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University of North Bengal
Raja Rammohunpur, District Darjeeling
West Bengal, India Pincode: 734013
Phone: 0353-2580998
Weblink: https://karatoya.nbu.ac.in

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Chief Editor:
Prof. Bijoy Kumar Sarkar
Department of History
University of North Bengal
Email: bksarkar58@nbu.ac.in

Associate Editor:
Verma Priyadarshini, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of History
University of North Bengal
Email: vermapriyadarshini@nbu.ac.in

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK:

We, on behalf of the Department of History, University of North Bengal, are extremely pleased to have this opportunity and honour to present to the readers the Volume 14(2021) of the Karatoya: North Bengal University Journal of History (ISSN 2229-4880) which is a UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities with Serial No. 42512. In the present Volume, we have included multiple research papers covering various themes, issues and recent trends across the discipline of History and related sub-disciplines like Ideas in History, Bengal famine, social conflicts in Colonial India, ancient statecraft, History of Eastern Himalayan and sub-Himalayan region, nature of Mughal defence, etc. In this regard, we would like to appreciate the concerned authors for an enriching and well researched contribution of their research papers to the present Volume. The Karatoya Volume 14 is refereed, blind peer reviewed, and rigorously edited and reviewed at each point in the process of its publication.

First and foremost, we take this opportunity to extend our sincere gratitude to our Honourable Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Finance Officer for their constant support and guidance for accomplishing this academic task. In addition to this, we also extend our appreciation and gratitude to our colleagues of the Department of History for all their advice and cooperation for ensuring a smooth publication of this journal.

We also extend our token of appreciation and thanks to all the officials and the staff of the North Bengal University Press for their cooperation and constant involvement in a time bound printing of the journal.

Editor-in-Chief:
Prof. Bijoy Kumar Sarkar

Associate Editor:
Verma Priyadarshini, Ph.D.

Minor Divinities in Padalisvarar Temple in Tamilnadu: Iconographical Significance

Prof. Bijoy Kumar Sarkar

Abstract: *There are around two millions temples in India; each year the number increases considerably. From the architectural perspective, two major temple-styles in the country are Nagara and Dravida, the former in the north and the latter in the south. However, there is another style known as Vesara, which is nothing but the combination of the Nagara and the Dravida style. In eastern India, there has prevailed an overlong tendency to focus on the temple art and architecture of the Aryavarta (the Indo-Gangetic Plain) in academic writings, which naturally gives an incomplete picture of India and its history. The present paper is an attempt at paying particular and deserving attention on the art history of South India – specifically speaking Tamil Nadu - through looking into the sculptures of minor divinities as found on the Padalisvarar Temple in the town of Thirupathiripuliyur under Cuddalore District in the state of Tamil Nadu.*

Key Words: *South Indian history, Art and Architecture, Temple style, Padalisvarar Temple, Divinities, Sculpture, Nayanars, Shiva, Brahma, Surya, Adichandikesvara.*

"catur-vidha bhajante mam janah sukrtino 'rjuna

arto jijnasur artharthi jnani ca bharatarsabha

*("*O best among the Bharatas [Arjuna], four kinds of pious men render devotional service unto Me — the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute"), said Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the seventh chapter of *Shrimad Bhagvat Gita*. To render devotional services, devotees sometimes come to a temple, which is (Latin *templum*) a building reserved for spiritual rituals and activities such as prayer and sacrifice. Temples are erected by various religions including Hinduism. Hindu temples are known by different names such as *Alayam*, *Ambalam, Degul*, *Devalaya*, *Devamandiraya, Devasthana, Deul*, *Gudi*, *Kavu*, *Koil*, *Kovil*, *Mandir* and *Raul*, the variation in name based on regions and languages. A Hindu shrine is a symbolic house, the seat and dwelling of gods and designed to bring human beings and gods together. Inside the innermost sanctum *(Garbhagriha)* of a Hindu temple, there is installed the image (a *murti)* of a deity or deities. There are around two million temples in India, and each year the number increases considerably. From the architectural perspective, two major temple-styles in the country are *Nagara* and *Dravida*, the former in the north and the latter in the south. However, there is another style known as *Vesara*, which is nothing but the combination of the *Nagara*

and the *Dravida* style.

In eastern India, there has prevailed an overlong tendency to focus on the temple art and architecture of the Aryavarta (the Indo-Gangetic Plain) in academic writings, which naturally gives us not a complete picture of India and its history. The present paper is an attempt at paying particular and deserving attention on the art history of South India – specifically speaking Tamil Nadu - through looking into the sculptures of minor divinities as found on the Padalisvarar Temple in the town of Thirupathiripuliyur under Cuddalore District in the state of Tamil Nadu. The Padalisvarar Temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva in the town of Cuddalore, is referred to as the *Padal Petra Sthalam* of Nadunadu. The presiding deity is revered in the seventh century Tamil Shaiva canonical work, the *Tevaram*, written by Tamil saint poets known as the Nayanmars, classified as one of the 275 *Paadal Petra Sthalams*[1] and are amongst the greatest Shiva temples of the continent. This is one of the *Devara Thiruthalam* and 18th *Shiva sthalam* in Nadu Nadu region. On the other hand, the *Divya Desam*s by comparison are the 108 Vishnu temples glorified in the poems of the contemporary Vaishnava Alvars of Tamil Nadu. However, the region of Nadu Nadu was located between the Chola mandala and Thondai mandala i.e. the kingdoms of the Cholas and the Pallavas.

The Padaliswarar Temple was built in the seventh century A.D. and dated a millennium earlier. It is revered in the verses of the seventh-century Shaiva saints Appar and Tirugnanasambandar in their works in Tevaram.[2] Appar is said to have been rescued from death by drowning here, by the grace of the presiding deity. The famous *'Sotrunai Vediyan' - Namachivayappatikam* was composed here. *Vyagrapadar* (the saint with tiger's claws and feet) is said to have worshipped here, as in Omampuliyur, Erukkattampuliyur, Perumpuliyur and Perumpatrappuliyur (Chidambaram). The *theertham* for this temple is the Gadilam River (sometimes pronounced Kedilam), which flows through the Cuddalore and Vriksham is Patiri. It was constructed during the Pallava and Medieval Chola periods. The Shaivite saint Appar is believed to have adopted Shaivism at this temple. It is one of the shrines of the 275 *Paadal Petra Sthalams.* There is a belief or myth that by worshiping this God a single time is equal to 16 times worshiping the Shiva in Kashi, eight times in Thiruvannamalai, and three times in Chidambaram. In the Padalisvarar temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva, the various linga forms which are described in puranic stories, *sthala puranas*, *stalamanmiyam* pertaining to the 16th century, sculptures of Dakshinamurti, Lingodbhava murti, have been portrayed.

The temple is constructed in the Dravidian style of architecture. It is classified as Gnazhar Kovil, where the image of the presiding deity is set up under Gnazhar trees. Trees like Kondai, Kongu and Theekku (teak) all fall in the category. The temples constructed in wood made from Gnazhar trees are also classified as Gnazhar Koil. Literary evidence is found in the works of Tirugnanasambandar, who refers the temple as Gnazhar Koil.[3] The lord of this temple saved Saint Appar from drowning when he was tied with a stone column and launched into sea as per the orders of the Pallava king Mahendra Varman. Appar, along with the stone, floated on the sea and safely drifted ashore here at Thirupathiripuliyur by the grace of god. Overwhelmed, he sang the thevaram "*Eendralumai enaku endhaiyumai*" (Anything for me today) in praise of the lord.

Sculptures of Vishnu are found in comparatively small numbers in this temple. The god appears in all his three usual postures: standing, sitting and lying. Lower reliefs are, however, only few. The temple also displays a few images of Mahishasuramardini-Durga, Kali, Laksmi Devi, Sarasvati and Gangadevi. An 18th-century Durga is found in normal standing posture in *devakotta*. However, the main focus in this article is to be thrown on the sculptures of other divinities to assess their individual comparative significance. Lords such as Brahma, Surya, Navagrahas, Dikpalakas, Nandideva, Chandikesvara, Garuda, Kubera, Shaivite Nayanmars, Dvarapalakas, Risis, Kinnarar, Apsaras, Kinnaris, Vidyadharas, Kimpurusas, Gandarvas, Narada, Tumburu, Kamadhenu and social activities such as scenery of lilas with love, alasya spinsters, entertaining sculptures, wonderful animals, clumps forms, dance sculptures, gymnastics are depicted through sculpturing arts. Some of these are being worshipped in this temple and some others are meant only for embellishing the architecture. Moreover, the main purpose of such is to spread the puranic stories among people. Among the above, the images of Brahma, Surya and Chandikesvara are being focused upon.

Brahma:

There are three images of Brahma in the Padalisvara temple. In Hinduism, Brahma occupies a significant position. He was considered the first of the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The origin of Brahma and his subsequent history are given in detail in the extensive Puranic and Agamic literature. Derived from Prajapati, the Vedic god of sacrifice, Brahma became one of the members of Hindu Trimurti. Over time, however, Brahma's place became inferior to that of the other deities and his worship became less common. The lower position of Brahma is

clearly seen in the Trimurti icons, mostly found in Central and South India. In these icons, the central place is given to either Vishnu or Shiva, but in no case to Brahma, The other two deities are usually depicted issuing from the main central figure. Thus Vishnu and Shiva were promoted in turn as the Supreme Deity, and this place of honour was not given to Brahma.

Sanskrit texts like *Rupaamandana*, *Suprabhedagama*, *Silparatna* and *Vishnu Purana* give details about the iconographic forms of Brahma. He is to be shown with four faces and four hands. According to the aforementioned texts, the four faces of Brahma signify the four Vedas, the four Yugas and four Varnas. The heads of Brahma, according to *Rupamandana*, should face the four arms. *Suprabhedagama* mentions that each face must be shown with three eyes (*trimbaka* posture). He may either be shown standing or seated on a *padmasana* or on a swan. On his heads, should be the *jatamukutas* and he should be adorned with all ornaments. On his chest, there should be a *yajnopavita*. The undergarments should consist of white cloths and the upper portion of the body should be covered with a deer's skin worn in the *upavita* fashion. In his ears should be shown golden or ruby *kundalas*. The hands should variously hold an *akshamala* (rosary), *kamandalu* (water-pot), *sruva*, *pustaka* (book of the Veda), *kurcha* (handful of Kusha grass) and *ajyasthali* (ghee-pot). The *Amsumadbhedagama* says that *akshmamala*, *kamandala*, utensils or ingredients meant for *yajna*, *ajayastali* (utensil to keep ghee for offering), and bunch of *durba* (grass) are to be possessed by Brahma.[4] His two front hands should generally be held in the *abhaya* and *varada* mudras. The *Rupamandana* prescribes for Brahma a beard too. The third canto of *Visnudharmottara Purana* mentions about the coming of Brahma in a sitting posture in a chariot being pulled by seven swans.[5] According to some texts, to the right and left of the god his consorts Sarasvati and Savitri should be depicted with all ornaments. But most of the texts enjoin the figure of Savitri alone seated on the left side of Brahma. The *Rupamandana* prescribes four faces and four hands for Savitri too and says that in her hands she should hold an *akshamala*, *pustaka*, *padma* and *kamandalu*. According to *Silparatna*, Brahma should be surrounded by Rishis and the Vedas and the *ajyasthali* should be placed before him.

In the sculpture of Lingodbhava made by Pandyas and Pallavas, Brahma could be seen seated on a swan, which started his journey to reach the peak of Shiva.[6]In the Lingodbhava image of the Chola period, Brahma and Vishnu stand around Shiva in the form of worshiping.[7] In Elephanta Caves on Elephanta Island in Mumbai Harbour, Brahma is depicted coming in a chariot drawn by seven swans in the art

of the Vakatakas (7-8th century C.E.).[7]In the cave number 2 of the Badami cave temples, an image of Brahma is depicted with Gayatri Devi and Saraswati Devi.[8] Many sculptures of Brahma are seen in this cave temple. The Brahma figure could be seen installed in a niche facing north in the temples constructed in Tamil Nadu during the period of the Cholas. In the Padalisvarar temple, three sculptures of Brahma are depicted. One image is seen in the northern side of the sanctum sanctorum (*garbhagriha*) or inner shrine chamber). The image in the niche of the sanctum has three faces; the arms hold *akshamala* and *kamandala* and show the *abhaya* and *varada* mudra. Other details related to clothing and ornaments could not be easily guessed. Even so, the face of the icon suggests that it was built around 1400 AD.

The second is on the projected part of a pillar. It is shown in standing position in *samapadasthanaka*. The feet are turned aside being in *vaivasvadasthana*.[9] He has three faces and four arms. The lower arms show the *abhaya mudra* and *katiyavalambida mudra* (keeping the arm on the waist). The upper right and left arms are shown with *akshamala* and *kamandala* respectively. The real grace of divinity is not found in this sculpture. It was probably installed between 1800-1900 A.D. The third icon is a bronze statue. It is very rare to find the image of Brahma made of bronze. The icon in question has eight hands. The lower right hand holds the *akshamala* and the left arm a mirror. It may also have been built between 1800 -1900 AD.

Surya

There are three Sun images found in the Padalisvarar temple. The sun-god is referred to as Surya or Aditya. Surya is one of the major five deities in Hinduism, considered as equivalent deities in *Panchayatana puja*. Vedic India had a vigorous tradition of Sun-worship, which forms an integral part of Nature-worship so prominently practiced by the Aryans. The very concept of Sun god among the Aryans was based upon the phenomenon of light whose chief source was Sun. The Sun was worshipped under various forms and names in the Vedic tradition: Surya, Savitri, Mitra, Vishnu, Pushan, Bhaga, Vavaswat and Adityas (Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Amsa, Daksha, Varuna, Martanda). Surya is the most concrete of the solar gods, because he represents the simplest and most direct form i.e. the round red orb of the Sun.[10] Savitri is the spiritual power of the Sun and thus a more abstract deity as compared to Surya. He represents primarily the stimulative aspect of the Sun. Majority of scholars takes Mitra to represent the beneficent aspect of the

Sun.[11] Mitra of the Veda is identical with Mithra of the Indo-Iranian religion.[12] Vishnu is the spirit of the Sun's rays in its capacity of creation, preservation and maintenance and also the personification of the swiftly-moving luminary.[13] Pusan appears a solar deity in his capacity of prosperity which had two aspects – production and protection of cattle which were useful for agriculture as well as for trade as mediums of exchange. Admittedly, Vivasvata is connected with the first sacrifice and is described as the father of the human race several times in the Vedic literature. Bhaga has been described by Yaska as the presiding deity of the forenoon.[14] The solar divinities – Surya, Savitri, Pusan, Vishnu, Mitra, Varuna, Bhaga, Aryamana and Amsa described above are jointly invoked under the name of Adityas in the Rig-Veda. However, the Rig-Veda is rather indefinite as to the names and names of the gods that the group includes. The friendly nature of Aryamana, which resembles Mitra - the Sun-god, is hinted at in the Rigveda.[15] In the Atharvaveda, the friendly nature of Aryaman is maintained.[16] Amsa is almost synonymous with Bhaga expressing both the concrete sense of share, portion and that of apportioner.[17] Daksha was regarded with Aditi as the universal parent representing the luminous sky.[18] Varuna appears to be a representative of the luminous encompassing sky.[19] However, he is also regarded as the nocturnal sun.[20] Martanda, as it seems to be suggested in the Rig-Veda, represents the setting sun.[20a]In the Epics, the personality of Surya has been fully humanized.[21] With humanization, there developed a family around him. In the early puranas, the story of Samjna and her shadow Chhaya as wives of Surya is referred to.[22] Surya has many children – Yama, Manu and Yami by Samjna; two Asvins – Dasra and Nasatya and Revanta from Samjna in mare's form; Manu Sanischara and Tapati from Chhaya. In some late passages of early puranas,[23] the attendants of Sun god – Danda and Pingala – also find mention.

The Agamas i.e. *Amsumadbhedagama*, the *Suprabhedagama* and the *Purvakarasnagama* contain the prescriptions for the construction of sun-images. Sun-god should be shown seated in his chariot drawn by seven horses. Aruna, the charioteer, should be placed in the front. It is suggested that the image of Aditya should have two arms and hands, each holding a lotus. He should wear only one cloth and the body should be covered with a long coat as in Northern India. The body should be beautiful and red in colour. The garment should be of red colour. His body should be adorned with all ornaments like coronet, *kundala* and necklace. He should wear *Yajnopavita* and a *Karanda mukuta*. His head should be surrounded with a halo or *prabhamandala* of medium size. The goddess Usa and

Pratyusa should be depicted standing on the left and right of the god engaged in dispelling the darkness.

The sculptures of Sungod in Tamil Nadu are found only from the period of Pallavas. At Mahabalipuram, an image of Sun is shown on the Dharmaraja ratha.[24] In the lower rock-cut cave temple at Tiruhirapalli a sculpture of Sun could also be noticed, which belongs to the period of Mahendravarman-I. On the other hand, in North India, Buddhagaya Sun image belongs to 1st century B.C.E. The sculptures of Surya are found in the Bhaja cave temples too.[25] In the Padalisvarar temple three images[26] of the Sun god are found. Two of them are being worshipped in two different temples and the third one forms a part of the Navagraha image. There is a Sun image in the sanctum sanctum *(Garbhagriha)*. The Sun god is in standing posture in *samapadasthanaka*. Interestingly enough, the deity has four arms. The lower right arm shows the *abhaya mudra* and the left the *varada mudra*. Both the upper arms are shown as holding blossomed lotus flowers. The deity puts on lengthy cloth in the lower portion of his body. Innerwears (*antaravasa*) are visible on both sides hanging right from the waist. The lower arms are adorned with *kanganas*. The *bhujanga* rings and *keyuram* adorns the upper arms. Ears are adorned with rings made up of gems. Ornaments embedded with gems are found around the neck. The head is bedecked with *karanda makuta*. To show the *prabhamandala* around his head, a circular form is depicted. This icon was most probably installed 200 years before, that is, in 1800 A.D. But the actual charm is lacking in the image. The second sculpture is found in another shrine with the above-mentioned artistic characteristics. Both the upper arms hold lotus flowers which are depicted, though, as buds. The *Abhaya mudra* and the *Varada mudra* are displayed in both the right and left arm respectively. The head is surrounded by *prabhamandala*. The sculpture is based on *padapitha* made on top of the other. The image was most probably installed around 1600 A.D. A small-sized image of Surya is made as one of the Navagrahas. This Navagraha panel might have been installed in the later period, perhaps in 1800 A.D.

Chandesvara

Two sculptures of Chandesvara are found in this temple. Ădichandiksvvara is regarded as one of the eight *parivara devatas*. The other seven are: Bhairava, Ganapati, Surya, Jesta Devi, Sapta matrikas, Chandra and Subrahmanya. He is considered to be the guardian of the temple belongings in the Shiva temples. The lands and properties belonging to a temple of Shiva used to be registered in his

name. According to Sastras, he is always installed in the north eastern corner of Shiva temple. In the *Chandikesvara purana*, the birth of Visarasarma at Seignalur is narrated. It is also stated in the Periya Puranas[27] that he was born into a Brahmin family and was called Visarasarman. When he was a young boy, their cows remained uncared for. Hence he was entrusted with tendering and caring for the cows. While doing so, he made a lingam made of sand and would pour some milk on the lingam. The news of this wastage of milk eventually came to the ear of his father, Datta. The father himself came to the field and scolded his son for wasting the milk by pouring on sand when Chandesha was deep in meditation in front of the sand lingam. Thus he could neither notice his father' arrival nor listen to his words. This enraged his father, who kicked the sand lingam. This interrupted Chandesha's meditation and he struck his father's leg with a staff. The staff turned into an axe and his father's leg was cut off.[28] At this time, Shiva manifested himself, blessed Chandesha and brought back the severed leg of Datta to the former condition.[29] Pleased with the devotion of Chandesha, Shiva also appointed him as the caretaker of his wealth (caretaker of Ganas as per another version).[30] The image of Chandikesvara should have four faces, with four or twelve arms. He is to hold *akshamala*, *trishula*,*uli* or *parashu* and *kamandala* in his hands.[31] He should have three eyes. There should be *jatamakuta* over his head with a crescent on it. Serpent should be shown as his sacred thread (*yajnopavita*). According to the Sastras, he has to be seated in *padmasana*. While sitting in *virasana*, he must have *parasu* in one hand and spade in the other.[32] He has to be shown as furious with blackened skin.

The representation of the above deities shows that whoever be the personal god for whom the temple has been dedicated, the devotees never fail to show their respect to other minor deities. However, there might be a message underlying that the god for whom the shrine has been built and whose icon has been installed in the *garbhagriha*, is superior to other deities displayed. Two of three images of Surya have been shown with four arms. Four-handed sun images are very rare in India, especially in North India. Two Sun images with four hands are also known Bengal.[33] However, while two sun images of the Padalisvarar temple are shown in standing posture, the above-mentioned images from Bengal are seated, one in *lalitasana* and another in *padmasana*. One of the Bengal images is made of bronze and has legs covered as usual while the other is made of blackstone has the bare feet in front of which is seated Mahasveta. While both the Padalisvarar images show *varada* and *abhaya mudra*, the Bengal black stone image holds *sankhya* in

right hand and *chakra* in left hand. The sun images in the early medieval north India are not found usually with *karanda mukuta* on the head unlike the sun images on the Padaliswarar temple. *Karanda mukuta* might have been provided to the Sun because of his position being accessory here on the Shiva temple. The sun images appear in Tamil Nadu much later because while in North India, the sun image appears in 1st century B.C. on the Bodhgaya temple in Bihar, Anantagumpha cave in the Khandragiri hills in Orissa and a cave at Bhaja in Maharastra, the same are found in proper or far South only from the period of the Pallavas (275 A.D. to 897 A.D. It may be attributed to the fact that the exclusive devotion to the Sun was brought to North India by Sun-worshipping Magas from Sakadvipa (Iran) and it naturally took time to reach the far south.

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Inter-state Relations in Kautilya's Arthashastra

Dr. Rajeev Kumar

[Editorial Note: The present paper has discussed about the political ideas and institutions existing in ancient India through an analytical study of the Arthashastra. The author has highlighted the inter-state relations as reflected in the text as well has also discussed in detail the ancient strategy of policy making, statecraft and administration and its relevance in the present times.]

Abstract**:** *The western world has been plagued with a wilful misconception that ancient India was uninformed or rather oblivious of elements such as statecraft, strategy, or administration. They intended to colour India's past as one having no historical sense even though the ancient Indian treatises and epics spoke volumes about vast kingdoms, their war strategies and administrative skills and about major battles that were fought. Such vast treasures on ancient skills in strategizing warfare and defining inter-state relations could not have been possible without a fine sense of policy-making and application. They, in fact, further the very idea of ancient Indian wisdom in statecraft and related aspects. Some 2300 years ago, Kautilya described the principles of statecraft, diplomacy and inter-state relations. He described the principles of inter-state relations as Mandala theory. The strategic thinking in Kautilyan grand strategic design becomes evident through the six measures of foreign policy, also known as Shadagunya theory, which was closely related to the strength and weakness of the state. The present study will make an effort to interpret the Kautilyan ideas and concepts with respect to inter-state relations and will try to explore Kautilya's significance and relevance in the present Indian and global context.*

Keywords**:** *Statecraft, Inter-state relations, Mandala, Shadgunya, Upaya, Strategic Culture*

Introduction

Arthashastra, for Kautilya, was the art of statecraft where *artha*, an all-embracing term used in the sense of the material well-being of people, prevailed as the most important objective to be secured by the king. Kautilya considered it ultimate as the attainment of all other goals, viz. dharma, kama and moksha depended on the material well-being of people. In ancient times, the land was the main source of securing material well-being. Hence, acquiring the land became one of the main ideas or goals in the Arthashastra and the state was, naturally, meant to be aspiring for acquiring more land, near and far. In this scheme of things, neighbours became natural enemies and hence the relations between the two states were seen as

relations of war, though circumstances remained the deciding factor in formulating any scheme. The main idea in the Arthashastra is unequivocally strategic planning and war; and geopolitics and inter-state relations. Kautilya's intent in Arthashastra is to "lay bare the study of politics, wealth and practical expediency, of ways of acquiring and maintaining power" (Modelski 1964: 549). At the same time, it establishes the fact that "because size enhances security, the objective is to consolidate one's strength at the expense of other powers" (Zimmer 1967: 119-20). It was for these very astute ideas and propositions forwarded by Kautilya that Johann Jakob Meyer, the German Indologist and translator of Arthashastra from Sanskrit to the German language in 1927, designated the Arthashastra not as a book but as a library of ancient India (Sarkar 2010: 261).

Arthashastra can, in fact, be contemplated as the first textbook in geopolitics and realism which talks of the state as an organism that will either grow or perish. Kautilya, thus, challenges the western view that Indians (ancient past) lacked strategic culture. In reality, he presented a comprehensive theoretical framework of inter-state relations and foreign policy which continues to deeply influence contemporary Indian strategic culture even today. Written around 300 BCE, it explains the entire course of state formation and the conduct of foreign policy through war and diplomacy to maximize the power of the conducting state. This maximization of national power through material economic strength gained by conquering territories next to the aspiring state was considered a prerequisite for regional ascendancy which, in turn, was seen as the ultimate foreign policy objective of a state.

S. Kalyanaraman (2015: 1-2) succinctly draws the meanings and contexts out of Kautilya's Arthashastra when he says that:

> The state is based on power backed by legitimacy, and consequently, there is a need for constant efforts to enhance both its power and legitimacy. The state ceaselessly engages in the pursuit of wealth and power and self-aggrandisement in an anarchic inter-state system in which matsyanyaya (the concept of big fish swallowing smaller fish) prevails and frequent wars and struggles for supremacy occur; and the doctrine of mandala provides both a categorisation of states and their inter-relationships as well as prescriptions on how to exploit this matrix to one's advantage.

Kautilya, as a political realist, thus, assumed that every nation acted to maximize power and self-interest. He envisioned national interest as the realpolitik behind shaping the foreign policy of a state; and to pursue it, the state must be proficient in political, economic and military terms. This approach to politics, which the modern world views as the concept of balance of power, thus, had its place in the Kautilyan scheme of things around 300 BCE. Kautilya was of the view that while it was good to have an ally, the alliance would last only as long as it was in that ally's as well as one's own self-interest, because "an ally looked to the securing of his own interests in the event of similarity of calamities and in the event of the growth of the enemy's power" (Kautilya 8.1.59: 389). Moreover, one kept an ally not because of goodwill or moral obligation, but because one was strong and could advance one's own self-interest as well as the self-interest of the ally, for "when one had an army, one's ally remained friendly, or (even) the enemy become friendly" (Kautilya 8.1.56: 389). Kautilya, thus, provides a comprehensive understanding of various aspects related to statecraft. An objective analysis of these aspects is necessary to understand the meanings, perspectives and contexts of the Kautilyan grand scheme.

Inter-state Relations: Contemplating Realism

Shyam Saran (2017: 16-7), the former Indian diplomat, said that India cannot insulate its security from developments within the neighbouring states. Long back, Kautilya had deeply analyzed the subject in his text when he looked at the Indian subcontinent as a geopolitical unit and, therefore, comprehended that the strategic compulsions needed to be defined by sub-continental concerns. Even Jawaharlal Nehru's policy of non-alignment, hailed as a realistic policy reflecting India's geopolitical situation, loudly echoes Kautilya's advice of following self-interest instead of getting trapped into a permanent enmity or friendship with any other nation (Dar 2021: 3). Manmohan Singh, during his second tenure as Prime Minister of India, also stated the essence of Arthashastra by arguing that, "whatever policy we may lay down, the art of conducting the foreign affairs of a country lies in finding out what is most advantageous to the country" (Baru 2015). Similarly, the realistic foreign policy followed during the previous term of the current Prime Minister Narendra Modi further reflects the themes from the Arthashastra. His *Neighbourhood First* policy was indicative of the Kautilyan wisdom of converting neighbours from challenges to opportunities. The conduct of inter-state relations in

the modern days from Nehru to Narendra Modi, thus, closely takes inspiration from the strategic foundation provided in the Arthashastra.

Writing on inter-state relations and diplomacy, Kautilya laid down some basic principles, viz. a) No state can exist in isolation; b) there are no permanent friends or enemies in inter-state relations; c) any kingdom is an ally or enemy according to its geographical position with respect to the intending conqueror; d) A wise king, trained in politics, though in possession of only a small territory, can conquer the outside world with the help of the best elements of his sovereignty and will never be defeated (Mukherjee 1998: 253).

The main ideas in Arthashastra that deal with inter-state relations and foreign policy are *Mandala Siddhant*, *Saptanga* theory (*Saptaprakar*), *Sadgunya* Niti (Sixfold policy), the four *Upayas* (Fourfold measures), and the types of wars.

Mandala Siddhant

Kautilya developed his idea of realpolitik in the form of the Mandala theory which is essentially a description of alliances a king has to make with friendly states to deal with the enemy states. Kautilya was not the first Indian thinker to talk about the mandala. In fact, mention of the mandala system is to be found in several ancient texts such as the Mahabharata and Agnipurana but Kautilya probably is the first thinker to systematize the theory and write elaborately on it (Mehta & Thakkar 1980: 58).

Kautilya considered the application of the mandala theory to be a prerequisite for an aspiring king to conduct his inter-state relations. In the circle of competing states, there is the need to know, establish and measure one's own capability and also that of the adversary or adversaries including what is the state of 'power' or *Shakti* (Gautam 2017). While the Mandala theory as propagated in Arthashastra is often considered merely as an "arrangement of states in concentric circles, the idea essentially was one of the inter-state linkages with its own complex degree of friendliness or animosity or in modern parlance of having allies and adversaries" (Muralidharan 2020).

Elaborating further on the subject, the text advises that while seeking hegemony and balance of power in one direction, the king must not ignore enemies and friends

in the opposite direction. Thus, the mandala siddhant consists of and represents balance of power among 12 states, viz. a) vijigishu (the would-be conqueror); b) ari (the enemy); c) mitra (the vijigishu's ally); d) arimitra (ally of enemy); e) mitramitra (friend of ally); f) arimitramitra (ally of enemy's friend); g) parshnigraha (enemy in the rear of the vijigishu); h) akranda (vijigishu's ally in the rear); i) parshnigrahasara (ally of parshnigraha); j) akrandasara (ally of akranda); k) madhyama (middle king bordering both vijigishu and the ari); and l) udasina (lying outside, indifferent/neutral, more powerful than vijigishu, ari and madhyama) (Kangle 2010: 248). These twelve kings constitute the Kautilyan international system in which the concerned kings constitute their own allies and mandala of states. Chakraborti (2016: 9) says:

> There are three levels of analysis in the Kautilyan model of an international system. At the first level, there are four mandalas, viz. the vijigishu's circle of states, the ari's circle of states, the madhyama's circle of states, and the udasina's circle of states. At the second level, there will be independent kings who are allies with other kings in the circle. The third level is the lowest level of the king and his kingdom. Each king has 5 sovereign elements in his kingdom. Therefore, each mandala consists of 18 elements (6 elements in each state including the king and there are 3 states in a mandala) and the international system will contain 72 elements.

In this scheme of inter-state relations or foreign policy, the immediate neighbours were considered as enemies, but any state on the other side of a neighbouring state was regarded as an ally. Kautilya put this basic principle in different ways, but most simply as, "One with immediately proximate territory was the natural enemy" (Kautilya 6.2.19: 318). He further said, "With respect to the middle king [he himself], the third and the fifth constituents were friendly elements. The second, the fourth, and the sixth were unfriendly elements" (Kautilya 7.18.1: 380). The basic premise for this concentric circle of kings was that the king should aspire to become *Chakravarti Samrat* (hegemon), the reason Kautilya addressed the king as *Vijigishu*, i.e. one who aspires for victory.

Further, a powerful and wise king had always tried to make himself the centre *(nabhi)* of the Circle and to make the friendly powers the spokes of the wheel *(nemi)* (Kautilya VII: 2). Thus, under the Mandala framework, Kautilya projected kingdoms or states as a series of adjacent or interconnected circles and described

their relationship to each other. The power of encirclement was, however, greatly determined by the alliances and capacity of individual states and the capacity of their constituent elements (Bisht 2020: 168). In order to determine the kind of policy to be adopted in each case, foreign rulers or states were classified by Kautilya under four heads, namely, enemies *(Ari),* friends *(Mitra),* mediators *(Madhyama),* and neutrals *(Udasina)* (Kautilya VI: 2).

Before making decisions in foreign policy, the task of the ruler and his advisers is ascertaining the relative strength or weakness of powers (Kangle 2010: 406). Thus, the ratio of prakriti aggregates or the correlation of forces is the key concept of the Kautilyan theory of inter-state relations. Liebig and Mishra (2017: 8) rightly say that:

> The seven parameters of the saptanga theory provide objective and substantive criteria for making a sound assessment of the correlation of forces between competing or adversary states and deciding on the course of action in foreign policy. The correlation of forces (in terms of prakriti aggregates) determines which of the six foreign policy methods has to be chosen.

In Kautilya's view, expediency was to be the main consideration in foreign policy. "If a king," said Kautilya, "was weaker than his neighbour, he had to adopt a peaceful policy; but if he was superior in strength to his rival, he was to make war. If the circumstances be such that it was desirable to crush a rival, but this could only be done with the assistance of some other Power, then the king had to adopt a policy of double-dealing" (Kautilya VII: 1).

Medha Bisht deciphers the Kautilyan grand strategy in terms of balancing personal with political along with prioritizing the interests of the state. She says (2020: 59):

> Mandala theory represented a unique order of states, wherein one could identify one's foes and allies on the basis of geographical proximity, but also in terms of material strength and cognitive intentions. To read mandala theory without the state (in terms of its capacity and strength) is therefore misconstrued, given the Kautilyan emphasis on the saptanga theory.

Talking about the actors, other than the vijigishu, in the form of allies and enemies and their role as facilitators who also regulated order in the mandala, she further says (Ibid.):

> The five independent actors, which therefore need to be reckoned with are: the conqueror, the enemy, the ally, the middle king and the neutral king. The rest of the actors were classified as per the sequence established for identifying enemies and allies. These actors were important as they acted as facilitators to measure the success of diplomacy. The intent of these actors can be approached by articulating the cognitive aspect which gave meaning to 'friend' or 'enemy'.

She also calls the mandala theory a fluid concept where transformations were possible owing to internal and external influences and factors. She says (Ibid: 60):

> If the state declined in terms of its capacity and influence, it had to adapt to various situations in order to regain its relative influence in the mandala. The circle of states was thus a fluid entity, which was prone to transformational elements dependent on state capacity and influence. The inside-outside or the internal-external dichotomy thus seems superficial in Arthashastra, as the strategy which the state was expected to adopt had to be in resonance with its internal capacity and strength. Order thus was not an arrangement which was fragile, but was a grand strategic design, taking a long-term view of things holding the states in the mandala together.

Thus, with 72 constituent elements, each having its own peculiar excellence, the Kautilyan diplomacy was about managing, regulating and balancing them through tactics and strategies.

Shadgunya and Upaya: Methods and Means of Inter-State Relations

In order to exploit the doctrine of rajamandala effectively, Kautilya propounded six methods of foreign policy called the shadgunya theory. These six methods of foreign policy contribute to increasing the effective national power of the state (Rangarajan 2000: 512). For Kautilya, the only way the vijigishu could attain success in the mandala system operating under the conditions of matsyanyaya was by following the shadgunya (six-fold) policy (Zaman 2006: 237). Scattered throughout the book in various chapters, this consists of six foreign policy methods that the vijigishu uses to achieve his goals, i.e. foreign policy consists of six gunas.

