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FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK:

On behalf of the Department of History, University of North Bengal, it is our privilege to present to the readers the Volume 13 (2020) of the Karatoya: North Bengal University Journal of History. The present volume has incorporated research papers covering a wide range of issues and from various sub-disciplines of History. The empirical works dealing with diverse spheres of the mother discipline, viz. nationalism, sub-nationalism, post-modernist views, sports history, women's history, etc. have enriched its contents. The Volume 13 is being published after all the articles having been refereed, peer reviewed, and critically edited 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.

It is our solemn duty to express our deepest gratitude to our Honourable Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Finance Officer for their generous concern on 'Academic Endeavour'. We are also grateful to our colleagues of the Department of History for their warm encouragement and necessary cooperation for publishing this journal.

We are also thankful to all the contributors for providing valuable research papers. Finally, the officials and the staffs of the North Bengal University Press deserve heartiest thanks for their cooperation in printing the journal within limited span of time.

Chief Editor:

Sudash Lama, Ph.D.

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Tales of a Distant War: The First World War and Coexisting Worldviews in Ramananda Chattopadhyay's *Prabasi*

Aryama Ghosh and Sujit Majhi

[Editorial Note: The paper enlightens us on the synergy of seemingly opposing ideas of the Sub-National, National, and Internationalistic ideas through the editorial pieces of periodicals like *Prabasi* in the time of the First World War. The authors have explored primary sources quite extensively while interpreted by using various historical discourses on the issue. D.A.]

Abstract: *With the First World War, colonial peripheries like India experienced superfluity of news contents and general interest among the newsreaders regarding wars and world politics. The reportage style of various periodicals like the Prabasi started to base on that newfound cultural consumption market with their shift of focus towards the events and interpretation related to war. This article argues that the prior growth of cosmopolitanism in the Bengali cultural public sphere found a boost in this process. The war acted as a catalyst and started producing editorial pieces substantiating sub-nationalism. These nationalist and internationalist ideals, despite their innate contradiction, coexisted and furthered the future expansion of the Bengali worldview.*

Keywords: *Ramananda Chattopadhyay, the Prabasi, the First World War, Nationalism, Sub-Nationalism, Internationalism*

Introduction:

Marc Ferro made an intriguing statement in his book *The Great War* which stated that the war 'liberated men's energies' with the outbreak of the First World War (Ferro 1973: 8). While Europe had direct encounters with violence and an outpouring of socio-political forces, faraway colonies encountered effects on a marginal level. Colonies suffered indirect financial losses, but events of battlegrounds were a long-distance affair. However, this distant attention and influence had some beneficial effects on colonial cultures, as the brief eruption of knowledge about global events pushed the Bengali intelligentsia's embryonic exploratory inclinations toward internationalism and cosmopolitanism. Internationalism had developed a variety of conceptual categories in the early decades of the twentieth century, but its infancy enabled cohabitation. The conflict acted as a stimulus but seldom caused internal rift. Innumerable materialistic, spiritual expectations, possibilities, started travelling beyond the boundaries of internationalist arrangements. The many ideas floating at the time were not seen as exclusive or in competition with one another, but as congregating and matching paths aiming at changing humankind's future and, indeed, humanity itself (Raza et al. 2015: xii). During the conflict, the *Prabasi* editorials exemplified this synergic cohabitation of seemingly opposing ideas.

Ramananda Chattopadhyay's Popular Miscellany in the *Prabasi*

Founded in Allahabad in 1905, the *Prabasi* was edited by Ramananda Chattopadhyay, a close friend of Rabindranath Tagore. He served as the magazine's editor until he died in 1943. In 1907 he also started editing the *Modern Review*, which could be presented as the English alternative to the *Prabasi*. In national level he started editing another magazine in Hindi named the *Visal Bharat*, which came out two decades after the *Modern Review* (Chatterjee 2016: 240). These three periodicals were distinct from each other with an underlying agenda of creating a nationalistic spirit. Thus, he was in favour of constricting 'Bengali, Indian, and Asian' levels of identity. The era is noteworthy because the Bengali cultural environment was undergoing some drastic changes, with demonstrable consequences. The acceleration of transportation and the expansion of print made it possible for a colonized man to comprehend or taste the universal exposure standardized on a western scale. Economic advantages were, of course, essential, and individuals like Ramananda had the requisite socioeconomic and cultural capital to enjoy it. Since the Swadeshi Movement had established the ranks of young Bengalis in the cultural arena based on Calcutta, they were urged to create an impact of their own, inspired by the century's new ideals. The anti-partition movement 'fractured by the slogans and icons that were chosen by the Bengali Hindu Politicians' had already characterised itself as an 'exclusivist Hindu dominated concept of nationalism' (Banerjee 2020: 23-5). Due to this, Rabindranath along with his followers dissociated themselves. After the anti-partition movement new issues started to form, creating tremors among Bengal and central India as well as western India based Congress leadership. The sub-nationalist trend would be clearer when the Non-Cooperation movement would start. Chittaranjan Das' council entry plan in the provinces would be revoked by Gandhi-led majority which in consequence would lead to the making of the Swarajya Party in 1923. But with the revocation of the Bengal Pact (1923) Chittaranjan's plan to form Hindu-Muslim unity based on the sub-national identity of Bengali would fail (Banerjee 2020: 25-7). On the other hand, nationalist imaginings before the war were Hindu-biased from which emergent and radical leaders had been trying to move away. While confident Chittaranjan along with Birendranath Sashmal, Subhas Chandra Bose planned for the Bengal Pact and ultimately failed, disheartened men like Rabindranath moved away from the overtly Hindu-biased politics. Rabindranath started writing '*Gare-Bayre*', a novel severely criticizing fanatic nationalism and revolutionary terrorism which became rampant during this time.

Ramananda was one of those men who had followed Rabindranath's departure from the anti-partition movement. He started the *Prabasi* in between Tagore's *Rakhibandhan* and Chittaranjan's the Bengal Pact, two failed projects of reviving Bengali sub-nationalism. His periodicals started to profess a very curious mixture of ideas ultimately performing a new type. He did not suggest for a total denial to West but opined that the British rule in India had 'stultified Indian minds' and therefore, he asked for getting rid of that hegemony which continued to suppress their 'genius' (Chatterjee 2016: 239). Now, the creation of the

Prabasi, a monthly illustrated magazine, was not just the work of one individual, as Samarpita Mitra argued. It can be rather considered as a medium of response to the contemporary demand of commercialization (Mitra 2013: 216). Before the outbreak of the First World War, the *Prabasi* had developed a 'cosmopolitan Bengali aesthetic' that could be distinguished from the blue-collar middle-class examples like the *Bharatvarsa*, 'the staunchly non-Rabindric journals', most notably Sureshchandra Samajpati's the *Sahitya* and the more conventional nationalist periodical like the *Narayan* (1914), edited by Chittaranjan Das (Mitra 2013: 227). Just like the *Prabasi*, the *Modern Review* was one of the few nationalist English magazines available then. Mitra argued that the leisure-reading manifested by the *Prabasi*'s illustrated production of cultural pieces of consumption had imposed new meanings to the concept of news. However, with the coming of the war, this new meaning got amplified. After the start of the war, the distinctness of these periodicals became more visible. While the Great War destroyed the beliefs, social permanency, and hierarchies of the old imperial world in Europe and others, it opened the door to developing a new global consciousness. This growth of global consciousness was also evident in Asia. The conflict shattered a previously constrained set of understandings among Indian elites and people regarding the world and India's position in the world (Ali Raza et al. 2015: xix). According to Francesca Orsini's thesis *The Hindi Public Sphere: 1920-1940*, the Hindi press advanced beyond the general circle of well-educated and properly schooled community; through periodicals and print language, it reached a more diverse reader circle with a shared culture and political consciousness (Orsini 1996: 63). It seems likely that the war had a larger effect on the print sector in Bengal than it did in other places. Resistance by oppressed peoples throughout the world was linked together by 'the spirit of internationalism' during this period. Emily S. Rosenberg, who is known for her contribution to pre-war groups of 'internationalists', shows how 'internationalism' was conceived in many circles as an idea that sought to bind nation-states in peaceful coexistence through a parallel attempt of strengthening national and imperial borders. Throughout the First World War, Indians in New York started becoming members of both the 'Hindusthan Club' and the 'Cosmopolitan Club'. (Ali Raza et al. 2015: xx-xxi). This harmony of internationalism without stepping away from nationalist needs could be seen in the *Modern Review* and the *Prabasi*. Ramananda Chattopadhyay, like Rabindranath, attempted to interweave nationalism with internationalism in such a way that internationalism might develop into a universal nationalism. *Gora*, one of Rabindranath's literary masterpieces, has been serially published in the *Prabasi* since 1907 and expressed the contrast between aggressive and liberal nationalisms. War provided a perfect stage for Ramananda to interplay his ideals into journalistic practice. With a perfect assimilation of his idealism and subtlety in handling global politics, nationalistic zeal, and cultural issues, his work reflected both nationalism and internationalism. That is why Sir Jadunath Sarkar described him as 'India's ambassador to the nations' and his magazines as entirely Indian while being cosmopolitan at the same time (Chaudhuri 2004: 19-20). The years 1917-1939 were not without precedence in terms of making connections with the world, and the

meeting of south Asians with European had been quite common even prior to that period. The Russo-Japanese and Balkan Wars had adorned the first pages of Bengali newspapers (Ali Reza et al. 2015: xii). However, in comparison to its predecessors, the Great War had a greater impact. This unprecedented event has resulted in the *Prabasi's* worldview being more expansive since 1917. It provided the editor with a few outstanding emerging issues to demonstrate intricate patterns of nationalism-cosmopolitanism interplay.

Bengali Martial Question: The *Prabasi* on Bengali Soldiers at War

For both the Bengali intellectuals and political leaders, war became an opportunity even in the time of crisis. As members of an ‘alienated cohort, poorly integrated into the Calcutta social order’, Bengalis saw the global powers clashing interests as a ‘sign of promise’. (Manjapra: 2011: 337). Bengali perspective was preoccupied with two distinct issues. Firstly, the so-called ‘wrong impression of the world’ needs to be rectified, and magazines such as the *Prabasi* played an important role in that. Macaulay’s image of Bengalis as cowards persisted, despite the attempt of publications such as the *Prabasi* to change the situation. Secondly, some colonial bureaucratic levels expressed qualms about arming Bengalis after some of them were led by ‘misguided ideas of patriotism to commit cold-blooded murders and crimes’. The general view of the newspapers and periodicals like the *Prabasi* was that the community should ‘not be misjudged by the misdeeds of a few’ and these ‘few’ means the revolutionary youths who have been causing violent resistance to authorities. (Bhargava 1919: 225). Although the *Prabasi* was a fervent nationalist publication, it never strayed from its original standpoint of propagating broad Bengali interest. The beginning of the British war effort in India unleashed a kind of media consumption that led to a public consensus of integrating Indians in the colonial administrative and military system. Japan’s rising strength as an Asiatic nation both threatened and encouraged the intellectuals for self-government and demand for positions in the army was a partial expression of that greater demand. The *Prabasi's* opinionated articles were replete with such observations:

“দেশী লোককে শিক্ষা ও সুযোগ দিয়া দেশীয় শিল্প বলিষ্ঠ ও উন্নত করিয়া তোলা গভর্ণমেণ্টের
কর্তব্য। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে দেশীয় সকল প্রদেশের লোককে সৈন্যবিভাগে গ্রহণ করিয়া ও সেনাপতি
পর্যন্ত হইবার অধিকার দিয়া দেশের আন্তরিক বল বৃদ্ধি করিয়া তোলা উচিত।” (*Prabasi*
Kartika 1322: 6)

Later, the *Prabasi* raised three specific demands relating to the security of Indian Territory: i) the creation of a militia of males aged between 18 and 41, ii) the need for students to participate in military training, and iii) the collection of war debts from the indigenous market. As a result, we can observe how wartime pressures altered the fundamental nature of the public debate. Bengalis were previously not recruited in the British-Indian Army because of Martial Race Theory-based recruiting procedures. However, with the increase of demand during the war, it became clear that the recruitment pool needed to be extended, which provided an opportunity for Bengali youngsters. The war was critical in obliterating

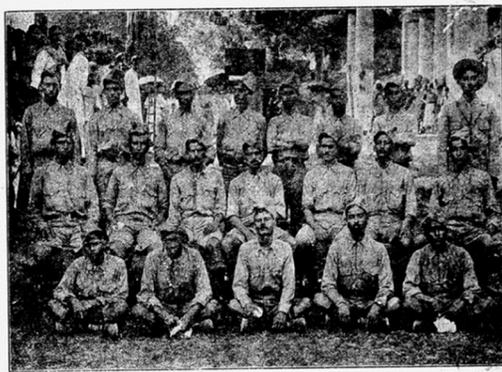
the old world of imperialist dominance and forming the desires and promises for a new world (Ali Raza et al. 2015: xviii). Demanding enlistment in an unprecedented war on a global scale was thought to be an opportunity for the Bengali identity for freeing it from the old world's stereotype of femininity towards a new world of recognition. *Prabasi's* treatment of the subject is intriguing since the journal believed that the Bengali race had to show their worth in conformity with ancient martial races like Rajputs, Sikhs, and others. It started constantly harping on Bengali heroism as a sub-national musing. It was initially a countermelody to the nationalist song.

The *Prabasi* not only championed the recruitment of Bengalis in the Ambulance Corps but also demanded direct involvement of Bengalis in the war activity. The primary reason for such rapporteur-like excitement was the idea that the 'angel of vision has changed'; the bravery of Indian soldiers and in this case the Bengali soldiers would convince the British of the colony's significance, thus materializing the collective desire for dominion status (*Prabasi* Shrabon 1323: 388). So, the sub-national urge not only coexisted but also reciprocated with the national interest. Later, the *Prabasi's* pages were often found adorned with the reports of Bengali heroism in the world's battlefields. The sub-national tendency was, however, only to assist the larger nationalist goal. As the Bengal Ambulance Corps showed heroism at Tesiphon, near Bagdad, removing injured from the firing line while being shelled, the *Prabasi* editorial noted,

“অস্ত্র হাতে করিয়া যুদ্ধ করায় একটা উত্তেজনা আছে; তাহাতে সাহস বাড়ে বই কমে না... কিন্তু কাহারও শরীরে শত্রুর গোলাগুলি শেল লাগিতে পারে, অথচ তাহাকে তাহা না ভাবিয়া ধীর ভাবে আহতদের সরাইয়া লইয়া যাইতে ব্যস্ত থাকিতে হইবে, ইহা যুদ্ধে নিরত সৈন্যদের চেয়ে কম সাহসের কাজ নয়, বরং বেশী। সব রকম সাহসের কাজ করিতে বাঙ্গালী সমর্থ, এ বিশ্বাস আমাদের ছিল। যাহারা প্রমানের অপেক্ষা রাখেন, তাহাদের জন্য এই একটি প্রমাণ উপস্থিত” (*Prabasi* Chaitra 1322: 542)

Throughout the battle, the *Prabasi* had been engaged in celebrating the alternative bravery of the Bengalis. A *Prabasi* editorial compared these Bengal Ambulance Corps soldiers to England's pacifist Quakers, who were staunch pacifists but showed exemplary bravery in battlefields as stretcher-bearers. The concerned editorial expressed deep resentment as the government failed to mention their compensation after the war (*Prabasi* Boisakh 1323: 15-6). However, it does not mean that the usual valour of martial qualities remained unappreciated. The recruitment of Bengali troops in the Chandannagar's French government as warriors, found its deserving place in an illustrated editorial titled 'Chandannagarer Bangali Soinya' (Bengali Troops of Chandannagar). It also severely condemned the British administration for not paying Bengali soldiers equally, which was an issue of upholding racial inequity (*Prabasi* Joishtho 1323: 107-8). When the case of Bengali volunteers being incorporated into the French army originally came to light, it received little notice. However, after being persuaded by a few individuals, including

Siddheswar Ghosal, Hardhan Bakshi and Narendranath Sarkar, and others, the *Prabasi* editorial took up the issue for raising awareness among Bengali readers. Motilal Ray quoted the words of Lieutenant Zile of Pondicherry in an article titled ‘*Pratham Bangali Soinya*’ (First Bengali Soldiers). The latter stated that the Bengali volunteers were obedient and honest and made positive comments about their abilities (*Prabasi* Joistha 1323: 184). The *Prabasi*’s nationalist columnists had used the example of the French volunteers to draw British attention to their stereotypical notion that Bengalis were non-martial. Furthermore, they started highlighting Bengali intellect as an asset in modern warfare.



বৃষ্টিবিলাসী
 সিন্ধুধর মল্লিক, মনোজ্ঞান দাস, সুনীলনাথ বসু, আশুতোষ বোস, স্বামীজীনাথ বোস, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ সরকার
 হারামিলাশের সিন্ধু, হারামিলাশের সিন্ধু।
 মোহন বসু
 শ্যামকান্ত বোস, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ সরকার, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ সরকার, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ সরকার, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ সরকার,
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 মল্লিক বসু
 সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ বসু, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ বসু, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ বসু, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ বসু, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ বসু।

Members of the Bengali Troops in the French Army (Prabasi: Joistho, 1323, 107)



Members of the Bengal Ambulance Corps (Prabasi: Sharabon, 1323, 387)

Meanwhile, the Bengal Ambulance Corps was disbanded on 30th June 1916 because its members did not wish to work in menial chores of non-combatants. The editorial in the *Prabasi* newspaper expressed its scepticism about the announcement and stated that the members would be returning to their posts shortly after (*Prabasi* Shrabon 1323: 313-4). The image of Bengali troops recruited as combatants in the French colony of Chandannagar and that of members of the Bengal Ambulance Corps treating soldiers are just the two of many that became part of the *Prabasi*’s visual display of Bengali pride. Finally, when the British government enlisted 228 Bengalis as combatants, the *Prabasi* editorial applauded the action, stating that new age warfare requires intelligence rather than physical power and communities such as Bengalis should be fully integrated in the system (*Prabasi* Bhadra 1323: 426). Although he reluctantly accepted the reputation of Bengalis as physically weak, he also gave another stereotype to the non-Bengali populations as being intellectually inferior. Sub-nationalist tendencies created minor breaches in the nationalist tune of the periodical but otherwise well-integrated ideals of the *Prabasi*’s cosmopolitanism remained intact. As early as January 1917, Punjab’s Lieutenant Governor proclaimed that well-educated young men were better suited for military service. The *Prabasi* editorials had spent more pages to write about the adequate work record of the

Bengali recruits (*Prabasi* Magh 1323: 318). Captain Jyotilal Sen and Captain Kalyankumar Mukhopadhyay were among the recruits who received the military cross, the British Empire's second-highest military decoration (*Prabasi* Poush 1323: 218). Many people following the *Prabasi* continued the colonial tradition of hero-worshipping but only within its colonial ambit. Satyendranath Dutta, a famous Bengali poet who used to publish in the *Prabasi*, wrote a song called 'Bangali Paltaner Gan' (Song of the Bengali Paltan) that echoed the periodical's overall trend of venerating Bengali bravery.

“শরীর শুধুই পিছিয়ে মোদের, এগিয়ে গেছে মন—

মানস-লোকে মার্চ করে যায় বাঙালী পল্টন!”

“মন আমাদের খাকী পরে সেজেছে সোলজার,

এমন সময় হুকুম এলো—পরোয়ানা রাজার!”

“ফাসে তোরা অস্ত্র ধরিস ভীষণ বিপ্লবে,

ব্রেজিলেতে সৈন্য চালাস অমর গৌরবে;

নামজাদা লাল পল্টনে ,ভাই ,তোরাই ছিলি ,শোন,

এম্পায়ারের ভিৎ গেড়েছে বাঙালী পল্টন।”) (*Prabasi* Bhadra 1324: 534-5)

Following Satyendranath's poetry, we can observe how the *Prabasi's* cosmopolitanism was frequently accelerated by a sub-nationalist undercurrent, but never dogmatized. The present splendour of Bengal was inseparable from the earlier majesty of the imperial realm, as often expressed in the *Prabasi* articles and Satyendranath's poem supports that mentality. The Bengali paltan should be motivated, according to the poet, because they built the British Empire centuries ago. It is a contradictory reality in which ideological conflicts coexist in the same narrative. This poem is a microcosmic image of the *Prabasi's* position regarding the issues like Bengali emotional resistance to the imperial narrative of perpetual femininity. Though Bengal has always been the 'locus classicus' for such type of ideological resistance against the dominant imperial narrative regarding martial or non-martial races, the issue of enlistment in the army had been an all-India phenomenon by the time of war. Robert P. Upton in his article concerning extraordinary advocacy of military enlistment by political leaders of the Bombay Presidency shows that political leaders of different ideological positions staunchly advocated for the enlistment drive. Gandhi, a staunch critique of violence, supported this enlistment drive in the 'hope that the military action would be a preparation for *satyagraha*' (Upton 2018: 1982). The same essence has been echoed in Ramananda Chattopadhyay's writings. Questions of manliness, non-violence, anti-imperialism everything intermingled in the time of enlistment drive and despite the apparent contradictions coexisted in the narrative.

***Prabasi's* War Trivias and Changing Bengali Worldview**

It was well known to the editors and authors of the *Prabasi* that its trivia-related column titled *Panchashashya* often reported on interesting trivia material that was purportedly appealing to readers. According to a short piece titled '*Yuddher Siksha*', statesmen and the general public were more aware of the political-economic systems of major world powers as a result of the World War. It goes on to say that:

“স্কুলের শিক্ষক ছাত্র পর্যন্ত বিশ্বব্যাপার, যুদ্ধের রীতিনীতি, ফলাফল, ঔচিত্য, অনৌচিত্য লইয়া বিচার করিতেছে; চাষাভূসারা পর্যন্ত খবর রাখিতেছে; সুতরাং দেশের নিম্নস্তর পর্যন্ত বিশ্বের বোধ ছড়াইয়া পড়িতেছে।” (*Prabasi* Ashar 1322: 375).

The *Prabasi's* pages soon became crammed with information about the conflict in Europe. However, according to Samarpita Mitra, the *Prabasi* editor also ‘justified it on grounds of an increase of quantity by introducing more features’ which were mainly centered on concerns like war and wartime politics. The post-war price rise was required to cover the growing printing costs. In order to include observations on international news the '*Deshar Katha*' (i.e., News of the Nation) section was being extended to '*Deshbideser Katha*' (Mitra 2020: 101). Similarly, a piece on anti-Zeplin guns appeared in the same issue, and it argued that war-related inventions and counter-inventions were causing an endless arm race. While, on one hand, the editor of the *Prabasi* took pleasure in disseminating information about the war to the Bengali readership, he did so with a tone of melancholy reflecting the *Prabasi's* pacifism on the other. Such pacifist tendency led to another development. News in ‘trench newspapers’ named ‘The War Cry’, ‘The Cave Man’, ‘The Trench Gazette’, and others which expressed the utter disgust for war by the soldiers, were published with visual illustrations in the same *Panchashashya* section (*Prabasi* Shrabon 1322: 508-9).

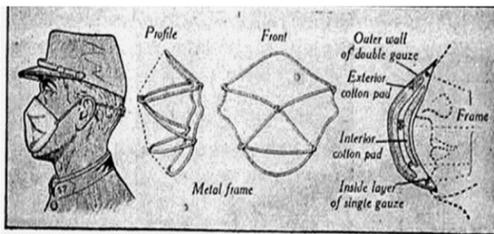


Illustration of French Gas mask (*Prabasi*: Ashwin, 1322, 793)



কেন্দ্রের উপর নকল কাঠামে ও পুতুল টেলর আসা হইয়া পক্ষের সৈন্যের আড়াল হইতে গোলাবর্ষণ করা হইয়া তাহাদেরকে ঠকাইবার ফলি।



Illustrations of Camouflage (*Prabasi*: Boisakh, 1323, 61)

When the French had engaged a soldier-poet named Theodor Bottrel to urge their troops in the trenches or when an American sculpture convention sponsored a contest to express

the symbolic imagery of war via art, the *Prabasi* joyfully published those events in its sections devoted to general trivia news (*Prabasi* Ashwin 1322: 792-3). Besides, ‘*Bibidha Prasanga*’, a regular column, had also covered war-related political and economic issues. These reports contain information about Austria’s rising birth-rate (*Prabasi* Bhadra 1322: 552). This general trivia also included information about new weapons utilized in war. The news of the use of lethal weapons causing mass devastation had naturally received public attention. There were in fact, fascinating details from artillerymen’s earplugs to trench combat in the *Prabasi*’s ‘*Panchashashya*’, accommodating in small informative paragraphs to long, comprehensive ones (*Prabasi* Aghrayan 1322: 187-8).

To say that World War One had a significant impact on the newspaper industry would be an understatement. However, while most artists in Europe went to the front to capture fresh evidence of events, the general public in India was quite satisfied with the illustrated monthly magazines such as the *Prabasi*. Along with images, armament and battle cartoons had also found their places in those magazines. Because of publications like the *Prabasi*, military-related titbits like ‘camouflage’, ‘flamethrower’, ‘gas and chemical warfare’, and other such terms became commonplace catchphrases. This piece was more opinionated, than that appeared in the ‘*Panchashashya*’.

Since journals like *Prabasi* have filled up the lacunae remained in newspaper dailies by giving trivia on wartime world politics, an economic demand also appeared in the printing business. Such demand served as the motor for rising interest in journalism. It was intellectually reinforced by Rabindric’s synergy of nationalism and internationalism. Increasing curiosity in Japan has become one of the budding factors of such journalism. Although Japan was an inspiration, its aggressive imperialism threatened India’s national interests, as the *Prabasi* frequently emphasized. The *Prabasi* editorials freely swung between various ideologies while reporting and analyzing issues. India’s trade was threatened by Japan, according to a *Prabasi* assessment. It stated,

“শুধু ভারতবর্ষের শিল্পবাণিজ্য নষ্ট হইলে ইংরেজ বণিকেরা গবর্ণমেন্টকে উহার জীবনরক্ষার জন্য কিছু করিতে বলিবে বা করিতে দিবে, এরূপ আশা খুব বেকুব ভারতবাসীও করে না। ভারতবাসী ও গবর্ণমেন্ট উভয়ের একাগ্র চেষ্টা থাকিলে বিপদ কাটিয়া যাইতে পারে। জাপানের গবর্ণমেন্ট জাপানের শিল্পবাণিজ্যের জন্য যাহা করিতেছেন, আমাদের গবর্ণমেন্ট সেরূপ চেষ্টা করিলে জাপান কখনই আমাদের শিল্পবাণিজ্য নষ্ট করিতে পারে না।” (*Prabasi* Bhadra 1322: 554).

It was also said in an essay called ‘*Japaner Matlab*’ (The Japanese Motive) that Japan’s continued rise and expansion in trade and military may weaken India’s position. It stated,

“আমাদের স্বল্পবশিষ্ট শিল্প জাপানের অত্যাচারে ও প্রতিযোগিতায় একেবারে নষ্ট হইয়া গেলে দেশে অধিকতর অন্নের অভাব ঘটবে। ইহারই মধ্যে বোম্বাইএর

কাপড়ের কলগুলি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হইতে আরম্ভ করিয়াছে। জাপানী সস্তা গেঞ্জি, চিরুণী, সাবান, আয়না, বুরুশ, এসেস, কাচের বাসন, আলো প্রভৃতিতে দেশ একেবারে ছাইয়া ফেলিয়াছে; আর অল্পদিনে ভারতবাসীর সকলপ্রকার আবশ্যকদ্রব্য জাপানীরা প্রস্তুত করিয়া আনিয়া ফেলিবো।” (*Prabasi* Kartika 1322: 5).

Since the Russo-Japanese War, Japan had been the focus of *Prabasi*, but with the outbreak of World War One, periodicals like the *Prabasi* were increasingly concerned with the issues of international relation. A group of scholars known as the Pan-Asianists, including Ramananda Chattopadhyay were introducing the concept of ‘Greater India’. Ramananda saw it as a ‘global territory that flourished in ancient times, against which the imperialist ‘misdeeds’ of empires in the modern West were held in negative contempt’ (Manjapra 2012: 59). This change in perception boosted Japan’s importance as part of a multinational civilisational entity. But at the same time the *Prabasi*’s own ideals regarding ‘Greater India’ distanced itself from the aggressiveness of the Japanese pan-Asiatic imperialism. This sudden interest initially demonstrated how the imagined notion of a transnational body found a more practical reality when journals discovered a market for international issues. Throughout the time of First and Second World War, Japan was both respected and circumspectly observed. *Bibidha Prasanga*, for example said,

“নিজেদের মধ্যে দুর্বলতার কারণ যাহা দেখিয়াছে, জাপানীরা তাহা নির্মমভাবে পরিত্যাগ করিয়াছে ও করিতেছে, সবলতার কারণ বিদেশে যাহা দেখিয়াছে ও দেখিতেছে, তাহা সর্বদা গ্রহণ করিতে উন্মুখ হইয়া রহিয়াছে। স্বদেশের কোন প্রথা, কুসংস্কার বা বিশ্বাস তাহাদিগকে অন্ধ করিয়া রাখিতে পারিতেছে না।” (*Prabasi* Bhadra 1322: 561)

Furthermore, The *Prabasi*’s short study on ‘Japan Rushiyar Shikkhok’ (Japan as Russia’s Teacher) indicating Japan’s contribution in transferring technological knowledge to a western state like Russia is quite unfathomable during that time. It was an existing idea that the east could only contribute spiritual, philosophical wisdom to the West, but not materialist information. As a result, Japan was breaking out the conventional east-west relationship.

Along with reporting on local issues like jute’s declining price and war-related hunger, the *Prabasi* also wrote about the rising tide of yellow journalism in the West in the wake of this conflict (*Prabasi* Kartika 1322: 45). Gopal Haldar, for example stated that the very essence of Ramananda’s ‘*Bibidha Prasanga*’, which was brimming with flaming nationalist spirit and anti-imperialist fervour, caused the colonial administrators to outlaw this periodical from circulation in jail (Haldar 1965: 9).

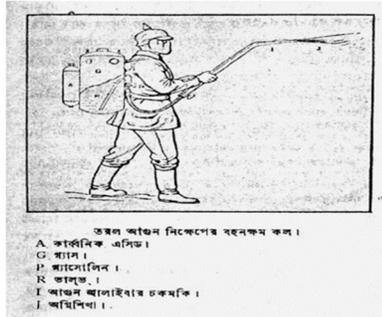


Illustration of Flamethrower Illustration of the Spanish cartoon
(Prabasi: Kartika, 1323, 59) (Prabasi: Poush, 1322, 224)

With the advent of war, Bengali magazines also had dealt with more progressive issues like the question of women representation in war. ‘*Narir Sainik Hawa Uchit Kina*’ (Can Women Be Soldiers?) was one of such articles addressing the concerned issue published in the *Prabasi*. Khirod Kumar Ray, the author of the piece, said that women had participated in World War I, both directly and indirectly and such examples should serve as an inspiration for women living in colonies. He stated this in his letter:

“আমাদের দেশেও বীরনারীর অভাব নাই। রাণী সংযুক্তা, রিজিয়া, অহল্যাবাই, দুর্গাবতী, লক্ষ্মীবাই, বেগম সমরু প্রভৃতি অনেকের নাম করা যাইতে পারে। ইহা হইতে ইহাই প্রমাণ হয় যে কোনো জাতি বা সম্প্রদায় একেবারেই কোনো-একটা কাজের যোগ্য নয়, এমন হইতেই পারে না। সকলের মধ্যেই সকল কাজ করিবার মতন যোগ্যতা আছেই”। (*Prabasi Bhadra* 1322: 580)

Since the outbreak of the First World War, many newspapers, and journals such as *Grihalaksmi* and *Stri-darpan* have begun to publish articles about women’s accomplishments in various contexts (Orsini 1996: 174-5). The *Prabasi* followed the same pattern of publishing on empowerment of women. Though Ferro argued that the Great War unleashed men’s energies, it also contributed partially to the breaking of indestructible glass barrier of societal standards, shackling the so-called weaker gender at home. Michael Adams believed that Victorian Britain’s gender role discrimination encouraged male violence, fuelling the initial phase of war’s martial excitement (Adams 1990). However, war at the same time reduces gender inequity and reconfigures gender roles. In his recent book *The Great Leveller*, Walter Scheidel opined that human civilization achieves a relatively equitable state during times of crisis. He further stated that the ‘world wars spawned the second major levelling force, transformative revolution’ like the previous mass mobilization warfare during the period of the Napoleonic War or the American Civil War (Scheidel 2018: 7). Various editorial pieces of the *Prabasi* started expressing the vibe of woman empowerment, which was not as expressive as Europe but was utterly unprecedented.

The Conjuncture of Sub-National, National, and International Interests in the *Prabasi*

Ultimately, as interest in the war and global politics grew on multiple levels, so did the desire for national self-government and concern over India's post-war diplomatic standing in the country. These issues shaped people's collective understanding of a generalized notion of national interest. The *Prabasi* papers acted as a catalyst in this case, and their ideas were frequently outlandish. '*Samrajya Sabhay Bharater Sthan*', the author said in an article.

“প্রবাসী ইংরেজরা একটা ধুয়া তুলিয়াছে যে, এই যুদ্ধের সময় ভারতবর্ষ আপনার দাবী করিয়া ইংলন্ডকে বিরত করিয়া তুলিলে অন্যায় করিবে, যুদ্ধশেষের প্রতীক্ষা করিয়া থাকুক, খুদ-কুঁড়া কিছু বকশিশ মিলিয়া যাইবে। ...সকলেই আপন আপন দাবী পেশ করিয়া রাখিতেছে। কেবল ভারতবর্ষই কি চুপ করিয়া থাকিবে?... সেইজন্য আবশ্যিক হইয়াছে আমরা স্পষ্ট করিয়া বলিব —আমরা যখন ব্রিটিশ সাম্রাজ্যের অঙ্গ, আমরা সুস্থ সবল স্বায়ত্ত থাকিতে চাই;”)*Prabasi* Kartika 1322: 11).

Such desire for obtaining dominion status was prevalent throughout the conflict because Ramananda and his associates of the *Prabasi*, like many of their contemporaries, felt that the Indian colonies would gain administrative autonomy under the empire's auspices. Though negative comments from Anglo-Indian bureaucracy frequently eroded their belief, the concept of India's self-government received a collective boost during World War II. Furthermore, the light of promise soon began to dim into despair, as British colonial interests continually pressed down Indian hopes for dominion status, in contrast to Indian top leadership. The *Prabasi* was the first to write about these matters. When the Canadian government extended the prohibition on Indian labour until March 1916, the *Prabasi* editorial criticized the notice, claiming that despite Indians' all-around assistance to the imperial war effort, the innate racism of the country will continue to look down on its Indian people. The editorial did not end there; it further requested that no Canadian subject be admitted to the Indian Territory (*Prabasi* Aghrayan 1322: 124-5). Due to their outspokenness, the *Prabasi* frequently engaged in journalistic disputes with pro-British journals such as the *Statesman*. It even chastised other newspapers and magazines for maintaining silence under the disguise of impartiality. Ramananda sarcastically stated in an editorial article titled '*Nirapekkha Sampadok*' (Impartial Editor), which included a reprint of a cartoon named 'perfect editor' from Spanish daily.

“মনে হইতেছে, ছবিটি ছাপিয়া ভাল করিলাম না। হয়ত পাইয়োনীয়ার, স্টেটসম্যান, ইংলিশম্যান, প্রভৃতির সম্পাদকেরা ভারতবর্ষীয় দেশী সম্পাদকদিগের জন্যও এইরূপ ব্যবস্থা করিতে বলিতে পারেন। কারণ, আমরা এখনও 'আদর্শ সম্পাদকে' পরিণত হই নাই।” (*Prabasi* Poush 1322: 224)

These fearless editorials avoided anti-racial mudslinging at all costs. The post-war period saw a shift of thought from a 'romantic and optimistic' 'utopia of peace' persisted before the war to a 'darker and more dystopian undercurrent to visions and ideologies' (Ali Raza et al 2015: xvii). However, as the British authorities began to backtrack on their previous promises of significant administrative reform favouring the natives, the *Prabasi* editorials became more critical of Ramananda's previous utopian vision.

The *Prabasi*, took an idealist stance against the war while preserving India's interests. Ramananda Chattopadhyay has long been a pacifist. In 1907 he wrote a letter to William T. Stead, famous pacifist journalist and editor of a London-based newspaper the *Review of Reviews* in which he expressed his views on the fact that there is a need of international brotherhood based on justice and national freedom (Chatterjee 2016: 244-5). In many of his editorials, Ramananda stressed the need for pacifism and prayed for an end to war. However, he remained a realist and backed war if nations felt the need to defend them. The *Prabasi* praised Belgium's stand against Germany because of this. Eventually, Ramananda's quandary would become a critique of the West. *Savyatar Sopan* (The Steps of Civilization) is an editorial piece in which the author quoted a Japanese writer sarcastically commenting that Japan was not civilized until it defeated Russia on the battlefield despite its rich ancient art, culture, and heritage. In terms of civilization's size, he was critical of Western thinking (*Prabasi* Falgun 1322: 436-7). His cosmopolitan pacifism and nationalist realism went hand in hand. When it comes to war expenditure, he criticized the government for spending much money on it while neglecting its colonial subjects. The latter, according to him, continued to die because of inadequate medical care. His such editorial has been titled 'Battle for Ages in India' (*Prabasi* Falgun 1322: 443-4). Despite Germany's appearance as a menace, malaria has continued as a more significant threat, according to an editorial titled "Yuddha Ebong Piranibarontha Bayer Hras" (On War and the Reduction of Disease-Related Expenditure) (*Prabasi* Aghryan 1323: 115).

The next target of Ramananda's ire was Britain. He argued that their principal motive was to take over the world, albeit claiming their war has been morally righteous. According to Ramananda's writings [*Shantir Sharrta* (Condition of Peace)], both sides used different justifications to excuse their actions, but both sides' principal motor of interest was either extending or keeping dominance. He stated that the outcome of the war became increasingly obvious and peace discussions must begin to circulate in the halls of international politics,

“... (১) যুদ্ধের সময় যেসব স্বাধীন জাতিদের দেশ অধিকৃত হইয়াছে; যুদ্ধান্তে তাহা তাহাদিগকে ফিরাইয়া দিতে হইবে, এবং তাহাদের স্বাধীন অবস্থা অক্ষুণ্ণ রাখিতে হইবে; (২) যুদ্ধের সময় বা তৎপূর্বে যে-সব স্বাধীন জাতিদের দেশের কোন অংশ কেহ দখল করিয়াছে, তাহা তাহাদিগকে ফিরাইয়া দিতে হইবে; (৩) যুদ্ধের আগে হইতে এখন পর্যন্ত যাহারা পরাধীন আছে তাহাদিগকে স্বীয় স্বীয় দেশের আভ্যন্তরীণ

ব্যবস্থা করিবার অধিকার দিতে হইবে। ইহা না করিলে সংগ্রামে যে পক্ষই জয়ী হউন, কাহারও সত্যবাদিতায় মানুষের আস্থা থাকিবে না। ...সুতরাং আমরা বলিতে পারি যে মহত্তম অধীনতাপাশ-মোচনের আভাসের প্রতি ইংলন্ডের প্রধানমন্ত্রী জগতের দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করিয়াছেন, এশিয়া আফ্রিকা মুক্তি না পাইলে, ভারতবর্ষ স্বরাজ (Home Rule) না পাইলে, তাহা অসম্পূর্ণ থাকিয়া যাইবে। ”)Prabasi Boisakh 1324:

4)

The *Prabasi* group clarified its position on its nationalist tendencies and its editor, Ramananda Chattopadhyay had sympathies for revolutionary terrorists. However, he explicitly clarified his opinion while discussing the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, that the scenario and social reality of India had nothing in common with either Russia or China and so it's not a perfect place to experiment with armed revolution (*Prabasi* Boisakh 1324: 11). So, Ramananda's *Prabasi*, like many of his contemporary liberal nationalists, believed in incremental administrative reforms, but this does not diminish his condemnation of imperial control. In her unpublished doctoral thesis 'Profile of a Nationalist: Ramananda Chattopadhyay through the Modern Review and the *Prabasi* (1905-1920)', Chaitali Chaudhuri pointed out that it was mostly due to Rabindranath's influence, as he never tolerated political violence but was sympathetic to revolutionaries' self-sacrifices (Chaudhuri 2004: 22). However, it would be too generalised argument if we put forward Ramananda's ideal simply as nationalism. Ashis Nandy said he belonged to a group who were 'dissenters among dissenters', and who 'regarded nationalism as a by-product of the western nation-state system and the forces of homogenization let loose by the western world view' (Nandy 1994: x-xi). However, when the issue of India's home rule became obsolete, the *Prabasi* began to self-criticize by highlighting India's incapacity to explain its problem to the world. In an editorial essay titled '*Jogote Varoter Songbad Prachar*', he argued that the world, including the British Empire, was sympathetic to Ireland's aspirations, but despite all of the assistance in the war effort, the Indian matter of 'home rule' was ignored. So, in his perspective, it was the responsibility of Indian journals to aid in disseminating Indian news to the rest of the globe.

Conclusion:

As we can see, the *Prabasi's* more significant motive of cosmopolitan nationalism received an increased readership as the First World War approached. Ideals were still in the fledgling stage; therefore, apparent conflicts coexisted with ease. In order to meet nationalist needs, nationalists are fed minute details as well as global instances; discourses on world diplomacy conceal and interpret the ideal existence of freedom and pacifism, or we should say right to national integrity and international coexistence. The question of enlistment and discourse of Bengali manliness became a burning issue while matters regarding Japan's emerging economy or day to day details of war attracted popular readership. War had created these opportunities. All of this mass-scale interest, as well as ideological

innovation, were fuelled by conflict. Though post-war despondency discouraged many, this communal motivating push was vital for future political consciousness, and the *Prabasi* played a vital role in this process. So, while scholars like Ali Raza describes this phenomenon as the international moment it becomes clear that the wartime journalism was an important catalyst to this.

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Sports for Disciplining and Character Formation: The Study of English Public Schools in Colonial India

Ritesh Gupta

[Editorial Note: The paper narrates how the introduction of sports in colonial India after the template of the public schools of England with a colonial imaginary of ‘disciplining the body, mind, and the character of an otherwise feeble people’ has created varied outcome based on the actual writings and lectures of colonial educators like Chester Macnaghten, Herbert Sherring, etc. D.A.]

