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We are delighted to present the fifteenth issue (March 2022) of Karatoya: North Bengal University Journal of History (ISSN 2229 4880) , a peer reviewed and refereed Journal for the readers of history.This volume incorporates the diverse arena of Indian history reflecting issues of the status of women, Colonial expansion in the Central Himalayas, growth and nature of nationalism, protests and dissents of the tribals, development of communication and print culture, colonial impact on communities, post-colonial problems of language, new economic policy and displacement as well as rehabilitation. This volume of the journal followed a blind–folded review process in accepting the articles keeping in view of the observations and suggestions provided by esteemed reviewers. We would like to express our gratitude to the esteemed reviewers whose insights and suggestions undoubtedly enriched the content of this volume. Furthermore, we extend our appreciation and thanks to all the contributors whose dedication and scholarly endeavours have brought forth significant areas of research in history, contributing immensely to the academic dialogue.

We convey our gratitude to the Honourable Vice Chancellor, University of North Bengal, The Registrar and The Finance Officer for their support in this academic endeavour. We are grateful for the cooperation and support from the colleagues of the Department of History in publishing this journal. A heartfelt thanks to Shubhrojyoti Kundu for designing the cover page of the journal. The unfailing cooperation and help of the officials and staffs of the North Bengal University Press is greatly remembered for publishing the journal within a short span of time.

Editors
Dr. Dahlia Bhattacharya
Dr. Amrita Mondal

Contradiction and Negotiation: New Economic Policy and Industrial Policy Transition in West Bengal, 1987 – 2000

Dr. Abhinandan Das

Abstract:

India's transition in 1991 to a regime of 'structural adjustment' is a watershed in the post-independence Indian economy. As an effect of this New Economic Policy (NEP), the traditional and indigenous industries were exposed to a severe crisis. In West Bengal, the impact of NEP onslaught was greater. In West Bengal the situation became even worse in respect of the industries, both in the private and public sectors, which had already started becoming sick for various reasons, including lack of investment, old machineries, managerial inefficiency and lack of ability to withstand competition in the market. Initially, the NEP faced massive mass opposition mobilised by the left-wing parties, but later the Left Front government adopted its own policy to revive the stagnating industrial condition of the state. This article attempts to analyse this policy transition and its impact on industries in West Bengal from 1987-2000.

Keywords*: NEP, Left Front, West Bengal, Industry*

By the beginning of 1990s, India witnessed a sharp break from the earlier period of Nehruvian mixed economic policy. During the tenure of the Narasimha Rao-led Congress government, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was adopted in 1991, though the ground was prepared earlier. In the mid-1980s, the *Licence-Permit Raj* was withdrawn, and India's economy was gradually opened up to foreign investors and domestic private players under the initiative of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. He adopted some pro-market policies of import liberalisation, concessions to foreign capital, and reforms were also introduced in the field of telecommunication, broadband system, etc. The Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practice Act (MRTP) was redefined; electronic machinery, machine tool, drug-related industries, etc., were de-licenced; and private production of telecommunication equipment was also allowed during this period (Nayar, 1990, pp.58-63). However, Rajiv Gandhi's reform policy and his pro-business budget of 1985 were highly criticised within the Congress party itself because it was a sharp break from the earlier policy of a 'socialistic pattern of development' as an exclusive aim.[1] The trade union organisations also opposed his privatisation plan of public sector units and the oppositions cornered him by the Bofors scandal.[2] In

[1] *Rajiv Gandhi, Selected Speeches and Writings-1986*. Government of India. New Delhi, Publication Division, (1989), pp. 66-72.

[2] In 1986 the Government of India signed an arm deal with Swedish arms manufacturer AB Bofors for the supply of Howitzer guns for the Army. It was alleged that to secure the contract the company had bribed top Indian politicians and army officers. The scandal became a political agenda against the Rajib Gandhi led government in the late 1980s. For more details, see Henrik Westander. (1992). *Classified: The Political*

this situation of political agitation, the central government sharply u-turned from the liberal agenda of privatisation and liberalisation, and initiated a pro-poor budget and anti-poverty programmes, like the *Jawahar Rojgar Yojana* (1989) (Nayar, 1990, pp.98-4). Though, the idea of liberalisation was in the air, which came into effect by 1991.

It is a generalised notion that an acute balance of payment crisis and industrial deadlock prompted the newly elected Congress government headed by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to initiate a major reform in the economic strategy of the country. At this juncture of policy shift to liberalisation and privatisation, the then Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, collaborated with International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, introduced the NEP in July 1991. Though the real cause and nature of the economic crisis of late 1980s and early 1990s is a highly debatable issue. According to some scholars like P. Patnayak, C.P. Chandrasekhar and others there was no such crisis in the real economy. They argued that the crisis was caused largely by finance capital and there was no need to initiate this kind of policy reform towards liberalisation and privatisation as dictated by the Fund-Bank lobby (Patnayak, 2010, pp.52-85).

Nevertheless, India's transition in 1991 to a regime of 'structural adjustment' is considered a watershed in the post-independence Indian economy. Reform in the industrial sector was a central focus of much of India's reform effort in the early stage. India's industrial policy, before the reform, was characterised by various controls over private investment and the *Licence-permit Raj,* and almost every industrial project was primarily dependent on foreign collaboration for technical know-how and capital. As a result, a dependent industrial structure evolved under this regime. After introducing the NEP in 1991, the industrial policy was changed rapidly, with most of the central government's industrial controls being dismantled. The industrial licensing policy of the central government had been almost abolished, except for only three key industries of national interest, e.g., defence aircraft and warships, atomic energy generation and railway transport. Liberalisation of trade policy and reforms in the public sector, including partial privatisation, were initiated. Thus, after four decades of mixed economy and protectionism, the Indian economy was gradually opened up to the world market and foreign investors significantly. In January 1992, the central government also abolished its scheme of equalising domestic freight rates for iron and steel. From West Bengal's perspective, this was one of the longest-standing demands of all governments led by the Congress and the Left Front.

As an effect of introducing the NEP, the traditional and indigenous industries were exposed to a severe crisis. In West Bengal, the impact of this onslaught was more significant. Here the situation even became worse in respect of the industries, both

Cover-up of the Bofors Scandal A gentleman book. Sterling Newspapers (Original from the University of Michigan); and Chitra Subramaniam. (1993). *Bofors: The Story Behind the News*. New Delhi, Viking.

in the private and public sectors, which had already started becoming sick for various reasons, including lack of investment, old machineries, managerial inefficiency and inability to withstand competition in the market. Initially, the NEP faced massive mass opposition mobilised by the left-wing parties in the state, but later Left Front government adopted its own policy to revive the stagnating industrial condition of the state. This article attempts to analyse this policy transition and its impact on industries in West Bengal from 1987-2000.

Initial Reaction to the NEP: *from Mass Agitations to Left Alternative*

The introduction of the NEP in 1991 faced intense agitation from a major section of the opposition, including the left-wing parties. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (hereafter CPI(M)) criticised this central government's decision of liberalising economic policy both inside the parliament and in public forums. According to their manifesto, it was a complete surrender of the central government to the capitalist section led by the IMF. The CPI(M) criticised the pro-market policies of the previous Rajib Gandhi led government for the acute balance of crisis that occurred by the end of the 1980s, which made the road for the total shift of India's economic transition from the Nehruvian 'socialistic pattern of development' to the new policy of liberalisation and privatisation. However, against this policy transition, the CPI(M)'s several mass organisations expressed their grief and arranged various protest activities over the year. On 29th November 1991, the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions called the first major nationwide strike. (Das, 2013, p.175) Both at national and regional levels, the CPI(M) and other opposition parties called for several strikes, court arrests and other mass civil disobedience campaigns. In April 1993, a National Platform of Mass Organisation was formed, which organised a voluntary court arrest movement and a nation-wide strike in August and September, respectively (Das, 2013, p.175).

In West Bengal, the Left Front government initially opposed this liberalised market-economy as being dictated by IMF and the World Bank. The CPI(M)-led Left Front government of West Bengal mobilised economists, intellectuals and academicians to denunciate the liberalisation policy in the public domain. The Trade Unions also expressed their opposition through a general strike in September 1993 and with the support of the Left Front, the strike became successful in this state. This was followed by the biggest mass mobilisation organised by the left-wing parties in which 12.5 lakh (approx.) volunteers participated in the court arrest programme, and another 50 lakhs (approx.) joined in the mass sit-in campaign. These mass protest programmes continued throughout 1994 and reached their peak in 1995. Thus, throughout the first half of the 1990s, the left parties, precisely the CPI(M), organised several agitations against the central government's liberalisation and privatisation policy.

Apart from these agitations, the CPI(M) also framed a substitute path to this pro-capitalist policy based on the left-alternative. The CPI(M) argued in favour of

economic sovereignty, land reform and rural employment scheme, minimum government expenditure, tax reform, promotion of public sector units and indigenous research and development, limited use of foreign technology in some vital sectors only and finally, social development for all (Das, 2013, pp.177-8).

The Left Front in Transition: *The Policy Statement on Industrial Development, 1994*

Despite continuous militant mass agitations and demonstrations by the CPI(M), an alternative thinking had gradually developed within the Left Front Government. The state government and the liberal line of the ruling party simultaneously started arguing for a change in economic policy. They realised the importance of abolishing the licence permit system and removing the freight equalisation policy for the industrial resurgence in the state. In this changing economic structure, the Left Front government eagerly tried to attract new investments by introducing some modifications in state economic policy and offering concessions to set up new industrial units in various sectors. They indirectly acknowledged that abolishing the *Licence Raj* increased the investment proposals in the state.[3] In 1993, the state government implemented a new industrial incentive scheme by announcing an attractive package of assistance for the establishment of new units, expansion of existing units and rehabilitation of sick units. A high-powered committee was formed to consider the urgent problems under this incentive scheme.[4] Some tax concessions proposed for new capital investment for setting up industrial units in the state. The West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation (WBIDC) became more active in promoting new investments in the state. Somnath Chatterjee, one of the influential members of the CPI(M) leadership, was appointed as the new WBIDC chairman. He was one of the liberals among his party leadership and had strong connections with various national level leaders and business organisations. Soon, the Left Front government announced a renewed *Policy Statement on Industrial Development* on 23rd September, 1994. In this statement, the state government proclaimed –

> ...the West Bengal Government's own proposal for an alternative economic policy call for a statement of policy by the Government of West Bengal on the vital issues of industrial development, rehabilitation of sick units and generation of employment opportunities and protection of the legitimate interest of labour.[5]

However, it was a significant change compared to the previous policy of 1978 statement (Das, 2019, pp.1211-19). In the new industrial policy, the government announced that it would welcome foreign technology, investment and recognised

[3] *Economic Review 1992-93*. Government of West Bengal (GoWB), Kolkata. (1993), p.4.
[4] *Policy Statement on Industrial Development*. GoWB, Kolkata. (1994), p.15.
[5] *Ibid*., p.1.

the importance and key role of the private sector in providing accelerated growth. It announced,

> The State Government welcomes foreign technology and investments, as may be appropriate, or mutually advantageous... [I]t recognises the importance and key role of the Private sector in providing accelerated growth...the State Government would also welcome private sector investment in power generation... While continuing to advocate a change in some important aspects of this new Economic Policy, we must take the fullest advantage of the withdrawal of the freight equalization policy on steel and the delicensing (*sic*) in respect of many industries.[6]

Although, the policy still considered the Public Sector as an important vehicle for ensuring social justice and balanced growth. But in the context of changes in the policies of the Government of India, the need for meeting the increased demand for power and the constraints on the budgetary resources, the State Government also welcomed private investment, both domestic and foreign, in power generation, roads, communication and other infrastructure sectors.

Regarding foreign capital investment, the new statement of 1994 marked a departure from the earlier statement of 1978. Here the Left Front government upturned from their previous militant attitude, at least in the policy statement, towards the multinationals and warmly welcomed foreign capital. The statement of 1994 stated that,

> Apart from the presence of large Indian Industrial Houses functioning in the State, a number of Multi-national Corporations (MNCS) have long been successfully operating in the State... Philips, GEC, Hindustan Leaver, ICI, Silences, Bata, etc. A welcome development is that a good number of Non-Resident Indians (NRIS), MNCs directly or through foreign Governments and Indian Industrial Houses have, in the recent past, shown special interest in coming to West Bengal.[7]

The new policy statement also identified some thrust areas for private capital investment, such as electronics and IT, petrochemical industries, heavy engineering, textile, iron and steel, mining, leather and food processing, tourism, gems and jewellery, etc. To attract foreign investment, the then Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, politburo member of CPI(M) along with Somnath Chatterjee, travelled to several western countries and projected an investor friendly ambience of the state. The Left Front also claimed to have removed certain misconceptions about the state

[6] *Ibid*, pp.7-8.
[7] *Ibid*, p.7.

government's principle towards industrial investment.[8] Thus, the state government tried to promote West Bengal as an attractive destination for private capital. In this matter, Somnath Chatterjee, the then Chairman of WBIDC, consciously projected West Bengal's changing capital-friendly environment through various press conferences, interviews and discussed with several industrialists to regain confidence. He was among the liberal minded members of the CPI(M) party. He once said, "We must attract private capital. I don't see any alternative." (Das, 2013, p.181)

Immediately after the announcement of the new industrial policy, the local chambers of commerce extended their support to the publicity campaign of the state government. International consultancy company, Arthur D. Little, appointed by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), commissioned a report on West Bengal's industrial future. The state government and the CII also jointly commissioned another consulting firm, Price Waterhouse, to promote West Bengal's potential for investment to the multinational investors. These reports emphasised the strong partnership between government, industry and labour and indicated several industrial sectors with strong growth potential.[9] These new initiatives reveal the state government's eagerness for foreign capitalist investment.

To highlight capital friendly image, the state government and its principal ally, CPI(M) also take various measures to control the power of the trade unions. The authority, on different occasions, repeatedly conveyed the message to the trade unions, mostly led by CITU, to go only for the just demands and maintain work discipline and work culture. Even, Jyoti Basu verbally warned the trade union leaders several times and ordered them to maintain cooperative labour-business relations (Sinha, 2004, p.85).

Thus, same as like the central government's NEP, on the one hand, the Left Front government also promoted multinational corporations and large Indian industrial houses. Ironically, on the other hand, the new industrial policy of the Left Front government did not announce any incentive scheme for the development of small-scale labour-intensive industries. This indicates the contradictory position of the Left party in power. While in its electoral propaganda the CPI(M) argued vehemently against the NEP and worldwide capitalist imperialism, but in practice the Left Front government was trying to ensure capital investment, irrespective of its colour, in West Bengal.

Condition of Industries in West Bengal during the Period of Policy Transition

Between 1987 to 2001, the Left Front Government was democratically re-elected to the office for four times through legislative elections in West Bengal. Thus,

[8] *Economic Review 1995-96*. GoWB, Kolkata, 1996, p. 43.

[9] For details see Confederation of Chambers of Commerce (CII). (1995). *A Vision of West Bengal's Industrial Future: A Strategic Perspective*, project prepared by Arthur D. Little, Inc., Kolkata.; *Doing Business in West Bengal, India*, GoWB, project prepared by Price Waterhouse Associates, Kolkata, (1995).

throughout this period, the state has achieved a steady government, which should be reflected in its overall socio-economic development. Between 1984 and 1994, the state accounted an annual growth rate of 5.7 per cent in food-grains production and achieved a leading position in India. After the announcement of the state's new industrial policy, the '*Shilpa Bandhu*' (friend of investors) or the 'Single Window' clearance cell of WBIDC was reconstituted in 1994 for the speedy clearance of new industrial investment proposals. Because of these positive factors, the state increased industrial investment. In the period from 1991 to 1999, West Bengal received 2031 investment proposals involving a total investment of Rs. 47393.93 crore. This includes 256 NRI/FDI projects involving a total investment of Rs. 19512.01 crores. Out of those proposals, 338 projects with a total investment of Rs 8688.21 crore were implemented in the state during this period.[10] Regarding the Industrial Entrepreneurs Memoranda, the share of such investment proposals increased to 5.1 per cent during the period from January, 1995 to December, 1999 compared to 3.4 per cent from 1991 to 1994 (Pederson, 2001, pp.646-68). Considering the new industrial policy of the state government, this change was significant. This implies that after the new policies were announced in 1994, the entrepreneurs became more interested in investing capital in the state.

Despite this increase in new industrial investment, the new economic policy could not resist the decline of the industrial output of the state. The Table 1 shows that in terms of ex-factory value added of output, West Bengal's share was reduced to 6 per cent in 1991 when the NEP was announced. This ratio was further reduced to 5 per cent and 3.9 per cent in 1994-95 and 1999-2000, respectively (Pederson, 2001, p.662).

Table 1: Ex-Factory Value Added of Output in West Bengal

Year	Share of West Bengal in total value of output in the country (%)
1985-1986	7.9
1990-1991	6
1994-1995	5
1999-2000	3.9

Source: *Economic Review*, GoWB, 2004-05, P.108

Regarding the number of approved proposals of foreign investment projects and approved foreign capital investment, West Bengal accounted for only a little more than 2 per cent during this period. The Haldia Petrochemical Complex, one of the most hyped industrial projects of the Left Front government, was commissioned in the year 2000, and this single project accounted a large investment share of the state in the early 1990s. Though, from the beginning, this project faced several problems, such as delays in getting a licence and clearance from the Central Government, the

[10] *Economic Review, 1999-2000*. GoWB, Kolkata, (2000), p. 39.

inadequacy of capital and raw materials, managerial inefficiency and above all, conflict of interest between the state and the investors. This seems a burning example of the failure of the notion that large-scale investment is essential for the development of a nation.

The condition of the organised industrial sector in West Bengal became more severe in the middle of the 1990s when some large well-established multinational companies such as ICI, Philips, Shaw Wallace and many more shifted their headquarters to other states from Kolkata. This indicates capitalist houses' lack of faith in the industrial potentiality of the state. Kolkata, once the industrial capital of British India and the whole East Asian region, gradually lost its position as an automatic choice of capitalist investment. Apart from these foreign companies, several large-scale Indian conglomerates and local medium and small-scale manufacturing units also became very sick and closed their factories by the end of 1990s. The traditional jute and engineering machine-tool industries faced a major blow. By the end of the millennium, West Bengal accounted for a large share of sick industries in India. The state-owned public sector enterprises have also incurred heavy losses throughout this period. In a liberalised economy, West Bengal failed to compete with the other emerging regions of the country in terms of offering incentives to investors and attracting new capital investment. The state government introduced several schemes, and offered easy loans for the prospective investors, but many of these projects were either poorly executed or abandoned in a very short time. As a result, throughout the 1990s, West Bengal depicted a gloomy picture of the industrial resurgence, and instead of the new industrial policy, the Left Front government failed in reversing the industrial decline of the state.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be argued that there was an ideological contradiction regarding the NEP inside the CPI(M) party itself and also in the Left Front government of West Bengal. Despite various mass agitation, mobilised by the left-wing parties especially led by CPI(M) in the initial period of the 1990s, the left in power in West Bengal tried to maintain a cordial relationship with the private capital and welcome foreign investment to revive the sinking industrial structure and dilapidated infrastructure of the state. The ruling left party in West Bengal imposed the policy of 'collective bargaining' and peaceful negation of industrial disputes to control the militant labour unrest. Here, the government directly intervened in any kind of industrial conflict between the workers and factory owners and tried to negotiate to improve the capital friendly image of the state. Hence, the working class lost their right to take any independent decision to safeguard their class interest against the capitalist section and became more venerable. However, despite all these measures, the industrial condition did not improve sufficiently. West Bengal gradually lost its previous superior position in the industrial map of the country to the other emerging states.

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Forays of the English East India Company into the Kumaon-Garhwal Belt of the Central Himalayas (1800's-1840's)

Anukta Gairola

Abstract:

After the Gurkha ruler was defeated in the Anglo-Gurkha war (1814-15), the treaty of Sugauli (1815) was signed and as war indemnity, the areas of Garhwal and Kumaon in the Central Himalayan region along with the territory of Sikkim that belonged to the Gurkha king were transferred to the Company. The paper attempts to explore various reasons of interest that the Company had in gaining access to the Central Himalayan region during the period of 1800's-1840's. The paper draws out the importance of the Himalayan region as a haven for the Europeans traveling far from 'home'. The development of hill stations of Mussourie, Lansdowne, and Nanital as retreat centers attest to the interest of the Company in the region. Furthermore, both land revenue and revenue from the rich forest wealth were important reasons for the Company to gain access to this region. In addition, the new army recruits that were available in the region became an important source for expanding the strength of Company's army. Last but not least was the trade with Tibet that attracted the attention of the Company. The author of the paper aspires to examine the diverse contributing factors that led the Company to choose the Central Himalayan region as an area for its political expansion.

Keywords: Garhwal-Kumaon, Gurkha, Company, Revenue, Soldiers, *Bhotiyas* and Political expansion

Introduction

The political sway of the English East India Company over the Indian subcontinent began with their victory in the battle of Plassey in 1757. After defeating the forces of *Nawab* of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah, the Company earned *Diwani* rights over one of the most fertile and richest provinces of India. The revenue from the region helped the Company to organize a strong army and meet the cost of the conquest of the rest of the country. Historians have divergent views while describing the motives for the territorial conquest of the Company. While scholars like P.J. Marshall have argued that the territorial expansion was "neither planned nor directed from Britain" (Marshall, 2003, p. 24), for other scholars, the imperial expansion was motivated by the fiscal and military needs of the Company, rather than interests in trade (Bayly, 1989, p. 10). P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins share the view that the expansion of Company was "the progress of Gentlemanly Capitalism" (Cain and Hopkins, 1993, pp. 323-24). They have argued that the revenue from the subcontinent was essential for internal and external trade and this in turn created an impulse to conquer. Bipan Chandra has also argued that the expansionist policy of the Company was guided by the needs of the British industry (Chandra, 2020, p.

97). Bandyopadhyay has commented that the commercial and political expansion are the most important reasons behind the story of imperialism which began with the Company and later was taken over by the British Crown (Bandopadhyay, 2014, p. 60). Thus, the imperial expansion of the British in the Subcontinent seems to be intrinsically linked to their need for revenue and markets. However, scholars while chronicling the story of the political expansion of the British into the Indian subcontinent often concentrate on the dynamics that existed between the British and the various post-Mughal regional polities. In this regard while the relationship between the British and regions like Awadh, Hyderabad, Bengal, Mysore, Punjab have received tremendous scholarly attention, the same cannot be said for the Central Himalayan polities.

This paper attempts to understand the motives of the Company to conquer the Central Himalayan region and incorporate it within its imperial framework. Through an understanding of the imperial expansion in these peripheral areas, it is hoped that a fresh perspective can be brought into understanding the political expansion of the English East India Company.

I

After the Gurkhas conquered the region of Kumaon in 1790, it raised an alarm for Pradyuman Shah (1787-1804), the raja of Garhwal, to militarize the region and prepare for the onslaught of the Gurkhas into his own territory. Captain F. V. Raper (who was sent to Garhwal by the Company to gather information about the region) has pointed out in his survey that Pradyuman Shah took a loan from one of the *Bhotiya* trader from village Mana to recruit an army and protect his realm.[1] However, his measure could not match the military might of the Gurkhas under Bahadur Shah, regent of the minor king Ran Bahadur (1777-1799) of Nepal, who in 1792, after securing Almora, attacked the territory of Pradyuman Shah (Saksena, 1956, p. 9).[2] This attack though could not lead into any definitive territorial gain for the Gurkhas due to an attack of the Qing Emperor on Nepal itself. However, the 1792 episode was a testimony of the military strength and might of the Gurkha army, the full force of which was felt by the Parmar Rajas of Garhwal later. In 1803, the Gurkhas, under the leadership of Bikram Shah (1799-1816) launched an attack on Srinagar, the capital of the Parmar Rajas of Garhwal. Pradyuman Shah unable to face the unexpected development fled to the plains for refuge while his son Sudarshan Shah (1815-1859) escaped to seek Company's refuge in Bareilly (Bahadur, 1992, p. 199).[3]

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[1] Captain R.V. Raper. (1807). *The Narrative of a Survey to the Purpose of Discovering the Source of Ganges XI*. Calcutta: Asiatic Researches, p. 525

[2] A treaty was signed and Pradyuman Shah agreed to pay a hefty amount of Rs. 25,000 to establish peace from the Gurkha menace. For next 12 years there was a period of external peace in Garhwal.

[3] Though, Pradyuman Chand (Shah) with the help of Ram Dayal Singh, the Gujar Raja of Landhura fought against the Gurkha's at Kurbura in Dehradoon, but he lost the battle and died at battle field.

By 1804, the Gurkhas had finally occupied the region of Kumaon and Garhwal. Hastidal Chautara[4] and Bumb Shah were given the reign of administration in Garhwal. Next on the Gurkha expansionary chart lay the kingdom of Sirmaur, through which they wanted to push further west into Kangra and beyond. Meanwhile, the king of Sirmaur, Karm Prakash (1793-1815), had to flee Sirmaur due to the machinations of the opposition. The fugitive king asked the Gurkha commander Amar Singh Thapa for their support to reclaim the throne which the commander happily lent. Though Amar Singh Thapa's forces did help to reinstate Karm Prakash, his role became largely ceremonial with the Gurkhas controlling administration in Sirmaur. The Gurkha forces then advanced up to Kangra where they were stuck in a lengthy siege and the alliance of Ranjit Singh with the ruler of Kangra saw the Gurkhas retreating from Kangra in 1809. The returning Gurkha forces returned to Sirmaur where the ruler Karm Prakash was deposed for his failure to supply men and resources to the Gurkha army during its siege of Kangra. The deposed Karm Prakash like the Garhwal ruler went over to the EIC for support while Amar Singh Thapa's son transformed Sirmaur into a vassal state of the Gurkhas. With the Westward expansion of the Gurkha kingdom blocked by the might Sikhs, the expansionary needs of the Gurkha kingdom looked to encroach upon the British Indian territories.

It has been argued by few historians that Bhim Singh Thapa underestimated the power and might of the EIC and felt that the opportunity was right to encroach upon Company's territories as he felt the Company was suffering from multiple wounds, any of which if pressed could turn fatal (Chowdhury, 1960, p. 161; Regmi, 2007, pp. 199-232) Meanwhile the cessation of Gorakhpur to the EIC had brought the Company in close contact with the frontier of the Gurkha kingdom. The Gurkhas took advantage and begun infiltrating through the Terai region absorbing multiple villages which were situated in disputed territory or within British territory itself (Shaphalya, 1969, pp. 1-9). The annexation of the areas of Butwal and Sheoraj by the Gurkhas was protested by the Company who claimed it as their own territory and it was the dispute around these two territories that served as a spark leading to the Anglo-Gurkha war in 1814. The Anglo-Gurkha war concluded in 1815 and a peace treaty was signed between the Company and the Gurkha Raja at Sugauli. According to this treaty, the region of Sikkim, Terai, Kumaon, Garhwal and Sirmour became part of the Company's territory. Within the territory of Garhwal, the western half of the kingdom lying between Alaknanda and Mandakini were given to Sudarshan Shah, son of Pradyuman Shah. The rest of the region came directly under the control of the Company. The eastern part of Garhwal along with Kumaon were recognized as non-regulation Province and this legal status even after the region's incorporation into the larger administrative unit of North Western

[4] Chautara or Chautariya was a regional affiliation. However, Mola Ram the poet and painter of Garhwal in his text *Garhraj Vansh Kavya* have used this name for Hastidal.