Talking of shadgunya theory, Kautilya says that the attitude of a ruler towards foreign rulers depended upon the special circumstances of each case. He was supposed to adopt one or other of six sorts of policy, namely, peace *(sandhi),* war *(vigraha),* neutrality *(asana),* preparedness for war *(yana),* alliance *(samsraya),* and double-dealing *(dvaidhibhava)* (Kautilya VII: 1). Kangle (1986: 251) quotes that Kautilya advises the *Vijigishu* to opt for:

1. *Sandhi* or alliance, if the enemy is strong or making a treaty containing conditions or terms, that is, the policy of peace;
2. *Vigraha* or war (Break the Sandhi, start war if you are strong) or the policy of hostility;
3. *Asana* or halting (Stationing of the forces near enemies' territories) or the policy of remaining quiet (and not planning to march on an expedition);
4. *Yana* or military expedition (Sanskrit word for mobilization – it means military exercise near enemies' territory);
5. *Samsraya* or seeking shelter with another king or in a fort (Joining hands with those who have similar aims); and
6. *Dvaidhibhava* (Dual policy – it means friendship with one enemy for the time being and enmity with the other – don't open two fronts at the same time) or the double policy of Sandhi with one king and Vigraha with another at the same time.

Kautilya says, "Of these, agreement with pledges is peace; offensive operation is war; indifference is neutrality; making preparations is marching; seeking the protection of another is an alliance, and making peace with one and waging war with another, is termed a double policy (dvaidhibhava) (Kautilya VII: 370).

Elaborating on the various aspects of the six-fold policy, Kautilya further says (Ibid: 370-1):

> Whoever is inferior to another shall make peace with him; whoever is superior in power shall wage war; whoever thinks "no enemy can hurt me, nor am I strong enough to destroy my enemy," shall observe neutrality; whoever is possessed of necessary means shall march against his enemy; whoever is devoid of necessary strength to defend himself shall seek the protection of another; whoever thinks that help is necessary to work out an end shall make peace with one and wage war with another.

The selection of one of the six methods of foreign policy is, thus, wholly dependent on situational factors, yet it follows an inherent logic. Kangle (2010: 321) opines that, "the guiding principle, in determining which of the six foreign policy options is to be adopted, derives from the intrinsic connectivity between the shadgunya and saptanga theories: The circle of constituent elements [the seven prakritis] is the basis of the six measures of foreign policy [shadgunya]". Kautilya says (Kautilya VII: 365), "the application of the six-fold royal policy is the source of peace and industry where the absence of disturbance to the enjoyment of the results achieved from works is peace and efforts to achieve the results of works undertaken is industry (vyayama)".

Talking about the nature of the alliance, Kautilya emphasises the fact that when the advantages derivable from peace and war are of equal character, one should prefer peace. He says (Ibid: 375):

> One shall make an alliance with a king who is stronger than one's neighbouring enemy; in the absence of such a king, one should ingratiate oneself with one's neighbouring enemy, either by supplying money or army or by ceding a part of one's territory and by keeping oneself aloof; for there can be no greater evil to kings than an alliance with a king of considerable power unless one is actually attacked by one's enemy.

Other examples of Arthashastra's practical foreign policy prescriptions to a king can be seen in the following specific advice he gives to a king (Ibid: 375).

> A king who is situated between two powerful kings shall seek protection from the stronger of the two; or from one of them on whom he can rely; or he may make peace with both of them on equal terms. Then he may begin to set one of them against the other by telling each that the other is a tyrant causing utter ruin to himself, and thus cause dissension between them. When they are divided, he may pat down each separately by secret or covert means. Or, throwing himself under the protection of any two immediate kings of considerable power, he may defend himself against an immediate enemy.

Kautilya suggests the six-fold policy to be applied together as well. When a king finds himself threatened by imminent dangers or troubles, he should, though

superior, seek the protection of another (Ibid: 378). This is the realist approach nations in the modern world also take into consideration when such a need arises.

Kautilya talks about various alternatives, other than the six-fold policy, as well. He says, "Whoever thinks that in the course of time his loss will be less than his acquisition as contrasted with that of his enemy, may neglect his temporary deterioration" (Ibid: 371). Overall, the ultimate aim of the king shall be passing from the state of deterioration to that of stagnation and from the latter to that of progress. Kautilya, thus, draws upon the Pendulum theory of history in which Kautilya depicts the kingdom passing through three phases – decline, stability and advancement (Boesche 2002: 99). Kautilya says that when in decline, make peace, when prospering, make war, if equal in strength, remain neutral, depleted in power, seek shelter, with help, seek dual policy and when blessed with excellence, prepare for war (Kangle 2010: 373).

At the same time, Kautilya realises that the shadgunya methods are effective only if they are implemented through various instruments, means or upaya (influence techniques). The upayas, in the Arthashastra, are introduced as means of politics in the tenth chapter of Book II. They are: (i) conciliation *(sama)*; (ii) making of gifts *(dana)*; (iii) causing dissensions *(bheda)*; and iv) war of punishment *(danda).* These measures were to be adopted by the Vijigishu to carry into effect their foreign policy and the sadgunya cluster can be seen as a derivative of the upayas in the field of foreign policy. Kautilya sees a ranking among the upayas when he says (Kautilya VII: 425):

> This is the group of four means. Each preceding one in the enumeration is the easier and lighter one. Conciliation is simple. Gifts are twofold being preceded by conciliation. Dissension is three-fold, being preceded by conciliation and gifts. Use of force is four-fold, being preceded by conciliation, gifts and dissension.

For fruitful application of the upayas, as components of inter-state relations, Kautilya further talks about the efficacy of three kinds of diplomats, viz. a) Nisrishtartha or plenipotentiary; b) Parimitartha with definite instructions for a particular mission; c) Shasanahara or royal messenger (Kautilya I: 16). Kautilya also discussed classification of ambassadors (duta), his qualifications, status, immunity, duties, salary etc. in great detail. A successful adviser (Minister) was deemed suitable for the post of ambassador. This practice continues till date.

The maintenance of balance of power was one of the problems in foreign politics that engaged the diplomats' attention in ancient days. Kautilya insisted that a monarch should always take care that none of the other powers grow either too strong or become too weak. Kautilya also talks of the importance of diplomatic espionage and the institutions of internal and external spies. He enlists the role and duties of the ambassador in terms of collecting information on the state of affairs of neighbouring kingdoms and the need to ascertain and neutralise any plans they may hatch against others. The ambassador was:

> expected to strike up friendships with enemy officers, become familiar with their military strengths as well as ascertain their weak points. He was also expected to cultivate and gain insights into the state of thinking of those in power in enemy territory. In the modern era, our diplomats and defence attaches too are expected to gain insights into the country they serve in. Thus, the basic principles of foreign policy as enunciated in the Arthashastra are as applicable today as at the time of its writing (Muralidharan 2020).

Kautilya also talks of war as a method for ascertaining victory for the vijigishu. When war becomes inevitable, Kautilya suggests three types of wars depending on the situation, viz. *Parakrama-yuddha* – open fight at a place and time indicated; *Kuta-yuddha* – concealed warfare involving use of tactics in battlefield; and *Tusnim-yuddha* – silent (proxy) fighting implying the use of secret agents for enticing enemy officers or killing them (Kangle 1986: 258). He also mentions three types of victories (conquests), viz. *Dharmavijay* – righteous; *Lobhavijay* – Greedy Conquest (by giving economic inducement to the enemies' forces); and *Asuravijay* – Demonical (by cunningness or unfair means) (Chakravarty 1992: 197).

Overall, Kautilya offered wide-ranging and truly fascinating discussions on war and diplomacy, including his wish to had his king become a world conqueror, his analysis of which kingdoms were natural allies and which were inevitable enemies, his view of women as weapons of war, the spread of disinformation, and his humane treatment of conquered soldiers and subjects (Kaur 2011: 114).

Kautilya's use of the word *vijigishu* is for purely theoretical purposes as he gives sufficient advice to a weak king to pursue against a strong king (Rangarajan 2000: 550). Through this evidence, the application of the Arthashastra's theories can be

done to all states, regardless of their policies and can be a useful tool to model state behaviour and understand motivations, behaviour and outcomes.

Kautilya places great emphasis on relative power in a bilateral relation to support a course of action (Rangarajan 2000: 543). Kautilya warns that power is not constant over time and advises a course of action based on deviations by factoring the variations in power on a temporal frame (Ibid.). The sub classification of types of neighbours, types of allies and types of vassals permits an analysis of the motives of the actors and allows a reasoned response through the models that Kautilya proposes (Ibid: 544).

Strategic partnerships, thus, in many ways can be seen as the heart of Kautilyan foreign policy and states routinely engaged in such activity and that it was a crucial part of interstate relations, allowing for strategic breadth and nuance in both the achievement of specific goals as well as competition with adversaries (McClish 2016: 29-30). Thus, in the seminal text on conducting inter-state relations, Kautilya draws various elementary strategies to be adopted by a ruler for securing and advancing the interests of the state and its people. Many of the prognoses Kautilya predicts for a ruler surrounded by predicaments happen to be the norms practiced even today.

Contemporary Relevance of Arthashastra

Deepshikha Shahi in *Kautilya and Non-Western IR Theory* calls the text a classic of IR theory providing lasting insights and intellectual stimulus for IR theorizing (2018: 167). Kautilya has been studied with variational alacrity in the scholarly world. Max Weber was the first Western social scientist to recognize Kautilya's Arthashastra as a foundational text in the evolution of political thought. Relations among states are shaped by a complex mix of capabilities, correlations of forces, intentions and values and all these four factors, congruent with political realism, are featured in the Arthashastra.

Defining the modern concept of security in relation to sovereign states, Michael Liebig (2020: 548) explains:

> The 'state' and 'security' are intrinsically intertwined concepts because the capacity to apply violence constitutes the essence of the sovereign state and is the basis of its internal and external security. For each state, its security

> has a 'strategic' quality precisely because it relates to the threat of use of force or the actual use of force, thus bearing upon the most fundamental and lasting of state interests, self-preservation.

He further states that "the inherent logic of strategy is a necessary condition to understand the actual behaviour of actors engaging in the external and internal security of a given state. All states pursue a security strategy and there are apparently universally valid 'guiding principles' that feature in the strategic conduct of all states" (Ibid.). Kautilya, in his Arthashastra, devoted three chapters related to these aspects of the state and its relations with others, viz. security, warfare and strategy. He opined that the ways in which states conduct their strategies should never be uniform and should, in fact, be guided by their experiences, preferences and orientations. The *modus operandi* for strategizing the essentials towards the conduct of foreign relations remains the same till date.

R.P. Kangle in his study, *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, has made very pertinent observations on the relevance of Kautilya in the modern era. He says, "We still have the same distrust of one nation by another, the same pursuit of its own interest by every nation tempered only by the considerations of expediency, the same effort to secure alliances with the same disregard of them in self-interest" (Muralidharan 2020). While the Mandala theory as propagated in Arthashastra is often considered merely as an arrangement of states in concentric circles, the idea essentially was one of inter-state linkages with its own complex degree of friendliness or animosity or in modern parlance of having allies and adversaries. This makes the notions and ideas of Kautilya still relevant.

Shiv Shankar Menon, former National Security Advisor, had succinctly summed up the relevance of Arthashastra by stating, "the concepts and ways of thinking that the Arthashastra reveals is useful, because in many ways, the world which we face today is similar to that in which Kautilya operated in when he built the Mauryan Empire to greatness" (Ibid.). The strategic relevance of Arthashastra, thus, lies in understanding the philosophy behind it, as it was the intangible/ideational elements that gave meaning and direction to concepts such as power, state and statecraft, and inter-state relations. Senior Indian diplomat, K.P.S. Menon, noted in 1947 that the "realism of Kautilya is a useful corrective to our idealism in international politics" (Kapur 1976: 77). However, Kautilyan realism is not 'pure power politics' but intrinsically rooted in what Liebig (2020: 553) calls political normativity

(*rajadharma*). He says that "Kautilya inter-relates 'realist' calculation of hard-power capabilities (military and economic strength) with political normativity (*rajadharma*) in making policy decisions. The central normative paradigm is that all-out-war is *ultima ratio* and 'indirect' strategic policies are preferred" (Ibid: 556-7).

Tracing the evolution of this rational approach to statecraft in Indian context, JN Dixit (2003: 24) notes, "It is very important to note, however, the moderate and rational approach to politics and inter-state relations in each stage of the evolution of Indian history as an independent political entity followed a process of political consolidation which required the application of concepts and prescriptions of Chanakya who predated Machiavelli nearly 2000 years". There are, undoubtedly, constants or 'lasting patterns' in the strategic posture and behaviour of these pan-Indian politics even though the political regimes have greatly differed.

Arthashastra's discourse on foreign policy and diplomatic practice can, thus, be described as a profound timeless classic of realism with inquisitive resonance with the modern times and thoughts. The pursuance of these policies led to establishment of India's first empire by Maurya dynasty which at its peak straddled well beyond South Asia's natural boundaries. In urging the king to rely on science and not the precepts of religion, Kautilya separated, for the first time in India, political thought from religious dictum (Sachdev 2014). In the 21st century, interestingly the context of what Kautilya wrote for his times now assumes importance as the very character of war has changed. Surely war-craft, statecraft and diplomacy are now conjoined as was in the time of Kautilya in the 4th century BCE (Gautam 2017). The use of diplomacy and political guile was propagated in preference to outright war. Rulers were also advised to calculate long-term and short-term gains before launching a war. It also talked of how every resource or element of national power should be utilized by a ruler. With most modern nations looking at issues through a similar prism, it would be evident that the Arthashastra is relevant even in the 21st century (Muralidharan 2020).

S. Kalyanaraman (2015: 1) rightly points out that "the Arthashastra continues to be relevant because of the key insights it provides about the enduring nature of the state and of the inter-state system as well as because of the framework of thought and action it prescribes for states to navigate through this system".

James Cook, modern strategist and war expert, defines strategy as something "designed to link *ends* (national interests), ways (concepts that describe how something might be done) and *means* (resources that are employed as capabilities)" (Cook 2013). What Cook and other modern strategists and thinkers explain was all embedded in Kautilya's Arthashastra and can well be related with the concepts in the text written more than two millenniums ago.

Conclusion

India had evolved her own ancient concept of statecraft which included an elaborate tradition of diplomacy, both inclusive (among rulers of India) and exclusive (beyond the subcontinent). From being initially rooted in the concept of dharma, the practice of diplomacy subsequently moved to realpolitik. The practice of inter-state alliances based on strategic or tactical considerations, thus, came into being. Kautilya's Arthashastra, written around 300 BCE and mainly concerned with statecraft, contained lengthy descriptions of strategies for the conduct of inter-state relations and diplomacy in the same tradition. The Arthashastra is, thus, a rich treasure of strategic thinking in ancient India.

The *Arthashastra's* legacy and influence have been substantial throughout the evolution of politics, strategy, statecraft, and intelligence on the Indian subcontinent. The impact of Kautilyan thought can be seen engraved on the present Indian policy-making as well. Pierre Bourdieu's 'habitus' concept is key to understanding this analogy, "which can be defined as the efficacious presence of past patterns of thought and behaviour in the present" (Bourdieu 1990). The habitus concept does apply to Indian strategic culture because it transcends the exclusivity of the conscious 're-use of the past', i.e. the deliberate reference to past ideas and experiences as the precondition for impacting present thinking and behaviour (Mitra 2011).

Kautilya was very much aware of the evolving geopolitical realities and his prescription for interstate relations was inclusive of all the strategic realities and impending threats from which the state needed to be secured. The text, therefore, needs to be studied in the right perspective keeping into consideration the realities Kautilya and his state was grappling with. The inter-state relations in Arthashastra encompasses internal and external dimensions of security, possibilities, and policy making in statecraft as the boundaries during the period of the text were fluid. Thus,

an empirical analysis of the text will bring the normative and practical aspects of conducting internal and foreign relations where flexibility was always an option towards attaining the ultimate goal of *yogakshema* (welfare of the people). The vast reservoir in the Arthashastra and the comprehensive genius in Kautilya still remain untapped to a certain extent and various concepts and ideas discussed in the text need further elaboration.

Finally, for a better understanding of Kautilyan thought and framework, state and statecraft must be read together as complementing each other, i.e. internal policies (governance) and external policies (diplomacy) must be perceived as interconnected and interdependent towards achieving the holistic and grand objective of the state, that is, augmenting the capacity of the state and welfare of its people. Kautilya's Arthashastra is, in every sense, topical and further research on the subject must be conducted for a considerate understanding of the inherent logic and thought in the text rather than judging it by modern parameters.

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The *Magh* Raiders and the Mughals in the First Half of Seventeenth Century Bengal

Dr. Varun Kumar Roy

[Editorial Note: The present paper narrates about the nature of the defence syastem of the Mughals against the *Magh* raiders of Arakan. The Mughals were weak at river river warfare hence they were not able to counter the raids by the *Maghs.* Further the paper gives a detailed description of the about the efforts made under Jahangir to put and end to to the *Magh* depredations. In the later part of the article the author enlightens us about the Mughals successfully conquering Chittagong and strengthening the Mughal hold over Bengal against the *Magh* raiders.]

Abstract: *This research article tries to understand the nature of Mughal defence against the Arakanese rulers in the first half of the seventeenth century. The atrocities of the magh raids in the various parts of medieval Bengal could not be countered by the Mughals because they were very weak at river warfare. The occupation of Chittagong by the Arakanese, making it a strong base for raids and keeping the Portuguese pirated as their front line of defence as well as attack kept the Arakanese rules at upper hand. It was only after the Fort of Chittagong was brought under Mughal rule; they could tame the Pirates and stop the raids.*

Keywords: *pirates, flotilla, army, river, raids.*

Introduction

Medieval Bengal has a long line of sea-coast extending from Chittagong to Balasore. Long distance trades were carried out from the forts of Bengal to Ceylon, Java, and Sumatra. But it is imperative to mention the relation of Mughals with that of the Arkanese. Nihar Ranjan Roy says that the region Arakan was which is now Burma was more a frontier province of Eastern India than the province of Burma. (Roy 1932). Chittagong, the Ports Grande of the Portuguese was the main bone of contention between the Muslims rulers of Bengal and the Arakanese rulers. Chittagong was under their occupation till 1666 (Hervey 1925-40). Prior to Mughal conquest there was anarchy prevalent in Bengal and this led the Arakanese to consolidate their stronghold over Chittagong. They were even successful in conquering the districts of Naokhali and Tipperah upto Meghna River (Karim 1974: iii). It developed into a major base of operations of the *Magh*s and the Arakanese

strongly defended this prized outpost. Tallish points out that every year Raja of Arkan used to send hundreds ships full of soldiers and artillery munitions and also carried gold coins stamped with his own name in Chittagong (JASB 1907:421). The strategic position of Chittagong enabled the *Magh*s to carry on raids to South Bengal. They built a strong fort at Chittagong and left a large fleet to guard it. (Karim 1974:112).

Who were the *Maghs*?

There is much controversy about the origin of the word *Magh*. According to the New Standard Dictionary published by the Statesman, the word '*Magh'* is commonly applied to the inhabitants of Arakan, particularly those living near the district of Chittagong. Whether the word *Magh* is of Bengali origin is not precisely known. But it can be said that the word is not a Burmese word. The authors of the book Bengali Literature in Arakan Court (D'Hubert 2020) have expressed the view that it is not proper to call the Mongoloid Arakanese *Magh* and that the word *Magh* is derived from Magadh where their ancestors came. The Census Report of 1931 refers that the term *Magh* is ordinarily applied to two distinct groups, viz. a Chittagonian Buddhist group and the Arakan *Maghs* of Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong. The Bengali speaking Chittagonian *Maghs* petitioned for the use of a distinct name. This caste claims them to Kshatriya status and they trace their descent from the Buddhists of Magadha who are alleged to have migrated from their old houses on the revival of Brahmanism and the advent of the Mughals. Risley has distinguished this as 'Marmagri *Magh*s' and the Arakanese as 'Jumia, Roang and Rakhaing', but the group speaks Bengali and a Burmese description of this kind is not used among themselves and suggests of Burmese source.'' It is true that during the rule of the Senas in Bengal, thousands of Buddhists crossed over to Arakan from Bengal. Hence it can be said with some amount of certainty that the royal house of Arakan belonged to a different stock than the raiders who were given the name *Magh* as that of the ruling tribe of Arakan (Roy 1968:220).

Mills points out that the *maghs* were certainly of Tai origin as their ancestors being Tai Long (Greater Tai) who were driven out of China towards the south and the south-west. Though the *Magh*s are now Buddhists they admit that they were once headhunters. Their language is Arakanese, a dialect of Burma, and as per physical figures the *Maghs* are stout and strong and sturdy. The face is broad and rather Mongolian and the complexion a sallow brown. The men usually have a straggling

moustache and occasionally a beard. The earliest home of which they have any definite traditions is Arakan, where they migrated in the 17th century into what is now Cox's Bazar Sub-division. Some migrated further into Bengal and their migration did not stop till early in the 19th century (Mills 1926).

The Bone of Contention

Prior to its conquest by the Muhammadans, Chittagong, lying on the disputed frontier between- the Hinduism of Bengal and the Buddhism of Burma, formed a source of chronic fend between the rulers of Tippera and Arakan. It frequently changed masters, being at one time subject to the king of Arakan, and at another attached to Tippera, a kingdom which at different periods extended from the Sundarbans in the west to Burma in the east and northwards as far as Kamrup of North Bengal. In the ninth century A. D. the country was conquered by the Buddhist king of Arakan, who erected a pillar at Chittagong, and according to Burmese tradition, the town derives its name from a remark made by the Buddhist king of Arakan '*sit-ta-gung'*, ie.,to make war improper. In the latter period it appears to have been lost by the Arakanese, as per the evidence of a copper-plate found at Nasirabad, a village close to Chittagong, which records the Land grant, dated 1243 A.D. The inscription refers to a dynasty of kings who were Vaishnava by religion, one bearing the title of Deva, and it has been conjectured that they were the Rajas of Tippera (JASB 1874).

As early as 12th century there was free commercial intercourse between Baghdad south-eastern sea-board of Bengal and the Arab ports of Basra; and it is probable that the commercial activity of the Muslims paved the way for Muslim domination in the district, Fakhruddin Mubarak, sultan of Bengal (1338-1349 A.D.), the founder of the earliest independent Muslim sultanate in Bengal with his headquarters at the historic city of Sonargaon, was the first muslim ruler to cross the Meghna river and establish his supremacy as far north of Syleth, to the east and Noakhali, and to the south into Chittagong. When Ibn Battuta visited Chittagong in the year 1350, he acknowledged the suzerainty of the Bengal king and said that it was an important centre of trade and "a great place situated on the shore of the Great Sea" (Dunn 1986:255).

The Arakanese regained possession of Chittagong, for the account of Ralph Fitch's visit leaves no doubt that in 1585 it was held by them, and at the same time that their rule was maintained only by means of constant fighting. '"*From Satagam* _

(Satgion),” he wrote, “I travelled by the country of the king of Tippara or Porto Grande, with whom the Mogores or Mogen (Maghs) have almost continually warred. The Mogen, which be of the kingdom of Rogen (Arekan) and Rame, be stronger than the king of Tippara, so that Chatigan or Porto Grande is oftentimes under the king of Reoon” (Harvey 1899:116)

The troubles of Sher Shah’s revolution, the Mughal invasion, the aggressions of the Portuguese, and the Bengal military revolt helped the Arakanese to conquer Chittagong. The Arakan king Sikandar Shah (Meng Phalaung—1571-1593) established his undisputed sway over the whole of Chittagong and brought a large portion of Noakhali and Tippera under his sway. His son Salim Shah (Meng Radzagni — 1593-1612) was equally ambitious and capable. His son Husain Shah (Meng Khamaung—1612-1622) proved to be the greatest and most successful conqueror. The two latter kings of Arakan led a series of campaigns against Bengal and by their policy of open war and secret help to the malcontents and rebels in Bengal, proved to be a great menace to the Mughal peace and a challenge to Mughal authority in Bengal (Sarkar 1943:243).

The *Magh* Raids in Bengal

The Arakan King kept the Portuguese mercenaries as advanced guards for the protection of his frontier, permitting them to live in the seaports of Chittagong and Dianga and making them grants of land. The Arakan coast was a place of retreat for the `fugitives from Goa, Ceylon, Cochin and Malacca. It bred a race of daring seamen. For centuries they remained a terror of the Ganges delta and lower Bengal.

Bernier points out that every kind of ‘criminals from Goa or Ceylon, Cochin or Malacca, mostly Portuguese and half-caste’, flocked to Chittagong where the King of Arakan designed to welcome any sort of allies against his formidable neighbour the Mughal and permitted them to settle. They soon developed a ‘busy trade in piracy, scoured the neighbouring seas in high galleasses, entered the numerous arms and branches of the Ganges, ravaged the island of lower Bengal, and, often penetrating forty or fifty leagues up the country, surprised and carried away the entire population of villages, and married the poor gentiles, and other inhabitants of this quarter at their assemblies, their markets, their festivals and weddings, seizing slaves both men and women, small and great perpetrating strange, cruelties and burning all that they could not carry away’.(Bernier 1916:175-82)

After the occupation of Sandwip by the Arakanese from the band of Gonzales, the Portuguese settlers in Arakan gave up all attempts at independence and lived on as the obedient instruments of the Arakan King. Manrique had given the King some valuable information to the effect that it was the declared policy of the Portuguese government, both in Lisbon and Goa to assist the Arakanese against the Mughal emperor on the ground that the latter aspired to make himself lord paramount of the whole of India and must be resisted by the creation of some sort of balance of power. Thiri Thudhamma, the Arakanese King (1622-1638), was grateful to have this authoritative statement of foreign policy (JBRS, 1923:215). It is to be pointed out that the Arakanese Kings had the greatest trouble with the Portuguese along the Chittagong coast. These people were nothing but pirates, free booters and adventurers, independent of the viceroy of Goa. King Thiri Thudhamma, in fact, had no confidence in the Portuguese. But, since his kingdom now included Chittagong, he had no way of defending that state against the Mughals except with the assistance of the Portuguese and he deemed it prudent to make use of them as long as they found it convenient to serve his purpose.

The *Magh*s used to raid from Chittagong through Bhalwa, which was within Bengal Subah, and moved up to Jessore, Hugli, Bikrampur, Sonargaon and Dacca (JASB, 1907:424). They came up to Dacca for plunder and looting by the streams flowing by Khizrpur and Jatrapur (Rennel Atlas, Sheet 1). By these raids the *Magh*s grew rich at the cost of Bengal. The areas raided were often left desolate and impoverished. According to Talish the district of Bakla (Bakarganj), which was formerly full of cultivation, was deserted by their raids (JASB, 1907:423). The Arakanese navy, reinforced by the Portuguese, was superior to that of the Mughals. Talish says, “Their cannons are beyond numbering, their flotilla exceeds the waves of the sea (in number). Most of ships are *Ghurabs* and *jalbas*; *Khatus* and *dhums* are larger than *ghurabs*, these are so strongly made of timber with a hard core that the balls of Zamburaks and small cannons cannot pierce them" (JASB 1907:423). The *Magh* depredations were frequent during the reign of Jahangir. In Islam Khan Chishti's governorship the *Magh*s once with 300 boats to the environs of Sripur came raided, burnt and looted a large number of villages and carried away the villagers as captives. They fed with ease before Islam Khan could send any help and Shaikh Yusuf, the *Thanadar* of Sripur Vikrampur, could not withstand them. The *Magh*s led another expedition against Abdul Wahid, the Mughal *thanadar* of Bhalwa (B.G.Vol.1:46). Ibrahim Khan Fath Jang, the governor of Bengal, had been commanded by Jahangir to subdue the King of Arakan. The conquest of Tipperah

towards that purpose. Ibrahim Khan was assigned to Mirz Nurulla Tipperah's capital, Udaipur where he was appointed as the administrative chief (Sardar). From Thäna Udaipur, Mirza wrote to Ibrahim Khan about the possibility of invading Arakan. Accordingly an expedition was sent which ended in failure because of the scarcity of food and the adverse communication system (B.G.Vol.2:628). During Shahjahan's the new *Magh* King Thiri Thudhamma (1622-38), sent a friendly mission to the rebel prince. Common hostilities to the Emperor obviously induced the new King to conciliate the rebel prince by friendly gesture. It has been already pointed out that the Arakan King sent his envoys to Shahjahan with rare gifts worth Rs. 100,000 as *peshkash*. Shahjahan also sent a valuable dress of honour along with many precious gifts to the *Magh* King and issued a Farman confirming his sovereignty over his territory (B.G.Vol.2:717-711).

The Arakan King appears to have taken advantage of the preoccupations of Prince Shahjahan in Bengal to indulge in a raid on Bhalwa. After the restoration of imperial rule in Bengal in 1625, Khanahzad Khan, son of Mahbat Khan, who left the governmental affairs in the hands of his favourites, failed miserably to check an incursion of the Arakan King. The Arakanese proceeded unopposed from Khizrpur along the Dulai to the environs of Jahangir Nagar, entered the city, burnt and looted it and retired with a large number of captives. The Subahdar's attempt to obstruct the passage of the Arakanese war boatsby means of iron chains across the river Dulai proved unavailing (Sarkar, 1948: 314). The frontier raids of the *Magh*s continued on Mughal Bengal even after the accession of Sahajahan. The Arakan King tried to undermine the Mughal authority by sporadic raids on villages and townships and by assisting their enemies in Bengal. He sent his own Portuguese Mercenaries from Chittagong to assist the Portuguese, who were fighting against the Mughals at Hugli during the governorship of Qasim Khan (Houston 1927: 420). However, their help arrived at Hugli too late. Thudhamma invaded the Mughal territory in 1626 with a fleet of 70 *galeotas* and 500 *gelias* carrying thirty Portuguese and other Christians who were in their service. They reached Dacca and received very feeble or no resistance from the Mughals. Taking the possession of the Nawab's palace in which he found great wealth. The *Magh* King spent three days sacking the city, destroying the Nawab's palace and levelling it to the ground and then returned home (Housten 1927:279). Perhaps the most obnoxious activity of these pirates was their slave trade, in which the more peaceful settlers also participated. A graphic picture of this gruesome trade has been preserved in the detailed account of Shihabuddin Talish. The extent of the ravage caused by it may

be gauged from the fact that between 1621 and 1624, the Portuguese brought to Chittagong alone 42,000 slaves from the various districts of Bengal. The settlers at Hugli regularly bought these slaves from the *Magh*s and so did the Portuguese at Tamluk. It is a significant fact that at the time of the fall of Hugh the bulk of its defenders consisted of slaves. Shahjahan accused the Portuguese at Hugli of selling Bengali prisoners to the *Magh*s for their galleys. The slaves purchased at Chittagong and Dianga were sent to different parts of India by Indian and Portuguese dealers. Manrique has also referred to the enslavement of the Bengali peasants by the *Magh*s as he says: "After purchasing slaves from the *Magh*s either at Dianga or Pipli in Orissa, the slaves were taken in ships for sale, tied together through holes in their palms and sustained by a daily allowance of dry rice thrown to them carelessly as to birds" (Housten 1927:279).

The Noakhali District Gazetteer contains horrible stories of the atrocities committed by the *Magh*s. Many are the tales told of the fierceness and cruelty of the robbers and how the whole countryside would tremble at the cry of 'the *Magh*,' 'the *Magh*', that told of their approach. Surprising the villagers in their homes or at the markets they would carry of men, women and children, holding some to ransom and keeping the rest as slaves either to sell them to the Portuguese of Goa or Ceylon and other places or forcibly converting them to Christianity to train them up as rowers in their own service. Women were sometimes sold for marriage in other parts of Bengal where it was difficult to secure brides in those days. These women were called 'Bharer Meye' (Webster 1911:9)

Since the reign of Emperor Jahangir, the Feringi pirates and the Arakanese constituted a great terror to the people of the coastal regions till the conquest of Chittagong by Shaista Khan. Throughout this period, the Mughals never succeeded in crushing the power of the pirates or in preventing them from carrying raids and plunder into the heart of the province. In spite of the strong militia and 'nawara' which the Mughals maintained, the pirates "did not cease to make frequent and strange ravages and to penetrate into the country, laughing at all the army of Mughals, having so bold and so expert in the use of arms and in navigating these galleasses that four or five of their vessels would not hesitate to attack 14 or 15 of those of the Mughals—destroying, taking or sinking them and coming off with flying colours" (Campos 1919:164). In fact, the Mughals were no match in respect of the use of firearms and naval dexterity and often they were on the defensive. It was Shaista Khan who succeeded in bringing peace in the region.

The Mughals and the Conquest of Chittagong

The Mughals had to wage severe and prolonged warfare with the Arakanese. After the disastrous failure of the Arakanese invasion of Bhuluai in January 1616, the Mughal viceroy Qasim Khan launched an aggressive expedition against the Arakan king. It was the repeated instruction of Emperor Jahangir "to conquer Arakan, to seize the white elephant and to send it to the sublime court". The viceroy himself advanced to Bhulua in February 1616 with a force of 5000 cavalry, 5000 musketeers, 200 war-elephants and a fleet of 100 war-boats in the direction of Chittagong. Qasim Khan with a large army, remained encamped on the bank of the river Feni in order to encourage the army of the vanguard. While the imperial army had been steadily proceeding towardsChittagong, the Arrakan king was not sitting idle. He made necessary arrangements for defence. He decided to check the advance of the imperial army. Notwithstanding the fact that the fort of Chittagong: was well fortified and equipped, the Arakan king sent his '*Karamkari*" with a hundred thousand infantry, one thousand war-boats and four hundred elephants to a place called Kathgar, a strategic point 20 miles north-west of Chittagong. The king himself started from his capital' Merohaung for the defence of the fort of Chittagong with an army of 300,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry besides a large number of war boats (Roy 1968:229).

Informed by the spies that the fortification at Kathgar was not yet complete and the Arakan king had not yet arrived at Chittagong with his main force, the Mughal commander of the vanguard And-unNabi, with the expectation of an easy victory, marched forward without delay. He left behind Sarhad Khan and Shaikh Kamal to erect a fort and hold it for the purpose of maintaining communication with the advancing army. The latter two generals were displeased at being made subordinate to Abd-un-Nabi. So taking advantage of their knowledge of the routes, they left the highway and following a short out way, they reached Kathgar and without delay made an assault on the *Magh* fort (Roy 1968:230). The *Magh*s offered stiff resistance and discharged cannon, guns, arrows upon the invaders. Many soldiers on both sides were killed and wounded. The victory on the Mughal side was almost certain. But some of the 'mansabdars' in collusion with Sarhad Khan did not desire a complete victory at that stage and under the plea of the approach of night, they proposed suspension of the hostilities till next morning. Abd-un-Nabi, an inexperienced man, could not read through their plea and hence suspended the hostilities accordingly (Borah ed. 1936: 406). While the assault resumed the next morning, the situation was completely changed. The *Magh*s within the fort of

Kathgar meanwhile had recovered from the shock of the surprise attack and offered a determined resistance. The Murals fought the whole day and when they found it impossible to storm the *Magh* fort, they made a division of the trenches and proposed to keep the fort in the centre and surround it. But as there was a high hill on one side of the fort, it was impossible to surround it and hence the siege was protracted. The *Magh* '*Karamkari'* ordered ten thousand *Magh*s to raise a strong stockade between the hills in the rear of the Mughal vanguard and in front of the camp of Sarhad Khan and Shaikh Kamal who had fallen behind for the purpose of bringing ration for the troops. Accordingly the *Magh*s raised a stockade and put the people who carried on communication, between the two divisions of the imperial army, into great difficulty. The besiegers themselves were soon reduced to the position of the besieged. Ultimately, the possibility of the food supply to the main army being threatened, the imperialists raised the siege and retreated towards Dacca leaving behind their heavy artillery and destroying about 500 mounds of gun-powder (Borah ed. 1936: 407). Thus the maiden attempt of the Mughals to conquer Chittagong ended in a complete failure.

During the viceroyalty of Ibrahim Khan (1617-1623) the Arrakan king Meng Khamaung (Husain Shah) launched another expedition. Meanwhile the latter had strengthened his Magh invasion, by conquering Sondwip from the possession of 1620 Sebastian Gonzales. The Arakan king, with a fleet of 700 '*ghurabs'* and 4000 '*jalia'* boats, made a surprise attack upon the villages along the bank of the river Meghna. As there was no opposition, the *Magh*s plundered the villages with impunity and advanced as far as the island of Baghchar threatening the city of Dacca. Upon the appraisal of the *Magh* advance, Ibrahim Khan collected 32 war-boats and advanced towards the scene, reaching the vicinity of the enemy camp with a few personal attendants. The rest of the Mughal 'mansabdars' and the landlords of Bengal joined the viceroy afterwards with a force of 8000 cavalry and about 5000 war-boats (Roy 1968:229).