Abstract: *The politics of the body in colonial India was intrinsically linked with the imperial project of hegemonic rule. The colonial imaginary that stereotyped the Indian body and character as effete and effeminate was employed to justify British rule in India. The politics of the body in colonial India manifested at the different contested sites of powers viz. medicine/hospitals, lunatic asylums, prisons, and educational institutions. However, the most aggressive expression of colonization of the Indian body concerning the imperial project of ‘disciplining the body’ was most apparent in English public schools. In this context, the present paper deals with the politics of body centred around sports as manifested in the English public schools of colonial India. Taking case studies of some public schools established in India during the colonial period, the paper examines colonial raison d’etre for introducing sports.*

Keywords: *Sports, English Public Schools, Disciplining the body, Chester Macnaghten, Herbert Sherring, Tyndale-Biscoe, Colonial India.*

Introduction:

From the 1870s onwards, there emerged a rush for establishing English boarding schools in India on the model of public schools of Britain. Rajkumar College of Rajkot (1870), Mayo College at Ajmer (1875), Aligarh College (1875), Rajkumar College of Raipur (1882), Aitchison College at Lahore (1886), and Christian Missionary School at Srinagar (1881) are a few to mention among some of the English schools founded during the colonial period. One of the most important characteristics of English schools in colonial India was that sports and athleticism formed an essential part of the education curriculum. In fact, British administrators and educators contemplated the very idea of English public schools in India to transform local elites into the taste and culture of English life. What appears is that, not only through English education but also through game-ethics latent in the English sports, a class of people, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinions, morals, intellect, and physicality sought to be created (Basu 2019: 265).

The introduction of sports and physical education during the colonial India was intrinsically linked with the establishment of English public schools. Being dummies of British public schools where sports and physical education became an indispensable part

of the curriculum by the middle of the nineteenth century, the English schools of India intended to inculcate the manly virtues of English gentleman in Indian students through the pedagogy of sports. It is worth mentioning that public schools in England underwent a landmark change in the second half of the nineteenth century when following the recommendation of the Clarendon Commission, Public Schools Act was passed in 1868 (Gathorne-Hardy 1978: 96-8). Many schools, including Eton and Harrow, were reformed and athleticism was made an integral part of the education with a view to develop cooperation, unselfishness, and sound character in the students (Ndee 2010). Among the colonial circle, the notion was established that manly qualities developed in playing fields of the public school contribute much to holding a dominant position in the colonies. As such, the public schools were considered a regular source of able administrative and army officers to the colonies who have developed qualities of endurance, toughness, and courage on playing fields. On the other hand, sports in colonies were thought to be used as a tool to make natives worthy vassals in the imperial order (Mangan 1986: 138). In a great semblance with what Macaulay was seeking to achieve through English education in India, the proponents of English sports thought that it would teach Indians the lessons of loyalty, respect, and obedience towards the rulers. Therefore, it was with this understanding of sports, colonial educators introduced it in Indian schools that themselves were established on the model of public schools of England.

Early studies on colonial history interpreted the spread of western sports in colonies simply as a part and parcel of the imperial rule. However, J. A. Mangan, who proposed the idea of 'games ethics', implicated a more nuanced and complicated motive behind the introduction of English sports in schools of the colonies. He argued that colonial administrators and educators established public schools in colonies to use it as a site to discipline the body and character of otherwise feeble and undisciplined people. His works on the diffusion of English public school 'game ethics' in colonies emphasized the role of sports in understanding colonial education and its relationship with the imperial ideology (Mangan 1978). However, sports and physical education offered in English schools not always produced expected results. It often played complex and contradictory roles in the context of fostering respect for the colonial order and incorporating elites within that order. As many scholars have shown, contests between British officials and nationalist Indians led to the re-imagining of goals assigned for sports. From the early decades of the twentieth century, the Indian educationists not only imagined an altogether different set of objectives for sports but, in a time, have also appropriated English 'manly' sports within the nationalist framework. Many of the English sports thus became a symbol of nationalist aspiration¹.

¹ From the early decades of the twentieth century, Indians reimagined and envisaged different goals for sports and physical education. Almost all major Indian educationalists of the early twentieth century, viz. Rabindranath Tagore, Annie Besant, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sri Aurobindo etc. contemplated a nationalist goal for sports pedagogy in India. However, discussion

Nevertheless, it is beyond any doubt that both British authorities (colonizers) and Indians (colonized) wanted to improve the physicality of the Indian body through the provision of sports in schools. The difference between both parties mainly lay in their different meanings and interpretations of educational virtues, namely 'disciplining and character formation', which are supposed to be inherent in the sports pedagogy. Taking a cue from Mangan's 'game ethics', sports pedagogy at some of the English schools established on the model of the public school of Britain in colonial India would be discussed next.

Early Sports Proponents and Their Rationale for Introducing Sports in Public Schools:

The early colonial educators to venture imperial project of transplanting English sports in India was Chester Macnaghten, the first Principal of the Rajkumar College established at Rajkot in the Kathiawar region. The college was founded in 1870 to provide the ruling princes and chieftains of Kathiawar with English education in addition to manly physical training (Khan 1904: 13-4). Macnaghten, educated at Trinity College of Cambridge (famous for its sporting culture), taught his students at Rajkumar College to play cricket and football. He encouraged his students to participate in sporting pursuits and used to join them in their games. Ranjitsinhji, the ruler of the Nawanagar princely state, who played first-class cricket for Cambridge University and had since won fame on English cricket fields, learned cricket from none other than Macnaghten (Wilde 2004). However, Macnaghten's enterprise of introducing western sports to the class of Indians, generally considered as effete and conservative was not an easy task. The following account of his work in Kathiawar taken from the *Times* of May 11, 1896, after his death, read as:

The Kathiawar chiefs are mourning for an Englishman who, during a full quarter of a century, has been to them a friend and guide. It is no high official whose loss they lament. Chester Macnaghten was neither a civilian, nor a soldier, nor a 'Political' of any sort; but a simple Cambridge scholar belonging to the educational service, which has done so much to render British rule a blessing instead of a hardship to India...He was sent into a territory beyond direct British control, to introduce education on the English public-school model for the sons of chiefs who did not want it, and who clung to their old traditions with a strength of conservatism unknown in this country, and scarcely equaled in India itself (Macnaghten 1896; xiii-xiv).

Sir James Peile, the then Governor of Bombay and a friend of Macnaghten, and in fact, on whose recommendation Macnaghten was appointed as the Head of the Rajkumar College in 1870, mentioned the difficulties he had to contend with in introducing sports in the college. Peile, who considered Chester Macnaghten as the pioneer of the public school

on such endeavour is beyond scope of the present paper. Here, the author has cited two secondary works which discuss how colonial sports turned into an agent of nationalist sentiment.

system in India, informed that at the time of the establishment of the college, it was dominated by the chiefs of an older generation who had grown up in the wildlife left by the Mughal anarchy. But the younger generation of chiefs came to join an institution that differed in no essential point from the public school of England. Describing Macnaghten's work in Rajkumar College, Peile narrated how he made the chiefs of Kathiwar in believing the tonic virtue of public-school education. The latter could discipline their bodies in the template of manliness and hardihood of the English public-school boy. Macnaghten inspired his pupils to take pride in the college games and appealed to their sporting and military tastes that, he considered, were their aristocratic and hereditary instincts. For this, he introduced many 'manly' English sports in the college and formed a squadron of mounted volunteers (Macnaghten 1896: xv-xvi).

H. H. Bhavsinhji, Maharaja of Bhavnagar, and a student of Macnaghten at Rajkumar College confirmed that the college, since its beginning, followed the lines of the British public school on the athletic side. Following the proposition that education aims at the scientific guidance to the growth of the physical, intellectual, and moral sides of human beings, the promoters of the Rajkumar College selected the public school system of Britain as model (Bhavsinhji 1911: 158-9). With this goal in mind, the moral value of properly organized games was strongly upheld by the teachers of all grades at Rajkumar College. The double value of games was emphasized at the college, first in strengthening the body and then in inculcating discipline and character in the pupils. Using the phrase, 'mens sana in corpore sano' translated as 'a healthy mind in a healthy body', Bhavsinhji writes following on the educational value of sporting activities imparted at the college.

It is an undoubted fact that these games, over and above their obvious physical value of giving a robust, healthy and responsive physique for strenuous mental application, develop the moral qualities of courage, endurance, obedience command, quick decision, love of fair play and justice, and perhaps above all, the felling of solidarity which creates a readiness to sacrifice personal interests to the good of their side, their Class or their College (Bhavsinhji 1911: 159).

Chester Macnaghten himself, in an article, wrote for *Calcutta Review* in 1879, discussed how his plan of employing sports in Rajkumar College had brought some remarkable changes in the physical constitution and character of his pupils. He observed that not only the rude and coarse manners and mind of the young chiefs diminished, but those long hereditary grudges between a Scindia and a Holkar, a Nabha and a Jhind, were forgotten in the neutral hall and playground of a college. While doubting about the natural indolent of the Kathiwar princes and chiefs, he wrote, "They need to lead; but when once roused they are not wanting in agility or spirit" (The *Calcutta Review* LXVIII 1879: 277-9). For Macnaghten, it was more satisfactory to see *kumars* (young chiefs) improving in their moral and physical skills as he considered behavior to be far more important than scholarship (Macnaghten 1896: xxiii). However, the most vivid expression of his conviction on the disciplinary characteristics of sports is reflected in his lecture titled- *Play*

that he delivered at Rajkumar College on August 14, 1887. Though at the first instance, encouragement for sports evoked adverse criticism, Macnaghten was pleased to see that its importance was gradually recognized, and more attention was then given to open-air sports and physical exercises in the college. Elucidating the educational values inherent in the sports; he quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson's *The Conduct of Life* (1876) that read as:

Archery, cricket, gun and fishing-rod, horse and boat, are all educators, liberalisers; and –provided only the boy has resources, and is of a noble and ingenuous strain-these will not serve him less than the books...Provided always the boy is teachable, football, cricket, archery, swimming, skating, climbing, fencing, riding, are lessons in the art of power, which it is his main business to learn;- riding, specially, of which Lord Herbert of Cherbury said, 'A good rider on a good horse is as much above himself and others as the world can make him (Macnaghten 1896: 126).

Dwelling upon the late nineteenth-century western educational philosophies that argue for man's comprehensive development, Macnaghten realized that man is not all he can be and should be through his intellect alone. Considering that the training of the mind alone does not only need in the training of man or even if it was so, he thought the energy of the intellect so closely connected with the health of the body that the development of muscular powers (not excessively, but to a reasonable extent) a necessary aid to the proper development of man's mental faculties. With this objective in mind, he thought that games of prowess, strength, and skill would contribute very considerably as they not only strengthen the muscles but also invigorate mind and character (Macnaghten 1896: 127). Besides strengthening the muscles, mind, and character, Macnaghten argued that "games teach us to keep our tempers and the quality of fairness much better than anything else". Thus, he firmly believed that physical training and sports could develop skills, gentleness, firmness, unselfishness, patience, self-control, and the health and activity of the body. For in hours spent in physical pursuits, Macnaghten thought, pupils can learn such lessons that no school instruction can give. The 'lessons' were those of self-reliance, calmness, and courage, which could make students fit to discharge the duties and difficulties of the future (Macnaghten 1896: 134). As he said, "Absolute fairness, the necessity of impartial justice to both sides alike, is a condition without which games cannot be played at all. This is the reason why at cricket no one is allowed to dispute with the umpire, it is often very good for us to have subordinated our own opinion to that of another" (Macnaghten 1896: 131). Macnaghten considered cricket one such English sport that can instill the virtues of fairness, gentleness, unselfishness, and patience in the students of Rajkumar College. He read a description of a cricket match from the English novel *Tom Brown's School Days*. This novel, written by Thomas Hughes in 1857, portrays the life of the English public school in 1830s. Tom Brown's Schooldays played a pivotal role in spreading the gospel of sport throughout the world. It is regarded as a founding text of 'muscular Christianity' that

inaugurated the cult of manly athleticism in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Winn 1960, Majumdar 2006). The excerpt from the book that Macnaghten read is as follows:

“What a noble game cricket is!” exclaims one of the Rugby masters to Tom Brown afterwards when the School Eleven are bating, - “the discipline and reliance on one another which it teaches is so valuable, I think; and it ought to be such an unselfish game. It merges the individual in the Eleven; he doesn't play that he may win, but that his side may”. “That very true”, said Tom, “and Tom, “and that's why football and cricket, now one comes to think of it, are such better games than fives or hare-and-hounds or any others where the object is to come in first or to win for oneself, and not that one's side may win!” “And then the Captain of the Eleven!” said the master, “what a post is his in our School-world! almost as hard as the Headmaster's; requiring skill and gentleness and firmness, and I know not what other rare qualities” (Macnaghten 1896: 133).

A very similar argument on cricket was made by another colonial educator named Herbert Sherring, the Headmaster of Mayo College. Established in 1875 at Ajmer, the Mayo College was founded to educate the aristocracy of Rajputana in the English public school system. Herbert Sherring, who called Mayo College ‘The Eton of India’, played a significant role in introducing English sports. Speaking at the cricket event held in February 1891 at Mayo College, he explained the educative lessons that cricket can provide in the following words:

For a college like Mayo, cricket must forever remain the game par excellence. And then cricket is an education in itself. It develops nearly every muscle in the body. To the mind, it teaches fortitude under defeat, and modesty at the time of victory. It discourages selfishness, and teaches the player the necessity of playing for his side and not for himself. It inculcates smartness and activity. No good cricketer is a sloven or a sluggard. It is a democratic game, where riches and poverty, high rank and low rank, are of no account compared to real merit...Under no circumstances must the temper be lost; that godlike attribute should ever remain calm and unruffled. For these and many other reasons, cricket has become the king of games, absolute ruler at the Mayo, as at every other college and school where it has been introduced (Sherring 1897: 227).

In the first report of the Mayo College, Colonel Oliver John mentioned that boys who joined them were more fearful of exposure to the sun than Englishmen and played in the open air only in the early morning and late in the evening. To eradicate such stigma, Sherring was keen to recreate the English public school in India, in particular, with its emphasis on games and sports referring to “the very great need that existed for a college like the Mayo where boys who entered were soft, weak, and pampered, could be turned out hardy, active young men” (Sherring 1897: 60). Alexis Tadie, in his work on Mayo College, argued that Sherring had a double necessity to promote ‘manly’ sports in the college. First, sports were supposed to be a means through which masculinity, discipline, and character

of the students could be upheld. Second, as per colonial discourse on masculinity that alleged Indians as effete and effeminate, educating them in such a pedagogy of sports would strengthen their body as well and turn them into a man (Tadie 2017: 263).

Hence, recognizing the necessity of competition between the boys, games, and sports like cricket, hockey, lawn tennis, high jumps, long jumps, throwing the cricket ball distance, 100 yards flat race, 300 yards flat race, stone race, hopping race 50 yards, horse riding, polo, tilting at the ring, tent-pegging, jumping were made part of the educational curriculum at the Mayo College (Sherring 1894: 218). In April 1893, following the custom prevalent in all public schools of Britain, new rules were introduced considering the inclusion of sports in all grades. Most importantly, points were accorded to various sporting activities. Certain new events were also added to the curriculum, viz. high pole jump, hop, step and jump, tug-of-war, and pick-a-back race. The competition was occasionally made compulsory, and in each event, the winner received 21 marks, the boy who stood second 10, and the third 5 marks. Upon completing all the events, the marks were added together, and the first in each division was awarded a prize (Sherring 1894: 218-21).

Moreover, Herbert Sherring was also very determined to organize a rifle cadet corps of the Mayo College on the line of public schools of England. It seems he wanted to encourage young Rajput princes to avail themselves of English sports to revive their military tradition that could ultimately be mobilized in the service of the British Empire. Looking at the stock of boys coming from the ruling classes who already been instructed in riding and shooting drills and taught to wield the lance, sword, and rifle, Sherring thought it would be easy to assemble a cadet corps from their ranks. Among the main advantages in the formation of such a cadet corps, was the employment of young chiefs in their later life in the imperial service. British extension of their protectorate over Rajputana led Rajputs in losing their fighting instinct and traditional profession. Sherring thought that if the chiefs 'slumbered instinct' would be aroused by organizing cadet corps, they could be employed as an efficient auxiliary to the British force in India (Sherring 1894: 223). Hence, to form the Rifle Cadet Corps, English games and uniforms were introduced at Mayo College in combination with horse riding, polo, and other martial sports considered part of the Rajput tradition.

Another colonial educator interested in forming cadet corps was G. D. Oswell, Principal of the Rajkumar College of Raipur in Central Province. Rajkumar College of Raipur, founded in 1882 by Sir Andrew Fraser, was another English school established in India on the model of the public school of Britain. At Raipur's Rajkumar College, every boy was taught to ride well on a horse, and Principal Oswell appointed a subadar of Madras Lancers for such training. Under Oswell's supervision, musketry was also taught to every boy, and the seniors with a rifle were made the volunteer of rifle range. Also were introduced certain uniformity in dress for drill and musketry classes in order to create a cadet corps. Instruction in horse riding and rifle ranges was included in the morning exercises with plenty of other physical activities, including dumbbells, physical drills, and *deshi kasrat*

(indigenous exercises). The evening hour at the college was devoted to games like cricket, football, and tennis etc. Oswell informed that, from the beginning of college, games were made an integral part of regular college routines, and attendance was compulsory (Oswell 1902: 38). Colonial administrators, particularly John Woodburn, Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces, declared that the aim behind the establishment of the college was to teach the elite native mind lessons of loyalty towards the imperial government through manly sports. To quote from the prospectus of the college:

The aim of the Chief Commissioner in establishing the college is to provide a place where the sons and near relatives of feudatory chiefs, zamindars, and large landed proprietors, and other native gentlemen of position in the Central Provinces, may receive a training that shall fit them for the important duties and responsibilities which will ultimately devolve upon them. Special attention will be devoted to the training of the boys in right and honourable principles of thought and conduct, in gentlemanly behaviour and bearing, and an aptitude and proficiency in manly sports. Our aims in this college then are practically identical with the aims of the great Public Schools of England (Oswell 1902; 48).

The introduction of sports and establishment of public schools as elements in a strategy of imperial ideology of 'white man's burden' was also reiterated by the highest colonial authority in India- the Viceroy. Many of the viceroys of India envisioned English public schools for developing and strengthening not only the mind and body but also the character of the Indians. In this context, Lord Lytton's speech delivered at the Mayo College in 1879 is worth mentioning. Unequivocally describing the special merit of the English public school system that aims at training, developing, and strengthening of the mind and body both, he informs that such an idea was expressed by Colonel Walter in a report that influenced Lord Mayo. Colonel Walter's report called for the education of young rulers and nobles of India, foundation of a college modelled on Eton College, a reputed public school of Britain. Sports were central to the Eton curriculum since the late eighteenth century (Carter 2021). Lord Lytton thus said, "Ajmere is India's Eton, and you are India's Eton boys" (Sherring 1897: 181).

Lord Curzon, who took a keen interest in reforming the Indian education system wanted to regulate the English schools of India in such a way that they could serve the British Empire. He wanted English schools to function as a colonial institution that can produce valuable public servants from that class of Indians who were by birth and inheritance the natural pillars of the British Raj (Mayo College Magazine July 1905; 4). Curzon's most explicit expression underlying this ideal was best manifested in an address he delivered at Aitchison College in Lahore in 1901. He said:

The Public School system, as we understand it in England, is one which is devised to develop simultaneously and in equal measure the mind, the body, and the character of the pupil; we undertake to educate our young men at these schools in England for the position or profession in life which they are destined to fill. We

endeavour to train their physical energies so as to give them a manly bearing, and to interest them in those games, pastimes, and pursuits which will both so much conduce to their health and add so greatly to the pleasures of their lives, and above all by the ideals which, we set before them, by the higher example which we endeavour to inculcate in them, and by the attrition of mutual intercourse with each other from day to day we endeavour so to discipline their character that they shall be turned not merely into men, but into what in England we call gentlemen (Oswell 1902: 48).

Apart from Curzon, another highest authority in India, Lord Hardinge, who served as the viceroy of India from 1910 to 1916, reiterated the importance of making Indian honest and disciplined subjects of the empire in a speech at Mayo College. He noted that colleges established in India on the model of British public schools made a civilizing and progressive influence. He firmly believed that Mayo and Daly College at Indore, following the principles of morality, locality, and culture, that he called characteristics of the British race, contributed to the formation of character in elite Indians (Mayo College Magazine February 1913: 12-3). Thus, such a view of Hardinge on English schools of India was the clear manifestation of the imperial ideology of civilizing mission and hegemonic domination under British rule.

Significantly enough, it is to be noted that the goals set for sports in these schools were only superficially similar to those in Britain. Sen has argued that emphasis was placed on developing the character of Indians, i.e., emotional, and physical self-control and subordination in the face of authority by institutionalizing sports in the public schools. However, neither English public schools nor English body and character were supposed to have been produced in India. Sen argued that colonial administrators and educators never wanted the Indians to develop the same character as that of the English schoolboys (Sen 2004). In his work on Mayo College, Alexis Tadie has also demonstrated that sports in English schools of India do not open the scope of integration of native elites into the English gentlemen mould, as it delineates different masculinities (Tadie 2017: 263). Moreover, sports in the English school that is meant to educate the mind and body of the Indians also provides the colonizers a fare justification to rule the Indians.

Very interestingly, no colonial officials or educators wanted Indians to lose their essential indigenous character or tried to instill in their attributes of English gentleman- mentally and physically. They even warned that their 'denationalization' would be disastrous not only for the Indians but also for the British Empire. Chester Macnaghten himself understood the danger of foreign education. He thought that it might unsettle, demoralize, and denationalize Indians (Macnaghten 1896: xxxii). As such, he thought to teach the young chieftains of the Rajkumar College of Kathiawar the British public school's virtues without undermining their old faith and its practical influence on their lives. He taught his students to value manly games and exercises like cricket and riding, not because they were English but because they were conducive to manliness (Macnaghten 1896: xxviii). While

writing on the subject of education to be given in English schools of India, Macnaghten said:

Is the English education, which we administer, of real benefit to India? Does not experience rather show that it has tended, while increasing knowledge, to increase the power of moral depravity? Has not our civilization in this case been a failure? Would it not be better let it alone? No one can altogether admire an occidentalised Orient; and English air has an unhappy tendency to detach Indian minds from all their old anchors, some good ones as well as some bad. I seriously submit that it would be best, both for England and for India, that natives of India, remaining in India, should retain their own customs, their own dress, and even in general their own religion. Only I should like to see them, while residing in their own country, have all the advantages of a high moral training to fit them for responsible duties in life (Macnaghten 1896: xxxiii-xxxv).

Such a colonial negation of imitating purely British-style public-schools in India was best articulated by Lord Harris, Governor of Bombay. In an address delivered at Rajkumar College in 1890, he argued that the attempt to introduce the public school system in India could never clone the original institutions in England because it does not suit the customs, habits of thoughts and mind, and body of the people. He said that in contrast to India, the public schools of Britain give no advantage to birth or wealth and even a person from humblest origin were allowed to excel in moral, intellectual, and physical qualities. Harris concluded his speech, saying, "Pray do not misunderstand me: I am not finding that these Indian institutions are not exactly the same as the English public schools. I acknowledge that every allowance should be made for climate, racial, and customary differences. Still, it is impossible to make an exact copy of it" (Khan 1904: 26).

Yet Harris in India is known for promoting cricket in Bombay presidency schools despite the opposition from Anglo-Indians. The latter considered the game unsuited to the physical and political temperament of Indians (Guha 2014: 67). Following a similar line, Henry George Impey Siddons, the first headmaster of Aligarh Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College, promoted cricket as a school sport. He opined that playing English sports would teach students at Aligarh something valuable without making them English. Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scout movement described the goal of colonial education as 'of developing the bodies, the character and soul of an otherwise feeble people' (Tyndale-Biscoe 1930: 20). Nevertheless, Powell always felt Indians could never come as par English boys in body, character, and intellect (Reynolds 1943: 262; Biju 2020).

Church Mission Society School, established at Srinagar in 1880, is another typical case of colonial approach towards sports in India. In the colonial discourse of the Indian body, Kashmiri pundits, along with Bengalis, were categorized as one of the most effeminate races of the subcontinent. Therefore, educators associated with the Church Mission Society School urged for introducing physical education and sports among Kashmiri pundits to build their bodies and character. Considering the work of Tyndale-Biscoe, who was

appointed as the Principal of the school in 1880, Baden-Powell wrote that through scout methods, Biscoe succeeded in strengthening the moral backbone of large numbers of boys in Kashmir and made an effete race manly, healthy, and Christian (Tyndale-Biscoe 1920: iii). However, the work of ‘putting backbone into jellyfish’, as Tyndale-Biscoe called pundits, was not an easy task because of their so-called un-disciplined social and personal practices. As soon as school was established in 1880, its first principal Rev. J. Hinton Knowles, engaged the boys in cricket, which they played, wearing all the regalia of a Kashmiri pundit—tight bandage-like puggaree, golden ear- and nose-rings, wooden clogs, and the long nightgown garment reaching from the neck to ankles called a *pheran*. Knowles also introduced boys to physical exercises and installed parallel and horizontal bars in the school. But this move of the first principal faced a massive backlash because Kashmiri Pundits thought physical activities smacked of low caste manual labour and derogatory for boys of higher caste. Consequently, instruction in drilling and physical exercise had to be abolished by order of the Maharaja (Tyndale-Biscoe 1930: 3).

Tyndale-Biscoe described three major reasons for Kashmiri pundit’s opposition to English athleticism and sports. First, the idea of wasting time at games must be more profitably employed in cramming for examinations. Second, their oligarchical perception was that, only manual labourers should attain physical strength, not high-born gentlemen. And lastly, caste taboo towards leather (which were made from a dead animal) made them to believe that all the sports materials are unclean, untouchable, and can pollute caste purity. This ruled out the success of cricket, soccer, boxing, and many other sports among the pundits, as balls and gloves were made up of leathers. In such a social setting, the enormous task that Tyndale-Biscoe set for himself as an educator was to alter the physical and moral habits of Kashmiri pundits through the pursuit of sports and drill exercises. Arguing that to run the school on the reformatory lines that were considered to be the best, he gradually introduced compulsory swimming, games, horizontal and parallel bars, and mass drill, cricket, football, and boxing, English uniforms, and corporal punishment for misbehavior were also introduced in the school despite obstinate opposition from the boys and their parents.

In Tyndale-Biscoe’s programme of athletic education, ‘of all the sports, however, the finest one for putting manhood into the products of flabby gentility (Kashmiris pundits) was boxing’ (Tyndale-Biscoe 1930: 13). It was supposed that the boy’s playful engagement with boxing gloves would in time eradicate their taboo for leather and instill in them ‘manly’ spirit². Besides, once accustomed to boxing gloves, their aversion to football and cricket ball, both made of leather, would also liquidate. While athletics were primarily

² Tyndale-Biscoe sought to eradicate taboos associated with leathers in Kashmiris pundits by introducing boxing to them. As the boxing gloves are made of leather, he must have thought it would gradually uproot their aversion for leather. Moreover, as boxing is an aggressive and violent sports, Tyndale-Biscoe may have thought that its practice among the pundits would instill “manly” spirit in them.

meant to build the boys' physicality, team games such as football and cricket would help fostering *esprit de corps*, terribly lacking in Kashmiri boys, as argued by Tyndale-Biscoe. He celebrated the occasions of Kashmiri pundit's taking up football for the first time that he regarded triumphant of his sports pedagogy at all odds as follows:

The ball was placed in the centre, the boys ranged in their places about it, the whistle blew, but everything remained stationary. The Principal explained, 'When I blow the whistle you must kick the ball. Now then.' The whistle blew again, but the ball did not move. Again they were told, again the whistle blew and still no one moved. Then the Principal called to some men whom he had stationed near the goal posts with single sticks, in case of emergency. As soon as the pandits saw the sticks there was one concerted rush by the whole lot to see who could get nearest the ball and so avoid the stick-bearers. Not only did they kick the unholy leather, but with hands and claws they fought each other to get near it. Pugarees flew out like pennants, clogs and shoes shot into the air. Football had started in Kashmir (Tyndale-Biscoe 1930: 20).

Thus, at Church Mission Society School at Srinagar, sports aimed at stimulating courage, manliness, and physical fitness. Athletic sports such as boxing, boating, swimming, football, and cricket were intended to strengthen the body and develop moral qualities and new attitudes essential for performing civil duties. As Tyndale-Biscoe wrote, "Finally, athletics having built up good, strong, healthy boys, they can use their strength in helping those weaker and less fortunate than themselves. Thus, through athletics, we hope to raise up useful citizens, instead of first-class blood-suckers" (Tyndale-Biscoe 1930: 22). Biscoe's programme of creating a new attitude towards physical work also included engaging pupils in civic duties, such as street cleaning and helping in flooding and cholera (Tyndale-Biscoe 1930: 54-63). Eventually, it was claimed that Kashmiri boys who hated athletics moved towards living a life of physical strength and moral character with a sense of civic duties. Tyndale-Biscoe credited sports and athleticism for such paradigm changes in the lifestyle of Kashmiri pundits.

Conclusion:

Many English schools were established in India from the 1870s onwards on the model of the public school of Britain with immense emphasis on sports and physical education. In the highly politicized pedagogy of the body, sports and physical education were conceived as tools through which British administrator-educators hoped to cultivate the virtues of loyalty, discipline, character, and citizenship in the colonized subjects besides strengthening their weak body. Most importantly, they wanted to construct an Indian variety of 'gentlemen' utilizing sports in schools as a disciplinary agent. To achieve this goal, the moral values of organized games were strongly upheld in English schools of India. Whether it was Rajkumar Colleges at Rajkot and Raipur, Mayo College at Ajmer, or Church Mission Society School in Srinagar, colonial educators at these public schools viz. Chester Macnaghten, G. D. Oswell, and Tyndale-Biscoe emphasized sports pedagogy to

develop character among their pupils that demanded physical self-control, mental loyalty, obedience, and subordination towards the authority, i.e., imperial order.

However, introduction of sports was not an easy task. Apathy towards the physical pursuits among the elites and high caste Indians restrained them from taking sports. In other words, these classes of Indians were not willing to take athletic games because they considered it as an activity of lower social order. However, colonial educators remained firm on the philosophy of sports pedagogy, continued their classes at all odds, and gradually sports became highly popular in English schools of India. Pursuit in athleticism and sports came to be seen as the sign of aristocratic life to which elite and educated Indians started taking pride in. The accomplishment in sports, thus, became the aspiration of educated Indians. Thus, it was mainly due to the 'game ethics' believed to be inherent in sports and athleticism that it was promoted in all schools and colleges of India. Either it was Presidency College, Bethune College, Scottish Church, St. Paul College, St. Xaviers College in Bengal Presidency or Christian College, Loyola College, Khalsa College, Aligarh College, Central Hindu College, and Doon School in other provinces, sports became an intrinsic part of the educational curriculum in all English schools of British India.

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Postcolonial Aporia in South Asia: A Case Study of Civil-Military Relations in Contemporary India

Manas Dutta

[Editorial Note: The author argues and revisits the role of the army in independent India and raises questions on some deficiencies in India's management of the army resulting from the contradiction with or inherent weakness of bureaucratic and political decision-making process. D.A.]

Abstract: *In recent time, we have been witnessing that the postcolonial south Asian states have a problem with civilian control over their military while India, as one of the distinct countries in south Asia, proved to be initially successful in maintaining such control since its independence in 1947. The strong democratic institutions, free press, responsible political parties, and the professional military kept India out of the fear of a military coup in the contemporary times. Yet, India has strikingly witnessed an absent dialogue among its stakeholders in matter of civil-military relations that gives birth to several misleading situations recently. Besides, the structure and the nature of civil-military relations have had an adverse impact on the effectiveness of the Indian military. Several crucial features characterized the developing relationship between civilians and the military in post-independent India that remain at the heart of understanding civil-military relations even in contemporary period. Parenthetically India, after having series of external wars within the south Asian regions and internal unrest and resistance, sought to provide a tight bureaucratic control over the military. India's inherent hierarchical mechanism in the military like Higher Defence Management (HDM), Defence Planning Committee (DPC), the Chief of Staff Committee (CSC) and most recently the Chief of Defence Staff in 2019 (CDS) further obfuscated the need for clear goals of policy implementation, frequently producing discord and tension in civil-military relations in India.*

Therefore, this essay tries to present thematic overview of Indian civil-military relations over more than seven decades by examining the key characteristics and describe how these characteristics in turn affect, the military's effectiveness in India and subsequently civilian intervention in this field.

Keywords: *South Asia, India, civil-military, military effectiveness, defence*

Introduction:

This paper presents a thematic overview of civil–military relations in India for more than seven decades by critically investigating the key debates and polemics between India's political leadership and its military. In the years following independence, India's political leadership offered its military a minimal role in policymaking, and it has subsequently been kept out of such activities for a number of reasons. Advancing a socialist-economic system

has gained primacy over military growth and all under the leadership of first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. On the other hand, military rule in Pakistan foregrounded certain warnings for Indian civilians who used to respond to giving not much power to its own military. (Pant 2008: 65-90)

In post-independent India, we have been observed several important features characterizing the developing relationship between civilians and the military. The latter remained at the core of understanding on civil–military relations even today. Indian Army was certainly constituted by considering ethno-linguistic and caste lines. However, many of the principles of British attitudes towards professionalism and mechanism of doctrinal issues have also been absorbed as military policy even in the post-independence era. (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010: 2-9) Issues like India's higher defence management and the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs occupied the crucial place in matters relating to army. The Committee consists of senior ministers from the Prime Minister's cabinet exercising chief responsibility over defence and foreign affairs. Under such mechanism, it is presumably argued that the civil-military attitude has been translated into multiple meaning and this has developed since the birth of the nation. People associated with this has their conflicting notion while the civilian interpretation of military has taken a back seat. (Roy 2010: 12-21)

Fight or Not to Fight: India and Its External Wars

Post-independent India initially fought four crucial wars with her neighbours Pakistan (1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999) and one with China (1962) in which the contours of its foreign policy and military strategy has exposed unexpectedly. It is evident that both India and Pakistan shared a common enmity over the issue of Kashmir in October 1947, when the Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh, requested assistance from the government of India and subsequently India's involvement to rescue Kashmir from Pakistan became a matter of animated debate. The war ended on 1 January 1949 through a UN backed ceasefire urging both countries to honour their commitment to hold a referendum in the state. (Kundu 1996: 201-13) Later in 1954, Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India was ratified by the state's constituent assembly. During the time of 1957, it approved its own constitution keeping the basic notions of the Indian Constitution in mind. Besides, at the same, a crucial issue received global attention regarding a small region, the Azad (Free) Jammu and Kashmir, which, the Indians call 'Pakistan-occupied Kashmir', has gained prominence in the backdrop of Indo-Pak recalcitrant atmosphere. Even, the larger areas like Hunza and Nagar are also likely to be administered by Pakistan. (Chandrasekhar 2017: 23)

India-administered Kashmir once again proved to be a hot bed of contestation in 1965, when Pakistani soldiers launched a covert operation across the ceasefire line into this area for greater strategic reasons. Here, one must remember that both states also shared conflicting claims over the Rann of Kutch. Seeing the turbulent condition, the United States and the Soviet Union along with Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan met at Tashkent and unanimously agreed to withdraw all armed personnel from both sides to positions held

prior to the outbreak of war and to observe the terms of the ceasefire. (Kukreja 1991: 23-29)

While India was managing its civil-military atmosphere, the incident of 1971 proved to be significant both for Pakistan and India and the civilian response got highlighted for a number of reasons. In 1971 a popular uprising was taken place in East Pakistan that brought ordinary citizens together demanding freedom, democracy, and human rights over religious bigotry and ultra-fanaticism committed by some Islamist separatist groups there. These could be identified as some of the reasons that instigated people in this region to go for it (Ray 2016: 50) The much-needed electoral victory of the Awami League in East Pakistan raised concern for the Pakistani Army, which after witnessing this unleashed most controversial genocidal violence against its Bengali population East Pakistan for creating political and economic deadlock condition. Seeing such ambivalent condition and a variety of circumstances further compelled India to intervene wholeheartedly to solve the treacherous act. (Raghavan 2013: 19) Finally, the defeat of the Pakistani forces at the hands of Bangladesh Mukti-bahini, which was well backed by Indian force had been able to provide a platform for creating a separate nation called Bangladesh in south Asia. The creation of Bangladesh strategically proved crucial for India and its eastern border afterwards. The blemish attitude of Pakistani army continually refuses to accept their loss and wanted to hold responsible India and US for making such move that initially caused harm to Pakistan's foreign policy and diplomacy worldwide. (Kipp and Grau 2012: 140)

Now, we can discuss the Kargil incident to emphasize the growing tension between India and Pakistan that further accelerated the blow to the South Asian geo-political space. India's tryst with the nuclear weapon power in 1998 had declared a nationwide phenomenon and paved the ground for raising concern for Pakistan at one level. Under such tremulous conditions, Pakistani soldiers occupied a number of strategic posts on the border of Indian side of the Line of Control to make their presence felt. Diplomatically and strategically, Indian soldiers conscientiously pushed back Pakistani forces in a series of small battles. Hostilities and crude enmities ended when Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif travelled to Washington responding to President Clinton's call for a ceasefire on 4 July 1999. (Wilkinson 2015: 141-49) The Kargil conflict has opened multiple narratives for shaping and reshaping the future structure of civil-military relations in India. These areas are like nuclear deterrence and democratic peace within the South Asian boundary while taking serious care of ushering in a new phase of military modernization and doctrinal innovation. The conflict also germinated a debate on the role played by the third parties in it. Here it has clearly indicated the pivotal role of the United States in pressurizing the Pakistani government in negotiating a peace deal for greater peace and stability in the South Asian regions. At the end of the war, a report called the Kargil Review Committee Report indispensably highlighted a number of recommendations that further advocated changes in military strategy and proposed a fresh new set of institutional responses in the presence of nuclear weapons and its utilization in these regions. (Chari 1977: 23-31) Later

a number of incidents like the atrocious attack on the Indian Parliament in 2000-2001 further revitalized the debate on preparing for a limited war with Pakistan keeping the civil-military association in mind.

Starting with the rising tensions in South Asia, India's relations with China marked a turning point in 1962, with the outbreak of war between the two countries offering us a panoramic view of crisis on longstanding India's tryst with China. As we have been able to see that quite expectedly China launched a military offensive, completely taking New Delhi by surprise for the first time since India's independence in 1947. The discussion on this issue further indicated the colossal debate on Defence Minister Krishna Menon's utter incompetence and enduring neglect in realizing timely warnings from senior military officials (Sukhla 2012: 34). While parts of the Henderson-Brooks Report were declassified, it was generally indicated that Nehru could have taken strong position for not making India's humiliating defeat in 1962 (Verma 2016: 43). The report also discusses how the Indian military has been allegedly ordered to engage the Chinese military in a war which they were bound to lose despite having combat capabilities. (Elahi 2019: 1-9) In this camouflage, one might argue that China's predictable military superiority remains an elongated threat for Indian security environment. In these changing circumstances, the role of Pakistan in south Asian geo-politics generated concerns for India for diverse strategic purposes. Even, the instability of Pakistan has posed a much more immediate threat to Indian security interests in the subcontinent that are closely interlinked to the larger issues of hope and aspiration. Besides, the various issues like rapid proliferation of militant groups, growing internal sectarian conflict and the increasing influence of the separatist group like Tehreek-e-Taliban in Pakistan provide lethal challenges to India and its very existence sometimes consequently got afflicted by it. (Basrur, Das and Pardesi 2014: 45-51)

Towards a Utopia of Stable Environment: Internal Discontent and Resistance

This is quite evident from the fact that the military offered its assistance to civilians as 'aid to civil power' in the maintenance of law and order since the birth of the nation. This is also true to fact that the military acted as the only reliable agency that could restore law and order and maintain stability accordingly for the sake of its motherland. Over time, however, changes in the nature of India's external and internal threats and inedible condition foreground the role of the military to embrace aspects of counter-insurgency operations in specific parts of the country giving proper priority. As an example, we can say that in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the Indian Army was fighting against the brutal Mizo rebels in the north-east, Sikh rebels in Punjab, Kashmiri separatists in Jammu and Kashmir and Tamil guerrillas in Sri Lanka continuing into the late 1980s. Broadly, such operations offered direct threat to the very foundation of Indian Army and its core establishment. During the Naga insurgency the army and civil administration had little to no experience of such situation, and this further aggravated the state of events. Local unrest gradually spread to various parts of the country and motivated organized and sometimes

unorganized separatist groups to carry on their movement in the name of identity formation and social recognition. Despite knowing the nature and if not the possible outcome of such insurgency, the political leadership failed to develop a coherent policy that often seemed fractured between using military force and appeasing the local population keeping specific agendas in mind. The Indian Army now adopted diverse strategies to isolate entire population from rebel groups in many parts of North-East Indian states for making their movement enfeebled from within. Both the states of Nagaland and Mizoram have witnessed different doctrines for eliminating the rebel tendencies and ultimately produced mixed results. (Rosen 1996: 11-17) Furthermore, a violent insurgent movement in Punjab gained momentum in the mid-1980s having specific aims and objectives. Led by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, this movement developed a violence-centered strategy to foster communal unrest within the state and thus provided a ground for communal sensibilities, which proved to be hazardous for the Indian nation around that time. To keep the Hindus out of Punjab was one of the mottos of the Dal Khalsa. It later created a backlash that could unite the Sikh community in building a new homeland as argued by the counter-insurgency experts of South Asia. Now, it has been seen that the Army had been able to realize the gravity of this violent movement while the contemporary Government led by the Congress party had little or no intension to counter this and thus offered glaring explanation. Later, on June 5, 1984, the military launched an operation code, named Operation Blue Star to evict Sikh rebel militants who had seized control of the Golden Temple, the holy shrine of the Sikhs in Amritsar, Punjab. This was argued as an epicentre of the movement. Finally, it has been observed that the Indian Army successfully destroyed the Sikh militant base through a fierce campaign and Punjab had been placed under the military rule. (Mukherjee 2020: 45-56).

After briefing on the two significant insurgency operations and its very nature, the present author seeks to turn the attention of the readers towards Kashmir once again. The separatist movement in Kashmir since 1990s proved to be one of the most challenging cases which caused the damaging of the army men, both physically and in terms of resources and it had its overwhelming impact on the society and economy of India squarely. Subsequently, rising tide of disillusionment with the politics of the state government uniquely provoked unrest and discontents against the local state machinery in a repeated manner. As a result, it had been seen that the conflicting violence spread across the state and such activism had not been controlled by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Border Security Force (BSF). In 1989, Government of India turned to the Indian Army for assistance to help local agencies for combating with insurgents in one hand and maintaining law and order on the other.