Frontier Province. While the region of Sirmaur was handed back to Karm Prakash but his court was placed under the supervision of a Company's resident.

Mola Ram in his text *Garhraj Vansh Kavya* has pointed out that in Garhwal, corruption and personal ambitions of court officials were responsible for the political turmoil in the region. Even under the Gurkhas this phenomenon continued. This image of the Gurkha invaders as ferocious barbarians, ravaging the Himalayan lands and destroying its peace and stability is a standard trope in regional histories. This trope was popularized by the Company's documents which portrayed an image of cruel and vicious Gurkha rule. Such a portrayal allowed the Company officials to argue that their main aim was to end the tyrannical rule of the Gurkha governors in Garhwal and Kumaon and free the people here from their exploitative iron fist rule thereby legitimizing the Company's incursions into this region. However, this paper will show that the reason for the company to enter into this region were far more complex and demonstrate that the perception of the Gurkha rule as evil and tyrannical was far from the actual reality.

II

One of the primary causes for the Company's intrusion into the Central Himalayan region was the desire for revenue. However, the Company officials were quick to realize that maximum benefit from the region of Garhwal and Kumaon could only be achieved through systematic governance, and establishment of law and order in the region. Their direct involvement in this region allowed the Company to understand the nitty- gritties of revenue administration here. Equipped with this knowledge, the Company initiated a process of agrarian expansion in the region through extension of cultivation of crops like rice, wheat, barley, buckwheat, and commercial crops such as amaranth, ginger, turmeric (Agarwal and Siva Krishnan, 2000, pp. 30). The early Company officials were aware of the agrarian benefits enjoyed by the region of Kumaon and Garhwal and the early records of the Company show them making a conscious effort to develop an environment for further agrarian growth and prosperity.

In order to maximize the land revenue from the region of Garhwal, the Company undertook an extensive survey across the entire region which was conducted by G.W. Traill, Deputy Commissioner of Kumaon. The aim of the survey was to understand the people and the extent of cultivation in Garhwal. According to the early Company official records, the region of Doon yielded a revenue of over a lakh per annum under the Parmars. Under the Gurkhas this had fallen down to an amount of less than Rs. 50,000.[5] The Company officials tried various methods to systematize the process of revenue administration with the ultimate aim of extracting maximum revenue. Through their repeated attempts to increase the revenue yield from Garhwal, the Company officials realized that government

[5] James B. Fraser, An Account of a Journey to the Source of the Jumna and Bhagirathi Rivers XIII (Calcutta: Asiatic Researches, 1810), 466.

incentives in the form of tax remissions, support for extension of agriculture into uncultivated areas could play a pivotal role in maximizing the produce from soil.[6] In one of the early letters written by Captain H.Y. Hearsay to the Governor General at Fort Williams, this sentiment is reiterated when the former mentions that during the Gurkha rule, the revenue from the entire region of Garhwal was around 3 Lakhs of Rupees in grain and coin which, he argued could be extended up to 6 lakhs of rupees per annum if managed leniently.[7]

The Company was also aware of the various other resources that were found in abundance in the Central Himalayan region which they were looking for an opportunity to tap into. Deciduous trees like *Deodhar* and pine grew in abundance in the forests of Garhwal and Kumaon. Entry into this region meant that the Company now had access to fine quality timber. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the exploitation of the region's vast stands of deodar and pine was confined to the smelting fuel needs of the mining industry in copper and iron. The expansion of Indian railways and its voracious demand for fuel and sleepers caused a rapid depletion of lowland hardwood forests across India. In such a situation, the entire region from Garhwal and Kumaon to Kashmir became a crucial source of timber for railway and other commercial needs. The Government awarded harvesting rights to contractors who used local labor for the felling and dressing of timber to meet the requirements of the British Government (English, 1985, pp. 61-79). The clearing of thick forests also paved the way for the establishment of tea plantations while also providing fuel for activities associated with tea production (Rawat, 1995, pp. 311-22)

While timber was one of the most important commodities obtained from the forested regions of Kumaon and Garhwal, the Company was mindful of the economic importance of the other forest products in this region as well. Consequently, it is not surprising to find evidences in the early Company records of duty levied on individuals who sold forest products like bees-wax and honey in nearby local markets.[8]

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[6] During the early period of the Company's rule in Garhwal, *padhans* and *thokdars* were given tracts of wasteland or forested areas by the government to settle tenants. These grants called *nayabads* were not taxed till the new settlement took place and these *nayabad* settlements played a very important role in increasing agrarian production.

[7] Captain H.Y. Hearsay to John Adams, Secretary to the Government, 24 August 1814 cited in cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 4. Also see Letter from W.L. Gardner to Colonel Nicholls Commander in Kumaon, Camp Jamar Prnc., May 14th 1815 cited in cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 97. Where W.L. Gardner points out that total loss in revenue of the Gurkha Raja after the Peace Treaty with the English government is estimated to be 8 lakh out of which 2 lakh alone has been estimated as loss of revenue from Garhwal.

[8] H Newnham, Secretary Board of Commissioner Furrukhabad to Mr. Moore Esq, Collector of Sehrunpore, Pre-Mutiny Record, 30th January 1819, List no. 1 Volume 1, DSA, 83-84. Further in a letter by the same person dated: 31st October 1819, The Secretary had specified the duty to be levied which should not hamper the trade and should encourage new region within the Doon valley to be cleared for expansion of agriculture. Also see M Moore, Collector of Sehrunpore to Henry Newnham Esq., Secretary of the Board of Commissioner Furruckhabad, Pre-Mutiny Records, 10th Nov 1818, List no.1 Volume 3, DSA, 18-20. From

The other important object from this Central Himalayan region which was exported in large quantities by the Company was opium and hemp. In the region of *Jaunsar Bhawar* opium and hemp were grown by the people in the villages. These were then sent to Doon where it was exchanged for grains. The importance of a commodity like hemp is evident from Captain Hearsay's letter to John Adams where he mentioned that the huge quantities of hemp found in this region would be sufficient for all the navy of England (Saksena, 1956, pp. 1-9) The Company wanted to control the trade in opium and hemp and hence asked its officials to record the average quantity produced in the province and the rate at which it was sold per *maund*.[9] To effectively collect opium from the cultivators, the Company appointed two officials who would also assess the quality and rate of the produce.[10] Gradually, the Company decided to monopolize their control over the opium trade. For this purpose, they decreed that the cultivators could only sell opium to the Company and no one else. Furthermore, a special board was formed by the Company to deal with commodities like salt and opium. This board forbid anybody to trade in opium or salt unless registered with the Board. Strict punishments were given to people who attempted to trade in these two goods without permission from the government.[11] The Company's control over the opium trade is evident in one of the letters to the Sudder Board of Revenue Allahabad in which the Commissioner of 1st division stated that if ever any division of another district required opium, it would be forwarded from Dehradoon.[12]

Along with these products, the Company officials were also very impressed by the quality of paper found in the hills of Kumaon and Garhwal. The paper found in the hills was of a superior strength and would not break or crack however much it may be bent or folded. Also, it was resilient to moisture. Prior to the coming of the Company, the paper was used across the region for writing genealogical records or other such accounts. The paper was made from the bark of an oak tree peculiar to the region and through Company's intervention the paper was available at a price 25 percent cheaper than what it used to be.[13] The discussion so far has shown the

106 mouza in Doon valley, an annual yield of Rs 5000 from forest products is mentioned. Moore argues that people have resorted to abandoning agriculture and showed an inclination to work in forests to escape duties and taxes. Therefore, he argues that a duty on selling of forest goods would be a welcome move.

[9] J. R. Hutchinson, Commissioner of Revenue Meerut Division to Lieut. Colonel Young, Political Agent Dehradoon, Pre-Mutiny Record, 14thApril 1834, List 1 Volume 81, DSA, 113-114. In his reply dated: 26th August 1834, Lieut. Colonel Young wrote that in the province of Doon opium is sold at a rate of Rs 160 per maund or Rs 4 per seer. 129-130.

[10] Letter to J. R. Hutchison Esq, Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit for the 1st Division Meerut, Pre-Mutiny Record, List no. 1 Volume 81, DSA, 200-202.

[11] Commissioner Office 1st Division to Lieut. Col Young, Political Agent for Dehra Doon, Pre-Mutiny Record, 26th Dec 1833, List no. 1 Volume 7, DSA, 365. The example given is of salt but even for opium this kind of vigilance was seen by the British government all across the subcontinent.

[12] H.S. Boulderson, Commissioner Office 1st Division to Sudder Board of Revenue, Allahabad, Pre-Mutiny Record, 3rd April 1837, List no. 1 Volume. 81, DSA, 238-239

[13] M.R. Murray Lt 2nd Battalion of Native Infantry to Capt. Brownrigg, Secretary of Military Board, Almora, Military Proceedings, 15th October 1816 and 21st December 1816, Letter no.122 and 123, NIA.

diverse and varied economic resources that were present in the Garhwal-Kumaon region of the Central Himalayan belt. The current discussion also makes it clear that it was with a view to exploit these vast agrarian and forest resources that the Company entered into the region in question.

III

One of the most important factors that drew the Company into the Kumaon-Garhwal region was their desire to control the trans-Himalayan trade. Scholars have shown that the region of Kumaon-Garhwal had extensive trading links with Tibet from the pre-colonial period (Joshi and Brown, 1987, pp. 303-317) Historically, a mercantile community referred to by the Company officials as '*bhotiyas*' were actively involved in this region's trans- Himalayan trade. They exchanged sugar, grains and manufactured wool from the Lesser Himalayas for salt, wool, animals and borax from the Tibetan plateau. Large herds of sheep, goats and yak were used as pack animals to traverse the hilly mountainous routes. When the Company controlled these regions post the treaty with the Gurkhas, their main aim was to exert strategic control over this lucrative trade. John Pemble has written that the annexation of Garhwal was contemplated "not much with a view to revenue as for the security of commercial communication with the country where shawl wool is produced" (Pemble, 1971, p. 85). The Company's desire to secure the Tibetan trade was primarily fueled by the needs for markets for their manufactured items. In this regard, the Tibetan kingdom was an untapped market for the Company to try and capture.

It must be kept in mind that Tibet had direct commercial linkages with China. A large number of Chinese products found their way into the Tibetan markets from where they were re-exported through the trans-Himalayan trading routes. The Company also wanted to control this Tibetan trade in the hopes of getting access to China and their markets as well. As early as under Warren Hastings an emissary was sent in the form of George Bogle to Tibet to negotiate commercial relations between the two countries (Chansoria, 2008, pp.1-8). Though Bogle was received warmly by the *Lama* in Tibet, who even spoke to the Chinese emperor regarding establishing trade relations with the Company, the *Lama's* untimely death ended the Company's hopes of securing a commercial deal with Tibet. Hence, following the treaty with the Gurkhas, it was through the agency of the *Bhotiya* traders that the Company wanted to secure its control over the Tibetan trade and get an entry into the Tibetan lands. Influential *Bhotiya* traders with links to the Tibetan plateaus were identified as political ambassadors who would serve as bridge between the Company and the Tibetan authorities and help the Company gain an entry into the Tibetan lands (Bergmann et all, 2011, pp. 104-129).

Since the *Bhotiyas* played a crucial role in the Company's plans, it was important to gain the loyalty of these elements so that they could help in furthering the Company's interests in Tibet. The Company's overall attitude towards the *Bhotiyas*

became evident when the *Dogras* invaded Western Tibet in 1841. This conflict severely affected the trans-Himalayan trade with several Tibetan marts which the *Bhotiyas* visited shutting down. To provide some relief to the *Bhotiyas* and in the hopes of securing their loyalty, Lushington, the then commissioner of Kumaon exempted the *Bhotiyas* from paying any revenue (Bergmann, 2016, pp. 88-98). The tax concessions were aimed at winning the support of the *Bhotiyas* and it was hoped that they would spread the message of the benefits of the Company rule to Tibetan authorities. The important role of the *Bhotiyas* to the Company's strategic program becomes clear when one notices that a traditional custom of Tibetan authorities collecting land tax from *Bhotiya* merchants residing within British territories continued till the 1890s. Though this was an infringement of Company's sovereignty, Lushington rejected any advice to change status-quo[14].

The Company efforts seem to be bearing fruit when the major exports from Kumaon to Tibet starts to comprise broadcloths, cotton-cloths, chintz, matchlock, dyes, sugar, brass-pots, beads to name a few. These were all products of the ever-expanding British industrial economy in India which gradually found their way onto Tibetan markets (Traill, 1928, pp. 98-99). The second half of the nineteenth century also saw an increase in the wool trade through the high valleys of Kumaon which increased from 800 kgs in 1841 to 3,30,000 kgs in 1901 (Roy, 2003, pp. 271-272). The industrialized wool mills in market towns along the foothills fueled a growth in demand. Thus, the trans-Himalayan trade and the need to establish commercial relations with Tibet and possibly China remained an integral factor for the entry of the Company into the Central Himalayan region.

IV

The Company servants who were residing in the Indian subcontinent from 1700-1800 always lamented about the overcrowded cities of the Gangetic plains and the tropical climate that was unlike what they were habituated to in the European metropolis (Pradhan, 2017, p. 6).[15] Therefore, the foundation of hill station has been seen as an attempt of the English government to create spaces within the newly acquired territory that could act as retreats for the new settlers. These hill spaces were both secluded and had similar climatic conditions that the Europeans were accustomed to. In addition, various scholars while attempting to understand the discourse regarding the foundation and popularity of the hill stations in the Indian subcontinent have argued that, for the Europeans the hills served as transitional space to reduce their sense of 'aloneness' and displacement from home while familiarizing them into their new surroundings. While explaining the climate of

[14] G.T. Lushington to R.N.C. Hamilton, Kumaon Division Political Letters Issued, 14 September 1842, Volume 50, SAUPF.

[15] In the book Pradhan has quoted Lady Eden's account about the excruciating heat in the plains of United Province and after returning to the Hills she can breathe again in the fresh and cool air. Also read D.M. Grey, Assistant Surgeon to Capt Young, Deyrah, Pre-Mutiny Records, 13th October 1829, List no.1 Volume 5, DSA, 47.

Dehradun in his memoir, G.R.C. Williams commented that during the sultry season of May and June, the cool breeze from the *Shiwalik* hills, after an occasional shower feels soothing to the Europeans and they dispense their *punkha* at night (Williams, 2010, p. 15). This was one of the reasons that the hills of Kumaon, Garhwal and Himachal were forever preferred as a retreat by the Europeans over the plains which were humid and hot. The presence of a retreat in the hills made it possible for the Europeans to bear the tropical climate. The hill stations like Mussourie, Darjeeling, Shimla and Ootacamund were favorite destinations for the Company during the summers and also emerged as important seat of imperial power under the British Government.[16]

It is interesting to note that practically all the travelers and Company officials have drawn comparisons between England and the region of Garhwal and Kumaon. In the early colonial writings, the climate, trees and the scenery of the region has been described with nostalgia reminding them of leaving their 'home'.[17] This was a process through which the colonizers were trying to appropriate the Indian landscape and thereby blur out the differences between the newly acquired land and the home left behind. This rooted the early colonist within the Indian subcontinent while creating 'non-hostile' spaces within the oriental. The attempts made by the early Company officials to trace similarities between the flora and fauna of Garhwal and Kumaon with those of Europe is a clear instance of the mechanism of appropriation at play. Therefore, one is not surprised to find Captain Hearsay arguing, the climate of northern and north eastern *parganah* of Garhwal were perfect for growing European species of fruits in wild state.[18] Furthermore, Raper's narrative which finds similarities between fruits found in wild state in the region of Garhwal with those in Europe also echo's a similar trope[19]

On hindsight, for Europeans, the hills were considered as natural sanatoriums and for this reason Indian hills became home to summer resorts and medical sanatoriums. Therefore, all new settlers would be sent to these hill stations after completing their long and torturous journey from the metropolis in order to bring back their health and acclimatize them to these new lands. Furthermore, for the reasons of health and hygiene the colonizers preferred the pure and tranquil climate

[16] Shimla was made the summer capital of the British India in 1864. Darjeeling was the economical capital of Bengal presidency and Lord Ellenborough made Ootacamund as the summer capital of Madras Presidency. Annual Migration of Local Government to the Hill Stations, in Home Department (Public), Part A, National Archive of India, 163-209.

[17] James B. Fraser. (1810). *An Account of a Journey to the Source of the Jumna and Bhagirathi Rivers XIII.* Calcutta: Asiatic Researches, 199, 201, 205-6 and 215. James Fraser while visiting source Jumna described a place called *Cursali* and compared its jungle to the Scottish wood with similar Birch trees as found in the Europe. Similarly, he has pointed out that the flowers and berries found in the region of Garhwal though of wild variety but are of the same family as found in European gardens.

[18] Captain H.Y. Hearsay to John Adams, Secretary to the Government, 24th Aug 1814 cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 4.

[19] Captain R.V. Raper. (1807). *The Narrative of a Survey to the Purpose of Discovering the Source of Ganges XI.* Calcutta: Asiatic Researches, 468, 515 and 543.

of hills over the plains which were infested with mosquitoes and insects. The new European settlers unaccustomed to the tropical climate of the Indian subcontinent, were prone to dysentery due to loss of water from their bodies. The European medical practitioners often suggested the Company officials in North India to send such settlers to cantonments in Dehradoon and Landour, where the weather was much pleasant [20]. Also, Rai Pati Ram Bahadur in his book quoted a pamphlet by E.H. Hankin titled *The Cause and prevention of Cholera* which was published in *Indian Medical Gazetteer No. XII of 1900*. Hankin argues, "Since I originally wrote this pamphlet, I have discovered that the water of Ganges and Jumna is hostile to the growth of the Cholera microbe, not only owing to the absence of food materials but also owing to the actual presence of an antiseptic that has the power of destroying their microbes" (Bahadur, 1992, p. 27). Thus, these reasons highlight the fondness of the Company for Garhwal and Kumaon in the Northern-province and hence the company was eager to acquire and control these territories in the Central Himalayan region.

V

The Anglo-Nepal peace treaty not only gave the Company political control over Kumaon and Garhwal, but also gave control over the regions military labor. It is important to understand that the recruits for the English army from the central Himalayan region were crucial in understanding the history of British army in the Indian subcontinent. The Company officials had realized the inefficiency of the soldiers of the Royal Bengal army to capture the hilly region Furthermore, the English had to depend on the local militia and martial practices to effectively control the region and protect its boundaries from any potential threat from the Nepal kingdom. During the decisive Battle of *Khalanga/Nalapani* (31 October- 30 November 1814) in which Major-General Robert Rollo Gillespie, the commander of the Company's force was shot in the battle field, the Company's military officials witnessed the bravery and conviction of the Gurkha soldiers who fought with every last drop of their blood for their commander Balbhadra Kunwar. The Gurkha forces were able to resist a month's long heavy garrisoned breach by the English army, with the water and food supply being completely cut off. Though at the end, the English forces were able to breach the fort of *Khalanga/Nalapani*, but Balbhadra Kunwar along with a small band of his soldiers were able to escape in the neighboring hills. After the end of the Anglo-Gurkha war, soldiers of the Gurkha army that were taken as prisoners of war were given an option to join the Company's army. A substantial portion of them agreed and this led to a new pool of military recruits from the region of Garhwal, Kumaon, Sirmour and Nepal.

[20] D.M. Grey, Assistant Surgeon to Capt Young, Deyrah, Pre-Mutiny Records, 13th October 1829, List no. 1 Volume 5, DSA, 47. Captain Young, D.M. Gray, the assistant surgeon has argued that the Europeans should be settled in an around Dehradoon to prevent them from falling sick.

When the Gurkha Rajas were in power in Kumaon and Garhwal they had taken several local men from the region as military slaves, who were trained in Gurkha military practice. Hearsay has argued that the Gurkha army under Amar Singh Thappa had 6000 men out of which only 1800-2000 were actual Gurkha soldiers, rest all were *Garhwali, Kumaoni* and *Sirmouri* men.[21] Even the Company recruited many *Paharees* in their army to fight the Gurkha army as these men had better knowledge of the region and of war tactics of *Gurkhalis* that were unknown to the English sepoys. James Fraser has argued that he employed 500 *Paharees* into his battalion and mixed them in every regiment.[22] After the Company conquered Kumaon and Garhwal from the Gurkha Raja, it was the soldiers trained in Gurkhali warfare that helped them in policing the region and also formed an integral part of the English army. These Gurkhali soldiers and local militia, retained their Gurkha military ethics but trained in the European military practices were appointed by the Company into four Gurkha battalions (Alavi, 1995, p. 278). These soldiers while being appointed were informed that they might be required to serve in the region away from their homeland, for which they agreed without any contestation. This became a crucial aspect for the Company that was expanding territorially in the subcontinent and required loyal soldiers who could be transferred to any location for the securing the benefits of EIC. Thus, the Company used the Gurkha soldiers to conquer regions in the hills, other parts of the subcontinent and even in expeditions abroad.[23] Though the army under the Gurkha Rajas followed the popular high caste *Kshatriya* warrior ethics prevalent in Awadh and Benaras (Alavi, 1995, p. 265). Yet the soldiers trained in Gurkha warfare were different from the soldiers of the plains as they consumed certain types of meat (except for cow's meat, even the upper caste people in the region of Garhwal, Kumaon and Nepal are not prohibited to consume meat) and were comfortable to eat food provided by the Company during an expedition. These soldiers, unlike their upper caste Easten India brothers, did not pressed the Company to provide them with money for carrying food supplies while going for an expedition outside their own homeland. Furthermore, the Gurkha soldiers did not have a problem eating in the common dining mess and living together with other fellow soldiers.[24]

Also, by the early nineteenth century the Bengal native army started showing signs of dissent against the administration of the Company's army. These peasant soldiers

[21] Captain H.Y. Hearsey to John Adam, Secretary to The Government, 24th August, 1814, cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 8.

[22] Captain Hearsey, Commanding detachment to the Hon'ble Edward Gardner, Agent Governor General for Kumaoon, Casseepoor, Camp Bilheree, 15th February, 1815, cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 58.

[23] Nicole, Deputy Adjutant General of the Army to Capt. Young, Officiating Secretary to Government Military Department, Fort William, Military proceedings of 1817, 15th July 1817, Letter no. 45 Volume 1, NIA. Adjutant General is giving orders to Captain Young to send Hill pioneers to serve in plains following the footsteps of Sirmour Battalion.

[24] Captain H.Y. Hearsey to John Adam, Secretary to The Government, 24th August, 1814, cited in B.P Saksena Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun :1809-1842, 3.

were high class *Kshatriya* or *Brahmin* recruits and they would keep their distance from the irregular corps (Alavi, 1995, p. 281). The soldiers of the Bengal native army, were demanding the Company to maintain their caste privileges and religious sentiments within the cantonment areas. In addition, these soldiers by 1820's were also resisting any administrative change that could bring the slightest infringement in order to maintain their caste superiority (Alavi, 1993, pp. 168-176). Furthermore, the martial race theory of Richard Orme had made the Company shift its recruiting base to wheat eating belt rather than rice eating belt. Therefore, for Company the soldiers trained in Gurkha military practice became a new option for recruits who were preferred over the high caste peasants' recruits from the Gangetic plains.

For the local *paharee* soldiers trained in Gurkha war tactics the Company's service was more lucrative as it came with the added benefit of pension and regular salary. Also, these soldiers were given lands around the Doon valley to establish invalid *thanna*s which helped the Company to keep a check on the soldiers who had retired from their service. These *thannas* further made the Company's service more popular. Thus, after the Gurkha forces withdrew their power from the region of Garhwal and Kumaon, a large pool of highly militarized soldiers was available for recruitment. The Company effectively used these men to train them in the European military practices to create an alternative for the peasant army created by Cornwallis and Hastings.

VI

To conclude, the paper attempts to oppose the ideology put forward by the early imperialist of saving the Himalayan region from the wrath of the Gurkha iron rod. An attempt has been made to highlight the material reasons were responsible for the Company to divert their resources in fighting with the Gurkha empire and conquering the region. However, even for the Company, their initial interest was concentrated to territorial and economic gains in the form of limited revenue and trade with Tibet. These two remained the immediate reasons for expanding in the region of Garhwal and Kumaon. However, the Company soon came across several other avenues like the timber, paper, forest produce, opium and hemp not exploited by the previous government, which would help them in generating more revenue and also produce resources which could be at disposal in the hands of the government. The *paharee* soldiers trained in Gurkhali military practices also attracted the attention of the Company's officials to widen their scope of military recruits. Further, the hills provided them with a sense of home, peace as well as a sanatorium for rejuvenating their bodies and minds. For the European children born in India, the idea of what England was could be explained through the Indian hills. This was one of the reasons why early schools for the European children born in India were concentrated in places like Mussourie, Nanital, Shimla, Darjeeling and

Dehradoon.[25] As early as the end of 18th century, Europeans travelers were undertaking travel expeditions to the sources of Ganaga and Yamuna. While undertaking these expeditions, these travelers were writing copious details of their thrilling and dangerous journey to the mighty Himalayan Mountain range. These early expeditions enticed an interest amongst first the English and then the Europeans to explore the uncharted Himalayan terrain. In the latter half of 19th and the 20th centuries, the mighty Himalayas became an attractive destination for mountaineers and adventurous to conquer the most dangerous peaks of the world. Several mountaineering schools have been established in the Himalayan regions of India and till today the western world is fascinated by the might of the Himalayas.