Conclusion

During the Jahangir's reign, no serious effort was made by the Mughal government to put an end to the *Magh* depredations by conquering Chittagong, 'the nest of the pirates'. When Prince Shah Jahan rebelled against his father in Bengal, the king of Arakan took this opportunity to come to an understanding with the former. A friendly mission from the Arakan came to Bengal. The rebel prince valued the assistance of the *Magh*s in his war against the Delhi emperor. In fact, common

hostility to the emperor brought them together and Shah Jahan reciprocated the friendly gesture of the Arakan king. "No tangible result, however, followed and the whole thing proved more than a diplomatic game."(Sarkar 1957:311). In the words of Karim, the Mughal Eastern frontier policy under Shahjahan was neither 'aggressive nor forward'. The Mughals aimed primarily at maintaining the territorial integrity of Bengal. In doing so they were sometimes unavoidably involved in frontier skirmishes and disputes but, on the whole they tried to keep their involvement to the minimum. In the case of Arakan they could not tackle the Chittagong 'nest of pirates' mainly because of their weaknesses on sea (Karim 1974:119). It was in 1666 that the Bengal viceroy Shaista Khan Khan under whom the Mughal flotilla of Bengal was substantially strengthened and utilised against the *Magh*s which ultimately succeeded in conquering Chittagong.

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The Dynamics of Religious Transformation of the Tamang Community of the Sub-Himalaya: Historical Perspective

Dr. Sudash Lama

[Editorial Note: In this paper the author has talked about the process of the religious transformation of the Tamang community in the sub-Himalayan region through a historical lens. The article has highlighted the transformation of the Tamang community from animism to Buddhism.]

Abstract*: The study of religion and cultural change has always cherished the historian and ethnologist. The Tamang have been the subject of study for historians, ethnologists and philologists for many decades. The cultural peculiarity and ethnographic distinctiveness has attracted the scholar. The present paper intends to highlight the imbibed religious transformative character of animism to Buddhism. It also attempted to explore the reasons for the cultural shift of the tamang from animism to Buddhism.*

Keywords*: Tamang, culture, animism, Buddhism, rituals.*

The micro study of Tamangs religion and its customs reveals that they had undergone religious transformation from the inception of Buddhism in Tibet or particularly with the foundation of Lama Buddhism or Lamaism by Guru Padmasamvawa. The Tamangs call them as 'they are by birth Buddhist' but their rituals and beliefs are totally antithesis of what they actually are. The religious initiation and ritual practices of Tamangs exhibit ritual differentiation like the religious system of Himalayas mostly of the South and SouthEast Asia. Tamangs religion is essentially two distinct yet coexisting systems, Buddhism and Bonism (Shaminsm). These are traditionally recognized dimensions. Hinduism also had deep rooted influence among Tamangs. Tamang considers them Buddhist, as opposed to Hindu, but the distinction is not absolute in Sub-Himalaya, likewise Bon religion. The characteristics of the rituals and practices of Tamangs which is very much animistic[1], but still affiliation with this is obscure. Larry Peters[2] observes

[1] Radin. Paul, "*Primitive Religion Its Nature and Origin"* Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 2010, pp 99-100.

[2] Peters, Larry, *Tamang Shamans: An Ethnopsychiatric Study of Ecstasy and Healing in Nepal*, State Mutual Book & Periodical Service, Limited, New Delhi, 1998.

Tamangs are adherents of ancient Tibetan religion i.e. Bon, because the core theme of this religion is 'Shamanism.' Shamanism is thought to be mankind's earliest religion, possibly dating back 100,000 years or more; it may well have been the religion of Neanderthal man. Shamanism originated in association with the hunting and gathering way of life[3] and many researchers believe that the shaman's role portrayed in the Upper Paleolithic cave art of southern France indicates that the first profession was that of shaman-curer.[4] The term shaman comes to us through Russian, from the Siberian Tungusic term saman meaning "one who is excited, moved, raised." This is descriptive of the most salient aspect of the shaman's trance: shaking[5]. According to Professor Sir Harold Bailey, shaman ultimately derives from vedic sram meaning "to heat oneself or practice austerities," and sramana meaning monk or ascetic. This term made its way from India through central Asia to China (sha-men) and Japan (shaman), entering Siberia via the dissemination of Tantric Buddhism.[6] The Tamangs have great faith as well as profound respect for shamans, who are identified as religious specialists of the community like other tribal religions. Belief in the existence of superhuman or supernatural powers is almost universal. Experiences of certain day to day sudden happenings of diseases, death and the explainable, have led tribal people into believing in other than the material visible world i.e. in the invisible spirit-world or supernatural powers. They have established a kind of close relationship between themselves and this power by adjusting themselves to it in two ways, first by controlling or overpowering the spirit by enchanting or practicing some techniques and canalizing the power, for

[3] J. W. Williamson and Edwin T. Arnold, *The Appalachian Journal*, Volumes 1, 1972, Vol. 7, No. 4, Index: The Appalachian Journal, Volumes 1-7, 1972-1980 (Summer 1980), pp. 162-163.

[4] Campbell, D. T., & Fiske, D. W. (1959). *Convergent and Discriminant Validation by the Multitrait-Multimethod Matrix*. Psychological Bulletin, 56, 81-105. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0046016

[5] Watters. E. David. *Siberian Shamanistic Traditions among the Kham-Magars of Nepal*, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/contributions/pdf/CNAS_02_01_11.pdf

[6] Andrei. A. Znamenski, *Shamanism: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, Routledge, 2004, pp. 132.

good or bad, and secondly, by offering puja or worship to propitiate the superhuman power for acquisition of the thing or object desired. We call the former magic and latter religion. In the tribals magic is actually an integral part of their religion and magical practices may be included as a method of propitiation[7].

The general account of the tribal religion of the Sub-Himalaya can be traced out in various forms of beliefs, faiths and ism prevailing among the tribal including Tamang of India and Nepal. They use it to propitiate the effects produced by superhuman or supernatural powers. The sacred place and symbolic articles or objects representing the different powers constitute the sacred geography. Sacred specialists like Shaman or individuals who propitiate the so-called God of the group concerned and finally the sacred performance reflect the method of propitiation, rituals, worship, offering sacrifice etc adopted by the people. Vidyarthi and Rai[8] made an outline of the nature or characteristics of tribal religion in the area concerned. Animism, Bongaism, Naturalism,Toemism,Taboo, Magic, Polytheism and Ancestor worship are the nature of belief in supernatural powers which makes them different from the mainstream religion like Hindu and Buddhism. In the same way tribal do propitiate number of spirits like protective spirits, benevolent spirits, evil or malevolent spirits and ancestral worship and for reverence to these elements they select particular place as sacred are sacred centers by sacred specialist. All these characteristics are distinctly seen in Tamangs belief and practices in the form of ancestral worship, devi stan, jhakri or shaman with their sacred performance. Tamangs from ancient times are followers of Bon religion, which was the religion of Tibet before the advent of Buddhism. Bon is the primitive native religion of Tibet, and it has, in spite of the influence of Buddhism, preserved itself till the present day. Bon was originally a cult of nature worship. It is said to have been widespread in inner Asia, China, East and West Turkestan, Manchuria, Mongolia and the Tibetan plateau. Tibetans of the early days were apparently completely subject to their formidable natural surroundings. Their religious ideas, which were rooted in and dominated by nature, revolved round the various good and evil spirits with which they populated their wild, highland landscape. These spirits in time became gods who had to be propitiated to avert harm and worshiped to secure help.

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[7] Vidyarthi, L.P., Rai. Binay Kumar, *"The Tribal culture of India",* Concept Publishing company, New Delhi, 1985, (p. 236)

[8] Ibid. pp. 239-240.

The belief in the spirits developed into a cult with its own elaborate ritual. There were Shamans or specialist priests who professed to be experts in controlling nature through their knowledge of the ways of propitiating the spirits. These practices varied from place to place and from clan to clan as Tibet in those days were not a unified state and were divided into a number of regions controlled by different tribes[9]. The Tamang tribe of the Sub-Himalaya also inherits same characteristics as of the Bon religion, which is evidence of as adherents of Bon religion, because they deified the forces of nature as Gods. Mountains and rivers, rocks and springs, land and sky and trees and bushes became the dwelling place of those gods. The helpful ones were worshipped, and the harmful ones propitiated. Among the Tamang beliefs and practice, main ingredients of worship or propitiatory rites were offerings in the form of food, drink, clothing and even sacrifices of cock, goat etc. From dawn to dusk of everyday life and from birth to death of Tamang, the rituals and practices of this animistic cult makes them firm believers of Tribal religion which is best known as Bon.

The advent of Buddhism in Tibet has changed the course of the belief system of the peoples of the place. There is no denying the fact that Buddhism is one of the most dynamic religions of the world. It is the only religion which made a notable contribution to the culture not only of India but also of other foreign lands. It is due chiefly to its catholicity that it could make an appeal to all, both Indians and foreigners, alike. King Asoka's contribution in this regard is highly noteworthy. He dispatched his missionaries to various countries in India and abroad to propagate Buddhism. But we know nothing of his mission in Tibet nor in fact do know of any activities of Indians for the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet. Before the 7th Century A.D. Buddhism was unknown in Tibet. Till then it was steeped in "barbaric darkness". Towards the early part of the 7th Century A.D. It first received Buddhism and through it some beginnings of civilization among its people. Undoubtedly Tibet received the largest contribution to its culture in respect of religion, literature, art and the like from India[10]. This was the stage of transformation of religion among the hill tribes of Tibet and Himalayan ranges. The

[9] Bansal. B.L, *Bon its Encounter with Buddhism in Tibet*, Eastern Book Linkers, Delhi, India, 1994 (p. 2)

[10] Banerjee. A.C. *Aspects of Buddhist Culture from Tibetan Sources*; Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd, Calcutta, 1984. (p.19)

introduction of Buddhism in Tibet totally changed the outlook of the Himalayan tribes and gave birth to a mixed religion which was neither pure Buddhism nor pure Animism or Bonism but it was a culture oriented religious system particularly for the Tamangs. Here we must know about how Buddhism makes its way towards Tibet? The transition of Bonism and Buddhism in Himalayan region was best elaborated by Dr. A.C. Banerjee who has given an account of Buddhism in Tibet in the early part of the 7th Century A.D. It is generally believed that Buddhism entered Tibet during the reign of King Naradeva (*Mihi lha*) who ascended the throne at the age of thirteen only. *Bu-ston*, the greatest Tibetan historian, also writes that "thirteen years of age he ascended the throne and brought under his power all the petty chieftains of the border land who offered him presents and sent their messengers of submission". Owing to his meritorious deeds he was later on better known as *Srong-tsan-gam-po* in Tibet. *Bu-ston* states that the original name of the king was *Khri-lda-srong-btsan* and he provides us with an interesting account of how the king came to be known as *Srong-btsan-gam-po*. It is to be noted here that "this original name of the king is practically forgotten in Tibetan history and his honorific name Srong-btsan-gam-po became firmly fixed". He was the son of King Gnam-btsan-tri-srong-bstan who was a warlike king and held supreme authority over Tibet. King Srong-bstan-gam-po bred the martial spirit of his father and took delight in bloody wars and campaigns. On his ascension to the throne he increased his military powers manifold and laid an expedition against king Amsuvarman of Nepal in the south. Fearing defeat at his hands king Amsuvarman of Nepal thought it wise to establish a matrimonial alliance with the king of Tibet. He offered his daughter in marriage to him. The king gladly accepted the princess as his queen. King Srong-btsn-sgam-po was only sixteen years old when he married the Nepalese princess who was aged eighteen years. Tibet became a very powerful nation then because of king *Srong-btsn-sgam-po's* military power. Some two years later king *Srong-btsn-sgam-po* laid a military campaign against *Sen-ge-bstan-po* (*Tai-tsung*), the powerful emperor of China in the north. The emperor also evaded the war by giving his daughter in marriage to the king of Tibet. Many romantic tales are still current in Tibet about the marriage of the king with the Chinese princess. Thus *Srong-bstan-sgam-po* had two queen one of them was "*Thi-btsun*" said to be the corrupt form of Bhr-kuti, the daughter of king Amsuvarman of Nepal, while the other was called *Wen-ch'eng* the daughter of *Tai-tsung* the emperor of China. S.Levi opines that the marriage of the king with two princesses was planned for the consolidation of the political power of Tibet. Both these wives were pious. The princess of Nepal was a devout Buddhist. As part of her dowry, she brought with

her the image of Aksobhya Buddha, Maitreya and Tara. To shrine the images *Srong-btsn-sgam-po* built a great temple which stands today in the middle of Lhasa. It is popularly called the Jo-Khang (House of the Lord). Its original name meant House of wisdom, perhaps, this change was a concession to the fact that Bon-pos were already becoming a little restive at this foreign influence. Nepalese architects and builders and the entire necessary craftsman were sent from Nepal for the work on the temple, the first to be built in Tibet. The princess of China was also a worshipper of Buddha. She brought to Tibet arts and crafts as well as an image of Sakyamuni which "is said to have been taken from Magadha by the Chinese about 1st century B.C." This was also installed in a great temple built by the king in Lhasa through the initiative of his Nepalese wife. It still survives there and it is the chief temple of Lhasa. Both the wives were further "canonized as incarnations of Avalokita's consort, Tara savouress or goddess of Mercy, and the fact that they bore no children is pointed to as evidence of their divine nature". The Chinese princess was glorified as the white Tara and Nepalese princess as the green Tara which is still very much venerated in Nepal. The king was a man of culture. He was deeply interested in cultural development, social reforms and the like. By the persuasion of these two queens, the king was soon converted to Buddhism. He felt the necessity of introducing Buddhism into his own country and henceforth devoted his attention to its propagation in Tibet.[11] Thus, Buddhism spread out in Tibet under the patronization of king *Srong-btsn-sgam-po*. The indigenous religion which has been deeply rooted in Tibetan culture became antagonistic against this foreign religion. The regular ups and downs make it difficult to establish a Buddhist church in Tibet in spite of strong support from the Tibetan monarch. During the rule of king *khri-srong-lde-btsan* (740-786A.D) marks the zenith of Tibetan power and the affirmation of Buddhism as the chief religion of the state. It was during his reign that Santaraksita, Padmasambhava and Kamalasila were brought to Tibet. He was a great admirer of Buddhism and to propagate Buddhism in Tibet he invited Santaraksita, the famous Indian Buddhist teacher to Tibet. But due to some reason he was unable to give permanency to this new faith in Tibet and had to leave for Nepal. Santaraksita was called back by the king. "Santaraksita advised the king to invite the celebrated Tantric teacher and *Yogi Padmasavbhava* for the thought that the people of Tibet being so attached to the local gods and magical practices would

[11] Ibid. pp. 20-21.

require a very powerful teacher".[12] *Padmasabhava* on his part arriving in Tibet in 747 A.D, he vanquished all the chief devils of the land, sparing most of them on their consenting to become defenders of his religion, while he on his part guaranteed that in return for such services they would be duly worshipped and fed. Now, onwards Buddhism firmly rooted in the land of snow and propagated the Dhamma in new form in the Himalayan region which is known as "Lamaism" which was best suited for all the people of the region who earlier used to be adherents of Bon. The Lamaism which was introduced by Padmasambhava had the esteem space for deities of Bon religion as well as it was based on Tantra, which has been the central point of beliefs of the Hill tribes.

The Tamangs idea of religion contains a number of elements which combine to produce a representation of tribal cult of belief system in spite of being followers of *Nyingmapa* Sect of Lamaism or Lamaist Buddhism. The ecology determines the shape and form of the tribal culture, but their religious activities and beliefs lead to an environment of supernatural beliefs and rituals that modify and influence the tribal culture. To explain the religion of the Tamang tribe it is necessary to have a holistic approach: their religious life plays an important role in the configuration of their culture. In the formulation stage of Indian anthropology a number of studies were presented to explain the culture focusing on "Nature" and the activities of "Man". But as studies advanced in the analytical phase of anthropology in India it became more and more clear[13] that Nature –man relationship was not only confined to the ecological or subsistence level alone. The invisible spirit-world is there at every stage of the life of the Tamangs which gives them a means to explain certain sudden happenings and unexplainable experiences. Thus it is clear that Nature-Man-Spirit[14] is useful for depiction of the Tamang culture. "Spirit World " of the Tamang explains many things as well as paves the way for understanding its beliefs and practices. The Tamangs nature of primary beliefs is animism later they are Buddhist. The myths and legends provide them with sanctions. They worship all types of spirits whether benevolent or malevolent. Their huts, villages and fields and forests are all full of sacred places. The head of the family has the responsibility

[12] Vidyarthi, L.P., Rai. Binay Kumar. *"The Tribal culture of India",* Concept Publishing company, New Delhi, 1985, p. 27.
[13] Ibid. p. 242.
[14] Ibid. p. 269-270.

to propitiate the gods and deities at family level. The village priest takes the responsibility at community level. The shamans are to protect the Tamangs from *Bhut prêt*. In sacred performances objects from eggs to buffaloes are offered to the gods and deities. The religious festivals are eagerly awaited by the people. The ancestral spirits find a favour and appreciation from their new generation and the people believe that the ancestors of their family and household deity (*Khyapa*) who helps them in every walk of life. It is observed that the Tamangs have blended their beliefs and rituals with Buddhism predominantly Lamaist Buddhism.

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The Great Famine of 1943 and North Bengal: Revisiting its Genesis and its Impact

Dr. Dhananjoy Bhattacharya

[Editorial Note: The paper revisits the origin and the impact of the Great famine of 1943 especially in context of North Bengal. The author has explored various primary and secondary sources to present the sufferings of the people in terms of subsistence, malnutrition, economic hardships, cloth famine, etc. leading to a situation of existential crisis amongst the people of North Bengal.]

Abstract: *The most catastrophic event which took a heavy death-toll in Bengal was the great famine of 1943. It shattered the socio-economic foundations of the then Bengali society. The people of North Bengal also went through this calamity which became very acute in the districts of Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Rangpur. Millions of people suffered from hunger, mal-nutrition, epidemics etc. which altogether accelerated the mortality rate during 1943-1944. Their age-old professions were at stake and they lost the capacity to purchase the foodgrains and other essential commodities from the open markets which practically went in the hands of the black marketeers. Peoples' sufferings were further multiplied with the outbreak of the 'cloth famine' at different places of North Bengal. Thus the famine of 1943 dealt a heavy blow on the life and livelihood of the people of North Bengal and led them into an 'existential crisis'.*

Key Words: *Bengal Famine, North Bengal, Nazimuddin, Suhrawardy, Syama Prasad Mookerjee*

On 24 April 1943 Sir John Herbert, the then Governor of Bengal, issued a proclamation by revoking the provision of Section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935 and invited the Leader of the Muslim League Assembly Party, Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin to form a new ministry. Having been supported by 140 members of the Bengal Assembly (out of total 250 members), Nazimuddin on that very day formed a 13 -member ministry which came to be known as the 'Bengal Coalition'. The most serious challenge that the Nazimuddin Ministry had to face immediately after its installation was the horrendous Bengal famine which became very severe

from May 1943 and continued till the end of 1944. The famine spread over nearly 21665 sq. miles out of its total area of 82,955 sq. miles;[1] completely affected and jeopardized 1/3rd of the total population of Bengal and took the lives of millions of people. The famine mortality was much higher in East Bengal in comparison to West Bengal. It reached its peak during July 1943 and June 1944 and it did not return to its 'normalcy' until the middle of 1945. According to the Reports of the Famine Enquiry Commission (which was formed under the presidentship of Sir John Woodhead and better known as 'Woodhead Committee Report'), 1.5 million people died in Bengal during the famine. According to Prof. Amartya Kumar Sen, ".... the Commission's own method of calculation does lead to a figure around three million deaths...."[2] and he is "inclined to pick a figure around 3 million as the death toll of the Bengal famine".[3] Bhabani Sen, a noted scholar, in *Bhanganer Mukhe Bangla* made estimation of 3.5 million deaths in Bengal due to famine in 1943 which according to him severely affected the lives of 20 million people (out of its total population of 60 million).[4] He further mentioned that in the famine – affected areas, 10 percent of the total population or an estimated 1.2 million to 1.5 million men, women and children completely turned into beggars.[5] Parallely another 6 million people, including 2.7 million land-labourers, 1.5 million poor peasants, 1.5 million indigenous industrial workers and 25,000 poor school teachers had to bear the same fate.[6] According to the Reports of the Settlement Department (1939) and the Census of 1941, almost 7.5 million people of Bengal were dependent on agriculture out of which less than 2 million cultivators had at least five acres of land. But surprisingly, 3 million people did not have any land of their own; they served as sharecroppers (*adhiars)* or as landless agricultural labourers (*khetmajur).* They were the worst sufferers and they became completely dependent on wages.[7] Besides the demand for labour and the rate of wages were heavily decreased. Bengal which was called the 'granary of the East' was struggling from food production particularly rice. From 1921 to 1946, there was gradual decline in the food output while there was the general trend of population increase. In 1943 the per capita entitlement of rice reached a crisis point due to the complete breakdown of a vulnerable rice marketing system along with uncontrolled hoarding and speculation. The unusual scarcity of food grains and other essential commodities inevitably led to inflation. As a result the price of rice went beyond the reach of the common people. The peasants were compelled to sell/ mortgage their assets including land. 600,000 tenants lost their holdings during 1943 and their cattle wealth going down by 20 per cent in a single year.[8] All these paved the way for

'depeasantization' in different parts of Bengal (including North Bengal) and made the life of the common people more miserable.

There are divergent opinions among the scholars regarding the genesis of the Bengal famine in 1943. Renowned economist B.M. Bhatia in his book entitled *Famines in India: A Study in Some Aspects of the Economic History of India, 1860-1965* categorized the Bengal famine of 1943 as a man-made disaster. He in his research highlighted the War situation and its impact on the common people and gave importance to the decline in the volume of crop production which, according to him, primarily led the people of Bengal into this catastrophe. The production of rice was heavily affected by the cyclone along with torrential rains and tidal waves especially in Midnapore district in October 1942 and there had been a fall in its production to the tune of 2.4 million tons during 1942-43. At the beginning of 1943, most of the South-East Asian countries including Burma were occupied by the Japanese Army and it was apprehended that at any point of time, Bengal would join in that list. In recent past, in order to meet up the shortage of rice, a substantial quantity of rice was imported from Burma to Bengal. But the seizure of Burma by Japan led to the stoppage of the supply of rice to the tune of 200000 tons and paved the way for the influx of the refugees from Burma to Chittagong which altogether enhanced the scarcity of food in Bengal. George Blyn, distinguished economist, in his research work entitled *Agricultural Trends in India 1891-1947: Output, Availability and Productivity* also highlighted the shortage of food. The shortage of rice in Bengal was also mentioned in the Report of the Famine Enquiry Commission. According to the Report, Bengal had 42 or 43 weeks of rice (including *Aman, Ayush* and *Boro*) requirements in 1943 which, according to Prof. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, was not at all a nominal amount to cause the famine in comparison to 39 weeks in 1941 and 44 weeks in 1936 and interestingly both these years (i.e. 1936 & 1941) were free from famine.[9]

The situation in Bengal became more adverse due to the Governmental procurement policy which gave priority to the official and military requirements. As part of the 'Denial Policy', the British Government from April 1942 removed surplus rice and paddy particularly from Midnapore, 24 Parganas, Khulna, Bakharganj etc. (from the 'dangerous zone', i.e. those districts of Bengal which were likely to be seized first by the Japanese invaders during the course of the Second World War) so that the British forces could easily get the food at wartime and at the same time the British administration could dismiss any chance of getting

any food on the part of the Japanese forces immediately after their penetration. Not only that, more than 26,000 country boats which were the most common means of transport in rural Bengal, were completely destroyed and 20,000 country boats were shifted to other places by the British Government.[10] This resulted in the withdrawal of 70 per cent of the country boats from goods transportation, fishing etc.[11] The 'Boat Removal Policy' severely affected the lives of the boatmen of the districts of Chittagong, Noakhali, Tripura, 24 Parganas and Midnapore along with the peasants, weavers, potters and other professionals. Side by side, a large number of steamers and trains were removed which altogether severely affected the food supply in Bengal. The *Census of India 1951* says: "In 1942-43 cyclones and floods reduced the Bengal rice crop by about a third; this, coupled with the absence of exports from Japanese-controlled Burma, and inadequate relief, led to famines, epidemics (malaria, cholera and smallpox), aggravated by widespread starvation".[12] A sizeable portion of the Bengali population also suffered from mal-nutrition which resulted in the gradual decline of their strength and immunity and increased their susceptibility to various diseases which altogether accelerated the rate of mortality.[13] From the middle of 1943, thousands of people died in Bengal due to cholera, dysentery & diarrhea, malaria and fever. The widespread outbreak of epidemics during the famine was also pointed out by Amery, the Secretary of State for India, in his statement at the House of Commons that 77,938 people died only due to cholera till the end of November 1943.[14]

During famine a huge number of people lost their traditional livelihood (like agriculture, pottery, carpentry, fishing, public and goods transportation etc.), lost their job security and ownership of earning mechanisms which altogether led them towards paucity, dispossession of food and to the final destination, i.e. starvation. Prof. Amartya Kumar Sen in his pioneer work entitled *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* explained the reasons why a particular class of people suffered from starvation and famine and he came to the decision that it was due to shift in 'exchange entitlements'. He challenged the theory of 'Food Availability Decline' or FAD and raised his doubt on its role behind the outbreak of famines. According to him, the availability of food in 1943 was only 5 per cent less than the average rate of the last five years and it was 13 per cent more than the food availability in 1941.[15] Prof. Sen rejected the theory of 'FAD' and put forward his 'food entitlement approach'. He wrote: "Starvation is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there not being enough food to eat. While the latter can be a cause of the former, it is but one of

many possible causes. Whether and how starvation relates to food supply is a matter for factual investigation".[16] He argued that 'Bengal famine was not the reflection of a remarkable over-all shortage of foodgrains in Bengal… The crisis was greatly aggravated by gross mismanagement and deliberate profiteering'.[17] Prof. Paul R. Greenough in his book entitled *Prosperity and Misery in Modern Bengal: The Famine of 1943-1944* pointed out the gradual declining trend of the per capita entitlement of rice in Bengal over a long period. He considered the Bengal famine of 1943 as a 'man-made calamity' because 'no drought, flood, or crop failure caused a shortage of rice so great as to make widespread starvation inevitable'. According to him, it was the military activity (but not the scarcity of food) which actually paved the way for the outbreak of the famine.[18]

Highlighting the factors which might account for the Bengal famine of 1943, *The Statesman* wrote on 23 September 1943: "Loss of imports from Burma is a big factor no doubt; the rapid growth of population and sudden influx of a very large number of men might have caused internal stresses, but they are just like a drop in the ocean. Moreover they did not happen in a day. The largest factor had outstandingly been a shameful lack of foresight and planning capacity of India's own civil government, Central and Provincial". Mr. V.V. Kalikar said in the Council of State on 20 November 1943 that 'neither the Bengal Government, nor the Secretary of State for India, nor the Government of India detected famine in Bengal in proper time to avert the tragedy. It was an administrative scandal of the first magnitude'.[19] Same sort of interpretation about the Bengal famine was given by the noted historian Prof. Ayesha Jalal: "By May 1943, the specter of famine was stalking the land, caused as much by a failure to organize adequate imports and proper distribution – mainly the Government's responsibility and hence something that could be blamed upon Nazimuddin's Ministry – as by an actual shortage of food. As Minister for Civil Supplies Suhrawardy had in charge of distributing food, and he was better at distributing patronage to the greedy than food to the hungry".[20] Suhrawardy was held responsible as he 'did little to alleviate it and possibly aggravated it by favouring his crony, Ispahani, as a government agent for procurement of foodgrains'[21] and the Ispahani Co. used the opportunity to earn huge profits. According to J.N. Uppal, a reputed scholar, the Bengal Famine of 1943 was 'a man-made tragedy'. He in his research has shown that Bengal had become 'a food-grain speculators' paradise' where "the amount of unusual profits, made on the buying and selling of rice during 1943, was 150 crores" (estimated by the Famine Enquiry Commission).[22] He wrote: "It was commonly believed that

some of the commercial firms concerned with food grains business notorious for shady practices enjoyed his (the minister of Civil Supplies Suhrawardy's) patronage".[23] Much of the wholesale trade and some retail trade in essential commodities (including the food-grains) were in the hands of the Marwaris. A large number of hungry people were boarding trains (without tickets) in search of a suitable place for food and shelter[24] and Calcutta was the automatic choice of many of them. The Nazimuddin Ministry failed to pursue a proper and effective policy of import along with a systematic and genuine distribution of rice. According to Herbert, the then Governor of Bengal, "In this matter of food supplies and other respects, Nazimuddin has been definitely weak in controlling his colleagues and imposing coordination on them".[25] Not only that, the people of Bengal also suffered from 'cloth famine' which according to Richard Gardner Casey (who became the Governor of Bengal on 22 January 1944), was 'in the hiding in the hands of the Marwaris'. He pointed out that 'black marketing was rampant' with the possible indulgence and connivance of a Minister.[26]

The famine of 1943 spread to almost every nook and corner of Bengal and brought disastrous consequences throughout Bengal including its northern part. The topography of 'North Bengal' consists of Darjeeling Terai and Hills, Jalpaiguri Dooars and the vast plain areas including Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Malda. Rangpur (also known as 'Rongopur' for its indigo cultivation) which is presently located in the north-western part of Bangladesh also formed an important part of undivided Bengal. The famine of 1943 had its tremendous severity mainly in the three districts of North Bengal, viz. Dinajpur, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri and it had comparatively lesser virulence in the districts of Malda and Darjeeling and also in the 'Princely State' of Koch Bihar or Cooch Behar which was finally ceded to the Union of India by an agreement dated 28 August 1949 (w.e.f. 12 September 1949). Later it was merged with the province of West Bengal on 1 January 1950 as its new district.

Dinajpur

Dinajpur which was a great center of peasant and tribal uprisings and nationalist movements including the 'Quit India Movement', went through a massive famine. It had adverse consequences in its seven Police Stations (out of thirty), viz., Peerganj, Baliadangi, and Atowari (in Thakurgaon Sub-Division) and Tapan, Patnitala, Porsa and Dhamoirhaat (in Balurghat Subdivision) which altogether covered an area of nearly 900 sq. miles.[27] Dinajpur which was a great center of rice

production, saw 25 per cent to 39 per cent decline in rice production during 1942-1943. Here the local markets were absolutely controlled by the jotedars. Thakurgaon and Balurghat Sub-Divisions were strong centers of the Muslim League and the local markets of the former were absolutely under the control of the Muslim jotedars. The League Ministry thoroughly executed the British policy of crop procurement in the district of Dinajpur and seized many rice-godowns in order to supply food grains uninterruptedly to the British military forces during the Second World War. It has come to us by recent researches that the famine did not occur in the seven Police Stations as a result of food shortage but it actually happened due to the 'conspiracy' hatched by the League Ministry, jotedars and moneylenders.[28] Soleman Mian, a very influential jotedar of the Thakurgaon Sub-Division and an active supporter of the League, had a very healthy relationship with Suhrawardy, the then Minister of Civil Supply Department. Soleman Mian came into limelight by purchasing a huge amount of paddy on behalf of the Ispahani and Co. He forcefully collected huge quantities of paddy from the Muslim jotedars of Shitlai and stored them at Thakurgaon. He also seized the paddy of Bilku Mian, a prominent jotedar of Battalihaat. The local people got excited and they built up barricades, set fire, cut off the roads etc. in order to create all sorts of obstructions in carrying out the seized paddy. The united resistance became fruitful at Battalihaat as the local people succeeded in snatching the paddy from the rice godown. It is to be mentioned here that at Thakurgaon the government failed to dispatch the procured crops and it had no other option but to sell the seized crops at a low and reduced rate to Madholal Agarwal, a Marwari businessman.[29] People also protested against the government seizure of 10-12 rice-godowns at Gareya (in Thakurgaon Sub-Division). Priyanath Das Chowdhury, a big Hindu jotedar and owner of rice-godowns of the locality, was ordered by S. Islam, the District Magistrate, 'not to remove the paddy'. The local peasants sent telegrams to both Mr. Harold Graham, Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division and the District Magistrate, requesting them to give up all the seized rice-godowns of Priyanath Das Chowdhury; otherwise they would be compelled to take possession of the seized paddy which would be distributed amongst the famine victims. As the administration did not pay any heed to their telegrams, a large contingent of the peasants under the leadership of Bibhuti Dey, a local doctor, looted the rice-godowns and distributed the booty amongst the poor masses.[30] Another interesting incident took place at Mahanpur (in Thakurgaon Sub-Division) where Hemanta Kumar Das, the Manager of the local jotedar, sold 7,000/8,000 tons of rice to Madholal Agarwal. Large number of peasants of Shibpur, N'para, Jayananda etc. and the Santals of Prannagar got united

under the leadership of Kuria Mondal and Jaykrishna Burman and launched a movement against the selling of food grains to Madholal Agarwal. The mob tied Hemanta Kumar Das, snatched away the key, opened the lock of the godown and seized the paddy. The local administration became furious and wanted to take stern action but surprisingly failed to arrest anyone as the local jotedar remained silent on the whole episode.[31] It is to be mentioned here that the peasants showed good gesture by compensating the whole amount in the next year (i.e. 1944) as there was good harvest.[32] Under tremendous financial crisis, many *adhiars* of Western Thakurgaon began to sell their ancestral lands at a nominal price and turned into landless-labourers who ultimately moved towards Bhutan in search of livelihood.[33] The volunteers of the 'Krishak Samiti' extended their help and assistance towards the famine victims. They organized a big meeting at Thakurgaon demanding reliefs for the needy people. The members of the 'Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti' (MARS) also became very active in relief works. Some of its prominent leaders like Rani Mitra, Bina Sen, Aloka Majumdar etc. mobilized nearly 500 local women and gave a deputation to the District Magistrate demanding food and relief for the famine victims.[34]

Balurghat Subdivision was a great center of peasant unrest and nationalist movements. Here the local administration began to purchase a huge amount of paddy at a very high rate. This created acute food shortage in the entire Sub-Division and particularly in Tapan, Dhamoirhaat, Porsa, Patnitala, Balurghat etc. The scarcity of food, its hoarding/smuggling and its high price along with the exploitation of the jotedars/moneylenders and the repressive measures of the local administration altogether led the poor peasants to launch a movement. The most important anti-hoarding campaign during the famine was initiated by Chiarshai Sekh, a very honest Communist worker of Khanpur (near Patiram) who led a procession of 10,000 poor and hungry people towards Balurghat demanding food.[35] From May 1943 the situation became more adverse in the district of Dinajpur as the prices of all essential commodities rose up by leaps and bounds. The following Table would give us an idea about the high price of different commodities in Dinajpur in 1943.

Table 1: **List of Commodity and its Price in Dinajpur during 1943**

Commodities	**Weight / Quantity**	**Price (Rs. Anna)**
Rice (ordinary)	per maund	Rs. 16 – 20
Sugar	per maund	Rs. 6-7
Musur Dal (Pulses)	per maund	Rs. 2- Rs. 2 & 8 Annas
Mung Dal	per maund	Rs. 4-5
Gur (Gaggery)	per maund	Rs. 4-5
Kerosene Oil	per tin	Rs. 11-12
Coconut Oil	per seer	6 Annas - 1 Rupee
Mustard Oil	per seer	Annas 4-5
Milk	per seer	1 Anna
Fish (Big)	5 seers	1 Rupee 1 Anna- Rs. 2
Potato	per seer	Paise 10-12
Salt	per maund	Rs. 1.5-2
Cloth	per pair	1 Rupee
Gold	per bhari	Rs. 35-40
Silver	per bhari	Rs. 5-6
bullock	per pair	Rs. 50-70
Plough	per piece	6 Annas
Tin	per baan	Rs. 35

Source: Dhananjoy Roy, *Bis Sataker Dinajpur: Manwantar O Krishak Andolan,* pp. 36-37.