Moreover, the Rashtriya Rifles was specifically created to manage counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir by the Indian government to maintain peace and stability in this region. To concretise the policies regarding the insurgencies in this region, the Special Task Force (STF) and Special Operations Group (SOG) were also created from within the J&K

Police in 1995 broadly helping the Rashtriya Rifles in close-contact counter-insurgency operations. In the last two decades, however, the Indian military has been unable to disengage itself from Kashmir. Moreover, it has also been strikingly pointed out that the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) had given the military to exercise its power with impunity, leading often to arresting, detaining, and killing suspected civilians in fake encounters. Issues like extrajudicial executions and disappearances became frequent in this region. It has also indicated the lack of professionalism of military units and further this caused the spawning of outrage among the embittered Kashmiri youth against the army and largely the government of India. This has also caught the attention of the world on a global sensitivity scale. Trapped between offering protections to Kashmiri civilians against a powerful militant movement and facing rising unrest to a perceived occupation, the morale of the Indian armed forces had suffered a serious blow (Bhimaya 1997: 49). Indian Army's gradual transformation towards a police force needs to be re-evaluated here. Though, it is trying to offer various schemes of developmental aid and assistance to disaffected local population to win their support and provoking them to be sensible with the contemporary government. (Chatterjee 2013: 180)

It has been argued that the counter-insurgency operations in Sri Lanka by the Indian Army proved to be crucial for the bi-lateral relations between these two countries. Tamil separatist movement was gaining ground in Sri Lanka while the Sinhalese government had started to plummet political freedom and rights of Indian born Tamils. This act has alternately given rise to the aggressive militant group namely the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It subsequently gained a stronghold in the provinces of Jaffna Peninsula, and it conducted violent attacks against Sri Lankan defence forces. This virulent tussle has continued for several years and ultimately Sri Lankan forces has started to launch a massive offensive against the LTTE in the summer of 1987. It has been argued that this action led by the Sri Lankan Army in the Jaffna Peninsula proved to be influential for India's security question. Concerned about the future of Tamil minorities in Sri Lanka, India's political leaders empathized with the Tamils as the Indian state of Tamil Nadu had a significantly large Tamil population. Moreover, extending political support to Tamil minority representative groups have been promised by the Government of India. Initiatives have been taken by India's political leadership to mediate between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil separatists and such leadership wanted to play a key role in the anti-militant campaign in Sri Lanka (1983-87). Later, it proved to be disastrous when Indian political leaders allowed Tamil separatists to conduct the training camps for Tamil guerrillas in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. (Narayan 2010: 5-17) After signing the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, India decided to send an 'Indian Peace Keeping Force' (IPKF) to the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka, and this has been done under the leadership of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on 29 July 1987. Violent repercussion in form of aggressions between radical Sinhalese nationals and the IPKF caught the global attention. As a result, a number of military clashes between the IPKF and the LTTE broke out without giving much attention on the peace process. This activism also compelled New Delhi to

decide to withdraw the IPKF forces from Sri Lanka under any condition. Finally, despite continued fighting in Sri Lanka, during the month of March 1990 most of the Indian soldiers had returned to India. (Bandarage 2009: 110-13)

Maoist Insurgency and Civil-Military Imperatives:

In recent times, a more challenging episode facing the Indian military is a strongly entrenched Maoist insurrection that threatens to destabilize the internal security of the country since its very genesis. The Maoists have emerged in 1967 and conducted a series of popular peasant revolutions against the abusive Zamindars and state apparatus in a combined manner. Popularly known as the Naxalite movement, the group has gained significant momentum against the Indian state since 2004 using violent mechanism to sustain and achieve their goals. The Government reports and various other official documents revealed the news that the Maoists are mostly active in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and several parts of West Bengal as a force against the oppressive state mechanism. Seeing their virulent presence, the Indian military launched Operation Green Hunt (a 100,000-troop strong counter-offensive mechanism) to fight the guerrillas. The then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has opined in one of the meetings that the biggest challenge faced by the contemporary India was that of the Maoist insurgency. One can see the gravity of this statement by examining the contemporary activities of the Maoists across the country. For example, one may talk about the most vicious campaigns executed by Maoist guerrillas in May 2013 to attack a Congress party convoy in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh. It was ambushed and exhibited dissent against the government efforts not to reduce their miseries. (Sawan 2020: 65-76) Despite having lethal expression, the Maoist movement is unique in regard to India's other counter-insurgency campaigns due to the tactical advantage enjoyed by Maoist guerrillas over Indian security forces. They were initially successful in organizing and conducting operations against the Indian state and a very recent incident in Chhattisgarh proved fatal for the Indian Army. During a deadly encounter between the security forces and the Naxals in this region, 22 jawans were died and 31 faced injuries. (The Wire 2021: 6) This issue has deepened over time and caught public attention, while the challenge for the Indian government and security forces now is to fight against the Naxals without estranging the local population. Now, it has become imperative that the military force of India has to devise alternative and infuriating tools effectively for fighting against the Maoists and their constantly changing strategy and doctrinal mechanism. (Sundar 2016: 7)

Reality Versus Power Status: Nuclear Proliferation and Strategic Orientation

Nuclear capability slowly started influencing India's stance on external and internal security issues and the contemporary geo-political capabilities. As we all know the emergence of India as nuclear power begun to materialize during the two subsequent tests in 1974 and in 1998. The first nuclear test, as is argued, in 1974 was conducted for some peaceful purpose while the second introduced India as a declared nuclear weapon state to

the world and placed her in the league of states that share the same equilibrium in the larger backdrop of nuclear proliferation programme. After those two tests, India's stated nuclear doctrine has undergone various permutations and combinations and along with this, significant debate concerning India's military and political leadership by keeping the issues of nuclear power in mind had germinated in the 1970s. (Pant and Joshi 2018: 63)

The strategic presence of India and its relation with her neighbours have to be explained in order to understand the nuclear proliferation process. Moreover, experts used to argue that India's nuclear doctrine is determined by a variety of considerations. On the external front, it is argued that there is a need to maintain a minimum credible nuclear deterrent in order to keep India's geopolitical realities with Pakistan and China in a changing politico-strategic ambience. Various issues like those related to Pakistan and its attitude towards competing with India's conventional military superiority, its failure to prosecute the perpetrators of the 1998 Mumbai attacks, the almost constant state of political instability within its borders, the rise of Islamist fundamentalism and covert support to militancy in Kashmir are some of the aspects that continue shaping India's future nuclear position and preparedness in South Asian scenario. While talking about the nuclear programme of India, most experts are likely to agree to the fact that the presence of nuclear weapons will inevitably influence the possibility of future conflict between the two countries. China as one of the advanced countries of South Asia as compared to India and Pakistan will continue to complicate the whole process and to stir up the entire situation. The security environment in this comparative perspective has played a challenging role in the whole process of nuclear proliferation programme. (Tellis 2001: 65)

Beyond the Issues of Doctrines and Strategy: Exploring the Defence Reforms

This has been quite evident from the fact that defence reforms play a pivotal role in shaping and reshaping the army in India. Despite concern over doctrine and strategy, the discussion on defence reforms in India has also emerged (in the context of wars or crises) as a burning issue over the last couple of decades. However, it is intimidating to say that the much-needed defence reforms in India continue to be a divisive issue, as it is essentially characterised by bureaucratic functions, utmost secrecy and lack of proper coordination between the Ministry of Defence and the three services of the army. Such initiatives have been taken quite repeatedly since 1990s in India. After the end of the Kargil War, a complete reappraisal came from the Kargil Review Committee Report for the reform of the state of Indian defence and its overall management for the future prospect. On the other hand, the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was instrumental in constituting a group of ministers to review India's national security system and implement the recommendations of the Committee for eliminating the internal fiascos in the army. Strategic experts like Ayesha Ray and Anit Mukherjee have informed that the recommendations of this Committee still remain declassified and function of the Task Force, headed by Arun Singh, has not been completed its job properly. Creation of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) has been foregrounded to head the Integrated Defence Staff

and the creation of a tri-services command at Andaman and Nicobar (ANC) and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) became vital for the fruitful management of the army in India. Later in continuation to the earlier Committee, the Naresh Chandra Committee formulated another set of recommendations urging quick and effective defence reform in 2010. While the arguments regarding such recommendations were going on for rationalization of the army, the Ministry of Defence started to blame the three services for discrepancies in the Committee's respective recommendations for the army in India. This generated debate and dissent among the civil-military arenas in India and eventually attracted greater public attention. (Ray 2004: 1-7)

Another major issue, namely the defence preparedness requires crucial attention in this respect. Arguably, a clear lack of coordination between various agencies in higher defence management has even worsen the situation. The question has been asked repeatedly that is the Indian armed forces ready in effectively defending the country during an external attack and providing immediate corollary to this angle. Even, it has been also enquired whether the Indian military possesses cutting-edge technology both in weapons and design to execute successful operations on the battlefield. Often, it is very disappointing to say that these areas are not in a very decent condition. One incident might be cited here when former chief of the Indian Army, General V.K. Singh expressed his anguish over the dire state of India's defence preparedness to the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh through a letter and urged to initiate immediate fruitful steps to avoid/ to handle such calamities in the future.

There were exclusive reports through investigative journalism and some in-depth studies, which reveal an overall Bureaucratic apathy and the control of the defence by a weak set of ministers resulting in an equally weak system of defence management. In matters like arms procurement and defence equipment, India is constantly facing a multitude of challenges, ranging from obsolete artillery and air defence systems to a rigid attitude towards military doctrine and inter-service cooperation. Even, India's navy is undergoing through various phases of ups and downs and as a result navy's only aircraft carrier is creaking towards retirement after more than five decades of British and Indian service. While India is struggling to improve its defence reforms on the other hand, two of its neighbours namely China and Pakistan seem to have a much better record in their defence investments. But despite such recurring problems, political involvement in this regard produced a very thin result. This entire process usually increases the corruption level inside the defence procurement. (Mukherjee 2009: 5-7)

(Dis) agreement between Armed Forces and Civilians: Inter-service Rivalry and Discord

While talking about the conflicting nature of the civil-military relations in India, one can see a long-standing complex orientation further intensifies discord and disagreement between the armed forces and civilians, and between the three services of the army in general. These issues, over the years, have demonstrated a growing sense of unease and

frustration with the Ministry of Defence. The overarching overlap between political and bureaucratic control sometimes provoke the army and civilians in equal terms and the political propaganda make use of this as their source for further deliberations. A number of examples could be cited here to elaborate this aspect further. Recently, a public battle of talk between former Chief of Staff, General V.K. Singh, and the government happened over a tenure issue that ultimately pushed the general to take his own government to court. On the other hand, under the Narendra Modi government, same V. K. Singh became the Chief of Defence Staff without consulting the officials associated with this. He has become the chief of all three services of the army and would likely to provide information to the current government for better running of the said department. Therefore, it is quite obvious that these kinds of activism raise mutual suspicion and the lack of coordination is increasingly making Indian civil–military relations more unstructured, and sometimes highly unprofessional. (Behera 2021: 1-19)

Over a couple of years, most of the states of South Asia and of course India has seen a bitter and acrimonious debate constantly happening within the three services and this sometime leaks the information and squarely distresses the civilian machinery with a strong note. Here one may cite an example of Kargil conflict. During the said conflict, the then army chief, General V.P. Malik, and IAF chief, A.Y. Tipnis, have put their conflicting opinions especially on key operational issues, such as ‘deployment of reconnaissance planes, fighters and helicopters with the purpose of evicting troops from dominating heights’ and eventually other difficulties arose due to that. Even the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on defence also highlighted the diverse orientations of lack of coordination between the navy and the Indian Coast Guard. This ultimately led to the process of making the Indian coast vulnerable to external threats in future. Such constant divisiveness is really making the orientation of the civil-military vicious and further leading the ground for constant aporia. (Dasgupta 2001: 44-61)

Concluding Remarks:

By analysing various aspects of the civil-military relations in India since 1947, we can provide some broad conclusions on its different notions. In the first place, this is quite obvious to know that Indian civil–military relations present a rather complex picture and civilian control over the army and army internal management sometimes remain absent or rather incomplete. Secondly, it has been seen that the military strategy and doctrinal innovation often find themselves in conflict with political objectives and the so-called political environment of India is not at all ripe for realizing such technicalities. It is often argued that repeated inconsistencies in political and military objectives during periods of brief crises or wars make a smooth implementation of political and military strategy much more challenging and is hardly welcomed by its civilians. Recently, we have been witnessing the manipulating friction in matching military strategy and doctrines to political goals gives Indian civil–military relations a complex and misinterpreted character, which

raise pejorative concerns nationwide. India's regular border clashes with Pakistan demonstrates the need for clearly articulated military objectives and sometimes need to have a clear vision to tackle the situation of keeping the international geo-political atmosphere stable. So, one can argue that Indian military relation responses need to be attuned in such a way that it will take into account the success of India's long-term political and military objectives and their dual responsibilities to make this aspect a grand success. While, we have been arguing the civil-military relations and its orientation, the role of bureaucracy has to be taken into consideration. As an intermediate agency between the political leadership and the military, the bureaucracy is severely obstructing direct civil-military communication. Sometimes, excessive involvement of the bureaucracy in the military matters and their allied performances put negative impact on their relation. Recent researches adequately highlighted a general apathy and inattention of the Ministry of Defence in the timely creation of institutional organisation to manage nuclear doctrine and military strategy. Therefore, this is drawing a deeper wedge in civil-military relations in India and the narrative of understanding on such issues project the ground reality in dubious terms. In order to expedite and foreground greater cooperation in Indian civil-military relations, it is equally required to standardize the system of higher defence management in India. This further requires the much-needed complete reorganization of the Indian defence management in order to cope with the current conjecture.

Some strategists like Harsh. V. Pant and C. Raja Mohan have repeatedly warned on the rise of the Islamist fundamentalists in Pakistan and its threat to India's external security. This issue needs some additional critical rethinking so that Indian civil-military responses towards Pakistan offer doctrinal and strategic goals and thus making its civil-military relation in tune with this situation. The question thus arises is that whether India needs to develop a combination of offensive and defensive doctrines to combat such threats visible and sometimes hidden threats for overall security of the country? In this respect, one may even ask about India's position and responses towards the stiff challenges of nuclear doctrine of Pakistan. We have to remember that both military and political goals are loosely associated with such issues, and it further provide dichotomous atmosphere. Besides, the vast expansion of terror networks also requires serious consideration and careful examination so that India could restrain its alarming impact for further implications. Several terrorist or rather separatist groups such as the Jaish-e-Mohammad, Hizbul Mujahideen continue to present India with a formidable threat, particularly in Kashmir and Pak administered Kashmir. The efforts to disrupt peace in India by Pakistani militant groups are entitled again to desolate humanitarian works keeping complete miseries in mind. Not only to this, issues like the rise of Al-Qaeda's South Asia unit, along with its links to ISIS, is demonstrating counter-terrorist activism in India and would try to push hard press on its security aspects. Therefore, India's topmost priority should be to keep the three services of the Indian military in coordination with security agencies for resisting

unlawful and unexpected terrorist attacks and tracing the earliest move of such activity. This will definitely strengthen the civil-military coordination in a greater way.

Finally, in the South Asian countries, the geo-political issues sometimes make serious concern for the emerging nature of civil–military relations and India is considered to have better position in this respect. Moreover, we must take into account the way it has evolved over last seven decades bearing significant implications to maintain the atmosphere of democratic governance. There is always a tendency in India that its political leadership has always been wary of designating too much decision-making power to the military in order to keep the armed forces under democratic parlance and to control it in an indirect manner. India’s political leadership should learn to work in developing a modernised military with enough weight in defence policy. The political leadership has to even learn the mechanism of identifying clear political goals without ever compromising the external and internal security interests of the country.

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A Melting Pot of Cognitive Frameworks: Influences on Philosophy and Action of Mahatma Gandhi

Sayantani Maitra

[Editorial Note: The present paper talks about how various existing theories of early twentieth century received a spiritual and practical outcome by the philosophies of Gandhi. D.A.]

Abstract: *Both conceptual and practical heralds of Gandhi for facilitating nationwide anti-colonial movements backed up by immense mass support had already been there in late nineteenth and early twentieth century nascent and restricted nationalist sentiments. Also, quite surprisingly in the writings of colonial administrators perpetuated as a part of colonial investigative modalities for knowledge formation, we get archetypal tincture of conceptualizing village society as the socio-cultural core of Indian civilization, later embraced by Gandhi and his fellow nationalists of twentieth century. All these prevalent knowledge and sentiments came into practice with political endeavors of Swadeshi movement of 1905 in Bengal. The present article is an effort to show that all these existing theories and practices catered Gandhi's political philosophy and pragmatic moves who blended them into the contextual necessities of his times. He simultaneously engaged himself in rediscovering, evolving, and expressing these prevalent components in order to suit his contemporaneous realities.*

Keywords: *Colonial Administrators, Drain Theory, Village Community, Western Civilization, Samaj, Swadeshi, Mahatma Gandhi*

Introduction:

Since antiquity, knowledge passes down from one generation to the other through a percolating process as part of a ceaseless tradition. Every generation picks up worthy parts among this available cognition, keeping in mind their surrounding contexts, and shapes them up accordingly. Following this generally accepted view, the historians dealing mainly with colonial rule in the subcontinent have recurrently pointed to the colonial categories of knowledge and the nationalist discourse. However, this gradual process was infiltrating in nature too. The colonial investigative modalities for reigning purposes had influenced extensively late nineteenth century anti-colonial thinkers in developing their political, social, and cultural views regarding the newly emerging concept of nation. This knowledge next passed down to twentieth century during which, it received its final momentum in the forms of nationwide anti-colonial popular movements spearheaded by charismatic Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi's arrival in India in 1915 from South Africa was like a fresh wind blowing over the crumbling dominoes of existing nationalist politics. Besides his political achievements in South Africa, another reason that brought him fame in the subcontinent

even before his arrival was his most original work, *Hind Swaraj*, considered till date one of the fiercest criticisms of modern western civilization. He was the first nationalist leader in Indian history to tour extensively across the nation upon his arrival. The firsthand knowledge that he acquired owing to this tour in village India, shaped some of his ideological views steadfastly. This in turn started to alter the course of nationalist movement in Indian history. All these corroboratively while shaping Mahatma, both internally and externally, led him to launch first three local level *Satyagrahas*; Champaran Satyagraha, Kheda Satyagraha and Ahmedabad Satyagraha, followed by three nationwide movements; Non-cooperation Khilafat movement, Civil Disobedience movement, Quit India Movement. The source of Gandhi's charisma in binding India together irrespective of class, caste, gender, religion, and region was undoubtedly his theoretical and practical originalities. However, most of Gandhi's philosophy and action which are regarded predominately original are actually end results of many preexisting ideas. This article primarily attempts to argue this. It tries to highlight on the process of investigative modalities pioneered by colonial administrators which in due process brought forth an archetypal image for structuring Indian society, revolving around its core organizational unit, village community. It also discusses Drain Theory, a late nineteenth century brain child of anti-colonial thinkers, largely molded by colonial knowledge formation process and how it had initiated the central theme of romanticized and essentialized traditional Indian village society and its gradual ruination in the nationalist discourse. How Gandhi's idea centered on individual's duties and responsibilities towards community life was also a harbinger of the prevalent notion regarding Indian *Samaj* that has also been mentioned here. This article harps on how the skeptical approaches that were evinced by the same anti-colonial thinkers of late nineteenth and early twentieth century pertaining to modern western civilization, finally culminated in the conceptually critical framework proposed by Gandhi in his *Hind Swaraj*. It clarifies how Gandhi's ideas regarding *Desh Seva* and politics orbited around spirituality, and were actually influenced by philosophical and moral notions conveyed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. The last section of this article is the *Swadeshi* movement of early twentieth century in Bengal that had drawn much of its thematic inspirations from these existing cognitional discourses, crystallized since the late nineteenth century. Bengal, being an enriched hub of late nineteenth-century anti-colonial thinkers and succeeding nationalists of twentieth century, provided many juncture points of ideological innovations and discoveries of indigenous texts. This period also witnessed urban educated young volunteers participating full-time in rural level organizational and reform work. Thus, for the first time, the socio-cultural gap was bridged not just in theory, but in practice as well. The culminating end came with Gandhi who addressed the bulk of his major political and socio-economic issues from the above-mentioned angles, albeit in a more all-encompassing manner. Gandhi being the convergence point of all these prevalent knowledges provided a condensed melting pot of cognitive frameworks to the nation for its struggle against its alien rule.

Colonizers on Indian Villages:

The image of traditional village is an inseparable part of the idea of India. It has long been perceived as one of the appropriate components for understanding the traditional Indian society marked by authentic native life uncorrupted by outside influence. Thus, Ronald Inden has rightly pointed out that in the western opinion, though most other civilizations of the Orient were primarily agrarian economies, it was only the Indian society that was essentialized into a land of villages (Inden 1990: 30). The caste system and the village communities were perhaps the two most important parameters on which the colonial ethnographic studies were made rather extensively to make sense of Indian society and to distinguish it from the West. In the case of the latter on the other hand, state held the central position. For present day professional sociologists and modern anthropologists too, Indian village represents a microcosm of real India's basic unit of socio-cultural structures. Anthropologists and historians dealing with colonial rule in India have convincingly demonstrated the intertwined play of the nexus of colonial power and knowledge in conceptualizing the Indian village. It was predicated upon the *modus operandi* of the colonial state that necessarily viewed these realities in terms of its own imperatives of consolidating an empire over an alien land (Thakur 2005: 27). The British colonial rulers obviously had their own political reasons for perceiving India as they did and imputing qualities such as autonomy, stagnation, and continuity of the village life in the subcontinent. It helped them justify their rule over the subcontinent especially to their people back home in Britain (Jodhka 2002: 3343). A close examination of the colonial writings produced by; colonial administrators like Charles Metcalf, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Sir Henry Summer Maine; western political philosophers like Karl Marx; Military personals like Lt. General Robert Baden-Powell, makes it clear that western writers embarked upon mainly two facets of the Indian village community; it is a self-sufficient republic, and it is stagnant in nature (Dumont 1966, 2002). They could look at the Indian village more as a unit of knowledge about Indian society than a mere unit of colonial administration. They perceived Indian society as a sum total of its multitude of 'little village republics'. After the introduction of the decennial census and the change in orientation of the colonial investigative modalities, the caste-view of Indian society seems to have overtaken the village-view (Cohn 1987, 1997). However, these administrators never denied that these two institutions were unremittingly connected. Indian nationalism, as argued effectively by Partha Chatterjee, although premised on an opposition to colonial rule, remained ultimately contained by the same dominant conceptual frameworks that it repudiated (Chatterjee 1986: 167-72). Thus, long after the British relegated the Indian village to the backseat in favor of caste as an important parameter for understanding Indian society, the notion of self-sufficient village republic continued to stir the nationalist imagination. The influence of Sir Henry Maine and that of other western colonial writings on the Indian village society is visible throughout the career of nationalist leaders like Gandhi (Gandhi 1948:79) and Nehru (Jodhka 2002: 3345-6). Irrespective of their attitude

and overall ideological orientation towards it, village for all of them was a civilizational entity¹. More importantly, they seemed to have assumed that the social structure of the village was similar everywhere in the subcontinent (Jodhka 2002: 3345).

This image of an idyllic, self-contained, craft work producing village community life which remained constant irrespective of dynastic changes or any other external forces was a central theme of discussion by intellectuals in metropolitan as well. In Great Exhibition of 1851 and Colonial and Imperial Exhibition of 1886 at Liberty's Department Store, London, India was portrayed as a timeless, unchanging, ancient land, dotted with jungles, natives, and village *bazaars*, at once geographically and temporally removed from the hectic pace of industrial life. For armchair anthropologist, Sir Henry Maine, the Indian village thus existed at an earlier, pre-capitalist stage of Britain's own evolution from tradition to modernity (Mathur 2011: 32-3). This view also dominated the late Victorian art critics and reformers in their preservationist approaches to India's cultural products. Among the most prominent of these figures was George Birdwood, art critic and collector, who attributed the greatness of India's cultural products to the social structures of the Indian village (Mathur 2011: 30). By adopting these images and practices, Gandhi and his contemporary nationalists consolidated their economic, political and spiritual vision for the nation into simple yet powerful physical form. During the twenties and the thirties of twentieth century, the peak hour of Gandhi's 'Constructive Work Programme', it was claimed by many of his fellow nationalists and constructive workers that many cottage industries including *Khadi* had an authentic legacy deeply entrenched in India's traditional past and should be revived in due time. These craftworks and their techniques, like their beholder traditional village community, remained uninterrupted and thus, in their views, had an inherent quality of representing India's socio-economic reality (Mookerjee 1940: 15-24).

Indians on Indian Villages:

Nationalist movements of every kind, in general, try to show the nation and its legacy actually as a product of a conjuncture, modernity substantiated by the notion of revival of a lost antiquity. So, although a modern phenomenon, nationalism must speak a traditional language of communities (Kaviraj 2010:21-2). And in this process of tracing the antiquity

¹ During the latter half of colonial period, an idea, nation vs. civilization, became popular in Indian nationalist discourse. Intellectuals like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru had contributed largely to this whole discourse. Modern nation state speaks a language of similarities, either in form of language or religion or ethnicity etc. Various parts of India that the colonial ruler claimed to have unified through their iron fist of law and order, science, and technology, had almost nothing in common. Indian intellectuals tried to utilize these dissimilar components spreading across the subcontinent to show that India's uniqueness had always been its vastness of diversity. According to them, this made India a perfect example of civilization, above often artificially claimed oneness of modern nation state. Indian village though was same in their eyes across the subcontinent in terms of few essentialized components, however, was understandable to them too in terms of its regional and local variations owing to different customs and traditions. This construction of unity amidst diversity in village life, the core unit of India, made village the essential component of the idea of Indian Civilization.

for legitimization, an “invented tradition” is always born (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1989: 5). Following this inventory process for a valid legacy, the late nineteenth-century economic thought of India’s anti-colonial discourse provided impetus to the popular theme of a subsequent discourse, namely, the romanticized traditional village society. The status it acquired after coming into contact with knowledge produced by colonizers became a major theme of discussion in late nineteenth century and continued to gain more attention throughout early twentieth century. Usual depictions in Mughal chronicles and travel accounts of foreign travelers indicate that peace and plenty reigned supreme in India’s self-sufficient villages alongside health, wealth, contentment, and leisure (Rameshwari 1940: 135). In 1787, Sir Henry Cotton commented, “The yearly export of Dacca muslin to England amounted to Rs. 3,00,00,000 approximately” (Mookerjee 1940: 16). Lord Clive remarked too, during the reign of Sirajaudullah, Murshidabad was “as prosperous and rich as the city of London” (Mookerjee 1940: 16). Thus, the India of these accounts and statements was a flourishing land with a large and prosperous economy, at the same time consisting of self-sustaining egalitarian village communities², capable of producing their own subsistence. A perceptible economic downfall coupled with India’s growing financial backwardness, increasing debt, the disintegration of previous rural societal forms became a major concern in Indian nationalist discourse of nineteenth and twentieth century. Need of reviving the cottage and small-scale industries became the most important juncture where they all spoke almost the same language (Jodhka 2002: 33-49).

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, there was an ongoing debate between two opposing school of economists on the nature of the economic process that India underwent during the British rule. One school, consisting of British officials and writers, declared that India was growing more prosperous as well as undergoing economic development as a byproduct of Pax Britannica’s modern progressive skills. The areas, in general, through which this progress became possible, according to them, were law and order, an efficient administration, an honest and efficient bureaucracy, development of railways, growing commerce, increased irrigation and increase in the area of cultivation. This optimistic side of development faced few unavoidable hindrances, in their opinion, due to issues such as rapidly increasing population, India’s financial weakness or its incapacity because of its poverty, shortage of internal capital or inadequate capital formation within the country. Additionally,

² West had multiple encounters with India since ancient times, each encounter leading it to conceive different judgmental perspectives regarding India. Their views pertaining to the lands of East had always possessed tincture of otherized components. One among the many components of these otherized views were, East was timeless hence changeless too. This idea received most attention along with affirmation too during colonial period as it was well suited with colonial ruler’s portrayal of Indian villages as self-sufficient entities. Through their investigative modalities, the colonial administrators established an essentialized constituent for understanding India that Indian villages were immutable in nature, untouched by external changes.

backwardness of Indian customs, habits and social institutions was seen by some of them as another obstacle to development (Chandra 1999: 116).

The other side, though not truly nationalist, was at least staunchly anti-imperialist or anti-colonial in tone (Chandra 1999: 116). Their demands were based on fundamental changes in the existing economic relations between India and Britain. This made their economic demands radically nationalist while their political demands remained moderate in nature (Chandra 1966: 744). Through their demands, the first sustained articulation of nationalism in South Asia crystallized around the notion of a territorially specified economic collective which eventually evolved into a national knowledge of political economy in the 1870's and 1880's (Goswami 1998: 611). These arguments subsequently clustered around a concrete form of theoretical aspect, popularly known as the Drain Theory, which later resulted in the economic nationalism of early twentieth century and the Deindustrialization theory of left nationalists in late twentieth century. Thus, we find, Ramesh Chandra Dutt's classic weaver thump story, mentioned in his *Economic History of India*, a seminal late nineteenth century text on Drain Theory, left such a deep and indelible impact that it was preached by twentieth-century nationalist leaders in their mass propaganda work (Home Department, Political Branch (Confidential Files 675/31. *Weaver Thump Story and Alleged Statement by a Collector of Faridpur*: 8).

Though the ancestry of this theory can be traced back to Raja Rammohan Roy (Chandra 1966: 637), it was a small band of Maharashtrian intellectuals who first made the economic drain, in all its implications, the principal medium of their bitter attack on British colonial rule in the early 1840's. According to them, the main constituent elements of the drain were decline of indigenous industry, transfer of wealth, excessive taxation, over-assessment of land revenue, unemployment of Indians in important civil and military positions, and expensive nature of British administration (Naik 2001: 4428-9). Rammohan Roy, the supposed ideological harbinger of the theory, was in search of a modernized Indian economy and polity with a viable rural base. What he had in mind was a process of modernization that involved the vast masses of rural population through whom the growth impulse could travel upward and forward on a massive scale. He however had a vision of future India's village communities as the renovated and restructured nuclei of a modern economic organization (Ganguli 1978:88-90). In one of his letters to Nehru, Gandhi too expressed his imaginary futuristic views on India's ideal village unit (Gandhi 1941: 421; 1945: 320; Natesan 1922: 336-44). Thus, both of their writings reflect more of a reformist view rather than a revivalist one. Rammohan was the first Indian intellectual who voiced his complaint against 'tribute' system (Ganguli 1978: 92). Later in the century, Dadabhai Naoroji spoke of the colonial economic drain primarily as an internal drain of the poverty-stricken India of the villages and secondarily an external drain of the prosperous India of the towns. His general context too was similar to that of Rammohan Roy. In the 1870's, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee had written acutely about the misery of Bengal peasants, foregrounding their exploitation by Indian landlords, in a series of essays which were

collected as *Samya* (equality) (Sarkar 2008: 434). Later in his life he admitted that substantial wealth was probably being transferred to Britain in the form of payments to colonial administrators, for which India was getting nothing in return. He was aware of the fact of deindustrialization but did not possess, and could not construct for himself, a conceptual apparatus (Chatterjee 1986: 46). Romesh Chandra Dutt, while assessing India's overall economic backwardness, discoursed on the evils of high revenue assessments under the British system of land tenure and the related problems of mass poverty and famines as part of an integrated whole. He was not only a strong advocate of India's industrial development, but he was also vocal about rejuvenation of the small-scale cottage industries as a kind of insurance against famine (Ganguli 1978: 184-200). The slow but steady industrial decline that had started around the mid 1820's had reached a crisis point by the 1860's (Dey 2009: 858). Spurred on by repeated famines and the increasingly perceptible dissonance between Britain's prosperity and advance, and India's misery and backwardness, the nineteenth-century Indian intellectuals turned towards a self-conscious nationalism, which often placed the poverty of the country at the heart of its critique of foreign rule. Such emphasis persisted in diverse forms throughout the colonial era and beyond. It is from this focus on Indian poverty that pattern of thinking and eventually actions emerged, that resulted in seeking remedies in varied recognizably developmental directions (Sarkar 2008: 433). Even the Gandhian model, which is sometimes designated as anti-developmental for its rejection of industrialized modernity, carries not many differences. It too was based on a passionate concern for mass poverty and tried to combine periodic mass campaigns with sustained village level 'Constructive Work', geared to promote self-reliance (Sarkar 2008: 435).

This subsequent economic stagnation along with increasing poverty, inequality and disintegration of traditional village life as the principal impact of colonial rule is viewed in the historical analysis of both Indian economic nationalists and Marxist anti-imperialist third world historians or left nationalists. It is perceived by both groups that British rule, by its revenue policy and by forced production for the market broke up the existing infrastructures. Production for the market had not been profitable enough and consequently led to widespread rural debt which jeopardized the economy. Thus, while on one hand, deindustrialization added to rural poverty by pushing many former artisans into agriculture, on the other, it gave control of the land to the moneyed people who were, by nature, averse to productive investment (Arnold 1976: 143). In contrast to typically considered destructive impact, caused by the colonial rule, the revisionist approach looks into the creative impacts on organizational and production pattern system. These changes, according to them had stimulated ultimately more significant effects in long run (Roy 1999: 3). However, the revisionist analysis could also not deny the fact that the subsequent changes in the formational structure of the traditional village society did happen.

However, the main issue that these anti colonial thinkers raised was not that of per capita income or destruction of handicrafts but of economic development (Chandra 1979: 118).

They all, without exception, accepted that the English introduced some structural changes and nearly all of them welcomed these changes as the entry point of progressive wind from the West. Modern industry, in their view, was necessary, if the diverse people of India were to be united into a single nation on the basis of common interests. The anti-colonial writers had not used “economic decay” to mean decay of handicrafts but signified the arrested growth of India’s industrialization and modernization. None of them had really condemned the destruction of the pre-British economic structure, except nostalgically and out of some sort of sympathy (Chandra 1979: 120-1). The content of a letter written by Ramesh Chandra Dutt on 16th September 1886, to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee substantiated this view quite amply (Bhattacharya 1941: 53-4). However, it cannot be completely refuted that these anti-colonial economic thinkers of the late nineteenth century also believed that the traditional, indigenous handicraft industries would play an important role in the economy for a long time to come, especially in providing employment to the millions (Chandra 1999:165). Therefore, they made the protection, rehabilitation, reorganization, and modernization of such industries an important part of their economic programme. All of these influenced Gandhi in many of his socio-economic policies for rural reform through revival and rejuvenation of lost village and cottage industries and his national emblem, *Khadi* (Gandhi 1934: 414; 1935: 55; 1939: 239). Even the economic content of the famous independence pledge of 26th January, 1930 amply demonstrated its derivation from the Indian economic thought of the last century as it accused British government i) for deprivation and exploitation, ii) for revenue extraction and economic ruin, iii) for destruction of village and cottage industries, iv) for differences of customary duties in import and export (Ganguli 1978: 279).

It was perhaps in 1894 that Gandhi for the first time invoked the idea of the Indian village as a political symbol though for a different purpose. After his return to India, he counterpoised the village to the city and presented the village life as a critique of, and an alternative to, the modern western culture and civilization. In order to wage a nationwide mass struggle against the colonial regime, he needed a different set of ideas or an ideology that would delegitimize the British rule over India (Jodhka 2002: 3346-7) The political passivity of the masses, especially in the villages, consciously inculcated and nurtured by the colonial authorities, was a basic factor in the stability and safety of colonial rule. It had to be replaced by mass participation and mobilization in politics (Thakur 2005: 21). The challenge for the nationalists was to work out a case where India could be represented as a single cultural and political entity, based on which they could imagine nationhood for India. To the advantage of these ideologues of the nationalist and regional movements, the colonial rulers had already done a considerable amount of groundwork on this (Jodhka 2002: 3345). In the process of gathering this data they also deployed several categories that enabled them to make sense of the Indian society. They tried to situate it in the available evolutionary schema that was being worked out in the western academy around the same time.

Contrary to western political philosophers like Karl Marx, the inability of the village to historically transform itself was not seen as a marker of backwardness. Rather, this immutability became the sign of its cultural confidence and civilizational strength. By refusing to bow to the vicissitudes of political history, the village showed its inherent capacity for resistance. And, it was this resistance to get bogged down by the tumultuous historical currents that saved it from decay and dissolution, notwithstanding the might of the invaders and colonizers. The point is that the same set of characteristics that were deemed to be responsible for the stagnation and immutability of the Indian village came to be seen as signs of its vitality and institutional endurance by Gandhi and his fellow nationalists (Thakur 2005: 26). The urban middle classes, which were championing the nationalist cause, needed the village to bolster their claims to be the true representatives of the Indian nation. By making the village the site of public policy debates, they could bridge the cultural gap between their own urbanity and the rural, rustic tradition of the village (Ludden 1985: 6-17). Gandhi and his political symbols became its ideal meditational point (Parel 1969: 514). The village India was now an archetypal colonial problem. By holding colonialism responsible for the problems of village India, such as famines and poverty, low agricultural production and indebtedness, the nationalist intelligentsia not only challenged the colonial domination but also imparted a distinctively nationalist interpretation to the idea of the village (Thakur 2005: 29-30).

It became impossible to imagine India as a unified nation without its seven hundred thousand villages where eighty percent of its population dwelled at that time (Gandhi 1936: 298; Rameshwari 1940: 136). Villages of traditional India were portrayed in this nationalist discourse as self-governing and self-sufficient units. Barter economy prevailed; all trade and credit transactions were based on human relationships rather than on mere profit and loss balance sheet accounts (Unknown 1941: 170). Different *varnas*, including lower orders followed their respective professions and rejoiced in simple amusements, which in turn provided nostalgic representation of supposed enduring bases of social unity (Gupta 2006: 300). In ideological terms, the village, with all its inflated virtues of horizontally divided *varna*³, provided a counterfoil to the much criticized hierarchic and undemocratic colonial notions of caste (Thakur 2005: 28). These heterogeneities that were given to Hindu society in *varna* were not supposed to be erased by the abstractions of a homogenizing

³ People belonging to lower *Varnas* had experienced oppression in the name of hierarchical notion of caste throughout India's historical time and space. The nationalist leaders of colonial times were mostly all upper caste educated professionals (particularly men) who were well aware of this. Therefore, they implemented a politically correct strategy pertaining to the caste question when it started gaining importance as a mobilizing political factor. Through showing that these social divisions had actually maintained an atmosphere of harmony, the nationalist leaders made an effort to deny all existing tincture of derogatory treatments. Besides, they needed an all-encompassing support irrespective of caste, class, religion, and gender to establish themselves as true leaders of the nation.

ideal of citizenship in a nation state (Bilgrami 2011: 104). Nationalists viewed that in place of this asymmetrical apparatus of pre-modern state society power division, British brought a highly centralized, technologically effective apparatus of control (Kaviraj 2010: 57). This penetration into a subsistence agrarian society eroded patron-client relationships that despite being unequal provided minimum security for all. The disruption of this security and the increasing differentiation is then seen to be followed by rural instability (Beck and Roy 1995: 442).

Indian *Samaj*:

European history, based on state-centric aggrandizement, was set negatively in the nationalist discourse of early twentieth century against the Indian civilization, a symbol of syncretic unification, preached through its community life (Bhattacharya 2011: 8). Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, one of the original anti-colonial thinkers of the late nineteenth century saw community life of Indian civilization as its central locus of prime importance (Kaviraj 2010: 267). It is generally assumed that most of the religions in agrarian societies of the East followed logic of ascribing the power of the legislative constitution of society to divine authority, with a crucial mediating role being played by religious intellectuals while marginalizing the power and authority of the state (Kaviraj 2012: 53). *Samaj* or society was therefore prioritized over polity and seen as providing continuity from the past, essential for bringing the collective self into existence. Therefore, fulfillment of duties and responsibilities towards one's own community as opposed to western concept of individual rights protected by state had always been the fulcrum of Indian *Samaj*. The politically and economically decentralized self-sustained village community of the pre-modern era facilitated that concept of continuation (Gupta 2006: 280). Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, late nineteenth century novelist and anti-colonial thinker in Bengal, wrote that the active *Sanyasa* expounded by *Gita* raised actions to the level of duties and responsibilities. This set of duties and responsibilities to the family, society and community had always been equal to *Dharma* in India (Gowda 2011: 24; Kaviraj 1995: 111). Bhudev Mukhopadhyay once commented that Indian society had always been more concerned with the general well-being of all the containing elements than in seeking self-interest or having quest for wealth and power through ruthless competition (Raychaudhuri 1999: 39-40). This was further explicitly preached by Rabindranath Tagore in his *Swadeshi Samaj* speech. Gandhi's concept of *Swadeshi* attributed love toward neighbors in forms of duties and responsibilities (Gandhi 1944: 171) and thus the Indian idea of *Dharma* provided basic conceptual echelon for Gandhian Constructive Work. For Gandhi though these particular duties and responsibilities became the true source of rights in Indian context (Tercheck 1998:28).

Civilizational Counters:

Gandhi is often regarded as the first Indian intellectual to provide a fundamentally cut-throat criticism of western civilization in Indian nationalist discourse. But here, he was preceded by anti-colonial or nationalist thinkers of late nineteenth century who even in

their admiration for the West had remained conspicuously selective. Though vaguely in most instances, they nonetheless hinted at some real sickness of western civilization which was later used by Gandhi in his refutation of modern nation-state's superiority. In the general consensus of late nineteenth century, India was portrayed as a country with spiritual and moral superiority that had nothing to learn from the West except in fields of practical matters of political economy, science, and technology. This sentiment of religious superiority appeared because of direct confrontational debate with western missionaries. We find this admiration for western superiority over practical spheres in the writings of anti-colonial thinkers of late nineteenth century like Bhudev Mukhopadhyay. He expressed sharp criticism of modern European statecraft but showed deep admiration for two achievements of European modernity, namely, political economy, the European science of improving the wealth of nations, and the growth of modern science (Kaviraj 2012: 61).