In the end, it is important to understand that the Company's inroad into the region led to phenomenal changes in the political-cultural and economic structure of the region. The first major change was the division of the territory and Company's conquest of a substantial part of the Garhwal-Kumaon region. In 1815, after the signing of the treaty of Suguali with the Gurkha raja, a separate treaty was signed by J.B. Fraser (in accordance with the Company) with Sudarshan Shah, the exiled Parmar Raja of Garhwal. Sudarshan Shah was given *parganahs* lying west of Alaknanada and Mandakini as far as Rudraprayag. A new capital city was founded by the Raja called Tehri on the bank of river Bhagirathi. The Company divided the rest of the conquered region of Garhwal into two parts. The region of Dehradoon along with *Jaunsar Bhawar* came under district Saharanpur, while the parts lying east of Alaknanda were added to Kumaon district under the administrative control of Commissioner of Kumaon, Mr. Edward Gardner with Almora as the headquarter for effective control over the new region. The newly conquered region of Kumaon Garhwal was administered as a non-Regulation province till 1835. Due to the remoteness and relative backwardness of the region and shortage of experienced civil servants in administering a vastly expanded territorial area, the administrative heads of the region were given flexibility in terms of introduction of English administrative mechanisms. Thus, the introduction of the institutions like *tehsils, thannas, sudder* office and revenue settlement in the region was initially carried out by Edward Gardner, but after 1816 G.W. Traill, who was appointed as the Commissioner of Kumaon-Garhwal, fine-tuned the administrative system in the region which would be followed by his predecessors for the next couple of decades. G.W. Traill devised the most extensive revenue settlement in the region. This settlement was unique because it addressed the regional specificity of agrarian and non-agrarian practices that were prevalent at time. In fact, Traill studied the society and economy of the region extensively before introducing the first British revenue settlement system (Tolia, 2009, p. 22).

[25] The earliest schools for European children in Mussoorie are Woodstock School, Wynberg Allen and St, George's College; in Nanital Sherwood School and St. Joseph's; in Shimla Bishop Cotton and Loreto Convent; in Darjeeling St. Paul's, St. Joseph's and Loreto Convent; in Dehradun The Doon School.

Furthermore, colonial rule also introduced changes in the relationship of the people with the political administration and the natural resources of the region. Earlier, the power to mediate in any judicial matter was with the *sayana* (village headmen), *thokdar* (land grantee) and the king. The British established new courts and tehsils who now looked into the judicial matters of the region. Similarly for the policing of the region new *thanas* were setup to ensure maintenance of law and order. Even for the revenue administration the traditional revenue office of *duftree* (hereditary revenue assessors) was replaced by the more efficient *kanungos* and *hill patwaris* (Tolia, 2009, p. 11). In addition, the colonial government also included forest within the purview of the colonial state. This policy restricted the people from using forest resources without remunerating the colonial government (Bisht, 2021, pp. 268-69). Furthermore, forest preservation policies restricted certain forested areas of the region as prohibited from 'human exploitation' thereby making it difficult for groups who were dependent on forests to meet their subsistence requirements. They could no longer freely extract firewood and other forest-goods from these 'protected areas'. The impact of the forest policies continues to haunt the people of the region (which was given an independent state status in 2001) by dismantling their symbiotic relationship with the forest through state intervention continuing even in post-independence times.

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Communication Revolution in an Enthusiastic Society: The Revamp of Postal Organisation and its Role in Nineteenth Century Bengal

Chanchal Chowdhury

Abstract: *In the eighteenth century, the communication networks in Bengal were archaic. The province of Bengal was a combination of its thousands of self-sufficient villages. Ordinary people could communicate only with those in their immediate vicinity. Postal communication was not intended for the general public. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, roadways were renovated and railways were introduced. The postal system of the country was thoroughly reformed, and its services were converted into cheaper, more efficient ones and made available to all. Under a hundred years of British rule, the ordinary people of Bengal became more enthusiastic about reading, writing, and communicating with others in distant places. To exchange information, emotions, ideas, and expectations with others, they sent letters in their millions through post offices. They also used the postal service to get printed books and newspapers. This tremendous change in the mental world and behavioural patterns of the Bengalis to expose them and know others by availing of the services of the post office can be called a communication revolution.*

Keywords: Post Office, Reform, Popularity, Correspondence, Communication, Revolution.

Introduction: The postal system in the eighteenth century was irregular, inadequate, expensive, and beyond the aspirations of the common people. This facility was restricted only to the ruling classes, influential aristocrats, and affluent merchants. There was no scope for the common people to avail the communication services provided by the state or private entrepreneurs in mediaeval India. With the expansion of the British Empire all over India, the requirement for more comprehensive transport and communication facilities was felt. The British government initially renovated the communication networks of India in order to maintain a smooth and uninterrupted communication channel throughout all parts of India so that they might be informed about what was happening in distant places away from the capital. Around the mid-nineteenth century, the services offered by post offices were thrown open to all, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, gender, or economic background. When the postal system, with its cheap and uniform services, was made available to all, it produced a far-reaching impact on the society of Bengal. This paper explores the revolutionary change in the thought process of ordinary people in Bengal in order to communicate with others through the fundamentally reformed postal networks in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In Bengal, references can be traced to the information exchange through written communications, like letters, notices, or royal orders from ancient times. Sher Shah, the Afghan ruler of Bengal and Bihar, reorganised the postal system of the country to a large extent. He utilised the *sarais* as a station for *dak-chauki*. The regularity

and rapidity of the postal system developed by Sher Shah were attested to by all historians (Qanungo, 1921, p.392). In the Mughal period, Akbar established posts throughout his kingdom. Two horses and a set of footmen were stationed at every five *coss* (10 miles approximately). Four thousand runners were on the permanent payroll of the emperor. On extraordinary occasions, some of them could complete a journey of seven hundred *coss* in ten days (Briggs, 1966, pp. 173-4). Peter Mundy, the British merchant who travelled to India in the seventeenth century, has recorded that correspondence was carried in India by private messengers.[1] During the rule of the Bengal *Nawabs*, the maintenance of roads and postal communications was neglected due to anarchy and confusion. In the early part of the eighteenth century, the *zamindars* were required to ensure the safety of the activities of the postal services. They were responsible for any interception or obstacle produced in the way of the despatch of letters within the territorial jurisdiction of their estate. Around the mid-eighteenth century, it would take four days' time to carry mail from Rungpour to Muxadabad.[2] The postal system in pre-Plassey Bengal was developed only for some limited parts of the country as required by the rulers of the land. The activities of the postal networks became an organisation for the rendering of public services after a period of a hundred years of colonial rule.

The increasing political causes and commercial ambitions of the East India Company prompted them to set up an efficient postal organisation in Bengal. The British rulers arrived in India from a continent where the industrial revolution had already begun its journey (Toynbee, 1956, pp.19-29). Their social behaviour and customs were different from those of the Indians. Their administrative policies for India have always been adopted, keeping in mind the interests of Great Britain. When he seized political power following the battle of Plassey, Robert Clive established a postal system in Bengal that was nothing more than a continuation of the pre-existing postal organisation of *harkaras*, or mounted carriers. He reorganised the system and made provision for a permanent and regular workforce of runners and shifted the responsibility to the local *zamindars* for keeping an adequate strength of runners.[3]

The administration of Warren Hastings placed the postal networks of Bengal upon a better foundation. The credit for setting up a regular postal system in Bengal goes to him. The posts, which were established mainly for official purposes, were made available for private communications. During his rule, the structure of a regular postal system was laid down, which was brought into effect on March 31st, 1774.[4] In the same year, a General Post Office was founded in Calcutta, with its subordinate offices spread throughout Bengal. A Postmaster-General was

[1]Mundy, Peter (1914). *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia (1608-1667)*, Vol. II., The Hakluyt Society, London, p.368.

[2]Touche, T.H.D. La (ed) (1910). *The Journals of Major James Rennell*, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, p.131.

[3]Clarke, Geoffrey (1921). *The Post Office of India and its Story*, Mayflower Press, London, p.12.

[4]*Ibid*, p.14.

appointed and postage was charged on private letters for the first time.[5] Regular postal services were established by 1775, connecting Calcutta, Patna, and Benaras with palanquins and bearers to convey people and parcels (Bayly, 1999, p. 58). The postal services of the East India Company became renowned on account of their security, regularity, and efficiency. Hastings made reforms in the postal organisation which provided delivery services for letters at recipients' houses in Calcutta and the suburbs around it.

By 1827, the territory under the East India Company in India had become large. But, there was no general postal system in their territory in India prior to 1837.[6] From the accounts of Taylor, it has been learnt that five branch mails were sent from Dacca in the 1830s. The five branch mails were from Dacca to Calcutta; from Dacca to Chittagong and Arracan; from Dacca to Mymensing, Jumalpore, and Assam; from Dacca to Sylhet, Chirra Poonjee; and from Dacca to Burrisaul.[7] The services rendered by the post offices in the Bengal Presidency were inadequate in terms of their revenue as well as their safe and speedy carriage of correspondence. Only the principal towns were connected by postal networks for the conveyance of government letters and parcels. Private people could avail themselves of the postal services only as a privilege.[8]

With the expansion of British influence all over India, the requirement for a more comprehensive postal service was felt. Prior to 1837, postal communication in the districts was entrusted to *zamindars* with large estates, and their duties and responsibilities were outlined in Bengal Regulation No. XX of 1817. The Company Government received exclusive rights to postal services within its territories under Act XVII of 1837.The East India Company government had closely controlled postal services since 1836, suppressing unlicensed "native dawks". A financial reason was behind this decision since they needed to maximise revenues from postage duty and stamps (Bayly, 1999, p.319). All the private postal services, barring a few licensees, were banned. The postal services from private operators ended when the post office was thrown open to all and the delivery of an ordinary letter was offered at a nominal rate of $^1/_2$*anna* for all parts of India by the enactment of a further Act XVII of 1854.[9]

The reforms of Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, brought a new era in the development of transport and communications in India. He carried out praiseworthy reforms in the postal system of the country. The previous postal system was corrupt, ineffective, and involved a lot of delays and difficulties in its

[5]*Ibid*.
[6]*Ibid*, p.16.
[7]Taylor, James (1840). *A Sketch of the Topography & Statistics of Dacca*, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, p.89.
[8]Clarke, Geoffrey, *op. cit.*, p.16.
[9]Cooper, Jal (1942). *Stamps of India*, Western Printers & Publishers, Bombay, pp.6-8.

delivery of services. There was no uniform postal rate. The charges on the letters were realised in cash from the receivers, which were usually in excess. Dalhousie appointed a commission in 1850 to recommend reforms in the matter of efficiency in postal services (Chhabra, 1971, p.225). The Commissioners consulted and examined both government officials and private individuals. The opinions of the Post-Master Generals of Bengal, North-West Provinces, and Bombay; Post Masters of all Presidencies; Madras Chamber of Commerce; Calcutta Trade Association; and influential private persons from Calcutta, Murshidabad, Benaras, Mirzapur, and Agra were considered. All of the consulted persons, barring a very few from the Post Masters, unanimously expressed their opinion that the existing rates of postage were far too high, which prevented the public, especially the poorer classes, from writing letters and sending communications.[10] Mr. Tayler, the Post Master General of Bengal, was of the opinion that "the present rates of inland postage undoubtedly prevent the public from writing letters which they would write if the rates were lower." The Commissioners submitted a joint report on the result of their enquiries into the Post Office of India and on the means which they considered practicable of rendering it more efficient and more extensively conducive to the public than it was before the submission of their report of enquiry on May 1st, 1851. Their major recommendations were: (a) a uniform half-*anna* rate of inland postage on letters not exceeding a $^1/_4$ *tolah* in weight; (b) compulsory use of stamps in all cases of prepayment; (c) reorganisation of Post Office establishments; (d) simplification in the process of receiving and delivering letters; (e) more extended use of accelerators and an increase in the number of delivery personnel; (f) an increase in the number of receiving houses; (g) establishment of sorting offices; (h) extension and improvement of the district *dawks*. The Commissioners had also prepared a draft of an Act for carrying out the proposals made in the Report and also a Code of Subsidiary Rules.[11] The proposal of the Commission was accepted and a uniform rate of half an *anna* for a letter weighing up to half a *tola* was introduced. It was decided that the charges would be realised from the senders in postage stamps rather than in cash (Chhabra, 1971, p.225). The half-*anna* postage stamp would carry a letter from one part of the country to another part. Before the reforms of Dalhousie, it had cost a rupee to send a letter from Calcutta to Bombay (Spear, 1978, p.217).

The reforms recommended by the Commissioners were based on the principle that the post offices would have to be maintained "for the benefit of the people of India and not for the purposes of swelling the revenues."[12] But, Strong reported that a tax called the Zamindari *Dak* Cess was introduced by the colonial government in 1862 for the maintenance of *dak* runners and for the conveyance of papers and postal

[10]Courtney, W., Forbes, H., and Beadon, Cecil (1851). *Report of the Commissioners for Post Office Enquiry with Appendixes*, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, pp.17-23.
[11]*Ibid*, pp.17, 124-5.
[12]Clarke, Geoffrey, *op. cit.*, p.22.

articles between the head-quarters of *Thanas* and the District and Sub-divisional offices.[13] The reforms executed by Lord Dalhousie in the postal system of the country were undoubtedly a remarkable chapter of Indian history. In consideration of the commissioners' recommendations, numerous new postal establishments were erected in the Bengal Presidency. In Bengal, the number of head post offices, subordinate post offices, and receiving houses were 82, 75, and 13 respectively in 1854-55, whereas the number in 1861-62 became 66, 176, and 13 respectively. A large number of subordinate post offices were opened across Bengal.[14] The post offices of Bengal have made rapid strides since 1861-62. At the end of the nineteenth century, they spread their branches almost everywhere in the province. It was reported that 144 post offices were in the Midnapore district, having 744 miles of postal communication in 1911.[15] In Burdwan district, there were 183 post offices and 656 miles of postal communication in 1908–09.[16] The ordinary public of Dacca district also enjoyed a fairly complete postal service. In 1911, there were 256 post offices of various grades.[17] The initiative of Lord Dalhousie in carrying out the reforms suggested by Post Office Commissioners opened up a new horizon for the glorious journey of the post offices not only in Bengal but also all over India. Post offices in Bengal became the most important people's organisation in India among all the organisations developed in modern times. In a society dominated by the caste system and religious divides, the postal organisation offered services to all and most successfully carried out its functions across the country.

The British rulers also introduced telegraphic communication in India. In Bengal, the construction work of a 30-mile telegraph line between Calcutta and Diamond Harbour started on November 5th, 1850, and by October the next year, the distance was successfully covered.[18] The telegraph line from Dacca to Chittagong was commenced in December 1858, and completed at the end of the following year.[19] But telegraphic communication was never developed for ordinary people in the nineteenth century.

The standard of a country's transport and communication systems play a major role not only in the field of economic progress but also determines the cultural advancement of that particular country. During the rule of Lord Dalhousie, the

[13]Strong, F. W. (1912). *Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers: Dinajpur*, Pioneer Press, Allahabad, p.94.

[14]Letter No. 2019, From G. Paton, Director General of the Post Office of India to E.C. Bayley, Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, Letter No. 2019, Camp Nynee Tal, 13th October 1862 in *Annual Report of the Operations of the Post Office of India, for the Year 1861-62*, Government Report, para.4, p.2.

[15]O'Malley, L.S.S. (1911). *Bengal District Gazetters (hereinafter BDG in short): Midnapore*, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot (hereinafter BSBD in short), Calcutta, p.133.

[16]Peterson, J.C.K. (1910). *BDG: Burdwan*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.143.

[17]Allen, B.C. (1912). *Eastern BDG: Dacca*, Pioneer Press, Allahabad, p.135.

[18]Shridharani, Krishnalal (1953). *Story of the Indian Telegraphs: A Century of Progress*, Govt. of India Press, New Delhi, p.4.

[19]Hunter, W.W. (1875). *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. V., Trubner & Co., London, p.108.

Public Works Department took into its hand the construction and repair work of roads, canals, bridges, and other public utility works. The hopes of Bentinck were fulfilled during the viceroyalty of Dalhousie when the main artery of traffic, the Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta, was completed with its bridge-works, with the exception of the great bridge over the river Soane, beyond Delhi and extending up to Peshawar (Spear, 1978, p.216; Arnold, 1865, p.253). Earlier, Calcutta was connected with England by steamships. On December 9th, 1825, the first steamer from England reached Calcutta.[20] Later, in 1847, the English East India Company started a steamer service from Calcutta to Assam (Barua, 1994, p.76). But the history of transport and communication in Bengal took a glorious turn in February 1855 when Lord Dalhousie officially opened the 121-mile railway from Calcutta to Raniganj.[21] The following table shows the distances over which the mails were conveyed throughout Bengal by railway, mail cart, horses, runners, and boats in 1860-61 and 1861-62.

Table I: A Comparison of conveyance of mails in Bengal between 1860-61 and 1861-62[22]

Presidency	Year	Railway	Mail Cart and on Horseback	Runners and Boats	Total
		Miles	Miles	Miles	Miles
Bengal	1860-61	248 1/2	411	11,592	12,251 1/2
Bengal	1861-62	358 1/2	300	11,482	12,140 1/2

It is found from the above tabular data that the railway was gradually taking the burden of carriage of mail bags. Before 1863, the mail bags were carried in the guard's van of the railway carriage if the weight was small, but when the mail was heavy, a separate railway compartment was used in charge of a mail guard. Later, railway mail service became the most important artery of the Travelling Post Office.[23] The British needed access to the vast labour force represented by the *harkaras* in order to establish new routes for the regular transmission of personnel. These *harkaras* were taught the skills of running and survival in hostile geographical tracts by their families or fellow caste members (Bayly, 1999, pp.60-3). The colonial government appointed the Indians in the postal organisation mainly

[20]Stock, Eugene (1899). *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, its Men and its Work*, Vol. I., Church Missionary Society, London, p.297.

[21]Khosla, G.S. (1988). *A History of Indian Railways*, Government of India, New Delhi, p.22.

[22] Letter No.1621, From G. Paton, Director-General of the Post Office in India, to W. Grey, Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, Dated Calcutta, 8th October, 1861, Annual Report of the Operations of the Post Office of India, for 1860-61. *East India: Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India, During the Year 1860-61*, Part I., Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1862, para.6, p.25; Letter No. 2019, From G. Paton, *op. cit*., para.6, p.2.

[23]Clarke, Geoffrey, *op. cit*., p.58.

as vernacular clerks and as *mutsuddees*, runners, bearers, coachmen, syces, boatmen, and other manual workers. At the end of the official year 1860–61, the staff of officers, clerks, and others in the postal department in the Bengal Presidency were as follows:

Table II: Officials in Postal Organisation in the Bengal Presidency in 1860-61[24]

Post	Number
Director-General of the Post Office	1
Postmasters-General	1
Inspecting Postmasters	10
Postmasters and Deputy Postmasters	260
Clerks (English)	334
Clerks (Vernacular)	32
Postmen and other servants of the Post Office	703
Road, Establishment, consisting of superintendent, overseers, mutsuddees, runners, bearers, coachmen, syces, boatmen, and others	3460
Bullock Train	347
Total	**5148**

The postal runners were largely recruited from India's "less civilised races," who had discharged their duties by facing wild beasts and wandering criminals and travelling thousands of miles with the mail bags and with the utmost honesty.[25] Many postal officials made outstanding contributions to the development of postal services in British India. In recognition of his excellent performance, Dinabandhu Mitra, the author of *Nil Darpan*, was honoured with the title Rai Bahadur (Ghosh, 1998, p.2). The renovation of roadways and the introduction of new means of transportation like steamer services and transport and communication by railways created a wider opportunity for ordinary people to develop physical communication with people living in far-off places. Personal communication among individuals developed into a social relationship and a new society in Bengal where the common people became used to writing personal letters and availing services offered by post offices.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, Calcutta became the epicentre of administrative, commercial, and intellectual activities in India. The significant contributions of the British rulers were the installation of a number of printing presses and the production of printed books for the public. Though hand-written *punthis* were available in Bengal, they were beyond the reach of ordinary people because of their paucity and high cost. These *punthis* were not produced for

[24] Letter No.1621, From G. Paton, *op. cit*., para.48, p.32.
[25]Clarke, Geoffrey, *op. cit*., p.5.

commercial purposes. There was no concept of textbooks in Bengal. We can find the names of eleven printing workshops in Calcutta from where printing services were offered in the years 1825–26 (Ghosh, 1362 B.S., p.153). The availability of brand new printed books to the common people opened up the field of knowledge for them. It was beyond the Bengalis' imagination in previous centuries that books could be a commodity or that men could make a living by printing and selling books. The average person could procure and read a *punthi* only in their dreams (Biswas, 2000, p.14). In Bengal, thousands of printed Bengali books were produced for sale around the mid-nineteenth century.[26] In the eighteenth century, paper was manually made in Bengal. The quality of this paper was of an inferior grade. The superior-grade paper, imported from Europe, was more expensive and its supply was irregular. The Mission Press of Serampore set up its own paper mill in 1809–10. On account of an accident, the missionaries imported and installed machinery driven by a steam engine around 1820, which ran till 1865. Between the years from 1820 to 1865, Serampore became the only source of machine-made local supply of paper other than imported and native handmade paper (Priolkar, 1958, p.70). Later, in 1867, the Royal Paper Mill was set up at Bally, which began to manufacture paper of modern varieties according to the European method.[27] The availability of inexpensive printed books and machine-made durable writing paper instilled in ordinary Bengalis a desire to read and write. The reading and writing habits of the Bengalis motivated them to send letters by post not only to their friends and relatives but also to those who were commercially connected to them.

The publication and distribution of newspapers and periodicals in society was a new chapter in the history of Bengal. In the mid-nineteenth century, the spread of western education, better communication facilities, the availability of good quality paper, and the supply of printed books in the market generated a new social space in Bengal. Between the years 1780 and 1818, nine English newspapers and periodicals were published from Calcutta. The most renowned among them were the Bengal Gazette, India Gazette, Bengal Journal, The Calcutta Chronicle, The Calcutta Gazette, Calcutta Courier, and Bengal Hurkaru. Besides newspapers and periodicals published in English, several numbers of them, like *Samachar Darpan*, *Sambad Kaumudi*, *Samachar Chandrika*, *Bangadoot*, *Sambad Prabhakar*, *Jnananweshan*, *Sambad Bhaskar*, *Bengal Spectator*, *Tattwabodhini*, and *Someprakash*, were published in Bengali from 1818 to 1858 (Chattapadhyay, 2000, p.18). Newspaper circulation was rare in rural areas in the 1840s, but by the seventies of the nineteenth century, it could be found in nearly every village (Bayly, 1999, p.335). These newspapers and periodicals contained valuable information

[26]James Long published a catalogue of 1,400 books in 1855. Long, James (1855). *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works, containing a classified list of Fourteen Hundred Bengali Books and Pamphlets*, Sanders, and Co., Calcutta, pp.1-106.

[27]Hunter, W.W., *op. cit*. (Vol. III., 1876), p.372; Sur, Atul (1385 B.S.). *Bangla Mudraner Dusho Bachhar* (in Bengali), Jijnansa, Calcutta, p.30.

about Bengal's contemporary society and people. The information published in the newspapers and periodicals created a huge awareness among the people of the province. If we go through them, we will find that a change had developed in the minds of the Bengalis, and they had become eager to communicate with others in order to express their economic, social, and religious perceptions. They sent hundreds of letters to the editors of these newspapers and periodicals, expressing their own views on different topics of society. The services offered by post offices helped them a lot in their efforts. The postal department's statistics back up the observation, revealing that vernacular letters accounted for 55.37 percent of all correspondence in the country in 1892-93.[28] The incorporation of Western education and the establishment of modern institutions by foreign rulers in Bengal altered the Bengalis' mental world. Other important factors which contributed to the increasing use of postal services were the emergence of Calcutta as the centre of British administration and affluent society; the evolution of the middle class; and lifting restrictions on elementary education from the lower classes.

In the early nineteenth century, the regular postal services were confined to a few main lines between important towns. District collectors were entrusted with managing their own local post offices. After 1854, when the postal infrastructure was brought into an imperial department under a single Director-General, its activities were widely extended. The actual business, like maintenance of accounts; receiving, sorting, and dispatching of letters; personnel management, etc., were done by post offices, which were divided into head, sub, and branch offices. The branch offices were opened for the purpose of rendering services in villages and at places where there was no need for sub-offices. In the history of postal communication in India, the branch post offices have always played a pioneering role. It had extended its services in remote areas by putting its charges on a schoolmaster, a shopkeeper, or any other resident of the locality who had sufficient knowledge to keep accounts. In this way, the great organisation reached almost to the doorsteps of the remote villagers of Bengal in the 6th decade of the nineteenth century.[29]

The low-cost postal communication via post offices proved to be a grace to Indians. The cheap postal rates attracted the Indians to use postal services a lot. The pan-Indian uniform postal charges popularised the postal services all over the country. The government considered the postal service a necessity for the public and not a source of income for the government. The expenditures of the imperial government on the Head of Post Offices in Bengal in the years 1874-75 and 1875-76 were amounting to Rs.22,48,464.00 and Rs.23,25,295.00, whereas receipts for the years

[28]Hamilton, Ivie G.J. (1910). *An Outline of Postal History and Practice with a History of the Post Office in India*, Thacker, Spink and Co., Calcutta, p.197.

[29]Clarke, Geoffrey, *op. cit*., pp.1-4.

1874-75 and 1875-76 were to the tune of Rs.15,69,507.00 and Rs.15,94,796.00.[30] It was reported that the postal charges after 1856 became 16 times cheaper than they were three years before. Then, at the same cost of sending a letter from Peshawar to Karachi, a letter could be sent to England (Chattapadhyay, 2000, p.96). The feature of the new postal system was cheaper services at the door-step of the public. Due to the popularity of the postal services among the Indians, they began to use them with ardent zeal. For the government, post offices have become a good source of earnings. In the Bengal Presidency, the number of correspondences through post offices in one year prior to the introduction of the half-*anna* postage in 1854-55 was 46,07,316, whereas the number was increased to 58,90,380 in 1854-55 and to 90,54,810 in 1860-61 (Arnold, 1865, p.263). The cheap and convenient postal services proved advantageous for the natives of India. Due to the popularity of the postal services among Indians, post offices became a good means of communication.

In the mid-nineteenth century, India's postal system was restructured both in principle and in its functions. Beginning in the 1860s, the general public of Bengal began to establish communication with others through the medium of post offices. The colonial authorities revamped the old postal structure and made it modern, nearby, and affordable for all. Postal services became attractive to the ordinary people of Bengal, irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. Uniform postal charges throughout India, irrespective of distances, prompted ordinary men and women to write millions of letters to their relatives, friends, and related people. The senders of letters from Bengal were not concentrated in any particular region, but people from all Bengal districts began to communicate with each other, which can be understood from the following table:

Table III: Postal Statistics of letters in Bengal Districts in 1861-62, 1865-66, and 1870-71[31]

Name of the District	Year: 1861-62		Year: 1865-66		Year: 1870-71	
	Letters received	Letters despatched	Letters received	Letters despatched	Letters received	Letters despatched
24 Parganas	249166	240537	269354	264312	437515	Not found
Nadiya	10055	11848	8277	11246	333963	Not found
Jessor	76898	145368	40294	72280	127503	Not found
Midnapur	68920	69144	87199	87990	139078	Not found

[30]Minute by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal dated 5th January, 1877. *Administration of Bengal 1875-76* (1877), p.44.