The Communist Party of India (C.P.I.) and its leaders mobilized the peasants against the hoarding of essential commodities and led expeditions against the stock-marketeers. Food committees were formed at different places and *Langar Khanas* (gruel kitchens) were opened throughout the district under the banner of the C.P.I. The volunteers of the 'District Krishak Samiti', 'Artaseva Kendra', 'Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti' etc. also joined their hands in the relief works. The members of the MARS distributed milk, barley, clothes etc. amongst the children and provided clothes, blankets, medicines (quinine) etc. to the needy people. Some prominent members of the MARS who were involved in philanthropic activities in Dinajpur were Snehalata Ganguly, Sabera Khatun, Sabitri Sen, Asha Sen, Ashalata Chakraborty, Dipti Bagchi, Manasi Roy and the like. A few local women like Kanthamani Barmani, Rohini Barmani etc. also joined with them.[36] Few good-hearted rice-mill owners like Madholal Agarwal, Nagarmal Agarwal, C.K. Das etc. also extended their help and assistance towards the famine victims and sold huge quantities of rice at a very reduced rate. Under the auspices of Gopikrishnan Daga and Sumal Dogar, two very prominent Marwari social workers of Dinajpur, a good number of *Langar Khanas* were opened throughout the district.[37] Among many voluntary organizations, the Ramakrishna Mission played a very important role in providing relief items to the famine victims and also in the cremation of the deceased persons. When the famine was rampant, the district was overburdened with the influx of thousands of migrants from Mymensingh, Khulna, Jessore, Pabna, Faridpur, Rangpur, Bagura etc.[38] There were also the occurrences of different diseases and epidemics such as Asiatic cholera, fever, malaria, kala-azar, smallpox, tuberculosis, diarrhea etc. which took away the lives of 14,172 persons in 1943.[39] Out of them 4,012 persons died due to the outbreak of malaria in this district.[40] Till the end of October 1943, cholera also became very fatal in Dinajpur and infected 5451 persons and ultimately took away the lives of 3462 persons.[41] The increase of registered mortality from respiratory diseases after 1943 in Dinajpur was quite exceptional one 'in view of the relative insignificance of such diseases in the overall famine mortality of Bengal as a whole'.[42]

Rangpur

The district of Rangpur which had a legacy of peasant uprisings, had to face the onslaught of the famine in 1943. It affected its twenty- one Police Stations (out of thirty) and became very acute in the Nilfamari, Kurigram and Gaibandha Sub-Divisions where thousands of people died due to starvation. Almost 1,00000 people (out of its total population of 25,00000), lost their lives in Rangpur due to famine

out of which 50,000 died at Nilfamari Subdivision.[43] The cotton weavers and fishermen of Rangpur were mostly affected due to the outbreak of famine and their occupation was at stake. The common people were going through various problems like food shortage, stock marketing, black marketing, price-hike etc. The price of rice rose from Rs. 10/- per maund in November 1942 to Rs. 29/- per maund in late March 1943 and it became much higher at the fag end of 1943 as there was more than 50 per cent decline in rice output in Rangpur in between 1942 and 1943. Interestingly, here rasgullas were more economical than rice and during a conference of the C.P.I. at Gaibandha, huge numbers of rasgullas were consumed instead of rice.[44] Epidemics like cholera, smallpox, poisonous *naga gha* etc. became rampant throughout the district which altogether increased the mortality rate. Orphanage, Relief Hospitals, *Langar Khanas* etc. were established at different places including Nilfamari Subdivision. Food and Relief Committees (having representatives of all the political parties) were formed at Kurigram. Several relief organizations, medical and cultural squads were formed for providing relief items, medical treatment and also for raising funds for the famine victims. Sita Kabiraj of Laxmitari village formed a medical squad to offer treatment to the patients of smallpox. Gopen Roy, Reba Roy, Mahasweta Devi, Binay Roy, Panu Pal were very well-known members of the cultural squad who raised funds for the purpose of relief by performing different literary and cultural activities.[45] In Rangpur all the leading political parties were involved in the relief works and surprisingly on this issue the Congress and League volunteers joined hands with the Communists[46] who ran not less than fifty *Langar Khanas* to feed the hungry people. The Congressites like Bidhan Chandra Roy, Kiran Sankar Roy, Bhupesh Lahiri etc. and different relief/medical organizations like the B.M.R.C.C. also came forward to fight against the disaster and epidemic in Rangpur.[47]

Jalpaiguri

Jalpaiguri, a 'Non-Regulated' district having an area of 3050 sq. miles, also witnessed the severity of famine in 1943 which spread over 700 sq. miles.[48] It became very acute in the five Police Stations viz., Panchagarh, Boda, Tetulia, Debiganj and Patgram. The district suffered from a 25 per cent to 39 percent deficit in the volume of rice production during 1942-1943. The people here faced a lot of problems like food-shortage, hoarding and smuggling of essential commodities, price-rise etc. which altogether made their life miserable. A good number of people died due to starvation particularly in Jalpaiguri Sadar (100), Debiganj (10), Panchagarh (7) and Boda (5).[49] The price of essential commodities became a great

headache for the common people. For example, paddy was sold at the rate of Rs. 36-37/- per maund whereas the government rate was Rs. 15/- per maund. Peoples' protests and the official measures on behalf of the local administration altogether helped to reduce its price (Rs. 25/26/- per maund) at Panchagarh.[50] During the famine days, Debiganj and Boda were declared as 'deficit' areas due to the shortage of foodgrains. The whole district was cordoned and nobody was permitted to dispatch any commodity outside the district or to bring any commodity from outside the district. It caused a huge problem to some rice-traders of Jalpaiguri who used to bring rice from the *haat* at Gareya (located in Dinajpur). When the police began to seize the purchased/imported rice, a large number of peasants protested under the banner of the 'Krishak Samiti' against the seizure. They decided to use their traditional *bangkua* (which were mainly used for carrying rice from its two sides) against the police personnel to regain their much coveted rice.[51] Surprisingly in this district the supply of cheap-rated mustard oil from the Railway Grain Shop was stopped. Thousands of railway workers and labourers assembled before the District Railway Office at Domohani and placed their demand for having that item in an affordable price.[52] The famine caused unbearable poverty and unemployment in Jalpaiguri and led many of its residents to sell their children (including the girls), increased prostitution and forced a section of people to migrate elsewhere. It is to be mentioned here that the 'All-Party Relief Committee', 'Famine Fighting Squad', *Langar Khanas*, milk-supply centers etc. were formed/opened at different parts of the district. A *Langar Khana* was opened in the office of the Domohani Railway Workers' Union where daily hundreds of hungry people used to get their food. The volunteers of the 'Calcutta Peoples' Relief Committee', the 'Red Cross' and the 'Railway Mahila Samiti' etc. spontaneously participated in social services like the distribution of dress materials, medicines (mainly vitamin), milk etc. amongst the distressed children.[53] The adverse situation in Jalpaiguri caused by the famine, forced the government to initiate some benevolent measures (like the opening of the 'Auxiliary Hospital') but peoples' requirements were much more.

Darjeeling

Darjeeling, a 'Non-Regulated' district of undivided Bengal, did not get rid of famine in 1943 which became very devastating in the areas like Darjeeling Sadar, Siliguri, Kharibari, Naxalbari etc. The hungry people launched protest movements at different corners of the district against the repressive measures of the British Government as well as against the gross failure of the League Ministry to handle the crisis. They stood against all the malpractices like hoarding of foodgrains,

black-marketing etc. They demanded regular supply of food, ration, wood charcoal, potato seeds etc. in order to fulfill their appetite, to generate warmth for fighting against excessive cold (particularly in the hilly region), to continue their age-old potato cultivation respectively. Different welfare organizations were formed in the district for initiating benevolent activities and providing some relief materials to the famine victims. The 'Tarai Mongal Samiti' (Terai Welfare Association) was one of them. Its members strongly opposed the 'Rice Removal Policy' and also the British land revenue policy. They put forward their demand before the District Magistrate for the supply of different articles like rice, salt, oil, pulses, cloth etc. at a controlled rate. The Samiti members sometimes gave legal assistance to the poor peasants cum famine victims to get back their lands which were given in mortgage.[54] The volunteers of the C.P.I. launched campaigns against black-marketing, illegal hoarding of goods etc. They organized processions in different areas and showed posters against the corrupted jotedars and moneylenders of the locality. Likely 75 volunteers under the leadership of Ratanlal Brahmin, snatched away the stored items from the godowns at Chauk Bazar (in Darjeeling Hills) and they sold the booty amongst the needy people at a fair price.[55] The tea plantation workers were also highly affected by the famine of 1943 and many of them went through havoc financial crunch. Not only that, 20 percent of the total tea-garden workers suffered from starvation and became vulnerable to many diseases like tuberculosis.[56]

Malda

Malda, the gateway of North Bengal and very famous for its mango orchards, silk and cotton- textile industries and a great center of nationalist movements, also felt the blow of the famine in 1943 which became very acute in the areas like Harishchandrapur, Bamangola, Habibpur, Kharba etc. The procession of the poor and hungry people for a piece of food was observed at Nachole, Shibganj, Bholahaat etc. (in English Bazar Police Station) and it became a common phenomenon.[57] Apart from rice, there were scarcities of sugar, mustard oil, kerosene oil etc. Peoples' sufferings were multiplied with the hoarding of articles, smuggling, black-marketing etc. Not only that, poor and hungry people were also attacked with various diseases like malaria, cholera etc. In Malda the maximum malaria deaths occurred in January 1943 and the district also witnessed two cholera mortality peaks - one in November 1943 and another in November 1944.[58] The scarcity of essential commodities led to massive price-hike throughout the district. The following Table would give us an idea about the high price of different commodities in Malda during 1943.

Table 2: **List of Commodity and its Price in Malda during 1943**

Commodities	**Weight (per maund / per seer)**	**Price (Rs. Anna)**
Rice	per maund	Rs. 40 – 50
Sugar	per maund	Rs. 40
Potato	per seer	1 Rupee 6 Annas
Salt	per seer	1 Rupee
Mustard Oil	per seer	Rs. 2
Milk	per seer	12 Annas

Source: *The Gourdoot,* 17 August 1944

The residents of Malda also suffered from a massive 'cloth famine' which is clearly been reflected in the *Gourdoot,* a local newspaper. The articles like yarn, dyer etc. which were used by the weavers almost disappeared from the local market. The dearth of clothes in Malda became so acute that in many places the common masses had no other option but to use paper.[59] This was absolutely shocking and embarrassing for the womenfolk which led a few local women to commit suicide. Two such unfortunate and shameful incidents took place - one at Kaliachak and another at Samsi.[60] The Malos (a fishing community) were also in great distress as they were asked to sell their fishes at a fixed price in the English Bazar Municipal area. On the contrary, the fishing items of the Malos including the boats and the boat-repairing materials (i.e. nails, pitch etc.) became very costly and the price of these items was increased by almost four- five times. For example, the boat which was earlier sold at Rs. 30-32/-, became Rs. 100-125/-.[61] The Malos also went through a great crisis as there was sharp increase in the value of the fen. The fen which was earlier auctioned at Rs. 2,000/- rose to Rs. 10,000/- Rs.15,000/-.[62] The silk weavers of Malda were also passing through a very deplorable condition. Meanwhile, the 'Bengal Silk Control Order' was passed in accordance with the Defence of India Act which asked the *basnis* (silk-worm producers) and the *ghaiwalas* (hand-reelers) to sell all their cocoons to the Government at a fixed rate

which was much lower than the usual price. The *basnis* and the *ghaiwalas* were highly disappointed with the Order and raised their protest in different parts of the district.[63] The local administration took ruthless measures to suppress their agitation. Likely, a powerful village headman of Malatipur was arrested in charge of provocation against the Government Order. The police forces went through large scale searches of households at Gayeshbari and arrested twenty persons. As a result the village was converted almost into an empty one.[64] The wretched condition of the common people throughout the district was thoroughly and vividly portrayed in the creations of local balladists, bards and folk artists. During famine many songs (known as *gombhira*) were composed which were popularized among the masses by Gobinda Sheth, Dharani doctor etc. The tremendous impact of these songs persuaded the British Government to put a ban on the public performance of Gobinda Sheth.[65] It is to be mentioned here that the people of Malda as a whole did not go through a severe food crisis during 1943-44 mainly due to large-scale availability of mangoes as well as their consumption.

Cooch Behar

Cooch Behar, a Princely State, was not set free from the famine in 1943. As there was not any sharp decrease in the volume of rice production (which declined around 24 per cent during 1942-1943), the famine did not bring disastrous consequences throughout the State. But it became quite acute in Jamaldaha, Uchal Pukhari, Baldiahati (all in Mekhliganj Sub Division) and Adabari, Okrabari, Gomanimari (all in Dinhata SubDivision).66 Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan (1922-1949) who adorned the throne at that time, was well aware of the catastrophe. He ordered his bureaucrats and officials to be very cautious about the calamity and to take all precautionary steps to tackle the situation. In Spite of his instruction and vigilance, the price of essential commodities rose in Cooch Behar. For example, the price of rice increased and it was sold at 4 Annas per seer; salt which was earlier sold at 12 Annas per seer, went up to 1 Rupee & 2 Annas per seer.[67] Apart from rice cultivation, the people of Cooch Behar were largely involved in the tobacco cultivation which became very popular in the areas like Adabari, Okrabari, Gomanimari etc. But the tobacco cultivators in this State suffered a lot because of the imposition of export duties at the rate of 3 Annas per maund from 1941 which invariably increased its price.[68] It dealt a heavy blow on their income and the situation became more critical with the outbreak of the famine. Not only that, due to famine the Princely State of Cooch Behar had to bear a huge burden of migration especially from the contiguous areas of Rangpur.[69]

When the famine was very rampant throughout Bengal and shattered the life and livelihood of millions of people, the members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly met on 5 July 1943 to discuss the overall situation on the floor of the House. The latter half of the July session became a hotbed of exciting debate on the Bengal famine and not only the distinguished members sitting on the Opposition Bench (like Fazlul Huq, Syama Prasad Mookerjee and so on) but also some members of the Treasury Bench (the Leaguers) severely criticized the Government for its failure in tackling the serious food crisis in Bengal.[70] The Opposition moved before the House 19 special motions on food shortage out of which 9 were accepted for discussion.[71] Participating at the debate of the House on the 'food situation in Bengal', Syama Prasad Mookerjee severely criticized the new Ministry under Nazimuddin for its complete failure in handling the situation and accused particularly H.S. Suhrawardy, the Minister of Civil Supplies. In his lengthy speech, he also attacked the anti-people 'Policy of Denial' of the British Government in the name of War and criticized the smuggling and hoarding of foodgrains by a firm owned by Ispahani, a patron of the League. The September session (1943) of the House also became very exciting on this issue. During the general discussion on the budget, the food situation naturally figured prominently and the Opposition Bench referred to the mounting death toll in Calcutta and mofussil areas due to starvation. At the floor of the House, Syama Prasad Mookerjee gave a firing speech and moved a Special Motion on 'Food Situation in Bengal' on 17 September 1943 wherein he totally accused the Nazimuddin Ministry: "The Ministry has failed to discharge the elementary responsibility of any civilized Government by its failure to save human lives and to procure for the people essential commodities for their bare existence".[72] As the Nazimuddin Ministry still enjoyed the support of the European Group (under David Hendry), it succeeded in defeating the Special Motion (moved by Syama Prasad Mookerjee) by 128 to 88 votes.[73] The next two Budget Sessions of the Assembly (which commenced in the months of February and June 1944), became very exciting and eventful as the Opposition members of the House pointed out complete failure of the government in combating the Bengal Famine. Even some members of the Treasury Bench were not happy with the activities of the Nazimuddin Ministry and surprisingly eleven (11) members of the ruling party crossed the floor on 20 June 1944 and joined the hands of the Opposition.[74] This made the next Budget Session (which took place in March 1945) very interesting. Under the influence of Mr. Huq, 21 Muslim League members of the Treasury Bench crossed the floor and joined the Opposition on 28 March 1945.[75] Increasing its strength, the Opposition got rejuvenated and Dhirendra Nath

Dutta, the Deputy Leader of the Official Congress, opposed the Agricultural Budget and read out his cut motion. Nalinaksha Sanyal, the Chief Whip of the Congress, argued that there was no other option but to put the motion into vote.[76] Due to the absence of the European Group, the cut motion was defeated by 106 to 97 votes.[77] This is for the first time after the death of C.R. Das, a Ministry in Bengal was defeated by direct voting.[78] Thus the disastrous consequences of the famine (1943-1944) in both South Bengal and North Bengal and the overall failure of the Nazimuddin Ministry in tackling the crisis, generated tremendous repercussions, decreased the acceptability and popularity of the Ministry and decided its destiny.

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The Rent Question and its Impact on the Peasants of Rarh Bengal (1820-1860)

Arundhuti Sen

[Editorial Note: The present paper focuses on the peasant studies in Colonial period and has explored the notion of 'rent' and its impact on the socio-economic condition of peasants especially in the select district of Rarh Bengal like Burdwan, Bankura and Midnapore.]

Abstract- *The history of peasants form an interesting theme in the agrarian studies of Bengal.The central theme of peasant studies revolves on the notion of 'rent' which is the root cause of their exploitation. Research works on the origin of rent, their circulation in the economy is well known discourse in Bengal. However, research work on the imposition and operations of rent laws, its impact on the agrarian structure, at intra-regional level is less known. Based on this concept, the present paper seeks to explore the notion of rent, its variation, its circulation in the economy, and finally the background that necessitated formulation of rent Act X of 1859 and its immediate consequences on the peasantry in the select districts of Rarh Bengal.(Burdwan, Bankura, Midnapore). While extrapolating the issue, the paper also tries to bring the inner strife between the occupancy and non-occupancy tenure of the peasants, their role in safeguarding their rights and finally the consequences of the rent legislation on them during 1820-1860.*

Keywords- *Peasant, Rent, zamindars, legislation Agriculture, Rarh.*

Introduction

The term peasant generally refers to the small scale agriculturists who take active part in the production process. In colonial context, the peasants were the heterogeneous class which consisted of sharecroppers, agricultural labour, tenants and the landless peasantry; who thrived on the agriculture for their basic subsistence. The peasants had a small holding which was exclusively controlled by him. The peasant tills their own land and participates in the process of cultivation.

With the coming of the English East India Company, the self-sustained economy of the peasant gradually transformed itself into capitalist one. Apart from the new landed- gentry, most of the peasants were unable to incur benefit from this process.

They remained in utter distress. The precarious condition of the peasants was due to the imposition of enhanced rents on them by the administration.

The permanent settlement gave absolute proprietary rights to the landowners. But it remained silent on the rights of the peasants on their land, most of them lost their hereditary rights during the land auction process. They were continuously rack-rented by the petty officials and were turned into landless labourers. The British administration was unable to tackle the situation, though there was an ardent need for protection of peasant rights; nothing could be legalized till 1859.

Based on this theme, my paper dwells on the Concept of rent, types of rent, Variation of rent rates that was active in the districts of *Rarh* Bengal during the said period. It also deals with necessity, and the process that led to the passing of the Rent Act X in Bengal and its impact on the peasants of the district of Bankura, Burdwan and Midnapore.

Literature Review

Historians from worldwide have embarked on different issues of peasantry. Their canvas of work on the peasantry, revolves on landed relations, changing patterns in agriculture, the growth of the land market, the operation of rural credit in the village economy and finally, the transition of peasant economy to a capitalist economy.

N.K Sinha's Comprehensive work on *History of Bengal* in 3 volumes, Benoy Bhushan Chowdhury corpus of work, consisting of his dissertation; "*Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Bengal*", His articles; *Land Markets in Eastern India*, and The *Process of Depeasantization in Bengal and Bihar, 1885-1947*, depicts the changes in the status of the peasants. He argues that the burden of taxation was a direct outcome of arbitrary increase of ground rent by the zamindars during the colonial period. The increase of rent came into forefront during the mid-eighteenth century, when the gradual substitution of occupancy ryots by non-occupancy rights took place in British India.

The awful condition of the peasantry of Bengal during the 19th century have been beautifully etched by R.C. Dutta, in his work Peasantry of Bengal. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's erudite essay, *Bangladesh Krishok* . Rev Lal Bihari Dey S work, *Bengal Peasant Life* and so on.

Precise works on the outcome of rent legislation are quite common in official tracts of Parbati Churan Roy, "*The rent question in Bengal",* and Radharomon

Mukherjee, *Occupancy rights, its history and its incident*. However, the background to the rent legislation in Bengal, its necessity, the role of peasants in procuring their rights is less focussed area. This is the gap in the existing historiography which my paper intends to cover.

Area of Study

The study is conducted on the semi-arid region of Bankura, Midnapore and the fertile tract of Burdwan, together comprising the South-western part of Rarh Bengal. The term "*Rarh"* is derived from the word Rarha which means rough and uneven. Archaeological excavations and old records identify the region extending between Chotanagpur Plateau in the West and Ganga in the East. The districts of Bankura, Midnapore being semi-arid and the frontier zone was a zone of turbulence, naturally parts of these districts were restructured into separate police units. These administrative changes affected the condition of peasants who were more efficacious to the question of rent than Burdwan. In the fertile tract of Burdwan, the coercion of intermediary owners increased the burden of rent of the poor peasants. The present paper had tried to draw the variations which the district witnessed during the period 1820- 1860.

The land revenue administration of the nineteenth century revolves around three pillars, Landlord, Peasant and Government. The definition of peasant, landlord and government is widely known, and well explained. The common theme which binds them together is"rent" and it is the question of rent which redefines their position in the society. Hence it is important to know about the concept of "Rent" before moving forward on the intricacies associated with it.

Terminology

The term rent means a fixed payment done by a peasant to his immediate lord in the form of kind or cash for using the former's land for agricultural purposes. According to Karl Marx, "ground rent is a socially determined category that arises from a historically conditioned process that precedes (and confronts) capital as it emerges from the womb of simple commodity production." (Ramirez 2009; p-2). It was usual from the ancient period that the peasants used to give their rents to the government. They enjoyed the fixity of tenure and were liable to pay rent after harvest. "The sources of real oppression were then the secret abwabs or un-avowed taxes imposed on the *ryots* by the Zamindar." (Roy 1883; p-44). This rack-rented the peasants and left them in desolate and distress. The situation further worsened

with incessant revenue experiments by the English East India Company and with the promulgation of Permanent Settlement in 1793 CE, the situation took a grave turn.

The Era of Permanent Settlement and Thereafter

The chief concern of the government was to secure the revenue and the government found the most convincing way by settling the rents with the Zamindar, whom they believed to be the real proprietors of the Indian soil. The Permanent Settlement had recognized the Zamindar as the sole proprietor of the soil but in doing so "it left the subject of the relation between the Zamindar and ryot open for later legislation". (Raha 2012; p-8)

The situation took a worse turn when the landlords were bestowed with the power "to summon riots and attach their crops and property in case of an arrear of rent by Act of 1799 and Act V of 1812 commonly known as *Haptam* and *Panjam*. The British administration had sought it to be the most convenient way to ensure greater punctuality in the timely realization of revenue. The law was too harsh, and oppressive than any other existing law of the time. The permanent settlement, as argued by R.C. Dutta, failed to improve the condition of the *ryots.*

Cornwallis, by introducing the Permanent Settlement in a hasty way, left the relation between the *ryot* and the zamindar open for later legislation. Apart from the moukhary and Istemaree tenure, the rights of the cultivators were virtually left at the mercy of the zamindars. They were rack rented by them. Therefore, the condition "of the *ryot* of the present day is as thoughtless and improbable a creature as he was centuries ago". ." (Rickards 1820; p-433). Despite the energetic efforts of the English administration to remedy the defect of the revenue administration, the condition of the peasant remained in the same state.

James Mill, while observing the condition of the *ryots* in Bengal stated, that the relation between the *ryot* and zamindar was remarkable; while the zamindar could rob a *ryot*, the *ryot too* had its power to distress the zamindar. With the commencement of *Haptam* and *Panjam,* the condition of the peasantry had become deplorable. They were ill-paid, poorly clad, and were unable to obtain effectual redress for prosecution, exaction and dispossession. To add to their woes, they were further repudiated to seek redress against prosecution, exaction and dispossession in Court. However regional variation existed everywhere, which directly bore its impact on the peasantry in Rarh Bengal.

Therefore, to understand the system of rent management in the aforesaid districts, it is necessary to have a glimpse on the land tenure of the districts.

Types of Cultivating tenure:

The district of Burdwan, Bankura and Midnapore consisted of innumerable tenures; the greatest number of which was prevalent in the district of Midnapore. Apart from the *mourasidari ijaradars,*[1] the cultivating tenures in the districts were subdivided into three distinct division i) cultivators holding their lands with a right of occupancy in perpetuity and free from liability of enhancement of rent. ii) cultivators holding their lands with a right of occupancy in perpetuity and free from liability of enhancement of rent.

ii) Cultivators holding their land with a right of occupancy subject to fair and equitable progress of rent and finally the tenants at will. In the district of Midnapore and Bankura the cultivating tenures were more widely scattered than Burdwan where the resident cultivators could be traced up till 1859. The pahikasht ryots of the district were further subdivided into *nij-ganjpahikasht* and *baze-ganjpahikast*. (Mill 1826; p-206)

The *baze-ganjpahikasht* were the migratory cultivators who made waste land suitable for cultivation. Similarly, there were *ryots* cultivating a certain amount of land at fixed rates and khamar ryots who were equivalent with sharecroppers. They used to receive a certain portion of produce as their share. Besides this, there were mutwari ryots who derived their subsistence from the land, with the help of the pahikasht. (Hunter 1878: p-22)

The district of Bankura from the time of the permanent settlement was divided into several holdings which were further subdivided into miadijama, jungalbaree tenure, Mourassi [2]and moukhary tenure[3], korfa and dar-korfa tenure[4]. The miadi-jama corresponds to the ijara lease whereby the cultivators held the land temporarily for the fixed period under a *patta* or lease. The jungalbaree estates were concentrated in the remote part of the districts where "the wastelands are leased out for the favourable purpose of being cleared of jungle and brought under cultivation". (Ghosh 2003: p-98).

[1] Temporary lease holders of land.

[2] Hereditary tenure

[3] Rate of rent fixed in perpetuity,

[4] Under raiyat

This was the general trend of the cultivating tenure that was evident in the districts of Rarha Bengal in the 19th century. The condition of the peasantry and their response to the rent management cannot be visualized, unless we have a clear knowledge on the changing agrarian structure of the region. These changes which started after the ravaging famine of 1770, became more pronounced, with the strengthening of sub-infeudation and the growth of commercial agriculture in the districts.

Agrarian Structure

During the 18th century the main objective of the British government was to ensure a steady flow of revenue from the zamindars "whom they regarded as the land captains and entrepreneurs to accomplish the agrarian revolution, an idea which was evident in contemporary England." (Hunter1878: p-3). Therefore, to ensure smooth flow of revenue, a series of revenue policies was undertaken by English East India Company, none of which was successful. The faulty revenue policies became the reason for the marginalization of the peasantry. As the rent assessed on the land was flatly made on speculation, the collectors mercilessly extorted the peasant at their will. There was no provision for remission of revenue during natural calamity. Such a scenario was witnessed in Bengal in the ravaging famine of 1770, which was indeed a man-made disaster.

The Famine of 1770 and After

The decades following the famine of 1770 was a period of distress. A number of constraints sealed the fate of the cultivators in Bengal. W.W. Hunter in his book Annals of Rural Bengal has clearly viewed that the famine was responsible for the most pronounced stratification of the peasantry. The famine and the incessant revenue policies of Hastings resulted in the process of substitution of resident *ryots* with non-resident ryots known as *pahikasht.* The *pahikasht ryots* formed the core of the new cultivating class in *Rarh* Bengal. The pahikasht were offered half of the concessionary rates by the zamindars than *khudkhast.*[5] As such "the long-resident cultivators came to resent the privileged position of the pahikasht cultivators. When the government tried to place both the *khudkash*t and *pahikhast* on equal footing, "the *pykast ryots* refused to pay the enhanced rate". (Mcclane 1993; pp-205). On being pressed, they retired with their crops in the native villages.

[5] Resident cultivator

The growing discontent of the *pahikasht* created a tension among the ryots. During this period, the tribal migrants played an active role in the cultivation process in the western districts of *Rarh* Bengal. Elsewhere, the middling caste consisting of Hindu and Muslim peasants were active participants in the recovery and reclamation process.

Apart from the *pahikasht ryots*[6] there was a rise in the population in the districts of Burdwan division. The cadastral survey undertaken during this time reveals that the number of inhabitants increased to an average of 6 people in Burdwan,. average of 5.5 per person in Midnapore and 5 per person in a house in Jungle Mahal. This clearly proves that the increase in population provided manpower for the agriculture in the districts.

Condition of Agriculture

During the late half of the 18th century, the possibility of the development of agriculture was more distinct in Burdwan than in Bankura. In Burdwan the possibility of this development arose due to. increase in grain prices., the growth of commercial agriculture and iii) granting and distribution of pattas to the peasants.

In the district of Jungle Mahals, the principal crops of the district were rice, indigo, and tobacco. The introduction of cash crops had hardly affected the agrarian condition; "but the cultivation in the district have extensively increased by the reclamation of extensive jungle tracts within the last twenty or twenty-five years."(Hunter-83)

In the district of Midnapore, the principal staple crops was rice, apart from rice the cultivation of cotton, mulberry, and indigo was widely practiced in the districts. Though the area of cultivation of rice increased during the period, no improvement was seen in the quality of the production.

The Agrarian structure in 1840

The introduction of the cash economy led to a change in the position of intermediaries in Bengal. Profits incurred from the cash crops in the districts of Midnapore, Burdwan led to the differentiation of peasantry. It saw the rise of yeomen class who had strengthened their position by entering into the land-owning

[6] Migratory cultivator

business These rich peasants had eventually turned into Jotedars and participated in the agricultural production of Burdwan and Midnapore.

However, the marginal peasants, tribals and non-occupancy ryots of the districts of Rarh Bengal remained in distress. The reason for their distress was rooted in illegal cess and abwabs which enhanced the rent of the peasants . The gradual substitution of non-resident *ryots c*reated a tense situation, since if the non-resident *ryots* were unable to pay their rents, they could be ousted easily by the zamindars at their will. Therefore, an organized attempt to secure the rights of the peasant became utmost necessary and this necessity became evident in minute, newspaper, proceedings. literature and through the voices of the contemporaries. The next segment deals. with the background and circumstances leading to rent legislation in *Rarh* Bengal.

The pre 1859 phase

The introduction of the Haptam of 1799 and Panjam of 1812 led to the peasant exploitation in Bengal. The system remained uninterrupted till the major step towards the peasant legislation was taken. It was Mr J. Harrington who in his minute '*On the regulation of Ryot in Bengal"* spoke about the condition of the peasantry in Bengal. He pointed out that the condition of the peasants deteriorated after the introduction of the Patni system in the district of Burdwan. While, going through net collection of revenue accrued from the districts of Bengal, he said that "in one district in Burdwan from 1800 and 1810 the rent of the *ryots* had doubled." (Harrington 1856:29). The reason behind the enhanced rents was the presence of multi-layer lease holders in the district.

The view of Harrington is criticized by Santosh Kumar Dutta who argued that the, "*Patni* talukdars had tried to keep their *ryot* satisfied because, upon their punctual payment of rent depended the security of maintaining their estates and prosperity." (Chakravarti.1974: p-32). He further argues that by the year 1830, the authorities had received very few complaints from the side of the zamindars and the *ryots.* However, the view of Santosh Kumar Dutta could not be taken into account, since the contemporary journals claim that the condition of the peasantry of Burdwan was comparatively worse when compared with the other districts of Bengal. Mr B. Bayley, the then Officiating Collector of Burdwan stated that due to the *Patni* system, the poor ryot lost the custodian of the zamindars forever. He also adds that the *Patidar* were so powerful in this region that the officials of the zamindar remained loyal to the *patnidars.*

However, the *patnidars* and his allies became prey to the illegal cesses and abwabs which were enforced from them alongside with the revenue. The *patnidars* were bound to pray Shubho-Punnaho on the beginning of Baishak or the financial year. The *patnidars* were summoned in the office by the zamindars to pay off his stipulated revenue and to meet the expenses of customary gifts in festive season. Such imposition of illegal cesses, abwabs forced *patnidars* to extract from the *ryots* who were driven into destitute and poverty. The condition of the district had become such horrid that Mr Dampier the Superintendent of Police says that,

> In this district as well as in other region where there is much underletting, holders of the land and others apparently engaged in trade and of some respectabilities are engaged as protectors of Dakoits and receivers of the property." (Calcutta Review-1846; 32).

The ordinary peasants remained in distress and destitute, they were unable to reap profit from price induced inflation. The communication of the districts was poorly developed, hence, the peasants had rare access to the world market. The crops were produced for the purpose of mere subsistence, and the surplus which was left out was paid out as debt to the moneylenders.

Bankura

In the district of Bankura, the question of rent had been the pivotal issue which spurred up after the permanent settlement had been introduced to the newly formed provinces of West Burdwan. In the arid district of Bankura, presence of different tenures and different methods implied for extracting rents was a principal factor to reckon with: The ryots of the district had to pay two types of rent on produce, one being the Sanja consisting of fixed produce. Whereas, when a cultivator had to pay a certain amount of produce from his cultivation, it was known as bhag. The peasant thrives on two third of the produce of the cultivator and the rest one third was taken by the zamindar themselves. Prior to 1859, there had been inconsistencies in the collection of rent. Such inconsistencies resulted in the enhanced revenue, which was levied to the poor ryot by the tehsildar during that period. Apart from that, the rent levied on the newly accredited resumed land of the district of Midnapore and Bankura had been source of clash and conflict, in which the ryot sometimes sided with the Zamindars.

In such districts, rent was kept low and frozen to the reclaimer. However, the tactics of measures were largely employed, "to enhance rent at fixed rate". (Robertson 1826;61). These tactics were generally employed by the Zamindars who also doubled or tripled the rent whenever they wanted, exploiting the peasantry. Such incidence of enhancement of rent was deduced from the suits of Talukdari claim of Bhagnath Chakroborty of Bancoorah who sued a petition of claiming reduction in the rent due to certain land that was included as *lakhiraj*. (S. Sinha, H. Banerjee 1989;221). The deputy collector on inspection found out that ryot had indeed concealed the great part of land. The exact reason for the concealment of the land was not known, probably the lands had been subjected to denudation for which it was concealed by the *ryots.* There was an instance of imposition of *abwabs* imposed on *Jalsasan* land. The *jalasasan* tenants were given waste lands in a certain area for the first few years, after which the rent was levied on the land, which was highly assessed, leading to their impoverishment.

Midnapore

In the district of Midnapore, the rent was given in kind by the Collector except in the province Bogri, where the rent was fixed on the land, and adding extra benefit to the peasant when compared with the ryot of another district. The economic condition of the peasantry of Midnapore was in a deplorable state. According to Syed Rashid Ali, "the marginal raiyats of the district who held a small farm less than 6 or 7 acres were in a precarious state.

Though the official records shows that the rent of the district assessed remained unaltered from 1839 to 1856, and the ryots paid the same rent, except in the year 1856, when the question of rent levied for the lands lost through alluvium and its adjacent land drew the attention of the authorities. As per as the customs, whenever a rent was levied on the alluvium land, in case of its denudation, the rent for the deluded land and its adjacent land was to be remitted. But unfortunately, in Midnapore, though the rent levied on the land lost vide alluvium was remitted, the remaining rent on the adjacent land was, "still levied at the same rate before and the ryot position is so-far unchanged." (Lawrence Report 1884;75).