European civilization's desperation for consumerism appeared to be a very flawed aspect to a person like Keshab Chandra Sen, who was otherwise renowned for his fervent admiration for the West. Vivekananda wrote approvingly of the sophisticated pleasures of Parisian life, but was repelled by the logical climax of western consumerism. Materialism, in the eyes of such observers, was not an abstract description to rubbish the West, but almost a palpable sickness of the soul which they found truly appalling. In their view, the factory industry on which the whole structure of consumption was based, transformed the worker into a mindless automaton and the consumer to an equally mindless slave of habit (Raychaudhuri 1999: 37). Gandhi later blamed this system of social production as the devilish source of modern imperialism. According to him, it was the limitless desire for great production and greater consumption which kept up this spirit of ruthless competition. This ran the entire system and impelled these countries to seek colonial possessions. Gandhi stated this position quite emphatically as early as in his most original political tract *Hind Swaraj* (1909) and held on to it throughout his life (Chatterjee 1984: 165; Herdia 1999: 1499). Unlike motives related to economic aggression and oppressive exclusivist nationalism pillared on a homogenous organic community in the modern state, the nation he talked about instead was a pluralistic political community (Parel 2011: 160). Bhudev Mukhopadhyay's rejection of the western proposals of modernity on four fundamental grounds was also later elaborated by Gandhi in his critique of modern western civilization. Bhudev's grounds for refutation of the western civilization were twofold: the depletion of emotional bonds within families in the hands of individualistic values of capitalist modern society; the destruction of the sense of community by making human relations competitive and aggressive. Bhudev also criticized the modern western state, which he felt were primarily effective engines of comprehensive war against other nation states. Such states, he believed, in the quest of narrow self-interest led them to deny self-determination, consequently justifying modern imperialism (Kaviraj 2012: 63-4).

Unlike above-mentioned anti-colonial Indian critic of the West and their limited ideational opposition, Gandhi saw nothing worth praising in modern civilization. His prescription was

that Indians should reject it totally and fall back on the tradition of India's primordial villages and high moral ideals (Raychaudhuri 1999: 42). Leo Tolstoy once wrote, "What does it mean that thirty thousand people, not athletes but rather weak and ill-looking, have enslaved 200 million of vigorous, clever, strong, freedom-loving people? Don't the figures make it clear that not the English but the Indians have enslaved themselves?" (Gandhi 1963: 241). Tolstoy's "simplicity of life and purity of purpose" had made the greatest impact on him, appearing recurrently in his writings and speeches. Therefore, he agreed to this point and according to him, Indians themselves were responsible for enslavement as they embraced capitalism and its associated legal and political structures. Gandhi was at pains to point out that India's struggle could not be against the British but against the civilization that they belonged to (Suhrod 2011:73). His remedy for national regeneration alongside eradication of this ailing contagion of western civilization was moral and utopian one. He suggested that Indians must eschew greed and lust for consumption and should revert to the village-based self-sufficient economy of the pre-colonial times. He viewed colonial cities in India as Bastille of modern civilization, responsible for exploitation and oppression by the British. Gandhi's emphasis on the dependency of these cities on villages for supply of food and raw materials which happened to be an ancient nature of city formation, since the time of Roman Empire, became a wide theme of discussion among active rural level organizers, mainly influenced by Gandhi. The opinion that one serious downfall in village production would give a blow to urban consumption and lifestyle, was supported both by Gandhi and his fellow nationalists (Gandhi 1937: 169; 1939: 259; 1940: 103; 1947a: 303; 1947b: 201; 1948: 365). Though Gandhi continued to see village as an alternative way of living, he also found many faults with the existing lifestyle of the rural people in the Indian countryside, namely the practice of untouchability and unsanitary habits of villagers (Gandhi 1919: 273; 1929a: 295; 1929b: 47; 1935: 324; 1936: 105; 1937: 217-8; 1940: 380; 1946: 105; 1947: 306-7). This concern led Gandhi and many of his contemporaries to take up courses of village reform (Kaviraj 2012: 68). His *Hind Swaraj*, though generally considered either a criticism of western civilization or a criticism of civil society, provided primarily a theory of salvation from this precarious downfall of humanity, not only for Indians but also for British. Thus, for Ashis Nandy, he appears as a counter modernist critic of the West (Nandy 1994: 2-4).

Spiritualization of Politics:

The origin of Gandhi's concept of professional *Satyagrahis* as the ideal *Desh Sevakas* lies in the term *Seva* whose roots are traceable to India's past. The duties of a *Sevaka*, namely *Seva*, traditionally rights performed to divinity, gained its popular and secular connotation around 1908. Amritlal V. Thakkar wrote to his brothers on 25th January 1914, a member of the Servants of India Society, an organization established by Gandhi's political guru Gopal Krishna Gokhale, that India needed full-time devoted workers for nation building (Srivatsan 2006: 428). Social service in Gokhale's opinion stood for a spiritualization that predisposed people to duty that could only be achieved by active political participation. The points of convergence with Gandhi were performance of duty and observance of

morality. These were described by him in convertible terms for his philosophy of action (Srivatsan 2006: 429). Therefore, Gandhi's definition and conception of *Seva* for full-time dedicated Congress and Constructive Work *Sevakas* had its genus in Gokhale's philosophy of action. Gandhi always preferred to use the word "service" to describe activity. His another significant term was "constructive" used as an adjective describing work, activity or program. We get a sense of the relationship between Constructive Work and *Seva* by mapping the use of the word "constructive" in Gandhi's correspondences (Thompson 1993: 230).

Swami Vivekananda, a Bengali ascetic, converted the life-denying philosophy of mystics into a practical creed of universal applicability by relating it to normal human experience. It meant revival of India's true religion which consisted of fearlessness, love and selfless action. Its root was spirituality which Vivekananda characterized as 'lifeblood' of India (Chakravarty 1992: 5). For Gandhi too politics without spirituality and religious morality was like a soulless icon of divinity (Gowda 2011: 178). There had been an implicit recognition of an existing disjuncture between morality and politics. Gandhi's unique utilization of the concept of Non-Violence and Truth bridged that gap (Gandhi 1925: 310). This anti-materialist and anti-technology sentiments, hostility to competitiveness, efforts to root a mobilizational politics in indigenous cultures, and an acutely voluntarist sensibility have particularly been characteristic of some varieties of Japanese and Chinese nationalism (Misra 2014: 706). Vivekananda's *Nishkam Karma* favored a bridge of mutual compassion between those who were intellectually, ethically, and economically strong and the poor and ignorant, who needed them the most. The weak, in his opinion, needed to follow the path of the learned by receiving guidance from them (Gowda 2011: 92). Gandhi's ascetic activists; namely, professional *Satyagrahis*' and Constructive Workers' approachability attributed same principles for their rural counterparts. He felt that forces of change are not going to be endogenous, that is, coming from within the village. Therefore, he advocated for the application of outside agents, who were professionally trained and educated on his ideological line.

Swadeshi Movement:

The high point of late nineteenth century anti-colonial sentiments, often preached as romantic nationalism, was the *Swadeshi* movement triggered by the Partition of Bengal for a better administrative management, finalized by Viceroy Lord Curzon on 16th October 1905 (Chakrabarty 2004: 665). Bhudev Mukhopadhyay first used the term *Swadesh* (one's own land) alongside *Swajati* (one's own people) in his *Samajik Prabandha*. Gopal Hari Deshmukh, a Maharashtrian reformer of 1870's first used the term *Swadeshi* (goods of one's own land). Instead of prayers and petition, one strand of this movement facilitated Constructive *Swadeshi*, emphasizing the need for work at the village level. Such efforts at self-reliance together with the support of vernacular mediums and utilization of traditional popular customs and institution (like *Mela* or fair, *Jatra*) were felt to be the best method for drawing the masses into the national movements (Pandit 2015: 26). Once again, these techniques of organizing *Swadeshi* themed exhibitions, fairs, lantern shows were later used

to a great effect by Gandhi and his fellow Congressmen in his Constructive Work programme (Prabhu and Gandhi 1960: 37-9). The Constructive aspect of *Swadeshi* period had attracted many youths who later collaborated with revolutionary activists. There were revolutionary inner circles within many of these Constructive Work *Samitis* (Sarkar 1973: 299). Even Barindra Kumar Ghosh's group of young revolutionaries was attracted for a brief period by Rabindranath Tagore's scheme of constructing an ideal village community (Sarkar 1973: 294). This phase of constructive rural level activities was genuinely kept aloof from political agitation by its ardent advocates, mainly Tagore. Thus, though a predecessor in spirit, it was different from the future Gandhian Constructive Work schemes as many towering figures of Constructive Work very often attached themselves with conventional politics and Gandhi's nationwide movements. However, this wave of enthusiasm received serious setback after 1908, due to declining enthusiasm, disillusionment among youths, rise of underground revolutionary nationalism, sporadic outburst of rural violence and ambivalent attitude of its preachers.

In Tagore's seminal speech, *Swadeshi Samaj*, subsequently given at the Minerva and the Curzon theatre in 1904, this conceptual orientation of Constructive *Swadeshi* received its first most exposure. Here the traditional *Samaj* was hailed as the real centre of Indian community life and not the state which, by then, had been seen as the driving force of European spirit of centralization and violence. Besides reviving which is lost, Tagore expressed his dream of an ideal village model in this speech. The reforms that he proposed were not much different from that of Gandhi. While romanticizing the traditional village society, the urban educated middle-class youths were given the task of propagating *Swadeshi* in villages through *Melas*, *Jatras* and Lantern slides. To Tagore, *Swadeshi* meant a society taking a different stand in promoting self-reliance against the external forces of state (Flora 2002: 14; Sarkar 1973: 297). Later, Gandhi appeared on the scene and was able to synthesize, using Congress as a medium, Constructive *Swadeshi* and give it a moral orientation.

Tagore's proposal for organizing Village *Samitis* did not go unheard and started mushrooming. They were particularly numerous in Barisal, Faridpur, Mymensingh and Tippera. Five most successful of Constructive Work *Samitis* were situated in these districts, namely, Swadesh Bandhab Samiti, Brati Samiti, Dacca Anushilan Samiti, Suhrid Samiti and Sadhana Samiti. The towering figure of such variants of *Swadeshi*, who through his tireless effort made an all-encompassing applicability of its ideals possible, was a schoolmaster of Barisal Brajomohan Vidyalaya, Aswinikumar Dutt. From the 1880's, there had been a people's association which provided the basis of Dutt's work (Sarkar 1973: 290). His Swadesh Bandhab Samiti with its 159 branches could penetrate deep into the interior of the district because of his organizing capabilities. Volunteers of all these *Samitis* attended local *Melas* in large numbers mainly with the purpose of enforcing boycott through various indigenous, traditional, and vernacular mediums (Sarkar 1973: 291). Permanent committees for promotion of *Swadeshi* industries and agriculture, national education and arbitration courts, cooperative banks, *Dharmagolas* and sanitation measure

in the villages were parts of Dutt's definite blueprint. These districts of eastern Bengal became stronghold of Gandhians and their *Asramas* during and after the Non-Cooperation movement. Much of these institutions (to name a few; Khadi Pratisthan of Satish Chandra Dasgupta, Abhay Asram of Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and Suresh Chandra Banerji), modeled after Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram, sprung up during 1920's and 1930's. Inheriting the organizational and methodological apparatus left behind as a legacy by village level *Samitis* of *Swadeshi* days, these institutions played an active role in mobilizing and institutionalizing the Congress at the grass root level in eastern part of Bengal.

A fairly consistent and coherent set of reflections on an alternative socio-economic order represented by progressive rural communitarianism during the *Swadeshi* period found expression in Satish Chandra Mukherjee's essay, 'The Indian Economic Problem'. Satish Chandra Mukherjee, editor of the journal, the Dawn, was the only nationalist intellectual of his generation to raise his voice vehemently against large scale modern capitalist industry (Chandra 1999:166). He argued for a decentralized system of industrial production on a wide rural base which would be pillared on a system of improved family handicrafts. Large scale urban capitalist industries were not totally out of place in his argument but they, in his opinion, should be limited to a few sectors, owned, and operated by the state. Grants and aids, both financial and technical, were welcomed by him for improvement of rural agriculture and handicrafts. For this purpose, he voiced ardently the need of a proper technical and industrial education curriculum, corroborating with nation's socio-economic necessities. He genuinely advocated for a cooperative ethical life in a cooperative, structurally decentralized society, where material progress would be surpassed by spiritual and moral reform (Ganguli 1978: 95-9). Additional preservatives were later conjoined with this in Gandhian scheme of rural Constructive Work.

Following the sentimental approach of late nineteenth-century economic thought, handlooms became a dominant theme of newly emerging *Swadeshi* economy. It was in Hind Swaraj that Gandhi first time mentions ancient and sacred handlooms. Many caste weavers, who had previously abandoned their family occupation, returned to it during the days of *Swadeshi* movement which in turn provided impetus to the local handloom industry in some old bases, namely, Burdwan, Twenty-four Parganas, Nadia, Jessore (Bhattacharya 1986: 13). Thus, during *Swadeshi* period, in particular, the handloom became the concrete, material symbol of an imagined simplicity and purity of rural life, of folklore, of a distinctive Indian tradition, and of forms of life and remained sacred beyond the pale of the modern colonial rule (Bayly 1986: 297-8; Goswami 1998: 625). However, what antiquity it bore in this newborn sentiment for handlooms can be doubted as suggested by Tapan Raychaudhuri. He argued that the contact with the West and the colonial experience itself acted as a catalyst for our culture, giving rise to industries different from both the indigenous inheritance and the elements of western civilization (Raychaudhuri 1999: 99). Following this argument, it can be said that the goods like handlooms produced and promoted during the *Swadeshi* campaign were, thus, neither the products of India's

artisanal past, nor the products of the British colonial economy. Thus, *Khadi* which later became Gandhi's national emblem of unity was a new product of that particular wave. This period with this claim of legitimate antiquity, also witnessed the rise of a major concern for the status of the Indian craftsman. It was believed that the crafts in India could ultimately be revived to sustain the ideals of beauty and love and to serve the highest aims of religion and life, thereby connecting the project of artisanal rehabilitation to a high spiritual and ethical realm (Mathur 2011: 45-6). The product of artisan's labor was seen as the 'art of the masses' and as the foundation of good living of a truly civilized life by leading art critic and art reformer E. B. Havell. Finally in this conceptual evolution, the ultimate point of culmination came with Gandhi's powerful appropriation of the whole craftsman semiotic.

However, surprisingly, the nationalist demands of the *Swadeshi* period had been increasingly focused on the necessity of the state patronage towards indigenous enterprise. In order to combat the hegemony of the British capital, the nationalists proposed the protection of indigenous capital. Therefore, despite Gandhi's later conceptually radical reformulation, *Swadeshi* remained a movement for the nationalization of capital, not its abolition (Bhattacharya 1976: 1828-32; Goswami 1998: 628). Amit Bhattacharyya's point of departure formulates a critique because he says that only two things remained *Swadeshi* in this whole entrepreneurial endeavor: capital and members of the Board of Directors. Machineries and raw materials were very often imported (Bhattacharyya 1986: 45). Finally, the trend of Constructive *Swadeshi* seldom went beyond the boundaries of *bhadralok* movement. Change was more apparent than real as their attitude towards the Bengal's rural population showed a good deal of ambiguousness. This bewilderment was highly reflected in limitations of *Swadeshi* movement's agrarian programmes. These hindrances not only widened the gap instead of bridging it and were later inherited by Gandhian Constructive Work programme as well.

Conclusion:

The theoretical and practical apparatus for the future Gandhian philosophy and action in India was thus the fruit of the tree planted in nineteenth century colonial writings impregnated with the zeal of knowledge formation, late nineteenth and early twentieth century's anti-colonial thoughts and sentiments, and its final applied practice in the form of political endeavors of *Swadeshi* movement. Gandhi's *Khadi*, revival of village and cottage industries and Constructive Work programme including Basic National Education scheme of 1937 finally stroked the canvas of nationalist movement in India during 1920s and 30s. This phase included not only a promise for constitutional independence but a pledge for socio-economic independence. The latter was preached through a blueprint of moral uplift for village societies. Gandhi also used exhibitory and other indigenous vernacular propaganda mediums like his predecessors for accomplishing his coveted ends. The paradigm shift that he brought about in the scenario of India's nationalist movement,

from an elite-bourgeois activity directed at mobilizing the newly emerging middle classes to a popular movement with growing participation of the *mofussil* and village people from India's hinterlands could become a reality as a consequence of constant intermingling of all these elements by Gandhi. His charismatic traits laid in symbolic elements that he used, reused and reproduced ceaselessly in his writings, speeches, demonstrations and actions. Utilizing these emblematic constituents not only ensured a hegemonic position for the nationalist leadership over Gandhi's target section of population, hitherto untouched by any anti colonial sentiments, but could uphold unanimity of the nation too. In many instances, Gandhi's followers assimilated his philosophy of moral action with existing precursors. Nonetheless, they inherited these legacies along with their successes and failures which prevailed quite amply in their implicational contexts, varied regionally and locally as well.

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Identifying the Geographical Boundaries of Puṇḍravardhana

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[Editorial Note: In this paper, the author has tried to identify the geographical boundaries of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* based on both epigraphic and archaeological sources. The author claims to identify some of the places mentioned in various copper plate inscriptions pertaining to the early medieval period. Particularly, the mention of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* in various inscriptions has been identified by him with an area of undivided Purnea district and northern parts of present Malda district. However, a more intensive archaeological endeavour and comparative study of mounds, ceramics, artefacts are a desideratum to reach to such a conclusion. D.A.]

Abstract: *The land of Puṇḍravardhana witnessed the emergence of human settlement much early. This area must have obtained an urban status not later than third century BCE and underwent further development till the Pāla-Sena period. This region is fed by several rivers, their tributaries and ultimately pour out their water to the Ganges. Such rivers were the lifeline for the urban centres engaged in trade and commerce and rendered fertile and vast agricultural fields by their silt deposits. Generally, we believe that the land between the river Karatoya in the east and Mahananda in the west was known as the Puṇḍravardhana bhukti. This is almost identical with the Varendra region of the Pāla-Sena inscriptions. The motive of this paper is to frame out the geographical boundaries of Puṇḍravardhana bhukti more precisely on the lights of new archaeological findings and interpretations.*

Keywords: *Puṇḍravardhana, Varendra, Vyāgrataṭī, Koṭivarṣa, Māthraṇḍiyā, Anuliya Copper Plate Inscriptions.*

Boundary of an area or state in a modern sense was not quite known to ancient India. We frequently record that the natural boundaries like river, mountain were used as marks of delimitation and acknowledged by the administration. In some cases, where natural boundaries were not available, as the inscriptions reflect, a date palm tree can be treated as a mark of the limit of a land. (Kielhorn 1897; Maitreya 1319 BS)

In ancient and medieval times, the sub-regions of our study area had different names, now erased from the memory of the common people. Ancient Bengal as a whole, was known to the classical Greek writers as *Gangaridae* and *Prasii*. (Mukharjee 2004: 37) They mentioned the people of the concerned region as the Puṇḍras. In the *Śunahṣepa* legend of the Aitareya-brāhmaṇa, Puṇḍras, who among the hundred sons of Visvāmitra had been cursed by his father to have the lowest caste for their descendants. (Haug 1922: 469-70) In the *Sabhā-parva* of the Mahābhārata (Ch. XXX) mention has been made of Puṇḍras while describing the hill tribes defeated by Bhīma in the battle against Karṇa (the king of Aṅga).

In the Mahābhārata and the Harivaṃśa, (Mahābhārata, *Ādi-parvan*, ch. CIV, vv. 52-5; Harivaṃśa-*parva*, Ch. XXXI. vv. 33-42) the Puṇḍras is claimed to be a descendent of the blind sage Dirghatamas (born of the queen of the demon Bāli) alongside Aṅgas, Vaṅgas, Suhmas and Kalingas. In the epics, the name of the Puṇḍra tribe uttered with many variations, viz., Puṇḍraka, Pauṇḍra, Pauṇḍraka and Pauṇḍrika. The nomenclature of the study area has been changed to Puṇḍravardhana with its capital at Puṇḍranagara during the time of the imperial Mauryas (Bhandarkar 1932). Subsequently, this area became a crucial part of the Gupta dynasty and to be referred to as Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. During the early medieval time, particularly after the fall of Śaśāṅka, the first independent king of Bengal, the northern Bengal region was known as Varendra. Though, epigraphically we find the name 'Varendra' in an inscription from South India, dated 967 CE, where a Brahmin was named as *Varendradīyūtikariṇa* and *Gaurchūramaṇi*. (Roy 1414 BS: 116) The epigraphs of the Sena's write the name of the study area as Varendrī¹.

The historical geography of our study area presents some delicate problems. As per the analysis of the boundaries of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* are concerned, it is believed that the ancient river Mahananda forms the western boundary of the Puṇḍravardhana region which extends to the southward course of the Karatoya to the east, the Ganges forming the southern boundary and the northern boundary of the *bhukti* was formed by the Himalaya. Scholars like N. R. Ray pushed the southern boundary of the *bhukti* to the Bay of Bengal. It includes the Sundarban region (Ray 1414 BS: 85). There is a controversy among the scholars regarding the western boundary. In this paper, the author will try to propose some new observations regarding its boundaries on the basis of archaeological evidence and interpretation.

No less confusing is the fact that the land of Puṇḍra also seems to be synonymous with Varendra. This land according to Xuan Zang's account had its capital at Puṇḍravardhana. (Beal 1884: 194) The site of Puṇḍravardhana has been identified with Mahasthangarh on the bank of the river Karatoya² in the district of Bogra (Bangladesh) (O'Donnell 1875; Ahmed 1981). A Mauryan Brahmi inscription³ from Mahasthangarh mentioning a city called *Puṇḍanagala* forms the basis of

¹ The Tarpandighi inscription of Lakshmaṇasena, (Majumdar 1929: 102); The Madhainagar inscription of Lakshmaṇasena (Banerjee, 1913-14: 6-10) mentions *Śrī-Puṇḍravardhana-bhukty-antahpāti-Varendryām*. (II. 39-40)

² Its antiquity has been established by an ancient text the *Karatoyā-mahātma*.

³ This is the earliest inscription of this part of the land so far. After studying this inscription Bhandarkar writes: 'Some ruler of the Mauryan period, whose name is lost, had issued an order to the *Mahāmātra*, stationed at Puṇḍranagara, with a view to relieve the distressed caused apparently by a famine to a people called *Samvamiṅgiyas* who were settled in and about the town. Two measures were adopted to meet this contingency. The first apparently consisted of the advanced of a loan in *gaṇḍaka* coins, and the second of the distribution of *dhānya* or paddy from the district granary. A wish is expressed that the *Samvamiṅgiyas* will thus be able to tide over the calamity. With the restoration of plenty they were asked to return the coins to the Treasury and the corn to the granary.' (Bhandarkar, 1932, p. 123)

this identification. (Bhandarkar 1932: 83-91)

In Gupta land records, Puṇḍravardhana is described as a *bhukti* or province of the Gupta state. This status of *bhukti* was retained till the Sena period with a little variation in the name. We often find Pauṇḍravardhana instead of Puṇḍravardhana in some of the Sena records. The Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscriptions and Dhanaidaha Copper Plate Inscription (henceforth CPI), dating from 143 to 214 of the Gupta era, prove that Puṇḍravardhana was the name of an important and large territorial division in the possession of the Guptas at least from the second quarter of the fifth century to about the middle of the sixth century CE. (Sen 1942: 104) From the time of Dharmapāla it was an important province of the Pālas. The Tarpandighi Grant of Lakṣmansena (Banerji 1914: 6-12), the Madhainagar Grant of Lakṣmansena (Majumdar 1929:106-15) and the Selimpur inscription of the Kamrupa king Joypāla (Basak 1982: 283-95) assign Varendrī within Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. Like the other demarcations of lands of those time, this tract was probably bounded by natural barriers like mountains or large rivers. The north-eastern boundary of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* was the river Karatoya and according to the *Yoginī-Tantra* it was also the western boundary of Prāggyotiṣa (Bhattashali 1935:75). The river Brahmaputra would be taken as the eastern boundary of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. A line drawn straight eastwards from modern Rangpur to meet the Brahmaputra would be an excellent imaginary boundary between this portion of Prāggyotiṣa and Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. The districts of Dacca, Faridpur and Bakarganj were also included in Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. (Bhattashali 1935: 73-114)

As per the traditional narration is going, the northern boundary of the *bhukti* was formed by the Himalayas. The word *Himavachchhikhara* of Damodarpur plate 4 of Budhagupta of 214 GE (533-34 CE) hinted this point. The word is repeatedly used in 5th and 10th lines of the grant. Basak translated these lines as ‘...this *śrēshṭhin* Ribhupāla thus “In Dōṅgā-grāma in Himavachchhikhara (lit. the summit of the Himalaya) 4 *kulyavāpas* of *aprada* lands were formerly given by me to Kōkāmukha-svāmin and Śvētavarāha-svāmin, in the hope of benefit to myself (and) for the sake of increasing religious merits” and

It is a fact that by him were given in Himavachchhikhara eleven *kulyavāpas* of *aprada* lands to Kōkāmukha-svāmin and Śvētavarāha-svāmin; and so application has been properly made (by him) for *vastu*-land to be given to him in the neighbourhood of those cultivated lands for the purpose of building temples and store rooms. (According to) the prevailing custom of sale of one *kulyavāpa* of land for 3 *dināras*... (Basak 1920: 140)

The plot Dōṅgā is placed by the scholars in the Himalayan region of Nepal and identified with Vārāhaketra on the confluence of the river Kokā and Kauśikī. (Sinha 1977: 43)

In this case, it would be quite amusing to mention that the applicant of the plate #4 was Ribhupāla, Guild President (*nagara-śrēshṭhin*) of Koṭivarṣa. Then the question may arise, why should he buy any plot to build two temples in such a distance from his jurisdiction? In the plate #5, five *kulyavāpas* of land was allotted for the repairing work of these two

temples. What was the legitimate reason for such type of grants? Whereas we find several villages in the vicinity of Bangarh having names like Dānga, Dāngi, Dongi etc. with ancient relics. In all probabilities the word *Himavachhikhare*, during that time, might be used as an allegory for a high mound of the area. As we know, the area of Koṭivarṣa was a fully flourished urban centre much before the time of the Mauryas. So, there was many possibilities of the presence of high mounds in this area. For better understanding we must take the example of Somapura monastery of Naogaon, Bangladesh. (Dikshit 1938) The people of this region often called the un-excavated Somapura monastery as Pahar (hillock). The most important point to note here that the rate for these lands is 3 *dināras*, which was the standard rate for only Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya*. In spite of such debate, one conclusion can be made, in the matter of Ḍōṅgā, that it was an important urban area of Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya* with an immense religious value. Thus, we have no fair reason to put the northern boundary of this *bhukti* to extend up to the Himalaya.

Previous scholars extended the southern boundary of the *bhukti* to the sea of the Bay of Bengal on the basis of unjust identification of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* with the Sundarban region. *Vyāghra* is a Sanskrit word, means tiger. So as the name suggests Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* was a land of tigers. We come to know about this piece of land from two Pāla and one Sena inscriptions. Roy gives an etymological description of the word ‘Vyāgrataṭī’ and allude the Sundarban region (India and Bangladesh) as the present location of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* with *Bāgḍī* as the center point. (Roy 1414 BS: 85) However R. C. Majumdar has some doubt regarding the identification of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*. The theory that equates the Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* with *Bāgḍī* is not based upon any convincing evidence. (Majumdar 1943: 24) According to the previous researches, all the toponyms mentioned in the Khalimpur CPI (Kielhorn 1897: 243-54) are identified with the places of northern part of Bengal. But only Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* is placed in the far south at *Bāgḍī*. We find another mention of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* in the Nālandā CPI (Shastri 1924: 310-27) of Dēvapāla. Here we also find the mention of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* and its ruler Balavarmana, who acted as *dūtaka* on behalf of Magadhan king. Generally, a *dūtaka* of an inscription has to be a *yuvarāja*. The *dūtaka* of Khalimpur CPI is *yuvarāja* Tribhuvanapāla; (Kielhorn 1897: 245) the *dūtaka* of the Mungir plate is *yuvarāja* Rājyapāla. (Kielhorn 1892a: 253-8) The Nalanda plate refers the importance of the ruler of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* in its v. 22 and v.23. (Shastri 1924: 310-27) In the reign of Dēvapāladēva, Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* was governed by a district ruler called Balavarmana. The way he is praised in the Nalanda plate, as the right arm of the Emperor, would show that he had a higher rank even though he was one of the feudatories of Dēvapāladēva. (Kielhorn 1897: 243-54) He was so important personality that he had his importance not only to his own territory, but to his neighbour’s territories also. He also acted as a *dutaka* in the Rajauna image inscription of Śūrāpāla. (Sircar 1942: 139)

All the places mentioned in the Nalanda plate are identified with some villages of the district of Nalanda, Rajgrha and Gaya districts of Bihar. It would appear from this plate

that the Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*, not a big area of itself, was an important piece of land from a political point of view and probably lay on the frontier. The Khālimpur CPI records, the king Dharmapāladēva, at the request of his *Mahāsāmantādhipati* Nārāyaṇavarmana, granted four villages to a temple of the God Nunna-Nārāyaṇa, which had been founded by Nārāyaṇavarmana at Śubhasthalī. This inscription of Dharmapāladēva mentions Mahantāprakāśa *viṣaya* as being included within Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*. (V.31.) *śri-Puṇḍravardhanabhukty-antaḥpāti- Vyāgrataṭī Maṇḍal-samva(mba)ddha-Mahantāprakāśa viśa(sha)yē Krauñchaśvabhra-nāma-grāmō*. Trans: In the Mahantāprakāśa district (*viṣaya*), which belongs to the Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* within the prosperous Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*, is the village named Krauñchaśvabhra. (Kielhorn 1897: 253). Here a *viṣaya* (Mahantāprakāśa) is placed within a *maṇḍala* (Vyāgrataṭī), (Maitreya 1319 BS: 28), which is not familiar in the Pāla administration. Chakravarty identifies many toponyms of this plate in north-eastern part of Malda district, WB. (Chakravarty 1982: 138-41) He locates the Krauñchaśvabhra at the Kauch village of Chanchal, Malda. (Chakravarti 1982: 139) The Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* might be placed on the frontier of Mahantāprakāśa *viṣaya*. After studying these two Pāla inscriptions, it can be concluded that Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* was placed on the east of Nālandā *viṣaya* and on the west of Mahantāprakāśa *viṣaya*. The head quarter of this *maṇḍala* was probably laid in the undivided Purnea district. The district of Purnea also fulfils the reason of the name of the *maṇḍala*, i.e. Vyāgrataṭī. If we go through the district gazetteer of Purnea, we can find that even before few centuries ago this part of land was full of tigers and other animals. (Hamilton 1928) Depredation⁴ of tigers was so severe that the authority had declared prize money to kill those tigers. (Hunter 1976) In all probability, the Kosi must have served the principal water source in Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*. The Kosi river changes her course frequently with the time and left huge fertile river beds for crops and high grass, which is ideal for an extensive settlement and for tiger also.

The Anulia CPI of Lakṣmanasena is another important source of information for the study area. The toponyms of the plate are not located yet. Though the plate was found from Anulia, but it has close proximities with the inscriptions of Northern Bengal. The Tarpanighi grant is almost similar to Anulia CPI. (Banerji 1914: 6-10). The present author presumes that in some cases of north Bengal, the findspots and the actual places where the inscriptions actually belong are different. Here we can take the example of the Nandapur CPI of Gupta time. This plate was rescued from a village called Nandapur, near Surajgarha in the district of Monghyr. It was fixed on the wall of Burhanath Mahadeva temple. (Majumdar 1940: 53) Majumdar's observation is that the inscription was drafted, engraved,

⁴ Death, caused by wild beasts from 1863 to 1875 are turned by collector as follows: - 12 in 1863, 39 in 1864, 8 in 1865, 13 in 1866, 9 in 1867, 30 in 1868, 7 in 1869, 11 in 1870, 13 in 1871, 23 in 1872, 10 in 1873, 15 in 1874 and 28 in 1875. Total for the thirteen years, 184, or an annual average of 14. (Hunter, 1976: 37)

and issued from northern Bengal, evident not only from the nature of the script but also close agreement of its phraseology with that of Baigrama and other plates of this century discovered in northern Bengal. (Majumdar 1940: 54) Griffiths reported two newly discovered inscriptions of which the Kuddālakhāta CPI of 159 GE is found from a scrap metal shop in Dhaka but it was actually found from Bogra, Bangladesh (Griffiths 2015: 16) and the second one i.e., the Mastakaśvabhra grant of Pradyumnabandhu from Hong Kong in the collection of François Mandeville, who purchased it from a dealer in Milan, Italy. (Griffiths 2015: 27)

In Anuliya CPI of Lakshmaṇasena we also find mentions about Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* and its other toponyms, viz., *Māthraṇḍiyā*, *Mālāmancha-vāṭī*, *Jalapilla* and *Sāntigōpī-śāsana*. The identification of these places will not be possible until proper identification of Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala*. However, the present author has made an effort in this paper to identify these places. This grant mentions,

(Line 34-46): “Be it approved by you that a plot of land (of the village of) Māthraṇḍiyā within Vyāgrataṭī, which is situated in the Puṇḍavardhana *bhukti*, having for its four boundaries of follows, viz., the banyan tree as its boundary on the east, Jalapilla as its boundary on the south, Sāntigōpī-śāsana as its boundary on the west of and Mālāmancha-vāṭī on the north.” (Majumdar 1929: 81-91)

Mālāmancha-vāṭī

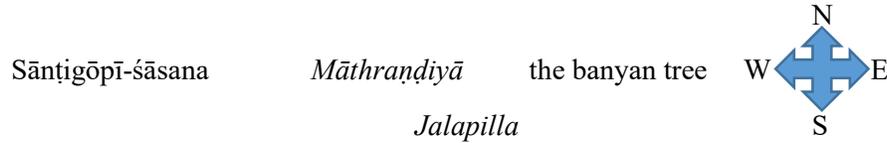


Diagram 1: Plot donated through Anulia CPI

After several visits in Gajol subdivision of Malda district, present author seeks readers' attention to some of its village-names and artefacts. First in this list is village Methrani, which yielded many artefacts of the early medieval period. There is a pond, now called by the villagers as *Pirpukur* have pucca bathing *ghats*, facing four directions, (picture 1) with a temple like structure on the east. On the southeast of Methrani, a village namely Jajilpara is situated, which also have huge antiquities of that time. The Jajilpara CPI of Gopāla II has been found from this place (Misra and Majumdar 1951: 137-44). This Jajilpara village might be the Jalapilla village of the inscription. On the north of Methrani, two villages, viz., Malanipur, Manchampur are situated, which altogether could be the Mālāmancha-vāṭī of the inscription. The place of Sāntigōpī-śāsana in the west has not yet been found. If such identification is substantiated with further evidence, we can justify the reason behind placing the Mahantāprakāsa *viṣaya* under Vyāgrataṭī *maṇḍala* in Khalimpur CPI. Sarkar identifies another site of Khalimpur CPI i.e., Āmrasandika with Amshol of northern Malda. (Sarkar 2015: 88-109) The distance between the Amshol (erstwhile Āmrasaṇḍikā) and Methrani is 10.10 km. The donated village Māthraṇḍiyā can be identified with the Mēthraṇī

village of Gajol subdivision of Malda district of West Bengal on the basis of archaeological remains and corrupted names of its and its surrounding villages. It can easily be assumed that the word *Mēthrāni* is a corrupted form of *Māthraṇḍiyā*. So from the discussion it can be assumed that the Khāri *viṣaya* or *maṇḍala* and the Vyāghrataṭi *maṇḍala* were separate geographical entities in early medieval Bengal. Otherwise, their names would not be figured separately in the inscriptions. Therefore, the tiger infested eastern part of the district of Purnea, lying between the two great ancient rivers, the Kosi and the Mahananda, was in all probabilities known as the Vyāghrataṭi *maṇḍala*. From this discussion this study proposed the southern boundary of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* was not extended up to the Sea, but the Ganges.

However, the problem is yet to resolved with regard to the western boundary. The Tīra *bhukti* and Śrīnagara *bhukti* were placed on the western side of the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. Thus, the problem is to find out the boundary between the Tīra *bhukti* and Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* on the north of the river Ganges. (Bhattashali 1935: 75-6) If we accept the probability of the Vyāgrataṭi *maṇḍala* being included in Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*, lying in the district of Purnea, then the Kosi is to be regarded as the boundary between Tīra *bhukti* and Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. We have much archaeological evidence that the entire course of the River Bhagirathi formed the boundary between Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* and Vardhamāna *bhukti*. So, the land between the river Karatoya, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Bhagirathi, Kosi and Himalaya would be identified with the area of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*.



Northern *ghat* of Pirpukur, Methrani, Gajol, Malda (Photo collected by the author)

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Nationalist Women Poets in Colonial Bengal

Tapan Chattopadhyay

[Editorial Note: The author in this paper presents a narrative of patriotic, and nationalistic consciousness conceived by the women poets of colonial Bengal. D.A.]

Abstract: *Bengal from time immemorial has produced courageous and spontaneous female poets. The emergence of nationalistic consciousness in the post-1857 era has created an intellectual literati class in which women played crucial roles. The social consciousness evident from the writings of Birajmohini Dasi, Urmila Devi, Kamini Roy, Begum Rokeya or Sufia Kamal has created a progressive environment during the colonial period. The present paper seeks to revisit the contribution of such writers and explains how the poetic efforts of these colonial-era poets have enriched Bengali poetry in future.*

Keywords: *women poets, poetic expression of patriotism, rise of social consciousness, post-partition poetry.*

Past Heritage

The anti-British revolt of 1857 not only ignited and inspired India's future political aspirations and movements, it also strongly influenced the thinking of Bengal's women poets, who were incidentally sizeable in number unlike in other provinces and vied for attention with their male counterparts since the Middle Ages. Much before the colonial rule, the theme and treatment of their poetry were strangely bold, uninhibited, and original – more so, in fact, than the male poets. In this context one recalls the boldness of Padmavati, the spouse of the poet Jayadeva (c.1170–c.1245) of *Gitagovinda* fame

¹. Not only did she help her husband compose the famous couplet in *Gitagovinda* with her surreptitious addition: *Dehi padapallavamudaram*, but she saved the honour of their patron king, Lakhsman Sen of Nabadwip, by defeating the challenger-singer Buran Mishra in her husband's absence (Pragyanananda 1948: 58). Her prowess as an exponent of the ragas and poetry was well known to the celebrated maestro, Jalaluddin Tabrez (Pragyanananda 1948: 58).

Later too, the women poets of Bengal kept up this spirit of boldness and independence, undaunted by prevalent political and social considerations. The first acknowledged Bengali female poet, Rammani or Rami 'Rajakini' (first half of the fourteenth century), was herself a revolutionary in the sense that she had dared to openly express her love in her poems for the strikingly handsome Brahmin bard, Chandidas, son of Durgadas Bagchi of Nanoor in Birbhum, in spite of being a 'lowly-born' washer-woman, and had her love finally accepted

¹ According to Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *Gitagovinda* songs were originally written in Western Apabhhransa as written in the East or in Old Bengali. See his *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Volume One, Rupa & Co, Calcutta, 1985, pp. 125-126.

by the elite of the caste-ridden society. Even Chaitanya (1486-1534) was fond of Chandidas's poems which gave a stamp of approval to their poetry and love (Chakrabarti 2004: 20). Rami's daring was well rewarded when a number of ballads were written subsequently on her love for Chandidas.

Her cudgel was later taken by Chandravati (b. 1550), daughter of the poet Dwija Bansidas (sixteenth/ seventeenth century), of Patwari village in now Kishoreganj district of Bangladesh (Gupta 1930: 38). She attained so much eminence during her lifetime and afterwards that her poems became a household property in rural Bengali and were included in the famous *Mymensingha Gitika*, a collection of folk ballads of Mymensingh in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) in 1923². Even her Ramayanic renderings were bold and contained warnings against political and social oppressors. Two gifted poets of the succeeding period - Anandamayee (1752-1772) of Japsa, Dhaka, and Kaminisundari Devi (who wrote also under the pseudonym of 'Dwijatanaya') of Sibpur, Howrah - were her torch-bearers; the latter's play, *Urvashi* (1866), was the first of its kind in Bengali literature (Chakrabarti 2004: 32). Four years later, in April 1870, Mokshadayini Devi (b.1848), sister of Womesh Chunder Bonnerjee, the first president of the Indian National Congress, brought out from Kidderpore, Kolkata, the first women's magazine in Bengal, *Bangamahila*, (Chakrabarti 2004: 51) and heralded the new age of women's intellectual emancipation.

The revolt of 1857 was basically a reaction to the usurpation of the rights and privileges of the Indian upper classes by the British in a changed political power-equation. It was also an expression of fear and discontent of the Indians for the usurpers' reformist zeal for dispensing with traditional values and institutions. By the early 1850s, many British officials were nursing plans finally to abolish the Mughal court, and to impose not just British laws and technology on India, but also Christianity (Dalrymple 2006: 10).

Nationalist Consciousness

However, there was an inevitable backlash that found expression in Indian politics and poetry; more so in Bengal, which was culturally the most advanced during the relevant time. The euphoria of resentment for the withdrawal of various privileges by the British government led to the formation of a basically upper-class organization styled as the Indian Association of Bengal in 1876 under the leadership of a noted orator in English, Surendranath Banerjea (knighted in 1921). It held many meetings, sprouted many patriotic ideas, and captured the city's imagination, including that of the female folk. The

² *Maimansingha Gitika*, also known as *Mymensingh Gitika*, was edited by Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen (1866-1939) and published by the University of Calcutta in 1923, along with another similar publication named *Purbabangagitika*. The folk ballads were collected from the region by Chandra Kumar De (1889-1946), a local enthusiast and a biographer of Chandravati's life, and Dinesh Chandra Sen, professor of the University of Calcutta. The ballads were published in English as *Eastern Bengal Ballads*. Needless to say, these ballads are important milestones of Bengali poetry.

organization sponsored the Indian National Conference (1883, 1885), which merged with the Indian National Congress when it was formed in 1885 (Chattopadhyay 2013: 317).

The initiative of forming the Congress was taken by an off-beat, retired British bureaucrat, Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912), whose basic idea was to help the government by bringing the like-minded English-educated Indian gentry on a common platform to discuss Indian problems and ventilate their grievances for possible redress. The outfit was basically meant to be a safety-valve for the government, though it later turned otherwise in the hand of Indian patriots. Hume was greatly helped in forming and running this organization by his personal assistant, Janakinath Ghosal, deputy magistrate³.

Janakinath, a suburban zamindar, had other credentials. He was the son-in-law of Debendranath Tagore, Rabindranath's father. His wife, Swarnakumari Devi (1855-1932), was a self-taught scholar, a popular socialite among the city's elite women, and a nationally known poet. Her house was visited by the big personages of the day including Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society (1875), Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Chittaranjan Das, the maharaja of Gwalior, and even the young Mohandas Gandhi.