[31] Hunter, W.W., *op. cit*., (1875) Vol. I., p.221; Vol. II., pp.130, 317; Vol. V., pp.138, 237, 353, 474; (1876) Vol. III., pp.186, 410; Vol. IV., pp.168, 300, 420; Vol. VI., pp.223, 342, 440; Vol. VII., pp.125, 343, 434; Vol. VIII., pp.116, 301; Vol. IX., pp.230, 365; Vol. X., pp.195, 319, 440; Jack, J.C. (1918). *BDG: Bakarganj*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.106.

Hugli (including Howrah)	190523	157412	209111	206316	284348	Not found
Bardwan	116985	122077	140604	173155	280657	Not found
Bankura	32003	33111	37692	37638	77038	Not found
Birbhum	27065	25237	54783	73091	71190	Not found
Dacca	183769	360682	222605	298885	317223	Not found
Faridpur	49575	59780	46445	55489	87352	Not found
Bakarganj	67903	57290	75305	76372	173803	Not found
Maimansinh	65000	59991	76807	78710	140027	Not found
Chittagong	88347	82498	94330	131276	120558	Not found
Noakhali	35232	35790	40762	65951	77196	Not found
Tipperah	51117	49870	59552	57970	101102	Not found
Maldah	58194	55035	42481	43356	102653	Not found
Rangpur	85722	75862	72925	89843	186141	Not found
Dinajpur	52111	57391	80407	86954	143381	Not found
Rajshahi	91303	55220	111516	85152	142073	Not found
Bogra	20744	26190	33696	33545	57591	Not found
Murshidabad	49804	39757	35320	33656	61340	Not found
Pabna	55496	49888	61660	53779	132845	Not found
Darjiling	65488	63115	95447	89711	117236	Not found
Jalpaiguri	12374	14644	86096	53238	89404	Not found
State of Kuch Behar	14722	12876	79442	76895	77920	Not found

From the above tabular data, it can be observed that people from all Bengal districts were writing and receiving a large number of letters to and from others in the seventies of the nineteenth century. The people of Bengal came out of their small world and learnt to communicate with others living at a distance.

The post offices would carry not only letters, but they would also carry a large number of books and newspapers. According to Section 2(i) of the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, the expression "postal articles" includes "a letter, postcard, newspaper, book, pattern or sample packet, parcel and every article or thing transmissible by post."[32] From the early nineteenth century, the ordinary people of Bengal started to read printed books and newspapers of their choice. In its February 27, 1819, issue, the *Samachar Darpan* reported that a country that did not carry out printing works could not be called a "civilized nation." The same issue of the *Samachar Darpan* also reported that in the past, a limited number of people got books in their possession and got education, while the vast majority of the masses remained in darkness. Around the end of the second decade of the nineteenth

[32]*Post Office Manual: Containing Special Supplementary Rules and Regulations*, Vol. V., Superintendent Government Printing, India, Calcutta, p.6.

century, people of all classes began to procure printed books, and an estimated 10,000 books were printed in Bengal over the last ten years. These books had been distributed among different people. The person who bought a book tried to get another one, and in this way, knowledge was spreading in this country.[33] In this case, post offices became a good means for getting books and newspapers from distant places. From the following table, we can get ample testimony of that.

Table IV: Postal Statistics of Books and Newspapers received in Bengal Districts in 1861-62, 1865-66, and 1870-71[34]

Name of the District	Books received			Newspapers received		
	1861-62	1865-66	1870-71	1861-62	1865-66	1870-71
24 Parganas	1419	2164	5201	24265	25639	32881
Nadiya	-	-	2810	378	108	11159
Jessor	1151	161	1310	6960	4250	9430
Midnapur	2393	1364	4151	7515	9126	11559
Hugli (including Howrah)	345	609	3421	16456	16846	16368
Bardwan	2663	809	2597	11410	14377	15549
Bankura	43	758	1883	3838	4169	6147
Birbhum	1003	639	655	2636	5875	4261
Dacca	2273	2295	4357	23854	22977	28050
Faridpur	547	746	1297	5893	5602	3754
Bakarganj	869	1143	2477	6699	7866	15177
Maimansinh	1652	514	2936	6541	7997	9279
Chittagong	1069	1304	2918	7342	13858	16958
Noakhali	70	-	788	1603	3904	9586
Tipperah	789	1231	2352	6214	8121	9812
Maldah	-	566	752	3820	4427	4849
Rangpur	1163	1143	2637	8287	8031	7994
Dinajpur	252	524	2029	7898	7748	9543
Rajshahi	364	485	2083	9271	9458	11519
Bogra	791	695	828	1939	4315	4655
Murshidabad	351	271	245	5190	4094	5314
Pabna	-	-	1056	8922	4938	6299

[33]Bandyopadhyay, Brajendranath (ed). (1339 B.S.). *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha 1818-1830* (in Bengali), Vol. I., Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Mandir, Calcutta, p.52.

[34] Hunter, W.W., *op. cit.*, Vol. I., p.221; Vol. II., pp.130, 317; Vol. V., pp.138, 237, 353, 474; Vol. III., pp.186, 410; Vol. IV., pp.168, 300, 420; Vol. VI., pp.223, 342, 440; Vol. VII., pp.125, 343, 434; Vol. VIII., pp.116, 301; Vol. IX., pp.230, 365; Vol. X., pp.195, 319, 440; Jack, J.C., *op. cit*., p.106.

Darjiling	1610	2728	4580	31125	22955	24852
Jalpaiguri	147	516	1684	2430	12909	8718
State of Kuch Behar	70	239	302	1894	8234	5540

The data from the above table shows that people from all parts of Bengal were eager to acquire knowledge and get information about what was happening in India and outside India. People residing far away from Calcutta had been collecting printed books by post, and their demand was increasing day by day. In the 1870s, they were subscribing to thousands of newspapers and were getting delivery by post. The Bengal postal system, which was not intended for ordinary people prior to the Plassey episode, was gradually developed by colonial authorities after capturing political power in Bengal for various reasons. This development process began at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Lord Dalhousie's regime fundamentally redesigned the country's postal system. After the reformation of Dalhousie, the post offices of Bengal as well as other parts of British India became people's organisations. The British government did not even take into account a revenue deficit in this respect.

Until the first half of the nineteenth century, the services offered by postal organisations were limited. For many reasons, ordinary people could not avail themselves of the postal services. But the main reasons were the absence of post offices close to residences and their high charges. After the reforms of Dalhousie, these difficulties were removed. Ordinary people became enthusiastic about reading and writing and were eager to know what was happening around them. They became desirous of reading printed books to acquire knowledge. They were keen on reading newspapers to get current information about their country and abroad. They became smart enough to write their own views by sending letters to newspaper editors. They were also writing millions of personal, official, and business letters. Their awareness was further testified by the fact that people residing in all parts of Bengal sent thousands of written memorandums to the census authorities asking for their aspirations from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and their weight during the census of 1911 was one and a half maunds.[35] But the major part of their communication with others was established through millions of letters and newspapers, and the post offices of Bengal in this matter played an epochal role. With the development of the mental world of the ordinary Bengalis, they began to exchange interpersonal communication extensively and with great enthusiasm. This phenomenon, occurring in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Bengal, can be called a communication revolution.[36]

[35]O'Malley, L.S.S. (1913). *Census of India 1911*, Vol. V., Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim, Part I. Report, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, p.440.

[36]In nineteenth century Bengal, a changed social structure emerged with a change of its psychology, ideology, beliefs and valuations due to many factors. Establishment and extension of modern, cheap, and faster postal services, and its use by thousands of common people was a revolution. Dr. Sorokin, the eminent sociological

The eagerness of the common people of Bengal to communicate with others by using the services of the post offices nearby had been increasing throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the fiscal year 1870–71, the number of letters received and delivered from post offices in Bakarganj, Birbhum, Burdwan, Hooghly (including Howrah), and Midnapore was reported to be 1,73,803; 71,190; 2,80,657; 2,84,348; and 1,39,078. In comparison, the number of letters received and delivered from post offices in the same districts was: 22,93,226; 6,23,350; 22,30,000; 11,36,018 (excluding Howrah); and 14,97,756 in the first decade of the 20th century. In other districts of Bengal, people showed a similar enthusiasm for communicating with others through post offices. In addition to letters, the increased demand for newspapers through post offices shot up sharply in the early 20th century. Not only letters and newspapers, but huge quantities of postcards were delivered to the common men of Bengal at the beginning of the 20th century. In the first decade of the 20th century, post offices from the districts of Birbhum, Burdwan, Hooghly, Midnapore, and Nadia delivered post cards numbering 11,14,858; 39,60,000; 20,93,260; 20,12,530; and 1,09,300 successively. The districts of Bankura, Chittagong, Dinajpur, Howrah, Jessore, Khulna, Malda, and Rangpur delivered letters, post cards, newspapers, parcels, and packets by the millions.[37] At the end of the nineteenth century, the ordinary people of Bengal got used to communicating with others through the services offered by post offices, and the overall people-to-people communication through post offices became revolutionary. In the early decades of the 20th century, the post offices became a part and parcel of the daily lives of the educated Bengalis.

Conclusion:

In eighteenth-century Bengal, there was no vernacular newspaper to get information about the outside world. Because there were no printed books, ordinary people's knowledge was confined. Since the early nineteenth century, Western

theorist defines: "Revolution is a change in the behaviour of the people on the one hand and their psychology, ideology, beliefs and valuations on the other. Revolution represents the deformation of the social structure of society. Revolution means the change of fundamental social processes." Sorokin, Pitirim A. (1925). *The Sociology of Revolution*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, p.11.

[37]Jack, J.C., *op. cit*., p.106; O'Malley, L.S.S. (1910). *BDG: Birbhum*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.82; Peterson, J.C.K., *op. cit.*, p.143; O'Malley, L.S.S. and Chakravarti, Monmohan (1912). *BDG: Hooghly*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.204; O'Malley, L.S.S., *op. cit*. (*Midnapore*), p.133; Garrett, J.H.E. (1910). *BDG: Nadia*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.103; O'Malley, L.S.S. (1908). *BDG: Bankura*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.122; O'Malley, L.S.S. (1908). *Eastern BDG: Chittagong*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.133; Strong, F.W. (1912). *Eastern BDG: Dinajpur*, Pioneer Press, Allahabad, p.94; O'Malley, L.S.S. and Chakravarti, Monmohan (1909). *BDG: Howrah*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.127; O'Malley, L.S.S. (1912). *BDG: Jessore*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.110; O'Malley, L.S.S. (1908). *BDG: Khulna*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.133; Lambourn, G.E. (1918). *BDG: Malda*, BSBD, Calcutta, p.77; Vas, J.A. (1911). *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers: Rangpur*, Pioneer Press, Allahabad, p.99.

education has been introduced in Bengal. The Christian missionaries began to spread education not only to urban aristocrats but also to the ordinary public. Newspapers and periodicals in the vernacular were circulated across the province. Roadways were renovated, and railway transport was introduced. The country's existing postal systems were completely revamped and converted into ones that were cheaper, faster, and more efficient. Printed books, vernacular newspapers, and Western education opened up a kingdom of knowledge before the Bengalis. They became enthusiastic about writing prayers, petitions, and memoranda to the government about their aspirations. At the same time, they began to write letters to the newspaper editors, expressing their views on the burning issues of society. However, the most extensive exposure for ordinary Bengalis occurred in the field of personal communication with others. In the eighteenth century, the ordinary public of Bengal lived in a small world, communicating with others only by sending a message or meeting personally. From the latter half of the nineteenth century on, they sent and received millions of letters and postcards, besides books and newspapers, through the post office. This shift in the ordinary Bengali's mental world towards communicating with others through a newly renovated postal organisation resulted in a communication revolution in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

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Understanding the Real and the Imagined: Birsa Munda 1870- 1902

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Abstract: *Colonial India witnessed many tribal uprisings against the exploitative and infringing attitude of British rule. One such uprising was led by Birsa Munda, who steered the Munda rebellion in the Chotanagpur plateau of southern Bihar. With the demographic changes caused by the encroachment of outsiders, the native tribal people faced new challenges in maintaining their livelihood, and even their traditional culture and ancient religion faced the threat of gradual erosion. Birsa became a religious preacher, declared himself as the representative of God, and initiated various reforms in the Munda society. Legends broke out, crediting him with some supernatural powers, further advancing his leadership. In principle, he and his followers wanted to establish a 'Munda Raj,' and the myths were perhaps popularized to gain the faith and support of the people of his community.*

Keywords: *Chotanagpur, Munda, Birsa, Myth, Rumour, Reformer, Rebellion*

Introduction

According to Oxford Dictionary, a tribe is "a group of (esp. primitive) families or communities, linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties and usu. having a common culture and dialect, and a recognized leader" (Allen, 1993, p. 1303b). From this definition, we understand that tribal people are primitive communities sharing socio-economic and even religious or blood bonds. They share a common culture or dialect and may even have an accepted leader, as did the Munda tribal people. During the British period, certain forest dwellers were declared as 'tribal people' and bought within the modern state system and the proselytization of a new religion, Christianity. To maintain the Munda tribe within this system as well as to proselytize Christianity, it was necessary to have European officers and preachers physically present in the Munda tribal belt. This, as well as the exploitation and erosion of the Munda way of life, was actively resented by the Munda tribe. The celebrated administrator, Nari Rustomji, who worked with numerous tribal people in north-east India, wrote;

> No community, tribal or otherwise, will readily welcome in its midst the intrusion of a population practising a way of life which is at complete variance with its own. (Rustomji, 1983, p.7).

And, so, it was with the Munda tribal people. The prevailing conditions then conducive to a revolt, and the missing spark to light the flame of an uprising was an able leader, which came in the form of Birsa Munda. The simple tribal people saw Birsa as a trustworthy leader and even gave him a parallel status with God. Under the circumstances, it was natural for the Mundas to spawn myths about their

hero, which left behind a trail of stories where reality and the imagined merged. This article will deal with both the myth and the reality of Birsa Munda.

The Munda Tribe previous to the advent of the British Rule:

The Mundas considered themselves the descendants of Singbonga, the race of the Asurs, and claimed that they were the original residents of the Chotanagpur area (Hallet, 1917, p.20). They were the residents of mainly Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Palamau, Singbhum, Manbhum and Dhanbad districts. Until the beginning of the communication system, the regions where the Mundas lived were unreachable, and they lived with their own customs and customary laws. As the area was mainly mountainous and forested, they worked hard for their livelihood. They had their own Mundari language in which they spoke but no written script. They were conservatives and did not want to mix up with the aliens. They were honest, and courageous with self-respect (Roy Choudhury, 1962, p.234). *Pahan, was the religious chief of the Munda tribe,* who offered public sacrifices in the *sarna*, or the holy tree, to save the tribes from wickedness, for a good yield of the crop, and as submission to the Almighty. He also settled disputes according to customary laws. The *Manki* was the secular head. Both *Manki* and *Pahan* were hereditary posts (Roy Choudhury, 1962, p.236), with no overlapping of the powers between them. There were also *bhuinhar*s whose forefathers were the original clearers of the land and, thus, the founders of the villages. The *bhuinhars* had *khuntkatti* tenures or ancestry possession over the land. The Mundas had their *panchayati* system with *Manki* and *Pahan as the authorities who resolved community problems.* This ancient socio-legal system was disturbed by the advent of European interference.

Encroachment by the outsiders and its effects on the Mundas

From the first half of the 19th century, there were various tribal uprisings occurred in the Chotanagpur region, which were suppressed initially by the English East India Company and then by the British administration. Towards the end of the 19th century, there was an encroachment on the traditional livelihood of the tribal Munda community, which rose in revolt against political, economic, and religious aggression, under the direction of their young leader turned messiah, Birsa. Having obtained the grant of Dewani of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa in 1765 by the East India Company, the area of Chotanagpur gradually came under the Company's control. The outsiders (whom the tribal people designated as *dikus) took away the lands of the original inhabitants*, either forcibly or by fraud. From the core position in the agrarian arena, the Munda peasants and other tribal communities were dispossessed and turned into marginalized groups. The customary laws of the Mundas were also greatly affected by the establishment of the law courts. In the 1840s, the Christian missionaries came to Chotanagpur and started converting the tribal people through the spread of Western education and hints that a Christian administration would relieve them from the oppression of landlords.

Thus, not only the traditional system was also disturbed by the British administration, but a new burden was imposed through a new taxation system in their area. Original landholders began losing their rights over their lands, and newcomers transformed *bhuinhari* lands to their own names. This resulted in discontent, and there were periodic uprisings during the second half of the 19th century. Many of the uprooted *bhuinhars* started the Sardar movement in the 1870s, but they were suppressed by severe punishments. But the most vital uprising took place in the 1890s led by this young Munda named Birsa in the Ranchi and northern area of the Singbhum when the entire Munda tribes rose as one in a rebellion.

Birsa Munda's religion

Birsa Munda was a religious reformer, a rebellious fighter, and a tribal hero. There is confusion regarding the exact year of his birth, and it is presumed that he was born between 1872 and 1875(Chanda, 2016, p.21) in the village Chalkad under Tamar police station in Ranchi district. His family had converted to Lutheranism, and his father was a Lutheran preacher. So Birsa was admitted to a German Mission School at Chaibasa where he learned some English. Missionaries promised the tribal people that if they followed Christianity, they would get back their land. But this never materialized. As a consequence, Birsa naturally lost his faith in the missionaries and coined the slogan, "*Saheb Saheb Ek Topi Hai", meaning* "All *Sahebs* are similar whether they are missionaries or rulers" *(*Sunwani and Panda, 2003, p. 152).

By the beginning of the 1890s, he had not only left the school, denounced Christianity, and turned against the missionaries, but had also returned to his native religion. It is said that he came into contact with a *Vaishnab* monk named Anand Panre, and, under his influence, he learned about Hinduism, studied the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and accepted several Vaishnavite practices such as wearing the sacred thread, the sandalwood, sign on the forehead etc. (Chanda, 2016, p. 21). He adopted the good practices of both Christianity and Hinduism to uplift the people of his community and desired to remove the superstitions deeply rooted among the Mundas. He introduced various reforms, such as shunning witchcraft, daily prayers, giving up liquor, worshipping only one God, observing cleanliness, and urged his followers to obey them. He also asked the Mundas to follow purity, not to eat animal flesh, and to put on the sacred thread like the twice-born Hindu castes (Roy, 1912, p. 328). Although the Hindu philosophy of inner and outer purity had a great influence on him, he eventually developed his own religious philosophy. Birsa wanted to bring some purification to traditional Munda rituals, which had ill effects on the community, and some of his religious thoughts and beliefs were a challenge to the traditional religious authority of the *Pahan*.

His religious preaching had a remarkable effect on his followers, known to the British as Birsaites. There are various songs and poems recited by the Birsaites dedicated to Birsa, such as

"Birsa says, give up drinking rice-beer and liquor.
For this reason, our land drifts away.
Drunkenness and sleep are no good.
The enemies laugh at us.
The beer distilled from fermented rice stinks.
A person's body and spirit too decay likewise." (Chanda, 2016, p. 22)

Drinking intoxicants was a natural habit of the Mundas, but it was Birsa who made them understand that 'drunkenness and sleep' were not good, and they led to the gradual destruction of body and mind. Thus, through his religious preaching, he could eradicate the age-old social evils in the community to some extent.

Myths and mysteries related to Birsa

There are various rumours and myths related to the life and activities of Birsa, some of which originated out of some distinct situations and some which were created by Birsa himself as well as by his followers. One of these is that Birsa had turned into a person having miraculous power. Birsa's own pronouncement could have added and fueled the belief that he was more than a mortal. On one occasion, he said,

> *Singbonga* had given me everything of the world, I shall cure the sick, and therefore we shall leave the worship of the numerous spirits. I shall save the people from suffering. (Sinha, 1964, p. 50)

With such a pronouncement, myths became a part of Birsa's biographical construct. Consider the following story where myth and reality dissolve to float a story of a miracle. In the rainy season of 1895, one day Birsa and one of his friends were moving in the forest when suddenly a thunderstorm occurred, and lightning went through Birsa's body. His companion watched as Birsa's face changed to glowing red and white for some duration (Roy, 1912, p. 326). This story spread through the tribal heartland, and Birsa was shrewd enough to grab this prospect by announcing himself as the embodiment of *Singbonga*. The rumours and gossip led to an increase in his fame among his tribes, so much so that gradually Mundas from all corners, who were suffering from various physical disabilities, rushed to him for succour. Birsa, on the other hand, never disappointed them and told them that if they believed him, they would get cured. Another story is that when smallpox became rampant in a nearby village, villagers sought Birsa's help. He went there and asked them to bring the patients to an open place. He then, looking towards the sky, started uttering mantras and touched the sick many times with his sacred thread, and told the villagers to take the sick home as he would recover soon (Sinha, 1964, p. 51). There are also various anecdotes with reference to Birsa using his sacred thread in a way that it supposedly had some magical power (Luker, 2022). Many of the sick recovered, adding weight to the belief in his miraculous power. Birsa's presence had a profound psychological effect on the patients, and when some of them got cured in the natural progress of the disease, the healings were sufficient to establish him as a divine healer. "Miracles" eventually led the people to believe that Birsa

was the incarnation of *Singbonga*. Faith had so permeated through the Munda society that when miracles failed, he defended himself by saying that the person did not come at the right moment, and people believed that too.

It did not take too long before his disciples designated him as 'Birsa *Bhagwan*'. Birsa's transformation was rapid and consequential, with a rise from a preacher to a healer, progressing gradually to a leader, a prophet and even a *Bhagwan*. Rumours spread that he was the representative of God and that he could not only cure the ill but also salvage his community from injustice. Sometimes it seems that Birsa also believed in his extraordinary qualities and used this not just to gain fame but also to uplift the Mundas.

Through his 'mystical' powers, Birsa drew the Munda people towards him. He occasionally made unusual predictions that had remarkable consequences for his believers. Birsa adopted policies intended to convince his tribes about his prophethood. His recognition spread throughout the Munda region, and "[T]he credulous Mundas…flocked in from all directions to see the young prophet newly arisen in the realm" (Jay, 1961, p.286). People travelled long distances and faced hazards, as pilgrims visiting the 'Bhagwan'. Like the traditional Indian devotees hazarding journeys to holy sites, Chalkad became the centre of attraction for the tribals of the area and beyond. (Guha, 1986, p.266)

The main reason behind Birsa's popularity was that he understood the inherent weaknesses of his community, and tried to overcome them by way of following some extraordinary methods which would increase their acceptance. Though the Sardar movement had taken place for a long period, it could not solve the problems that the poor, oppressed, and uneducated Mundas faced. Birsa assured his fellowmen that he could not only treat their physical illness but that if they followed in his footsteps, they would receive social justice by not paying the land rent. Such pronouncements led to the growth of total faith in him to the extent that no one ever in the Munda territory has gained so much recognition and popularity as Birsa Munda.

Birsa's political agitation

His religious and social activities gradually took a political turn. The Mundas and other tribal communities were suffering exploitation by the British, money lenders, and zamindars. Birsa came forward to save them and created a band trained in using bows, arrows, and swords, making the people experts in guerrilla warfare. Within a few months, there were many followers with the hope that their leader could solve all their problems. He and his followers believed that he had been sent by God to save them. Mundas believed he came forward to protect the lands of the tribal people and that he was *Dharti Abba* (father of the soil). In fact, he tried to focus on himself as the rescuer of his community from discrimination and unawareness like the role played by Ram, Krishna, and Christ in their periods (Sinha, 1964, p.53).

He got so much recognition and faith from his community that they led to the growth of overconfidence in his character and behavior.

Birsa said,

> Chutianagpur belonged to us, the Mundas, therefore we shall not obey any order of the Government. We shall not pay the land tax. We shall not obey the police, the magistrate, the landlords. (Sinha, 1964, p.50).

He announced that the Maharani's raj is ended and Munda raj is coming (Hallet,1917, p.50). As the incarnation of *Singbonga*, he declared that

> on a given day fire and brimstone would descend from heaven and destroy all men on earth except those who had the good sense to repair to his village of Chalkad and stay near him on that occasion. (Hallet, 1917, p.50)

Thus, Birsa through the way of prophecy tried to endow a 'supernatural' explanation to the problem of his fellowmen (Luker, 2022).

Birsa being the first in the Munda community to give the people assurance and hope against British injustice, they became believers in his opinion. They agreed to give up what were claimed as drawbacks amongst them and follow the path shown by him. The Government wanted to restrain his growing popularity which had morphed him into a political rebel. Attempts were made to arrest him, which were vigorously resisted. On 24th August 1895, Mr. Meares, the District Superintendent of Ranchi, arrested him and 15 followers on the grounds of violating law and order (Datta, 1957, pp. 97-8). The operation was carried out at night to avoid the police from facing a violent armed mob which would have been very difficult to manage. The Government was aware of the myths centring on Birsa, and, as everyone knows, fighting a person is one thing but combating myths is a whole lot different and difficult. British concern is palpable from a government report dated 28th August 1895,

> Many ridiculous sayings were ascribed to him; for example, that Government ammunition, powder and bullets, as well as all the rupees of the country, would be turned to water.[1]

The administration would be helpless if the people actually believed the prophecy was true.

The arrest had a tremendous effect on the Munda community who believed in his supernatural powers. A Government report dated 6th Sept. 1895 mentioned that, "…the large crowds assembled at Chaklad, after remaining three days for the re-

[1] Unofficial reference from the Home Department, *Trust of fanatic named Birsa Munda who occasioned considerable excitement in the Lohardaga District*, 24th September 1895, No. 22549, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

appearance of Birsa Munda, after his arrest had dispersed."[2] Rumour spread that when Birsa would enter the jail gates, the jail wall would fall down, so no one could imprison him. Even Birsa, on an occasion, told his followers that even if he was taken to prison, he would return to Chalkad just after four days, planting a log of wood in the prison (Roy, 1912, p. 331). The very day Birsa was taken to the prison a mud wall broke down for some unknown reason, but immediately gossip spread that as he was the manifestation of God the jail wall had fallen. Such a deep faith grew among the Mundas that they believed no one could arrest their 'Bhagwan'. No one would believe his confinement and it was rumoured "that he had gone up to heaven, and that the authorities had only a clay figure in jail, which they pretended was Birsa" (O'Malley, 1910, p. 43). Various absurd stories spread about Birsa, such as that the government will not be able to hold him in jail, he has gone to heaven. (Singh, 1983, p.80) Thus, through these stories there was an attempt to "maintain Birsa's divine status amongst his followers". (Rycroft, 2004, p.59) It became necessary to suppress Birsa's activities and "to explode the myth of Birsa's divinity and to kill the faith" (Singh, 1983, p. 73). There was an open-air trial because the Government wanted to make Birsa's appearance and his punishment visible to everyone present there (Rycroft, 2004, p.59). After the trial, Birsa was sentenced to two years of imprisonment in November 1895. Besides, he was also fined Rs. 50, and since he could not pay, the punishment was extended by six additional months (Datta, 1957, p.98). His followers also had to face various periods of imprisonment according to their activities.