The poor ryots of Midnapore had always remained in a distress, unable to reap the fruits of their production. In case of valuable cash crops, "the cultivator's profit on 1/3rd beegah was 5 rupees to 10 rupees for ordinary rice cultivation, 20 rupees for sugarcane, 70 to 85 rupees for mulberry" …. (Parliamentary Papers, London:1872;36). However, as the cultivation was to be carried out by their own

expenses employing labours, if necessary: at the end the profit incurred was spent in payment of the labour, this case was also applicable to the moukhari ryots and the share-croppers who were practically ruined under such prevailing circumstances.

Throughout in the nineteenth century the peasantry in Midnapore have been subjected to severe exploitation, a writer in the Friend of India had aptly remarked, that the ryot makes scarcely half of his rent as taxation he is taxed on every circumstance, and the abwab levied on him was collected brutally.

The peasants of this district had also witnessed a series of dispossession during this period. Judicial records give an instance of *ryot* Mutthur Maitte, when ejected by the plaintiff, Bangshe MuddanMitter for arrear, aided with his opponent Kishan Kishore Ghosh to recover back his proprietary rights over the land. Civil suits related to the extortion of the ryots could be deducted from the judicial proceedings of the district court. Examples of such could be deduced in1853, when the property of a ryot of Midnapore was confiscated, his homestead was burnt down and he was brutally tortured to death. On another occasion a poor ryot Sheikh Khajroo was seized by Nemai Chakraborty for trespass, and compensation was demanded for the trespass done on the four beegah paddy land. However, the official investigation revealed that that suit was falsified to harass the *ryot*.

The district also witnesses several suits pertaining to the bond debts of the poor *ryots* to the moneylenders where the bonafide documents were usually fabricated for malicious purposes.

Midnapore Raiyat Association

In Spite of the severe extortions which the peasants of Midnapore faced over the time, they never did remain an idle spectator to the exacerbating nuisance of the privileged class. The *riots of Midnapore* became a unified force, to raise their voice against their oppression. They tried to turn down the cards of the Zamindars and the moneylenders, and made every possible way to seek the attention of the government through their meticulous organization. In the year 1856 a meeting was held by the riots of Midnapore at the Town Hall leading to the formation of 'Midnapore Raiyats Association' to redress the grievances of the riots. The organization was opposed to the exploitation that the riots had faced over decades. Vehemently condemning the exactions, the association said:

> "It is an established principle of the political economy that whatever remains of the produce of land, after

> paying the wages of the labour, and the interest of capital should go to rent, any rent taken in contravention to this principle is sheer oppression…." (Sircar1856; Kolkata)

The raiyats demanded to settle estates grants, pattah or leases to the cultivator fixing according to the just and equitable rate. They also requested to modify the severity of the law of Haptam and Panjam. The Zamindars were asked to give a month's notice to collect the rents. There should be grant of remission of revenue in case of natural calamities, and finally the raiyats demanded honest and independent police administration to keep a check on the police. The association of the Ryots have been revolutionary since it provided social impetus to the future emancipation of the peasantry, a process which officially started with the promulgation of Rent Act X of 1859.

Rent Act X of 1859

The problem of the agricultural profits and capital formation at the primary level did not concern the officials as they relied on the efforts of the planters and their ability to transform the capitalist farming into small-farming. The gradual transformation of the ryoti-jotes to demnese-jote and the gradual eviction of the moukhari ryots opened up the question of the occupancy rights of the peasant.

The harshness of the Haptam and Panjam had affected the general interest of the peasantry, since the Zamindars could force the attendance of the riot in the Court for and could sue of his land in case of an arrear.

The first attempt to revise the harshness of the Law of Sale and Law of Distraint was undertaken vide Regulation XII of 1817, whereby in each village a separate put wary division was made where from the patwaris served as an independent agency for maintaining a record of reciprocal rights of both the parties concerned with the rights of the land. (Bandyopadhyay 2007;56). The *cannungoes* failed to furnish information about the actual rental of the land held by the peasants, due to absence of pattah.

The protection of the rights of the khudkasht ryots was enumerated in the Regulation VIII of 1819, which provided that nothing in such shall entitle the purchaser of a public sale of arrear of intermediate tenure to eject a khudkasht ryot or a resident cultivator, neither they could cancel the bonafide agreements made with such tenants without "proof of the suit by the purchaser that a higher rate would have

been demandable at the time such engagements made by the purchasers predecessor…".(Calcutta Review 1883;42).

The next legislation pertaining to the issue of the tenurial rights was completely breached vide Regulation IX of 1822, which directed the registration of the village rights of the cultivators, whether possessing the right of hereditary occupancy or not. This sub-clause took for granted the rights of the riots by not mentioning the composition of hereditary class, their origin it created a vagueness and left the matter to be judged according to the discretion of the government.

A significant move towards protecting the tenurial rights was reflected in Harrington's *Minute and Draft of Regulation of Ryots in Bengal.* This was considered as a major intervention of the official authorities in favour of the riots. The landholders were asked to furnish the account of all the villages within their possession. They were asked to furnish. the statement of the tenant, the land they possessed; and the rent levied on each. The minute also proposed to maintain records of the land held by the resident cultivator, irrespective of their occupancy status. 'The abwabs were abolished. The zamindars were advised to provide fresh pattah to the riot specifying the rent to be paid by them. The draft also criticized the abuse of the powers of distraint and process of jurisdiction.

However, the draft never got a legal recognition since the fixation of rent might prove to be elusive for agricultural produce for which the English East India Company was not ready to abide. According to Chittabarata Palit, during the time, the government seemed finally to believe in laissez-faire and was convinced that the fixation of rent to be paid by the riots to the landlords was indeed a herculean task. The increasing encroachments of the right of the *khud-khast ryots* and the government inability to protect their rights roused a wave of indignation among the elites. Such instances could be seen in the series of memorandum presented by Ram Mohan Roy in his reply to the questionnaire sent to him by the select committee of the House of Commons in 1831 to renew the Company's charter in 1833. Speaking on the issue of the *ryot,* and on their *pattas* he spoke that the title-deeds should not be set aside except in certain specified cases, applicable to that period of general settlement and not-extending to forty years afterwards." Speaking on the issue of arbitrary increase of rents he observes: In practice however, under one or other of the preceding fair conditions, the landholders (Zamindars) through their local influence and intrigue easily succeeded in completely setting aside the rights even of the khud-kasht cultivators and increased their rent.

The worsening condition of the peasantry and the question of their occupancy, was further revoked by the Act Xi of 1841. It empowered the auction purchaser to enhance the rents at their discretion. The new landlords could evict and eject all the tenants except the khud-kasht having the legal deeds of occupancy at fixed rents as the tenure holder enjoyed absolute power to increase rent, they could eject tenants of any category, if the former failed to clear off their dues.

The stringent clause of the Act XI of 1845 was repealed through Act I of 1845, but yet the uncertainties of the peasant's position had become a matter of serious concern. The long period of gestation of the government came to an end with the transfer of power from English East India Company to the crown resulting in the change in the administrative policies of India, which was soon reflected in the Rent Act X of 1859. (Roy 1832;55).

Rent Act of 1859 and its Aftermath

The Rent Act X of 1859 heralded a new era in the history of tenancy legislation in India. Through this legislation, the government tried to remove the abuse of the existing laws, especially the Haptam and Panjam. According to this legislation, "the ryots were classified into three categories: ryots holding at fixed rents, occupancy riots and non-occupancy ryots." (Raha 2012,73).

i) Ryots holding the rent unchanged for 20 years since the Permanent Settlement, were entitled to hold the rents forever.

ii) The raiyats "who had cultivated or held lands for twelve years were declared to have a right of occupancy in the land, so long he paid the rent payable on account of the same. However, this did not apply to the proprietor's private land leases for a term of a year or a few years in case a written contract barring such incidents comes into forefront." (Mukherjee 1916,71).

iii) The ryots without the rights of occupancy were declared to be entitled with pattas and rates that might be agreed upon by the zamindars and the ryots.

Thus, by the Act X of 1859 a distinct division between the khudkasht and the pahikasht ryots was made by conferring the occupancy ryots to the former. It safeguarded the peasant from the ambivalence and fear of dispossession in case of enhancement in rent. The provision of the rent act X was successfully implemented in the outskirts of Rarh *a*nd the rents for the occupancy riots were fixed accordingly, which could be determined from the table below:

Table: 5.3- Average incidence of rent per acre in the districts of Bengal in 1860:

Thana	Incidence of rent per acre		
	Rs	A	P
Midnapore	3	15	5
Tippera	3	2	2
Dacca	2	13	0
Bankura	1	12	0

(Source: Robertson: 1926.p-70.)

But did the Rent Act X of 1859 was able to expunge the age-old exploitation which the peasants had encountered over the years? In the nexus to the question, Rev Lal Behari Dey replied that the Rent Act X of 1859, was Magna Carta for the peasantry, which freed them from the vices of repression. It ended the era of apprehension, as the peasant could reap the fruits of his harvest with fixed rent without harbouring over the zamindars. It also put a blow to the existing illegal cesses and abwabs, which had increased the rent of Bengal. However, in his fiction, Bengal Peasant Life. He lamented by saying:

> If this Act had been passed a few months earlier, Govinda would not have been ruined, but as the haptam and pancham had their full swing, his property was sold to the highest bidder. Govinda was now perhaps in a more helpless state than at the time when his homestead was reduced to ashes by the orders of the zamindar. He had hardly recovered from the effects of the conflagration when he was plunged into fresh. Debt.(Dey. 1816.p-366)

Gobindo Samantha, the example of a stereotypical peasant from the Aguri community of Burdwan and his condition prior to the rent legislation might induce us to question whether the condition of peasantry improved after the Legislation? Did it safeguard the proprietary rights of the peasantry? However, the reports and the proceedings of the civil suits of the period confirms us that nothing improved ever; Most of the time the zamindars relinquished the pattas before the expiry of

twelve years. Even the rent suits for the recovery of the residue due under regulation VII of 1799 was declared invalid in Burdwan. The immediate effect of the rent act was the anticipation which made both the landlords and tenants equally conscious about their rights. Speaking on the issue, the Governor- general says

> "The general effect of the new law appears to have been levied satisfactorily. suits of arrears of rent under clause 9 SecXXIII have become as numerous as they were under the old law…" (Cases on Appeal to High Court,1864;340-41).

Impact of rent Act-X in Bengal

The immediate effect of Rent act X of 1859 in Bengal on its initial years was a sudden decrease in the number of revenue suits when compared with the cases of the corresponding period of the preceding years.

The general effect of the new law appears to have been satisfactory. The rent was satisfactory. Besides, the summary process for evicting tenants had not been resorted so frequently as expected.

The annual reports from the lower provinces of Bengal depict that the rent law worked effectively in different districts of Western Bengal. Constant supervision and proper management made it easier to access the cases without hassle. In case of extraordinary influx of cases "Deputy Collectors have been promptly appointed or transferred from one district to another to meet such sudden pressure (Annual Report 1861; pp-18).

The Act was thought to be so light at a point of time, that it seemed that suitors came solely for the purpose of registration. The Governor- General while looking through the returns from Lower Bengal stated that 63% of the total suits in which the judgement was instituted had no dispute within them. The increasing number of suits between the zamindars and ryots was largely due to the hassle created by the agents, who were employed by the zamindars to collect the rents. The regulation of 1859 had directed the authorities to dispense the receipts against the remittance of revenue; however, the *ryots* were unwilling to take receipts from the agents fearing the agents would take the money and would conceal the receipts to take money again. Therefore, the *ryots* used to keep their rents back in their pockets until they were summoned in the Court for disbursing their rent.

In the district of Burdwan, for the patnidar and their tenants "there was a special law for compelling them to pay their rent every half year."- In most of the cases, the patnidars never paid their rents, and thus within every half –year he had to put for sale about eight hundred *Patni t*enures, depriving the *ryots* of his domain to enjoy the occupancy rights. Statistical evidences show that it had the rent suits and miscellaneous applications after rent act increased from 119 original suits to 635 in Burdwan. The East India Association undertook measure to seek permission from Legislative Council to allow Maharaj of Burdwan to institute suits to recover his lands from the government which was taken away on pretext of being invalid tenure.

In the district of Midnapore, the fixation of rent regarding the Junglebarry estate forms the basis of the litigation whereby it was decided that the rates of rents should be determined by the customary rates for smaller land enjoining by the riots in place adjacent to it. 'But the rate of rent should be raised as per the prevailing customary rent not beyond it. In the district of Midnapore, the substantial ryots were unable to sublet their lands to the tenants who were denied from their occupancy rights. The beneficiary was of course the jotedars, who enjoyed the status of occupancy ryots in the district and sublteed their land to the tenants.

In the case of west Burdwan, in 1869, the enhanced rent was imposed for invalid lakhiraj tenure which was cancelled by the orders of the High Court. The incidence of increase or encroachment of occupancy holdings was relatively scarce in the district, since most of the region consisted of Junglbaree estate and constant substitution of different estates for a long time makes it impossible to trace the condition of the place.

Conclusion

In genesis, the tenancy legislation sought to bring out stability in agriculture and production. It restricted the possibility of enhancement of rent in Bengal. The situation was not the same in the districts of Rarh Bengal. The civil suits on occupancy rights were more in Burdwan when compared with Bankura and Midnapore. Burdwan.The fertile tracts of Burdwan lured the *patnidars* to devise tactful measures to devoid the occupancy status to the resident *ryots* of the district. In the districts like Midnapore and Bankura, the rents being low, the prospects of subletting the land to the tenants, was less than Burdwan. The occupancy *ryots* held

a premier position in the districts, by encroaching the junglebaree estate, which was never counted for rent purposes. However, it also prepared the stage for the further struggle over the occupancy status and rent in Bengal. For the time being, Rent Act X of 1859 was unable to attain its objective as the incidences of increased rent, encroachment remained unabated. However, it also made the peasant conscious of their rights. As more and more peasants came forward to protect their occupancy status, a series of clashes, protest, and indigo revolt, Pabna Riots came to surface in the districts of Rarh Bengal. This Act ushered a new dawn in peasant history which paved the way for further tenancy legislation in Bengal.

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Rites and Rituals in the Life and Death Cycle of the Mangar

Asudha Mangar

[Editorial Note: The present paper provides an insight into the historical origin of the Mangar Community and also explores the various life, death and similar other significant rites and rituals revolving around the lives of the community.]

Abstract: *The history of origin of Mangar or Magar in India is shrouded in obscurity. 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. Hence, the rites and rituals of Mangars settlers of Sikkim, Darjeeling or sub- Himalayan region has a close affinity and can be found with similarity with other castes, yet holding its uniqueness and ethnic values. The paper here tries its best to bring out expansively the prevailing rites and rituals of Mangar among the inhabitants of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts in respect of life and death cycle.*

Key Words: *Society, Culture, Tradition, Rituals, birth, death.*

Introduction

Society refers to an encompassing network of social interaction and interrelationship and encloses innumerable individuals and phenomena. Social relationship and social behavior form the essence of society. The social environment of any human group plunges into culture. It is the culture, which guides the people- what to eat, what to be done and how to be done, how to talk and how to think. Human behaviors are grossly determined by culture as the individuals are born, raised and live in it. A person can never be free from cultural influences. These Phenomena have been explained by Leslie White as 'cultural determinism'. Every human society either literate or illiterate has a distinctive culture which governs the behavior of its members. (Roy, 2003: pp. 516 & 660) Melville J. Herskovits in his book, "Man and His Works" (1947) tried to relate culture and individuality in terms of enculturation. Enculturation is the process by

which an individual learns the forms of conduct acceptable to his group. He (1955) points out that in diffusion, the transmission of culture is a gradual process of culture change of which acculturation is one expression which occurs when any two are in historic contact. According to Felix-Keesing, "Culture change may be defined broadly as a reformation in group behavior, such reformation may be seen occurring from the level of individual experience, as being an innovator or accepting an innovation to that of the total functional and integral setting of a culture system." (Kumari, 1999: p. xxxi.). According to White, culture is the matrix, which is governed by its own laws of growth and operation. Neither human biology, nor human psychology can analyze the principle of its reality (Roy, 2003: p.660).

Mangars as an aboriginal of India

The history of Mangar or Magar in India is shrouded in obscurity. 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 1100/1AD as Mangvara' (Witzel,1991, p.18).

The mythological narratives describe Mangar as the descendants of 'GanaDevta' 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 (Tilak Pradhan, 1996, p.4). A Copper Plate Inscription of Shivadeva, dated 221 Newar Era (1110 CE) has been discovered (The Gazetteer of Sikkim, pp.10 and 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 (Kumar Pradhan,1991, p.35).

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, p.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, p.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, p.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).

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,* Vol. I, p.180).

Mangars as Early Settlers in West Bengal

The Mangars and its existence with its unique culture in India especially in Assam, Sikkim and West Bengal (Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar Districts) have come into limelight in the last decades of the previous century. The 1901 Census figures for the Magars or Mangars were 3214 in Jalpaiguri and 11,174 in Darjeeling (*Linguistic Survey of India,* Vol-3, part-, p.206). J.F. Grunning mentioned that there were 3709 Mangars in Jalpaiguri district as per the 1911 Census figures (Grunning, 1911, p.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, pp. 72-92). The article therefore describes the customs and rituals of Mangars inhabited in these areas from time immemorial.

Rituals of Mangars

The life cycle of human beings consists of different phases and different changes that he passes through commencing from birth to death. The life of an individual in any society is a series of passage from one age to another and from one occupation to another. Transition from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence. Hence, it encounters a wide range of social ceremonies like birth, childhood, marriage, pregnancy, parenthood, death rites etc (Gennep, 1977: pp.2-4). The Mangars inhabiting these areas have their own basic rites and rituals which differentiates them with other castes of Nepali community.

1. Birth Ceremonies

The observance of birth rituals of Mangars are different from the other caste of Nepali community. Though some of the taboos are similar to some extent, it is generally prevalent among them and strictly followed by all the members of the community.

(a) Pre- natal Care and Taboos

This life cycle begins with the union of two adult male and females through matrimony. Pregnancy of a woman is a natural desire as among other communities and believes that a good infant is born in a good atmosphere. A woman without an issue is looked upon as inferior in status. The desire to get a child is also strong among the Mangar women as well. However, there are certain restrictions or taboos when a woman gets pregnant.

(b) Restriction of food

(a) A pregnant woman is prohibited from eating twin bananas or any sort of adjoined fruits. Consumptions of such fruits are believed to have been delivered in twin children.
(b) Consumption of Papaya and bottle gourd are prohibited items to a pregnant lady in order to avoid any mishap or miscarriage of child.
(c) Chopping of any fruit or vegetables into halves is also banned to an expectant mother for fear of any mishap to the child in womb.
(d) A pregnant woman should never eat the flesh of wild animals like Leopard, else the child would snarl like Leopard (Allay, 2003: p.71).

(c) Social Restrictions

An expectant mother and father are entangled with various social restrictions before the birth of a child.

(a) An expectant mother is not allowed to chop off her hair till the delivery of a child.
(b) The expectant mother and father duo are disallowed to kill or harm any living creatures.
(c) An expectant mother, henceforth not allowed touching or looking at the corpse except the nearest one of the family but, if possible, to avoid doing so. Similarly expectant fathers should avoid attending the funeral process

during the time. They believe that if they do not follow such restrictions the new born may be born wrapped with numerous threads like hairs as that of cloth wrapped to a corpse.

(d) A pregnant woman must not be part of any rituals related to death ceremonies and avoid being near a sick person. The husband of the pregnant woman must avoid touching the dead bodies in order to avoid the miscarriage of the woman.

(e) A Pregnant woman should also avoid being exposed during an eclipse. It is generally perceived that a child born with black spot is the result of a mother touching her womb during pregnancy at the time of eclipse. It is also believed that a pregnant woman and husband of the woman should never step over a rope with which a cow, buffalo or goat is tied with. If either he or she does so, it is perceived that the child will be born with great difficulty and will be hazardous at the time of delivery of new born (Kumari, 1999: pp. 37-38).

(f) A pregnant woman doing heavy household work is likely to be bestowed with a healthy and strong child.

2. Birth of a Child and Expectation

Prognostication of an unborn child is a quite natural habit among the women of any society; hence it is not different from the case of Mangar society. In earlier days, the conception of pregnancy used to be determined on the basis of the stoppage of the menstrual cycle of women. It is commonly perceived that a woman with a bright face during her pregnancy is blessed with a girl child and vice- versa with the unclean face a male child. Sometimes on the basis of the shape of the womb, it is presumed whether she is having a boy or a girl child and sometimes on the basis of placement of the baby in lower or upper parts of the body. The delivery of a child generally occurs at the husband's house due to post rituals complication. After the birth of a child , if at home the midwife cuts the umbilical cord or *nal* for which she is provided with some money.

(a) Naming Ceremony (Mi-Ar-Min / Aarmin Dake)

A house is considered as polluted, the moment the child is born and expected to be purified only after the naming ceremony. The length of time varies from one Mangar group to another. The naming ceremony is held on the 5^{th}, 7^{th}, 9^{th} or 11^{th} day of his/her birth. On that day, sprinkling of cow's urine did purification of the house earlier but sometimes the same ritual is performed with gold- dipped water also. The followers of Vaishnavite sects among them purify themselves by putting

holy ash on their forehead by a Sadhu or an ascetic (Subba, 2008: p.349). The whole household members remain secluded and live a life of isolation from other families in the neighboring locality. The term *Sutak* is highly considered as impious in Mangar family and observed with great care. The first priority of naming the baby is always given to the paternal aunt of the child. Henceforth, he or she is called as per the name given by the aunt.

The naming ceremony of a girl child is observed on 5th and 7th day, however for a boy child it is generally observed on 9th and 11th day (Ibid., p.349). On the day of purification, all the members of the family are required to undergo the ceremony. Besides personal purification, the house is also purified. The mother and the child are presented with new clothes and other materials by the child's maternal uncle. Due to influence of Hinduism some of the Mangars families observed this purification ceremony by the Brahmin whereas in absence of him, it is also done by the son-in-law of the family. However, in the interior areas, the Mangar Priest *Bhusal* or *Wapa* also concludes these ceremonies. According to their social beliefs, the god of destiny comes and writes the destiny of the child (Mangar, .1993: p.30). So, the guests stay awake the whole night, singing devotional religious songs. In the morning, the host presents any person who is able to remain till morning with rice, alcohol and money on a *nanglo* (winnowing fan). The alcohol and money are being accepted but the rice is left for the host.

Purification Ceremony Prevailing among other Nepali Communities

Sl. No.	Name of the Castes	Number of days for Birth Pollution (Sutak) **Female child**	Number of days for Birth Pollution (Sutak) **Male child**
1.	GURUNG	7th	9th
2.	TAMANGS	3rd	5th
3.	THAMIS	5th	7th
4.	NEWAR (PRADHAN)	5th	6th
5.	CHHETRIS	7th	11th
6.	KAMIS (Viswakarma, Lohars, Sunars)	5th	7th
7.	DAMAIS, DARJIS, SARKIS	11th	11th

(Sources: - Subba, J.R., *History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim*, 2008)

After *Chaiti,Navran*is performed to purify the mother and the child and to give a name to the newborn. The Brahmin or Bhusal provides the rashi-naam determined by its horoscope, which helps in making *Janam-Patra or Kundali*(birth chart) of the child.The brahmin priest whispers the name in his or her ears and then to his or her parents. A thread is tied to the child's wrist and neck. Apart from this the ceremony includes the touching of cow-dung and milk by the toes of the baby. The child- cries, during the ceremony is considered a good sign. After the consummation of *gaunt*, the mother and the whole household are considered to be ceremonially clean (Allay, 2003: pp.70-73). Serving of common feast to the other relatives is also done on the very day as part of celebration of welcoming the newborn in the family. However, the mother or *(sutkeri*, new mother who stays secluded for some time), is supposed to stay in an isolation period of 22 days when after offering Sutkeri Puja to *Kuldevtas*(Sectorial God), she may lead a normal life. It is generally perceived that some unpleasant incident might harm both baby and mother, if the puja is not performed.

(c) Weaning Ceremony (Purbhade/ Cho Kaske)

Mangar people also perform *Pasni* (rice feeding ceremony), which takes place in the case of girls after five months of their birth and six months in case of boys. It is also named as *bhat- khwai* (Magar, 2004: p.27). Before the feeding ceremony, the child is bathed in *sunpani* (gold dipped water). Generally, the first person to feed the child goes to the maternal uncle of the child, later carried by the eldest members of the family, then the parents and other relatives. After the bath, they feed the child with a variety of the food, however, with growing consciousness among them, they prefer sweet light dishes for the day which replaces the heavier food day after day. The child is commonly dressed up in the cloth given by the maternal uncle on this day. Apart from this, a big tray containing toys, paddy, ornaments, book, pen, metal etc is placed before the child. The child's future career is presumed from the nature of objects he picks up from among those items. At the end a grand feast is organized for all the relatives and neighbors.

(d) Mundan Ceremony (Chhaewar)

It is the initial hair- shaving ceremony of a boy child. This is performed when the child attains the age of three, five or seven years in odd number years or within nine years (Baral Magar, 1994: p.64). In Mangar community maternal uncle plays a very significant role in completion of any rituals. No rituals are possible without the

inclusion of maternal uncle in case of nephew or niece. Hence, a prior invitation to him is needed for performance of this ceremony. In absence of him, someone from the maternal side has to perform it. Some hinduised Mangars prefer a Brahmin priest for this ritual. For this ceremony an auspicious day is selected with the consultation of local astrologer or priest. On this day a ceremonial platform is set up for the performance of this customs. Some Mangars of these regions also prefers a *gai-goth* (a cow shed or stable), where the child sometimes entangled with the same rope used for knotting the animals, placing betel-nut in his mouth, and chopping of hairs by his *mama* (maternal uncle). He cuts the few locks of hairs and places them in a plate, which later on proceeds by the barber. The child is completely shaved off leaving only his *tupi* (topknot) on his head (Pilgrims, 2007: pp.33-34). The paternal aunts assist the *mama* throughout the process and they are presented with a new set of clothes. After the completion of hair shaving, the child is prepared in the clothes given by his maternal uncle. At last, the child is given tika on his forehead by *mama* and the close relatives. Some offer gifts and some also gives money to the child. Some people organize it with grand communal feast to all the invitee's at large scale. This first shaved off hairs is wrapped in a new cloth and disposed of at a holy spot, under a tree or in nearby river or stream. The people believe that it keeps the child away from evil spirits and also perceived the length of hairs become long like the water of the stream.

(e) Cloth Giving Ceremony (Gunyu Cholo or Gaghar Yahake)

Gunyu and cholo is an in general dress of an adult Mangar female which a young girl is ritually given to wear after they perform this ceremony (Sinjali,2014: p. 62). This is performed when the girls turn into odd numbers years like five, seven or nine. Most importantly this ritual has to be observed before the first menstrual cycle of the girl child. *Gunyu* means Skirt, the lower garment and *Cholo* means blouse the upper garment worn by the Mangar women. An auspicious day is being chosen by the Brahmin priest to conduct this ritual. All the relatives from both paternal and maternal sides get invitations on the day and after some rituals the girl is gifted with new clothes and blessed with *tika*. It is believed that the girl will have a blissful life if this ritual is conducted. The day onwards she can wear these clothes which are generally worn by the Mangar Women. However, in recent times, these customs are rarely observed but still in rural areas it is performed with full faith and beliefs for the better life of their daughters. In some of the places the Feet washing or *Gura Dhune pratha* of the girl is also done by all the elders including the maternal uncle and aunts. In other words, the girl is beautifully decorated like a bride. Some believe

that it gives an opportunity for their grandparents to bless their granddaughter as bride due to uncertainty in future.

3. Death Rites

Risley mentioned that the funeral ceremonies of the Mangars, which are the same as those of Gurung and Sunwars, are curious and interesting. The Hindu theory of the transmigration of soul and the law of *Karma* has an effect on the death rites among Mangars. They believe that the soul of a person, after death, finally goes to the abode of *Yama* and they receive reward or punishment according to their deeds during their lifetime. They also believe in the concept of natural death and unnatural death and accordingly the underworld concept (Kumari, 1999: p.95). The Mangars also followed this ritual and similarity is found with respect to this in the area. When death occurs, at first, he is kept on the ground and a brass plate with the rice and an oil lamp on it is kept close to the head of the dead person. The dead body is constantly guarded so that it cannot be touched by any pets like cats or dogs (Subba, 2008: p.354). Risley mentioned that one of the maternal relatives of the deceased, usually the maternal uncle is chosen to act as priest for the occasion and to conduct the ritual appointed for the propitiation of the dead (Risley, 1891: p.75). Before the burial the corpse is wrapped in a white cloth and pinned at nine places with tiny dry sticks. Their custom is that the corpse is carried by a son only, however in absence of by son- in low or close relatives as well. Due to the influence of Hinduism, Some Mangars have started the system of cremation but majority of them still prefer to burn on pyre. The funeral procession proceeds, the priest or a *Dhami* recites mantras and sprinkles coins and *akcheyta* while blowing a conch (Pilgrims, 2007: p.41).

After reaching the cremation site by a river bank, the white cloth is removed and the body placed on the funeral pyre. The deceased's son puts a burning camphor inside the mouth of body and some milk is poured. The process is called giving *daakbatti*. After the *daakbatti* the pyre is set alight with straw. While performing this ritual people utters these sentences,

"Chiniliking, naku loho lam nungki, Danya manar debro dunki,

Loho bajyu, barajyu kush lam nungne, holak na nungki

Loho gehek jatche boilethang na kungki."

(Which generally means today onwards you go ahead your way, go left instead of right, go through the way from where the ancestors had gone, go to your universal creator)

During these whole death rituals, only Mangar people are allowed to handle the corpse. After the pyre has been burnt, the ashes are thrown into the river and the funeral pyre is washed. If they perform a burial, they bury the body in a secluded place. After completing the cremation or the burial, the sons and brothers of the deceased shave the hair on their body and their *tupis*(top knots). However, if the deceased is mother then the moustache is kept intact in respect of father; similarly, if the deceased is father, they keep their eyebrows in respect of mother. Then they bathe and wrap their bodies in a white loincloth. The abstention period is varied for 13 days and 10 days. Most of the Mangars, under the general guidance of the association , observed a period of 10 days in case of adult death, seven days in case of children under ten years of age and five days in case of new-born in both areas of settlement (Allay, 2003: pp.85-87).

All the funeral goers have a ritual bath to cleanse themselves before they return home. Risley described that when the mourners return home, one of their parties goes ahead and makes a barricade of thorn bushes across the road midway between the grave and the house of the deceased. As they are about to leave, they burn a fire and cover it with a branch of a *Chautari* tree and some *titepati*. They walk over it, touching the fire slightly with their hands or feet. Some places a throny bhalaio bush and rose bush branch over the fire so that the deceased spirit will not follow the *malami* (funeral goers). The Mangars believe that the deceased spirit may follow the man and roam the surrounding area until the final ritual gets completed. (Pilgrims, 2007: pp.42-43). Risley has also mentioned that the object of this curious spirit ceremony is to prevent the spirit of the dead from coming home with the mourners and establishing itself in its old haunts.

(a) Abstention Period

The Mangars believe in observing this abstention period with strict rituals and rites, failing in which they believe that it might bring troubles to their lives. Hindu Magar observes birth pollution for ten days (Bista, 1967: p.72). The abstention period differs in case of death of child and unborn child.

Sl.No.	CASTES	Abstention Period in case of death of **Adult**
1.	GURUNG	14th, & 49th (Buddhist)
2.	TAMANGS	49th
3.	BAHUNS, CHHETRIS	13
4.	NEWAR (PRADHAN)	13
5.	THAKURIS	6
6.	KAMIS (Viswakarma, Lohars, Sunars)	7, 9, 13
7.	DAMAIS, DARJIS, SARKIS	11

(Sources: - Subba, J.R., *History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim*, 2008).

When the deceased son returns, they shave their heads and moustaches and are placed in a secluded part of their home, which is cordoned off from the rest of the living area of the house. They do it immediately after returning from the funeral for up to an abstention period of 10 days. The day onwards the one who starts *kuri* or abstention, stays secluded doing all his work by himself from cooking to washing his day-to-day wear cloth. During the period, he takes unsalted boiling food, generally boiled rice with ghee and fruits only. They offer food to the deceased before consuming by themselves. They take baths every day before offering and consuming food in nearby rivers or nearby water resources at home. They can only rest and sit in the *kuro* (secluded place that is built for them). They cannot be touched by anyone, not even by the family members except by the one who is in *kuri.* They keep themselves away from any domestic animals or pets, failing in which they might have to restart from day one. Married daughters and son-in -law are bound to observe partial pollution rituals varying from 3 to 5 days. The married daughters consume unsalted foods like boiled rice, potatoes and fruits for five days cooked by themselves but do not need to stay in a secluded area.

On the tenth day or thirteenth day, the people staying in *kura*, come out of the area and after performing different rites as said by the priest or *Bhusal*. Some offer *godan* (offering of cow calf) to priests. On the day, the family as per their capacity gives all the necessary articles from head to toe to the priest along with other necessary articles like umbrella, bed with all bed articles as *saiyya daaan*. Apart from this son-in-law also plays a crucial part in absence of priests by offering *nun tel* (salt, oil), and *Gaunth* (cow- urine) dipped with *titepati* or mugwort (sacred leaves used for purification (Ibid, p.44). On the last day the ones in kuro are allowed to touch salt and oils which were the items on the banned list and they are purified

with sprinkling of *sunpani* (gold dipped water), *gaunth* (cow urine) and the drinking of a small quantity of this *gaunth*. The *malami* (funeral goers) are also given some of this gaunth to drink and then a feast is given to all there (Bisht & Bankoti, 2004, p.954). The family was announced as purified from death rites, however some partial obligation continues for a year. On the day the daughters prepare food for people observing abstention, also non-veg items as a mark of permitted consumption of all sorts of foods. But the son and daughter do not take milk for the whole year in respect of mother and curd in respect of father. They avoid consuming food in social functions and do not make pilgrimages for the next year.

Conclusion

It is evident from aforementioned practices that the Mangars have distinctive rites and rituals regarding life and death cycles. They perform and observe all these rituals which differentiate them with other castes of Nepali community. Though, this can also be mentioned that they are not unaffected from Hinduism. Some of their basic cultures have similarities with other castes. But in spite of all, the community observes these rites with full devotion for avoiding any unintentional harm to the family in case of failure of observance. In the present-day society, a leniency can certainly be found in respect of some traditions but the efforts of the community in the preservation of these rituals have unified them either in hills or plains. In the interior places of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar districts, these are strictly performed in order to stay in social systematic order along with other castes in the society. It is therefore being carried forward from generations to generations from the time immemorial.

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Anglo-Indian Community in Darjeeling Hills: Study of the Growth of Educational Institutions (1835-1900)

John Biswas

[Editorial Note: The present paper talks about the Anglo-Indian community of the Darjeeling Hills, their rich history as European settlers in Bengal, the study of the growth of educational institutions that were established for their children and why was Darjeeling chosen as the place for establishing such institutions.]

Abstract: *The Anglo-Indian community is among the minority communities recognized by the Indian constitution. This mixed-race community has a rich history of nearly 500 years. The history of the Anglo-Indian community begins from the first European settlement in Bengal. The community found a new home in Darjeeling after this region was acquired by the British. This paper aims to find out a vivid picture of the Anglo-Indian community in Darjeeling and makes a study of the educational institutions that were established for the European and Anglo-Indian children. This paper also aims to find out why Darjeeling was chosen for establishing institutions such as schools and orphanages for European and Anglo-Indian children. This paper also looks into the active role and involvement of the Christian Missionaries for all-around development of Anglo-Indians. Missionaries also played an important role in establishing Girl's schools.*

Keywords: *Anglo-Indian, European, mixed-race, missionaries, education*

Introduction

India is considered an actual lenient mixing bowl of races and cultures. The geographical setting of the Indian sub-continent and its course of happenings have brought persons with different ethnic origins and varying cultural stresses. One of the very significant legacies of colonial India was the birth of a community of mixed racial and cultural legacy i.e. the Anglo-Indian community. The Anglo-Indians, although historically microscopic as an interesting cluster in modern India, have long been regarded as a distinct community that still survives as one of the minority communities in India. The community's '*native*' status was established in 1911 during British rule along with its name, 'Anglo-Indian'. Although called by numerous connotations the community was acknowledged as a minority in Independent India.