A number of nationalist outfits came into being during this period including 'Sanjibani Sabha' and also 'Hindu Mela' inaugurated by Rajnarayan Bose (1826-1899). The political and cultural atmosphere was full of excitement and has been beautifully portrayed by Tagore in his memoir, *Jibansmriti* ('Life's Remembrances') (Tagore 1968: 77-82). Politics in those days was of course more talk than action; and Bengal's women did not lag behind in this, although they rarely ventured out in public, till Janakinath's daughter, Sarala Ghosal (1872-1945), Devi Chaudhurani, the stormy petrel of Bengal's politics and poetry, broke the barrier and came to the adverse notice of the government. Others also came forward to show their spirit in politics and evinced their revolutionary mettle in poetry and thus helped create a unique tradition for Bengal's later women poets.

Early Patriotic Expressions

The poet who first decidedly expressed her patriotic feelings in colonial Bengal is little known in the history of Bengali literature: Rakhmani Gupta, born perhaps in 1850, whose book of poem, *Kabitamala*, was published in 1865. The poet gave her identity as 'kono sadbangshiya kulabadhu'. Jogendranath Gupta has not even mentioned her in his book titled *Banger Mahila Kavi* ('Women Poets of Bengal'), first published in 1930.

Her poem *Bharatvarsher Bartaman Abastha* ('Present Condition of India'), which is included in the book, contains the following passionate lines: *'Ha ha mato punyabhumi*

³ Kanak Mukhopadhyay's article captioned 'Unabingsha Shatabdir Sanskritik Nabajagaran o Swanakumari Devi' in *Bangiya Nabajagaraner Agrapathik*, Paschimbanga Ganatantrik Lekhak Sangha, Kolkata District Committee, Kolkata, 2007, p. 377. This fact has been mentioned in Saraladevi Chaudhurani's autobiography *Jibaner Jharapata*, Dey's Publishing, Kolkata, 2009, pp. 190-191.

janani amar / Dekhiye tomar dasa kari hahakar/ Bartaman bhab tabo korite barnan/ Akulito hoy mon, jhare dunayan/ ... Ar ki purber moto pabe tumi maan ('O my mother, Sacred Land! My heart breaks seeing your plight. Tears fill my both eyes in describing your condition.....Will you get back your past honour ever?') (Chakrabarti 2004: 57)

The next woman poet who wrote patriotic poems was Swarnakumari Devi (1855-1932), mentioned earlier. She was the fourth daughter of Sarada and Debendranath Tagore and was Rabindranath's fourth eldest sister. From her daughter Sarala Devi Chaudhurani's account, it is known that she built a niche around herself in a portion of the Tagore house at Jorasanko and rarely mixed with other female inmates. Even her own children had little access to her (Chaudhurani 2009: 17). All through the day she busied herself with reading, writing, and editing the family periodical, *Bharati*, which was first edited by her eldest brother, Dwijendranath Tagore (1840-1926), in 1877 and put in her charge in 1884.

Swarnakumari edited *Bharati* with rare acumen till 1894, after which her daughters, Hiranmayee and Sarala, took over charge till 1897. Rabindranath too lent his hand to editing the magazine for a year in 1898 and then handed over the responsibility to Sarala who converted it into a nationalist journal and continued to edit it till 1907 before re-locating herself in the Punjab. Consequently, Swarnakumari had to take over its reins again (1908-1914). Since the beginning of her career as editor, Swarnakumari had created a literary group around this magazine known as the 'Bharati Gosthi', which was patronized by the contemporary women poets such as Prasannamayee Devi (1856-1939), Girindramohini Dasi (1858-1924), Nistarini Devi, Leelavati Devi and Amodini Ghosh (Chakrabarti 2004: 65). In this way she became the path-setter for the future literary groups like the 'Kollol' and the 'Krittibas'.

The *Bharati* combined analytical discussions on literature, science, geography, theory of knowledge, current affairs, local history and theatre, along with progressive political articles. When Sarala succeeded her mother for a time as its editor, the magazine became a vehicle of nationalist ideas. In 1889, Swarnakumari composed her famous nationalist song: '*Ek sutre ganthiachhi sahasra jiban / Jiban marane rabe shapath bandhan. / Bharat matar tare snapinu e pran, / sakkhi punya tarabari, sakkhi bhagaban. / Pran khule anandete gao jayagaan, / Sahay achhen dharma ar kare bhoy*' (Mukhopadhyay 2007: 376). ('We have kneaded thousand lives with one string / This bond of oath shall remain in life and in death. / We shall sacrifice this life for Mother India, / The witness to this shall be our sacred sword, and God. / So, rejoice and sing our victory to your heart's content, / Dharma is with us, so whom should we fear?').

Her song, written sixteen years earlier, echoes in Rabindranath's famous song '*Ek sutre ganthiachhi sahasrati mon*' ('We have kneaded hundred minds with one string') that was sung by thousands of people during the anti-partition movement in Bengal in 1905. Pratima Devi (1893-1969), wife of Rathindranath Tagore, has given a beautiful pen-picture of the excitement of those days in the Tagore household in her memoir, *Smritichitra* ('Memory-picture') (Devi 2007: 41-44). Apart from patriotic songs, Swarnakumari wrote a short

story, 'Mutiny', in the backdrop of the 1857 uprising that was published in *Bharati* in 1910 and then included in her collection of short stories titled *Malati o Galpogucchho* ('Malati and A Bunch of Other Tales') in the same year.

A year younger to Swarnakumari, Prasannamayee Devi (b 1857) also came from an enlightened family and cherished nationalist ideas. She belonged to the well-known zamindar family of Haripur village in Pabna district of now Bangladesh. Her father, Durgadas Chaudhuri, was a deputy magistrate (Chakrabarti 2004: 75). One of her brothers, Pramatha Chaudhuri (known more by his pseudonym 'Birbal'), became famous for his Bengali prose style and also as the husband of Indira Devi Chaudhurani, daughter of Satyendranath Tagore, first Indian ICS, and Jnanadanandini Devi, who devised the dressing style and sundry other styles for Bengali women along with Maharani Suniti Devi of Cooch Behar.

Prasannamayee became an important author in her time and her writings came to be published in other magazines of repute such as *Bharatvarsha*, *Manasi o Marmavani*, *Matrimandir*, and so on (Chakrabarti 2004: 76). Her first book of poems titled *Adha-Adha-Bhasini* ('Baby Talk') was published in 1870 by G.P. Ray & Co. Printers, containing only twelve pages. Her second publication, *Banalata* ('Wild Creeper'), published in 1880, made her an established poet. Many poems of Prasannamayee in this and other books contain strong nationalist fervour. Her autobiography, *Purba Katha* ('Past Account'), which was published by Subarnarekha, Kolkata, in 1917 is available now on internet, is useful for knowing about her times.

Her daughter was the famous novelist, Priyamvada Devi (1871-1935). So, it was really a close literary circle. The 1857 uprising had made a deep impression too on Prasannamayee. She wrote a historical novel, *Ashoka*, in its backdrop, apart from a robustly patriotic poem 'Veernari Lakshmi Bai' which was included in *Banalata*. A few lines of the poem are: '*Ranabeshe matta sati nachichhe samare re nachichhe samare / Bimukto kuntalbhar, / Mukhe shabda mar mar, / Tikhna tarabari oi shobhitechhe kare re, / Shobhitechhe kare! / Atulito rooprashi, / Sharater paurnamasi, / Rabi chhabi parakashi koritechhe ran re, / Koritechhe ran*' (Gupta 2013: 64) (The unblemished lady dressed as a warrior is dancing in battle / Her hair is blowing in the wind / Her battle cry is "Kill", "Devastate", / A sharp-edged sword is dazzling in her hand! / Her celestial beauty, like that of the full moon, / Is shedding light like the sun while engaged in battle'). In another poem in *Banalata* she wrote: '*Hai, sei to sakol, / Purbo gauraber sthal, / Ai to Bharatbhumi priyo nikan; / Ai sei punya sthan shobhar sadan*' ('Alas, these are the places of the past glory / These are India's dear abodes; / These are sacred places, abodes of beauty') (Chakrabarti 2004: 77).

The poet could feel the pain of an enslaved nation even in the flow of the river Jamuna (Gupta 2013: 65). In 'Jahnvi Saikate' ('On the Shore of the Ganges') included in her book of poems, *Niharika* (1883), she wrote: '*Diptiman saubhagyer se din otit/ Khunjile Jamuna prane/ Milibena bartamane, / Bharater itihas Aarjer gorima, / Bilupto smritir chhabi Janhavi-Jamuna./ Andhar saikat bhumi, bhagana shmashan, / Deepmala nirbapito, /*

Hahakare parinito / Snigdha samiran, shudhu akul krandane/ Pratidhvani teere teere jage ratridine' (Gupta 2013: 65) (The day of bright fortune is over/ In the soul of the Jamuna / One won't get now/ The history of India, the glory of the Aryans, / Only their memories are etched in the Ganges and the Jamuna./ The shore is dark, devastated, and desolate, / Lights are all gone, / Everywhere has become sorrowful / Only the cool breeze keeps vigil on the shores in relentless tears'). There was a stamp of the celebrated poet, Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay (1838-1903), on her patriotic poems.

In this context, mention may be made of Birajmohini Dasi (b.1858) whose personal particulars are still unknown. Perhaps she came from the plebeian background. Her book of poems titled *Kavitahar* ('Garland of Poems') was published in 1876 and contain twenty-three poems dedicated to her son. Her poems poignantly reflect the ills of the society: the condition of Bengali women (*Bangaramanir Duhkshavarnan*, 'Description of Sorrow of Bengali Women'), the plight of the widows (*Bidhabaganer Kleshvarnana*, 'Description of Distress of Widows'), life of sorrow (*Timirachchhanna Rajani*, 'Night Enveloped in Darkness') etc. Her poems cannot be said to be of high merit, but they deserve mention for reflecting social awareness and patriotic élan.

Her poem titled *Bharater Prati* ('To India'), which is included in *Kavitahar*, has expressed her patriotic sentiments: 'O Ma! Ratnagarve! Bharat-janani / Veer prasabini swarup kao-o. / Prabhat-shashangka samo prabhaheena, / Hoiya ekhon keno ma rao-o./.....Tanr priyo karjo sadhite jatane, / Shikhao tomar santangane. / Tabe pade pade taribe bipade / Pabe swadhinata harano dhane' (Chakrabarti 2004: 82) (O, Mother India! Womb of Jewels! / Who have given birth to the brave, express yourself / Why do you remain now / Lusterless like the moon at morn? / To achieve God's dear work with care / Teach your children / Only then they can overcome danger at every step / Then only will they get back independence, their lost treasure.)

Post-Partition Poetry

A number of poets enriched Bengali poetry after Birajmohini, but they did not write patriotic poems. Among them were Michael Madhusudan Dutt's niece, Mankumari Basu (1863-1943), of *Rat din Jhamjham*, *Ratdin tuptup* fame, Binodini Dasi (1863-1941), Niradmohini Devi (1864-1954) and Suniti Devi (1864-1932). The anti-partition movement created an unprecedented wave of resentment and anger against the British not only in Bengal but all over India, but strangely no one among them gave expression to the nationalist sentiments before Kamini Roy (1864-1933) of Barisal, East Bengal (now Bangladesh). She is one of the greatest poets of Bengali literature and her poems are now part of the school syllabus in both West Bengal and Bangladesh. Incidentally she was the first to use her surname among the women Bengali poets.

Kamini Roy's father, Chandicharan Sen, a leading Brahmo, was a sub-judge and an author of historical novels. Her husband, Kedarnath Roy, was a statutory civilian officer of the British government. He was an admirer of his wife's poetry before marriage and so gave her unstinted cooperation in her creative work. Roy was indeed an avant-garde feminist

activist. In her essay captioned *The Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge*, she wrote: “The male desire to rule is the primary, if not the only, stumbling block to women’s enlightenment....They are extremely suspicious of women’s emancipation. Why? The same old fear – ‘Lest they become like us’⁴.”

In 1921, she was one of the leaders, along with Kumudini Mitra (Basu) and Mrinalini Sen, of the Bangiya Nari Samaj, an organization founded to fight for women’s suffrage (The Bengal Legislative Council granted limited suffrage to women in 1925). In 1922-1923, she was a member of the Female Labour Enquiry Commission; and in 1932-1933, she became vice-president of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad (Sen Gupta and Basu 1976: 75).

India’s subjugation to an alien country pained her immensely. Her anguish found poignant expression in her poem *Matripuja* (‘Worship of Mother’). The poem contains these memorable lines: ‘*Jeidin o charane dali dinu e jiban, / Hasi ashru seidin koriachhi bisarjan. / Hasibar kandibar abasar nahi ar, / Dukhini Janam bhumi,- Ma amar, Ma amar./.....Moribo tomari kaje, banchibo tomari tare, / Nahile bishadmoy e jiban keba dhare? / Jatadin na ghuchibe tomar kalanka-bhar, / Thak pran, jak pran,- Ma amar, Ma amar*’ (‘The day I gifted my life at your feet / I gave up my laughter and my tears. / I have no time now for laughter and tears, / My Motherland is distressed, my Mother is chagrined. /..... I shall die for your work, I shall live only for you, / Why else should I hold this sad life? / So long the burden of your shame is not removed, / I shall not care whether I live or die, o my Mother!’).

Many of her poetic lines like ‘*Sakoler tare sakale amra, / Protyeke amra parer tare*’ (‘We are all for us, ourselves/ Everyone is for everyone else’), ‘*Parer karone swartha diya bali / E jiban mon sakali dao, / Tar moto sukh kothao ki achhe? / Apanar katha bhuliya jao*’ (‘Sacrificing your self-interest for others’ cause / Give up everything, your this life and your soul, / Is there any happiness comparable to this sacrifice? / Forget about yourself’) and ‘*Pachhe loke kichhu bale*’ (‘Lest people should say something’), etc. have become part of everyday vocabulary. It can indeed be said that no other poet in Bengal, whether male or female, has exhibited patriotic sentiments in poetry so forcefully and so touchingly like Kamini Roy. Bengal’s revolutionaries and other freedom-fighters were inspired by her poems.

When Kamini Roy was in her prime, Binoykumari Dhar (b. 1872), eldest sister of Manmohan Ghosh, regularly contributed poems to the magazines like *Sahitya*, *Dasi*, *Bharati* and *Pradip*. She wrote a patriotic poem ‘Bharat Vandana’ (‘Hymn to India’) in *Purbachal* edited by the poet Jatindramohan Bagchi on 15 August 1947 (Gupta 2013: 157) when India was conferred the dominion status, prior to attaining independence. However,

⁴ This essay has been included in *Talking of Power – Early Writings of Bengali Women from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Malini Bhattacharya and Abhijit Sen, Bhatkal & Sen, Kolkata, 2003.

the most celebrated female activist of the day who was born in the same year and wrote revolutionary poems, among other things, was Sarala Devi Ghosal, already mentioned. In 1904, she opened an academy of physical culture at Ballygunge, Kolkata, with the direct political object of training up the youth for fighting for freedom for the first time in Bengal⁵.

A New Thrust

The Bengali patriotic poetry got a new thrust and direction after Sarala Devi took charge of editing *Bharati*. Apart from being an aggressive go-getter and organizer, she was a gifted musician and helped Tagore in composing music for the national anthem, *Bande Mataram*. (Chaudhurani 2009: 40) At 29, she conducted the orchestra having 58 singers for the opening song composed by her at the Calcutta Congress session in 1901, which was attended by Gandhi (Gandhi 2007: 214). In fact, she used *Bande Mataram* as a political slogan for the first time during a procession taken out by the Suhrid Samiti in Mymensingh, East Bengal, in 1904 (Chaudhurani 2009: 53). The training syllabus of her academy was later discovered by the police among the documents of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti⁶.

The revolutionary leaders like Jatindranath Banerjee, Chittaranjan Das and Bal Gangadhar Tilak maintained contact with her, as did Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita, who wanted her to completely devote herself to educating and uplifting Indian women (Chaudhurani 2009: 149-50). Sarala was reported to have protected the dreaded revolutionary, Amritlal Hazra, alias Sasanka, of the Rajabazar bomb conspiracy (1913) fame on one occasion. Her activities were closely monitored by the Intelligence Branch, Bengal. Subsequently she came close to Gandhi (who once thought of having ‘spiritual marriage’ with her) (Gandhi 2007:215), and gave up her revolutionary urges. However, she was a nationalist all through her life.

Sarala’s poems are not small in number; but they are scattered in different magazines and have not been compiled in a book, although she has prose works such as *Nababarsher Swapna*, *Shivratri Pujo* and *Jibaner Jharapata*. Some of her poems are of high merit. In *Ahitagnika* (‘Purified by Celestial Fire’) she has expressed dilemma of a woman who has decided to sacrifice her life for her country. The first stanza of the poem is like this: “*Sarbadev sakhkhi kori e ki broto korile grahan! / Path je durgam, e karan? / Sutibra dibas ar sudirgha sharbari, / Aprakampya chitte sarba bhoy parihari, / Paribe ki jete? Tumi biklabbachana! / Ashruabilochana!*” (Chakrabarti 2004: 145) (‘With all the gods as

⁵ F.C. Daly, Deputy Inspector General, SD, Bengal, *Note on the Growth of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal*, dated 7 August 1911, reproduced in *Terrorism in Bengal – A Collection of Documents on Terrorist Activities from 1905 to 1939*, Volume I, ed. Amiya K. Samanta, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta, 1995, p. 8. Also see *Militant Nationalism in India 1876-1947*, ed. Amitabha Mukherjee, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1995, p. 68.

⁶ F.C. Daly, Deputy Inspector General, SD, Bengal, *Note on the Growth of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal*, dated 7 August 1911, reproduced in *Terrorism in Bengal – A Collection of Documents on Terrorist Activities from 1905 to 1939*, Volume I, p. 7.

witnesses, what a vow have you taken! / The path is so difficult to traverse, why did you do so? / The day will be so scorching and the night so long, / With un-trembling heart, forsaking all fear / Will you be able to go on? So incoherent you are/ So full of tears!). A number of her songs such as *Hey Sundar Basanta Barek Phirao* ('O, Beautiful Spring! Give Back For A While'), *Otit Gaurav Kahini Mamo Vani* ('Past Tale of Glory is My Message') and *Bandi Tomay Bharat-Janani* ('I Worship Thee Mother India') etc. express her patriotic fervour.

In this connection, mention may be made of Suramasundari Ghosh (b.1873), daughter of Umesh Chandra Bose, of Malkhannagar, Dhaka, and wife of Nishikanta Ghosh, a reputed lawyer and a minor poet. Her books of poem – *Sangini* (1901) and *Ranjini* (1902) – drew some notice in those days. Her *Banga-Janani* ('Mother Bengal') is a patriotic poem. Another poet who deserves mention is Mrinalini Sen of Bhagalpur, Bihar, who had her second marriage with Nirmal Chandra Sen, second son of Keshab Chandra Sen. Her career is interesting in the sense that she wrote a number of articles against Catherine Mayo's *Mother India* and acquainted Mohandas Gandhi with the intricacies of the Bengali language during his stay in London. Her books of verse – *Pratiddhani* (1894), *Nirjharini* (1895), *Kollolini*, and *Monoveena* (1899) – contain her deep love for her motherland. Among Indian women, she was the first to undertake a solo flight and became a member of the Indian Institute of Aeronautics and Electronics (1955).

Like many of the above poets, Kusumkumari Das (1882-1948), is almost unknown today, although two lines of her poem *Adarsha Chele: Amader deshe habe sei chele kabe, / Kathay na baro hoye Kaje baro habe* ('When will there be such a son in our land, / Who will be big in achievement rather than in talk') are often recited by the Bengali-speaking people. The last four lines of the poem are also well known: *Krishaker shishu kimba rajar kumar / Sabari royechhe kaj e biswa majhar, / Haate prane khato sabe shakti karo dan. / Tomra manush hole desher kalyan.*" (Whether the son of a peasant or that of a king / Everyone has work to do on earth, / Toil you all with hand and heart, contribute your strength. / If you become worthy human beings, it will help the country'). Kusumkumari had another credential: she was the mother of the poet Jibanananda Das.

Another poet, Urmila Devi (1883-1956), who published a collection of poems, *Pushpahaar* ('Garland of Flowers'), took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1921, founded the women's social organization 'Nari Karmamandir' and wrote short biographies of Sarojini Naidu and Gandhi. A short-lived poet, Pankajini Basu (1884-1900), who lived only for about seventeen years, wrote a few inspiring patriotic poems. Her poems, some of which were translated in English by the celebrated polyglot and litterateur, Harinath De, contained jibes against pseudo-patriots, as in the present poem: *Lamphajhampa, hankahanki, / Deshoddhare dakadaki / Sabhay koriya, dhoke Shrigal-guhay! / Bangalir chele tora ke dekhibi aay!* (Chakrabarti 2004: 193) ('Leaping and jumping, yelling and shouting / Exhorting people to come forward and free the country/ In an open meeting, the

Jackal comes back to the den of his home! / O, you Bengali boys! come here and see him now.’).

At quite another level, a woman activist of very great ability defied her conservative socio-religious milieu and made a mark not only as reformer but also as an author of poetry and prose in both Bengali and English. Rokeya Khatun (1880-1932) of Pairaband village, Rangpur, East Bengal (now Bangladesh), who is commonly known as Begum Rokeya but wrote under the name of ‘Mrs. R.S. Hossain’, is widely regarded as the pioneer of women’s liberation in South Asia⁷. Rokeya wrote a number of books such as *Matichur*, *Padmaraag*, *Sultaner Swapna*, *Abarodh-kahini* and so on and contributed articles, stories, and poems to various magazines (Gupta 2013: 276). While she wrote her prose works always with a purpose, in poetry she expressed her inner soul, including her love for her country, although strangely she did not publish any book of poems, just like Sarala Devi. Some of her patriotic and lyrical poems are still very readable and touching.

Rokeya Hossain founded the Anjuman-e-Khwateen-e-Islam (Islamic Women’s Association) in 1916 to fight for education and upliftment of Muslim women. Earlier, in 1911, she had established the Sakhawat Memorial Girls’ High School in Kolkata. In recognition of her contributions in the field of female education and social justice, the Bangladesh Government observes ‘Rokeya Day’ every year on her death anniversary on 9 December and confers ‘Begum Rokeya Padak’ on individual women for their exceptional achievement.

Later Poets

In contrast, Leela Devi (1894-1943), daughter of Ranendramohan Tagore, is entirely lyrical. She was married to the artist Aryakumar Chaudhuri, son of Sir Ashtosh Chaudhuri, and published only one book of poems titled *Kishalaya* (‘New Leaves’) in 1921 that contains three types of writing - introspective, devotional, and patriotic (Gupta 2013: 288). On the other hand, Jyotirmayee Devi (1894-1988) wielded her pen like a sword and was seriously engaged in writing all her life. The collection of her works has recently been published in five volumes. Her father, Abinash Chandra Sen, was dewan of Jaipur. She was married to Kiran Chandra Sen of Guptiara, Hooghly, but lost her husband at the age of twenty-five and came back to live with her parents. She wrote a number of books in prose. Her book of poems titled *Chakrabal* (‘Horizon’) contains her burning love for freedom. Poems like *Hawai* (‘Wind-Borne’) and *Mukhosher Dam* (‘Value of Mask’) unmask leaders who masquerade as patriots.

The poet of *Ghasphul* (‘Flower of Grass’), a collection of poems published (1989) at the fag-end of her life, Bina Dey (1906-1999), daughter of Gagan Chandra Roy and Mandakini

⁷ <https://theprint.in/features/rokeya-sakhawat-hossain-a-pioneer-of-womens-education-who-strove-for-a-feminist-utopia/561895/>

Roy of the family of Raja Rammohan Roy ⁸, made her presence felt as an activist-poet quite early in life. Her long poem *Aahvan* ('Call'), written on the occasion of Gandhi's Salt Movement (1930), was distributed to the students' hostels in Kolkata and created a deep impact. Lines 36-41 of the poem deserve a quote: '*Esho bhai dale dale / Shashoner jantro bhagna kori / Chhinna kori dasatva shrinkhale. / Karo pusta, karo drira / Rhriddha karo jatiyo bahini. / Hey tarun muktir senani!*' (Chakrabarti 2004: 248) (Come, brothers, in hordes / Breaking the machine of control / Tearing away the shackles of slavery. / Fill in the ranks, make them strong / Enrich our national army').

Her poem, *Bandi Bandhur Prati* ('To My Friend in Prison'), written on the occasion of the arrest of her friend Bina Das (1911-1986) for attempting to assassinate Stanley Jackson, the then governor of Bengal, expresses her deep commitment to the national struggle. Lines 13-16 of the poem are: '*Dukkhkho mithya, mithya kanna / Mithya hahakar. / Satya shudhu – manusher chira-abhisar / Ananto alor pane. / Jibaner muktipathe*' (Chakrabarti 2004: 247-48) ('Sorrowing is futile, futile is shedding tears/ Futile is desolation. / True alone is man's desire for striving / To move towards endless light. / To be on the path of freedom'). Her poem *Pataka Bandana* ('Worship of National Flag') written on 15 August 1947 was probably published in the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* (Dey 2012: 290). Bina was married to Sharadindu Chattopadhyay of the Maluti zamindar family in Birbhum at the age of twelve. Her husband was a well-known Congress leader and died of cholera while engaged in social work when Bina was only sixteen. Much later she married the famous artist Mukul Dey and settled in Santiniketan. Bina's younger sister, Baruna (1909-2007), wife of Phanindranath Chattopadhyay of Pindira (later, Guptipara), who has been mentioned in her memoir *Hariye Jawa Din* ('Days That Are No More'), also wrote patriotic poetry. Another poet who can be mentioned in this context is Rajlakhsmi Devi, who lived outside Bengal. Her patriotic poem titled *Mahasadhak* (1945/1946) was published in the literary weekly, *Desh* (Chakrabarti 2004: 267)

A poet of different range and verve of the period was Sufia Kamal (1911-1999), who was born to a zamindar family of Shaestabad in Barisal district of now Bangladesh. Though brought up in a conservative milieu, she became a multi-lingual person, knowing Bengali, Hindi, English, Urdu, Arabic, Kurdish and Persian. In 1918 she came in contact with Begum Rokeya in Kolkata and was deeply influenced by her. In 1925 she met Gandhi, took to wearing simple khadi dress, and became a member of 'Matri Mangal', an organization dedicated to women's welfare. She published a short story on the life of a soldier's wife titled *Sainik Badhu*. She edited *Sultana*, the first women's weekly in erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, along with Jahanara Arzoo, apart from the women's weekly, *Begum*, with Noorjahan Begum (Chakrabarti 2004: 251).

⁸ The biographical note on Bina Dey in *Samsad Bangali Charitabhidhan* (Samsad Dictionary of Bengali Personalities), Volume II, ed. Anjali Basu, Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 2004, p. 230. See also Bina Dey's autobiography, *Hariye Jawa Din* ('Days That Are No More'), ed. Anjali Bandyopadhyay, Papyrus, Kolkata, 2012, pp. 250-251.

Her first poem, *Basanti* ('Vernal'), was written in 1926. Since then, she published a dozen volumes of poetry. As a revolutionary poet she drew attention after the publication of *Sanjher Maya* ('The Eventide Spell') in 1938 where she castigated the wrongs committed by European imperialists in Africa. The poems were appreciated by Kazi Nazrul Islam and Rabindranath Tagore. Sufia Kamal was not an arm-chair poet and intellectual. During the communal holocaust in Kolkata in 1946, she set up a shelter for the riot victims at Lady Brabourne College. Again, she took part in the Bangladesh liberation movement in 1971; and two of her daughters joined the Mukti Bahini. Also, she set up the first hospital for the Bangladeshi freedom-fighters at Agartala in Tripura. For her patriotic fervour and literary merit, she is considered to be one of major poets of the Bengali language.

In summing up, it can be said that the poetic efforts of these colonial-era poets have enriched Bengali poetry. The women poets of today are so totally liberated in their thought and expression and their output is of such a high order - on par with that of their male and female counterparts anywhere in the globe - because of the poetic strivings of these elder poets. The social consciousness of Birajmohini Dasi, Urmila Devi, Kamini Roy, Begum Rokeya or Sufia Kamal and their ilk has found fruition in the present writings of poets like Sulekha Sanyal, Mahasweta Devi and Taslima Nasrin. Similarly have Bani Roy, Hena Haldar, Kabita Singha, Sadhana Mukhopadhyay, Manjulika Dash, Bijoya Mukhopadhyay, Nabanita Deb Sen and a host of other poets explored their inner self in such an intricate manner in delectable poetry on the foundations built by their illustrious ancestors.

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Development of Women Education and its Impact on the Status of Women: A Case Study of Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Darjeeling

Pranita Pradhan and Swapan Kumar Pain

[Editorial Note: The paper is a summary of the nature of women education during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Darjeeling. D.A.]

Abstract: *Education provides a base for the upliftment of the status of women in the society. If women in society does not get access to education, they are unable to make claim for their rights, and in the long run this affect their status. Women though constituted almost half of the population in the world were denied equal opportunities. As a result of their little access to education, they were forced to accept the secondary status to men. Darjeeling, being a colonial master, could not escape from such social injustice. The situation in Darjeeling was little unique with regards to women education. It nurtured a society, which though patriarchal in nature, had allowed women to go out from their domestic domain for livelihood. However, they lagged substantially in getting formal education. The nineteenth century being a transitional phase as a result of the introduction of British colonial rule and various social reform movements, the sector of women education was also substantially touched upon. The unlettered women of colonial Darjeeling encountered the world of education with the help of missionaries and the Bengali bhadramahilas. The education of native women in turn gradually transformed their status in the society. In the present paper, an attempt is made to examine the nature of the progress of female education in Darjeeling hills and how far it impacted upon their status in the society.*

Keywords: *Women Education, Changing Status, Colonial Darjeeling, Missionaries, Bhadramahilas*

Introduction:

It is of no doubt that the development of a society is dependent on progressive scientific education. A positive mind and rational thought process can be developed through education. In India the modern education was brought about by western officials and the missionaries. Although they had their own motives behind the introduction of western learning, Indians were largely benefitted by the policy. The western education even being a new concept was well accepted by a substantial population.

At the outset, the authors clarify their limitation and scope of the paper in which the other intricate details apart from women education and its impact in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of Darjeeling will be not touched upon. Darjeeling is the northernmost and the only hill district of West Bengal. The district lies between 26°31' - 27°13' North

latitude and 87° 53'- 88°53' east longitude; that is, 35×18 miles in length and breadth respectively (Dozey 1922: 37). It was opened to the British in the early nineteenth century after which it saw an acceleration in its developmental process. Following this the migration of diverse population also enhanced. In pursuance of various economic activities, the people from surrounding areas started flocking around the hill. Very soon the places inhabited by few aboriginal tribes were exposed to the world and this transformation was felt in almost every sphere of human life of Darjeeling.

The main objective of the article is to focus on different issues leading to the development of women education in Darjeeling hills. It aims to investigate the condition of women living in hills, the challenges, and hindrances the hill women faced during their journey to educate themselves. Modern education consequently paved the way for their upliftment. The study also explores the evolution of changing status of hill women after their exposure to modern education.

Historical Development of Darjeeling

It is generally believed that Darjeeling is a creation of the nineteenth century. At first it formed a part of the Raja of Sikkim, a petty ruler who had long been engaged in an unsuccessful struggle against the growing power of the warlike Gorkhas (O' Malley 1907: 19). The area was later overrun by the Nepalis. In 1817, the East India Company struggled with the Himalayan states on behalf of Raja of Sikkim and thus Treaty of Titaliya was signed in 1817. After ten years, dispute arose between Sikkim and Nepal and matter was referred to the Governor General. Two British Officers, Captain Llyod and J.W. Grant were deputed to deal with the dispute in 1828. From a report dated 18th June 1829, in which he claims to have been the only European who ever visited the place, we learn that Lloyd visited "the old Gurkha station called Darjeeling for six days in February 1829 and was immediately struck with its being well adapted for the purpose of Sanatorium" (O' Malley 1907: 20). The Governor General Lord William Bentick deputed Captain Herbert as the Deputy Surveyor General to examine the site. The Court of Directors approved the project. General George Aylmer Lloyd was directed to start negotiations with the Raja of Sikkim. On 1st February 1835 he succeeded in obtaining a Deed of Grant from the Raja of Sikkim. The Deed of Grant reads as follows:

The Governor General having expressed his desire for 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, the Sikkimputtee Rajah, out of friendship for the said Governor General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is all the land of South of the Great Rungeet river, and west of Rungpoo and Mahanuddi rivers. (O' Malley 1907: 21).

From 1836, the station was developed by General Lloyd and Chapman and by 1840, a road was constructed from Pankhabari. In 1839, Dr. Campbell of the Indian Medical Service was appointed as the Superintendent of Darjeeling. He was previously a British resident in

Nepal. At Darjeeling he was in charge of dealing political affairs with Sikkim and was entrusted with the civil, criminal and fiscal administration of the district.

In the meantime, the relation between Sikkim and the British Government had been far from satisfactory. The British subjects were being continuously kidnapped. As a result of which in February 1850 an expedition was sent by the British. The Sikkim Terai was annexed. A portion of the Sikkim hills bounded by the Ramman on the north, the great Rangit and the Tista on the east and Nepal frontier on the west, a tract of country containing about 5000 souls was also annexed (Ray 1980: 472).

In the beginning of 1862, the news of Bhutanese attack on Darjeeling had spread. Troops were at once stationed at Darjeeling. In 1863 a special mission was sent by British under Sir Asley Eden. The British Envoy was openly insulted in the *darbar* and his demands were also rejected. He was compelled, as the only means of ensuring safe return, to sign under protest a document by which the Government of India was to renounce the Bhutan Duars on the Assam frontier. Sir Asley Eden, who had been treated with gross indignity, at last succeeded in leaving Punaka during the night and returned to Darjeeling in 1864. A military force was dispatched to Bhutan in 1865, and the treaty exorted from Sir Asley Eden was given up in favour of a fresh treaty. The whole of Bhutanese possession in the plains thus became British. Kalimpong area was also ceded to the British. In the year 1866, the area got included in the Darjeeling district. This was the last addition to the district, which thus acquired a large area ranging from 640 to 1164 sq miles (Dozey 1922: 2). Hence Darjeeling saw the growth of tea plantation, construction works, both railways and roadways. Eventually, the British utilized the region for sanatorium purpose owing to its pleasant climate and later transformed it into an educational hub for the Anglo-Indian children.

When British first stepped into Darjeeling the population was quite modest but gradually the development process influenced a large-scale immigration from surrounding areas. By 1881, the Nepalese formed the absolute majority of Darjeeling town and also of the district. Few Bengali families serving administrative and clerical jobs also settled in the town. Slowly, the Marwaris and Beharis gathered for commercial purposes. Thus, gradually Darjeeling was inhabited by different socio-cultural groups, and this had a tremendous impact on every sphere of society including the status of women.

Conditions of Education during Pre-colonial Period

The pre-British education system in Darjeeling Hills was very simple and practical one. No formal education was known to them. They had some general idea about their surroundings, landscapes, forests, and animals. The ethnic groups like *Rai*, *Lepcha*, *Limbu*, and *Bhutias* followed their traditional cultures, religious faiths, and economic activities. Their learning was acquired through their actual participation in various activities of home and society. The concept of popular education was unknown when British took over the district (O'Malley 1907: 170). The education back then was synonymous to experience, obtained from the elders of the society. There were no books, except the religious scriptures

but folk drama, folk tales, folk songs, and stories were handed down from generation to generation. This was informal way of imparting traditional values and information to new generations. Religion dominated the life of the people. Faith and practices connected with the religions had played a dominant role in education. During the closing decade of the eighteenth-century, monasteries were established, and they provided religious education. Monasteries became the centre of education, but such education was mostly restricted to men, who were aspired to become monks. The oldest monastery of Darjeeling, at Observatory Hill though was a place of worship, also experienced an elaborate teaching-learning process of Buddhist religion and culture. They were taught to chant the Tibetan texts (Pradhan, A. K. interviewed: 21.07.2021). However, in the case of women, the education was mainly experience-based as mentioned above, and they learned mostly about domestic chores, cooking, agriculture, cultivation, child rearing, religion, folk songs, tales, medicines, flora and fauna, etc. Such experience-based learning though, bears enough significance in day-to-day life, cannot be termed as education in modern sense of term. For the hill people, school or formal education was still unheard of.

Condition of Women in Colonial Darjeeling

While reviewing the scenario of the nineteenth century Darjeeling, one must be very clear of the fact that it was not the condition of women of a homogenous society, rather that of a varied society in a more or less similar geographical terrain. A diverse cultural set up is one of the chief characteristics found in the Darjeeling hills. Different communities had different social rules and regulations which ascertained the position of men and women in their respective societies. The tribal groups following the animistic and Buddhist tradition were quite liberal towards women but on the other hand the Hindu society had imposed various restrictions upon women. The birth of a son was preferred by the upper caste Hindus as son played a major role in the funeral rites. However, we have hardly been come across any traces of infanticide in the native society. The girls were usually married off at a tender age. Even in the Hindu society the women had a certain role and there was a tradition of worshipping the sisters and daughters during some ceremonies at home¹. The married women had some important roles at their maternal home particularly during the funeral rites and ceremonies of certain castes such as Newars (Pradhan, A.K. interviewed: 21. 07. 2021).

In Darjeeling, generally, the upper caste Hindu women were not allowed to mix freely with others, and they were more involved in household chores. The tribal or the ethnic communities showed different picture. These societies displayed more flexible attitude

¹ As we all know that The Hindu societies do worship their premenstrual daughters and sisters on every religious function by putting them *tika* and touching their feet and take blessings from them. The eldest male member of the family puts the *tika* but touching feet and the blessings are taken by all. Even if the family doesn't have premenstrual ladies, they are brought from neighborhood and worshipped.

towards women. The women of Lepcha, Limbu, Tamang, Mangar, Gurung, and Rai used to enjoy much freedom and they were even allowed to take part in the family investment alongside men. Limbu, Tamang and Rai women used to enjoy inheritance rights on father's properties. A single Lepcha daughter also had equal rights on the house, ancestral land, and property of her parents like of a son. However, as soon she is married to a person she was automatically ousted from her claim to father's house, ancestral land and property (*Lepcha Customary Law*: <https://aachuley.wordpress.com>; accessed on July 21st 2021). During the concerned period, generally the upper caste Hindu family believed in arranged marriages within their own society. The tribal communities like Gurung, Tamang and Mangars practiced cross-cousin marriages. However, in both the cases, the women had a very little freedom in choosing their life partners. A unique type of marriage was in vogue in the Newari community where a girl was married thrice; first with the *bel* (woodapple), second with the sun, and third time with a man belonging to their own community. A Newari girl had never been considered as widow even if her husband died. Widow Remarriage was not a matter of concern in the tribal communities. Lepcha and Sherpa women could remarry within the periphery of their lawful family. No evidence of infanticide, *sati* and dowry deaths have hitherto been reported though polygamy, polyandry (in some tribes) and dowry system were present in some communities. In hills, the dowry was not a compulsion or demands but it was in the form of gifts from the bride's family. Due to coming from different financial backgrounds even within a single community, the condition of such women showed not much difference from those hailing from the rest of the country.

The practice of intermingling of different customs and culture in colonial Darjeeling left a great impact on women. They began to adopt each other's manners and customs. The mixing of the tribal and Hindu societies led to the exchange and assimilation of their culture and beliefs. However, such intermingling had both positive and negative impacts. Greatly influenced from the Hindu women, some of the tribal women started following the Hindu tradition of using vermilion on their forehead and even keeping distance from menstrual women. On the other hand, the colonial influence provided a different environment for these women to grow. The tribal ladies who already had an experience of liberty because of their own socio-economic practices were further empowered by encountering the colonial domain.

The hill women apart from their domestic work were also employed as porters, *ayahs*, tea garden labourers. The British women, popularly known as *memsahibs* also recruited them as their domestic servants. *Memsahib* was also an epithet widely used for the white women or the wives of the British governmental officials of Darjeeling. The children of *Memsahibs* were looked after by these hill women. The native women got much to learn, especially the western livelihood pattern from their masters, the *memsahibs*. By working in the houses of such *memsahibs* they got a humble training about health care, hygiene, home decors,

gardening etc. It is of no doubt that in Darjeeling hills, a social change happened owing to such western contact.

Development of Women Education

The Charter Act of 1813 compelled the East India Company to provide education to the masses of India but the activities of missionaries, where they were directly involved, has never been challenged by the authority. Such policy was even followed in England. Alexander Duff, a greatest missionary of the period had faith in the potential power of English to secure converts. Any endeavour on understanding the growth and progress of infrastructure of education in the district of Darjeeling will be incomplete without giving proper honour in the first place to the Christian Missionaries who have made pioneering effort in the same. By the Charter Act of 1833, Missions from the other countries came to India. The most prominent among them were German and American Missions. It was in the year 1841 Rev. William Start, a Baptist from England was first to bring a band of Moravian Missionaries (Trutler, Wernicke, Stolke, Schultz, and Neibel) and established a school for the natives at Tukvar (Anon 1857: 50). The Lepcha School did not last long and failed. There were a lot of hindrances on the way of Missionaries to open up schools at Darjeeling like language problem, and those concerning the economic as well as the geographical factors. By the Wood's Dispatch of 1854, the responsibility of education of common people was given to the British Government. W.B. Jackson in his report had mentioned about the need of opening of schools in Darjeeling (Jackson 1854: 27). As a result, Darjeeling district was granted at this period one school of the official enterprise on 20th September 1856. Therefore, the first government school was opened and named 'Darjeeling School' (Dash 1947: 276). The formal education thus begun in the hills.

Despite such endeavour, the introduction of women education in Darjeeling was still a Herculean task as it was for the rest of the country. If we comparatively look towards the beginning of woman education of Darjeeling and other areas of Bengal, we can say that institutional education reached women of Darjeeling very late. One of the most important figures on female education was Miss Macfarlane, who established the first Girls' School in 1872. She had come on a mission to help the hill girls (Himalaya Darpan: 2018). Whether the school continued or not is a matter of further debate however, it was the first institution established for the education of native women. In Darjeeling there is a Girls' Boarding School and Female Teachers' Training School, teaching up to the Upper Primary standard. The industrial training was also given to the women. (O' Malley 1907: 173). The missionaries were determined to succeed in imparting women education. The works of the missionary was strengthened by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Graham, members of Church of Scotland Mission. In the mountainous district there was no practice of *Zenana* System (Graham 1905: 90). As it is well-known this system was quite popular for education of women staying in closed doors particularly in the plains. In 1890 a Brahmin lady was converted by Mrs. Graham which led to a much-tensed situation. However, within a short span of time, i.e., by 1895 twelve Bengali homes with 19 pupils and 37 Nepali pupils were

brought under the same order (Chakraborty 1988: 309). Such Ladies Missions were mostly dedicated to the establishment of new schools. Mrs. Graham founded a girls' school at Kalimpong in 1891. At Kurseong there was only one school for girls which was established in 1907, known as Scott Mission School. The school provided education to both boys and girls at primary level (Thapa, Purnema interviewed: 2021). In 1894 Mrs. Graham opened an industrial school in Kalimpong. Encouragement was provided for vocational and technical learning in various fields viz. lace work, wool dyeing, weaving, tailoring, embroidery, carpet making, etc.