During the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of the reign of Queen Victoria, he was freed in January 1898, sometime before the termination of his sentence. For nearly two years, there was no trace of Birsa, and maybe he was hiding in the dense forests, gathering his followers and preparing for future activities. There was also gossip that "he was leaving the earth for a time, but would return again" (O'Malley, 1910, p. 44). Govt. records show that during the period from February 1898 to December 1899, Birsa held frequent meetings with his followers in isolated places (Datta, 1957, p.100). This time, his activities took a wider shape, and he even appointed preachers among his followers to spread his political and religious thoughts and beliefs (Roy, 1912, p.335). In the meetings, Birsa and his preachers listened to the people's complaints while preparing plans for agitations. In those meetings, Birsa ordered them to prepare bows, arrows, and swords to kill the oppressors.

In 1896-97 and 1899, there was a failure of the monsoons. Exploitation by the landlords and moneylenders was still continuing, and in the severe famines, people's suffering was at a peak, which created unrest among the Mundas. They became rebellious under the leadership of Birsa, who was able to gain mass

[2] *Ibid*

popularity and sympathy for the agitation by providing help to the famine-affected people.

In November 1899, Birsa performed some ceremonial activities, showered *Bir-da* or hero water on some of his followers, and assured them that they have become unbeatable and would have the strength to destroy all the oppressors. He made his remarks that after defeating all, "the country would be ours" (Roy, 1912, p.338). After raising an army, he again led an uprising in January 1899, and his followers started armed attacks in various places in Khunti, Tamar, Basia, and Ranchi police stations. Khunti, near Ranchi, was the main quarter of the rebellious activities and had spread to other places such as Ranchi, Chakradharpur, Bandu, Tamar, Karra, Torpa, Basia, Sisai, etc. (Diwakar, 1959, p.651).

The rebellion took an organised shape and a widespread character when the bulk of the Munda population joined Birsa. On 3rd January, 1900, the Commissioner of Chotanagpur reported that,

> [T]he Mundas in the south and south-east of Thana Khunti, in the Ranchi district, are in a dangerously agitated state. On the night of 24th ultimo several Christian converts and the Reverend Father Carbery, a Roman Catholic priest, were shot at with arrows and some houses were burnt…These disturbances are due to the re-appearance of a young man, named Birsa Munda, who has for years carried on a religious agitation, proclaiming himself a prophet.[3]

The government became alarmed, and two companies of military police were sent to quell the rebellion, resulting in many of the rebels being killed. Although they searched for Birsa in every nook and corner of the jungle, he was nowhere to be found. Finally, with the help of some spies, Birsa was arrested on 3rd February 1900 in a deep forest in the northern hills of Singhbhum. He was taken to Ranchi jail, and it was reported that he died of cholera on 9th June 1900, but there was an allegation from his community that he had been poisoned by the British. His life was too short, but in that limited time, what he did became a landmark in the history of the tribal movements in India.

The religion Birsa established did not die with his death, and his followers became known as Birsaites. This was a socio-religious movement that also led to a political awakening due to the discontent of the Munda community. It was an important aboriginal religious revitalization movement, and one renowned scholar on Birsa Munda and the Munda rebellion has recorded that "the Munda movement ran parallel to the Indian Renaissance and partook of its verities: the stress on the past, social reforms, and internal purification." (Singh, 1966, p.200).

[3] Proceedings of the Home Department, *Outbreak of the Mundas in the Ranchi District*, August 1900, Nos 326-353, National Archives of India, New Delhi

Agrarian, political, and religious factors contributed to the growth of the Munda rebellion. Birsa wanted to bring a revolution amongst the oppressed people who were suffering from exploitation. The objective of the movement was to keep the rights of the tribes over the land which they inherited from their ancestors. Birsa's rebellion was an eye-opener to the British Government, and the administration felt the necessity to solve the grievances that led to the agrarian revolt. An investigation was done over the Munda area, and in 1907, the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act was passed, which consolidated local customary rights and usages of land to stop overburdening the tenants.

Birsaites folklores

Despite the early death of Birsa Munda, his followers learned how to protest for justice. His martyrdom had a great impact, specifically upon the Munda community and generally upon the whole tribal population, by making them conscious of their own identity. He was a living legend to them, a hero, a saviour, an incarnation, and a prophet, a messiah who united them, fought against the enemies, and tried to remove injustice towards the people of his community. Birsa is recalled in various folk songs of the Birsaites, which express their passion and feelings and the influence of Birsa over them. For example;

> Open the door to Birsa's religion,
> Shut the door upon Satan,
> Change the order of Satan
> Recover the land of the Mundas,
> Life –eater, inimical to intelligence!
> Let the wind carry away the words of Satan,
> The path shown by Birsa Bhagwan is good,
> This will lead to happiness and sweetness (in life)
> and to the kingdom of Heaven." (Singh, 1983, pp. 284-5)

Thus, there was a great effect of Birsa's religion upon his community. Since they considered him their 'Bhagwan', they believed that the path shown by him was the right way, and this would relieve them from the oppression and lead them to the happiness they wanted.

Despite the arrest and subsequent death, they believed that he would return, which is expressed in the following song –

> "Amidst the wild forest,
> O Birsa, they arrested you,
> Your friends and relations mourn.
> O Birsa, on your hand is the iron chain.
> In front of you and behind you are mounted soldiers,
> O Birsa, they took you by Ranchi Road.
> O Birsa for the land

You suffered.
O Birsa, you will come back again in the next life.
O Birsa, I grieve that they arrested you,
I grieve that they took you away." (Singh, 1983, p.281)

It reflects the concern of Birsa fellowmen when he was arrested by the mounted soldiers. They expressed their feeling that the cause of Birsa's suffering was due to his rebellion for their right on the land.

The Mundas even compare Birsa with Mahatma Gandhi, drawing a parallel that Gandhi fought for Swaraj, Birsa also fought for their freedom from bondage and to establish Munda Raj. Birsaites sing –

"O Mother, like the rising sun Gandhi was born,
Like the rising moon Birsa had come up,
O Mother, Gandhi was born for Swaraj,
Birsa had come up to put the Mundas on their feet." (Singh, 1983, p. 285)

Though the above verse makes a comparative reference to Gandhi, the miracles and supernatural incidents related to Birsa are not copies or inspired events from Gandhiji's life, for they occurred decades before Gandhi's emergence. It seems that the verse reflects, on a later recall, the fact that the Mundas had found their father in Birsa, just like the nation had in Gandhi.

Conclusion

Even though the life of Birsa Munda is surrounded by myth and rumours, there is no denying that perhaps no other tribal hero in Indian history has gained so much popularity and honour. His movement blended the agrarian revolt and religious reformation, as well as political resistance. To his community, Birsa was a heavenly character, and his rebellion assumed a great impetus, irrespective of the facts or fiction of his myths and miracles. Despite knowing the military strength of the mighty British government, he did not want to lose the hope and faith of his fellowmen in him and so sacrificed his life. Though his expected success did not immediately materialize, his love for his fellowmen and his feeling of their pulse made him their hero forever. Under Birsa's leadership, Mundas fought a massive revitalization movement that alarmed not only the mighty British power but also left an indelible feeling among his tribesmen for generations. His agitation was termed as "*Ulgulan*" or The Great Uprising and was also one of the millenarian movements in tribal India. Activist and writer Mahesweta Debi wrote "অরণ্য মুন্ডাদের মা, আর দিকুরা মুন্ডাদের জননীকে অপবিত্র করে রেখেছে। উলগুলানের আগুন জ্বেলে বীরসাজননীকে শুদ্ধ করতে চেয়েছিল" (Debi, 1384, p. 2). (*Forest is the mother of the Mundas, outsiders have defiled the mother. Birsa sought to purify the forest/mother through the fire of the Great Uprising.*) She also added, "উলগুলানের শেষ নাই! বীরসার মরণ নাই !"(Debi, 1384, p. 322) (*The Great Uprising never ends! Birsa never dies!*) Even Birsa's life, myths

and miracles have influenced many aborigine poets of Indian origin such as Usha Kiran Atram, a poetess who wrote:

> *"*Birsa once again you come/
> Take birth in the womb of tribal mothers/
> Once again you call for Ulgulan/
> Our glory of forest burnt out/
> Our forest is suffering by the incurable diseases" (Ulemale, 2021, p. 117).

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DEVADASIS: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: *The tradition of Devadāsī is a century-old phenomenon. The theme of pleasing the Supreme Being is nothing but a continuous process of devotion and belief in divinity. One association with divine power can be seen in the case of devadasis. These women were considered as the wives of the Gods, but in later periods they were also associated with the Goddesses too. As devadasis was seen as the utmost replica of chaste women because of their connexion with the celestial beings. The temple was the epicentre of the early medieval and medieval society. The temples were mainly donated by the royal families, rich merchants, and merchant guilds to legitimize the feudal polity to form an equation between the deity and the ruler in the world of authority in the agrarian fields as well as in materialistic matters. They were never recognized as widows or deprived of their marital status, as they were married to a god who was immortal. The theme of social constructs changed with in the bygone times; it translated from gender to sex, biological identification to define human beings. The system has gone through erosion in its position because of the existing power struggle of men in the social, political, economic, and cultural yards. In the shadow of patriarchy, devadasis occupied the role of a man, yet remained as like another woman in the social conjuncture. The practice of donating girls in the temples gave birth to a quasi-matrilineal community under the patriarchal equilibrium*.

Keywords: Matrilineal, Embedded, Tradition, Honour, Stigma

Introduction

The predefined social constructs of gender that are termed masculine and feminine are being used to label a particular human being. These definitions have been continued for ages. In this paper, an attempt has been made to explore the journey of honour associated with Devadāsīs. Later, it takes the wrong turn to the path of stigma, which leads them to a blocked destination. The position of patriarchs in the embedded matrilineal system is placed under the formation of a patriarchal society. From the nineteenth century onwards, the suffrage movement has taken the lead in coming up with the visibility and vocality of women in front of the social lens. Women are viewed as receptacles, with their status or position changing to reflect the state of the world around them (Roy, 2011, pp.1-3).

The embedded part of society is a broader causal nexus. The terracotta figurine of the mother goddess excavated from the Indus Valley civilization assures the position of women in social phenomena. The Vedic corpus provides a handful of sources of women sages who renounced the world with their knowledge. They remained unmarried and did not take up the responsibility of procreation for the rest of their lives. Rather, they took part in the procreation of knowledge. They lived in forests, learned *Samhitas, Aranyakas,* and, Upanishads, and led their life

on the road of salvation. Though there was evidence of the involvement of women in the Indus Valley civilization and Vedic age, yet it was limited. In the later period of time, with the flow of expansionism and militarism, society evolved into a new stage where the expectations shifted from an instrument of procreation to objectification of women who would produce warrior sons. These changes in society tried to put various new terms and conditions on women's visibility.

Historical Background

In the world of gods and goddesses, to please be an essential theme created by humans. These themes are changed with the course of space and time. As far the discovery of Sītābengā and Jogīmārā caves in Ramgarh hills at Surguja district in Chattisgarh is is concerned, it unravelled the earliest history of devadāsī tradition in the Indian subcontinent. According to Richard Salomon (Salomon, 1998, p.141), a scholar of Indian epigraphy, Sanskrit and Buddhist studies, suggests that both of the Ramgarh caves having inscriptions are dated back to the 3rd century BCE. The Sītābengā cave [Plate-XLIII(a)], written in Prakrit, Saurasena dialect, has a two-line inscription with letters of equal size in Brahmi script just below the roof of the cave close to the top cut-out wall on the northern side of the entrance states-

(L.1) *adipayaṁtihadayaṁ | sabhāva-garukavayo e rātayaṁ...*

(L.2) *dulevasaṁitiyā | hāsāvānūbhūte | kudasphataṁevaṁalaṁg* . [t.]

The above-mentioned inscription (Bloch, 1903-4, pp.123-124) has different translated versions by many prominent scholars. One of the personalities who took the lead was Haraprasad Sastri (Sastri, 1902. pp.90-91) he translates the above inscription as-

> I salute the beautifully formed one who shows us the gods. I salute the beautiful form that leads us to the gods. He is much in quest at Varanasi. I salute the god-given one for seeing his beautiful form.

The other translation was given by T. Bloch (Bloch, 1903-4, p.123) in his book *Caves and Inscriptions in Ramgarh Hills, Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India 1903-4,* translating the above lines of the inscriptions as-

"(L.1) Poets venerable by nature kindle the heart, who...

(L.2) At the swing festival of the vernal full moon, when frolics and music abound, people thus(?) tie (around their necks garlands) thick with jasmine flowers."

The above description from *Sītābengā* cave evidently prescribes that caves were not always used as an abode of ascetics to renounce worldly attachments, but sometimes also used as places which may be for reciting poetry, singing love songs, and acting in theatrical performances. The other inscription from Jogīmārā caves [Plate X(b)] written in Prakrit, Magadhi dialect in Brahmi script added more

evidence to trace the tradition of devadāsī. The later cave inscription (Bloch, 1903-4, p.128) states-

(1) Śutanukanama

(2) devadaśikyi

(3) Śutanukanamadevadaśikyi |

(4) taṁkamayithabal [a] naśeye |

(5) devadinenama | lupadakhe |

The latter inscription in the translation (Bloch, 1903-4, pp. 128-129) was given by T.E. Bloch, explains as-

(1) Sutanukā by name,

(2) a Devadāsī.

(3) Sutanukā by name, a devadāsī.

(4) The excellent among young men loved her,

(5) Devadinna, by name, is skilled in sculpture.

As Haraprasad Sastri (Sastri, 1902, p.90) translates-

> The heart of a lady living at a distance (from her lover) is set to flames by the following three:- Sadam Bagara and the poet. For her, this cave is excavated. Let the god of love look at it.

Another translation was given by Professor Luders, (Luders, 1961, p.867.) states-

> The temple-servant (devadasikyi) Sutanuka (Sutanuki) by name. The copyist (lupadakha), Devadina (Devadatta) by name, the Balanaseya (native from Baranasi), loved her.

The translation of the Jogīmārā cave inscription (Bandopadhyay, 1980, pp. 44-45) differs from one scholar to another. This confusion mainly arose due to the interpretation of the words "*lupadakhe"* and *bal[a]naśeye*. K.P. Jayaswal (Jayaswal, 1919, pp. 131) *The Jogimara Cave Inscription* in the Indian Antiquary describes the term "*lupadakhe"(= rudraksha)* meant for some officials or ministers, and Sutanukā was an ascetic, not a beloved one of Devadinna, the *rudraksha*. And the inscription was a decree issued to that ascetic woman related to her worship of *Varuna*. He translates the inscriptions as-

"In Favour of Satanuka, the devadasi (Order) 'Sutanaka,' by name, devadasi, of austere life, (is) now in the service of Varuna. – Devadina (=Devadatta) by name, Rupadaksha.

Scholars like S.N. Ghosal, forwarded his opinion about the translation of Jogīmārā inscription (Bandopadhyay, 1980, p. 44) as-

> Sutanaka by name, a female attendant (devoted to the service of the gods). Her beloved, who came from Benaras, Devadinna by name, skillful in the dramatic performances (i.e.), adept in the historical art).

S C Chatterji (Chatterji,1960, pp.35-36), S Settar (Settar, 2003, pp.35-39), and others also opined about the relationship between Devadāsī *Sutanukā* and *Devadina,* but what is more interesting in this context is the mention of the term Devadāsī, who is none other than the sacred attendants of gods. As Professor Jayaswal defines, the worship of *Varuna* by Sutanukā added more evidence to the tradition of devadāsī and devoted as wives of gods dated back to the cave age era.(Jayaswal, 1919, p.131) The term devadāsī connotes '*devā,'* who is a god, and the subsequent term *'dasī'* is a hand-maiden of god. The definition of devadāsī stands for the maidens of god or wives of gods once who enjoyed the great privileged life of honour in society.

Here we can see that Sutanukā, who belonged to the section of devadāsīs, has provided a place to lie down. The preliminary cave inscription of Sītābengā, where dancers and actors used to perform, maybe for the gods or audiences, and the later inscription found nearby the previous cave denote it must serve as a resting place where performers used to take a rest after performing. In addition to the research by Bloch at Sītābengā and Jogīmārā caves at Ramgarh hills, Professor Luders explains the term "leṇaśobhikā" who were the "cave actresses" (Luders, 1961, p.127) occurs in the Mathurā inscription. Along with that, he also pointed out the passages in Kālidāsā's poems, which, however, show that caves in ancient India were not entirely built for religious purposes but often served in quite different ways as the abode of dancing girls and their lovers. The gap between the Ramgarh cave inscriptions and Kālidāsā's age is counted as almost 700 years, which clearly noted that the practice of Devadāsī was a bygone tradition attached to caves, later with temples and religious institutions.

The Jaina text *Rayapasaneyasutra* explains several dancers who were well-learned in various arts. They also performed thirty-two types of dancing poses in front of the Mahavira. During the early Buddhist period, accomplished dancing girls occupied a recognized position in the society. Buddhist literary sources mention the *nagaravadhus and yikes-magadhavati,* salvation, *basavdatta, Vimala,* and *Amrapali or Amrapali*. From the Maurya period onwards, social stratification came to a new change with the expansion of kingdoms from the core to the peninsula. Kautilya's Arthasastra defines the duties and responsibilities of devadasis and *ganikas;* they had to spend eight years of training and to recognize as cultured people, they needed to learn 64 essential skills (*kalas),* singing, dancing, performing with musical instruments, and sometimes they were trained as spies also. Kalidasa, in Meghadutam, gave a description of dancing girls performing in Mahakala temple at Ujjain.

During the early medieval period, women were engaged in domestic as well as in economic pursuits. Vatsayana in his book Kamasutra, discloses many passages describing how their conduct should be and always forms a private communication (Vatsayana, 1883-1925, pp. 98-152) with their partners. It is evident from the works of Vatsayana and Kautilya, respectively, that the practice of cryptography and well-known ciphers belonged to the temple dancers (Madras Courier, 2017) because they were well trained in those essential *kalas.* In the 12th century, the *Rajatarangini*, written by Kalhana, speaks about the practice of devadāsīs in Kashmir and other parts of the subcontinent. In this context, we can trace the story of *Jayapida*, king of the Karkota dynasty of Kashmir; he who visited the Pundravardhana of Gauda banga and saw the *Lasya* dance by devadāsī named Kamala (Dutt, 1987, pp. 84-88) in the temple of *Karttikeya.*

Tradition of Devadasi

The practice of devadāsī was not unique in the Indian subcontinent, but the recruitment of girls into the temple was also prominent in the temples of Egypt, Greece, and Babylon. The process of entrance to become a devadasi has seven gates (Mukhopadhyaya, 2000, p. 163); *Datta*, donated by the householder for *punya* or to clean their *papa* or sins; *hrta,* captured and gifted to the temple*;* birth, sold in lieu of money*; baryta*, self-donated in front of the deity; *bhakta* or devadāsī, donated herself as a nun, *Malankara* or *Malankara*, after completion the course of *kalas* of singing and dancing they jewelled and donated to god. The royal women and princesses were donated as *Malankara*. Lastly, the *Topeka*, or *rudraganika*, was paid to perform on some special occasions conducted in the temple complexes. These illustrations depicted that the devadāsīs were coming from different social backgrounds. The initiation ceremony of devadāsī is held in the ambit of the temple, and the grandeur of the ceremony depends upon the social class belonging to devadāsīs. The process of inclusion was both ritualistic and non-ritualistic in nature, the first was customary, and the latter one is obligatory (Pande, 2005, p. 12).The ritualistic induction of girls into the temple by performing the marriage ceremony to the deity by wearing the thread of *nityasumangali* (Kersenboom, 1984, 1984, pp. 13-30*),* after marriage, she was considered auspicious at times and a deviant woman, who socially outcast for the rest of her life, yet termed as a divine shadow (Sharma, 2018, pp. 79-93). They were never recognized as widows or deprived of their marital status, as they were married to a god who was immortal. As the elite section of society voluntarily donated their daughters to the service of the temple, they were termed as *sampradayamvaru,* devoted as *Markakis* and *kayaks*.

On the other hand, the girls, who belonged to the lower class, worked as fan-bearers and decorators of the temple complex; in short, they were given labour-intensive work. The temple girls hardly identified as devadāsī*;* instead of that, they were referred to as *munuti sanulu, sani* or *munuri, basavi, Patri, devarasule,* (Pande, 2005, p. 9) etc, clearly indicating their social status within the embedded matrilineal system under the umbrella of patriarchy. Since the temple girls and women had to

perform most of the services of the temple, they often provided residences near the temple with separate quarters belonging to different classes. The temples could have 300-500 devadāsīs, depending upon their location and importance. They often performed the *margaritas* and *namasankirtanas* for the audience. Tirumala Tirupati inscription (Pande, 2005, pp. 9-10) mentions that the temple dancers accompanied the procession of deities through the streets and markets.

There are mainly two reasons for donating girls to the temples, one is raising the social status, and the precedence is the economic reason that is in lieu of money. The former occasion was pre-eminently for the Kings and the elite' donation of girls to the temples; as an act of virtue, and the latter occurred by the parents who donated their girl child as an act of religiosity and favouring their economic condition. One such instance was the merchant of Elesvaram, who donated his two daughters to the temple. The devadāsī of the prestigious class were allowed to marry kings and noblemen. This rule was not followed by thedevadāsīs, who belonged to the lower class of society. During the 9^{th} – 10^{th} centuries, the theme of pleasing god was changed from *sringara rasa* (Takako, 2014, pp. 321-323) to *bhakti rasa*, emphasizing the religious attributes rather than the loved relationship between god and humans. In the context of devadāsī, *deva*, or the god, is the beloved, and *dasi*, or the maiden of god, is the lover, but with the flow of time, this state of relationship transforms into devotion towards the supreme.

Northern India

The temple was the epicentre of early medieval and medieval society (Pande, 2005, p.7). Almost all the early medieval ruling dynasties went through the process of legitimization and cult imbibition (Chattapadhyaya, 2005, pp. 171-190) during this period. The ruling dynasties implored the warrior sons of gods and goddesses, who upheld their position in the social strata. To brighten up the glory among the other dynasties, it is important to maintain a cordial relationship with the temple, as it ranked at the pinnacle of the social ledge. The rulers assumed dual sovereignty of both political and ritualistic aspects. Thus, the Vedic concept of *dana-dakshina* was replaced by the process of legitimization. In the later period of the Gupta-Vakataka age, the grants of devadāsī and *brahmadeya* given to the temples and Brahmanas, respectively, soon got their institutionalized characterization.

Temple architecture in India has always embodied an underlying vision. It is a representation of experience, moulded in space and time. The art and architecture involved in the construction of temples are well defined in the Shilpasastra, which mentions about three major types of temple architecture in India: Nagara, Vesara, and Dravida. The temples of Khajuraho are magnificent examples of Nagara ornate style, built by the Chandra rulers between 900 CE.-1130 CE. Devadāsīs were once a major part of temple activities. Majorly they were brought from Magadha and Malwa regions and trained as devadāsīs in the temple. The practice of devadāsīs was in vogue and reflected in the figures of surasundaris (Ladies with musical

instruments), who covered the interior and exterior walls of the temple and were believed to be taken from real-life and juxtaposed with the sculptures of gods and goddesses.

The practice of Devadāsī is an age-old tradition, and the general assumption of the term Devadāsīs is that they might be associated with temples or religious institutions. So, the architectural evidence of Devadāsīs from the temple complexes is extraordinary in manner and presentation. The Natamandira is a striking architectural feature of Odisha which was added to the main temple which are *Deul* and *Jagamohan*, an arena for the performance of music and dance. One such example is traces from the Bhubaneswar and Konark in Odisha, the Jagannath temple (Marglin, 1985, pp.30-37) and Konark Sun Temple displays ample scenes of music and dance performed by women.

Other sources from the Brahmesvara *Siva* temple inscription (Pal, 2012, p. 124) of the time of Somavamsi ruler Udyota Keshari mentioned that his mother Kalavati built the cloud-touching temple for Lord *Siva* and dedicated beautiful dancing girls to the god; the girls were adorned with ornaments made in jewels and appeared everlasting but playful lightening and looked lovely like the pupils of the eyes of men. The *Sobhanesvara* temple inscription (Rajguru, 1903, pp.242-284) states that the king named *Vaidyanatha* constructed the compound wall in the *Sobhanesvara Siva* temple, offering beautiful dancers like the *apsaras* of heaven who have nectar in their sweet lips and ornamented with jewels and bijou. From the Ganga period onwards, especially under the rule of AnantaVarmanChodaganga Deva, the practice of Devadāsīs extended to Vaishnavite temples. The Korni Copper plate grant of Chodaganga describes in the *Srikurmam* temple that the Devadāsīs were appointed to the service of God Kurmesvara; they performed singing and dancing in the morning and evening for the deity.

In the Vaghli stone inscription (Epigraphia Indica, 1898, p.227) dated *saka* 991(1069 – 1070 CE.) grant of Govindraja making provision for *vilasinis*, who were dancing and singing damsels in the temple. In the other inscription issued by Cahamana king Jojaladeva dated *samvat* 1147 (1090 – 1091 CE.), the courtesans of all temples are said to have been ordered to come in their best dress and celebrate a festival of music (Epigraphia Indica, 1911, pp. 26-27). Here we can see the change in the position of devadāsīs, the king who recognized himself on the grounds of religiosity, polity, and society as equal and supreme, and he makes an order over temple dancers who mainly serve the temple deity.

Southern India

In many instances, the practice of devadāsī is one such informed precedent. The term devadāsī is traced back to its origin from the legendary tradition of the southern part of India about the story of sage *Siva Jamadagni* and his wife, *Renuka*. The story narrates (Jagnathan, 2013, pp. 1-5) that her chastity was so pure that she could make a pot out of sand that could hold water. But one such day when she

tried to make pot but failed because she saw a couple enjoying intimate desires in front of the river and lost her chastity. After questioning her chastity, sage *Jamadagini* cursed his wife and ordered his four sons to cut their mother's head. Three of his sons refused to do so, except his fourth son, *Parasurama*; he beheaded his mother and asked for a boon from his father. That her mother also live once again. But sage *Jamadagini* accepts the boon only the alive *Renuka*'s head, not the whole body. Thus the goddess *Yellamma* (Jaganathan, 2013, pp. 1-12) was born; she is worshipped by the devadāsīs in the southern part of India.