Anglo-Indian Origin

The beginning of the Anglo-Indian community traces back to the eighteenth century in Bengal. This minority community nurtures a rich cultural heritage all through the colonial period of India. The Anglo-Indians were commonly called with a variety of connotations such as *half-caste, half-breed, chichi, firringes, Eurasians*. In the initial years when the Europeans with their ships came as merchants and traders in the Indian subcontinent, fostered no desire to settle down here. They had their central objective to institute a commercial relationship with India. Historically till the first half of the seventeenth century the association between the British and the indigenous population was essentially professional or rather professionally reciprocal. Several British officers, armed forces, and citizens as well as many other men under the service of the European Companies and later the British India government, came to establish trade relations with them or search for employment in various subsidiary sections eventually resulting in personal connections with Indian women (Caplan 2001: 61-62). The feelings of settling down in India came only after when the English merchants and traders became the emperors of India. Few of the Anglo-Indian authors and novelists have tried to stress upon East India Company's deliberate policy of openly inspiring inter-community marriages, especially among their employees and local Indian women, leading to the birth of the Anglo-Indian community (Anthony 1969). On the other side, few of the scholarly works have advocated that Christian missionaries were much influential in encouraging matrimonial acquaintances among the Indians and Europeans (Caplan 2001) Apart from these two theories, the western historians were of the opinion that majority of such unions can be regarded as the less-recognized ones especially that happened during the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. In this linking, it is recognised to the fact and cited that every so often for extensively during this retro, European women were deprived of to access the colonies and for that reason, most of the European men could not in any circumstance come across the expense of to marry the European women who however could succeed to reach the subcontinent (Ghosh 2001 Reprint: Stoler 1989). And repetitively it was noticed that married European men were often omitted from employment in colonial government and trade which also is underwritten the European femininity disparity and encouraged associations and unions with local women (Stoler 1989; 134-161). Whatsoever the whys and wherefores it can be believed that in India and as in several regions of the colonial domain where European men found themselves sexually quarantined the native

mistress became a *recognized institution*(Dodwell 1926). Many of these women would probably be described as *concubines* (Caplan 2001).

Up to the second half of the eighteenth century, the mixed-race community was identified with the English and that was the reason that this group had not suffered any disabilities. If their fathers could afford to send them to England they had been sent for schooling and had usually resumed to India in the company services. Those who could not advance to England were educated locally and engaged in the great mainstream positions in the non-covenanted civil services, and Company's army (Gaikwad 1967). The prosperity of the Anglo-Indians extended roughly till 1785 as three repressive guidelines were passed against the community, the most important was the 1795's which specified that all personnel not descended from European parents on both sides were declared debarred for service in the army except as fifers, drummers, bandsmen, and farriers. Being a mixed-race community they suffered socially and economically. Debarred from seeking employment with the company, the Anglo-Indians turned to the Princely states. Here many joined the princely state armies as a trainer for the state armies using their skills and talents (Abel 1988). The condition became worse with the enactment of the Charter Act of 1833 where all posts were made exposed to the public of any race in India. They started a competition between the Indians for job opportunities (Sen 2017).

Soon the situation changed with the introduction of modern means of communication in India, they could manage jobs in the emerging new sectors such as railways, telegraphs, and customs. The shift in the occupation yet again put them in the good books of the British. Despite all these the community was affected financially. A quicker inquiry seems to direct that numerous reasons accumulated together to produce the negative approaches towards the mixed racial community. The Anglo-Indian community started to appear in the Social scenario of Bengal from the beginning of 2nd half of the eighteenth century. Being a mixed racial community they also faced problems in the social and economic spheres of life. The community notwithstanding all the negligence were able to grow in digit, influence, and affluence with the knowledge of English. This minority community of British legacy received a helping hand for their prosperity and survival from the Christian missionaries and private endeavours. The alteration of the profession made the Anglo-Indians to travel in the suburbs of Assam and Darjeeling.

Sir Henry Gidney, the leader of the Anglo-Indian Community through his chairmanship of the All India Anglo-Indian Association pursued a new line in that

he fought for Anglo-Indians on the grounds that they were natives of India and therefore their rights were fundamental. The Government of India Act following upon the Montague Chelmsford Reforms became operative in 1921, and in that Act the community gained some recognition and protection as an Indian minority group. After the Irwin Pact, the next important date was 1935, when in the new Government of India Act the community were safeguarded and the description 'Anglo-Indian' was legally defined. Sir Henry Gidney's contest for the privileges of the Anglo-Indian community was to have far-reaching results in 1947 when India gained her Independence (Minto 1974: 129)

Anglo-Indians in Darjeeling

The District of Darjeeling comprises the four Subdivisions - Sadar, Kurseong, Kalimpong, and Siliguri. The first three are in the mountainous regions, whereas the last one Siliguri, meaning the stony plain, is in the deadly Terai region of Bengal. It lies between 26"-53' and 27"-13' north latitude and between 87"-59' and 80"-53' East longitudes. Its area is 1,164 square miles, of which an area of 445 square miles is under reserved forest. It may be of interest here to note that the province of Bengal, of which Darjeeling is one of the districts, covers 82,277 square miles (Bhanja 1993).

The history of the Anglo-Indian community in Darjeeling begins with the coming of the Europeans as settlers and tea planters. The history of tea in Darjeeling, however, began in 1841 when seeds and plants of tea were for the first time imported into the district from China. This industry in Darjeeling owes its inception to Dr. Campbell, the first Superintendent of the district. Union of these Europeans with the local women and tea garden women labourers gave birth to the first peer group of Anglo-Indians formally called Eurasians. This new-born community was disliked by the native people and the European tea planters. The newly evolved mixed racial community of European fathers and Indian mothers had to face social problems such as identity crisis and had gone through economic sufferings too. In the approaching years, the community's search for a suitable dwelling place began and found Darjeeling as such. Despite all the suffering soon the Darjeeling hill became the home for the Anglo-Indians. The connection between the Darjeeling hills and the Anglo-Indian community built up with tea plantation, education, and migration (Mondal 2019).

The scenario soon changed with the changing policies of the Colonial government in the Education sector. Darjeeling hills witnessed the construction of educational institutes and orphanages for the European and Anglo-Indian children which helped the community to enrich themselves to fight for their rights, popularise their voice, recognize themselves as Indians and prepared to migrate in other British colonies for obtaining professions.

Anglo-Indians and Educational Institutions

The Charter Act of 1813 had given the freedom to Christian Missionary societies to penetrate in India mainly from the United Kingdom. But the Charter Act of 1833 allowed missionaries from other parts of Europe and America as well. Lord Lytton, the viceroy, was the first to realize that it was negligent to allow wandering children on the street and there was an urgent need to make adequate arrangements for the developed future of these children. In 1833 the Bengal Code for European Schools was compiled which would be applicable to major provinces of British India, namely Bengal, United Provinces, Punjab, and Central Provinces. This was perhaps the first organized effort on the part of the British to look into the education of Europeans and that of the mixed-blood community in India. This effort was followed by grants to the schools as well as provision for technical and industrial training to these children to earn a livelihood in the future.

European schools in India, although included in the general system of public instruction, form a class by themselves. They owe their origin partly to the need of the European and Anglo-Indian community domiciled in India for schools in which the teaching is conducted throughout in English, partly to the desire of the community to maintain a distinctively European character in the instruction and training given to their children. These schools, though controlled by provincial governments, have many common ties. They are governed by a single all-India code of regulations whereas the provincial governments were given liberty to modify this code to suit local circumstances and have in fact introduced a number of local modifications, but in their essential features European schools are not subject to the provincial variations which affect Indian schools. Most of them prepared their pupils for a single series of public examinations to compete with the Cambridge Locals as many of them were from the hill schools in particular. These schools and the institutions had to draw their pupils from different parts of India sometimes remotest (Richley 1923: 191).

The hill tracts of Darjeeling forming a part of the British dominion acknowledged some German missionaries in 1835. It was these missionaries who had brought light of Christianity and western education in these hills. Rev. William Start was the first person to arrive here followed by a group of German missions. Sir Joseph Hooker wrote in his *Himalayan Journals* in 1854 mentioned that "children's faces afford as good an index as any to the healthfulness of a climate, and in no part of the world is there a more active, rosy, and bright young community than at Darjeeling" (Hooker 1891). Darjeeling had a most agreeable climate, particularly suited to Europeans, and climate for growing children were referred to, and it was only a natural sequence that this desirable hill-station should contain some very fine educational institutions, specially equipped for the instruction of - the sons and daughters of Europeans and Anglo-Indians. The bracing mountain air which brings the glow of health to the cheeks, and the rapid means of travel that place the station within easy distance of Calcutta, are advantages that are appreciated by parents in the plains, and cannot be overrated' (Newman Guide 1900). With the exception of the German Moravian missionaries all the other missions were interested in the education of the Domiciled European children and Anglo-Indians rather than educating the native children (Avery 1878).

European schools can mainly be categorized into three sections. The most attractive ones were the hill schools situated at centres of hill stations such as Simla, Murree, Mussoorie, Darjeeling and in the Nilgiris. Secondly, the schools in the plains mainly concentrated in or nearby commercial or administrative centres and third was the European schools of plains in railway junctions where a small population of European concentration was seen. Every European parent in the interests of his children's health, and education sends them to a temperate climate if he can afford to do so. In that case they preferred the hill schools. Most of the hill schools on those days had boarding accommodations. On the other hand the more well-to-do European officials would send their children to England for education (Richley 1923: 194). The reason for which these hill stations became the place of fascination for the Europeans was because of the remoteness. These enclaves preserved a seamless stability between the public and the private compasses where a sense of community was continued. Many more other causes were outnumbered by women and children in hilly terrains in contrast with the demographic pattern of the European population in the plains.

The Christian missionaries seemed to be concerned in the edification of the domiciled European and Anglo-Indian children rather than the native children of

the hill region of Darjeeling. As the natives of the hill tract of Darjeeling were not geared up to receive the formal education in the European line. Since the climate of the Darjeeling hills was so admirable for the domiciled European and Anglo-Indian children the missionaries desired that this hill station should encompass a very adequate and well-equipped educational institute for these children. The aim of these educational institutions was to provide the domiciled European and Anglo-Indian children the type of tutelage and education to which the paternities were familiar. These were the children of the government servants who could not meet the expense of sending their children to their native land. These institutes were mainly designed and retained by the missionaries for those offspring alone.

In this regard, the place of esteem was easily secured by the Loreto Convent in 1846. The convent founded was mainly for girls and was accomplished by the Loreto Nuns of Rathfarnham, Dublin by one of the Irish ladies who laboured in the spread of education in this hill tract, Mother M. Teresa Mons. It is a milestone in the education of Anglo-Indians in the Darjeeling district. Loreto Convent was the first institute that paved the way for the Education of Domiciled Europeans and Anglo-Indians on the breezy hills of Darjeeling hills. (Dozey, 1922: 108) The convent was funded by William Moran and T. R. Lounghnan ICS and the district judge of Darjeeling. The idea of starting a school in the hills of Darjeeling for girls first occurred to Archibishop Carew which was brought in his notice by R.Loughnan, a retired senior civil servant of Patna (Chakrabarty 1988). The first Catholic mission institute began its journey with just five pupils (Dozey, 1922: 108). The opening of Loreto Convent in Darjeeling coincided with the missionary efforts of the Roman Catholic Church. These efforts were closely connected with the establishment of schools for the Europeans and Anglo-Indians (Dash 1947). The system of education in the Girl's school was the same as that of Calcutta Loreto House. Along with formal education, girls were trained in needlework too. The Loreto nuns also established a boy's school and an orphanage for the orphans from tea-gardens and soldier’s children in 1868. The Loreto orphanage had a short existence as the orphans were totally shifted to Calcutta (Colmile). Though work among the poor and indigenous population was not totally neglected the main work of the mission was directed to the educational needs of the European and Anglo-Indian children of the sophisticated earning group (Chakrabarty 1988). Although the Convent had to face a few difficulties, mainly from the Protestants, the convent took long strides ahead to weave a glorious future. The convent became one of the most outstanding schools in the hills of Bengal and increased its popularity

(Chakrabarty 1988). The students from the European and Anglo-Indian community of Loreto Convent were successful in the middle scholarship and primary scholarship examinations. After two years in 1848, another school was established in the hills of Darjeeling district was the St. Gregory's Institute by the Italian Capuchins in 1848. The school was built for the domiciled European and Anglo-Indian boys by the Catholic mission. The school was named St. Gregory's Seminary but it was unfortunately closed in 1850. In this regard, the Herald of Calcutta announced in 1850 that the classes were suspended due to unintended situations (Dewan 1991 :90).

Another remarkable institution of such esteem was St. Paul's School. It is one of the oldest schools of its type in India and the second oldest in Bengal (Birney Notes). The school was established in 1846 with the initiative of a prominent Anglo-Indian leader, John William Ricketts to meet the needs of the Anglo-Indian population in Calcutta. (Vol. XIV-307) Mr. Ricketts was the first honorary secretary, founder of the school. Later Dr. George Smith became the principal of the school, he was well known for his works. He was the editor of *Friend of India* and biographer of Cary, Henry Martyn, Duff (Vol. XIV-307). In 1863, the school was in hitches and Bishop Cotton raised funds by private entrepreneur and government donations and decided to move the school to Darjeeling. St. Paul's was also intended for the pupils of the well to do class and followed the same course as prescribed by the Cambridge University Local Examination Syndicate along with religious teaching upon the philosophies of the Church of England. Though the company paid great attention to the education of the growing British population, nothing was for this mixed community at the beginning. With regard to education for European children, the first notable movement began as early as 1863 when the institution known as St. Paul's School was opened in Darjeeling. The school was hung around by the children of government employees such as the officers, clerks, tea-planters and railway health workers. The school was established mainly to educate the sons of the Domiciled Europeans and Anglo-Indians on the line of a public school system at a reasonable charge, as it was in the United Kingdom. Although initially it had not served any purpose for the native children, later it took step forward to build institutes for the Lepcha and Bhutia children in the missionary line (Dewan 1991: 93).

The hills of Kurseong of Darjeeling district witnessed another educational institution established for the Domiciled Europeans and Anglo-Indians in 1879 was the Victoria Boys. The Boys' School, which is located at an altitude of above 6,000

feet from sea-level on an estate covering an area of 100 acres of land, established in 1879. Several constructions were made to the main building to cope with the ever increasing demands for admission until the current year when the number of students on its rolls stands at 190. The course of studies of the school at the beginning was worked upon the Junior Cambridge curriculum and was raised to the Senior Cambridge. Students after passing the Junior Cambridge Certificate Examination were put in a further two years for the Technical branches which include Mechanical, Electrical and Mining Courses. The school was established to serve the children of railway employees and government servants of all ranks. The fees structure of the students varied as the records say the children of non-officials had to pay a higher amount of fees. Initially as a co-educational school it started the journey, which ended in the year 1887, became a boys school and a separate school for girls was erected.

The Dow Hill Girls School started its functioning as a Middle English School in 1898. According to (Dozey 1922: 191) the domiciled community should be indebted to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir Ashley Eden. Both the institutes Victoria Boys' and Dow Hill Girls' were maintained by the Government for the education of the children of persons of European descent who are employed in any branch of its service. It was the Government school then from inception originally intended to teach only the children of government servants of the Anglo-Indian and European communities. Mrs. E. Peglar was appointed as the first headmistress. The school had 80 resident students on its rolls at the opening to which instructions are imparted up to the Eighth Standard. Staff of five junior mistresses and a matron were appointed. Pupils are also prepared for the Junior School Certificate Examination of the University of Cambridge (Dewan 1991: 134). It contributed a huge proportion for the education of the Anglo-Indians and Domiciled Europeans.

The Diocesan Girls' School was established in 1875 under Miss Cordue's excellent management (Avery 1878: 121). Miss Roby's School after the slip-disaster was taken over by the Clewer Sisters and started in 1904 under the above designation in the spacious building situated just beyond the Old Cemetery on the Lebong (Cart) Road. The institution during those days was under the supervision of the Sisters of the Community of St. John Baptist, Clewer, England, who were assisted by a competent staff of unprofessional teachers. Later in 1929 it was known as St. Michael's School where the girls were taught by the Sisters of the Order of St. John Baptist. It was passed over to Sisters in 1895, after it had been founded in 1886 by Bishop Milman of Calcutta as the Darjeeling Girls' School. In 1895 it was made a

Diocesan school with the Metropolitan as President. In 1899 a disastrous cyclone destroyed the site and all the constructions (Dash 1947). In 1900 the school was retained in two hills namely Rivers Hill and Richmond Hill.

With the growing demography in Darjeeling many of the hill schools were very crowded and some of them had long waiting lists. The schools had done their best to expand to meet the demand of the European and Anglo-Indian population. The years 1917-1922 the Dow Hill and Victoria schools at Kurseong have embraced wide-ranging building modifications which included a new dormitory building. It is estimated to cost over five lakhs where Sir Percy Newson made a generous contribution of two lakhs (Richley 1923).

On the line next was St. Joseph, North Point Darjeeling established in 1888. The St. Joseph's College was a large Jesuit institution where it carried with the teaching staff of which were composed mainly of members of the Jesuit order who were unsalaried. Although an aided school it received government help from its inception. The institution was opened under the direction of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. It was a Roman Catholic institute located nearly two kilometres from Darjeeling town. The boys went through a regular course of studies for the junior and Senior C.L. (Cambridge local) Examinations. The college was fully recognized as a higher secondary school by the Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate, and special classes equipped young students for entrance examinations keen on the different Government services. They were made ready for placements in accounts department, police service, hospitality etc. Although a Jesuit institution, pupils of other denominations were also admitted. The usual settings were being perceived with regard to their religious instruction (Newman's 1900: 51). At the commencing days there were only 35 boys registered but the number increased gradually and record shows in the year 1895 the number rose to over 200. The Annual Report of the Administration of Bengal Presidency during the year 1881-82, mentions that St. Joseph's Seminary was apparently a high school. Father Henry Depelchin was placed in charge of the small school of St. Joseph's. However, from small beginnings it had attained a place among schools of the first rank having 200 pupils as average strength for numerous years after 1895. Its ordinary curriculum worked up that of a secondary school, but it also had special branches which prepared youths for the different services. The school was separated into four departments: the Primary, Middle, Higher and Special Departments (O'Malley 1907).

On this line other institutes that were built by the missionaries and public segments were St Helen's Convent, Kurseong. The convent for European and Anglo-Indian children was founded in 1890. It was funded by the Roman Catholic Daughters of the Cross of Leige. The convent started its journey in a small leased cottage in 1890 with 36 pupils. After a year in 1891 the institute was shifted to larger premises. But in the earthquake of 1897 it was again shifted out in 1900 to a newly constructed building as the older one was damaged badly. Another school of such importance was the Mount Hermon School. It was established in 1895 by the missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America. The school was built for European offspring to provide Christian education. The main school building was popularly known as Queen's Hill which was regarded as one of the first educational edifices in India with hostel accommodation. It was a co-educational institute. The St. Mary's Training College, Kurseong built in 1889 by the Belgian Jesuit Fathers of the R.C. Mission of Bengal. The staff of the college and most of the inmates were of Belgian origin. Shortly after the establishment of this college was completed for the education of children of the Christian servants attached to it the institute also worked for Indian offspring. The educational provision made here for children followed the opening of St. Alphonsus' School, which later developed in the upper primary standards by the gross revenue of the nineteenth century (Dozey, 1922). The St. Mary's College missionary efforts gradually started an orphanage and a dispensary in the neighbourhood next to the college. Mount Hermon was one magnificent establishment in the hills of Darjeeling for the European and Anglo-Indian communities built in 1895 (Chakrabarty 1988).

The most important institution for the European and the Anglo-Indian children was the St. Andrew's Colonial Homes also known as Graham's Home. It is an institution for the education and training of needy European and Anglo-Indian children. It was inaugurated in 1900 when the Government granted an estate of 100 acres of land on a peppercorn rent. This organisation covers within its range training in industrial lines comprising carpet-weaving, lacemaking, embroidery, tailoring, and carpentry. Not acknowledged by the educated Indians and not accepted socially by the Europeans, the Anglo-Indians in Graham's home grew up with a mixture of inferiority and superiority complexes. Many of the planters wished to educate their children, but if they sent them to a fee-paying school of good calibre, indiscretion would have to be admitted, and as a result, the child would have a miserable time. Consequently with no hope of a decent education the children ran wild on the estate

(Minto 1974: 54-55). Graham's Home became a new home for the Anglo-Indians of Bengal as well as India.

Darjeeling hill station had enormous importance for the Colonial government. The colonizers made it conceivable to take away the younger peers from the vulnerabilities that lay lurking in the plains without eradicating them from India altogether. The children of poor whites and other British officials' children were introduced in the hill schools with the social and cultural values that set them apart from Indians. These institutes permitted the British to visualise the prospect of their everlasting domicile in the Sub-continent without fear that physical and moral collapse would inevitably ensue. Simply the hill schools held the potential of the societal and ideological reproduction of Britain's imperial representatives. All these schools or institutes were established for European and Anglo-Indian children. They are the landmarks for Anglo-Indian education in Bengal. The main object of these schools was to offer the Anglo-Indian children a comprehensive and substantial education in the remarkably adequate climate of Darjeeling and inspire in them useful Christian knowledge at a modest fee. The institutions very minutely worked for the welfare and education of the Evangelical families of the Anglo-Indian Community. Anglo-Indian students from different parts of the country and abroad e.g. Burma came to these institutes on the hill.

Conclusion

The establishment of the educational institutions had a great impact on the education of the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled Europeans children. These children were brought up in the European line of education and culture and religious belief to cope up with the aim to secure jobs in the colonies. Through the efficient initiative of the institutes the offspring of mixed parentage were gathered to be skilled industrially and morally, with a view to prepare them for entering effectively upon the struggle of existence in the British colonies like Canada, Australia, South Africa, or elsewhere. They were mentally and educationally unsuited for life in the new India. Their Western biased education had made them aliens in the country of their birth. They knew little or nothing of the culture and history of India. Their knowledge of the language was usually a bazaar Hindi which sufficed only for giving orders to servants. The Western education given in Anglo-Indian schools prior to Independence increased the difficulties of the community immeasurably. These Anglo-Indians were away from their mothers which was often the wish of the father. This state of affairs was accepted because the mothers were 'natives'.

Although the institutions were erected for those children gradually these institutions integrated native children of the hill regions. The native children were also given western education and Indian languages became an important and compulsory part of the curriculum, the erection of these institutes had a social significance. It saw an influx of native children from the state of Bhutan, suburbs of Terai and Assam Dooars. The hill society inherited a few western cultures in their food habits and costumes as well as cultures.

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Situating Crime and Administration of Law and Order in Colonial Bengal: A Study of Jalpaiguri (1869-1947)

Tushar Kanti Barman

[Editorial Note: The present paper focuses on the role of police and judiciary in Colonial Bengal especially in Jalpaiguri, administration of law and order and the nature of crime and criminal in the said period.]

Abstract**:** *Crime and violence manifests in many ways and various factors have been responsible for crime and violence. Jalpaiguri has been a late history to the development of administrative changes and in the formative years of colonial administration, the district had witnessed widespread crime and criminal activities in miscellaneous forms; such as dacoity, murder, theft, burglary, and affray, riots etc. To prevent such types of crime the administrators as well the society have followed different techniques. Henceforth, police and judicial administration had played a crucial role for maintaining law and order. The present paper aims to study the nature of crime, criminals and the system of law and order in colonial Jalpaiguri.*

Keywords**:** *Theft, Dacoity, Murder, Violence, Law and Order.*

Introduction

Crime as an integral part of a society has existed since the antiquity of civilization and the concept of crime came out in practical ways since the formation of the state. It is a primitive practice that has always been treated as a part and parcel of the socio-cultural milieu. Usually the word 'crime' is applied to those acts that go against social order and are worthy of serious condemnation. Officially the term 'crime' is used as an umbrella term to describe wide range human actions, irrespective of individual or a group who actually affected or had the potency of disrupting the normal functioning of law and order. The pre-colonial definition of crime and criminality remained in an elaborate form in various texts and scriptures. But it is difficult to understand what the historical definition of crime in colonial India was, as the rulers who codified the criminality of Indians to all kinds of prejudices' against the people whom they ruled. There was hardly any scope to put up the Indian insights in the colonial jurisprudence about crime and criminality; because the colonial ruler set up their perception of crime according to the potentialities of threat and the colonial perceived notion of order. Henceforth, the legal inspection of crime and criminality in colonial India was effectively a colonial construction.

Crime germinated in manifolds and different types of crime have different implications to the administrators as well as to the society. The colonial state's response towards each crime was conspicuously different. Crimes that occurred in the colonial period were divided into ordinary and extraordinary categories. The 'ordinary' crime was where the objective is livelihood, and the targets of attack indiscriminate. Generally, the nature and incidence of 'ordinary' crimes are viewed as bearing a direct correlation with the subculture of poverty and integrated issues. It has been found that poverty born crimes were quite widespread in the colonial period (Sandria 1991: 227-61). The other category of crime has been described by E. P. Thompson as 'social crimes' (O'Brien 1978: 511). Social crimes occur within a framework of a shared 'moral economy', and the 'criminals' engaged in them often enjoy wide social support in the local society. Even as the state insists in branding them as criminals, the ordinary people see them as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters of justice, perhaps, even leaders of liberations, and in many cases, as to be admired, helped and supported'. It is for that reason E. J. Hobsbawm calls them 'primitive rebels' or social bandits'" (Hobsbawm 1959: 13-29). Such collective, bold and violent crimes had an insurrectionary potential and they appeared to be the greatest challenge to the authorities.

A micro study of the history of Bengal on this matter is somewhat a neglected field of research. A few research works have been undertaken to focus on the history of crime, criminology, police and judicial administration and in the course of historical investigation researchers have tried to focus on various aspects of crime, criminology, and control in colonial Bengal and moreover in India. Anand A Yang, in all probability, is the earliest scholar to write about crime and control in early colonial India (Yang: 1979) Yang has also edited a very important collection of essays, "Crime and Criminality in British India" (Yang: 1985) on the social history of law, order and crime. On the contrary, Basudeb Chattopadhay was one of the earliest scholars to write an article in 1981 on crime and control in early colonial Bengal (Chattopadhaya: 1881). His other major work has brought to light the nature of colonial control and colonial perception of law and order in Bengal. Ranjan Chakrabarty (Chakrabarty: 1885) in his article entitled "Social origins of Dacoity in Bengal: A Preliminary Probe" focused on the several possibilities of the existence of noble robbers in the nineteenth century Bengal rural society. Arun Mukherjee (Mukherjee: 1995) highlights various crime and public order and disorder by using the statistical method, the extent of criminal occurrence in Bengal. Ranjan Chakrabarty (Chakrabarti: 2009) thematically focuses on the

encounter of local restlessness, crime and violence on the one hand and the colonial states attempt to control these, on the other. But the researchers mostly confined their study within the southern districts and the lower province of Bengal in general and they overlooked the research in certain regions and localities particularly in present North Bengal. Local level especially district level crime study is still out to discover; it is, therefore, not important but essential to explore the social history of crime and criminality of rural Bengal from micro level perspective. Consequently, a study of crime in a northern Bengal district like Jalpaiguri can be a study under British rule and how the colonial masters treated crime and criminals in this region. Moreover, Britain started since the nineteenth century considering the criminals as a separate "species" and as "others" in Britain and in the same way they started to treat the Indian criminals. In India they adopted a scientific approach and a method of scientific classification of criminal behavior was assumed and the conclusion was reached that the Indian society was full of "hereditary" and "habitual" criminals (Arnold 1986: 124). Therefore, this article attempts to trace the evidence of both forms of crimes i.e. ordinary and extraordinary in the colonial period with a view to deepen our understanding about the nature of British identification of crimes and criminals and the method of control.

Formation of the Jalpaiguri district

The district of Jalpaiguri as an administrative unit came into being on 1st January, 1869 by the merger of the *Titulia* Sub-Division of Rangpur District with the *Dooars* region which was annexed by the British in 1864 from Bhutan (Bari 1970: 39). Jalpaiguri was a part of Rangpur (now in Bangladesh) since the East India Company was granted the Diwani of Bengal. This area was administered from 1765 to 1868 as part of Rangpur district (Hooker 1885: 10). The district comprises two well-defined tracts, the portion which was separated from Rangpur was known as the regulation or permanently settled tracts as it was administered under the ordinary laws and regulations which was enforced in Bengal. It lies for the most part on the west of the *River Tista*, though it included Patgram on the east to the river. Similarly, the two Chaklas of Boda and Patgram belong to the Cooch Behar Raj; but the Baikuthapur Estate between them nearly covers the whole of the permanently settled portion of the districts (Roy 2002: 185). The other tract known as the western *Dooars* is bounded on the West by the *Tista*, on the East by the *Sankosh*, on the North by Kalimpong and Bhutan and on the South by the Cooch Behar and Baikunthapur. The tract extends further east, covering the northern strips of Goalpara and Kamrup and a northwestern slice of Darrang district of Assam,

known as "Eastern *Dooars' '* (Barman and Barman 2015: 80). The Western and Eastern *Dooars* are jointly known as 'Bhutan *Dooars'*.

Although it was a newly formed district, it was considered by the British Government as a suitable strategic point from where they could keep their sharp eyes on the affairs and activities of Bhutan and the North-Eastern part of India. Hereafter, the district was made the sub-divisional headquarter of Rajshahi Division immediately after the formation of the district (Grunning 1911: 145). The promulgation of a new setup of law and order in the district was created to control the criminal activities. As Michel Foucault states, law is an element of power and in a modern society law combines with power in various locations in ways that expands patterns of social control, knowledge and documentation of individuals for institutionally useful ends. The British after consolidating the northern part of Bengal wanted to have an effective control system by establishing legal order and expanding the system of control through surveillance and inserting the fear of being seen to be doing something wrong. Having borders with other states and countries in the district, the national and international crime had been occurring vehemently and the nature of crime varied from time to time and from place to place. The article hereafter endeavors to focus on the various forms of crime and control of this particular district.

Crime and Criminals

During the colonial era Bengal was marked by the increased numbers of crime in general and dacoity in particular. Dacoity was looked upon by the Raj as essentially a problem of law and order. The contemporary British writers took serious interest in the crime of dacoity and frequently discussed the problems in detail. It is a kind of violence which is so bold, noisy, slashing and destructive of life and property and runs directly counter to the openly expressed 'Whig ideology of law' that was supposed to reconcile freedom with order and ensure the security of life and private property. The official and non-official data and contemporary literature suggest that like other parts of Bengal, the district of Jalpaiguri was also not free from violent and non-violent crimes. It has been found that Jalpaiguri in the period under survey were, more or less, infested by violent dacoits and gang robbery. J. F. Grunning has pointed out that, "the criminal work of the district is not heavy… but it comprises looting of wealth, murdering and dacoities"(Grunning 1911: 125). The same opinion is being recorded by Charu Chandra Sanyal that, apart from dacoity-

burglary and theft the other forms of crime are not often reported at least till 1910 (Sanyal 1970: 90).

However, in Jalpaiguri dacoity was quite common which was committed by gangs who carried their activities mostly through the river way border and abjuring forest area. They operated in large boats and country vessels named as *bajras.* The name of these *bajras* became legendary among the local people with the owner and leader of the gang. The border areas had become the dens of dacoits who would commit crimes in Jalpaiguri as well as in Cooch Behar and Rangpur district. The local inhabitants were left at the mercy of the dacoits. The most dangerous gang used to work in Nepal and was interlinked with Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts; its leader Balbant Manger, was a Nepalese subject, who had received long sentences for dacoity with murder in his own country, but had contrived to escape. These gangs usually deal with the smuggling business of precious commodities in the India-Nepal and India-Bhutan adjacent areas. From the contemporary sources we got some name like; Balbant Manger, Jaman Singh Mangar, Urgan Ghurti et el. were the popular *dacoites* in this geographical area. *Dacoities* and burglaries were traced to a gang composed by the Muslim communities as well. Generally, *Nepalis, Bhutias, Meches, Garos* were involved in criminal activities from the very beginning of the colonial rule (Grunning 1911:132). It might be that these ethnic races could not regulate themselves in the new economic changes during the colonial period and the changing social structure with the flow of people from other parts of Bengal into the district posed a threat to their existence. They neither could adopt the colonial economic opportunities nor could remain in their indigenous lifestyle under the colonial state legal rules. Therefore, dacoity and other forms of crime came as an alternative to their existence.

The British Administrators had their opinion that the dacoity was hereditary with the Indians which their ancestors had followed from time immemorial. Warren Hastings, W. W. Hunter, James Hutton the official historian of British tried to conceptualize the existence of numerous and prosperous clans who practiced robbery as a hereditary calling (Hunter 1868: 72; Hutton 1857: 101). The British thoughts and conviction took a complete shape during the course of the nineteenth century by culminating the Criminal Tribes Act. It does appear from a critical reading of contemporary sources that, in the shaping of the perception of identified 'crime and criminal' with the lower orders; the ideological, symbolic and institutional resources in the hands of the state and the dominant groups played a crucial role. In fact, this was one of the important strategies through which they

marginalized the substandard social groups from social and political domains. However, according to the official data there was a steady movement of a large number of men belonging to the castes and tribes classified as 'Criminals' or quasi-criminal communities, from northern India to Bengal in the nineteenth century. F. C. Daly, the Superintendent of Police in his manual of crimes pointed out about some indigenous and exogenous criminal groups; among them Sunders and Karwal Nuts were prevalent in Jalpaiguri who were involved in river dacoity, burglary and theft (Daly 1916: 79-82). The following tables (Table-I & II) can give us a picture of the involvement of the so-called hereditary crime and criminals in North Bengal:

Table-I

Important Indigenous criminal groups operating in North Bengal: 1861-1915

Name (Caste/Sub-caste)	Typical Crime	Area of Operation
Choto Bhagiya Muchi	Dacoity, burglary and cattle poisoning	Jasore, Nadia, Murshidabad, Pabna, Rajshahi, Khulna, 24-Paraganas, Burdwan & Hoogly.
Sandar	River dacoity	Dacca, Bakarganj, Faridpur, Dinajpur, Malda, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Bogra, Jalpaiguri, Pabna, Chittagang, Tippera, Cooch Behar and some Assam districts.

Sources: Daly 1916: 17-27.

Table-II

Important exogenous criminal groups operating in North Bengal: 1861-1915

Name (Caste/Sub-caste)	Typical Crime	Area of Operation	Place of origin
Baid Musalman	Swinding	24-Parganas, Pabna, Bogra, Bankura, Murshidabad, Nadia(besides other parts of India)	Rajputana
Bhur	Burglary, theft	24-Parganas, Calcutta, Howrah, Hooghly, Mdnapur, Dacca, Burdwan, Dinajpur,	Uttar Pradesh

		Malda, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Nadia, Mymensingh.	
Palwar Dusadh	Burglary	Malda, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Murshidabad and the coal-mining areas of Burdwan district; Cooch Behar and Assam (partly)	Uttar Pradesh (Ballia district)
Karwal Nut	Burglary, theft	Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Pabna, Mymensingh, Nadia, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Bogra, Darjeeling, Murshidabad, Midnapur, Bankura.	Nomadic (U.P./Bihar)
Chain Mallahs	River Crime	River routes along the Ganga, Bhagirathi and Brahmaputra rivers & their tributaries: Rangpur (Jatrapur, Phulchari), Faridpur (Goalundo, Pangsa), Mymensingh (Bairab Bazar, Narainganj), Pabna (Serjaganj, Saraghat), Nadia (Khoksha, Kushtia, Poradah, Mirpur & Damukdia), Murshidabad (Azimaganj), Chittagong, Sunderbans and Goalparadistrict of Assam.	Uttar Pradesh & Bihar

Pasi	Dacoity, robarry	Jassore, Faridpur, Rangpur, Nadia, Midnapur, Bankura, Dacca, Mymensingh, Calcutta and its neighbouring districts.	Uttar Pradesh & Bihar
Chain Mallah	Pocket picking, snatching	Rajshahi, Pabna, Bogra, Rangpur, Dacca	Uttar Pradesh

Sources: Daly, 1916: 37-78.