The Roman Catholic Missionaries at the outset had created schools for Anglo-Indian students. The Loreto Convent in 1841, St. Helen's in 1890 and St. Joseph's Convent in 1925 were mainly established for the Eurasian students and the local girls were not given access to enter the premises. This was the outcome of the strict order from the Church of Scotland Mission. However, eventually they opened schools for the natives, viz. St. Teresa founded in 1923, St. Philomena, in 1932, St. Joseph's Girls school in 1935, and St. Teresa's Pedong, a primary school for the girls. Through the government initiatives in 1898 a girl school was started at Dow Hill for the wards of Government Railway officers. The Dow Hill School was basically a girls' division of the government school at Kurseong (O' Malley 1907: 179-80).

In Darjeeling, however, it was found that no less than 12 percent of males, or approximately 1 in 8, were literate, while the proportion of literate female rose during decade ending in 1901 from 5 to 14 per 1000 approximately 1 in 71 – a ratio surpassed by no other district in West Bengal or eastern Bengal outside Calcutta (O' Malley 1907: 174).

The Government of India Act, 1919 made primary education for boys at free of cost. However, it was only by the Bengal Primary Education Act, 1930 that compulsory primary education was introduced for both boys and girls (Dewan 1991: 111-2). Therefore, the governmental effort for women education can be considered as a very delayed act.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Indian elites particularly Bengalis had started taking claim on Darjeeling. By 1880, big zamindar like Maharaja of Burdwan had built Summer Palaces in Darjeeling. Other professional classes also began to own property in Darjeeling (Bhanja 1993: 77). The place thus gradually not only became a colonial enclave for health purpose but also received enough popularity as a summer capital both for the British and Indians. The presence of Bengali *Bhadraloks* and with them the educated *bhadramahilas* started flocking around Darjeeling. In this context, it will be unwise if one ignores to mention the tremendous contribution made by Hemlata Sarkar, the daughter of Pandit Shivnath Shastri, a leader of Brahma Samaj in the spread of female education in Darjeeling. After her marriage to Bipin Behari she had settled at Darjeeling. Having educated at Bethune School and College in Calcutta she was well aware of the importance of modern education. She had difficulties in sending her daughters to school as the convent schools admitted only European girls. She took initiatives in establishing school for Indian girls, which was encouraged and financed by her friends, the Maharani of Coochbehar,

Mayurbanj, and Maharani of Burdwan. Thus, the Maharani School was started in 1908. The school provided education to the Bengali children and beneficiaries were also the Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepcha children. This school stands a mute witness to the missionary zeal of its sprightly architect and guide who less than a decade after the turn of the last century brought about revolutionary change in the field of education in the then British town of Darjeeling (Mukherjee 1968: 3).

Shri Ramakrishna Vedanta Ashram was founded in Darjeeling in 1924. Like the Christian missionaries, the Ramakrishna Mission also took up the cause of educating hill people. Swami Avedhananda worked a lot to spread education among the people of Darjeeling. In 1931 Sardeswari Girls' school was started. In 1934 Himachal Hindi Bhawan was established for both girls and boys and had a provision for a night school for the local students (Dash 1947: 266). Pranami Vidya Mandir was founded in Kalimpong in 1944. Youngmen Buddhist Association established girls' school at Ghoom (Dash 1947: 266). *Anjuman-e-Islamia* took the responsibility of educating Muslim girls. A girl *Maktab* was opened in 1910 in Darjeeling town.

By the middle of the twentieth century the largest number of schools for both boys and girls were run by the Scottish missionaries. The Girl's school at Kalimpong was upgraded to high school in 1924. The students were mainly Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha girls. In 1944 there were 594 girls on the rolls of high school and 5 in training classes. In 1942 the Boarding school of Darjeeling was upgraded to high school and was named as Nepali Girls' High School. On 31st March 1944, the number of pupils learning in the school was 444 of which 27 were hill boys, 331 were hill girls and the remaining has been designated as Christians (Dash 1947: 267-71).

Challenges towards Women Education

As shown above, the various efforts were put together to educate women in Darjeeling by the missionaries, government, and private and native enterprises. Despite such endeavours, education was yet to receive enough popularity from the masses. The religious factor was one of the major constraints in this regard. The Bible lesson taught in school of the missionaries was disliked by the orthodox Hindu families and in fear of conversion their attendance was exceptionally low. Apart from this, the gender disparity starting from home posed a major challenge in women education. In general terms, a patriarchal society always experiences preference for boys leading to lesser participation of girls in schools. As a consequence, the women are more blinded towards the household activities. However, in the case of Darjeeling hills, the social scenario is slightly different in a sense that the women were mostly involved in skill-based jobs. For example, in tea plantation industry, they were in great demand. The economic stagnation in the society forced the women to dedicate themselves in professional works rather getting attached to books. This resulted in school dropouts at a substantial scale, which in turn made difficulties for the smooth running of schools. In most cases, girls left school midway due to a variety of reasons like for looking after their younger siblings, ill health, death of parents, loss of interest in

education, early marriages, financial crisis which led them to become coolies or labourers. The failure of the promotion at the end of the term made them discontinue studies. The geographical factor can be considered as another hindrance in the way of women education. The rugged terrain of Darjeeling without proper means of transportation mostly stood as a wall between the girls and the schools. Moreover, even after completion of schools, encouragement for getting higher education was not present in hills, at that time. In spite of such challenges there were some women who showed their great enthusiasm and took major steps for learning and changing their lives for good. This in turn started creating a new environment in the hills.

Changing Status of Women

Education is one of the most important weapons for the modernization of society. Through these weapon, equal rights, equal status, and opportunities are provided to both men and women. It is true that, some hill women did overcome hindrances and embraced western education and such education helped them to uplift their status in the society. However, in the initial phases, such changes were quite gradual and not visibly present. The twentieth Century ushered a new dawn for the lives of hill women. This new way of living had touched upon the lives of mostly every category of women ranging from those belonging to higher status to porters, *ayahs* and labourers. They started learning, practicing nursing, and even participating in political activities. The Scottish Missionaries raised the standard of education with a view of preparing more capable individuals as teachers for village school. Mention may be made of Tokyo and Mimi from Kalimpong Girls and Yanzome, Shoshi, Dhanlachi and Dhaubre who taught at 11th mile school (Smith 1911). Women students gradually started passing their intermediate examinations. The Scottish University School Register of 1938 has recorded the names of such individuals, viz. Miss Dorothy Sitling, Miss Matilda Sitling, Miss Chandrakala Thapa, Miss Amrita Devi Chhetri, Miss Chandrakala Kumari and Miss Padmavati Thapa. These women remained as inspiration to others in near future.

Similarly, the national issues were conceived well by hill women. They started being well acquainted with the ideas of nationalism, freedom movement, liberty, colonialism etc. Few women like Sabitri Devi Lepcha, Putalidevi Lama Poddar and Maya Devi Chhetri joined the freedom movement along with the male freedom fighters from hills. Though many of them were not able to complete their formal education, were highly inspired by the new wave of modernization. Savitri Devi alias Helen Lepcha is still considered an inspiration for hill women for her political spirit and courage. Putali Devi Lama Poddar established a Harijan school, which functioned as a night school. Seven women members including Putalidevi opened Mahila Sanstha, Kalyan Samaj for social upliftment of women and Dhinhin Mansoor Samaj for the workers (Poddar 1997: 33). At the above-mentioned night school, she used to teach basic writing skills. Maya Devi Chhetri also has a very inspiring story. Influenced and supported by her husband she educated herself and joined politics. She urged the hill women to resist the colonial authorities and fight for freedom (Lama

1988: 20). Eventually, she became the Member of the Upper House of Parliament. This testifies to the fact that slowly the Hill women started to become conscious about their political rights and duties.

While exploring themselves with western education, hygiene, health issues and sanitation had been also become matter of grave concern for them. Such education had hardly been sufficient to produce native doctors, but at least general nursing, anesthetic and midwifery trainings were provided to some of them. The Charity Hospital had 13 native nurses in training to look after infant welfare centers at Kalimpong and antenatal clinics providing milk, cod-liver oil to the undernourished and tuberculosis infected children and instructing parents about hygiene (Eastern Himalayan Report: 1918). These trainings helped them in widening their minds in the field of modern medications rather than confining themselves to superstitious healing process.

Conclusion:

It is seen that by the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the hill women had slowly started to experience the influence of modern education. Though the negative impacts of patriarchal society, superstitious beliefs, religious fervent, along with various geographical and economic factors pulled the women down, but newly emerging positive wind encouraged some of them substantially. This positive wind was provided by the religious missionaries and the roles played by some Bengali *bhadramahilas* must not be underestimated. It is of no doubt that the modern education had a modest beginning. However, we cannot deny the fact that the independent consciousness and awakening had touched the hill women. These women slowly started coming out of their shell and began to understand the nature of changes emerging in the outside world.

Although the modern education did not bring about sudden transformation, but despite of its shortcomings the foundation stone for the emancipation for women education was made by colonizers, educated natives and missionaries. Though different ethnic communities provided some sort of social and economic liberties to women but those cannot be comparable with the freedom, a woman can achieve after acquiring formal education. The modern education can make women well-aware about their rights and duties. Such rights in some forms were though present in the social and economic structure of pre-colonial Darjeeling, position of women had remained a subordinate one. Education provided them with strong pillars to strengthen their position in the society. However, hill women faced huge challenges in educating themselves and the lesser opportunities enjoyed by them than men cannot be doubted. The government effort was comparatively negligible. It is also quite interesting to note that the situation of hill women was not similar to the rest of Bengal. Unlike other parts of Bengal where educated men were quite supportive in women emancipation colonial Darjeeling showed a different picture. The native men of hills were intellectually not in such a position to support women. They were also still in the process of learning about the outside world. Despite all the hindrances, some women could make

their way to attain knowledge and could bring about new vision into their lives. Though slower than the rest of India, the evolutionary process towards upliftment of women began with it. The hill women travelled a long journey from living under the shadow of the male members of their family enjoying their limited rights to establishing their own position in the society.

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Locating the Workers ‘Coolies’ in the Tea Plantations of Colonial Darjeeling: A Historical Retrospect

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[Editorial Note: The paper is an attempt to trace the historical processes in the making of ‘coolies’ in tea plantations of Darjeeling mostly based on published sources. D.A.]

Abstract:

The labourers are the pillars of every industry. In fact, tea plantation is a labour-intensive industry in which, most of the works is done manually by the labourers. At the same time, it largely depends on cheap labour procured from the migrant population, however, such process entails structural transformations in the economy and society enabling the evolution of waged labour culture guided by the capitalist industrial model. Such arrangements facilitate the creation of a class who works in the plantation in lieu of wage i.e., the coolies. The coolies in general sense, are a well-researched topic in academia. However, tea plantation workers of Darjeeling with different anecdotal experiences cannot be homogenised with those of other plantation industries and the concerned topic requires separate analysis. Thus, this paper intends to trace the historical processes in the making of coolies in tea plantations and their consequences of Darjeeling using different methodological tools.

Keywords: *coolie, plantation, Darjeeling, labour, tea*

Introduction

During the early nineteenth century, the British desperately needed an alternative to eliminate the Chinese monopoly of tea trade as a result of which extensive plantations were started in different parts of the Orient. The opening of Darjeeling as a colonial capital with its modern geographical outline had prompted ardent transformation in its cultural landscape. The introduction of the tea industry had emerged as a watershed episode changing the fate of Darjeeling forever. The history of tea plantation needs critical understanding with rational reinterpretations to have an insight on related culture, and economy. Such attempt is not only essential to probe the colonial imagination of tea plantations rather is imperative in exploring the indigenous perspective. Thus, the paper aims at re-imagining, re-writing, and challenging the existing norms in the study of the tea plantations of Darjeeling.

Historical Backdrop of Tea Plantation in Darjeeling

In the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century, the expansion of European colonialism and a capitalist economy led to the emergence of coolies across Asia including India in general, and Darjeeling in particular. The concept of sovereignty in the pre-colonial period has been largely contested and the prevalence of a polity marked by semi-fluidity is generally accepted in the historical discourses. In Darjeeling, such features are quite

pronounced. There are oral and written sources indicating the fact that inhabitants paid tribute to different entities in different historical junctures. However, such sources also attest to the fact that the region before colonial intervention had a predominance of ethnic groups consisting mostly of Tibeto-Burmese dialect speakers who maintained fluid frontier relation with adjoining areas since time immemorial (see Pradhan 1991; Middleton and Shneiderman (ed) 2018). However, the British discovery of Darjeeling brought a standard benchmark in the historiography of the region. The colonial intervention of the territory between rivers Mechi to Tista with different political motives led to obtain perpetual territorial and political stability of this region and creation of modern Darjeeling.

The Deed of Grant in 1835 between the Raja of Sikkim and the East India Company ceded the territory to the new colonial dominion with an agreement of Rupees 3000 per annum as remuneration from the company. The territory was subsequently consolidated with the inclusion of the area east of the river Tista from Bhutan in 1865 (see O'Malley 1907; Dozey 1916; Dash 1947; Hunter 1974). Colonial administrators conveniently called this territory a virgin land replete with dense forests (Ritchie 1891: 18) Thus, the newly assimilated territory was proposed to be a place of rejuvenation and army depot. However, with the advent of A. Campbell as Darjeeling's first Superintendent, a large tract of land was readily sold to the European investors for the development of tea plantation (Bhattacharya 2012: 21-40; see Besky 2014) by declaring it uninhabited and non-revenue producing 'waste lands' (Revenue and Judicial Records from India and Bengal 1837: 5). Simultaneously the native inhabitants were eschewed from the historical records that certainly backed the colonial narrative of virgin territory (Middleton 2018: 30-4). The logic behind the projection of the place as a virgin was to facilitate private investments for the development of plantation economy and eventually making it a 'planters' own colony' or an enclave to dispense colonial administrations of 'Victorian' design (see Bhattacharya 2012). With the success of the experimental tea plantation by Campbell in 1848, Hooker has foreseen the possibility of establishing extensive plantations for commercial purpose. He wrote regarding Lebong that "tea plants succeed here admirably and might be cultivated at great profit and be of advantage in furthering trade with Tibet" (Griffiths 1967: 86-7). Henceforth, the bilateral collusion of colonial governance and planters' capital had transferred Darjeeling into the hands of nascent class of planters who would now dictate and design the fate of Darjeeling in the coming decades.

The triumph of experimental tea plantations encouraged the formation of different tea companies that introduced the commercial tea estate in the 1850s. The inauguration of Aloori Tea Garden as first commercial plantation in 1856 led to further expansion of plantation in the region and subsequently, by 1870s, there were 56 tea gardens with around 11,000 acres of land under cultivation employing 8,000 labourers and producing a yield of nearly 1,708,000 lbs. of tea (Dash 1947: 113-4). As the consequences of the investment of colonial capital, the development of tea plantation in the region was amplified drastically within a few decades that is cited in the following table:

Table I: The Growth of Tea Plantation from 1866-1905 in Darjeeling

Year	Number of Tea Estates	Area Under Cultivation (in Acres)
1866	39	10,000
1870	56	11,000
1874	113	18,888
1885	175	38,499
1895	186	43692
1905	148	50,000

Source: O'Malley 1907: 74

Conceptualizing the Plantation Workers- 'Coolies'

The development of the plantation economy is also believed as an apparatus to tame the wild populace and their land (see Breman 1989). In fact, this has been utilized as a tool to consolidate the newly acquired colonies by the imperialists (see Thompson 2010) and to bring the natives into the light of their civilisation and modernity (see Phillips 1904). The introduction of plantation economy infers to the redeployment of slave relation in new zones of commodity production or the formation of second slavery with indentured labourers in almost all the plantations across the world who are disclosed as spatially and temporarily heterogeneous but at the same time integral aspects of modernity and capitalist transformation (Tomich (ed) 2016: 1-3). Plantations represented the deepest penetration of European power system in the frontier land¹, it brought men under new and stringent order of control (see Thompson 2010) entirely different from their prevailing structure. Coolie as an identity is the construction of colonialism rather it is a composite identity of labourers precisely in the historical landscape of Asia. These labourers in the industrial plantation sector including the tea plantations of Darjeeling hills gradually obtained a distinctive identity as plantation worker or a 'coolie'. The migrants from an agrarian background who lost their ancestral lands were reported to have arrived at the gates of mills, mines and plantations in increasing numbers as waged workers. A coolie is generally termed as a waged worker who has no proper legal securities rather belongs to the lowest unit in the industrial labour market. In the recent days, they are not paid by the hour but in accordance with the assigned task, hence considering the classical politico-economic sense, they cannot be considered as proper wage labourers (Kelly 1992: 252-3). With the introduction of work-time, and clocks in the factories, the work of a labourer in a day essentially in the tea plantations begins and ends with the ringing of bell. Thus, in tea plantation coolie is

¹ An introduction by Sidney W. Mintz and George Baca in Edgar Tristram Thompson's book 'The Plantation' writes affirming plantations as pioneering institutions in frontier areas and deeply penetrated centre of European power and a centre to dispense colonial norms in the newly added territories.

paid both by time and assigned task i.e., *thika*. The aim of the planter was to have his labour reaching the greatest possible degree of efficiency (Phillips 1904: 258-61). During this time, plantation workers were not free to enter or leave the contractual relations with the employer, thus his identity appeared primarily as the seller of labour bonded by contracts, popularly known as *girmityas*.² This was in vogue in the plantations of Assam and other areas where Indian labourers were indentured (Kelly 1992: 251-2). However, in the case of tea plantations in Darjeeling, the labourers were free and had not entered into any kind of agreement or were controlled by any special legislative enactments, they were free to come and go as they like (O'Malley 1907: 84).

During the concerned time-period, plantation economy recognises the 'ideal coolie' to be the migrant population who had abandoned their families and home who were predominantly male populaces. Women by large could not meet this ideal for planters, as women with young children cannot be utilised to the maximum in procuring their labour, it represented double burden with extra non-productive mouth to feed (Breman and Daniel 1992: 283-5). Women workers had no substantial role in the factories³ and in the plantations, thus female coolies were not considered to be ideal coolie (Breman 1989:192). The mastery exercised by the planters went so far that the indentured labourers could marry only after obtaining permission from their masters. The identity of female workers were not visible in the moral landscape of cooliedom. Moreover, she was counted among the low 10-20 percent of female workers who were wives, mothers and sisters of male workers who were counted as dependants, not workers. Even some men as heads of households refused to count their female counterparts as workers (Breman and Daniel 1992: 287). Certainly, the identity of coolie is masculine projection of hierarchical and patriarchal institutional value as George L. Beckford rightly states plantation to be a 'patriarchal institution' (see Beckford 1972). However, female coolies in Darjeeling tea plantations have had their distinct identity and completely different than their counterparts in other parts of the world which is addressed below in the paper.

The Making of Coolies in Tea Plantations of Darjeeling

The history of the plantation system has been characterised by the fact that labour requirements could normally be met by the supply of labourers in the immediate neighbourhood of the plantations (Gordon 2007: 314)

The rise of industrial plantations in the nineteenth century is customarily referred to as Second Industrial Revolution that replaced previous traditional cultures with new capital cultures. Through this process of agrarian transformation precisely known as depeasantisation, the transformation 'from peasants and tribesmen to plantation workers'

² The Indians called the contract as *gimit*, from the English word agreement. They called themselves *girmityas* precisely by those who had entered plantation as labourers through agreement with the planters.

³ In British India, the Factory Act of 1891 reduced the numbers of working hours that women were allowed to work per day. The prohibition of night work for women was followed soon thereafter.

or coolie or a waged labourer (see Das Gupta 1986) became ardently habitual. The early colonial accounts claimed the region to be sparsely populated by the native tribes like Lepchas, Limbus and Bhutias. However, these colonial demographic numbers are, at best, incomplete (Middleton & Shneiderman (ed) 2018: 6-8) which needs further introspections⁴. W. W Hunter questions the accuracy of the census by calling it fairly accurate for the old hill territory of Darjeeling but incorrect for Tarai sub-division and for the Damsang tract (Kalimpong) to the east of river Tista (Hunter 1876: 41). The settlement of Darjeeling from its very inception was based on logistics that included the presence of large numbers of natives who eventually served not only as domestic labour for the Europeans or as clerks for the civil administration, but also as plantation labourers in the tea estates (Bhattacharya 2012: 51). The development of plantation requires two basic necessities i.e., large cultivable land and a large labour force (Bhowmik 1980: 1524). The newly developed plantation economy in the region required colossal labour supply that could not be secured by the recruitment of natives only, thus Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal facilitated the supply. Certainly, the inhabitants from eastern Nepal moved along the porous and fluid Himalayan frontier to meet the demand of labour pool in the developing Darjeeling (see Pradhan 1991). J. D. Hooker compared the rapid development of Darjeeling with the Australian colony of the British (Hooker 1854: 50, O'Malley 1907: 34), besides he was also astonished to perceive the infrastructural development as well as the demographic transformation of the region. The plantation economy had to depend on migrant labour whose migration was induced by the planters backed by the state. In fact, Campbell was mostly responsible for the demographic transformation of the place as he realised the agrarian and feudal exploitation in the neighbouring kingdom could definitely be the push factor (see Pradhan 1991, Bhattacharya 2012, Besky 2014, Dash 1947, Middleton 2018: 30-3) and subsequently the emergent plantation would pull them in the form of wage labour. Unlike the plantation of the Americas, the labour-power here was not supplied by the slaves but by a workforce engrossed through different labour recruitment procedures. In general, all plantations were settlement, an institution with coerced labour or importation of indentured, contract or slave labour (see Thompson 2010), however in Darjeeling tea plantation importation and incorporation of the population became a major trend in the workforce accumulation.

The British relied largely on informal labour recruiters known as *sardars*⁵ to bring and integrate labour in the developing tea plantation economy. Seemingly they occupied important status in the plantation system. Sir Percival Griffiths has noted that recruiter

⁴ The colonial documents itself make contradictory statement on the demographic composition of Darjeeling. Campbell (1869), and Hunter (1876) call it an 'old Gorkha Station' and also validate the inhabitation of different tribal population at different juncture of time. The place had remained a major point of trans-Himalayan trade prior to the colonial intervention.

⁵ *Sardars* were Nepali men who used their knowledge of their natal regions in eastern Nepal to bring a steady supply of labour to Darjeeling. They were important intermediaries in the plantation structure and were integral to the maintenance of workers' subsistence.

including *sardars* used all forms of trickery and deceit to employ people in the tea gardens like by giving promises of better wages and advanced payments (Griffiths 1967: 283). Working closely with the planters, these agents were overall employer, supervisor, guardian and intermediaries between labour and management (Middleton 2018: 37; Sharma 2010: 16). Labourers were directly employed by *sardars*. The latter generally took advances from the estates or planters on the account of procuring coolies, though having no indentured ties with them as evident from Assam. O'Malley wrote *sardars* as guardians were looked for advance by the coolies, whereas the *sardars* were dependant on managers thereby making a financial bondage and rarely escaping the toils of it (O'Malley 1907: 84). *Sardars* had ethnic ties with the procured workers, which enabled them to gain their confidence and assurance. They tended to recruit from their own ethnic group which fostered that particular ethnic group in making the working-class of tea plantations and ultimately formed a multi-ethnic structure of the working-class in Darjeeling. Later, such *sardari system* was adopted in Terai and Dooars in 1870 in which the *sardars* were recruited by the manager through the legitimate authority of Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, an organisation of all tea estates managers based in Calcutta (De 2015: 279-83).

This recruitment in the plantation was something more than the abstract flow of people as labourers and was an assimilation of them forming into a new institution, economy, and culture. Precisely this economy gave birth to a new identity of class. As Thompson pointed out, the plantation is a 'race making institution' (Thompson 1975: 19-23) as the composition of the workforce in the tea plantations has heterogeneous ethnic groups with homogenous economic activity that constructs the notion of shared identity (see Bhowmik 1981) among them. The new arrivals with their distinct languages, customs and religious practices had to undertake homogenous economic activity leading to the development of collective class identity i.e., of a worker or coolie. Thus, this assemblage of ethnically plural population with different linguistic background but with homogenous identity of class facilitated to the acceptance and development of Nepali language as Darjeeling's lingua-franca. Rather such shared class identity and language became the crux for the rise of Nepali nationalism too in the region later in twentieth century (Pradhan 2010:1-41). The growth of the Nepali population assured the planters as they secured labour in future, however, the disapproval and hesitance of the Nepali government for the migration of their subjects to Darjeeling created political tension for some period resulting in the refusal of Nepali coolies (Middleton 2018: 34-38)

A Retrospect: Coolies in the Tea Plantation of Darjeeling

The tea planters in Darjeeling needed a section of population to be recruited at low wages, hence they chose the migrants from Nepal on a large scale. The *sardars* backed by planters, encouraged families rather than individuals to migrate in the plantations by which planters could procure the labour of entire family. Furthermore, it also ensured the future supply of labour as well (Bhowmik 2017: 56-7). The labourers were made free in the tea plantations

of Darjeeling (O'Malley 1907: 84). There are instances of workers moving from plantation to plantation in search of the most favourable living and working conditions for their families (Griffiths 1967: 518–9). In fact, there was no need to indenture or bond them through contracts as the migrants had no choice of returning back to their ancestral homeland due to ongoing political and economic mayhem. As a result of the Gorkha conquest, the peasantry in Nepal had facing an impoverishing state, therefore 'going to Mugalan' (as India was then called in Nepal) to sell their labour might have been the only alternative to escape the oppressive hierarchies of the Gorkha regime. Moreover, it can be considered as a symbolic act of protest against the consolidating empire and its oppressive structure (see Pradhan, 1991).

It is an irrefutable fact that the influx of population in Darjeeling after the introduction of tea plantations (see Hunter 1974, O'Malley 1907) as well as for the availability of 'lands'⁶ sufficient for cultivation made drastic transformation in its demographic composition within a few decades (Dash 1947: 49-50). Kiratas⁷ seemed to have already settled in Darjeeling by the middle of the nineteenth century and even before the introduction of tea plantations since Hooker enlisted Limbus as an inhabitant of Darjeeling (Pradhan 1991: 211-3). The first regular census of 1871-72 showed the dominance of Nepali population, as likewise, the *matwalis*⁸ and untouchables formed the majority among the migrants in Darjeeling (Dash 1947: 49). The Kiratas were largest in number among Nepali population followed by Tamang and Mangars, for whom Darjeeling became an easy refuge to escape from harsh conditions of adjoining eastern Nepal (Pradhan 1991: 211-2). In Darjeeling, the Brahmans formed 2 percent of the total Nepali population in 1901 while Chhetris constituted little more than 1 percent of total Nepali population in 1941. Apparently they chose to become the residents of 'Khasmahals' practising agriculture and started investing capital on land and cattle (Pradhan 1991: 214). However, a little percentage of that population also formed the work force in the plantation. The Census Report of 1891 made clear statement about the predominance of Matwalis population of Tibeto-Burmese language group and Kiratas in Darjeeling in general and tea plantations in particular. The statistical data is provided below:

⁶ Land by declaring as 'Waste Lands' was made available by the Company to attract capital and labour for infrastructural and demographic transformation of Darjeeling. Company was aware about the agrarian roots of Nepali population and knew the fact that they would prefer to settle in Darjeeling if cultivable land is made accessible.

⁷ The Tibeto-Burmese flock, predominantly the inhabitants of eastern Nepal precisely Limbus and Khambus who shared fluid frontier with Darjeeling and Sikkim from time immemorial (see Pradhan 1991).

⁸ It is generally associated with the Tibeto-Burmese groups, who is considered relatively low than Nepali upper castes (*Tagadharis*) and to whom consumption of intoxicant liquor is not a taboo.

Table:II Caste-Wise Population Composition of Darjeeling in 1891

	Caste	1891
1	Brahmans
2	Kshatriyas/Chhetris
3	Newar	4,953
4	Gurung	9,232
5	Mangar	11,412
6	Jimdar / Khambu	29,950
7	Sunwar	5,156
8	Limbu	12,812
9	Kami	7,048
10	Darji / Damai	3,460
11	Kurmi	525
12	Sarki	1,547
13	Yakha	1,250

Source: Census Report of 1891: 13 (Cited in Rasaily 2003)

The Brahmans- Chhetris did not form any sizable part of the nineteenth century migration, however those who got migrated preferred to become cultivators. Sarat Chandra Das in *Journey to Lhasa and Central Asia* mentioned that while travelling to Tibet through Darjeeling and Eastern Nepal, he noticed numerous Nepali settlers with some Brahmans- Chhetris who made their livelihood chiefly by selling milks. However, in comparison, their numbers grew considerably in Eastern Nepal during the corresponding period (Pradhan 1991: 214). In 1848, Hooker while describing Ilam in Limbuwan noted that the inhabitants were chiefly brahmans due to the introduction of new land tenure systems and losing of Kipat land ownership by the inhabitants as the consequence of Gorkha imperialism (Jones 1976: 70-4, see Caplan 1970). However, it is interesting to note that the people escaped the feudal exploitation in Nepal to endure colonial exploitation in British India (*Mugalan*). Thus, their population migrating from eastern Nepal started increasing in the tea plantations of Darjeeling and adjoining regions. *Sardari* system of labour recruitment can be traced as another factor for their predominance in Darjeeling plantations as they mainly recruited labours from their own ethnic groups. Further, the opening of Gurkha recruiting depot in Darjeeling in early 1890s had significant impact on their increasing immigration. Considering this group including Magar, Gurung, Limbu and Rai as belonging to a 'martial race' encouraged them to migrate in Darjeeling as tea coolies. This, in fact, allowed them of having scope to get recruitment as soldier or police (Middleton 2018: 44-5).

However, Kumar Pradhan held the view that all Nepalis settled in the hills were proletariats as most of them were from working class backgrounds with no intra-community class

exploitations in Darjeeling (see Pradhan 1991, 2004; Sarkar and Khawas 2018: 181). However, he failed to address caste dynamics and locate tea plantation worker as a different entity. Certainly, the caste perspective in the formation of class cannot be overlooked and can be linked with the argument of predominance of alcohol consuming working class (see Mondal 2018) especially among tea workers with *matwalis* and untouchables ethnic roots. In most parts of the world, plantation labour, while remaining one of the lowest paid occupational categories, has invariably included women. However, during the initial decades after the introduction of tea industry, the women workers were few enjoying relatively low wages as compared to their male counterparts in tea plantations of Darjeeling. Such discrimination was due to the incapacity of plantation structure to locate them as complete workers as they lacked the moral order of coolie identity (see Breman and Daniel 1992). Royal Labour Commission of Labour Inquiry, 1931 stated the minimum earnings of tea workers were about ‘seven annas and six pices a day for men, women earned six annas a day while two anna nine pices for adolocents’ in Darjeeling (GOI 1931: 399). The table below shows the difference between the male and female composition in the district of Darjeeling when tea industry was in the phase of its initial development where the number of women workers are comparatively low to their male counterparts..

Table III: Sex Ratio of Population in Darjeeling, 1872-1891

Year	Total population	Males	Females
1872	94,712	53,057	41,655
1881	155,645	89,351	66,294
1891	223,314	123,046	100,268

Source: Census Report of 1891, (Cited in Rasaily 2003)

A.J Dash reports 34 per cent of men, 49 per cent women and 17 per cent children in 1939 (Dash 1947:119-20) and Labour Investigation Committee found employment of women and children higher suggesting the increase of women workforce in the plantations of North Bengal (Bhadra 1985: 93, 2004: 53-5). Female workers started forming a major workforce in the tea plantations right from the beginning of the twentieth century (Bhadra 1985: 93). The sardari system encouraged family migration and their recruitment to meet the growing demand of labour. Furthermore, it would prevent the workers from escaping to other work sectors (Sharma 2010: 16). Initially, tea workers used to escape from their job to work in railway and roadway construction sectors. Planters too encouraged the recruitment of women workers by considering them submissive who would not bargain even if they were being exploited (Banerjee 2018: 3-6). Their task in the garden mainly plucking, pruning and other garden maintenance were considered unskilled, low-skilled and of low prestige and therefore, were entitled to a low wage. The intention of the planters had eventually become more manipulative by recruiting more female workers with less

wage and were conscious enough to identify those migrant women from eastern Nepal with agrarian backgrounds would easily adapt to the work in tea plantations because of its agrarian characteristics. Recruitment of female coolies along with their families would also secure future labour supply. In fact, the planters made desperate pleas to the government to stop the incursion of their workers in other occupations including military to preserve and retain their workforce for the development of gardens (Middleton 2018: 45-6). The male workers have been encouraged to join British Army abandoning their previous work to enjoy job security, pension benefits, land grants, and relatively high status whereas their female counterparts due to their gendered responsibilities of domestic work and child-rearing could not move out from the garden (Sharma 2018: 86-7) and would remain as stable workforce who would not abandon their work in the middle. Certainly, such situation facilitated in the rise of the number of women workers in the tea plantations of Darjeeling thereafter.

The emergence of women workers efficient in the plucking of tea leaves and their specialisation on the task is the result of embedded socialisation with training and practice that has been prevailing since centuries (Banerjee 2018: 6). Perhaps, the narrative of 'nimble fingers enabling better plucking of tea leaves without damaging the bush' (Banerjee 2018: 6-7) is the desperate gendered attempt of the colonial planters to make women work in comparatively low wage and to avoid labour shortage when men workers started moving out of the plantation in search of better wages and opportunities. Women workers too focussed on plucking intensively certainly to enjoy the incentives (amount per kilogram) provided after the completion of allocated task, *thika* in order to earn similar to their male counterparts

Conclusion:

The tea plantation introduced the natives with the western model of industrial capitalism and bestowed them with a new identity in Darjeeling. The tea plantation, a labour-intensive industry, that needs a huge workforce largely relied on the transformation of agrarian and tribal populations into plantation workers (see Das Gupta 1986). These structural transformations among the population not only acquainted them with the western values of civilisation but they were also tamed by the planters to become a perfect coolie (see Breman 1989). In fact, plantations made the 'barbarian and uncultured flocks of tribes and peasants' to accept and adapt the European model of civilisation. The white planters and managerial class were something to be idealised (see Phillips 1904) and to be addressed as Sahib and Memsahib having sole authority like an official of the state. It is of little wonder that the plantation system has actually been embedded with feudal structural values, and it was subsisted on the capitalist-industrial norms of labour control. *Sardari* system further institutionalized such feudal values by which *sardars* became the overall recruiter, guardian, and representative of the workers. In most of the cases, this mechanism had

completely denied the basic rights of the coolies, thereby making *sardars* the only legitimate head.

There are a very few instances that Nepali migrants occupied high or significant positions in governmental and non-governmental offices unlike the *sardars* who was being mostly acknowledged as the first-class contractor, even achieving the title of ‘Rai Bahadur’ (Sharma 2018: 88-91) and ‘Mandal’ (see Sarkar 2010) Thus, they failed to play a decisive role in power structure of the colonial plantation economy. Perhaps, such denials are the reason for the lack of political representation of coolies in Darjeeling.

Alternative employment was totally barred for the coolies making them reliant on plantations. However, some of them managed to get recruited in the army or other sectors but still bearing their roots in the plantations. Thus, the workers or coolie of tea plantations in Darjeeling faced utmost and strict surveillance through garden chowkidars and special North Bengal Mounted Rifles formed in 1872 to protect the interests of the planters (Bhowmik 2011: 246-7). Though the coolies in Darjeeling were neither indentured nor enslaved, the relation between the planter and the coolie was much less than that between employer and employee and more like master and slave (Bhowmik 1981: 135).

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The Mangars: Origin and Settlement in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling

Asudha Mangar

Abstract: *The history and culture of the Aryans have been extensively dealt with by different scholars but the description of the non-Aryans or the aboriginal tribes still hold obscurity either it is about their contribution to the primitive history of India or facts of their origin in the Indian sub- continent. The history of origin of Mangar or Magar in India is also shrouded in obscurity. It is due to this fact; a variant of opinions is adjoined with them. However, some scholars emphasized on the fact that the Magars or Mangars, are one of the aborigines of Sikkim and Nepal, belong to the Kirata community of the Eastern Himalayas. They are one of the oldest tribes of Sikkim. Rajesh Verma has reasonably stated that the Kiratis include Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Mangar and Tamang tribe of Sikkim. S.R. Timsina has also mentioned that the Mangars, Limbus and Lepcha are the earliest settlers of ancient Sikkim. J.D. Hooker has also described them as the aborigines of Sikkim, whence they were driven by the Lepchas westward into the country of the Limboos and by this latter further west (Nepal) still. At the end of 20th century, the identity aspirations and sense of identity have offered a new dimension to the assertiveness of the ethnic groups and similarly to this community. It is in this background, the history of origin of Mangars and their traditional values came to prominence and look for an identification of the facts in the district of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. Hence, the article attempts to find the history of its origin and their inhabitation in these districts of West Bengal.*

Keywords: *Kirata, Primitive, Aborigines, Indo-Mongoloid, Sub-Himalayas.*

Introduction:

The name Kiratas is for the first time found in the Yajurveda (*Sukla Yajurveda, Vajasaneyi Samhita*, XXX, 16; also, *Krsna Yajurveda, Taittiriya Brahmana*, III, 4.12.1). Macdonell and Keith have the following note in their *Vedic Index on Kirata*: 'Kirata is a name applied to a people living in the caves of the mountains, as appears clearly from the dedication of the Kirata to caves (guha) in the *Vajasaneyi Samhita (also Taittiriya Brahmana)*, and from the reference in the Atharvaveda to Kirata girl (*kairatika*), who digs a remedy on the ridges of the mountains'. Later the people called *Kiratas* were located in Eastern Nepal, But the name Seems to have been applied to any hill folk, no doubt aborigines, though the *Manava Dharma- Sastra* regards them as degraded *Ksatriyas* (ref.X,44)' (Chatterjee 1951: 27-8). The *Kiratas* pre-eminently figure among the tribes described in ancient Indian and Classical (Greek and Latin) literature, which constitute one of the major segments of the tribal communities living in the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan regions, forest tracts, Mountainous area and the Gangetic plains, valleys and delta of India, have been a subject of least important (Singh 2008: 2). However, the subject has been accorded the prominence

by the ancient Indian writers, classical geographers and historians while dealing with the Primitive races of India.

G.P. Singh opined that in the post- Vedic times the epics-the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were the most useful sources where the *Balkanda* and the *Kiskindhaa Kanda* of Valmiki *Ramayana* dealt with their origins, movement, physical characteristic, dwellings in the marshy region near the sea- coast, etc. Tulsidasa also referred to the Kirata and Khasa together in the Uttarkanda of his Ramacharitamanasa. Similarly, *Mahabharata* – a semi historical work also provides a very clear and reliable account of the Kiratas. Out of the eighteen Parvas of the Mahabharata, ten are valuable for the study of Kiratas. The puranic records comprising both the *Mahapuranas* and the *Up-Puranas* are the repository of historical information about ancient Indian tribes and races. It is true that the traditional accounts, contained in the *Puranas* have been vitiated by mythological details, interpolations, exaggeration of religious bias and other anomalies. However, in spite of many obvious defects the Puranic accounts cannot be regarded as wholly untrustworthy. The *Kiratas* have been described in different *Puranas*, which supply very positive information about different aspects of the life and culture of the *Kiratas*. They have been described as the peoples, the countries and *Janapadas* of the eastern, northern or *Uttarapatha*, southern western and mountainous regions of India (Chatterjee 1951: 24).

Rajatarangini of Kalhana, the chronicle of Kashmir and the first celebrated historian of ancient India between CE 1140 to 1150, mentions Kiratas as associated with some other aboriginals' tribes living in the Vindhya hills and Rajputana (Chatterjee 1951: 24). According to him, the *Subhasitavali* of Vallabhadeva of Kashmir (not earlier than fifteenth century CE) describes the *Kiratas* as a degraded mountain tribe, who lived mostly by hunting. Ronnow Kasten's article '*Kirata- A Study on some Ancient Indian Tribe*' (Ronnow, 1936 vol. XXX: 90-170), is helpful in finding the graphic description of the origin, migration, settlement, expansion, etc. of the *Kiratas* inhabiting different region of India. G.P. Singh has also appreciated him in preserving the detailed account of the subject as well as for critically examining the views of different scholars regarding the Indo-Mongloid theory of the origin of Kirata.

Mangar as One of the Kiratas Communities:

The Kiratas, one of the living representatives of the primitive non- Aryans race, construct a wide scope for making of historical study of their culture and civilization. The present scenario reflects that they are widely scattered and divided. After having been defeated and driven away by the Aryan race, they took refuge in dense forests, mountains, and hills. In ancient times the "North Eastern, North Western, Central and Deccan regions" were the cradles of the Kirata culture (Singh 2008: 6). Suniti Kumar Chatterjee has observed that the original Mongloid incomers were a very primitive people, being mostly hunters and food-gatherers who also used caves for habitation. The Mongoloid tribes of Tibeto-Burman speaking dialect had probably found a centre of dispersion in the tract to the east of Tibet and north-east of Assam, from where they might have spread into India and Tibet prior to

1000 BCE. The Tibetans, according to a late Buddhist tradition which is of very doubtful historical value, are said to have entered their country during the lifetime of Buddha- say about the middle of the first millennium BCE. They may have been preceded by earlier tribes who formed the nucleus or basis of the 'Himalayan' Mongoloids of Nepal, speaking languages like Newari, Lepcha, Magar and Gurung and the '*pronominalised*' languages like Dhimal, Khambu, Kanawari and others. The speakers of the '*pronominalised*' dialects probably represent the earliest waves: and the Newars, Lepchas, Magars, Gurungs, etc., represent later arrivals. The Himalayan groups of Indo- Mongoloids were thus probably the first to be established in India, and settled in Nepal, and pushed as far west as Garhwal and Kumaon, and further to the west; but they have remained largely in a very primitive state: except Newars (Chatterjee, 1951: 41).

Different Views Regarding the Origin of Mangar:

The origin and history of Mangar is not easy to trace, but some scholars have tried some of the possible views regarding the origin of Mangar. Michael Witzel mentions, 'Magars were apparently known already to the Mahabharata as Maga, to the Puranas under the name of Mangara and in a Nepalese copper plate inscription of 1100/1 AD as Mangvara' (Witzel 1991: 18).