Chennakesava temple at Belur displays exquisite carvings of bracket figures, including male and female dancers dedicated to lord Vishnu. The Hoysala temple complexes show the variations of dancers or devadāsīs dedicated to the deity, where both male and female dancers are devoted to the lord. Figures like *tribhangisundari* (Tri-style dancing lady), *gaanasundari* (singing beauty), *Martina lole* (lady dancing with drum), Natyamohini, etc. represent female dancers who please the god with their arts (*kala).*

Kolappa Kanakasabhapathi Pillay in his monumental work, *The Sucindrem Temple* (Pillay, 1953, pp. 205-230) writes- *"O Thanumalaya, who resides in the Sucindrem with woman as one half! ...",* which states that the principal deity of *Sucindrem* resided with women, who basically were the devadāsīs dedicated in the temple. The entrance porch or *natakshala* of the temple has eight pillars at the base, each of which is a statue of a woman, commemorating the eight devadasis who contributed to the construction of the space in the 16th century CE. Contemporarily, the in front of the Ilayanayanar or Subramanya shrine, which is the work of devadāsī Sitamma. She and her mother, Malaikutty, are commemorated with statues at the entrance. The elegant pavilions (*Chitrasabha)* and the *Vasanthamandapam*, where lord Nataraja worshipped, are also attributed to devadāsī Malayakutty Malayamma (Pillay, 1953, p. 210) of the 19th century.

The information regarding the status of devadāsīs displays that they had a prestigious position in society and were looked upon as one of the closest members to the deity. This also suggests that they had a pretty well-lavished life so they could contribute to the construction of the temple at Sucindrem, were bestowed with responsibilities of the temple, and erected statues of themselves, which not common for other women in existing society. The devadāsīs were richly honoured by the kings of successive dynasties, and it is interesting to note that during the period of Venad rulers of Kerala (c. 8th/9th CE – 1729), some of the devadāsīs were given the title of Rayar in Sucindrem. Titles like Rayar given to devadasis represent their social importance in many parts of the temple and are attributed to donations by devadasis and their well-economic position. The status of devadasis was further deteriorated during the colonial era when the colonial mindset imposed the concept of prostitution on the temple dancers and devadasis as well.

The archaeological evidence from the inscriptions of 1004 C.E. of the Rajarajesvara temple at Tanjore decodes that 400 devadāsī stayed and held second place after the priests in the temple complex (Pande, 2006, pp. 5-14). From the 6th century onwards, devadāsī bestowed high dignity and moral respect in society during the reign of Cholas and Pallavas. This evidences confirmed the existing system of donation for girls in the temple continued till ages

The residential address for Devadāsīs was temple buildings, and the magnificent temple architecture created a sense of competition among the royals and aristocrats to showcase their victories and achievements in front of ordinary people. Pallava king Mahendravarmana records his achievements in the *Mandakapattu* inscription (Prasad, 1999, pp. 129-136) written in Sanskrit in Pallava Grantha script dated to the early 7th century CE. At *Mandakapattu Tirumurthi* temple, located in Tamil Nadu, states about building ayatana(home) for the gods. In the Orrisan sources, it is recorded that Ganga king Narasimhadeva I built majestic temples supplemented by recurring levies in cash and kind, together with periodic interests charged on fixed sums of money deposited with the temples, added to their wealth and magnificence. The Ittigi inscription (Epigraphia Indica, 1913-14, p.58) dated 1112 CE. who recorded a Brahmana named *Mahādevahas* who donated houses for the retinue of dancing girls of the temple. Records like this show that to earn *punya* as well as a prestigious position in society, people used to donate land to devadasis. Thus, temples grow into the wealthiest institutions of the time.

The temples were mainly donated by the royal families, rich merchants, and merchant guilds to legitimize the feudal polity to form an equation between the deity and the ruler in the world of authority in the agrarian fields as well as in the materialistic matters. These suggestions indicate that God was an earthly king, like the king in the court. Thus, the distinction between rajas and devas diminished with the interchangeability of women in the temple services with those of the king's court.

On the grounds of polity and society, the king emerges as the Supreme Being, as he compares himself to god, blurring the line between deity and human being. The *Kalahasti* temple records describe that the king ordered him to transfer dancing girls and their descendants from his service to the amenity of that temple. This shows that the devadāsīs crossed from the king's court and entered the temple boundary. The *Mukhalingam* temple records (Pande, 2006, pp.7-8) mention *vasama,* a *gudisani* of *Madhukesvara* temple, *Sanjaya* was of *Doddapanyaka,* an officer of king Rajendra Chola.

Transition from the stage of honour to stigma

Initially, devadāsīs were subject to two great honours. First, they were literally married to the deity, were to be treated as a portrayal of the Goddess herself, and secondly, they were considered to be those great women who could control natural human impulses and submit themselves completely to God. Though the honours

were distinguished between the *varnas*, they provide shelter for the maidens to earn their own. They have a unique lifestyle similar to men in society. Like; they have similar rights over property and inheritance. Other than property rights, devadāsī can perform *shradh* after the death of her father, which no women were allowed to perform in general.

The Dharmaśāstras allow retired devadāsīs to take up weaving and spinning as a source of livelihood (Thapar, 2003, p. 413). The Arthasastra also made the same statement on acquiring wealth from women. Temple dancers were generally paid in kind, with a share in the temple property. They were paid in cash occasionally during the festivities. Inscriptions found in Karnataka suggest that land was the major source of income for them*;* they were given both dry and wetlands and stipulated that they were also allowed to lease out the land for earning. Thanjavur inscription attests that Rajaraja I assigned lands to 400 devadāsīs according to their ranks, which gave them financial independence by managing lands and living on their own wage. They were leading their lives with full privilege and honour.

From the 12th century onwards, recruitment of devadāsīs and their service in the temples became hereditary. As the literary sources remark, that they belonged to various social groups, from royal women to the poverty-ridden girls becoming hand-maidens of God. So, with the changing course of time, they formed an 'occupational group' (Sriram, 2007, pp.) rather than a caste within the matrilineal structure. The term caste itself is a Portuguese-originated phrase, later added to the Indian societal hierarchy. Changes also occurred in the process of the initiation ceremony, including the deflowering ceremony or *uditambuvadu*, whereby the priests would have intercourse with every devadāsī enrolled in the temple as a ritual of religious sanctity. There are several factors that made contributions to change the gaze towards devadāsīs, but religious beliefs, poverty, caste system, male domination stands out loud among them.

As Aparimita Sahoo (Sahoo, 2006), in her essay, pointed out that the institution of temple dancers lost their patrons, their principal financial sponsors, due to the frequent Islamic invasions at that time. She also asserted that the exploitation of lower varna women came into prominence, which made dance and prostitution inseparable. Professor Rekha Pande clearly defined that, with the passage of time, the practice of devadāsīs is viewed as 'performer-cum-prostitute' and as an 'isolated form', not as an 'associated form' or component of sacred complexes (Pande, 2005, pp. 39-65). During this period of time, the dedication of girls in the temple was completely shifted from an act of honour to improving the economic condition of that family.

One of the main instincts of dedication of young girls was that they were daughters. People from the lower varna dedicated their young daughters to the temples because they were viewed as expenditure in the family. These incidents led the existing practice of devadāsī to take a new turn, which is the donation of girls from the lower

varnas to rid of their responsibility of taking care of her. Jinadatta Suri, a 12th-century Jaina saint and author, wrote *Apabhramsakavyatray* states, the worshipping area became *kamadhyavasaya* instead of *dharmadhyavasaya*. It shows how the place of *Dharma* became the arena of *kama*, later taking the shape of evil in the society. The question of dignity and chastity started to be defined by the terms and conditions of the upper classes of the social order. It is important to mention here that the Westernized elites define a dichotomous character of women as a chaste or a prostitute. This demarcation of character left a deep impact on how we gaze towards women. Here the truth lies that devadāsīs were holy artists, not prostitutes in general. They maintained the sanctity of dance and devotion to the deity. The profession of prostitution is considered immoral in society. However, the dedication of girls from lower varnas used to justify the practice of prostitution, hence devadāsīs escape the furnished social stigma.

There is a saying in Marathi, *"Devadasi deva chan, byako saaraya Karachi"* (Pande, 2005, pp. 5-14) - servant of God but the wife of the whole town. This above statement confirmed that in real scenarios, the embedded social stigma associated with them could only be felt through the question of gazing. In the context of chastity and prostitution, historian Leah Lydia Otis states that, the institution is a "phenomenon in which socially identified group of women earn their living principally or exclusively from the commerce of their bodies" (Otis, 2009, pp. 7-25). So, we can trace the beginning of the state of the stigma that after the destruction of the temple and patronization from the upper classes, devadasis fell into a condition of major economic stress. They were the handmaidens of the gods and not permitted to lead a normal life of women. Thus, they choose the spontaneous option of dancing with prostitutes to live their lives on their own.

Abbe Dubois, a French missionary who spent nearly 30 years in the southern part of India, recorded his observations in his *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*–

> *Once the devadasis sanctuary obligations are finished, they start to open and show their cells of shame an irregular change over the sanctuary itself into a stew. A religion more disgraceful or acute disgusting has never existed among socialized people.*

It suggests that the practice of devadāsī fell into disrepute with the phase of exploitation of women from the lower varnas by the socialized people of the upper varnas (Dubois, 1905, pp.577-612).

In the later period of time, when they moved from hand-maidens of God to a synonymous substitute with *ganikas* or prostitution and living on their own made them self-independent in lieu of depending on patriarchs for wages. The patriarchal religio-social corner allows them to practice social rituals like giving blessings as divine shadows, inheritance of property, *shraadh*, etc. In the shadow of patriarchy,

she occupied the role of a man, yet remained as another woman in the social conjuncture.

Conclusion

The theme of social constructs changed with in the bygone times; it transited from gender to sex, biological identification to define human beings. The system has gone through erosion in their position because of the existing power struggle of men in the social, political, economic, and cultural yards. The donated temple girls belonged to various varnas, thus giving different ranks associated with its social position. From the perspective of, varnas though they were donated and controlled by men of the society, yet formed a embedded matrilineal hierarchy among themselves that continued till date.

Devadāsīs, in a general manner, were the wives of gods and associated with temple services, leaving a murky inception of their existence yet surviving on their own strength. The reference to Vishnu as the presiding deity of *sringara-rasa* traces in the text *Natya-sastra* (Ghosh, 1950, pp. 33-42) of Bharatmuni is which defines the divine relation between god and temple dancers. This seems like the zenith of devotion to building a close relationship with the Supreme Being. But in the substantive world, the temple priests were the ones who claimed themselves as the nearest to God and built a sexual relationships with the devadāsīs. Afterwards, the dilution in their position pushes them into the 'performer-cum-prostitute' (Pande, 2005, p. 1-2) platform of penny-provider and receiver respectively. Thus, it originated the crux of absentee sire in the system.

As we have seen, that daughters are marked as expenditures, it is sons who are expected to perform as providers of the family and parents in their old age. But in the embedded system of matriarchs, sons or the men born from the devadasis experienced the opposite. Though they were said to bless other people for well-being, sons for inheritance, but the whole scene changes in the case of sons of devadasis. It is the daughter who inherited the property of her mother. Both the sons and daughters borrowed their mother's surname and sometimes their profession too. The devadasis from the lower varnas and their children witnessed oppression from the upper varnas. Men were unable to get work available to others. Thus, they are also left with the stain of other men (Documentary, 2012) on the social stage. The men in the system lack the patriarchal features that existed previously in society, which led them to a status of shame about the stigma amalgamated with the abode of devadasis.

As we have traced the threads linked with the devadasis of her, *nityasumangali* privileged life (Dalrymple, 2008) transform into a life of impoverishment and dishonour with changes in societal, political, and economic needs. The emergence of nationalism in the 19th century lit up the nationalists but, in Westernized attire, recognized devadasis as nautch and their institution as socio-religious dogma. With the beginning of the Anti-nautch movement (Rao, 2018, pp. 44-45) in Madras in

1892, they were marginalized as prostitutes in the social category. The new identification of devadasis shoves them to unify and uplift them as a caste in society. The *Sengunthar Mahajan Sangam*, founded in Coimbatore in 1913 by men born from devadāsīs, was the earliest example of caste formation of devadasis. The women of this practice maintained a non-conjugal sexual relationship with upper-varna men in society. This system of donating girls to the temples gave birth to a quasi-matrilineal community under the patriarchal equilibrium.

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Emergence of the Local Print Culture in Banaras, 1800-1900

Santosh Kumar Sahani

Abstract:

When the Europeans established most printing presses in different parts of India, an indigenous print culture emerged in Banaras during the nineteenth century. Despite the direct influence of missionaries and the British government, Banaras lacked the mission or government printing presses. It was indigenous people who played a pioneering role in the establishment of printing presses in Banaras. The local patronage, traditionally dominant literate groups and the introduction of the lithography printing press accelerated the growth of the print culture in Banaras. This development marked the transition from private printing press ownership to print entrepreneurs. The development of print culture could be seen in two phases, i.e., the pre-mutiny period and the post-mutiny period, which eventually produced a multilingual literary sphere in nineteenth century Banaras. While discussing all these nuances, this article explores how the Indians established private printing presses and helped in the rise and growth of the local print culture in Banaras in the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Banaras, Printing Press, Local Print Culture, Indigenous people, lithographic

In the nineteenth century, the arrival of the printing press in north India marked a watershed episode in the print history of India. Several printing presses were established in different parts of north India with and without the help of the colonial government and the missionaries. Along with other parts of northern India, Banaras emerged as a prominent print centre during the nineteenth century. However, instead of growing missionary activities and the British influence, the number of printing presses in Banaras had not increased significantly under the influence of Christian missionaries. The growth of print activities indicates that local individuals came forward and set up several printing presses in Banaras. It provides a classic example of the intimate relationship between Indian press ownership and the emergence of a local print culture. The present paper intends to explore how the involvement of indigenous people in print activities helped develop a local print culture in Banaras throughout the nineteenth century.

The introduction of the printing press in India (first in Goa) was traced back to 1556 by the Portuguese Jesuit missionaries. Most of these printing presses were concentrated on the publication of Bibles and other religious materials, and they had minimal impact on the rest of the subcontinent. Print became significant only from the closing decades of the eighteenth century in the regions conquered by the East India Company. It took a long time to reach the indigenous hands. The moveable type was introduced to the printing and publishing in India in the first

half of the nineteenth century. The scenario changed when the lithographic[1] press came to India in the 1820s. It paved the way for the establishment of Indian-owned printing presses. The first lithographic press came to India in 1823 when the East India Company set up lithographic presses in cities such as Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The first private Indian owned lithographic press *Matb-i-Fardunji Dohrabji Dastur* was established in Bombay in 1826. In the case of North India, Indians started to conduct printing activities on a larger scale in the 1830. However, Francesca Orsini stated that the beginning of printing in north India was 'tentative' (Orsini, 2004, p. 110) due to the patronisation of print under the local ruler courts or the British. Meanwhile, the lithographic presses were spread all over northern India. Several printing houses were flourished during this time. It became a hub of lithographic printing presses in the nineteenth century. The lithographic press could provide more copies at a lesser price than the other types of printing. The lithography was cheaper, portable and easy to operate. As a result, printers could produce many books and newspapers in different scripts at low prices. Therefore, lithography became one of the main technological factors that prepared the ground for the emergence of the indigenous print industry during the nineteenth century.

In the North-Western Provinces[2], the number of printing presses increased in the following decades. Aloys Sprenger argues that twelve private lithographic presses were functioning in Lucknow by 1830.[3] In 1848, seventeen printing presses were operating in the provinces. These presses were mainly publishing newspapers and periodicals in native languages. Among these printing presses, two printing presses were functioning in Banaras in 1848.[4] However, the government report probably did not include many small hand-operating presses which were set up as print shops in the private homes or its vicinity. The printers were engaged in printing and selling the works in several languages and scripts. These print shops became one of the major sources of their livelihood. As a result, the mushrooming of native printing presses could be seen in Banaras along with Lucknow and Patna.[5] Besides, the following section traces the chronological development of Indian-owned printing presses in Banaras during the nineteenth century.

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[1] Lithography was a printing technology which was invented by Alois Senefelder around 1798. He developed a method of imaging limestone that produced a print. The significance of lithography is that it accelerated the process of printing and publishing during the nineteenth century.

[2] The region of northern India known as the North Western Provinces (NWP) came into existence in with the capital at Agra in 1836. In 1877, it merged with Oudh to become North Western Provinces and Oudh. In 1902 it was renamed as United Provinces of Agra & Oudh (or simply the United Province) that name continued until independence 1947 when it became Uttar Pradesh (known in present days).

[3] Aloys Sprenger. (1854). *Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian and Hindustany Manuscripts of the Libraries of the King of Oudh, vol. I*. The Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, p. xii.

[4] *Selections from the Records of the Government, North Western Provinces, vol. III*, Secundra Orphan Press, Agra, (1855), p. 237.

[5] George A Grierson. (1889). *The Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan*. Asiatic Society, Calcutta, p. 145.

Indigenous Endeavours and Printing Press in Banaras:

The establishment of the first printing press in Banaras remained unclear. One of the articles indicates that the printing press existed in Banaras before 1780. It was about a printing press 'at one thousand years old', discovered at Banaras when Warren Hastings was Governor-General (Priolkar, 1958, p. XV). This story ran in an American Periodical, '*The New-Yorker*', in July 1840 with the title of an 'Extraordinary Discovery of an Ancient Printing Press in India'. The newspaper informs that:

> An extraordinary discovery was made of a press in India when Warren Hastings was Governor General of India. He observed that in the district of Benares a little below the surface of the earth, was to be found a stratum of a kind of fibrous woody substance, of various thickness in horizontal layers. . . Major Roebuck could collect it appears probable that the press had remained there in the state in which it was found for at least one thousand years".[6]

However, it was the first reference of the existence of a printing press in Banaras district in the 1780s.

In the nineteenth century, the Europeans' endeavours to establish the printing press in Banaras were minimal. Even the missionaries were not the pioneers in establishing the printing press. The lack of the European-owned press[7], the absence of the missionary press and the coming of the lithographic presses paved the way for Indian participation in the print activities in Banaras. The source indicates that Indian-owned printing houses also flourished during 1820s and 1830s. '*Garhashta Chikitsa*' was one of the early printed books found in Ramnagar Fort's Library, Banaras (Medhasananda, 2002, pp.643-644), and was published from *Anjuman Yantralay* in 1827. '*Bharatvarsiya Itihas'* was printed from *Sarasudhanadhi* Press in 1839 (Medhasananda, 2002, p. 644). Both books were produced in lithographed form by these presses. Initially, the local *pandits* or Brahmans had enrolled in this printing activity, published their ritual and cultural works and played a central role in the emergence of print culture in Banaras.

Various actors shaped and featured the emerging local print culture in Banaras. The people welcomed the printing press for commercial purposes and identified it as an agent of enlightenment, progress, and social change. Due to their efforts, the print was not limited to the progressive and modern sections of society like Calcutta (Ghosh, 2006) and Bombay (Naregal, 2001). In Banaras, the printers-publishers came from backgrounds like *Brahmins, Kayasthas,* and *Khatris*. The print was

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[6] *The New-yorker*, 18 July 1848, p. 275.

[7] In Banaras, only three European-owned printing presses existed during nineteenth century. James Princep first set up a printing press in 1822 for official use only, then Colonel Peter Lawrie Pew established the Recorder Press in November 1846 and last one the 'Medical Hall Press' established by Dr. E. J. Lazarus in 1854.

dominated by these groups who were migrated from Bengal, Maharashtra, or the Gangetic core region. Among them, Brahmins played a dominant role in print. The local learned Brahmins entered the publishing trade in large numbers in Banaras, indicating that 'print was well compatible with their scribal and intellectual concerns' (Stark, 2008, p. 78). IN THEIR WORKS ON BANARAS, M. A. Sherring, Francesca Orsini, and Dhirendranath Singh argue that some press proprietors were involved in the print business for their livelihood or for intellectual purposes. It paved the way for the establishment of private printing presses in the vicinity of the city during the nineteenth century.

The early attempt to establish a printing press in Banaras was made by Raja Jayanarayan Ghoshal (1752-1820), an ex-superintendent of the Calcutta police and had good relations with the Church Missionary Society. When he established the first 'modern School' in Banaras, he understood that the school would not fulfil his ambition of enlightening the minds of Indian people in the absence of a printing press. He believed that the printing press would work as a civilising force. In 1818, he requested the London Church Missionary Society to send a printing press to Banaras. He wrote a letter to the Church Missionary Society, London, on 12 August 1818:

> I long greatly that the most effectual means may be used for enlightening the minds of my countrymen. I am therefore anxious to have a printing press also established at Banaras, by which school books might be speedily multiplied, and treatises on different in different subjects might be printed and generally dispersed throughout the country. Without this, the progress of knowledge must be very slow, and the Hindus long remain in their very fallen state, which is a very painful consideration to a benevolent mind.[8]

He also asked the Missionary Society to send learned men or supervisors to run the press.[9] But this request had not been fulfilled by the Church Missionary Society.

In 1830, Raja Udit Narayan Singh (1795-1835) of Banaras showed his eagerness to print religious works. He sponsored several publishing projects for their court. For instance, an edition of the famous *Mahabharat* translation was done in Hindi (*Brajbhasha*) under the aegis of the Raja of Banaras. Gokul Nath completed This Mahabharat translation[10] and printed it at the Calcutta's Sastra Prakas Press in 1829-30. Unfortunately, the Raja did not possess a printing press.

The pioneer among the Banaras printers-publishers was Babu Govind Raghunath Thatte, a Maharashtrian Chitpawan barahaman, who established the first Indian

[8] James Long. (1848). *Hand-Book of Bengal Missions, In Connexion with the Church of England*. John Farquahar Shaw, London, p. 70.
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] Grierson. (1889). *The Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan*. p. 118.

owned printing press 'Banaras Akhbar Press' in Banaras in 1844. It was a lithographic press and published both newspapers and books. The Press launched two weekly papers; the first was the Benares *Ukhbar* (*Banaras Akhbar*), published in January 1845 (Singh, 2003, p. 15), also known as the first Hindi paper in the Hindi Heartland. The second weekly paper was the Benares Gazette (Banaras Gazette), published in Urdu. The *'Ukhbar'* was lithographed in *Nagari,* though the language was Urdu. Both papers were printed in four to eight pages. It was sold at Re 1 per month. The *Banaras Akhbar* was divided into many editorial parts, containing some translations from Sanskrit law books and local news gleaned from the other Indian vernacular newspapers and English newspapers. Raja of Nepal financially helped these two newspapers.[11] However, due to the aggressive nature towards the Christian Missionaries, the local government took action against this paper, and according to the 'case of libel' in 1853, the publication of the Banaras Gazette was suspended (Stark, 2008, p. 60). The *Banaras Akhbar* was continuously published till 1870. The paper began with a circulation 44; among them, half of the subscribers were European, and the rest were Hindus. Several titles (books) were also printed in Banaras Akhbar Press. Most of these books were published in *pothi* (manuscript) format (See Figure: 1). It was another way to sustain the print business. Thus, Raghunath Thatte remained in the printing business for almost three decades.

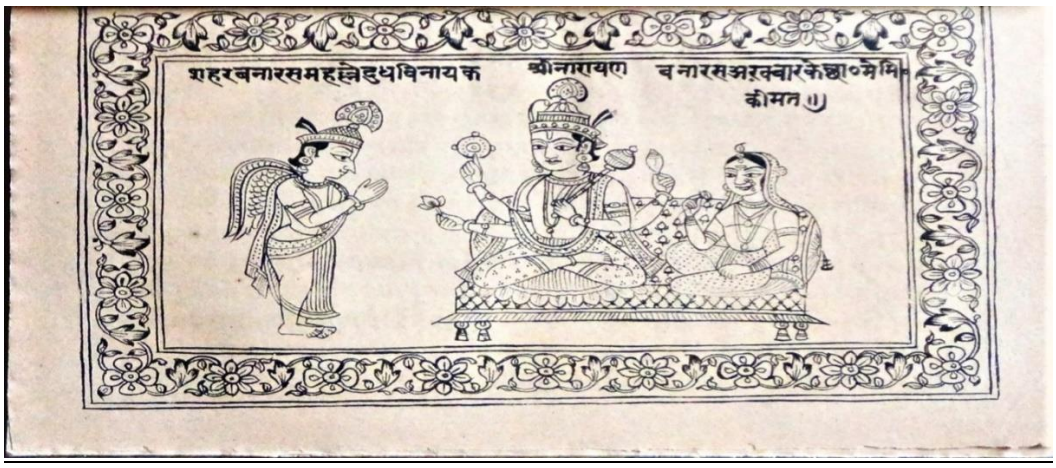

Figure 1: *Sanatankumaracaritra*'s Frontispiece printed in Banaras Akhbar Press in 1854.

Source: https://chapakhana.rcc.uchicago.edu/gallary/

The second printing press that came into existence in the city was the Sudhakar Press, established by Pandit Ratneswar Tiwary. The press was a lithographic press which used *Nagari* characters. A weekly Hindi newspaper, '*Sudhakar*' was launched. But it used more Urdu (Persian style of Urdu) in its language than Hindi. In 1848, '*Sudhakar* paper had a good number of circulations of 50 copies taken by

[11] *Selections from the Records of the Government, North Western Provinces,* (1855), p. 237.

Hindus, 22 by Europeans and two by Musalmans'.[12] The paper contained local news and general information. Soon it lost many subscribers. The reason for the fall of *Sudhakar's* circulation was the gradual switch of languages in Urdu, Hindi and sometimes in Sanskrit. So, it became hard for this paper to recover its expenses. The monthly expenditure of this press was Rs. 50. In 1851, the paper went to the 'hands of Brindaban Tiwari'.[13] Brindaban Tiwari printed the first book '*Jankee Bundh*' for the Raja of Banaras from this press in 1851. Another work, '*Chhandastarang*' (See Figure: 2), was published and circulated in good numbers. It was one of the early works that survived. Thus, it could be said that Raja of Banaras commissioned this press to print a few books for him. He started to use a high-flown style in which Hindi mixed with Sanskrit words. The readership of this paper remained intact among *Banarasi* Hindus as they understood this high-flown Hindi language. Sudhakar Press did not criticise the Christian Missionaries like the Banaras Akhbar Press.