The above tables reveal that *dacoities*, burglaries and thefts were committed by Choto Bhagiya Muchi from the local origin and Bhur, Palwar Dusadh, Pasi, Chain Mallah from the exogenous, while river crimes were the domain of Sandars and Mallahs. It is worthwhile to mention that although the said caste or religious groups were very much involved in various crimes, there is no such consensus that the heinous crime has not been committed by the so-called "*bhadralok*" community. We have couple of references and incidence that the '*bhadralok*' community also been involved with such criminal activities in order to their need, even there have been a European dacoit gang led by a European called Johnny Dick in Nadia district of Bengal (Suppression of Dacoity Report 1857-58: 23).

Nevertheless, a number of dacoity and other forms of crime were committed in the northern frontier. W. W. Hunter has shown a statics from a police superintendent reports that in the early days of colonial rule during the year 1872, the total number of cognizable and non-cognizable cases investigated in Jalpaiguri district was 919, in which exactly the same number of 919 persons were tried; of whom 484 or 52.66 per cent were convicted or one person convicted of an offence of some kind or another to every 865 of the population (Hunter 1876: 312). Out of these crime statistics in the year of 1872, 6 cases of gang dacoity, 5 cases for other robberies were being reported. The following table (Table-III) has also given us an idea of the number of persons who have been arrested by the police after committing dacoity and robbery.

Table-III

Number of Convicted persons for Dacoities and Robbery noticed in Jalpaiguri during 1893-1902

OFFENCES	PERSONS CONVICTED OR BOUND OVER IN									
	1893	1894	1985	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902
Dacoity…	01	01	12	-	06	06	-	-	06	-
Robbery...	01	-	-	-	4	4	-	2	-	1

Sources: Jalpaiguri District Gazetteer Statistics, 1901-02 1905: 10.

According to British Officials, more than 130 cases were registered related to various types of crime and violence in Jalpaiguri *Sadar Kotwali* police station within the year of 1907-08 (Grunning 1911: 132). In 1908 large numbers of criminals were arrested who committed crimes in the entire districts of Jalpaiguri (Saha 2015: 18). Hereafter, Jalpaiguri witnessed thirty-three crimes, mostly *dacoities* and burglaries traced to a gang which consisted of *Meches* and *Garos* with one local *Mahamedan*; convictions were obtained in 20 cases and 12 members of the gang were afterwards prosecuted in a gang case under section 401 of the Indian Penal Code and were all convicted. Another gang of *Meches* committed a dacoity in the Tandu village; the offenders, one of whom had absconded and gone to Bhutan, were arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from five to eight years (Sengupta1981: 32). One more gang which caused considerable trouble was composed of *Bhutias* who committed a number of *dacoities* along the frontier. It was mentioned in the Report of 1919 that there had been regular pitched battles in that area between the police and a group of robbers (William 1985: 181). To prevent this, a chain of patrol posts had been established. The Darjeeling district police had to be especially alerted to prevent criminals escaping into Nepal as extradition from Nepal was difficult and rarely successful (Dash 1947: 136). The difficulty of suppressing these dacoits was always increased by the fact that they terrorized the villagers by cruelties so atrocious that few or none can be found to give evidence against them. The superintendent of Police of Jalpaiguri observes regarding the dacoities 'The criminals got the support of the local people when the police were taking action against them under section 110, Criminal Procedure Code, so much so that cases stated in connection with special report cases No's 36 and 41 of 1921(*dacoities* section 395, Indian Penal Code) had to be withdrawn as

the non-cooperators are reported to have advised the witness that if necessary the accused might be dealt with in the 'Arbitration Court'(Hyde 1922: 30).

But the official reports many times contradicted the existing fact that there were many bandit groups who were social in nature and helped the poor and needy. During the early part of the colonial regime the region resorted to a rebellion under the Sannyasis-Fakirs against British rule and looted the British *kuthis* and *bunglaws*. Lending hands to the villagers with money and goods were present among the bandit group of Bhabani Pathak, considered as the vanguard of the Sannyasi movement of Rangpur. E. G. Glazier's 'A Report on the District of Rangpur' (1876) also fortifies the piece of information that Devi Chaudhurani used to meander through the *Tista* basin of Rangpur district and almost the entire basin of Karala river in present Jalpaiguri district and rendered donations and distributions to the poor peasants inside the Baikunthapur forest. On her way to the *Karala* River, either to meet Bhavani Pathak or to make donations to the peasants, she first used to visit a temple to pray before the Goddess Kali (The Statesmen 2019: 5). The anti-British character of the group became a major theme of the novel of Bakim Chandra Chatterjee who has described the environment of forests of the region and the legendary character of Bhabani Pathak and Devi Choudhurani. Their characters are not just considered mythical for the local peasants and workers. Yet in the present days the local people of Shikarpur worship their idols as a savior along with the goddess Kali in a temple in the tea garden of Shikarpur near the village of Sannyasikata (The Telegraph 2018: 6). Therefore, it could be assumed that the complaint regarding the suppression of dacoity of police that the villagers were non-cooperative with the police administration can be judged in that way as well.

On the other hand, numerous cases of robberies on tea estates were reported from time to time. The earliest incident in the tea district was reported in 1906, this undersigned crime is usually related to "high prices of food grains and other necessities". This corroborates the general picture not just of Bengal but elsewhere in India as well (Arnold 1979: 111-45). Due to floods, the price of rice rose temporarily to three *seers* a rupee in some parts of the Jalpaiguri district, the *Santhal* Coolies, combined to loot the market and were suppressed with some difficulty" (Ghosh 2016: 51). In 1912 dacoity was being committed by the tea garden workers. On that occasion, the District Superintendent of Police announced a reward of Rs. 50 for the information leading to the arrest of four persons who had absconded after committing a dacoity near the Tasti tea in Falakata" (DPA Report 1912: 205). The

nature of these *dacoities* and the identity of the perpetrators become clear from another incident in 1920. The Superintendent of Police reported in 1920 to the Chairman of the *Dooars* Planters Association about a spread of *dacoities*, that:

…during the last three weeks there have been three cases of highway dacoity and robbery committed by some unknown persons on carts returning from or going to the hats within the tea garden areas. There is reason to suspect that these robberies are the work of the same gang and a vigorous combing out of all roads and *busties* within the limits of Madarihat, Falakata, Dhupguri and Nagrakata is necessary… I wish to remark in each case the complainants have said that their assailants appeared to be coolies of tea gardens (DPA Report 1921: 213).

During the First World War most of the incidents were, however, following inflation and instability. In 1917, several petty cases of '*hat*' looting were also reported by the Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division who requested the cooperation of the planters 'in suppressing this form of crime which at any time may blaze out and become serious' (Roy 2002: 96). In 1939 when the Chairman of the DPA expressed doubts over claims of the police that the most of the *dacoities* in the villages near the tea estates were done by the 'coolies of different gardens visiting local coolies', the Superintendent of Police swiftly furnished him with a list of twelve cases in the past two years from Maynaguri and Alipur in which it was established beyond reasonable doubt that the persons involved were tea garden worker (DPA Report 1939: 200-3). A more serious incident took place at Madarihat over an altercation between a Marwari shopkeeper and a santhal labourer, (or peasant) over two gunny bags and the latter was assaulted. The Santals collected and organized some men of their tribe and looted the Marwari shop. A case was filed against the *Santals* and accordingly a police officer arrested four *Santhals* who were identified as having participated in the looting of February 1922 (Sanyal 2007: 525). As early as 1941, there were incidents of paddy-looting from the houses of the *Jotdars* in Jalpaiguri, and the reasons given were "inability to get credit (most certainly consumption loans) and dissatisfaction over profiteering" (Fortnightly Report, 1941). In the incident at Kumargramduar police station during the Quit India Movement, it was thought that the scarcity of paddy was the chief cause of grievance among the people.

Murder and Violence

There were other forms of heinous crime as murder which was non-preventable. According to various crime and criminal reports, the general motives behind murders have been ascribed to "intrigues with women, domestic quarrels and land disputes"; within these general descriptions, obviously, were included murders for gain and revenge as well. There were quite a few cases of murder of women suspecting them to be witches in the district of Jalpaiguri but none of these happened in any of the districts of Bengal proper.[1] During the *Oraon* movement an official account gave a description of crime where, "a man named Charua Orao cut his wife's throat and then tried to cut his son. He told the police that the villagers had asked him to 'sing the name of the Germans' and had threatened that, if he did not, a devil named Logo would kill him. He and his wife resolved to kill themselves rather than be killed by a devil… he said that an unknown man was always telling him to recite something and that as he refused, every one abused him and his wife, so they resolved to commit suicide…"[2] There is a reference to the murder of a European Assistant Manager of a tea garden in Jalpaiguri (William 1932: 536). Conversely, there was a consensus among the officials that the recurrence of crimes of violence despite various administrative measures was believed by the Government to be largely due to the defective land tenure system. This prompted the government to order a detailed survey and settlement operations for the districts. Disputes about land with their inevitable accompaniment of forgery, perjury and the fabrication of false evidence are common as is the case elsewhere and the cultivator shows the usual tendency to try and drag what are really civil disputes into the criminal courts (Strong 1912: 115).

Dampier, the Superintendent of Police, Lower Provinces, admitted in 1842 that the "agricultural classes" in Bengal were often tempted to take the path of crime in times of economic distress (Police Report of 1841. 1842: 119). Prior to the introduction of forest conservancy in Bengal in August 1864, a group of forest dwellers of the districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Rangpur controlled vast reserves of timber and other forest resources and supported an

[1] Such cases have been reported from the tribal-majority districts of Bihar, viz. *Santhal* Parganas, Hazaribagh, Singhbhum and Palamau in the respective Bengal Provincial Annual Administrative Reports, 1904: 24; 1905: 24; 1906: 22; 1908: 21-22; 1909: 20.

[2] The description of his particular incidence has been found in 'Oraon Unrest in Bengal Bihar and Orissa, Judgment of the Special Tribunal appointed under the Defense of India Act in the Oraon Case' NAI Home Political: A. Nos. 280-81 of June 1916: 5.

enormous range of livelihoods. Communities of artisans lived in the forest; many pastoralists grazed their cattle, sheep and goats there. The forest also provides raw materials, particularly wood, for peasants and artisans who lived outside their boundaries. In the years of dearth and crisis the forest could cushion scarcity problems and offered subsistence to people (Gadgil and Guha 1993: 259-95). But when the colonial state set about extending the rule of law into the forest, it criminalized many forms of behavior pertaining to the hunting and wounding of animals and fishing and the displaced groups then took to dacoity. The official papers relating to the suppression of dacoity in north Bengal as well as Bengal through ample light on *Shikari* dacoits. Similarly, the main group of offences was that of hunting, wounding or stealing animals, and poaching or fishing. In this manner created a whole new legal category of forest crimes. There was an opposition to the new rules; illegal grazing and setting fire to the forest became endemic. In 1882 in the Jalpaiguri Division only, several cases of illegal grazing were also reported (Roy 2002: 87). Referring to the rise in the incidents of forest fire in 1921-22, which was a 'particularly bad year of protection in the 'Buxa Division' the District Forest Officer reported:

It was in the Haldibari range that the number and extent of fires showed the greatest increase 9,738 acres being burnt in 23 fires. In none of these cases was the offender detected, but it is certain that most of the fires were malicious and were started to facilitate hunting and grazing and that the local people were encouraged to fire the forest by rumors spread by political agitators that the reserves were to be thrown open for hunting and grazing (Forest Administration Report 1921-22: 6).

The forest officers reported that 'organized poaching by large parties of tea garden coolies' had increased 'tremendously'. In 1932, it was reported that a guard was murdered by unknown persons and no definite evidence could be secured against anyone (Forest Administration Report 1932-33: 33). Similar incidents occurred in February 1936, where some *Santhal* workers at Nagrakata shot and killed two forest guards of the Upper Tondu forest with poisoned arrows when the latter tried to stop them from poaching. Quite a large number of workers seemed to have been involved, as the government report mentioned that a majority of the accused were charged with poaching while eight persons were charged with rioting and murder (Fortnightly Report 1936: 32). In another incident a month later which occurred further east, on the border between the reserve forest and the Rajabhatkhawa Tea Estate, three forest guards on challenging a group of *Santhals* carrying the body of a *Sambhar* deer were shot upon by arrows. When the forest guards fired in self-

defense and killed a member of the gang, the *Santhal* chased them shouting '*Goli Mara! Mara! Maro Salo Ko, Faros Ko Admi! Choro Tir*! (Free Translation: they shot at us, killed them, the men of the forest department, and shot your arrows (DPA Report 1936: 27-8). Additional inquiries by the forest department revealed that incidents of this type were quite regular in the *Dooars*. The Deputy Conservator of Forests reported:

'I am informed that coolies of all neighboring tea estates gather together on set occasions, mostly on Saturday and Sundays, split up into gangs of anything from 9 to 10 to 30 or more and enter the reserves for *Shikar*" (Roy 2002: 184).

Furthermore, Affray and Riots was a particular type of violent collective "offences' ', attended with or without loss of life, against person or persons, widespread in the countryside in the phase of colonial rule. It was usually an open shadow of violence between two armed parties over a variety of rural disputes. Affrays between Land holders, between tea planters and managers were frequently reported by the district administration. However, only a very small percentage of the total number of such crimes could actually be brought to the notice of the higher authorities. In 1906 serious riots occurred among the *Santhal* coolies employed in the tea-gardens areas of Jalpaiguri (Gruning 1911: 133). The riots in 1906 took place when the workers were working overtime. The dispute was probably over being forced to work beyond the previously agreed time. The 'serious riots' referred to by the *Dooars* Committee in 1910 arose 'from a dispute over the hoeing task' (Monahan 1910: 23). In 1912, there was 'a particular bad *riot*' at the Nya Sylee tea Estate as a result of which the manager 'found it necessary to turn out certain *Sirdars* and collies' (DPA Report 1912: 120). Again in 1916, the Tondoo tea Estate was threatened by a potential 'riot' when 'the *sraders* threatened to prevent the whole of the garden collies from working and finally said that they would kill the manager Mr. Partridge (DPA Report 1916: 290). A typical case in point is a strike in Totopara tea estate where in September 1936 'the women got somewhat excited and at one time looked threatening; the strike 'originated in a misunderstanding on the part of the *pluckers*'. The matter, however, was subsequently settled'. But this incident never found a place in the Annual Report of Planters Association. It cannot be a wrong hypothesis that there were many such potential or actual incidents of labour resistance but the officials did not take notice of the superior authority due to their bad impression on their work ethics.

Mechanism of Control

Existence of crime by and large questions about the state of the criminal administration of the district. Therefore, to prevent such criminal activities the criminal administration of Jalpaiguri followed through various mechanisms or institutional agencies of control like police, court, prison etc. and the colonial government tried to reduce all challenges through the 'law and order' paradigm. Law was viewed as an instrument of pacification and an indispensable 'mechanism of discipline'.[3] In Jalpaiguri the suppression of dacoity, rural violence, destruction of life and property was the most pressing importance from the point of view of the authorities. Consequently, it became necessary for the Company to establish complete monopoly over the legitimate instruments of coercion.

The police constituted the frontal institute of colonial control and legitimate instrument of coercion. Magistrate was the head of the criminal administration and police department. The district's police force was headed by Superintendent of Police and consisted of two bodies; the regular police and the village watch or rural constabulary. As Jalpaiguri was rural-urban in character, it needed another institution for the prevention of criminal activities. The policing of rural areas had to depend heavily on an espionage system (Barman 2020: 74-5). *Dafaders* and *Chowkidars* looked after the criminal activities in village areas and a village resistance group's act as self help organization for guarding the properties of the rural communities and against *dacoities* and burglaries mainly. They were fostered and assisted by the police but appointed by the local landlords (Barun De et al 1980: 99). Besides it there were seventeen centers for the investigation of crime. The district contains 11 police stations and 10 outposts (Imperial Gazetteer of India 1909: 234). In the Regulation area the District was divided into four police stations i.e. Siliguri or Sanyasikata, Fakirganj, Boda and Patgram. On the other hand for the convenience of the police administration, non-regulation portion was divided into three police circle i.e. Maynaguri, Falakata, and Alipurduar with a permanent

[3] The Word 'discipline' has been used in this work in the sense applied by Foucault. To Foucault discipline is 'political autonomy of detail'. The 'vagabond masses had to be held in place 'looting and violence' must be prevented: the fears of local inhabitants who did not care of troops passing through their towns, had to be pacified. "The aim is to derive the maximum advantages and to neutralize the inconveniences (theft, interruptions of work etc.) as the forces of production became more concentrated to protect materials and tools and to master the labour force." Foucault, Michel. 1978. "Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison". New York: Vintage Books: 213-4.

outpost station at Dhupguri, and cold-weather outpost at Benchapara, Ambari and Haldibari (Grunning 1911: 132-3). Apart from the police control there was Judicial administration and Criminal justice was administered by the Deputy Commissioner and Deputy Magistrate with some Divisional Officers (Imperial Gazetteer of India 1909: 217). In accordance with available sources, generally there had been a district jail and there was a whole time superintendent in charge, one Jailor, one Deputy-Jailor, three clerks and one Medical Officer. In Jalpaiguri Sadar had a District Jail with accommodation of 127 prisoners and also a subsidiary Jail at Alipurduar with accommodation of 22 prisoners (Grunning 1911: 125-6). It is worthwhile to mention that in spite of mentioned statistics the Judicial and Civil administration had been changed due to the time being.

Hereafter, Prison was yet another mechanism of control, an instrument of coercion to discipline and pacify rural turbulence. The classification of prisoners, measures adopted for reformation and deterrence to crimes have been probed. Prison served as an instrument of threat and threat of coercion. It became necessary in view of the breakdown of the traditional institutions of social control. As Michel Foucault states that by the beginning of the nineteenth century imprisonment was becoming the favored form of punishment for the 'offenders' in Britain and Europe. He argued that there was a shift towards punishment aimed at modifying behavior rather than mortifying the body through the infliction of physical pain. Such a shift was taken up by the colonial masters in creating prisons and introducing the concept of imprisonment and penal institutions over physical punishment (Foucault: 1978: 7-8/11). Henceforth, prison labour is a very important one; the labour provided the coverage of the cost of the prisoner's food and cloth. Prison labour was identified not just as an instrument of deterrence, but also of reform. David Arnold mentioned that the prison system in India grew out of the British preoccupation with maintaining law and order and the desire to ensure economic viability (Arnold 1986: 124). In practice, it appears that the duty of all these institutions was to identify the section of the society which was unwilling to be reconciled with the new system and to identify the areas which were crime prone and had the highest concentration of criminals. All these organs of the state were expected to be effective to control crime and public disorder.

Conclusion

The entire discussion reveals that, prior to colonial rule the region of north Bengal experienced less crime and violence. But there has been a sharp increase of crime

and massive range of violence during the colonial period. Several factors have been responsible for that, likely the impact of colonial rule, transformation of the land revenue system, the new process of urbanization and the change in the population structure which were imposed upon the indigenous people. The replacement of the native rulers by the Imperial colonial government and the alter of priority of the indigenous population mostly the *Nepalis*, *Mech*, *Rabha*, Garos, *Bhutias* etc. with new group of people migrated from the southern part of Bengal, Chota Nagpur region, and other parts of India alienated the aboriginals away from the colonial institutions. The aboriginals could not accept the new mode of economic system as well as could not work as labourers in their own lands and could not hold their life as forest dollars because of forest conservation by the Raj. Furthermore, the commercialization of agriculture brought tea plantations which invited the *Santals*, *Oraons* and *Mundas* into the region and pushed away the indigenous people who experienced and could not accept the new set of orders by the colonial government. Furthermore, the First World War brought inflation along with the exploitation of the labourers in the tea gardens who took the path of crime to find out a way of starvation and anger. They identified the moneylenders, Marwari shopkeepers mostly migrants and sometimes crimes were committed towards the European planters. However, it is to be noticed that a crude form of racism was visible in the tea gardens with incidents of the '*sahib*' planters trying to discipline his native servant or *coolie* by kicks and blows or by 'shooting accidents'. But such incidents did not get a place in the district official records. Consequently, crimes increased in the domain of ordinary and extraordinary form. Moreover, the region of Jalpaiguri was closer to the borders of neighboring kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim where British laws were not applicable and it further increased and facilitated crimes. Henceforth, British rule initiated new rules of the state order through the popular method of 'law and order' and crimes began to be controlled with an orderly system of law and punishment through various institutions. But the district administration neither ensured the security and safety of the common inhabitants nor protected the western ideas of the rule of law in true sense.

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Caste, Untouchability and Social Conflict in Nineteenth Century Bengal

Chanchal Chowdhury

[Editorial Note: The present paper discusses on the deeply embedded evils of the Caste system and untouchability in the 19th Century Bengal. The hierarchical division of the caste system gave rise to social conflict which resulted in numerous protests against their low social positions and submitting of petitions before the British for their social upliftment.]

Abstract: *Caste system and untouchability were an integral part of social life among the Hindus and Muslims of pre-Plassey Bengal. These two customs were deeply rooted in self-sufficient villages where people lived with their fellow caste-men adopting their hereditary occupations. The social conflict, generated due to the hierarchical division of the caste system, was felt in the society just like mild waves. East India Company servants ruined the self-sufficient village economy of Bengal through their ruthless exploitation of artisans and craftsmen. Consequently, they had to move from their village abodes and adopt alternative occupations generated under the Company's rule. Very soon, some ambitious individuals with low social backgrounds amassed huge wealth and began to claim higher social status for their castes. Leaders of many castes began to lodge protests against their low social position, and petitions were submitted before British authorities for approval of higher precedence of their castes on the social ladder. As a result, intensified caste conflict was produced in the society of nineteenth century Bengal.*

Keywords: *Caste, Sub-caste, Untouchability, Hierarchy, Conflict.*

Introduction

As an institution, caste has its unique place among the Hindus to access the fundamental feature of their social relations in daily life. Caste has been defined by Nesfield as "A class of the community which disowns connection with any other class, and can neither intermarry nor eat and drink with any but persons of their own community." It is a divisive apparatus which rigidly divides people on the concept of purity and pollution. The system prescribes rules restricting norms and behaviours of the Hindus and determines the place of an individual on the social ladder depending upon his birth. Under caste hierarchy, the Brahmins are placed at the top and the Sudras and untouchables at the bottom on the strength of religious scriptures. Over hundreds of years, the society of Bengal was transformed almost into a culturally isolated domain where different communities like the Brahmins,

Baidyas, Kayasthas, Telis, Kaibarttas, Chandals, Rajbansis, Kamars, Kumars, Goalas, Kalus and others, remained disjunct from one another in self-sufficient villages. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the structure of the self-sufficient village economy of Bengal was destroyed to a great extent. The caste system, which survived upon the hereditary occupations of the artisans and craftsmen, received a tremendous shock. By the fifties of the nineteenth century, many individuals belonging to non-Bhadralok castes raised themselves on an economic scale. Because of their increased economic status, these individuals began to claim a comparatively higher position for their caste in the social hierarchy. The British Government conducted the first organised census in India in 1871 and elaborately recorded caste matters. The Government Census produced a general idea among members of different castes that the objective of the census was to fix the relative social status of different castes as well as "to deal with questions of social superiority". They began to submit prayers before the British authorities of Bengal to approve their demands for higher status in the caste hierarchy. Thousands of petitions were presented before the census authorities on behalf of different castes requesting that their castes might be renamed, raised in a higher position, and be known as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, etc. But no one could climb upward on the social ladder without superseding some other caste. This research highlights the social conflict produced in the nineteenth century among different castes of Bengal as a result of their claim to higher social status.

The caste system is an integral part of Hindu life and culture. This system has continued in Bengal since the ancient past. The Brihad-Dharma Purana, composed in Bengal in the thirteenth-fourteenth century, has categorised all the castes of Bengal, except the Brahmins, but including the Kayasthas (Karans) and Baidyas (Ambashthas) as Sudras and sub-divided them in three classes as high, intermediate and low.[1] Mukundarama Chakraborty, in his Chandikabya, composed during the latter half of the sixteenth century, has depicted an excellent illustration of the different classes of Hindu people of Bengal with their respective position on a social scale. The following table shows a description of Bengali Hindu society when Mukundarama composed Chandikabya:

[1]. Tarkaratna (ed) 1420 (B.S.), 339-0.

Table-1: Hindu Castes and their social status in the sixteenth century[2]

Social Status	Caste
High	Brahman, Baidya, Kayastha.
Middling	Gopa, Teli, Kamar, Tambuli, Kumbhakar, Tantubay, Mali, Barui, Napit, Agrori, Modak, Gandhabanik, Sankhabaik, Kansari, Subarnabanik.
Low	Das, Baiti, Bagdi, Koch, Dhoba, Dorgee, Siuli, Chhutar, Patni, Rajbhat, Chandal, Goala, Pulinda, Kirat, Kol, Hadi, Shunri, Chamar, Dom.

In the nineteenth century, the Hindu society was divided into different castes and sub-castes. Only the Brahmins, Baidyas and Kayasthas were considered as higher castes (Bhadralok classes) on the social scale.[3] The social position of a caste was determined by the perception of the Brahmins about that particular caste. The majority of the principal Hindu castes like the *Kaibarttas (Mahishyas), Chandals (Namasudras), Rajbanshis, Bagdis, Pods (Poundras),* and *Bauris,* were despised by upper castes. Even the trading castes like the *Subarnbaniks, Telis (Tilis)* and *Sunris* were not respected by the upper castes. The social equality among the Muslims was nothing but word of mouth. There were tremendous differences between the *Shiahs* and the *Sunnis*. The '*Aharaf*' classes of Muslims looked down upon the '*Ajlaf*' classes cultivating Shekhs, and other functional groups like the *Jolahas, Dhunias, Kulus*, *Kunjras, Hajjams,* and *Darzis*. The *Ashrafs,* like the high caste Hindus, considered menial service or to handle the plough as degrading work.[4] The '*Sharif*' Muslims despised the '*Ajlaf*' Muslims in the same way as the Hindu Brahmins would despise the low caste Hindus. Social status was determined by a person's caste, not by wealth. A poor and illiterate Brahmin was highly respected in society compared to an affluent *Subarnabanik*. Renowned scholar Dr John Wilson has observed:

> "Indian Caste is the condensation of all the pride, jealousy, and tyranny ... without sympathies of a recognized common humanity."[5]

Under colonial rule, a smaller segment of the lower castes became prosperous and wealthy, taking advantage of the newly developed economic opportunities. This

[2]. Mukundarama (1332 B.S.), 86-0.

[3]. Thompson 1923, 351.

[4]. Gait 1902, 439.

[5] . Wilson 1877, 11.

comparatively affluent segment could not distinguish themselves from their poor fellow caste-men since they were very small in number compared to their upper caste counterparts. Their common low social position in the caste hierarchy generated caste consciousness among them, which cut across the divisions between the rich and the poor. All these low castes claimed superior status for themselves, which the upper-castes would not acknowledge. This contention produced severe social conflict in the nineteenth century Bengal.

Conflict between Money Power and Brahmanism

After the foundation of the town Calcutta in 1690, people were attracted to Calcutta for several reasons. One of the reasons was the desire to earn liquid money. There were several instances where ordinary people from villages came to Calcutta and became millionaires. These nouveau riches, irrespective of their humble birth, soon placed themselves among the new urban aristocracy by using money power. The money power of the non-Brahmin millionaires of Calcutta overshadowed the age-old special dignity of the Brahmins of Bengal to a great extent. It was observed that the Brahmins were no longer so highly honoured in the mid-nineteenth century. The clever Sudras thrust them aside from their place and power without scruple because a "greater increase of wealth and wisdom has been diffused" among the former.[6]

Money power endeavoured to break the traditional social institutions. As a result, social conflict became intense. A social conflict prevailed in Calcutta between the financial power of the urban millionaires and the birth dignity of the Bhadralok castes. When any caste-related contention was discussed, Babu Ramdulul Dey, the millionaire and early nineteenth century Bengalee business tycoon of Calcutta, emphatically said that "the caste was in his iron chest."[7] The caste rivalry went to such an extreme extent that the wealthy outfit of many low castes had been approaching the Brahmin Pandits for higher position of their castes and the Pandits issuing favourable *vyavashthas* on accepting bribes from them. In some of such cases, the Samaj Raksha Sabha of Benares took disciplinary measures against certain Pandits.[8] The majority of the affluent persons of Calcutta belonged to the Subarnabanik community who, though intelligent and well-to-do, were a degraded

[6]. Kaye 1853, 654.

[7] . Bose 1883, 179.

[8] . O'Malley 1913. 440-1.

caste.[9] The higher order of the Brahmins did not accept a drink of water from their hands. Baboo Mutty Lall Seal was one of the renowned Subarnabanik millionaires of Calcutta. He was an orthodox Hindu with the knowledge of Vaishnavism.[10] In this backdrop of social contention, Mutty Lall asked the secretary of the *Dharma Sabha* of Calcutta three questions by sending a letter regarding the comparative social status between a Brahmin and a Sudra Vaishnav in 1832. In reply to the questions, the Pandits of the *Dharma Sabha* proclaimed their dictum that: (a) A Sudra Vaishnav is not vulnerable to a Brahmin. (b) If a Sudra Vaishnav pays respect to a Brahmin by touching his feet, the Brahmin will not pay respect to the Sudra Vaishnav in the same way by touching his feet. (c) A Brahmin cannot consume leaves of meals (*prasada*) of a Sudra Vaishnav.[11] The non-Brahmin wealthy classes claimed a higher social status, which the orthodox Brahmins denied. This claim and denial produced a social conflict in Bengal.

Conflict between Brahmins and other 'Bhadralok' Castes

Under the rule of Murshid Quli Khan and the succeeding Nawabs, the *Vaidyas* and *Kayasthas* along with the Brahmins, with their talents and mastery over Persian, occupied the highest civil posts under the Bengal *subahdar* and many of the military posts under the *faujdars*. Because of their royal employment and economic prosperity, the *Vaidyas* and *Kayasthas* further raised their social position in the Hindu society during the former half of the eighteenth century.[12] This social recognition continued until the mid-twentieth century, and only these three castes – the Brahmins, Baidyas and Kayasthas – would make up the bulk of the "Hindu Bhadralok classes of Bengal."[13] The Baidyas were chiefly employed as ministerial officers. They engaged themselves in the occupation of physicians and were also landed proprietors. The Baidyas of Bengal were classified by the Brahmins as Sudras.[14] The orthodox Brahmins did not admit that the Baidyas were authorised to wear the sacred thread in accordance with the religious dictums. Raja Krishnachandra Rai of Nadia would never allow any person from the Baidya caste

9. Bhattachraya 1896, 199.

10. Mitter 1993, 25.

11. Laha 1940, 51.

12. Sarkar 2003, 410.

13. Thompson, *op. cit.*, 351.

14. Hunter (V.) 1875, 47.

to visit his court wearing a sacred thread.[15] This attitude of the orthodox Brahmins to the Baidyas was unchanged in the nineteenth century.

In the former half of the nineteenth century, the Kayasthas were employed as pleaders, accountants, writers and treasurers by large landholders in their estates or in Government Departments. But the Kayasthas were also considered as Sudras, though they claimed a higher status for themselves.[16] Rajnarayan Ray, the Kayastha *zamindar* of Andul (born in 1809), during his pilgrimage to Vrindavan, was forbidden by the Brahmin priests when he attempted to decorate the deity with a garland made of jewellery, on the ground that the Bengali Kayasthas were ineligible to wear the sacred thread, and, therefore, not authorised to touch the deity.[17] The Baidyas and the Kayasthas were not satisfied with their Sudra status. The Baidyas claimed to the census authorities to place them next to the Brahmins on the ground that they acted as spiritual guides to the Brahmins. The Kayasthas claimed to be renamed as Kshatriyas.[18] The census authorities turned down the claim of the Baidyas and the Kayasthas due to the opposition of the Brahmins. For this reason, the Baidyas and the Kayasthas became strong critics of the Brahmins, resulting in acute caste conflict between the Brahmins on one hand and the Baidyas and the Kayasthas on the other hand.

Conflict between Brahmins and other Hindu Castes

The Hindu religious scriptures authorised the Brahmins to promulgate religious opinion on issues relating to caste matters. Because of their monopoly in sole authority to interpret religious scriptures, they treated the other castes of the society inferior to them. Krishnakanta Nandi was the great *zamindar* of Cossimbazar estate. He was a Teli (Tili) by caste. During the eighteenth century, he amassed enormous wealth in his possession under the patronage of Warren Hastings. Other families belonging to Teli caste who amassed huge wealth under the East India Company's rule, and rose into eminence, were the Ray (Kundu) family of Bhagyakul (Dacca), Pal Chowdhuri family of Ranaghat (Nadia), and Dey family of Srirampur (Hooghly).[19] Once Kantababu offered a large gift for Lord Jagannath at Puri. The status of Kanta Babu's caste was so low on the social scale of Brahmanical

[15]. Ray 2011, 76.

[16]. Hunter (V.), *op. cit.*, 47.

[17]. Sinha 1398 (B.S.), 117.

[18] . Gait, *op. cit.*, 379, 381.

[19]. Sanyal 1981, 100.

Hinduism that the pandas of Lord Jagannath temple at Puri refused to accept the presents sent by him.[20] Later, Kanta Babu was appointed the president of the Jatimala Kachahri or Caste Cutcherry in Calcutta, a tribunal which dealt with cases relating to caste matters by Warren Hastings.[21] The orthodox Brahmins did not recognise the appointment of Kanta Babu. They sarcastically designated his caste as "*Punte Teli*".[22] The non-Brahmin wealthy castes did not consume this indignity without any repercussion.

Preetiram Das (Marh), a successful Kaibartta (Mahishya) trader of the Beliaghata region of Calcutta, amassed a huge wealth towards the end of the eighteenth century. Later he purchased the estate of Pargana Makimpur and became a *zamindar*. Rajchandra Das (Marh) was his youngest son who was married to Rasmani Devi.[23] After the death of Rajchandra Das in the year 1836, Rani Rasmani inherited his huge assets. She built the famous Kali temple at Dakshineswar in 1853-54.[24] After the construction of the Dakshineswar temple, Rani Rasmani exerted her endeavour to enthrone the goddess Kali in the shrine and offer oblation made of boiled rice to the deity. No Brahmin of Bengal, not even her family priest, gave his consent towards the initiative of Rasmani in this connection since she was a Sudra by caste. Rani Rasmani, then, sought the opinion from different *chatuspathis* of the country. All the Pandits of the *chatuspathis* expressed the same opinion. Only Ramkumar Chattyopadhyay, the Pandit of Jhamapukur *chatuspathi* of Calcutta, brought out a tricky opinion for the Rani. He prescribed that the temple be donated to a Brahmin before enthronement of the deity. If that Brahmin installed the idol and offered oblation made of boiled rice to the deity, it would not be an act of breach of religious scriptures. In the absence of any other alternative, Rani Rasmani appointed Ramkumar to accomplish the rituals which he completed with great courage.[25] The refusal of the Brahmins to enthrone the goddess Kali in the Dakshineswar temple and to offer oblations to the deity on behalf of the Sudra Rani reflect that the Brahmins possessed a strong aversion to the *Kaibarttas (Mahishyas)*. Encouraged by Brahmanical apathy towards them, the upper-caste

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[20]. Gait, *op. cit.*, 366.

[21]. O'Malley 1914, 193-4; Mullick 1935, 45.

[22] . Sinha, *op. cit.*, 75, 235.

[23]. Roy 2003, 28-34; Bhattachraya*, op. cit.*, 281.

[24]. Roy, *op. cit.*, 54, 79, 126-7; O'Malley & Chakravarti 1909, 48.

[25]. Roy, *op. cit*., 80-1.

Hindus taunted them as Keots.[26] The Kaibarttas strongly objected to this indignant epithet.