The mythological narratives describe Mangar as the descendants of 'Gana Devta' of the Lord of Kirateshwar (Shiva). It tries to bring the fact that the entire tribes of Himalayas as descendants of Kirateshwar, ranging from the Kashmir Himalayas range to Myanmar and from Tsangpo river of Tibet to the Gangetic Plain (Pradhan 1996: 4). A Copper Plate Inscription of Shivadeva, dated 221 Newar Era (1110 CE) has been discovered (The Gazetteer of Sikkim: 10, 38). On it is mentioned the name of a *vishaya*, or province, called Mangavara. Scholars believe that the name was an archaic form of Magar. They came into prominence as a great power in about 1100 A.D., when Mukunda Sena, the Magar King of Nepal invaded and conquered the Nepal Valley and committed terrible atrocities during the reign of Hari Deva, King of Nepal (Pradhan 1991: 35).

Apart from this, it is to be mentioned that the eighteenth century king, Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of the modern kingdom of Nepal announced and loved to call himself 'the king of Magrat' or 'the king of Magar country' (Beine, 2013: 61-74). According to Marie Lecomte -Tilouine, a senior researcher in social Anthropology at the French National Centre for Scientific Research, Prithvi Naryana Shah narrated in his autobiography about praying to a goddess who he described as the daughter of Rana or Magar (Lecomte-Tilouine 2009: 81-120). The Scottish contemporary writer, Francis Buchanan- Hamilton, in his journal contends that the shah dynasty was derived from the Magar tribe (Hamilton 1819: 26). Many prominent Historians of Nepal have claimed that '*Aramudi*', an eighth-century ruler of the Kali Gandaki region was a Magar King (Shrestha, 2003 and Prapannacharya 2014-15: 518). *Aramudi* derives from the word for 'river' in the Magar language which means, '*ari*' stands for 'Source of Water' and '*modi*' stands for 'River',

which means, ‘*Arimodi*’ or ‘*Arimudi*’ literary meant for the source of river. But due to lack of historical evidence there are conflicting ideas regarding the originate of Magar in Nepal. The Magaras or Mangars, one of the aborigines of Sikkim and Nepal, belong to the Kirata community of the Eastern Himalayas. They are one of the oldest tribes of Sikkim. Rajesh Verma has stated that the Kiratis include Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Mangar and Tamang tribe of Sikkim (Verma 2015: 7).

As per Kirat Mundhum, Iman Singh Chemjong states that a place called Shin in the northern part of the Himalayas was the original home of the Mangars. They were headed from north to South by Shin (Chemjong 2003: 138). The Magars (Mangars) are described by Hamilton (1819) as a Himalayan Tribe “Wallowing in all the ancient abominations of the mountaineers” and found anywhere in the Himalayan region (Vansittart 1896: 104). S.R. Timsina has mentioned that the Limbus and Magars, were identified as ethnic groups in Sikkim in 1642 (Timsina, 1998, pp.22 & 42). Iman Singh Chemjong further stated that ‘in the East Nepal and Sikkim the Mangars are so called because they were the children of Mang, Mong or Mongol people. The Chinese and Burmese people call *Mang* or *Mong* for Mongolians; and *ar* or *arui* means children. So Mangar means the Children of Mongols. He regards it as the correct interpretation as their complexion proves that they are no other than scattered Mongolians (Chemjong 2003: 141). On the authority of Madhya Asia ka Itihas (History of Central Asia) by Rahul Sanskritayan, the learned author has identified the Ancient Mangar Kirat tribe of Sikkim and Nepal with ‘Kirait’, one of the nomadic tribes of Central Asia. He says that long before the adoption of the name Mongol or Mongolians (in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE) in Central Asia, one branch of the tribe Kirait and Mongku tribe of Central Asia spread towards Suchuwang, Yunan, Burma, Eastern India and Nepal. They did neither hear the name Mongol nor do they claim to be of their origin. The Mangar tribe of Nepal, he says, must be from the composite group of Kirait and Mongku who came to Sikkim and became Mangar (Chemjong 2003: 74-5). The Mangars or Magars after having settled in Sikkim in Ancient times roughly before the fifth century ruled in its various parts independently like the Lepchas and Limbus (Singh 2008: 96).

John Dalton Hooker, who conducted a scientific exploration in Sikkim in 1848-49, has mentioned that “Mangars, a tribe now confined to Nepal west of Arun, are the aborigines of Sikkim, whence they were driven by the Lepchas westward into the country of the Limboos and by this latter further west (Nepal) still. They are said to have been savages and not of Tibetan origin and are now converted to Hindooism” (Hooker 1855: 180). S.C. Das⁹ in his book has mentioned about the existence of Magar in Sikkim very earlier and described that while travelling to Tibet, he heard of Kangpachen People (a district to the west of Kanchenjunga) and of Magar, the ruins of their forts and towns in the Kangpachen

⁹ He writes, “The legend which I heard of the Kangpachen people (west of Kanchan Gongga), and of the Magars the ruins of whose forts and towns we saw in the Kangpachen valley, is very interesting. People say the account is correct and true...”.

Valley, which seemed to him very interesting and the people assured him about its correctness and truth (Das 1902: 26-7). Northey and Morris also approved of inhabitation of Magar in the temperate region which was immediately to the north of foothills (Northey and Morris 2014: 165).

H.H. Risely, while dealing with the *History of Sikkim and its Rules*, also mentioned about the rule of the Magar kings or chiefs in Sikkim (Risley 1894: 27). During 1600 CE. or so the chief Sintu Pati Sen had established a Magarjong at Mangsari, West Sikkim, and ruled surrounding areas for many years. The Ruins of Mangarjong at Mangsari, West Sikkim is still there. Similarly, ruins of many Mangarjong such as Sukhia Pokhari of Darjeeling; Mansong Mangarjong of Suldung, Kamrung, Famtham, Sudunglakha, Berthang-Berfok Mangarjong and Rateypani Kateng Mangarjong, are the historical and archaeological significance¹⁰ (Allay 2003: 45-65).

The Mangar tribe of Sikkim were in existence is also evident from the account of the travel of the first Chogyal Phuntsho Namgyal, who travelled through his entire kingdom. When Phuntsong Namgyal was summoned to Yuksom by the three Buddhist monks to proclaim him as the first Buddhist King (Gyalpo) of Sikkim in 1641 CE a team of three messengers had travelled through Sang, halted at Rumtek and while proceeding through Yangang, they encountered a group of Lepchas and Mangars¹¹. They were gathered there to witness and welcome their one of the would be first king of Sikkim (Namgyal, & Dolma 1908).

Settlement of Mangar:

I. Jalpaiguri

The settlement of Mangar in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district is one of the inquisitive facts to find. The common factor that brings them together is the growth of tea plantations in these places in the early second half of the nineteenth Century.

One of the long-lasting impacts of the imperial rule in the Jalpaiguri district especially in the Western Duars was the commercialisation of agriculture, and this process of commercialisation made an impact not only on the economy of West Bengal but also on society as well (Milligan 1919: 21). It should be mentioned that the considerable potential of Duars as a tea growing area was noticed as early as 1859 by Brougham at *Gazaldoba* (Gupta 1992: 56). The year 1877 marked a significant year, because the first Indian pioneer in tea industry Munshi Rahim Baksh opened a tea garden at *Jaldhaka* on 17.8.1877 on 728 acres of land (Ghosh, 1970: 283). In 1877 *Baintbarrie*, *Baniandanga*, *Ellenbarrie*, *Danidim* and *Washabarrie* tea gardens were started (Ghosh, 1970: 284). By 1881 the number of

¹⁰ Allay has thoroughly written about those historical sites with the mythology related with and its importance as ancestral heritage in Sikkim.

¹¹ The travel account of Chogyal describes the evidence of their presence a, “the next day they (the king and his followers), crossed over the Rag-dong Bridge and proceeded through Yangang. While passing through Yangang, where Lepchas and Mangars, as the party happened to be riding on ponies and some of the retainers had matchlock guns, which they went firing along the road, the simple natives who have never seen ponies, nor firearms, said to others, the entire party rode on huge hogs, and some of them bore sticks which when pointed towards you produced great sounds.”

gardens rose up to 55 and by 1890 Duncan Brothers had its agency in 12 gardens with a planted area of 5,795 acres.

II. Darjeeling

Darjeeling was originally a part of the Kingdom of Sikkim and was inhabited by the Lepchas, a tribe native to the area since the beginning of time. It was invaded by the Gorkha army from Nepal and attacked the ancient capital of Sikkim Rabdentse and annexed territories up to the Teesta River in Nepal. By 1816 the whole of the area of the then British Sikkim belonged to Nepal. After the Anglo-Gorkha war, one third of its territories were ceded to the British under the Sugauli Treaty in 1816. By the treaty of Titalia signed on 10th February 1817, the British returned it to Sikkimese Chogyal (Dozey, 1989: 196).

Dr. Campbell brought Chinese tea seeds in 1841 from the Kumaon region along with a number of Chinamen to teach the pioneers in this industry. He started growing tea on an experimental basis near his residence at Beechwood, Darjeeling. This experiment was followed by similar efforts by several other British. The experiments were successful and soon several tea estates started operating commercially. By 1856 the tea industry was well established in Darjeeling and by next six years it was extended to the Terai. The Makaibarie and Aloobarie were planned out in 1857 and soon followed by Takvar Tea Company in the next two years. The number of tea gardens were 39 by 1866, each having an average acreage of 256^{1/2} acres and aggregate yield of 133,000 lbs of tea and within four years the number of tea gardens rose to 56 in 1870. The constant growing tea estates in Darjeeling, increased the importance of Darjeeling and many citizens of Sikkim, mostly of the labour class, started to settle in Darjeeling as British subjects (Dozey, 1989: 197).

Under this background it is to be mentioned that the most of the Mangars are found in these areas as the plantation labourers and also as agriculturists. Thus, they are now found over most parts of Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Sikkim and other districts of West Bengal. They are mostly concentrated in Dooars, Darjeeling Hills, Dehradun, Bhaksu, also in Assam especially in Naga Hills and few are scattered in other parts of India. The 1901 Census figures for the Magars or Mangars were 3214 in Jalpaiguri and 11,174 in Darjeeling (*Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. 3: 206). J.F. Grunning mentioned that there were 3709 Mangars in Jalpaiguri district as per the 1911 Census figures (Grunning 1911: 41). As per the census of 1931, the Mangar population in West Bengal was 24,042, out of which 14,613 were in Darjeeling District alone. The Census of 1951 gives the figure of Mangars in West Bengal as 42,663 and in Darjeeling Hills as 34,350 (Mitra 1954: 72-92).

Jalpaiguri has been a homeland for different ethnic groups. Mangar being one among them enriched with their rich ancient culture and rituals have settled in tea-plantation and agriculture areas like Kalchini, Dalsingpara, Lankapara, Bandapani, Kumargram etc. In Darjeeling they are found in almost every part of the district but mostly concentrated in Rangbhang Valley Tea Estate, Magarjong, and Sukhia Pokhari etc. in Kursong Pankhabari Tea Estate, Babukaman and in Kalimpong, Samalbong Busty, and Kumai T.E. Chiboo

Busty etc. Most of the people of the Mangar community in these regions are farmers or peasants or tea-plantation labourers (ABMS to CRI, dated 29.12.03).

As mentioned by I.S. Chemjong, the Mangar tribe in India, were in Sikkim and ruled there before the Bhutia of Sikkim and in the sixteenth century, they had built a vast kingdom in Western Sikkim by Sintu Pati Sen. He mentions that another proof of the affinity of the Mangar and Lepcha tribe in counting numbers. The Mangars count one, two, three, four, and five as *kat, net or nis, sam, buli, banga*, and the Lepcha tribe says *kat, net or nis, sam, fali, fungu* (Chemjong, 2003: 142). The history of Sikkim describes that the Mangar chiefs were so active in Sikkim that they kept on fighting with the Sikkimese chief up to the 18th century. The Sikkimese chiefs tried their best to keep them under their power by matrimonial connection but failed and perhaps were driven out with no mention in history. With the passage of time the various socio-economic and religious factors contributed to their fall from a powerful and glorious past to a little-known backward caste of Nepali community and so as of Indian society. Most of the people from this community earn their livelihood by engaging themselves in occupations mostly in tea plantation and cultivation.

Conclusion:

The ruins of Magarjong (fort of Magars) at Mangsari, West Sikkim and similar ruins of Mangars in Sukhia Pokhari Darjeeling, Mansang and other places indicate their existence in these areas since antiquity. The Ethnological team led by Sinha in Suldung village of West Sikkim under Chakung constituency also confirmed Mangar Settlement in the village. Hence, the existence of Mangars in West and South Sikkim is stated to have existed before the formation of “The Greater Sikkim” in 1642 CE.

The Limbus and Magars (Mangars) were identified as ethnic groups in Sikkim in 1642. CE. Das observes that the ethnic scene of Sikkim began to undergo a rapid change with the advent of the British. Till 1780, Darjeeling was a part of Sikkim. During 1780-1816 it remained under Nepal. In 1816, for implementing the Indo- Nepal Treaty or Segauli treaty, it was ceded to the British. On 10th February 1817 according to the Treaty of Titalia, Darjeeling was transferred to Sikkim by the East India Company and again taken back from Sikkim on 1st February 1835 (Timsina 1998: 35, 42, 43). From the Maharaja’s History of Sikkim, it reveals that the Mangars were in Sikkim prior to 1642 as evident from the account of a travel of the first Chogyal Phuntsho Namgyal of Sikkim, who was consecrated in 1642, across the Kingdom (Namgyal and Dolma, 1908). Shiva Kumar Rai has appropriately stated that “some parts of Nepal were under Sikkim once and likewise some parts of Sikkim were Under Nepal....Therefore, it is natural that the various communities living in Sikkim and Nepal...freely moved and settled in various parts of Sikkim and Nepal” (Rai 1995: 12). Hence, the settlement of Mangars in Darjeeling which was once an adjacent part of Sikkim is a natural process whence, they were driven by the Bhutia chieftains in Sikkim. Similarly, concentration of Mangars in Jalpaiguri as being the adjacent foot hill of Darjeeling, might have been an obvious settlement in search of livelihood and the

commercialization of agriculture and tea industry during the period advanced the process of settlement in these two districts of North Bengal.

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Swadeshi Enterprise and The Bengali Business Community in North Bengal (1905 – 1920)

Supam Biswas

Abstract: *The growth and development of Bengali entrepreneurship during the Swadeshi movement is an integral part of the history of North Bengal. They exhaustively showed their interests in all fields such as tea plantation, timber, rice, jute, silk, textile, tobacco, banking, insurance and other miscellaneous sector. This section of the Indian bourgeoisie, though economically weak, represented national aspirations and sought to attain economic development.*

Keywords: *Swadeshi Enterprise, Jalpaiguri, Bengali Business Community, Europeans, Zamindars, Associations.*

Introduction:

The enterprising intellectuals, professional men or landlords who had shown courage and patriotism in starting new industrial enterprises particularly during the anti – partition movement in Bengal (1905), came out on top when the unstable 1920s had been succeeded by the 1930s (Ray 1994: 24). The small and medium Swadeshi entrepreneurs used ads as one of the media of propaganda among people through literature, handbills and so on. Thus, became one of the major sources of information on the industrial development of Bengal along Swadeshi lines (Bhattacharyya 2007: 156). In this context, we will study the involvement of Bengali people in trade and commerce in North Bengal during the Swadeshi movement who exhaustively showed their interests in all fields such as tea plantation, timber, rice, jute, silk, textile, tobacco, banking, insurance and other miscellaneous sector. In fact, an entire series of administrative, financial and economic policies and measures were adopted to impede the growth of the Indian entrepreneurship (Dasgupta 1992: 63). Much has been said about different aspects of Swadeshi Enterprise in Bengal. But still there are some lacuna, especially on the growth and development of the Swadeshi enterprise in North Bengal during the period of our study. This section of the Indian bourgeoisie, though economically weak, represented national aspirations and sought to attain economic development. Here in this essay an attempt has been made to make a study in this field.

Tea Plantation Industry:

The first phase of Swadeshi enterprise in North Bengal was started with the tea plantation industry. Tea plantation industry in the hill area and the Terai region of the Darjeeling district and the Jalpaiguri Duars was originally initiated and developed by European enterprises. Beside the European enterprise, the Bengali entrepreneurs coming various parts of undivided Bengal made a little bit entry into the field of tea industry (Roy 2002: 123). The European tea planters, under the banner of Duars Planters' Association (DPA),

established their full sway in the tea industry (DPA Report 1910: 54). The socio – political and economic environment was not suitable for the growth of Indian entrepreneurship. In the contemporary period, the whole of India was then under the flame of the independence movement. Now the Indian planters began to be intimately associated with the Indian independence movement at Jalpaiguri district. They felt a strong desire to be identified with their own social exclusiveness blended with Indian heritage, nationalistic ethos. The ‘Divide and Rule Policy’ of the British Raj always endeavoured to frustrate the Indian planters (Centenary Souvenir DBITA 1979: 76). Those incidents, it may be assumed, had functioned as an eye opener which led them to find out new ways and means. As a result, a number of tea estates came up by the Bengali entrepreneurs of Jalpaiguri town. The total number of Indian public limited companies having registered offices in the Jalpaiguri District was 89. Eventually, though the Indians operated on smaller scale and had weaker resources and capability, they emerged as the politically stronger voice (Census of India 1921: 51).

Beside tea industry, they also took great initiatives in establishing dramatic society, national school at Jalpaiguri town. The chief aim behind such endeavours was to create patriotic feelings among the youths. They actively participated in the Swadeshi movement in Jalpaiguri town (Bagchi 2007: 22).

Table I: Indian Tea Planters in Darjeeling Hill

Name of the Planter	Caste	Occupation	Native Place	Tea Estate
Naffer Chandra Pal Chaudhury	Hindu non Brahmin	Zamindar, Trader	Ranaghat, Nadia	Jogmaya
Bipra Das Pal Chauhdury	Do	Engineer	Do	Gayabarie and Tindharia
Ganesh Chandra Banarjee	Hindu Brahmin	Govt. Service	Dacca	Makaibari
Tarapada Banarjee	Do	Zamindar, Trader	Do	Happy Valley and Wiondsor
Bhagwati Charan Rai	Hindu Nepali Brahmin	Govt. Contractor	Darjeeling Town	Sourini and Sampripani

Table II: Indian Tea Planters in Jalpaiguri Duars

Name of the Company	Founder	Date of Registration
Nuxalbari Tea Co. Ltd.	Musharaf Hossain, Jalpaiguri	18/05/1910

Fulbari Tea Co. Ltd.	Sen mjumder Family, Birbhum	1919
Sukna Tea Co. Ltd.	Musharaf Hossain, Jalpaiguri	11/04/1913
Kamala Tea Co. Ltd.	Tarini Prasad Ray, Jalpaiguri	06/03/1914
Bhojnarayan Tea Co. Ltd.	Biraj Kumar Banarjee, Jalpaiguri	27/07/1915
Darjeeling Dooars Tea Co. Ltd.	Karuna Kishor Kar, Jalpaiguri	01/01/1916
Baikunthapur Tea Co. Ltd.	Prasanna Deb Raikot, Jalpaiguri	05/12/1916
Jalpaiguir Dooars Tea Co. Ltd.	Nalini Ranjan Ghosh, Jalpaiguri	24/03/1920
Merryview Tea Co. Ltd.	Musharaf Hossain, Jalpaiguri	24/04/1919
Sayyedabad Tea Co. Ltd.	Musharaf Hossain, Jalpaiguri	27/10/1919
Debijhora Tea Co. Ltd.	Rajendra KumarNeyogi, Jalpaiguri	14/05/1922
Chandmani Tea Co. Ltd.	Tarini Prasad Ray, Jalpaiguri	23/12/1924
Bijaynagar Tea Co. Ltd.	Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, Jalpaiguri	24/06/1925
Sahabad Tea Co. Ltd.	Saha Borthers, Nadia	20/03/1920
Radharani Tea Co. Ltd.	Jyotish Chandra Pal Chaudhuri,	1917
Kharibari Tea Co. Ltd.	Darjeeling Tea Company	1917
New Tea Co. Ltd.	Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, Kolkata	1936
Mahargaon Gulma Tea Co. Ltd.	Amiya Pal Chaudhuri, Nadia	1930, September

(Mukherjee, Sibsankar.1978. *Emergence of Bengali Entrepreneurship in Jalpaiguri Duars, 1879-1933*. Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of North Bengal.)

Tobacco Industry:

The Rangpur Tobacco Company was registered on 2nd September 1907 with an authorised capital of Rs. 2, 50,000 and started its functions in the month of May 1909. Some Swadeshi

entrepreneurs consisting of people belonging to the landowning class and professional people like lawyers, doctors, service holders took the initiatives in forming the Company. The Board of Directors consisted of ten members of which Pramathnath Bose, Jogendra Chandra Ghosh, Bipradas Pal Chaudhury were some notable personalities. However, the Company bought machineries from the European companies for its production like Messrs. Warden & Company, Bombay and few from Germany. Cash shortage was only one of the problems faced by the company. An equally serious one was the emergence of the European companies. Powerful, wholly foreign – owned companies with high – scale economics, low – cost technologies, greater capital and large market development outlays driven away small patriotic Indian firms from the market. The Rangpur Tobacco Company began to feel the pinch of competition from several foreign companies like the Peninsular Tobacco Company, the East India Cigarette Manufacturing Company – a Turko – Indian joint Enterprise. However, the most deadly competition for by the Rangpur Tobacco Company came from the British India Tobacco Company of Monghyr. It was originally an American company, commonly known as the Imperial Tobacco Company and finally turned into a British Company. They sold their articles at a very cheap rate and hastily set up an utmost superiority over the Rangpur Tobacco Company. By facing the challenge, the Rangpur Company started to sell its cigarettes at a very nominal rate but it did not work. However, their shortage of funds and their failure to plough back sufficiently for modernisation reflect their view of business. As a consequence, the company soon went into oblivion (Bhattacharyya 2008: 179-82).

Banking and Insurance:

During the Swadeshi movement, a large number of banks came up. The very utmost example was the Bengal National Bank established in the year 1907 (Bhattacharyya 2008: 231-4). In colonial North Bengal, the four banks of Dinajpur - the 'Trading and Banking Company', the 'Dinajpur Bank', the 'Balurghat Town Cooperative Bank', the 'Raiganj Central Cooperative Bank Limited' – were all established between 1906 and 1947. The 'Trading and Banking Company', was founded in 1906 under the leadership of Jogindra Chandra Chakrabarty and Lalit Chandra Sen. The 'Dinajpur Bank' came into force in the year 1918 by Jatin Mahan Sen who was himself a pleader by profession. After partition in 1947, the Bank was shifted to Calcutta along with its head office. One of the pillars of the Swadeshi movement in Dinajpur was the 'Balurghat Town Cooperative Bank'. It was established in 1915 under the initiatives of Umesh Chandra Banerjee, Gyan Chandra Sen, Nalini Kanta Goswami and Suresh Ranjan Chatterjee. However, the initiative and the bulk of the primary capital came from the leading native Zaminders. 'Dhana Bhandar', a golden name in the banking history of Dinajpur was founded by Jamini Ranjan Ghosh at Raiganj during the second decade of the twentieth century. The primary object of the Bank was to provide industrial advancement and to actively assist in the development and extension of the indigenous trade and commerce (Goswami 2008: 95).

Another area of colonial North Bengal famous for its banking activities was Jalpaiguri, the Head Quarter of Tea Industry. Professor Binoy Sarkar commented that “the most prosperous town of the Bengalis, across the whole of Bengal, outside Calcutta is none other than Jalpaiguri. The Court Bar Library did not consist of the minute details of the legal sphere; rather it consisted of discussion and debate on share market” (Ghosh 1417 BS: 31). However, the leading Bengali tea planters of Jalpaiguri town played a major role in laying foundation of banking business there. During the period of our study, there was only one European bank at Jalpaiguri town ‘Loyed Bank’ which mainly dealt with the European owned tea gardens. It had no connection with the Bengali owned tea gardens. This Bank instinctively favoured European as against the Indian tea planters. As a consequence, few leading personalities and tea industrialists of the town assumed the initiatives and ultimately, a number of banks were established to deal with the Bengali owned tea gardens in particular. The common features of the Swadeshi banks at Jalpaiguri town were small paid – up capital, boards of directors predominated by lawyers and management by persons without any experience or knowledge of banking.

The ‘Jalpaiguri People’s Cooperative Bank Limited’ was set up on 19 May, 1913 under the initiatives of Nawab Musharuf Hossain, Jagadindradev Raikat, Upendranath Karmakar, Sashi Bhushan Niyogi, Matilal Barua, Shanti Nidhan Ray, Pramath Nath Sengupta, Makhan Lal Kundu, Nityananda Das and so on (Sanyal 1970: 82-3). The first branch of the ‘Bank of Bengal’ established outside Calcutta was at Jalpaiguri town in 1894. In 1921, the bank was merged with the Presidency Bank and came to be known as Imperial bank of India. After partition in 1947, this bank was further merged with the State Bank of India on 1 July 1955 and came to be known as the State Bank of India, Jalpaiguri branch.

The ‘Bengal Duars Bank’ was established in 1911 under the guidance of tea industrialist Tarini Prasad Ray, Makleccher Rahman. The main purpose of the Bank was to provide loan and other facilities to the Bengali - owned tea gardens during the time of financial emergency. The ‘Raikat Industrial Bank Limited’ was established in 1920 under the endeavours of Raikat family. The objective was to develop a competitor for the private money lenders who then ruled the money market. Nevertheless, a number of private banks were setting up during the period at Jalpaiguri town such as the ‘Jotedar Banking and Trading Corporation’ (1911), Arya Bank, Lakshmi Bank, Rahut Bank, Calcutta Commercial Bank, Kumilla Bank. The “Das & Co. Banker and Share – Broker” firm was established in 1927 by Manaranjan Dasgupta to provide short term institutional finance to various tea companies and later on established a share – broker firm of his own. However, when a crisis of widespread default did strike, these banks were less able to tide over. These banks had very small capital to start with. For example, the ‘Bengal Duars Bank’ and the ‘Raikat Industrial Bank Limited’ were takeover by the State Bank of India in the year 1966. The Kumilla bank was merged with United Bank of India (Sutradhar 2008: 199 - 20).

Bengal had a long tradition of insurance business which reached its apex of glory during the Swadeshi movement. The Hindusthan Cooperative Insurance Society established in the

year 1907 was the finest example in this field. In north Bengal, the insurance business first established its feet at Jalpaiguri town. It made an appeal both the Bengali Muslim and Hindu intellectuals.

Paper Industry:

Paper was necessary for various purposes like publication of books, administrative purposes. The manufacture of writing paper was first introduced in Europe after the invention of paper machines. Like other parts of India paper was produced in various districts of colonial North Bengal such as Pabna, Bogura, Jalpaiguri. The people who invested in paper industry were professional middle class. In Pabna, jute paper of one type was produced by 13 families. It had a great demand among the local Mahajans and Marwari businessmen. Satish Chandra Kundu of Bogura had some fame in paper making. It was said that he learnt this art from Kashmir. Bankim Bihari Roy of Darjeeling set up a small firm where *deshi* tracing paper and black carbon paper was manufactured. However, *deshi* handmade paper could not compete with foreign paper of finer variety and cheaper price.

Match Factory:

By 1920s, Bengal had 27 match factories. In a Government report it was stated that 'many large factories have been started in Calcutta and its surrounding places and it promises to become one of the organised industries of the province'. Meanwhile, the industry spread too few districts of North Bengal like Jalpaiguri, Rangpur and Rajshahi (Report 1929: 50). The Jalpaiguri district was the first choice to establish match factory in North Bengal as it was abounded in timber and cost of transportation would be low. Therefore, a large number of Bengali entrepreneurs like Aditya Mahan Ray, A.K. Raha, Jagannath Sharma, A. Banerjee showed business interests in North Bengal. They started with whatever resources were available at hand in the heyday of *Swadeshi* movement. A.P. Ghosh, a match expert, collected 45 species of wood from the forests of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong for his Bande Mataram Match Factory.

1920s was a golden period for the indigenous match factory at Jalpaiguri. The bedrock of the Jalpaiguri Industries Limited was laid down in the 1925 and the manufacture of matches was started from January 1927. It was purely a *Swadeshi* concern. It had a Board of Directors consisting of seven members, all of whom were Indians. The company had 22 workers, consisting of 8 boys and 12 adult men. Each man and boy got an average monthly income of Rs. 25 and Rs. 12 respectively. However, the company arranged free quarters, medicines and pure drinking water for the welfare of its workers. The machines used by the Company mostly were of indigenous origin, perhaps made by the Bhowani Engineering and Trading Co. The wood was chiefly collected from the Baikunthapur forest and Berubari forest. The other necessary articles except timber were bought from Calcutta after paying high railway freights. However, the selling markets of its products were the districts of Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Rangpur and Dinajpur, all of which were situated within a very short distance from the manufacturing centre. Another example of such *Swadeshi* product

was the Aurora Match Factory of Jalpaiguri established in 1918 and the Kumudini Match Factory by Kumudini Chakrabarty in 1910. However, the later did not last long.

Deshi Shops:

The spark in the economic activities during the Swadeshi movement led to the appearance of a large number of deshi shops not only in Calcutta and its surrounding areas but in North Bengal also. In Dinajpur, the 'Sen Brothers', 'Ghatak Brothers' and 'Chattarjee Brothers' was the most popular depot of indigenous art and manufactures. The cycle shops 'Majumder friends' was the epic centre of revolutionary organisations like Anushilan Samiti in Dinajpur. The 'Shyama Stores' inspired by Gandhian ideology was opened by Shyamapada Bhattacharya. The 'Kamala Book Store' opened by Jogesh Sarkar was the first book shop at Raiganj. Another book shop 'Students Library' was opened by Durgesh Bhowmick. The 'Heena Art press' was opened by Raj Muhammad Sarkar in 1915. He was a prominent leader of Muslim League in Dinajpur. The 'Mukul Press' was opened by Sudhir Ranjan Dey, a teacher of Raiganj Coronation High School. The Swadeshi Bhandar set up by Jogindra Chandra Chakrabarty, Paramesh Chandra Da, Hari Narayan Bhattacharya in 1906 at Raiganj was declared to be cheapest and the best house of Indian goods. Another example of deshi shops was the Swadeshi Bhandar at Balurghat established by Nalini Kanta Chakrabarty, Debendra Ray in 1905. The grocery shops 'Chattarjee and Sons' opened at Balurghat was famous for its cheap rate and high quality. There were many others such as R Nag & Sons, Raj Lakshmi pharmacy, Krishna Pharmacy, Netra Sudha and Union Medical Hall of Dinajpur and 'Maldaha book Depot' by Prafulla Chakrabarty of Maldah (Goswami 2008: 94 – 5).

The Lakshmir Bhandar at Jalpaiguri town was a popular depot of indigenous art and manufactures. The Matri Bhandar was declared to be cheapest and the best house of Indian goods. The Jalpaiguri Poly Clinic opened by Dr. Jogindra Nath Sengupta, North Bengal store by Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal was some famous medicine shops of Jalpaiguri town. There were many others such as Nani – Gopal Store, Ghosh & Sons, D D Mukherjee & Sons which used to sell deshi goods.

Tara Stores, Ghosh Brothers was the most popular shops of indigenous art and manufactures at Siliguri. 'Padukalay' the first shoe house at Siliguri was opened by Priya Gopal sen, a railway serviceman by profession. Bijli Talkies, Tripti Talkies were some milestones where people assembled to watch theatre and movies. The first book store of the town 'Goswami Book House' was opened by Prabir Goswami. He was a freedom fighter and was said to have spent a important phase of his life at cellular jail, Andaman island. It was said that a communist - minded environment grew here centre around the shop. 'Burdwan Store' opened by Jiten Bhattacharya at Station Fader Road was famous for swadeshi items. The 'Dhakeshwari store', Chattarjee Brothers', 'Lakshmi Narayan Bastralaya', 'Deshbandhu Cloth Store' and 'Mitalaya' were famous for khadi garments. Grocery items and other articles were supplied from the 'Radhika Bhandar' to the tea gardens lying outside the town.

In Coochbehar, a number of shops was opened by the local people, instigated with swadeshi spirits. The Poddar & sons, established by Govinda Poddar at Cooch Behar was famous for cloths and other garments. Banik & sons, opened by Ramesh Banik had some reputation for supplying hardware items at cheap rate. In 1920s the first photo studio was opened at Coochbehar town by Bishnu Chakrabarty. With the growth of urban life and the promotion of education, there was a rise in the demand for these articles. The ‘Roy – Barman’ book store met such demands at the town. It was also very popular for school level books. Shyama Charan Talukdar was another famous book seller. ‘Alley and Row’ shop was famous for selling coal at Cooch Behar. It is important to mention here that the Bengali people belonged to the Saha community and had important role in (Roy 2002: 125 – 32).

Hosiery and Textile Industry:

Swadeshi Movement led to the emergence of a number of hosiery industries at Calcutta and Pabna. At Calcutta, the industry was relatively organised while Pabna had the most extensive cottage sector with the Pabna Shilpa Sanjivani Company. It was established by Taran Govinda Chaudhuri, the founder of the Pabna Bank with a nominal capital of Rs. 2 lakhs and was registered on 8 February 1906 (Kumar 1335 BS: 155-7). It trained local youths in hosiery trade. From Pabna, the industry spread to Rajshahi to Rangpur.

It was the most notable firm which achieved spectacular success from the very beginning. An official note stated that “The quality of its products was of such a high order and prices of its products were so low that very soon it established a reputation of its own in the market”. In 1937, the Company’s Secretary wrote to the Director of Industries that “after declaring high dividends for about fifteen successive years it has still been able to make a reserve about 150% of its capital. Its products enjoy an all India reputation”.

Shilpa Sanjivani was a follow – up of the Pabna Provincial Conference founded in February 1908 to promote industries with Rabindranath Tagore, Surendranath Banerjee, Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri, Hirendranath Dutta and Motilal Ghosh, Headmaster cum editor of Amrita Bazar Patrika. This company did not face early marketing problem. It did not engage foreign experts, made limited use of imported yarn and pursued an innovative marketing strategy with peasants as its main target group (Sarkar 2014: 197). However, in Pabna, there was the Pabna Sranta Shilpi Hosiery and Banking Limited. It was registered on 26 September 1911 and starts its journey with a nominal capital of Rs. 1 lakh (Bhattacharyya 2008: 23).

J.A. Vas has commented that “articles command a ready sale in rural markets with *bhadralok* boys earning about twenty rupees a month” (Vas 1911: 91). The western part of Bengal like Medinipur Bankura, Birbhum Hooghly and Bardhaman did not have such industries. Outside Calcutta, it was only found in east and north Bengal. In North Bengal, Pabna and Rangpur was the hub of hosiery industries. It was estimated that about 1,000 men were working in the cottage units of Pabna (Sarkar 2014:201-2). In Dinajpur, the principal weaving centres were Baliyadangi and Chirirbandar outposts. A kind of cloth

(Phota) made by the Rajbanshi women was very famous. Similarly, the ‘Lepcha cloth’ was produced in Darjeeling district.

Some Swadeshi entrepreneurs consisting of people belonging to the landowning class and professional people took the initiatives in forming a small weaving mill known as Pioneer weaving mill at Jalpaiguri town. It began its journey with a very small amount of Rs. 50,000/- in the year 1906. After some ups and downs, it freshly started in 1908. Another weaving mill opened at Jalpaiguri town was the ‘Shilpa Samiti’ in the year 1906 on the bank of Karala River. It was lasted for 4 years only. Later, it came under the ownership of Mahini Chakrabarty who opened a weaving mill ‘Mahini Mill’ at kusthia in 1910. The Swadeshi movement also paved the way of opening up small hosiery industries in the district Rangpur (Bhattacharyya 2008: 17).

Conclusion:

Thus, we may sum up the discussion that the first phase of Swadeshi enterprise in North Bengal was started with the tea plantation industry. Later, Swadeshi ideas of different strands took place in other areas, too. In fact, several attempts had taken to set up Swadeshi industries during the period of our study. The immigrant Bengalis were mostly belonged to the small and middle section of the society. Majority of them were legal practitioners, Zamindars, traders, Govt. servicemen. They strongly participated in tea industry, operated banking business and insurance. They opened many deshi shops, rice mills, printing house, hosiery and textile industry, paper industry, silk industry, match industry. They carried on their activities in the face adverse situation. Their zeal and agility were the main source of inspiration.

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Experiences of Refugee Women After Partition (1947-1962): A Case Study of the Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal

Agnita Pal

[Editorial Note: The present author tries to capture the history of memories of the refugee women with special reference to Jalpaiguri District as if the latter are re-living their past. D.A.]

Abstract: *Partition and migration can be considered as a mirroring face of Indian independence. A huge number of refugees entered in India after partition, and among them a considerable number were women. This particular gender unfortunately bore the most lasting scars of partition, both physical and mental, as refugees on one hand and for being women on the other. Adjustment in the new land was very difficult, rather challenging for them. Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal is in fact flooded with the stories of sufferings of those women thereby containing a significant history frozen in the memories of those surviving eyewitnesses. This paper is an attempt to seek attention to those unknown parts of human history.*

Keywords: *Women, Jalpaiguri, Partition, Refugees, Suffering, UCRC.*

Introduction:

The present year, 2021, as we are celebrating 75th Independence Day and reminiscing the glorious history of our freedom fighters, who lost their lives and livelihoods in securing freedom of their motherland, it is rather our duty to throw ample light on other aspects of independence as well. Similar to various episodes enriching the history of pre-independence era, the refugee migration in India, made the aftermath of partition phenomenally important. A huge number of refugees crossed the border and flooded the Indian subcontinent. Both the men and women, from either side of the border, had to tremendously suffer due to partition. It became an anathema to their lives. The gender, that had to pay the highest cost of partition, was undoubtedly the female. Even any word is not sufficient to describe their sufferings both for being women and for becoming refugees. They became the common target of all inhuman activities. Sexual assault, abduction, forced marriages, intimidation became regular events in their life. The mental and physical threats converted their livable earth into a mere hell. In Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin's words,

Women who were destitute in one way or another by the event, as forced mass migration led to an extreme disruption of life at all levels and exposed them to a kind of upheaval that could only proclaim the dark side of freedom. (Menon and Bhasin 2000: 209).

Being adjacent to East Pakistan, Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal experienced the whole matter in a delicate way as some of its areas were also partitioned in 1947. Under the Radcliffe Award the region within the southern police stations of Tetulia, Pachagarh, Boda,

Debiganj and Patgram comprising a total area of 672 square miles went to Pakistan (De 1981: 80) and Jalpaiguri, Rajganj, Maynaguri, Nagrakata, Dhupguri and Mataili, Alipurduar, Kalchini, Kumargram, Falakata and Madarihat had remained in India (Government notification 9483 Jur., dated 27.09.1947). Therefore, Jalpaiguri saw the wrath of partition very closely. Mostly, the Hindu community of erstwhile eastern parts of Bengal maintained a steady inflow towards Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, and it continued on a regular basis.

Table No. I
District-wise Statistics of Migration from East Pakistan to Jalpaiguri District
(1946-1951)

Sl no.	Name of the districts (East Pakistan)	Male (In number)	Female (In number)
1	Kustia	426	383
2	Jossore	784	653
3	Khulna	451	379
4	Rajshahi	676	546
5	Dinajpur	9,662	7,829
6	Rongpur	13,584	11,759
7	Bogura	671	553
8	Pabna	2,185	1,910
9	Dacca	9,005	7,147
10	Mymensingh	9,296	7,741
11	Faridpur	2,540	1,953
12	Bakharganj	1,056	902
13	Tripura	985	729
14	Noakhli	974	648
15	Chittagong	689	467
16	Syllet	280	248
Total		53,264	43,847

Source: Mitra (ed.) 1954: 93-4.

The above table shows that, a huge number of people both men and women from different parts of East Pakistan entered Jalpaiguri district. The highest number of men and women, who entered in Jalpaiguri during 1946-1951, were from Rangpur district of Dacca. This process of refugee exodus continued till 1971, that eventually led to the urbanization of the district.

As the historians of post-independence era were not initially much concerned about the partition history of north Bengal and particularly that related to women, the historical books are found almost muted regarding this matter. This paper seeks to break that silence and reveal the blanketed facts about the condition of women in their new destination after partition. It tries to reveal the trauma of displacement, struggle, and survival through her voices and experiences hitherto untouched in the regional history.

Experiences of the East Bengal Refugee Women at Their New Destination:

Women had to experience both physical and psychological violence prior to and in the post partition era. They became the common targets of all inhuman activities, starting from sexual assaults, abductions, forced marriages, resulting to life sacrifices during this period of turmoil. The women, who came from East Pakistan to West Bengal and gradually in north Bengal in later period, were demeaned and inhumanly tortured in every possible way in their ancestral place and also in their new abode. In words of Gargi Chakravartty,

Violence was inextricably linked to the partition.... Partition stories have become so poignant because of the direct or indirect violence associated with them (Chakravartty 2005: 6).

After the declaration of partition, the religious agitation between the two leading communities - the Hindus and the Muslims, reached to its highest peak. It became very difficult for the people of the Hindu community, particularly women to stay in East Pakistan. Their life, honour, chastity, and security were in grave danger. Being generally considered as the weaker gender, they were being threatened in every possible way by the Muslim majority community, that ultimately forced them to leave their ancestral places and thus, they migrated to West Bengal, as well as in Jalpaiguri, with the thought of securing their chastity and honour, and to live a secured life again. However, the situation was not that bearable as per their expectations.

In most of the cases, the destiny of the migrated women was dependent on their economic status. Like, the elite people of the '*babu*' community, who somehow could manage to sell their property at East Pakistan, arranged places to take shelter in the new country (Ghosh 2008: 96). People belonging to the middle class and lower-middle class also arranged places at rent or took shelter in the houses of their relatives. However, such numbers were quite few. The bulk of refugees, who successfully migrated to Calcutta, failed to manage any place other than taking shelter at Sealdah station and those who could not find any place to stay in Calcutta and its suburban areas, marched towards north Bengal. Many people directly migrated to north Bengal via Gitaldah border, hill borders, Murshidabad border etc. as the former being adjacent to East Pakistan. Besides, a sizable population was also migrated to north Bengal via Assam border as in their opinion, it was easy to manage the border security officers of Assam border and was also less expensive (Ghosh Personally interviewed.2021).