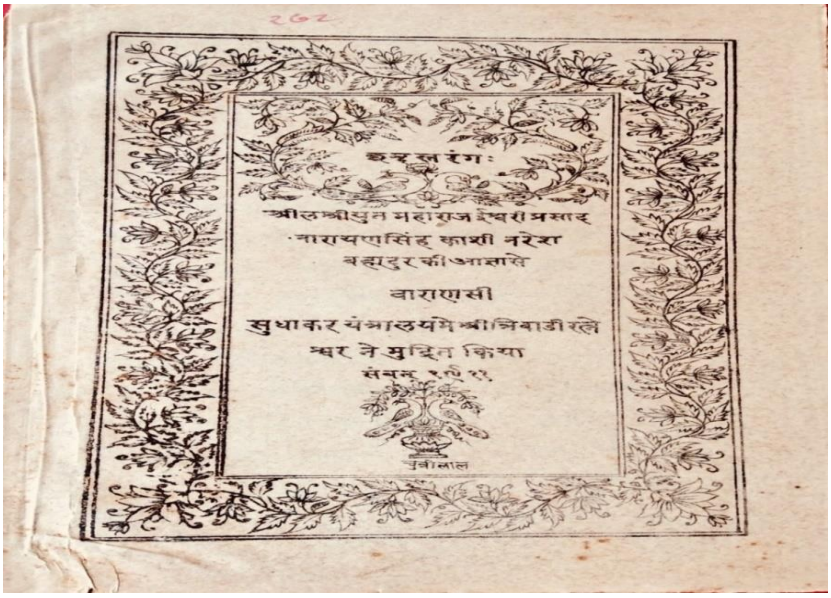

Figure 2: Title page of *Chhandastarang, Sambat* 1911 (1854 CE).

Source: https://chapakhana.rcc.uchicago.edu/gallary/

It was loyal to the government. The Native Newspaper Report of 1851 informed that 'in style and type it is far superior to the other Hindi paper of Banaras, called the '*Banaras Akhbar'*.[14] The column of this paper also contained articles on modern science, history, and useful knowledge. Due to educational publications, this newspaper became a useful instrument for the government to spread scientific

[12] *Ibid*, p. 245.
[13] *Selections from the Records of the Government, North Western Provinces, vol. IV*, The Government Press, Allahabad, (1868), p. 78.
[14] *Ibid*.

knowledge. The government extended financial support to the '*Banaras Akhbar'* by purchasing half of the published copies of the newspaper and distributing them among the rural schools.

The first Bengali printing press in the Banaras was the Mutba-Bagh-O-Bahar Press, opened jointly by Kedarnath Ghosh and Kali Prasad Benerjee in 1848. They published two weekly newspapers, '*Bagh-O-Bahar'* in Urdu and '*Banarasi Chandrodaya'* in Bengali. They had some 40 subscribers at Rs. 14 per annum each. The paper's quality was not good. These papers contained the local and current news and the 'Decisions of the Sadan Diwani Adalat, North-Western Provinces.'[15] Among these papers, the '*Banarasi Chandrodaya'* was discontinued within one year, but '*Bagh-O-Bahar* continued for many years. Over time, these papers changed in their content style. They started to include useful subjects like 'the description of the medical system, history, astronomy'.[16] Apart from it, the Bengali almanac and Bengali works were issued from this press. Sometimes, a few books were produced and commissioned by the Raja of Banaras. In 1851, Kedarnath Ghosh resigned from the Bagh-O-Bahar Press and the press was run solely by Kali Prasad. The subscribers started to fall because the papers were severely executed. Later, this press contacted the government to remain in business and received financial support from them. It got a big financial boost in 1850 when the British Collector's Office commissioned 10,000 lithographed copies.

Kedarnath Ghosh and his editor, Munsi Harbans Lal (Munshi Harivans Lal), started a magazine named the '*Mirat-ul-Ulum'* or 'The Mirror of Science' in August 1848. It was edited by Munsi Harbans Lal. It was issued monthly. The periodical contained articles on Modern history and English modes of Agriculture. Unfortunately, it was discontinued in November, just after three circulations.

The first printing shop of the city dedicated to the printing of books was the 'Gulzar-e-Hamesha Bahar Press' (Rose Garden of Eternal Spring), established by Virsingh Khatri 'Vagvishvendra' in 1849. He had tried to open a printing shop before this press with the help of a stock company. Unfortunately, the Banaras Bank Scandal[17] took place, which shook the whole city. As a result, the shareholders were afraid to invest in any risky venture. The 'Gulzar-e-Hamesha Bahar Press' did not publish any newspaper. Virsingh Khattri printed books in several languages like Sanskrit, Persian, Hindi and Urdu. The total number of copies of the book was 3,200, published in 16 titles. Out of these, the Press could only sell three copies of *Ashtadhyayi*, one copy of *Meghaduta*, and only five copies of the Hindi rhetorical treatise on Tulsidas. So he had to face a huge loss which was not recovered. This press was closed down in 1849.

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[15] *Ibid*, p. 79.

[16] *Selections from the Records of the Government, North Western Provinces*, (1855), p. 299.

[17] The Banaras Bank collapsed due to the corruption of a non-native Colonel Pew, the managing Director of the Banaras Bank. For further details of the Banaras Bank Scandal see *The Constitution and History of the Benares Bank, Compiled from the Records.* Presbytarian Mission Press, Allahabad, (1849).

In 1850, the 'Mufad-i-Hind press' was established by Munshi Harbans as a printing shop. This press had launched a bi-monthly journal '*Sayuren-e-Hind* (*Sa'iri'n-e-Hind*) in Urdu. It started with a good number of circulations of 75 copies. Harbans Lal was keen to promote scientific knowledge through this paper. The paper contained articles on the arts and sciences that fulfilled the needs of the merchant and mechanics. The native report of the government indicates that the journal 'was run by two persons – Harbans Lal and Bhiru Prasad'.[18] Harbans Lal, the former editor of '*Mirat-ul-Ulum'*, started '*Mufad-e-Hind*' Press for more profit but did not have much success. The Europeans supported the paper, while over half of Hindu subscribers discontinued their subscriptions. Harbans Lal printed the first Hindi prose version of the *Bhagavata Purana,* the *Sukhsagar,* in 1853.

The second Bengali press was Banaras Kashi Press, set up by Bengali Brahmin Kashidas Mitra in 1851. The Press published a weekly Bengali newspaper, '*Kasi Barta Prakashika'*. The '*Kashi Barta Prakashika'* was the only Bengali newspaper in Banaras with a high circulation of 92 copies (1851). The circulation of this paper was increased from 92 to 110 within a year. Most of the subscribers were residents of Banaras. Later, this press published one more Urdu periodical, '*Aftab-i-Hind'*. It contained articles on educational and scientific topics that attracted the government towards this paper. Its circulation reached 110. Along with Banaras, this newspaper was circulated in other stations of North-Western Provinces for distribution. Both papers contained local news and news of Rangoon, Calcutta, Bombay, China, Nepal and princely cities of India.[19] Apart from that, extracts from the Government Gazette, like articles on the history of India, the medical system, Chemistry, and European Astronomy, were published in both papers. Some of the significant books, published by this press in well lithograph, were the editions of Tulshidas's *Vinaypatrika* and Chatra Nrpati's *Padaratnavali,* a Hindi Treatise on music. Both of these books were published in 1854.

[18] *Selections from the Records of the Government, North Western Provinces*, (1855), p. 287.
[19] *Selections from the Records of the Government, North Western Provinces*, (1868), p. 132.

Figure 3: *Kavitt Ramayan* printed in 1858.

Source: https://chapakhana.rcc.uchicago.edu/gallary/

The Ganesh Press was a lithographic press. It was established by Durgaprasad Katare in 1850 near Ghughrani *Muhalla*. This press mostly printed books in the Hindi language. Among the books, 'the famous works were *Tulsidas's Ramcharitamanas, Kabitta Ramayan* (1850), *Vinay Patrika* (1850), *Nandadas's Anekardh Manjari* (1850)' (Singh, 1986, p. 63). All these books were printed on handmade papers, which were manufactured by the local printers. Due to the limited economy, they did not try to buy the papers from the paper factories.

Another Lithographic press named Divakar Press was established by Shiva Charan in 1855. He published an illustrated version of *'Ramcharitmanas'* in 1855. Apart from it, several religious works like '*Pothi Kashi Yatra'* (1856), *Kavitt Ramayan* (1858), *'Shukbahtri'* (1859), *'Gitawali'* (1882) (Singh, 1986, p. 64) were published. Among them, *Kavitt Ramayan* was beautifully lithographed with illustrations (See Figure: 3).

In 1857, the local print industries were scattered in north India due to the uprising of the 1857 Mutiny. However, Banaras remained unaffected compared to other parts of north India. Before this Mutiny, 'no less than five newspapers and eighteen other presses were in operation in this city'.[20] Among these newspapers, only one newspaper, '*The Bal Patrika'*[21], published in Hindi, had stopped during this time.

[20] *Ibid*, p. 165.
[21] *Ibid.*

The print presses began their work again in 1858. But the number of presses had reduced from eighteen to twelve after the Mutiny. Apart from that, several large commercial printing firms were developed in the city in the following decades and engaged in commercial activities like producing books, almanacs, etc. In 1884, there were nineteenth functional commercial printing presses in the city.[22] Except for the Medical Hall Press, all presses were owned by indigenous people.

After the Great Mutiny, the first Hindi Printing Press established in Banaras was the Banaras Light Press in 1860. Gopinath Pathak was the proprietor and printer of this press. The press used both types of presses, i.e., typographic and lithographic. This press received royal patronage and worked in close collaboration with 'a team of court poets (Narayandas Kavi, Munshi Harbans Lal, Babu Avinashi Lal and Babul Bholenath) to print accessible lithographic editions of the devotional classic of Tulsidas, Surdas and Kabir' (Orsini, 2004, p. 118). Dhirendranath Singh talked about the printing method of this press and mentioned that 'it was basically a lithographic press, but they kept typographic press too; they printed the 'title page' in the typographic press by using red ink which made it so attractive' (Singh, 1986, p. 63). It produced almost 200 titles. They also brought works of courtly erotic (*riti*) poetry, commentaries, and the Hindi texts produced in Calcutta for Fort William College, like Lallulal's *Sabhavilas*' (Orsini, 2004, p. 118). The magnificent work of this press was a *Brajbhasha* version of the Bhagavata Puran-'*Ananda ambudhi* (1868), commissioned by the Maharaja Raghuraj Singh of *Rewah*. The reputation of this press attracted the attention of Hindu reformer Dayananda Saraswati. He collaborated with Gopinath Pathak to print his *Sastrartha Kasi* (1869), a famous religious debate with the Banaras *pandits*, and *Advaitamat Khandanam* (1870), a refutation of the doctrine of non-duality.

During the 1860s, Hindi writers started to participate in the printing and publishing business. Among them, the contribution of Manna Lal Sharma 'Dwij' was unforgettable. He set up the Kashi Sanskrit Press in 1860. He also worked as a member of the Bhartendu circle. Another literary figure, Bhartendu Harishchandra, set up his press Harishchandra Chandrika Press in 1874 in his *Chaukhamba* residence. It was a lithography press. Earlier, he opened this press to publish his and his father's works. But not a single piece of Harishchandra was printed here. Some pieces of his father Gopalchandra *'Giridhardas'* were printed and published here. His father was also a renowned poet of *Brajbhasha*. One of his works, '*Jarasandh-Vadh'* epic was printed from Harishchandra Chandrika Press (Singh, 1986, p. 76). Later, Harishchandra became the founder and editor of three influential magazines, like *Kavivachan Sudha* (1867), *Harishchandra Chandrika* (1873) and *Balabodhani* (1874). But these magazines were not published by his Harishchandra Chandrika Press.

[22] *Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Home Department, No. CCXIII*, Printed by the Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, India, (1884), p. 61.

॥भारतजीवन॥

अयं निजः परो वेति गणना लघुचेतसाम्।
उदारचरितानान्तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्॥ १॥

भाग { बनारस १८४१ मि० चैत्र शुक्ल ७ चन्द्रवार, २३ मार्च १८८५ ई०। } संख्या ४

BHARATJIWAN.
PUBLISHED EVERY MONDAY.

BENARES:
23rd MARCH 1885.

Figure 4: Title page of *'Bharat Jiwan'* paper, 23 March 1885.

Courtesy of Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi.

The establishment of Bharat Jiwan Press by Ramkrishna Varma in 1884 marked a turning point in local print history. He was also one of the members of the Bhartendu circle. Bhartendu Harishchandra inspired him to establish this press and suggested the title of this press. In 1885, Ramkrishna Varma launched '*Bharat Jiwan'*, a weekly paper (See Figure: 4). The *Bharat Jiwan* was one of the longest and most circulated newspapers of Banaras in the nineteenth century. The number of circulation reached 2,200 in a few years.[23] For the editorial work, he kept some sub-proprietors like Kartik Prasad Khattri, Harikrishna Johar, Ganga Prasad Gupta, Ramchandra Varma, and Krishna Prasad Gaud. The *Bharat Jiwan* paper started to print in eight pages. With time, the number of pages increased from eight to sixteen. The price of this paper was Rs. 1.5 (including postage duty). It contained socio-political news and information on contemporary writers and their writings, translations of Bengali novels in Hindi (*Khariboli*), etc. The paper was filled with more than half a dozen advertisements printed on the first and last pages for more profit. The Bharat Jiwan Press produced many books and soon became the leading book producer in Banaras in the 1880s. They had both typographic and lithographic presses. The qualities of printed books were good. The cover page was printed with light red ink. More than 256 titles were produced between 1884 and 1900 from this press.

[23] *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers Published in the Panjab, North-Western Provinces, Oudh, Central Provinces and Berar*, (01-04-1887), p. 12. (South Asian Open Archive).

By the 1880s, print had attracted the Indian writers' community. Commercial printing and publishing paved the way for those professional writers who depended on their writing for their livelihood. Devkinandan Khatri was one of them, who was known as the most popular and potential writer in Hindi and Urdu. Influenced by Bengali novels he started writing novels and published them in instalments. His two best-known series of novels, *Chandrakanta* and *Chandrakanta Santati, were* published in 1888 from various presses and brought him fame and fortune (King, 1994, p. 32). Soon, he launched *Upnayas Lahari*, a monthly fiction, in which he used to publish a series of novels, *Chandrakanta* and *Chandrakanta Santati*.[24] Through these fiction publications, he acquired enough money. As a result, he set up his own 'Lahari Press' in September 1898. The press published the sequel to *Chandrakanta* and *Chandrakanta Santati* (Chnadrakanta's offspring). Soon, the Lahari Press became one of the foremost commercial printing presses in Banaras. It paved the way for the profitable market for the printers-publishers. As a result, fiction publishing became most popular in the last decade of the nineteenth century. After the death of Devkinandan Khatri, his son, Durgaprasad Khatri, was running the Lahari Press.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it can be said that the emergence of local print culture in nineteenth century Banaras was possible due to the pioneer efforts of the indigenous people. While tracing the role of the indigenous people in the establishment of the printing presses, the article shows the diffusion of print into two phases - the pre-Mutiny period (pre-1857 Revolt), when the local and state patronage remained a critical factor for the survival of the local printing presses and helped them to sustain their small business. The local Brahmin intellectuals and *pandits* were entering the printing business to publish their ritual and cultural works. They reflected the city's culture and religious concerns through their publishing. Instead of looking for substantial benefits, they want to run their print shops for a long time. The second was the post-Mutiny period, when private Indian owned presses were opened in the city more than before. In this period, the nature of print was more focused on commercial printing and publishing. The technological advancement made print portable, cheap and easy to access. The scenario changed after the 1860s when local printers looked at the market for profits rather than patronage. However, this development shifted from private printing press ownership to print entrepreneurs. Thus, the small print shops became a significant publishing house in the city in the second half of the nineteenth century.

[24] 'Statement of Particulars Regarding Books, Maps, &c., Published in the N. W. Provinces, and Registered Under Act XXV of 1867, During the Third Quarter of 1896'. *Quarterly List of Publications, North Western Provinces and Oudh,* (1896), N.W.P. and Oudh Government Press, Allahabad, p. 19.

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From Effeminacy to Revolutionary: A Historical Analysis of the Rise of the Revolutionary Movement in Colonial Bengal

Subir Ghosh

Abstract: *In India, the origins of the revolutionary movement had a long-term historical process. In the early decade of the twentieth century, the revolutionary movement was mainly confined to Bengal, Maharashtra, and Punjab. This article focuses on the origins of the revolutionary movement in colonial Bengal. In Bengal, the revolutionary movement had a historical root. It was the result of the physical culture movement in Bengal. This paper is trying to argue that the concept of the revolutionary movement was not exported from Maharashtra. However, historians like Peter Heehs, Partha Chatterjee, and Bimanbehari Majumdar have argued that the idea of the Bengali revolutionary movement came from Maharashtra. This article discusses that the Bengali revolutionary movement started against the charge of effeminacy and cowardice of Bengali people. Some Bengali intellectuals, like Rajnarayan Bose, Nabagopal Mitra, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, later Sarala Ghosal, Pramatha Nath Mitra, Aurobindo Ghosh, Sister Nivedita, and Jatindranath Banerjee, played a crucial role in forming a revolutionary organisation in Bengal.*

Keywords*: Revolutionary, Effeminacy, Physical, Culture, Bengal, Movement*

Introduction

The Bengali revolutionary movement is possibly the most significant anti-colonial movement of the 20th century. It had a long-term historical process, which started in the last quarter of the 19th century. During this time, some eminent persons like Rajnarayan Bose, Nabagopal Mitra, and Jatindranath Tagore played a vital role in establishing a revolutionary tradition in Bengal. Later Sarala Devi, Aurobindo Ghosh, Jatindranath Banerjee, Barindra Ghosh, Bhupendranath Dutta, Bipin Chandra Pal, Pramathanath Mitra, Pulin Behari Das, Surendranath Banerjee and Sister Nivedita (disciple of Swami Vivekananda) fulfilled their ancestor's dreams and played a lead role in the setup a new cult or mood of resistance. At first Bengali revolutionary movement started through physical culture. Leaders established gymnasium and physical culture clubs to build muscular physique among Bengalis. The study proves that the idea of a secret society or revolutionary samiti was not imported from Maharashtra. It was historically rooted in the Bengali cultural milieu. Peter Heehs has argued that the idea of Bengali revolutionary tradition was exported from Maharashtra. He also opined that the first revolutionary organisation was established in Maharashtra, and then it came to Bengal (Heehs, 1993, p. 476). Partha Chatterjee argues:

> The history of terrorism in British India usually begins with the killing in Poona in 1897 of the British officials W. C. Rand and C.

E. Ayerst by the Maharashtrian brothers Damodar and Balkrishna Chapekar (Chatterjee, 2004, p. 1-2).

Partha Chatterjee also told before the murder of Rand, the plague commissioner and Lt. Ayerest, Maharashtra promoted the formation of clubs of young men, where they practiced gymnastics, wrestling and other kinds of physical exercises. Partha Chatterjee argued that the spotlight shifted to the east of the country (Chatterjee, 2004, p. 2). According to Bimanbehari Majumdar, 'Sri Aurobindo brought the seed of secret society from Maharashtra to Bengal' (Majumdar, 1966, p. 99). However, the article tries to show that the Bengali revolutionary movement was the result of Bengali's rising consciousness about India's socio-political conditions. It was not conceived in Maharashtra. Before Maharashtra, Bengalis were familiar with Western education and philosophies, which later produced intellectual Bengalis. An eminent revolutionary, Arun Chandra Guha, said that the Bengali revolutionary movement was the product of a cultural revolution in Bengal (Guha, 1971, p. 61).

Protest against the Charge of Effeminacy

The concept of effeminacy was embodied during the second half of the nineteenth century. Herbert Risley, a British ethnologist, and physical anthropologist, gave theories behind Bengali's effeminacy. Risley's scientific study of noses found that Bengalis were mainly from a Mongolo-Dravidian racial stock. His further scientific observations established that Bengalis, more than other Indians, were slenderly built, small-boned, and of low and stunted stature (Sinha, 1995, p. 20). Though Risley's primary explanations of Bengali effeminacy was 'the relaxing climate,' the 'enfeebling diet,' and the premature maternity of women that had resulted in the birth of a weak and stunted race in Bengal. Mrinalini Sinha said British officials offered various explanations behind the Bengali effeminacy: the decline of native physical pursuit under the material securing provided by the British rule; the elites' scorn for indigenous pastimes and obsession with everything English; the excessive concentration on studies leading to 'brain fever' and 'feeble development of muscles'; the Bengali diet of rice; the hot and enervating climate; early parenthood, and so on (Sinha, 1995, p. 21). She argues that in the second half of the nineteenth century, middle-class Bengalis made several efforts to combat the problem of the emasculation of the Bengali male. She also said that during this time, Bengalis revived the culture of *akharas* or gymnasiums to cultivate and instil a sense of pride in the physical prowess of Bengalis (Sinha, 1995, p. 21).

Eminent leaders like Rajnarayan Bose and Nabagopal Mitra promoted a spirit of nationalism and strongly protested against the charge of effeminacy and cowardice of Bengali men. They established the first secret society, *Sanjibani Sabha* in Bengal, through an initiative of Jatindranath Tagore, brother of Rabindranath Tagore. Rajnarayan Bose and Nabagopal Mitra were conscious of the importance of physical exercise and tried to promote physical activity through a National gymnasium. With the formation of the gymnasium, they aimed to build up the good

physique of the national worker through rigorous physical exercise. Through the help of the Tagore family, Nabagopal Mitra also organised *Jatiya Mela* in 1867, known as *Hindu Mela*, which played a significant role in spreading *Swadeshi*. He also insisted on using the Bengali language for educational and propaganda purposes. Rabindranath Tagore, a member of this Sabha, wrote:

> Joti Dada established a secret society and its assembly was organized in an old house; society program was associated with a book of Rig-Veda, dead man skull and an open sword; Rajnarayan Bose was Brahmin; they had taken the pledge for the salvation of the country (*Rabindra Rachanaboli*, vol.1, 1987, p. 15)[1].

Bipin Chandra Pal mentions society's activities in his autobiography, *'Memoirs of My Life and Times.'* He wrote:

> I knew of one such society, though I was not myself a member of it, whose initiatory rites were almost Masonic in some aspect. Every member of this society had to sign the pledge of membership with his own blood drawn at the point of a sword from his breast. They were dreamers of wild dreams, but harmless dreamers so far, whose thought and immigration alone were of a revolutionary character, but who never seriously meant to rise in physical revolt against the British authority in the country, or who hoped to secure the emancipation of their people by a campaign of political associations (Pal, 1932, p. 248).

Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, the author of *Rabindra Jiboni*, stated that the *Sanjiboni Sabha* is the same organisation that Bipin Chandra Pal mentioned in his memoirs (Mukhopadhyay, 1936, p. 59). However, Rajnarayan Bose and Nabagopal Mitra suffered from several shortcomings likes their movement in mainly sentimental character, they have little organising ability, they appealed only to Hindu people and they excluded the Muslims of Bengal (Majumdar, 1966, p 7).

However, the organised revolutionary movement started in Bengal during the first half of the twentieth century and grew through different stages. Initially, they concentrated on various physical exercises like drills, gymnastics, riding, boxing, and *lathi*-play. Later, they gradually took to militant activities with firearms and bombs, being influenced by Italy, Russia and Ireland. There was a general feeling among Indians that Bengalis were inoffensive, pacifists and incapable of physical exertion; thus, they were branded as cowards and effeminate. The youth of Bengal were determined to remove this stigma through acts of daring activities and heroic sacrifices. Bhupendranath Dutta wrote in his autobiography that the youths of Bengal joined the revolutionary movement to remove the blame that *"Kapurush Bangali kichu korte pare na"* (Coward Bengalis can do nothing) (Dutta, 1983, p.

[1] Author of this article has translated this passage from *Rabindra Rachanaboli*, vol. 1, p. 15.

9). Another eminent revolutionary, Trailokyanath Chakraborty, agrees with Dutta's view and wrote:

> *Banglar biplobi ra 'viru Bangali' ei opobad bivido karma anushtan dara dur koriachilo, artachari setango karmachari o police hotta koria abong shastra sangram koria proman korilo, bangali viru noi, banagali lorai korite jane, pran dite jane, tahara prithibir j kono swadhin jatir bir sainikder samokkoho* (Chakraborty, 2015, p. 46).

Revolutionary Jibontara Halder wrote in his book that in the early decade of the twentieth century, some noted persons like Sarala Devi Ghosal, Bipin Behari Ganguly, and Pabitra Sarkar established gymnasiums or *akharas* at Calcutta as well as different places in Bengal to provide physical training to the youth (Halder, 2009, p. 3). Later, these physical training centres came under the influence of revolutionaries and transformed into a political organisation whose activities were partly secret or open (Ray, 1909, p. 10).

The physical cultural movement took a significant chapter under the leadership of Sarala Devi Ghosal. She was the daughter of Janakinath Ghosal and Swarna Kumari Devi and granddaughter of *Brahomo* leader Devendranath Tagore. Sarala Devi played a crucial role in removing the stigma of effeminacy. In order to remove this stigma Sarala Devi opened an academy at Ballygunge in Calcutta, where youths practiced *lathi*, swordplay, drill and various physical exercises under a professional instructor, named Murtaza (Chadhurani, 1950, p. 126). To imbue nationalism among the Bengalis she introduced a festival in honor of the memory of Pratapaditya and his son Udayaditya of Jessore.[2] Sarala Devi also revised an old festival called *Veerastami*, in which young men of Bengal had to perform some arduous physical feats (Chadhurani, 1950, p. 140). Bimanbehari Majumdar argued:

> She was the bridge between the thought currents on militant nationalism between Maharashtra and Bengal on the one hand and between Bengal and Punjab on the other (Majumdar, 1966, p. 10).

An intelligence officer J.C. Ker wrote in his report:

> The object of Sarala Ghosal was apparently political, as she was known to be a supporter of the nationalist movement; her declared intention was to remove the historical reproach, perpetuated by Macaulay that the Bengalis were a race of cowards, and she was avowedly influenced by the success of the Japanese in the war with Russia (Ker, 1973, p. 7).

He mentioned that by the influence of Sarala Devi, in Calcutta, and throughout the province were established similar *akharas* (gymnasia), where wrestling and *lathi*-

[2] Home Confedintial, 7th August 1911, *Note on the Growth of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal*, File nos. 388/1911, West Bengal State Archive, Kolkata, p. 13.

play were taught (Ker, 1973, p. 7). Mrinalini Sinha argues Sarala Devi was a prominent woman among nineteenth-century Bengali nationalist leaders. She played an essential role in the 1890s in arousing Bengali youth to pursue a militant and nationalistic culture (Sinha, 1995, p. 21). Revolutionary Jibontara Halder wrote in his autobiography that some Bengalis also established circus troops against the charge of effeminacy and cowardice (Halder, 1989, p. 25). During that time, some prominent circus parties were Hippodrome Circus by Krishna Basak, *Baghmara* Circus by Shamakanta, etc. (Halder, 1989, p. 25). These entire circuses became famous around the country and the world. By the turn of the nineteenth century the physical culture movement in Bengal had become a base for terrorist organisations against the British (Sinha, 1995, p. 21). Dr. Bhupendranath Dutta (brother of Swami Vivekananda) mentions an incident in his autobiography (*Bharater Dwitiya Swadhinata Sangram*) that, in 1903 or 1904, he heard from Aurobindo Ghosh that some *sadhus* on the bank of Narmada prophesied that in 1906 a great revolutionary movement would be organised. Maharashtra would be its centre, but the cowardly Bengalis are keeping aloof from it. Bengali youths felt enraged at this and decided to organise a revolutionary movement (Dutta, 1983, pp. 9-10).