The *Chandals* (Namasudras) were the largest Hindu community in Eastern Bengal. They were known as a humble cultivating caste and believed to have been autochthones of the Bengal delta.[27] The Brahmins and upper caste Hindus have despised them from time immemorial. Among the Hindus, the Brahmins are considered at the top of the caste hierarchy and the *Chandals* at the bottom of it. That's why the term *"Chandal"* is often used to denote the antonym of a Brahmin. The Brahmanical contempt towards the *Chandals* was so deeply rooted that a Brahmin considered himself polluted not only by touching the body of a *Chandal* but also by treading on the shadow produced by the body of a *Chandal*.[28] The *Chandals* were compelled to leave their original habitation and settle themselves in the dreary and unwholesome swamps to the southern wastes of Faridpur, Jessore, and Bakarganj due to the strong aversion of the Brahmins to them.[29] They were banned from entering the temple of Jagannath at Puri under Section 7 of Regulation IV of 1809, acting on the recommendation of the Brahmins.[30] The caste Hindus of Bengal also denied temple entry to the *Chandals* due to restrictions imposed on them by Brahmanical *shastras*. They had been battling for temple entry for quite some time. The restriction on them entering the Hindu temples produced in them a feeling of hostility against the Brahmins. Later, in 1929-30, their attempt to get entry into Munshiganj Kali Temple created significant social tension.[31]

The *Jugis* (Jogis) were designated as a degraded untouchable caste. If a member of this caste happened to enter the room of a good Hindu caste, the cooked food and drinking water in the room were regarded as polluted and immediately thrown away.[32] The attitude of the Brahmins towards the Jugis was much prejudiced. The Brahmin census enumerators would enrol the social profile of the poor, illiterate and low caste people according to their own perception; not in accordance with the

[26] . Pringle & Kemm 1928, 22.

[27]. Allen 1912, 68.

[28]. Hunter (V.), *op. cit*., 285.

[29] . Beverley 1872, Appendix B, vi.

[30] . O'Malley, *op. cit*., 229.

[31] . Bhattacharyya 1977, 160-171.

[32]. Risley 1891, 360.

declared identity of the enumerated. When a conservative Brahmin enumerator declared emphatically that "he would rather cut off his hand than write down a Jugi as Jogi and his wife with the title of Debya like a Brahman woman," their feelings (to the Jugis) were easily discernible.[33]

Conflict between *Baidyas* and *Kayasthas*

There were tremendous differences between the Kayasthas and the Baidyas on the matter of their comparative position in the Hindu social ladder. The jealousy between the Baidyas and the Kayasthas became more severe since their social rank was disputed.[34] The Kayasthas would not admit the superiority of the Baidyas, nor would any Baidya recognise the place of the Kayasthas above their own caste. But, both the Kayasthas and the Baidyas invariably agreed that the Brahmins stood on top of the caste hierarchy.[35] The Baidyas claimed that they were identical with the Ambashtas of the *Shastras* and were descended from *Dhanvantari*, the son of a Brahmin father and a Vaisya mother. They also claimed their precedence over the Kayasthas citing that the High Court ruling upheld the *Kayasthas* as a Sudra caste and the *Kayasthas* were originally servants of the Brahmins and *Baidyas*.[36] On the other hand, the Kayasthas claimed themselves as Kshatriyas and designated the Baidyas as a mixed caste (*Barna Sankar* caste) having much lower position. The Kayasthas contended that the Baidyas had abandoned their Sudra rituals only hundred years ago when Raja Raj Ballabh of Dacca bribed the Brahmins to assume the sacred thread for the Baidyas. The Kayasthas also advertised their excellence over the Baidyas by referring to the *Vallalacharita* where the Kayasthas have been declared to be the best among the *Sat Sudras*.[37] The contention of caste supremacy between the Kayasthas and the Baidyas became a special phenomenon in nineteenth century Bengal.

Conflict between *Mihtars* and *Murdafarashes*

Much antagonism and envy were found among the castes whose relative positions in the society were not settled. Even the lowest of the lower castes were not free from this quarrel. We get ample testimony of caste disputes from the literature of

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[33]. Thompson, *op. cit*., 349.

[34]. Gait, *op. cit.*, 366, 369.

[35]. *Ibid*, 366.

[36]. *Ibid*, 379.

[37]. *Ibid*, 381.

the nineteenth century. Kaliprasannna Sinha, in his sensational work, *Hutom Penchar Naksha*, has depicted a real picture of this kind where hot words were being exchanged in an altercation between a *Mihtar* and a *Murdafarash*, both trying to establish the excellence of occupation of their own caste.[38]

Conflict among different other Hindu Castes

The essence of the caste system of the Hindus of Bengal in the nineteenth century was a fixed relative rank of all castes, from Brahmins to *Chandals*. Except for the Brahmins, all other castes were either lower or higher in rank than one another. This concept of "high" and "low" generated social animosity among different non-Brahmin castes.

The *Kaibarttas (Mahishyas)* of Bengal were good cultivators, hard-working, abstemious in their habits, quiet and peaceful in their avocations.[39] A segment of the *Chasi Kaibarttas* of Nadia took employment under the indigo planters and grew rich. In all cases, the Nadia Kaibarttas' prosperity was built on their service to the indigo planters.[40] But their social position was fixed at a much lower tier in the Brahmanical social ladder. In the nineteenth century, all the communities were desirous of obtaining a higher status for their castes. At the same time, they wanted that the same status not be permitted to other castes. This attitude was particularly observed among the *Chasi Kaibarttas*. When the new designation for their caste was approved as *Mahishya* by census authorities, they applied their energies on this occasion and were devoted to ensuring that other cases like the *Jalia Kaibarttas, Patnis*, and others, who claimed to use the same term or a variant of it, should not be permitted to do so.[41]

The *Chandals* (Namasudras) were the second largest Hindu caste in Bengal after the Kaibarttas, as per the census report of 1872. They were "characterized by an unusual amount of independence and self-reliance."[42] The *Chandals* were competent to do all kinds of works though they formed the large proportion of the peasantry. Because of their bravery and superior knowledge in river transport, they

[38]. Gait, *op. cit.,* 369; Sinha, *op. cit*., 268; Hunter (I.) 1875, 71.

[39] . Mukharji 1938, 44.

[40]. Pringle & Kemm 1928, 22.

[41]. Thompson, *op. cit.*, 346.

[42]. Risley, *op. cit.*, 184, 189.

were the only Hindus who were employed in the boats (*bajra*) hired by the Europeans.[43] A portion of the East Bengal *Chandals* earned money through their employment with the Europeans. Wealth was accumulated by some of them through cultivation and trading of jute in northern Bakarganj and Southern Faridpur, as well as Narail and Magura subdivisions of Jessore and the northern low lands of Khulna. Some of them became rich by means of river borne trade, salt trade and as dealers of crops.[44] Very soon a portion of the *Chandals* established themselves as shopkeepers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, oilmen, as well as successful traders.[45] In 1872, one Choron Sapah, a rich *Chandal* of village Amgram in Bakarganj District, arranged a feast and invited all castes including the Brahmins and Kayasthas. The Kayasthas instigated all the caste Hindu invitees not to accept the invitation with taunts and reproaches: "Eat with men who permit their women to go to market and … are employed as mehters in jails … What next?" The refusal of the upper caste Hindus to participate in the feast produced an intense caste rivalry between the *Chandals* and upper caste Hindus. The *Chandal* headmen of all the villages in this part of the country held a meeting and resolved that the *Chandals* would not accept food cooked by upper caste Hindus except the Brahmins.[46] In the latter half of the nineteenth century, they were not in a position to bear with their abusive caste name (*Chandal*) and the brunt of untouchability. As a protest the *Chandals* of Bengal made a general strike in the district of Faridpur in the early part of the year 1873, "resolving not to serve any body of the upper class, in whatever capacity, unless a better position among the Hindu castes than what they at present occupy was given to them".[47] The strike was led by better off *Chandals*. Ray Chand Mundle, Nilmoni Biswas of Dout Koora and Sibu Dhali, Ramchand Bugsha, Bhojan Bala of Poorsoor, the leaders of the *Chandal* Movement of 1872-73, were fairly rich men.[48] The general strike called by the *Chandals* produced a tremendous economic impact and civil disturbance not only in Faridpur but also in the adjoining districts of Bakarganj and Jessore. The strike was so complete that the Magistrate

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[43]. *Ibid*, 188-9.

[44]. Bandyopadhyay 1989, 179-0.

[45]. Risley, *op. cit.*, 188.

[46] . *W.L. Owen, Dist Superintendent of Police* vide Letter No.66 Dated Camp Bhanga, the 18th March 1873, para.5-6.

[47]. *Magistrate of Furreedpore* vide Letter No.340, dated Khalia Khal, the 8th April 1873; Hunter (V.), *op. cit.*, 285.

[48]. *W.L. Owen, op. cit*., para.12.

of Faridpur, in the course of his official enquiry into the affected areas, even after four months of its inception, found "the fields … untilled, the houses unthatched, and not a Chandal in the service of Hindu or Mahomedan, or a Chandal woman in any market."[49] The areas under Muxoodpore and Gopalgunge police stations became the epicentre of the movement. The situation in these areas was so tense that additional police reinforcements were dispatched from Dacca and deployed there to maintain law and order.[50] In the jails, the *Chandals* were compelled to remove filth. They were not allowed to appear before the *Bhadralok* castes wearing shoes. To protest this, they organised a joint movement in the Pirozpur thana of Bakarganj district.[51] The hostile movement of the *Chandals* for dignity, on one hand, and its rejection by upper-caste Hindus, on the other hand, produced an intense social conflict between these two camps. The *Chandals* wanted a higher social position for them but were plunged into caste prejudices and were not ready to allow a fair social status to other degraded castes. If a European inadvertently stood or walked over their cooking place on board a boat, they threw away their cooked food at once. They considered themselves polluted if they touched the stool on which a *Sunri* was sitting.[52]

Hunter classified the Rajbansis as a "semi-aboriginal caste" along with the *Palis, Koches* and other castes.[53] The Rajbansis grabbed the advantage of land reclamation in jungle areas of North Bengal in the nineteenth century. In 1911, around 89 per cent of the Rajbansis were 'cultivators' of whom many were sharecroppers or *adhiars*. But a segment of them had also become wealthy peasants like *Jotdars* or *Chukanidars*, while a few had raised themselves to the position of big *zamindars* like the *Raikat* family of Jalpaiguri.[54] The Rajbansis were a "versatile race" and engaged not only in the occupation of cultivation, but also were blacksmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters, fishermen, and moneylenders in the nineteenth century.[55] Yet their social status was extremely low. All the clean castes refused to consume food from their hands or smoke from the same hookahs. In Darjeeling

[49] . *Magistrate of Furreedpore, op. cit.,* Para.15; Hunter (V.), *op. cit.,* 285.

[50] . Magistrate of Furreedpore, *op. cit.,* para.32.

[51] . Risley. *op. cit*., 188.

[52]. *Ibid*.

[53]. Hunter (VII.) 1876, 219-0.

[54]. Bandyopadhyay 1990, 108.

[55]. Risley, *op. cit.*, 499; Vas 1911, 47.

Terai region, though, where the topography was unfavourable for human life and the number of this caste was numerous, the upper caste Hindus accepted water from them.[56] The aversion of the pure Brahmins and clean Sudra castes towards the Rajbansis produced among them an acute resentment.

Conflict among the Vaishnavas

In the sixteenth century, Sri Chaitanyadeva of Navadweep and his followers launched a serious challenge to the social supremacy of the orthodox Brahmins and the hegemony of *Varnashram dharma* in Bengal. Both Brahmins and lower castes were among Sri Chaitanyadeva's followers. After his death, the hegemony of the Brahmin gurus was established among the Vaishnavas, and the lower caste Vaishnava devotees were branded as Jat Vaishnavas, acquiring the pejorative meaning of outcast Vaishnavas.[57] Though the movement of Chaitanya was intended to bring equality among individuals, the Vaishnava sect was being regarded as a caste, and caste prejudices were creeping among them.[58] The practice of untouchability also began to surface among different grades of the Vaishnavas. Many of them retained their old social distinctions and a Baishtam of Kayasth descent would not ordinarily accept water from the hands of a Vaishnava whose ancestors were Chandals.[59] Inter-caste conflict was existent among the Vaishnavas in full swing.

Conflict among the Muslims

Islamism disapproves of the caste system. However, the majority of the converted Muslims of Bengal who were Hindus before conversion retained the caste system.[60] In the nineteenth century, the following classes, strongly demarcated by occupation, existed among them in the districts of Bakarganj and Nadia. These classes of Muhammadans were categorised separately from the rest of the Muslim community. Bitter social conflict existed among the Muslims. Not only the Ashraf classes but also the Ajlaf classes of Muslim cultivators despised all these Muhammadan groups.

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[56]. Risley, *op. cit.*, 499.

[57]. Chakravarti 1985, 321-2, 333.

[58]. Hunter (II.) 1875, 52.

[59]. Gait, *op. cit.*, 371.

[60]. Beverley 1872, 186.

Table-2: Low caste Muslims of Bakarganj and Nadiya District[61]

Serial No	Muhammadan Caste	Occupation
1	Nikari	Fishermen, boatmen, and fruit-sellers
2	Naiya	Fish sellers
3	Jola	Cloth manufacturers, weavers
4	Lahuri	Ornament makers
5	Osta	Circumcisers
6	Nagarchi	Musicians
7	Mir Shikari	Fowlers
8	Garali	Harpooners of crocodiles
9	Matial	Makers of oil-pots
10	Nalua	Makers of reed mats
11	Kalu	Oilmen

Besides the functional groups mentioned above, the Dacca Muhammadans were divided into a long list of functional castes like the *Khasyes, Mallees, Challenhas* (persons who catch mullet), *Bildars, Dooreahs* (dog keepers, sweepers, match-makers, appliers of leeches, &c.), *Daees, Hajjams, Dhoobees, Myeferosh* (sellers of fish), Bearers (carriers of dhoolees), *Sampooriahs*, and *Bazighurs*.[62] The Keyots and Badyakars were two untouchable Muslim communities of Rangpur District. Muhammadans of good caste would not dine together or smoke from the same hookah. They were compelled to bury their dead bodies in separate burial grounds.[63] The *Halalkhors, Lalbegis, Abdals*, and *Bediyas* were the lowest classes of Muslims (Arzal). Their social position was similar to that of the Hindu untouchables. No other Muhammadan would associate with them. They were forbidden to enter the mosque or to use the public burial ground.[64] However, unlike the Hindus, the wealthy low caste Muslims could raise themselves in social scale more easily in comparison to the Hindu castes since Islam did not recognise caste system. As a result, caste mobility among them was not a rare phenomenon. That's why there has been a proverb in Bengal, "Last year I was a Jolaha, this year I am a

[61]. Hunter (V.), *op. cit.*, 195; Hunter (II.), *op. cit*., 50.

[62]. Taylor 1840, 244-6.

[63]. Vas, *op. cit*., 42.

[64]. Gait, *op. cit*., 439.

Shekh; next year if prices rise I shall be a Saiad."[65] Notwithstanding, we observe a significant social conflict among Muslims in the nineteenth century.

Conflict among the Christians

A section of Bengalis converted to Christianity, pulled by their humanitarian ideas. Notable converted Christians from the western educated class were Mahesh Chandra Ghose, Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Lal Behari Dey, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt. The missionaries also extended their influence among the lower castes. In 1838, some five hundred members of the KartaBhaja sect of Nadia embraced Christianity under the inspiration of the Church Missionary Society.[66] The converted Christians of Nadia would introduce themselves as Hindu Christians and Musalman Christians and could never intermarry. The two sects of the Muslim Christians of Nadia were 'Satgeya' and 'Soterapera' who kept up separate traditions of their Muslim ancestors and inter sect marriage among them was also forbidden. The caste prejudice among the converted Christians was to such an extent that the converts from the shoe maker caste were classified as 'Moochie Christians.'[67]

Intra Caste Conflict

Ordinarily it is supposed that the caste conflict existed in the society of Bengal only among different castes. But the real picture was something different. Severe caste rivalry can also be observed among different sub-groups of all castes in Bengal during the period of our review. All classes of the Brahmins were not equally treated in the Hindu society. Some of the Brahmins had also become degraded because of their service to despised classes. Though they were priestly classes, the pure Brahmins would not accept water from their hands. They were designated as "lapsed Brahmans" and were not admitted to intercourse with the pure Brahmins. These classes were called by the name of the caste whom they served, such as *Shaha* Brahmin, *Kaibartta* Brahmin, *Subarna Banik* Brahmin, etc.[68] The *Barna* Brahmins and the *Kamrupi* Brahmins, though not actually degraded, could not stand on equal position with the Brahmins who officiated in the ceremonies of the *Navasakhas*.[69] The *Ugradanee* Brahmins and *Maraipora* Brahmins were the classes who had

[65]. *Ibid*, 441.

[66]. Stock 1899, 314.

[67]. Garrett 1910, 140.

[68]. Hunter (V.), *op. cit*., 190.

[69]. Gait, *op. cit*., 369.

fallen in rank of the Hindu priests. They could visit and marry only among their respective castes. The *Doivanga* Brahmins would practice astrology, prepare horoscopes, discover stolen goods, and were able to compose almanacs. They were frequently seen in the streets with the almanacs in their hands. The *Doivanga* Brahmins were also sunk in status.[70] The pure Brahmins despised them and would not maintain any social relation with this class.

The *Pir Ali* Brahmins were another group of degraded Brahmins. The Tagores of Calcutta belonged to this class of the Brahmins.[71] They were the original residents of Narendrapur, near Rajahat in the District of Jessore. Their ancestors were declared to have lost their caste on the ground of smelling of forbidden meat in the house of Pir Ali Khan, a Mahomedan.[72] Social differences among different categories of Brahmins were very high. The *Pir Ali* Brahmins were despised by other Brahmins, and were prohibited from visiting the temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri or offering puja to the deity by the legislation provided under Section 7 of Regulation IV of 1809.[73] Around the first decade of the nineteenth century, two Brahmins of Calcutta belonging to the Pir *Ali* group tried to wipe out the stain of *Piralism* by expanding a large sum of money. But they were disappointed.[74] No respectable Hindu family of Calcutta or around Calcutta would agree to tie up matrimonial relations with the Tagores of Calcutta. The pure Brahmins even refused to visit their houses. A man named Shibu Ghosh, a Kayastha, married a *Pir Ali* girl in 1803. He had to suffer heavily because of this marriage. Ultimately he restored his caste after a period of seven years by expending seven thousand rupees for the atonement of his transgression.[75] The Pirali Tagores of Calcutta were famous for their huge wealth and liberality. Notwithstanding, they could not regain their caste or their original status in the Hindu society.[76] The hatred of the orthodox Brahmins to the *Pir Ali* Brahmins was a unique feature of social conflict in nineteenth century Bengal.

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70. Ward 1818, 63.

71. Hunter (I.), *op. cit*., 57-8; Bhattachraya, *op. cit*., 119.

72. Westland 1871, 185.

73. O'Malley 1913, 229.

74. Bose 1883, 165.

75. *Ibid*, 166.

76. *Ibid*, 170.

The *Chandals* of Bengal were not a homogeneous community. There were sharp differences among different sub-groups of the *Chandals*. Dr. James Wise has categorised the *Chandals* of Eastern Bengal into eight classes with different occupations, the members of which would never eat together and would rarely engage in inter-class matrimonial relations.[77] The Chandals of Pabna District were a numerically strong community. They were divided into eight functional sub-castes, viz., *Halia, Chasi, Jalia, Karal, Karati, Nalo, Kora, and Kahar*. The *Halia, Chasi, and Karati* were superior to and claimed to be entirely separate from the others. These three classes would intermarry among themselves but decline to marry or eat with the other classes. Upon breach of caste rules, especially in the matter of forbidden marriages or degrading occupations, prompt punishment was awarded to the violators through an organised panchayat system.[78] Intra-caste contentions among different sub-sections of the *Chandals* were prominent in the nineteenth century.

There were many internal differences among the Rajbansis as well in the matter of caste questions. They would not accept food from any other sub-caste of them other than their own. Their caste prejudice was extended to such an extent that they refused to consume rice cooked by any person of their own sub-caste unless they were their close relatives.[79] The Goalas of Bengal were a *jalacharaniya* caste through their social status in the caste hierarchy was low. They were served by degraded Brahmins though their Brahmins in a few other districts of Bengal took a higher rank. Daga Goalas were one of the sub-castes of them. The occupation of the Daga Goalas was branding of bullocks. They were degraded in the society and water was not taken from their hands even by other sub-castes of the Goalas.[80] Internal conflict among the Goala sub-castes was high.

Census Operations and Social Conflict

People tried to promote the superiority of their own castes and dismissed the claims of others. If some members of a particular caste claimed superior status for themselves due to financial advancement, higher education, political patronage, or any other similar reason, members of other castes would not acknowledge them and

[77] . Wise in Risley, *op. cit*., 185-6.

[78] . O'Malley 1923, 32-3.

[79]. Gait, *op. cit*., 367.

[80]. *Ibid*, 371.

would resort to various taunts and reproaches. For these reasons, social contention evolved in society in severe forms.[81] The census operations in the last quarter of the nineteenth century opened up new avenues for the caste leaders to lodge their claim for higher status on the caste ladder. The following table shows how different castes were desirous for new names for their castes:-

Table-3: Claim for new caste names to the Census Authorities in 1911[82]

Caste	Locality	Name Claimed
Koch	Mymensingh	Koch Kshattriya
Pod	Bengal	Bratya Kshattriya, Pundra Kshattriya
Rajbansi	Cooch-Behar	Kshattriya Rajbansi, Rajbansi Kshattriya
Goala	Bengal	Vaisya Ballabh Gop
Sadgop	Bengal	Vaisya Sadgop
Shaha	Bengal	Vaisya, Vaisya Shaha, Sadhubanik or Shahabanik
Subarnabanik	Bengal	Vaisya
Tili	East Bengal	Vaisya
Bhunmali	East Bengal	Bhumi Das
Jogi or Jugi	Bengal	Yogi
Jolahas	Bengal	Sheikh
Kalu	Bengal	Taili
Shagridpesha	Midnapore	Madhyasreni Kayasth

The census authorities of Bengal received hundreds of petitions from different castes asking for new names for their castes. The weight of these petitions during the census operations of 1911 amounted to one and half maunds.[83] The large numbers of such petitions suggest the existence of an intense social conflict among different castes in the society.

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[81] . *Taka bangshagourab chhapie uthlen. Rama Muddafaras, Keshta Bagdi, Pencho Mullick o Chhuncho Sheel Kolketar Kayet Bamuner murubbi o saharer pradhan hoe uthlo.* Sinha, *op. cit.*, 76.

[82] . O'Malley, *op. cit*., 441-2.

[83] . *Ibid*, 440.

Conclusion

The caste system and untouchability survived in Indian society for the past hundreds of years. Inter caste rivalry was there in the society just like small waves. When the East India Company captured political power in Bengal, its servants resorted to ruthless exploitation of the wealth-producing communities. Under their rule, millions of artisans and craftsmen had to abandon their traditional occupations and leave their rural abodes. Many individuals belonging to humble caste backgrounds adopted alternative occupations and raised themselves in economic status. Due to their increased economic position, they began to demand a higher rank for their respective castes in the social hierarchy. But, their demands could only be fulfilled by breaking the existing hierarchy of the caste system in Bengal. None of the members of any caste was ready to go down from their original social place. On the contrary, all were claiming for a higher position on the social ladder. As a result, social conflict between different castes in society was unavoidable. When the British Government initiated to conduct organised census in Bengal, leaders of different castes began to register claims for better status for their castes on the social ladder and opposed offering the same position to other castes that held a lower status than them. Their demands resulted in further inter-caste conflict in the society. The aspirant lower caste people who were the victims of the caste system and the worst sufferers of untouchability rarely raised their voice to abolish the caste system. They accepted the caste system while demanding only better precedence for their castes in society. There were both inter-caste and intra-caste contentions among the higher castes and the lower castes in the same form. The untouchable groups were not free from this caste rivalry. Assertion of a higher position in the traditional caste hierarchy produced severe social conflict in nineteenth-century Bengal.

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Letter from Magistrate of Furreedpore to the Commissioner of Dacca Division vide Letter No.340, dated Khalia Khal, the 8th April 1873.

Letter from W.L. Owen, Esq. Dist Superintendent of Police to the Magistrate of Furreedpore vide Letter No.66 Dated Camp Bhanga, the 18th March 1873.

The Agrarian Structure and Social Change: Cooch Behar

Shelly Das

[Editorial Note: The present paper talks in detail about the process of the transformation of Cooch Behar from a kingdom to state to a district in the present times. The transformation also led to a rise of complexities in the society and also marginalised the status and contributions of the Rajbanshis especially.]

Abstract: *Cooch Behar has been transformed from an earlier kingdom to a State and from a State to the present status of a district. By colonial intervention (1772) the state was transformed into a quasi-feudal State. Several settlements had occurred by the East-India Company in the consecutive years. It fabricated a new social order in terms of caste hierarchies and caste differences. A group of people who migrated from the adjacent state of Cooch Behar to hold the lease of Land as well as administrative posts. This phenomenon created a complexity in the society where the best parts of Rajbashi were marginalized.*

Key Words: *Koch kingdom, Colonial intervention, feudal system, Settlements, revenue revision, rent revision, social change.*

Cooch Behar, the former princely state was located in the far eastern part of northern West Bengal in the vicinity of Bangladesh, Assam, Jalpaiguri district and the Alipurduar district of West Bengal. The political dignity of the district has kept on changing, from a Koch Kingdom, to a Princely State, then to a feudatory state to the British, and permanently it became a district town of West Bengal by its merger with India in 1949. With the end of Khen dynasty the kingdom of Kamatapura was disintegrated into various small princedoms under local rulers. The Kamrupa was frequently being raided by tribal heads from the north east region India meanwhile the Koch chiefs gradually rose into power. The political transformation of vanquishment, supreme-position and assimilation ultimately led to the formation of Koch kingdom or Cooch Behar State in the 16th century[1].

From several conquerors such as Muslim rulers of Bengal, the Mughals and sometimes by the kings of Bhutan the Cooch Behar state got far fetched consequences. Being challenged by periodic Bhutanese attack during the period of 1771-1772, Khagendra Narayan, the Nazir Deo[2] of Cooch Behar applied to the East India Company for help against Bhutan, who had commenced malevolence and carried away the Raja and the Dewan Deo[3] of Cooch Behar as captives. By extending military aid to Cooch Behar against Bhutan, Warren Hastings concluded a treaty with Cooch Behar on 5th April, 1773[4]. It is clearly mentioned in 4th Article

of the treaty "That the Raja further agrees to give over to the English East India Company one-half of the annual revenue for Cooch Behar for ever"[5]. The East India Company had honoured it as it was a golden opportunity to expand their territorial boundary up to Rangpur. The Cooch Behar state turned into a feudatory of the East India Company[6].

Before the intervention of the British, Cooch Behar State had an independent character from all aspects. The then economy of the state was solely agrarian based in nature. Consequently, the central source of revenue of the Cooch Behar State was land revenue through no proper accounts of land settlement system. After the intrusion of the Company in the State, the land revenue system had experienced a discernible variation in terms of its nature and its suitability[8]. Being transformed into a revenue paying estate of the British, the interest on land revenue took a new dimension. The Company therefore, took a keen interest in land to raise the revenue collection of the estate.

To achieve the highest accessible revenue for a short period, the Ijaradari system was introduced[9]. In 1870 to cease the greater offences and its malicious aftermath of the system a general survey of the Cooch Behar state was executed under the supervision of O'Donell. In 1877 the First Settlement was concluded in the whole state[10]. It is decided by the Jotdars where to pay their revenues to the sub divisional kutchairs. Wrong doing of payment resulted in annulment of the patta. Later the non-payment jotes were to be put to auction and sold for arrears of revenue. Thereupon the amount of the revenue raised[11]. The second settlement locally called "Ratam Charcha " (classification of land) settlement was completed in 1888-89. Another petty settlement known as the Palit Charcha (follow land) had taken place between First and second settlement[12]. The third settlement inscribed to rent revision was completed between 1912 and 1920 followed by the Final Settlement in 1920-27. Owing to these consecutive settlements revenue of Cooch Behar State went up from 3 lakhs to 18 lakhs nearly[13].

The revenue recorded an increase from Rs. 3,64,140 in 1872 to Rs. 17,98,984 in 1927. Enhancement of 2.38% land was achieved by conversion of waste land arable land grants and reclamation for revenue purposes a good part of Debattar, Brohmattor, Mukarrari and other service grants. Besides these, at every stage of revised settlement a part of the total jotes had been surrendered by the former jotedars due to their incapacity to pay revised revenue rate. The jotes thus obtained had been settled with new jotedars, many of them were immigrants from

neighbouring areas. In the economic field the First World War, subsequent great depression of the 30s and famine in Bengal also severely affected the subsisting model of land ownership in the Princely Cooch Behar. A big crisis in rural credit that succeeded the depression coerced many small jotedars to sell their lands[14].

Before and after the colonial intrusion Cooch Behar State consisted of the major ethnic group Koch or Rajbanshis[15] belonged to a semi tribal community. The rest of the people were upper class people and Muslims very few in number[16]. Rajbanshis transferred their land to the non-Rajbanshis who were merchants, moneylenders and speculators. Small Rajbanshi jotedars had transformed into under tenants, inferior to a latest class alien gentry. After a considerable time it grew a sense of sorrow and resentment among the expropriated Rajbanshi jentry. W. W. Hunter depicted that the Jotedars ``can underlet their holdings to inferior tenants or farmers, and also transfer all the rights and privileges to their under tenants. These subtenants or farmers have the power of again subletting their lands to holders of the third degree and so on"[17]. They all exercised the occupancy rights in Cooch Behar[18]. There were adhiars under Chukanidars, Darchukanidars as well as Jotedars[19]. Hired labourers called adhiar or a praja who harvested lands on the condition that he got half of the produce of the crop though he had no rights on the soil[20]. With the change of the demographic composition the land control structure of the state was changed. There were, however, subsequent changes in the pattern of land control, with the result that the Rajbanshis were gradually pushed out by the non-Rajbanshi landholders from their position of eminence[21]. In Cooch Behar too, the people from outside those who were mostly in the administration of the Cooch Behar state and were perceptively more resourceful than the local inhabitants, grabbed a large number of jotes. By 1872 in Cooch Behar 54% of the revenue paying land had passed into the hands of the outsiders[22].

From the late 19th century with the migration of upper caste Hindu gentry the situation began to change. They strengthened their stand as non-cultivating gentry and also succeeded to form a middle class at the village society. Gradual inflow of caste Hindus like Bengalis, Beharis, and Marwaris as also of Muslim from the neighbouring districts such as Kumilla, Rangpur, Pabna, Noakhali the Rajbanshis of this area met with a process of cultural assimilation and conversion through both Hinduization and Islamization. As the system of English education was not developed much in Cooch Behar the locals did not get the opportunity in administrative and judicial settings. The non-Rajbanshis Hindu upper castes having formal English education promoted themselves into a new employment advantage.

The non-Rajbanshi bureaucracy such as Babu Kalikadas Dutta (Dewan), Bulloram Mullick (Judicial member), W.O.A. Beekolt (Asstt. Commissioner Cooch Behar Div.), E.E. Lowis (Vice President in Council), Babu Karuna Niddan Palit (Head clerk to the State Council in 1884), Harinath Basu (Head clerk to the State Council in 1895), Harendra Narayan Choudhury (Settlement Naib Ahilkar), Sashi Bhushan Roy (Canoongo), Babu Priyanath Ghosh, M.A. (1885) etc. drawn from the correspondence relating to the re-settlement of the State of Cooch Behar are noteworthy[23]. The pattern of administration prevailing in Cooch Behar at this time was also ridden with medieval features which aggravate the misrule in the country[24]. As years rolled on under the British administrative system various merchants got mesmerized and set about migrating for. New road and the Cooch Behar State Railway for traffic (1893) expanded the export and import trade of the state[25]. Shekhar Sarkar in his Ph.D. work defined by 1872 in Cooch Behar 54% of the revenue paying land had passed into the hands of the outsiders. It is a paradox that outsiders possessed much land while in the Rajbansi community they were gradually ill-fated. The Rajbansis who once monopolized the local society and economy of the State were increasingly shattered by the freshly settled dominant upper caste gentry. Moreover, prevalent variant kinds of land grants and hierarchic structure of landlords incorporated a new constituent of complexity in the rural agrarian people of Cooch Behar.

The economic contour of the state had been becoming metamorphosed while the British by virtue of Anglo Cooch Treaty entered and took the charge to escalate revenue. A great transition took place in the economy through something that resembles feudalism, but is not exactly equal to it and capitalist exploitations of waste land through commercialization of crops. Though British administrations did never make any instantaneous changes in the land administration of the Princely State. With the change of the ethnic composition of the landholding class certainly the rural economic pattern of the state had been changed. Personal relationship between the landlords and the peasants was replaced by the emotionless contractual relationship. A new cultural influence originated from upper caste landlords on the jotedar. Rajbansi who were also jotedars or rich farmers came under the new flow as they were closer to this new section in terms of secular dignity.

The dilapidation of the barter system, commercialization of agriculture, the proliferation of English education in the urban Cooch Behar opened a new branch to getting opportunities for outsiders to migrate to the state. Keeping administrative needs at centre, all kinds of commercial activities grew up. Trade, commerce,

courts, judiciary, schools etc. led together an expanded employment base offering job opportunities to people.

The transfer of jotes in the hands of the non-Rajbansi people disorganised the traditional structure of the society. There were layers in terms of caste hierarchies and class differences presumed a noticeable form. It affected the egalitarian social order of the Rajbansi. It was not inconsequential that the English education and the process of urbanization served to force out the long established rural elite which were the parapet of the Rajbansis. When the Government and private enterprises schools were going to be set up even in the rural sectors the Rajbansi pupil population too had increased over the years. Rajbansi jotedars with a new elitist outlook motivated their next generation to enlighten themselves by the light of education. It resulted in the genesis of prosperous, we educated people, regarded as members of a social class, distinguished from the parental background. They took a crucial part to stir-up this community harmony and awareness owing to deploying the members of their caste for communal mobility. In the course of time through the Kshatriyaization movement, the Rajbansi pursued to uplift the social rank by declaring Kshatriya status i.e. asking for a stronger placement at the hierarchically arranged Hindu caste structure. Thus the movement simultaneously challenged the Hindu Brahmanical caste structure. The pre-colonial and post-colonial Cooch Behar carried on with agriculture as the main dominant key of economy with a few ornamental modifications in the consecutive periods. The best part of the poor Rajbansi lived the same as they were.

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List of Contributors:

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of History
University of North Bengal
Email: bijoy.nbu@gmail.com

Dr. Dhananjoy Bhattacharjee
Associate Prof. in History (W.B.E.S.)
Taki Government College, Taki, 24 Parganas (North)
Email: dhananjoy_here@rediffmail.com

Dr. Sudash Lama
Associate Professor
Department of History
University of North Bengal
Email:lamasudash@nbu.ac.in

Dr. Varun Kumar Roy
Associate Professor
Department of History
University of North Bengal
Email: varunkroy@nbu.ac.in

Dr. Rajeev Kumar
Assistant Professor
Department of History
Central University of Himachal Pradesh
Email: rajeev6jnu@gmail.com

Arundhuti Sen
Assistant Professor in History
SACT
Email: senarundhuti7@gmail.com

Asudha Mangar
Assistant Professor in History
Mekliganj College, Coochbehar, West Bengal
Email: ashumangar@gmail.com

Shelly Das
Assistant Professor
Department of History
Vivekanand College
Alipurduar
Email: shellyapd@gmail.com

Chanchal Chowdhury
Independent Researcher
Senior Joint Commissioner of Revenue
West Bengal
Email: chanchalchowdhuryboi@gmail.com

John Biswas
Ph.D. Research Scholar,
Department of History
University of North Bengal
Email: johnbiswas63@gmail.com

Tushar Kanti Barman
Ph.D. Research Scholar
Department of History
University of North Bengal
Email: tusharkantibarman89@gmail.com

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