Women Experiences at Relief Camps:

The middle-class refugees took shelter in the houses of their near and dear ones, and relatives. In some cases, compassionate natives made necessary arrangements for their survival. Some of them even acquired land for cultivation. However, those who could not manage anything for survival, had to depend on the relief camps, mostly lacking basic facilities. In Dipesh Chakrabarty's writing, "Remembered Villages: Representations of Hindu-Bengali Memories in the Aftermath of the Partition", he also mentioned an interview, where a refugee was found to say that,

I am today vastuhara in this city of Calcutta. I live in relief camp. Some in this camp have contracted cholera. A vastuhara child died in pox this morning when I received a handful of flattened rice. I do not dare to approach the 'relief babu' who only gets into a rage if I try to say something. I do not ask why this has happened" (Chakrabarty 1998: 136).

This statement explicitly illustrated the condition of refugees during that particular time. Besides, they had to endure the harshness of the camp officers. Sarala Rani Das (Personally interviewed), a refugee who took shelter at Indira Colony under Falakata P.S of Jalpaiguri, recalled her miserable memory of complaining to one of the officials. The concerned person reprimanded her by saying, '*Tomra toh r sasurbari aso nai, besi kotha bolle ghar dhore ber kore dibo*' (You have not come to your clink (in-laws' home), if you talk too much, I will take you out by your neck).

Women faced difficulties of various measures at the relief camps. Uma Rani Dutta (Personally interviewed, 2020), recalled her camp days in Talma Riverside Colony of Jalpaiguri where, dearth of water, food, and cloths, besides unhealthy situation, irregular rationing system made their life miserable. Some children died due to the lack of milk. Besides, there was the case of increasing fatalities due to the outbreak of cholera disease. And there was no proper system of cremation of such dead bodies. Every day seemed a nightmare to her. She was then 13 years old and stayed for approximately 36 days at the camp. Later she and her family moved to Cooch Behar.

Tushar Singh has narrated a pathetic story of women suffering. According to his description, at Bhadrakali Refugee Women's Camp, a case of women persecution was reported. On 19th and 20th October 1954, those women were physically tortured by a group of outsiders. Subsequently, they were admitted to the nearby hospitals. Instead of arresting those men, the relatives of victim women were put into prison. Those anti-socialists were responsible for pushing the lives of many young women and girls to the way of darkness. It was not a sole example, rather repetitions of such incidents were quite common. On 10th February 1956 again a group of people attacked Bhadrakali Camp at night and severely tortured ten women. The police forces generally preferred to keep silence on such matter.

To protest this physical violence, a meeting was held which was presided by Subarna Sengupta. They presented several demands to the government, which was not at all encouraged by the latter. To check their further progress in this regard, the camp

administrators stopped doles of 17 families as punishment, which again boosted the protest movement. On 15th may, 1956, another meeting was arranged at Uttarpara where some leaders like, Kunja Dasgupta, Usha Nag, Sarayubala Bal, Pranakrishna Chakraborty, Monoranjan Hazra were present. Few days later police arrested ten women from the camp viz. Sarayubala Bal, Shishu Dutta, Praphulla Dutta, Manjulika Brahma, Annapurna Roy, Mahamaya Chakraborty, Shephali Das, Kosturi Biswas, Priyabala Dey, and Lakshmi Das. Unfortunately, on 11th march, 1957, another violent attack was made upon the Bhadrakli women. The children were transferred to Piyara Doba camp of Bankura. When the mothers returned from jail, they were unable to find their sons and daughters. On demand of meeting their lost children, they chose the way of hunger strike. United Central Refugee Council took initiatives to overcome the situation and consulted with the chief minister Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and rehabilitation minister Praphullya Sen (UCRC.2011). However, the outcome didn't meet the expectation. In co-ordination with UCRC, a protest coven was arranged near the house of Dr. Roy. The women continued the hunger strike up to 61 days as per the information given by Mr. Tushar Singh. After 61 days the secretary of UCRC, Ambika Chakraborty met Dr. Roy again with a list of demands, and he assured to come with a solution (UCRC. 1958: 19). However, ultimately the government showed less interest in this matter. The transferred women had not been returned back and Smt. Sarayubala Bal had also remained expelled for long period of time (Singh 1999: 29-31).

Women Experiences Regarding Private Spaces After Partition:

Before partition, the women of East Pakistan used to lead a private life secured by the men members of their family. But after partition, due to the scarcity of space, it became difficult for them to maintain their privacy. They had to share 'their privacy with men, sleeping in the same room with their in-laws and brother-in-law's (Waber 2006: 71). It was not that one family was given a single whole shelter. The refugee families had to adjust with other families at the same place, which was difficult for everyone especially, the female members. There were no separate washrooms for the women. Pregnant women were given no special facilities (Bhattacharya 2021: Personally interviewed).

Hironmoy Bondyopadhyay in his *Udvastu* explicitly narrated such problem of private space during his visit to Alipurduar district. He found it to be overcrowded with refugees. There were innumerable numbers of one storied house with a small balcony. Many families took shelter in each different room (Bondyopadhyay 1970: 12) of such houses. Therefore, the question of private spaces for women could not arise and difficulties for survival was rather unimaginable for most of the women.

Social Humiliation of the Refugee Women:

The women after partition, not only tortured by the other communities or the opposite gender, but people from their own community and even by women. Their mental abuse knew no bounds. Manashi Devi (Personally interviewed. 2021), who was originally a resident of Barishal and came to Jalpaiguri in 1968, at the age of 17, faced incredible cruel treatment from society. The local women used to look down upon them and behaved like

they were untouchables. This was the most unfortunate part of her partition memory. She added that some women who were comparatively more curious, used to ask her directly if they have had experienced any kind of physical torture at '*Desh bari*' (Native country)?

Women Sufferings Due to Experimental Governmental Policies:

Leaders expressed their concern and anger at the 'moral depravity' that characterized this 'shameful chapter' of the history of the two countries; the actual fact was that 'our innocent mothers and sisters had been ashamed' was a serious matter itself that would not be looked upon with calm. A letter dated 4th April 1947 from Mr. Nehru to Evan Jenkins, the then governor of Punjab, says:

There is one point, however, to which I should like to draw your attention, and this is the question of rescuing women who have been abducted or forcibly converted. You will realize that nothing adds to popular passions more than stories of abduction of women and so long as these... women are not rescued, trouble will simmer and might blaze out. (Confidential Papers of Evan Jenkins, IOL/R13/1/176, Dated 4th April, 1947).

The concern of the Prime Minister regarding Punjab also gives a strong support to that thought, that the situation of Punjab and West Bengal might not be similar in matter of refugee rehabilitation, but in the case of women suffering, there was hardly any difference. Women were victimized everywhere, just for being women.

The first initiative was taken by the government at the '23-25th November 1946 session' of the National Congress at Meerut, at which a resolution was adopted:

The congress views pain, horror, anxiety the tragedies of Calcutta, East Bengal, Bihar and some parts of Meerut district.... These new developments in communal strife are different from any previous disturbances and have involved murders on a mass scale, as also mass conversions.... abduction and violation of women, and forcible marriage. Women who have been abducted and forcibly married must be restored to their houses; mass conversions have no significance or validity and people must be given every opportunity to return to the life of their choice. (Menon and Bhasin 2000: 213).

On 3rd September 1947, leaders, and representatives of both the republican countries took some call on convalescing and restoring the abducted persons. On 17th November 1947, the All-India Congress committee passed a resolution which stated:

During these disorders, large number of women has been abducted on either side and there have been forcible conversions on a large scale. No civilized people can recognize such conversions and there is nothing more heinous than the abduction of women. Every effort must be made to restore women to their original homes with the co-operation of the governments concerned. (Menon and Bhasin 2000: 213).

On 6th December 1947, an arrangement was made by the government to rescue the kidnapped women. An inter-dominion conference was organized in Lahore, where steps were taken for the implementation of recovery and restoration, with the appointment of Mridula Sarabhai as chief welfare worker. Accordingly, necessary provisions were made in India and Pakistan, and within two years 50000 Muslim women in India and 33000 non-Muslim women in Pakistan were rescued (Menon and Bhasin 2000: 214). However, Gopalswami Ayyanger, minister of transport, in-charge of recovery, called these figures 'rather wild' and Mridula Sarabhai believed that the number of abducted women in Pakistan was ten times than the 1948 official figure of 12,500 (Basu 1995: 176). At Ravi bridge, 4 miles south-east of Narowal, 17 non- Muslim women with children were recovered by Pakistani troops and handed over to Indian troops. In December 1959, the number of recoveries was 12,000 for India and 6000 for Pakistan and the age-wise break-up is as follows:

Table No. II
Recovered Children and Women: Age-wise Break-up in Percentage (%)

Age	In India	In Pakistan
>12 years	35	45
12-35 years	59	44
35-50 years	4	6
50 and above	2	5

Source: Constituent Assembly (Legislative) Debates. Dec,1949.

From this above table (No. II), it is quite evident that the girls and the young women were targeted mostly in both side of the border and therefore, during the rescue operation their numbers were the highest in recovery list. Measures were taken by the government in matter of distribution of power to the rescue officers, and police regarding identification of the abducted person, protection of the abducted women etc.

It was of no doubt, that the government took these initiatives for the betterment of the life of the refugees. However, in later period, it proved to be a punishment for women. In many cases, these women had already married to the men who kidnapped them. They eventually became mother and started a settled life and, it was nearly impossible for them to omit those horrible memories from their mind. So, during the rescue operation of the government, they again started to separate themselves from their new families, which seemed to be a kind of reliving their harassment. They protested it by saying "Why are you separating us, what is the benefit of remembering those old days?" (Menon and Bhasin 2000: 8). With the combined rescue operation of the two nations a good number of women were rescued, but it actually hurt their feelings of chastity and dignity. In some cases, the reason of their unwillingness was that they got already adjusted with the tragedy of their lives and started leading a happy life there. Some women who denied returning, chose the

way to hunger strike. One young, recovered girl confronted Mridula Sarabhai by saying that,

You say abduction is immoral and so you are trying to save us. Well, now it is too late. One marries only once – willingly or by force. We are now married- what are you going to do with us? Ask us to get married again? Is that not immoral? What happened to our relatives when we were abducted? Where were they? You may do your worst if you insist, but remember, you can kill us, but we will not go (Basu 1995: 179).

These women were well-aware of the fact that, their previously affectionate relations with their families would not be the same. Their conversion to Islam, marriage to a Muslim, bearing their children would be utterly unacceptable for their own original family. These women knew that, to their ancestral family, one marriage with a man of same religion and caste was respectful, but marriage with a man of different religion, or second marriage would be tremendously shameful. Besides, the question of their motherhood till remained unresolved by the protagonists of the recovery operation.

It was not only the women who refused to go back to their own family, it was also their families, who showed unwillingness to get back their own lost family members. Thus, the women were victimized twice and in both ways: firstly, by the males of different community, who physically assaulted them and secondly, by her own family or community, who mentally harassed them. To make their family understand, on 17th July 1948, Nehru made an appeal to the public through Hindustan Times,

“I am told that there is unwillingness on the part of their relatives to accept those girls and women (who have been abducted) back in their homes. This is most objectionable and wrong attitude to take and any social custom that supports this attitude must be condemned. These girls and women require our tender and loving care and their relatives should be proud to take them back and give them every help” (Menon and Bhasin 2000: 222).

Victimized Women and Their children:

A major problem arose while dealing with the matters of orphan children and the children of the captured women. When the rescue operation begun, most of the women who were captured or being raped, had already, gave birth to their child. The government of Pakistan had no proper rules and regulations for them. However, the Indian government declared that the children of the captured women who were born in Pakistan, would be a citizen of Pakistan and would stay there. On the other hand, those women, who were being captured in India and willing to go to Pakistan, they can take their children with them (Bandyopadhyay 1994: 101). With this declaration, the future of the children became uncertain along with their respective mothers. The women who were permitted to go to Pakistan with their children got feared with the thought that the society of Pakistan would not accept them. On the other hand, in matter of Indian women, the policy seemed inhuman due to creating separation trauma both for mother and her child. In most cases, the Indian

women were not ready to leave their son/daughter. Under these circumstances, the said decision was reconsidered, and it was declared that the children of Indian women could accompany their mother to India. However, after some time, the mother would decide on whether to keep her child along with herself or to send him/her to Pakistan to father's family.

Even today, in most of the cases, the women are found to be afraid of revealing their names in matter of physical victimization. During an interview, same thing has been experienced in Jalpaiguri district. A lady (Personally interviewed 2021) was not ready to reveal her name, but somehow agreed to tell her story. She was a victim of partition. In 1948, during the agitation, she was abducted by the Muslims. Her family somehow managed to save her elder sister, but not her. After passing three and half months being captive, she was forced to marry and to convert to Islam. However, her soul never accepted her fate and finally she got chance after two years, when she met a Hindu family, preparing to leave East Pakistan. Somehow, she convinced them, and escaped with them to India. When she reached India, she found herself as being pregnant. Thus, the situation became more difficult for her to survive. She tried but failed to get any information about her own family in India. She was strong enough to give birth of her child alone and decided not to marry again. She earned her livelihood by working as domestic worker at a well-to-do Hindu family and till now she is living with that family.

Conclusion:

It was the women, who had suffered the most due to partition. To escape from the inhuman ambience in East Pakistan, they decided to shift to a new abode. But here also they were not at all welcomed. To adjust themselves in their new homes, they had to face new challenges day after day. They were tortured in the new destination in the disguise of dishonest government officers, cheaters and above all, the society. After coming to India, the very first challenge was the shelter issue that they had to face. Initially, they took shelter at railway stations where privacy was completely absent. The women who adjusted at different houses with other families, they faced the problem of privacy issues. Both governmental and non-governmental camps were lacking in proper food and lodging facilities. Moreover, there were active anti-social activities, that put their lives into hell. The local people used to treat them as aliens. However, the most painful among all was that, when victimized women were even betrayed by their own family members. The political associations and the government authorities in later period, showed interest to rescue them and provide a better life for them, but in most of the cases their initiatives got failed and brought about more misery for them.

In some cases, women were seen to involve themselves in protest movements and fight for their rights. With the help of the social workers and initiatives of the political and social organizations, these women got the strength to fight those challenging situations. Particularly when it came to the matter of their children, their inner strength got a boost to fight, and they ultimately survived by breaking all hurdles. However, both the physical and

mental tortures, that they had to bear after partition, till now are surviving in their memories not less than as horrible nightmares.

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Questions to the interviewees

1. What is your name and describe a little about your early life in East Pakistan or in Bangladesh?
2. What were the changes in your daily life in terms of social, political and economic matters that you felt after the declaration of partition?
3. What were the key factors that ultimately encouraged your family to decide to leave your ancestral place?
4. What was your mental condition of that time? Thinking just to avoid the condition of your ancestral places you are migrating for a temporary period? or you are migrating permanently?
5. How was the journey towards the new destination, was it smoothy or you faced any kind of difficulties and why do you have chosen that route?
6. Could all the members of your family become successful to migrate?
7. What were the situations that you faced after coming to India?
8. In the new country did you have any relatives?
9. What kind of shelter that your family could manage, relative's house, camps or rental houses or anything else?
10. If camps, what was the conditions of the residents of that particular camps? Living like situations were present there or not?

11. Was there any kind of help, provided by the government or any social workers' groups, political and non-political parties? If have any personal experience, please describe.
12. Was the governmental policies proved to be good for refugee migrants or it increased the difficulty levels of living? Please describe.
13. How the native society used to treat the refugees or migrant people?
14. Have you ever fought for your own right? If yes, then how?
15. How could you overcome the difficult situations, if faced any?
16. Did you ever go back to your ancestral place or do you want to?

The *Babus* and the Social Body in Conceptual Proposition in Early Colonial Bengal

Varun Kumar Roy

Abstract: *Edward Said maintains: “Knowledge of the Orient because generated out of strength, in a sense, creates the Orient, the Oriental and his world” (Said 1978: 40). The emergence of the Babus brought new changes in the social atmosphere of early colonial Bengal. The elite, wealthy, western educated Bengalis began imitating western culture and were very much eager to forge a new social class, which would align them with the Britishers. This research paper tries to revisit existing literature in conjunction with historical texts to understand the formation of the Babu identity and how this was mirrored in the new social body that had come into existence.*

Keywords: *Body, Babu, culture, language, English*

Introduction:

The Bengali *Babu* (or *Baboo*) had emerged as a social class because of the establishment of colonial trade and commerce and also due to the introduction of English education in Bengal. The English East India Company operated primarily as a trading agency in India till the mid-eighteenth century. The Battle of Plassey and the Battle of Buxar ensured a colossal strengthening of the Company’s position in the region leading to the grant of ‘*Diwani*’ for the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam. Bengal represented a region in which there were continuous attempts – both by the British colonists and the local population – to forge a hybrid identity at multiple paradigms. The establishment of the British Empire had a profound impact on the emergence of new Bengal. The new ambiance in Bengal was a reflection of archetype European society, and the emanation of *Babu* Culture was an example of this new prototype urbanism, and this had a huge impact on domesticity which inadvertently paved the way for new social body enigma in Bengal.

Conceptual Representation of the Body:

The ‘body’ of the human emerged as a subject of historical analysis in the latter 1970s. The genesis for the rise of this subject-specificity can be related to the interdisciplinarity of the ‘new social history’ of the 1960s and 1970s (Tilly 1884: 364). The scholarship developed in parallel to the growth of the histories of women and sexuality. Since then, it has developed in tandem with the new cultural history and gender history, both of which owed very much to the disciplines having general engagement with the linguistic turn. Body history does ‘exemplify general reorientations’ in historical study (Cartrine 2005).

The textual analysis of the body was not at all absent from the historical writings before the 1970s. Throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, historians regarded the human body as a source of weakness to be overcome while they privileged the mind as a source of rationality, consciousness, and identity. This dualism of mind and

body was the most important feature of classical Christian and Enlightenment traditions that dominated the western intellectual thought. Thus, in the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels the human body was weak and passive (Horkheimer & Adorno 1973: 231). Marc Bloch's (1973) examination of royal healing in England and France could be termed a prototype of body history, and Lucien Febvre's calls for 'quantitative histories' of family life, sexuality and death also encouraged historians to 'historicize aspects of the body' (Febvre 1970)

The most influential sociologist for the history of the body is Norbert Elias. Elias published works between the 1930s and the 1980s, but the key work for use for the present paper is "The Civilizing Process," first published in German in 1939, and translated into two volumes in 1978 and 1982. It had a major impact in the late 1970s, during which it became available in English translation. Elias examined changes in forms of 'acceptable social conduct' and 'treatment' of the body, particularly in relation to bodily functions, from the medieval to the modern period. He distinguished between two historical bodies. "Echoing classic modernization theory, the medieval body was childlike, uncivilized, irrational, and uninhibited in expressing emotions and bodily functions. In order for a more mature stage of individualization to develop, repression and education were needed. During the early modern period, the medieval body gave way to the modern, bourgeois body, which was restrained, mannered and decorous" (Carthine 2005: 2220. The medieval body's uncontrolled impulses were replaced by the modern body's emotional self-control.

Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) study of the culture of folk humor in the context of the French writer François Rabelais has become enormously influential in body history. Bakhtin identified two distinct bodies, the 'grotesque', which he discussed at length, and the 'classical'. These bodies were associated, respectively, with low and high cultures. The classical body of elite culture was easily described and recognized, but the grotesque body was difficult to categorize and appraise. It was defined primarily in opposition to the classical body. Where the classical body was individual, the grotesque was collective. While the classical body emphasized the head, traditionally associated with honor, the grotesque body accentuated the belly and genitals and embraced organic bodily functions: defecation, lactation, menstruation, and conception. The complete and immaculate classical body's interactions with the world were clearly defined. In contrast, the grotesque body, the boundaries between inside and outside, between self and the other, the body and the world were blurred (Clark 1984).

Michel Foucault was one of the key post-structuralist philosophers of the twentieth century. Within the poststructuralist tradition, bodies are viewed not as constant biological entities, but - like books, films, and language itself - as texts. Bodies can be read by interpreting bodily signs and symbols. This semiotic conceptualization has led to a focus on social construction - how the meanings given to the supposedly natural or biological body are not fixed but constructed socially and culturally. Hence the body is understood differently in different historical periods. Foucault's approach is a social constructionist one. For

Foucault, bodies were constructed to legitimate dominant forms of power. The power relationships between rulers and their subjects are enacted on the bodies of the dominated. As modern forms of power relationships developed, so there was a change from an older to a new, modern body. The old fluid body of humours and astrological correspondences gave way to a new body, the former was denied by observation, intervention, and scientific rigour (Foucault 1979:112,113). The establishment of the British Empire had a profound impact on the emergence of new Bengal.

The English *Babus* and the Social Body:

Tapan Raychaudhuri writes that the *Babus* were the “first Asian social group of any size whose mental world was transformed through its interactions with the West.” He points out that the British brought about a “close contact between two entirely different cultures of which one was perceived to be dominant,” and this supremacy proved the catalyst that prompted a segment of young Bengali men to mimic their colonizers which, in turn, contributed to the rise of the *Babus*. But the “colonial mimicry [of the *Babus* was, in essence,] the desire for a reformed, recognizable other as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite” (Raychaudhuri 1988: 9)

The advent of the East India Company allowed Bengalis many opportunities to amass large fortunes within a lifetime that would have been impossible if positions such as those of the *banians* and *dewans* had not been occasioned by British needs. In her essay, “The ‘Great Houses’ of Old Calcutta,” Chitra Deb (1990:6) rightly says of Bengalis, who filled such positions: “Unusually too, their wealth came not from hereditary trade or landed wealth but from new sources allied with nascent British colonialism.” Bengal was a simple case where both imperialism and colonialism were supported and perhaps impelled by impressive ideological formulations, and it reminded that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination (Deb 1990:60).

When the British first came to conduct business in Calcutta, the Setts and Basaks were existing businessmen of the time, but no one in Calcutta knew English. The use of sign language was prevalent when communicating with the British regarding business matters. Gradually, with the aid of sign language, some English words were learned. Later, because of the establishment of the Supreme Court, learning of English was necessitated for smoothly conducting legal matters (Bandopadhyaya & Das ed. 2004: 17).

The *Babus* realized they could only receive acceptance if the British perceived them as being socially and culturally evolved, that they could use their money as a means to display their refinement and social status proving the negative opinions of the British to be unfounded. They were quite aware that the British considered “European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures,” (Said 1978: 7). The study of English literature, in particular, helped to form a sense of connection between rulers and ruled, and yet it also served to perpetuate the *Babu* stereotype. It accomplished this by presenting a vision of idealized Englishmen and Westerners as the

universal standard which all enlightened persons should strive to attain, and by attempting to point out the failings of Bengali character through rationalistic discourse (Vrudhula 1999:89).

Decoration for the body has always been a way of representing status and the wealthier a society is, the more it puts emphasis on fashionable clothes as a means of creating superior social demarcation. The wealthy Bengali *Babus* too adopted clothing and fashion of the west. The wealth gave them the ability to buy and wear western clothes to decorate their bodies. They believed that decorating the body like *gora sahebs* would earn them passports into British society. The Babu's haircut was called the "Albert-cut" because it resembled the hairstyle of Queen Victoria's consort, Prince Albert (Sinha 1997:9).

To them the existing Bengali society was old fashioned and orthodox. Joining the west would make them progressive and modern since they "believed that Western civilization was superior to anything the Indian had to offer" (Greenberger 1969: 73).

The *Babus* were criticized due to their bohemian lifestyle by the older generations of the then society. They believed that mimicry of the Britishers was indirectly helping them to set solid footings on Indian soils. Motilal's father in *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* (1893) completely lost faith in Motilal when he became a *Babu*. Nobo's father's frustration with Nobo makes Nobo's father in *Ekei Ki Bole Sobhota?* ask Nobo's mother why she had not killed Nobo when she had conceived him. Both Motilal's and Nobo's fathers are shocked by their sons' activities, and both are quick to realize that their sons' ways of life threatened ago-old Hindu traditions that forbade the eating of beef, drinking of alcohol, and upholding the caste system. Most Bengali authors such as Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay, Tekchand Thakur, Kaliprasanna Sinha, Bankimchandra Chatterji, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt who wrote about *Babu*-culture were decidedly against it and disparage those who embarked on a *Babu* lifestyle. Dipesh Chakrabarty observes that English education often brought in its trail a sense of crisis in Bengali families—a certain degree of waywardness in young men that led to their neglecting their duties towards their families and the elders was a most commonly voiced complaint against the Bengali *Babus* of the early nineteenth century (Chakrabarty 1997: 373). In fact, the *Babu*, as he appeared in the farces and the sketches, was the pampered son of a British agent who has inherited his father's wealth dissipates it on drinking, whoring and other amusements with a host of sycophants (Banerjee 1998:180). Conservative mainstream society recoiled from the *Babu* lifestyle and, in response, entrenched themselves further in tradition and mocked the *Babus* in popular folk songs: *Brandi, ganja, guli, yaar jutey katokguli Mukhetey sarboda buli, hoot boley dey ganjaya tan* (They are immersed in brandy, hemp, and opium along with their cronies. Gabbling all the time and pulling away at hemp) (Banerjee 1998: 109).

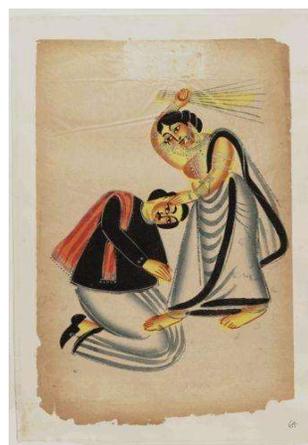
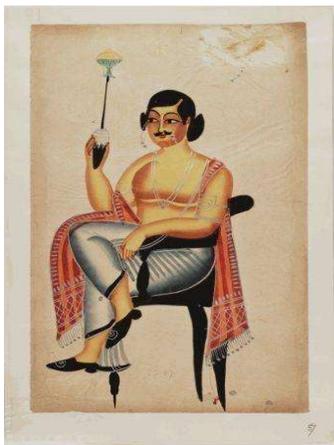
The *Babus* also tried to counterfeit the 'manly Englishmen' and projected a masculine body. The *Samachar Darpan* of 9th June 1821 (Bandyopadhyay 1950:78) writes that when a European quarrels with anyone, he virtually makes war. He attacks him with his fist, pistols, and so forth. By way of imitating that, *Babu* punched his dependent relatives and

also threatened to shoot them whenever his anger was aroused. *Babu* considered this as a mark of virility. Babu Dataram Ghosh, as mentioned in *Samachar Darpan*, determined to live like the European *sahebs* projected his bodily attitude in every particular way. For instance, the *sahebs* generally go for a ride in the mornings and evenings, either in a carriage or horseback. *Babu* Dataram Ghosh gave instructions to his servant to wake him so that he can go for a ride on horseback early in the morning. Unfortunately, he spent most of the night in a brothel, and arriving home early hours went off to bed. Soon the- servant came and woke him. He was still feeling sleepy when he got up and by the time he was mounted on the horse and ready to go, it was well past sunrise (Bandyopadhyay 1950: 78).

Conclusion:

Despite heavy criticism and censure from the orthodox society, the *Babus* began the trend of wearing western clothing, decorated their body mimicking the western *sahebs* and led a lavish lifestyle. No doubt the new social body of the *Babus* was despised by others; they did have a measure of achievement, and they led India into the Western world in terms of ideas. It is in the *Babus'* imitation, that is, in their taking on Enlightenment forms of thought, Western manners and habits, and forms of literary and artistic expression, that their construction of a colonial modernity lies Modern Calcutta owes a large measure of its modernity to the progressiveness of the *Babus*. The *Babus* began the trend of wearing Western clothing, and men in Calcutta today are most often seen in the clothing of the West rather than in traditional Bengali clothing.

The British also encouraged Westernization of the *Babus* because it served as a means of control by creating a group of people Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. (David 1995: 129). Promoting western education, clothing, and making new social bodies became a device of acculturation that the British used effectively as part of their “divide and rule” policy.



Source: <https://dreameroftheocean.wordpress.com/2017/09/21/kalighat-paintings-and-their-status-in-the-present-urban-ambiance/>

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Neo-Vaisnavism in Kamata Koch Bihar: Study of the Declining Phase

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar

The Neo-Vaisnavite movement, which was started in Assam along with Bhakti Movement elsewhere in Medieval India by Srimanta Sankaradeva, a scholar, poet, playwright and social-religious reformer, was introduced in the Kamata-Koch Kingdom by the founder himself during the reign of King Naranarayan (1540–1587), the greatest and last ruler of the undivided Koch kingdom of Kamata. King Naranarayan gave Sankaradeva the first royal patronage to his *dharma*.

This neo-Vaisnavim was characterized by *Nama-Kirtana* (community prayer), *Satra* (monastery), *Namghar* (prayer hall) and Krishna or Narayan being the sole object of devotion as the supreme reality. Hence the neo-Vaisnavite religion propagated by Srimanta Sankaradeva is called *Ekasarana Dharma* (literally: Shelter-in-One religion).

King Naranarayan at fifty years of age nominated his brother's son Patkumar as his successor. However, on the earnest request of his brother Shukladhvaj he remarried and in course of time a son was born to him, who was given the name of Lakshminarayan (Beveridge 2010: 1067). The son was probably named so because the King might have thought that his whole-hearted patronage to the *Ekasarana Dharma* of Srimanta Sankaradeva had affected his birth.

Maharaja Naranarayan died in 1587 CE and was succeeded by his son Lakshminarayan. Four years after his reign in 1591, two direct disciples of Sankaradeva - Madhavadeva and Damadoradeva - crossed over to the kingdom of Kamata because they had to leave their native country because of the sectarian oppression of the Ahom King. King Lakshminarayan received them with wholehearted favour and offered them shelter and enthusiastic patronage. The King also married Damayanti Devi, the granddaughter of Madhavadeva (Satsampradayer Katha: 47). It is said that he declared the religion of Madhavadeva to be the royal religion inimical to the followers of other doctrines.¹ Neo-Vaisnavism reached a unique dimension, when after the death of king Lakshminarayan, his son Kumar Birnarayan was duly installed as the king. According to the tradition of the royal family, coins were struck in his name. The most interesting and exceptional aspect of Birnarayan's coins is the change in the reverse legend concerning the sectarian affiliation

¹In the colophon of the Sanskrit anthology titled *Namamalika*, which extols the merits of the holy name, it is written: "Victory to Lakshminarayana who is the foremost of all great kings....., who full kindness recently removed all other religions, and punishing the wicked, made all the people take shelter of Hari."

of the issuer. Traditionally, the reverse of all the preceding Kamata-Koch coins displayed the legend *Sri Sri/ Siva Charana/ Kamala Madhu/karasya*. On the contrary, on the reverse of Birnarayan's coins are inscribed in four lines *Sri Sri/Krishna Charana/Kamala Madhu/Karasya* while the obverse shows the five-lined legend in just traditional pattern such as *Sri Srimala/d ViraNaraya/Nasya Sake/1547/118*. In a word, King Birnarayan had chosen himself to be described not as the 'bee of the lotus-feet of the god Siva' like his predecessors and many of his successors but as that of Krishna. It was he who installed the Chaturbhuj idol at Bheladanga. This, no doubt, speaks of the enormous royal patronage to the neo-Vaisnavism in the land of Saivism and Saktism. (Sarkar 2016 :143-154). Though professed by a few later kings, it was gradually losing its dominant ground in the Koch dynasty and possibly among the people. The article aims at reconstructing the condition of the faith in the post-Birnarayan period delving deep into the process of its comparative decline.

Maharaja Pranaranayan (1625-1665) succeeded his father Birnarayan to the throne of Kamata-Koch Kingdom. He was initiated into Vaisnavism by Banamali Gosain of Madhupura. (*Sri Sr iVanamali Deva Charita*: 52, 53). He established images of *Chaturbhuj* in Madhupura, *Madanmohana* in Shrirampur, *Chaturbhuj* in Kagajkuta, *Banamali* in Banamalipur and *MadanGopal* in Damodarpur. (Pal 1385 B.S.:13-14)

On the death of King Pranaranayan, four sons of Nazir Mahinarayan attempted to seize the throne. To pacify them all, Mahinarayan raised the last king's second son Modanarayan to the throne but virtually kept all powers in his own hands. The helpless king, managing to win over to his side some of the troops, killed some and expelled others of Mahinarayan's creatures from the royal court. In a battle that ensued, he finally defeated Mahinarayan who was later killed in a scuffle with the king's men. However, Mahinarayan's sons invaded the country with the help of the Bhutias but were ultimately defeated. After a disturbed reign of fifteen years king Modanarayan died in 1680 without any issue. Thus, one line of Viswa Singha's family became extinct, and the order of succession from father to son ceased (Pal 2009: 245). Nothing is known about the religious activity of king Modanarayan or the succeeding king Vasudevanarayan (1680-1682). From the first name of the king being Vasudeva, it appears that neo-Vaisnavism was still receiving the royal patronage. The next king was Mahendranarayan (1682-1693 CE), the great grandson of Pranaranayan, who took interest in the Vaisnava faith. Initiated by Ratikanta Misra, he was a devout Vaisnava, accordingly a vegetarian and used to take *Havisanya* (boiled rice mixed with clarified butter). He always performed *japain* the name of Hari and sung in praise of Him (Ghosal 2005: 218).

The next king Maharaja Rupanarayan (1693-1714) was also a follower of Vaisnavism. His guru was Siddhanta Shiromani Bhattacharya (Ghosal 2005: 224). On the occasion of initiation, a land-grant was made to him by the Maharaja at an eclipse of the Sun. It is he who constructed an image of Madan Mohan image, and established magnificent worship;

arrangement of provisions for its maintenance was made under his encouragement in Koch Behar (Pal 2009: 242)

Maharaja Rupanarayan was succeeded by eldest son Upendranarayan in 1714 CE. Previously the pro-Damodaradeva Goswamis of the *VaidikSreni* of Kamarupa were the royal Gurus. When Shakti-worship was re-established in the royal family (Roy 2006: 82). Maharaja Upendranarayan gave up the old line of Gurus and became a disciple of Satananda Goswami. Satananda was Radhiya Brahmana of village Sadikha in Murshidabad district (Ghosal 2005: 201). After the death, Satanandawas succeeded by his son Ramananda Goswami.

After a reign of 49 years, King Upendranarayan died in 1763 CE and his son Devendranarayan, still a child of four years, was placed on the throne. Only two years after his accession to the throne, the 6-year old king was assassinated in which Ramananda Goswami came to be involved. As a result, he was executed under the order of the Devraja of Bhutan (Das 1985: 44). Subsequently Ramananda's cousin Sarvananda Goswami came to the Koch Kingdom during the reign of the next king Dhairyendranarayan. Sarvananda, who is said to have given spiritual initiation to the Maharaja (Das 1985: 45), was appointed as *Rajguru*.

In the period from 1765 to 1773 which was full of internal intrigues and the Bhutanese aggression, we find three royal family members to be installed as the king one after another: Dhairyendranarayan (Upendranarayan's nephew), Rajendranarayan (Upendranarayan's another nephew) and Dharendranarayan (Dhairyendranarayan's son). To save the Koch country, which was almost occupied by the Bhutias on April 5, 1773, a treaty was concluded between the young Maharaja Dharendranarayan and the East India Company; Thus, Cooch Behar became a feudatory state. Thereafter a peace was concluded between Bhutan and East India Company on April 25, 1774, in consequences of which King Dhairyendranarayan was released from captivity.

During his second term Dhairyendranarayan (1774-1783) was very much indifferent to administration and mostly engrossed in religious thoughts. According to *Rajopakhyana*, one day during his sickness, the king desired the image of Madanmohan to be brought before him, which was complied with. Dhairyendranarayan died in 1783 leaving his almost 4 years old son Harendranarayan as the heir to the throne of Kamata-Koch Kingdom.

Maharaja Harendra Narayan (1783-1839 CE) was out and out a freedom-loving person. In addition, he was a typical Hindu with much devotion to gods and Brahmanas. However, he was a sincere and devout Sakta so much so that he composed a large number of *Shyamasangita* (songs in praise of Kali) (Pal 1999: 63-114). Harendranarayan's son and successor Sivendranarayan (1796-1847) was also full of devotion for the gods and goddesses as well as for the Brahmanas. Jaynath Munsu in *Rajopakhyana* has described him as '*Saktasiromani*' (crest-jewel of the Saktas). Being a devout Sakta, he paid much attention to the erection and repair of temples in the Kamata-Koch kingdom and composition of devotional songs including *Shyamasangitas* (Pal 1999: 39-40)

The reign of Maharaja Narendranarayan (1847-1863 CE), adopted son and successor of Sivendranarayan, witnessed celebration of Durgapuja with pomp and grandeur (Pal 1999: 117). Narendranarayan's son Maharaja Nripendranarayan (1863-1911) was highly influenced by his father-in-law Keshab Chandra Sen's ideas, i.e., the Brahma faith and therefore, declared the Brahma faith as the royal religion (Roy 1413 B.S.: 264). Like Nripendra Narayan, his son Maharaja Raj Rajendra Narayan (1911-1913 CE) was also baptized into *Nabobdhan* Brahma Religion founded by Keshab Chandra Sen. Maharaja Jitendranarayan (1913-1922 CE), younger brother of Rajendranarayan, was also a Brahma and even wedded to Indira Raje, daughter of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III of Baroda, at a hotel in London by the rites of the Brahma Samaj. However, after his marriage he was influenced by Hindu religion and became a devout Sakta (Debnath 1993: 179). Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan (1922-1970 CE), eldest son and heir of Jitendranarayan and the last ruling prince of his dynasty,² also adhered to the Hindu religion and took initiation in accordance with Sakta faith (Bandopadyay: 207)

Thus, it appears that after Dhairyendranarayan, the Koch kings devoted themselves fully either to Saktism or to Brahmaisim discarding the Vaisnava faith. The Vaisnava movement in the Kamata Koch Kingdom practically continued in full swing during three generations of rulers. Subsequently Vaisnavism remained confined in the initiation of the Maharajas by the Vaisnava preceptors.

It is interesting to note that the Neo-Vaisnava movement propagated by Sankaradeva, which sought to establish a new casteless and classless society, created tremendous impact in this region. However, it gradually lost its popularity because of lack of people's enthusiasm to the movement. Again, Vaisnavism as propagated by Chaitanyadeva in Bengal, though deprived of royal patronage, influenced the people from the time of Naranarayan itself. The influence of the faith as mentioned in the *Damodaracharita* (Sridamodaradeva Charita: 192) has not been properly evaluated. The influence of the cult of Radhakrishna is very much apparent even in the traditional folk songs of Kamata Koch Kingdom. Here, we may refer to worship of Radhavinoda, Radhavallabha, Radhagobinda, etc. patronized by royal ladies. It is probable that during the period of Damodaradeva the followers of the cult were preaching in western part of Kamarupa (Bhattacharya 1991: 116)

Kamata-Koch Kingdom, nay north-east India was predominantly inhabited by the tribal people most of whom were later on Hinduised. Among them worship of Siva prevailed from the remote past. Siva was the deity of fertility and agriculture to the people whose chief avocation was cultivation. That is why, Siva perhaps constantly remained as the guardian deity and there is no wonder that the deity would be adored and worshipped by the people. This perhaps gives satisfactory explanation as to the Koch king's obligation to

²The State of Cooch Behar was merged with the dominion of India (later the union of India) during his reign on August 28, 1949 and finally it became a district of the state of West Bengal on 1st January, 1950.

erect Siva temples occasionally and adopt legends leading their devotion to Siva (Bhattacharya 1991: 116).

The satras established by Sankaradeva usually on royal tax-free land, played a significant role in disseminating his ideals as well as the sophisticated methods of cultivation to the peasant of the distant parts. Signs of population growth after 1500 CE on account of adoption of labour intensive cultivation and the increased number of Satras (700) in the Brahmaputra valley indicate the popularity of the Satras (Guha 1984: 495). But the picture the Kamata Koch kingdom was something different. The Madhupura Satra in Koch Behar with its large amount of rent-free land (75 bighas) did not make much progress probably due to less growth of population for which it had depended mainly on charity (Bhattacharya 1991: 116)

Madhavadeva is said to have appeared to the rich traders and men of position to support his bhakats and himself with food and money. They were considered to be the mainstay of the NeoVaisnavism whose position became jeopardized with the large influx of Muslim peasantry and outsiders like the Armenian and the Bhutiyas in the bigger business transactions of the country (Sinha 1962:58).

The most important reason behind the decline of Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankaradeva seems to be the opposition of the priestly class and the Brahmanas in the court of the Kamata-Koch Kingdom. During the reign of successive rulers, they tried their best to restore the position of the Brahmanical religion in Koch Kingdom. In this connection, mention may be made of Maharaja Harendranarayan and Sivendranarayan who expressed their devotion to the Goddess Kali, composed songs in praise of Kali and constructed temples in dedication of Kali. All these virtually mark the extinction of the values which Sankaradeva is said to have propounded in the Kingdom.

Neo-Vaishnavism was brought to Cooch Behar by Sankaradeva and was being maintained and propagated by the followers. Before 1714 CE when Maharaja Rupanarayan was succeeded by eldest son Upendranarayan, the Brahmins of the Vaidik Sreni of Kamarup were the royal Gurus. Giving up the old line of Gurus, Upendra Narayan took SatanandaGoswami, a Radhiya Brahmana of Murshidabad district as his Guru. Naturally the Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankaradeva was deprived of royal patronage and consequently weakened.

The custom of Rajguru in the Koch Royal family was an established one. These Rajgurus enjoyed special privileges even till the reign of Maharaja Harendra Narayan. It is said that Rajguru Sarbananda Goswami received a royal order to collect *Guru Pranami* at the rate of one *taka* per house in all the houses of the kingdom. (Roy 1413 BS: 132) Naturally the Rajgurus played a significant role in maintaining and popularizing the glory of the *Rajadharm*. The English whose feudatory state was Cooch Behar since 1773, however, later stopped all the facilities of these Rajgurus and their families. This badly affected the *Rajadharm* in the Koch royal family.

Maharaja Harendranarayan had an intense love of freedom against the British intervention in the administrative affairs of the Koch Kingdom. This perhaps inspired him to be a Shakta and worshipper of goddess Kali in place of peaceful Vaisnavism. Under the indomitable influence of father-in-law Keshab Chandra Sen, King Nripendranarayan not only embraced the Brahmo religion himself but also declared it the state religion. These developments dealt a final blow to the hope of reemergence of neo-Vaisnavism in the Koch Kingdom.

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Samgraha (in Bengali), pp. 39-40, 121-138.

Sarkar Bijoy Kumar, "Neo-Vaishnavism in Kamata-Koch Dynasty: A Study of Birnarayan," *Satsampradayer Katha*, p. 47. Madhavadeva was a bachelor, Sri Damayanti Devi was not his real granddaughter.

Sinha, N. K., *The Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1962, p. 58.

Sri Damodaradeva Charita, p. 192.

Sri Sri Vanamali Deva Charita, pp. 52, 53.

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