Role of Bengali Intellectuals

Some of the great intellectual persons of Bengal, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda, Surendranath Banerjee, and Aurobindo Ghosh, had a tremendous influence on the rise of the revolutionary movement in Bengal. In the intellectual field of Bengal, the contribution of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was considerable both to constructive nationalism and rationalism. He wrote the great novel *Ananda Math* and was the first man in Bengal who wrote a series of novels to stoke nationalism in Bengal. In the historical novel *Ananda Math*, published in 1882, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee narrates some events of the *Sannyasi* rebellion. He portrayed a band of patriots who described themselves as *santans* (children) of the motherland. At the time of their initiation, they had taken the vow to renounce their hearth and home and devote themselves to the service of the motherland. An intelligence officer J.C. Ker reported:

> Many ideas were afterwards borrowed from this novel by the leaders of the Bengali revolutionary societies and the special vow taken by the members of the Anushilan Samiti of Dacca was practically the same as that imposed upon the children (Ker, 1973, p. 30).

He also wrote in his report that:

> ...the greetings' *Bande Mataram*' became war-cry of the extremist party in Bengal; it was raised at political meetings to welcome political leaders and to express approval of particularly exciting passages in their speeches and also occasionally as a shout of defence of Europeans in the streets (Ker, 1973, p. 30).

There were differences between the *santans* of *Ananda Math* and the revolutionaries of Bengal. The *santans* liberated their motherland from Muslim rule, and the revolutionaries tried to liberate it from British rule. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee targeted the British rulers of India under a thin veil. Therefore, he gave the revolutionaries the mantra of *'Bande Mataram'*. Arun Chandra Guha, a member of Anushilan Samiti, wrote in his autobiography:

> His essays on Auguste Comte, on Hinduism, on Sri Krishna, on the Gita, all contributed to the growth of rationalism and the cult of *nishkama karma* of the Gita, as explained and popularised by him, supplied the moral background to the Bengal revolutionaries and immensely helped to the growth of revolutionary ideas (Guha, 1971, p. 63).

Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches had numerous impacts on Bengali revolutionaries. Vivekananda's brother Bhupendranath Dutta played a leading role in the rising of the revolutionary movement in Bengal, and his autobiography reflects the influence of Swami Vivekananda's writings on the revolutionaries. Bhupendranath Dutta wrote:

> 'It is a truism to say that there is a correlation between Swamiji's appeals to his young countrymen and the intensity of revolutionary urge in the mind of the young men of later generation. Since the foundation of the revolutionary party in Bengal, in which Swamiji's British disciple Sister Nivedita took at first an active part and was a member of the Executive committee, his works, along with the writings and life of Mazzini as well as the life of Garibaldi, in *Bengalee*, were the mainspring of inspiration to the youthful mind of India. In every gymnasium, i.e., exercise-club of the revolutionary party of Bengal, his work entitled '*From Colombo to Almor'* was read.' (Cited in., Majumdar, 1966, p. 62)

Bimanbehari Majumder mentions that wherever the police searched, they invariably got a few works of Swami Vivekananda (Majumdar, 1966, p. 63). Sedition Committee report states that:

> For their own initiates the conspirators devised a remarkable series of text-books. The Bhagavad Gita, the writings of Vivekananda, the lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi were part of the course.[3]

Aurobindo Ghosh and his writings played a significant role in forming a revolutionary movement in Bengal. Dalia Ray said Aurobindo Ghosh played a double role in his political career. On the one hand, he was an explicit leader of the Nationalist Party. On the other way, he was the explicit leader who always inspired

[3] *Sedition Committee Report*. (1918). Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, p. 17.

the revolutionaries whose aims were to ruin the imperial rule (Ray, 1987, p. 40). But an eminent revolutionary, Jadugopal Mukherjee, said in his autobiography that Aurobindo does not believe in violent activities. According to him:

> ...revolution must be a prolonged effort to regenerate and revitalise the student community or youths and to evoke the sympathy and support of the labourers, farmers and soldiers so that they would actively participate in the movement and thereby make it a success (Mukhopadhyay, 1960, p. 26).

Before liberating the country from the hands of the imperialist government, Aurobindo wanted the country's economic development. He wrote:

> We must not talk of faith and hope, or revel in Utopian visions but run to the nearest scene of work, be one of the drudging millions, try to improve their lot and set ourselves to the task of mitigating human sufferings. The old villages are so many pictures of desolation and distress, they are the hot-beds of malaria, the sepulchres of our greatness; so go to them and try to reinstate our tutelary angel in his ancient seat. Or we must erect mills, start small industries, educate the masses, do philanthropic work and not talk of a free or united India until this is done (Ghosh, 2002, p. 879).

Bimanbehari Majumder said Aurobindo openly condemned the violent activities of revolutionaries. On 17th July 1909, Aurobindo delivered a speech where he said:

> If we are persecuted, if the plough of repression is passed over us, we shall meet it not by violence, but by suffering, by passive resistance, by lawful means. We have not said to our young men, 'when you are repressed, retaliate.' We have said "suffer" (Majumdar, 1966, p. 114).

Aurobindo emphasized on '*Swaraj'. 'Swaraj'* was the common goal of the revolutionaries. He said, 'The kingdom of *Swaraj* is within you' (Ghosh, 1997, p. 16). For achieving *Swaraj,* Aurobindo had taken the method of self-help and passive resistance. According to Aurobindo:

> The policy of passive resistance was evolved partly as the necessary complement of self-help, partly as a means of putting pressure on the Government. The essence of this policy is the refusal of co-operation so long as we are not admitted to a substantial share and an effective control in legislation, finance and administration (Ghosh, 1997, p. 154).

In an article, Aurobindo mentioned the policy of boycotting to achieve *swaraj*. According to him boycott is 'an ideal, like freedom; it means independence in

industry and commerce, as freedom means independence in administration, legislation and finance' (Ghosh, 1997, p. 396). Aurobindo also said:

> ...the necessity of boycott to help our own nascent energies in the field of self-help. Boycott of foreign goods is a necessary condition for the encouragement of *Swadeshi* industries, the boycott of Government schools is a necessary condition for the growth of national education, the boycott of British courts is a necessary condition for the spread of arbitration (Ghosh, 1997, p. 154).

But Aurobindo said that the internal conflict of the Congress creates obstacles against his policy (Ghosh, 1997, p. 155). So, he secretly provided support to organise a revolutionary movement in Bengal. Through the statement of Aurobindo, the article states that the political philosophy of Aurobindo greatly impacted young Bengali's minds to form a revolutionary movement in Bengal.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the *Brahmo* leaders of Bengal played a crucial role in the rise of the revolutionary movement in Bengal. Historian Bimanbehari Majumdar said:

> The *Brahmo Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj* do not believe in image worship, but some of the great leaders of militant nationalism came from the rank of these two reformist movements (Majumdar, 1966, p. 67).

Aurobindo Ghosh and Barindra Ghosh's father and maternal grandfather were *Brahmo*. Pramatha Nath Mitra and Satish Chandra Basu were the disciples of Bijoy Krishna Gowsami, who was a *Brahmo* (Majumdar, 1966, p. 67). The *Brahmo* leaders like Rajnarayan Bose and Nabagopal Mitra played a crucial role in forming a secret society. Bhupendranath Dutta, an eminent revolutionary, said that the *Brahmo* movement of Bengal had a significant impact on revolutionary society (Dutta, 1983, p. 7). Arun Chandra Guha, another prominent revolutionary, argued that *Brahmo Samaj* was the pioneer of the revolutionary movement in Bengal, as it had a direct and indirect connection with the revolutionary movement in Bengal in its early days (Guha, 1971, p. 64). Arun Chandra Guha identified the *Brahmo* leader Rajnarayan Bose 'the father of the revolutionary movement in Bengal' because he organised two societies with revolutionary ideas (Guha, 1971, p. 66). Jnanendra Nath Bose and Satyen Bose, the nephew of Rajnarayan Bose, took a leading role in forming a revolutionary organisation in Midnapore (Guha, 1971, p. 66). Guha also mentioned, Shib Narayan Sastri, a devout *Brahmo* and a disciple of Ramtanu Lahiri, who came under the influence of revolutionary ideas. Guha also noted that in 1876, a group of young men, including Bipin Chandra Pal, inspired by Shib Narayan Shastri, took a vow known as 'Dedication to the cult of fire' (Guha, 1971, p. 66).

Except that, the writings of Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya, the Hindu sacred text such as the *Gita*, the *Chandi*, the *Upanishad*, *Ramayan*, *Mahabharat*, book on

Ramakrishna, Aswini Kumar Datta's *Bhakti yoga* influence the youths of Bengal. All the writings inspired and guided the revolutionaries of Bengal to organise their struggle against the imperial rule.

The Immediate Context of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal

A series of contemporary incidents moulded the revolutionaries' intellectual minds. Government exploitation since the last decade of the nineteenth century played a crucial role in forming logical thinking among the revolutionaries of Bengal. Acute economic discontents affect the minds of the middle and lower middle classes in Bengal. There was common talk among the revolutionaries that India's textile, salt, sugar and other industries were ruined because of the British industrial development.[4] During this time, unemployment, famine, disease, and the growing taxation burden became vital issues. Bengalis had realised their growing impoverishment. Western education, contemporary published literature, pamphlets, and presses all contributed to formulating the intellectual mind, which helped to arouse national consciousness. They realised that the root causes of impoverishment were the colonial rule. But they had no faith in the path of constitutional agitation, which was followed by the moderate leaders of the Congress's. Thus, their thinking made them feel that the only remedy for all kinds of impoverishment lay in ousting colonial rule from India. Some young radical leaders of Bengal secretly started organising themselves under Anushilan Samiti's cover.

Meanwhile, the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave a platform to radical leaders of India. The leaders fully utilised the opportunity to constitute a mass movement against the British Government. An intelligence officer James Campbell Ker wrote, '*Swadeshi* movement and the revolutionary movement of Bengal are interconnected. The Bengali revolutionary movement reached its peak during the *Swadeshi* movement' (Ker, 1973, p. 5). An eminent revolutionary, Sri Pratul Chandra Ganguly, wrote in his autobiography:

> When *Swadeshi* agitators were started boycott and picketing then government gave a circular to forbid the students to join the movement. During that time some meritorious students like Binoy Sarkar, Radha Kumodh Mukhopadhyay quit university, and Aurobindo also came from Baroda to quit his job and concentrate on serving the country. All the incidents influenced the students to join the revolutionary *samiti* (Gangully, 1956, p. 46).

During the *Swadeshi* movement, revolutionaries seized the opportunity and made their presence at the Indian National Congress annual conference in December 1906. They convened the first revolutionary conference of Bengal in the house of Subodh Chandra Mallick, in which Pramathanath Mittra presided (Bhattacharya,

[4] *Ibid*., p. 92.

1979, p. 42). During the conference, Pramatha Nath Mittra asked the delegates to organise their societies with strict military discipline and accept Jugantar as their own paper. In this conference, Aurobindo Ghosh suggested to the delegates the possibility of looting the government treasury to finance revolutionary activities (Bhattacharya, 1979, p. 42). Aurobindo wanted to exploit the opportunity presented by the *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal, and he felt that partition was a great blessing in disguise, for it awakened many Bengalis to political life who had previously been ignorant or uninterested (Gordon, 1979, p. 114). An eminent revolutionary Hemchandra Kanungo, wrote in his autobiography that;

> Revolutionaries took the opportunity of *Swadeshi* movement. They organised meetings against the partition of Bengal, where they tried to propagate revolutionary activities and they also tried to get the masses to support against British exploitation. During this movement Calcutta based revolutionary samitis were revived (Kanungo, 1928, p.75).

During that time, Indian National Congress played a significant role in developing aggressive intellectual minds among young Bengalis. Some Congress men like W.C. Bonnerjee, Dadabhai Naoraji, and Badruddin Tayabji believed in constitutional politics. But some radical Bengali youths did not want to follow their way. In 1897, at the Amravati session of the congress, Aswini Kumar Dutta, from Bengal, impatient with how Congress was functioning, blurted out publicly and identified the annual Congress conference was 'a three days *tamasha'* (Bhattacharya, 1979, p. 36). The failure of the prayer and petition policy of Congress inspired to formulation revolutionary movement in Bengal (Dutta, 1983, p. 11).

The Bengal Provincial Conference of April 1906 is regarded as a turning point in radical and revolutionary politics in Bengal. Surendranath Banerjee was the president of this conference. The Conference witnessed the police repression of all participants but also exposed the helpless of moderate politics (Bhattacharya, 1979, p. 39). Surendranath Banerjee's leadership proved inadequate role to hold the session in the face of unprovoked police atrocity. This incident turns out to be an eye-opener to nationalist leaders. Barin Ghosh and his associates conquer this opportunity for revolutionary activities. Saral Kumar Chatterjee argued that for all practical purposes, the revolutionary action in Bengal started after the provincial conference of 1906 (Bhattacharya, 1979, p. 40). Revolutionaries had the broader historical concept of revolution. The intellectual leaders of the revolutionary movement such as Aurobindo Ghose, Bhupendra Nath Dutta, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, Debabarata Bose and Barin Ghose, came together and made a considerable discussion on the history of revolutionary struggles in Europe, America, and Asia (Chatterjee, 2004, p. 11). They discussed their strategies and tactics of modern warfare, including guerrilla war (Chatterjee, 2004, p. 11). Valentine Chirol wrote:

> ...of all Indians been the most slavish imitators of the west, as represented, at any rate, by the Irish Fenian and the Russian anarchist" (Chirol, 1910, p. 24).

But the study tries to argue that Bengali revolutionaries would not blindly imitate the Western concept of the revolutionary movement. Bengali revolutionaries tried mixing indigenous elements with Western revolutionary conceptions in the early phase.

In the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan defeated Russia, which had enormously influenced the Bengali revolutionaries. An eminent revolutionary, Arun Chandra Guha, wrote in his autobiography that the Russo-Japanese War greatly inspired them. He wrote:

> We came out of our classes; the school closed for the day. Aswini Kumar Dutta and at least one of our teachers addressed us. It was a day of Jubilation – for a victory of Asia over Europe. The defeat and surrender of the Baltic fleet of Russia which was despatched to the Far East was the climax of the episode. And we enjoyed it intensely (Guha, 1971, p. 32).

The Sedition Committee report showed that the Russo-Japanese War significantly impacted the Bengali revolutionaries' minds. Report mentioned:

> Neither the religious teaching of Vivekananda nor the exhortations of Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* would have afforded so moving a text to preach from had not the whole world, been electrified and amazed by the victories of Japan over Russia at a time when within this country circumstances occasioned by certain Government measures specially favoured the development of Barindra's plan.[5]

The research stated that all the incidents greatly impacted the youth of Bengal and helped them form a revolutionary movement against the oppressive colonial government.

Establishment of Samitis

Hitherto this article discussed the historical process of the revolutionary movement in Bengal. In this section, the study tries to show how the Anushilan Samiti, the first revolutionary organisation in Bengal, and other samiti like Atmonnati Samiti, Chhatra Bhandar, etc., were established.

At the initial stage, under the initiative of Satish Chandra Basu, a student of the General Assembly's Institution (now Scottish Church College) at Calcutta, the Anushilan Samiti was established. He and his friends were closely associated with Vivekananda's order. They established a club at Madan Mitra Lane in Calcutta

[5] *Ibid*., p. 17.

(Dutta, 1983, p. 180). Youths of the college practiced *lathi* play, drill and physical exercises. Satish Chandra wanted this club to be given a name. So he requests Narendra Chandra Bhattacharya, the headmaster of the new Indian Institute, Calcutta. Narendra Chandra Bhattacharya was inspired by Bankim Chandra's idea of *Anusilan* and christened the club Bharat Anushilan Samiti (Dutta, 1983, p. 180). However, Satish Chandra also looks for someone who can guide and lead them. He approached Sashi Bhusan Chaudhuri of Tegharia for this purpose (Dutta, 1983, p. 180). Sashi Bhusan takes Satish and his friends away to Asutosh Chaudhuri, a young barrister of Tegharia. But Asutosh Chaudhuri sent them with a letter to Pramatha Nath Mitra. Pramatha Nath Mitra, popularly known as P. Mitra, was a barrister-at-law practicing in the High Court of Calcutta. While studying in England, Pramatha Nath Mittra came under the influence of the history of Italian, Russian, and Irish secret societies and their revolutionary movements. Through this influence, he came to believe that:

> India's freedom was to build up slowly and steadily a band of young men, healthy in body and mind, fearless, dedicated and disciplined as soldiers and bound by oath, but he was against any premature action or uprising (Bhattacharya, 1979, pp. 19-20).

At Satish Chandra's and his friends' request, P. Mitra agreed to be their samiti's leader and become the samiti's commander-in-chief (Dutta, 1983, p. 181). However, P. Mitra shortened the name of the samiti from Bharat Anushilan Samiti to Anushilan Samiti.

Aurobindo Ghosh was then living at Baroda, posted there as the vice principal of Gaekwad's college and an important official in the Gaekwad's administration but spent most of his time dreaming about the country's freedom and the means of achieving it (Bhattacharya, 1979, p. 22). At the point of time Jatindranath Banerjee, the personal bodyguard of the *Gaekwad*, came in touch with Aurobindo and both of them frequently discussed various political issues of the country. In 1902, Sister Nivedita went to Baroda on an invitation from *Gaekwad*. There she met with Aurobindo and gave up-to-date information regarding the activities of the secret clubs and societies in Bengal and she requested him to go to Bengal to bring these scattered and separate groups into one well-knit organisation. According to Jatindranath Banerjee and Barindra Ghosh, Sister Nivedita has donated some two hundred books from her collection of revolutionary literature to the Anushilan Samiti's Library (Majumdar, 1966, p. 101). These books helped the revolutionaries know Mazzini's life story and the methods of guerrilla warfare. Jatindranath Banerjee resigned from his job and came to Bengal to organise a revolutionary movement. He met with Sarala Devi and Pramatha Nath Mitra and joined P. Mitra's club at Madan Mitra Lane, Calcutta. Later, Under Jatindra Nath's guidance, a new branch of the Anushilan Samiti opened at Upper Circular Road, Calcutta (Dutta, 1983, p. 181). The office of the samiti was transferred to Upper Circular Road. Towards the end of 1905, Pramatha Nath Mitra and Bipin Chandra Pal went to

Dacca and founded a branch of the Anushilan Samiti. Pulin Behari Das, a National school teacher, was this branch's commander-in-chief.

Another revolutionary samiti, Atmonnati Samiti, was established in 1897 in Calcutta by Raghunath Bandhopadhyay, and his collaborators were Harish Chandra Sikdar, Nibaran Chandra Bhattacharya, and Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyay. Later, Indranath Nandi and Bipinbehari Ganguly joined Atmonnati Samiti (Goutam, 2002, p. 597). The early years of Atmonnati Samiti were mainly spent organising physical training and a centre for discussion and debates. However, things took a revolutionary turn with the onset of Bipinbehari Ganguly (Guha, 1971, p. 88). After 1902, the samiti gradually merged with Aurobindo's revolutionary group (Goutam, 2002, p. 597). In August 1905, in a house on College Street, Calcutta, Pabitra Sarkar established an organization named Chhatra Bhandar. The organization played a significant role in the functioning of Jugantar as a secret revolutionary organization, and it was a meeting place for young revolutionaries (Guha, 1971, p. 88). Another important society was Dawn Society, established in 1902 by Satish Chandra Mukherjee. Its principal object was to impart better education to young men so that they could be soldiers of freedom. Though revolutionary, Arun Chandra Guha wrote:

> The Dawn Society was not a secret society or an avowedly revolutionary organization. But it was a certainly an organization which nurtured the revolutionary sprit and the urge for independence (Guha, 1971, p. 89).

The study argues that there was an inter-communication between all these organizations. Revolutionaries used to visit all these organizations frequently. The principal object of all these organizations was to uproot British rule. Samitis tried to awaken the masses about British exploitation. The youths of Bengal thought that the British government was only responsible for all kinds of miseries. So they decided that liberation from the imperial rule was the only way to escape all miseries. Thus, with the establishment of various samiti, the revolutionary movement began in Bengal.

Conclusion

The article argues that there was a direct link between the evolution of physical culture and the dawn of a revolutionary tradition in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Bengal. The Bengali revolutionary movement was a product of a distinctive cultural milieu indigenous to Bengal. It would be erroneous to ascribe the roots of the Bengali revolutionary movement to a marked influence of the Maharashtrian revolutionary tradition.

There were also distinct differences between the two revolutionary trends. Religiosity was a distinctive feature of the Maharashtrian revolutionary trend, while it was less marked in the cause of the Bengali revolutionary tradition. Besides, one

will not emphasize the vague rumours that Aurobindo was initiated into revolutionary thought by a Maharashtrian called Thakur Saheb. The British intelligence reports have failed to establish the true identity of Thakur Saheb. The Bengali revolutionary movement resulted from Bengali's rising consciousness of British exploitation.

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Socio-Economic and Cultural Life of the Bediyas of Bengal during British Rule

Dr. Sufia Khatun

Abstract: *Bediya is the generic name given to a number of gipsy tribes wandering in different parts of Bangladesh. In ancient and medieval Bengal, the Bediyas have been mentioned in contemporary literature as the 'antyaja' castes, displaying snake games and playing magic. During British rule, the Bediyas would live in boats or in houses raised on piles in different parts of Bengal. Unlike the settled cultivating class, they subsisted by selling snake venom, fancy goods, and small articles; by practising indigenous medicine; and by displaying magic, gymnastics, and shows of snakes and animals. A few Bediya families elected their own Sardar, whose decision was binding to all of them. A Bediya woman was more industrious compared to her husband. Their occupations, food habits, social organization, and everyday life were different from those of the settled communities of the country. In society, the Bediyas were treated as low-grade people. Most of the Bediyas followed Islam but were addicted to alcohol and ganja. They worshipped the goddess Manasa and observed many Hindu rituals.*

Keywords: *Bediya, Gipsy, Women pedlars, Major earners, Culture, Social change.*

Introduction:

People from various ethnic groups lived in Bengal from ancient times. As time passed, these people took on new occupations and developed their own culture and religious beliefs. The *Bediyas* of Bengal are one of the indigenous tribes of Eastern India. Since ancient times, the Bengal landmass has been dotted with hundreds of rivers and channels. Bengal received heavy rainfall under the influence of the south-west monsoon, and a vast tract of Bengal remained under water or became muddy during the rainy season, causing difficulty in operating inland transport. For this reason, communication in the medieval and early modern historical periods between different parts of the country was established through waterways. Another reason for the development of communication by water was that water transport was cheap. That is why the wandering *Bediyas* travelled across the country in their own boats in small groups in order to earn a living. The *Bediyas* were a gypsy-like wandering community. The vast majority of them made a living with their income by practising indigenous medicine, through micro-trading businesses, and by displaying gymnastics, magic, and shows of snakes and domestic animals. In the remote areas of Bengal, far away from the urban culture, the fleet of the *Bediyas* arrived with the display of their miscellaneous commodities to do business. For business, the *Bediyas* and the *Bedenis* carried with them fancy goods necessary for use by women, toys for children, cages for keeping snakes, medicinal herbs and amulets for medical treatment, and their pets for animal show. Their income varied

in different seasons. The *Bedenis* were hard-working, while their husbands were indolent. A *Bediya* woman earned much more compared to her husband to sustain the family. The *Bediyas* were Muslim by religion but Hindu by culture. They offered prayers in accordance with Islamic practice and observed fasting during the month of Ramadan. At the same time, they worshipped goddess Mansa, observed *Mangalchandi's* vow, and paid homage to goddesses *Durga* and *Kali*. They contracted their marriages according to Islamic practice, but the dowry system was prevalent among them. This research is a descriptive and analytical work. Its objective is to explore the socio-economic and cultural features of different classes of the *Bediya* population of Bengal. It has also been shown in this paper that the *Bediya* women were the principal earners compared to the male *Bediyas* in their society.

Historical Background:

The *Bediyas* are the gipsies of Bengal, wandering in different parts of present Bangladesh. We get the reference to the *Bediyas* in Bengal from the ancient period. In ancient and medieval Bengal, there is a wide range of literary evidence about the society and culture of the *Bediyas*. The eminent historian, Niharranjan Roy, classified the Bediyas of ancient Bengal as an "*antyaja*" community. In medieval Bengal, snake-bite and consequent loss of human life was a frequent incident. The worship of the goddess *Manasa* gives ample testimony of it. A *Bisbaidya* or a Bediya was an important royal physician. The *Bisbaidyas*, or *Bediyas*, also held a vital place in society (Roy, 1416 BS, pp. 251, 471). In the *Mangalkabyas* of mediaeval India, the *Bediyas* have been depicted as snake charmers. In the *Manasa Mangal* composed by Ketakdas Kshemananda, we get a reference to a *Bediya* who has been called "*saper sapure Rama*" (Khemananda, 1977, p. 83). During the rule of the Mughals in the seventeenth century, we find reference to a class of people, *Bahurupi* by name, who entertained people by taking many disguises. The present-day *Bahurupi Bediyas* might be their predecessors. (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 97). In his Annadamangal, Bharatchandra, the court poet of Raja Krishna Chandra Raya of Nadia, mentioned the name of the *Bediyas* while narrating the names of different castes of Bengal in the early eighteenth century. Bharatchandra composed, "*Kurmi Koranga Pod Kapali Tior, Kol Kalu Byadh Bede Mal Bazikar*." (Raya, 1350 BS, p. 13). In the Mahua *pala* of Maimansingha Geetika, we get a social perception of the *Bediyas* in contemporary society (Sen, 2013, pp. 8-12).

Transformation of community from pre-colonial to colonial period:

In pre-colonial Bengal, the different groups of gipsy tribes were found in all parts of the country. But it is very difficult to come to the conclusion that all these vagrant groups have a common origin. Those gipsy tribes have been designated as *Bediyas* since the nineteenth century. In the colonial period, the *Bediyas* would move from one part of the country to another for their livelihood throughout the year. They lived with their own people as a distinct community away from mainstream society.

Ordinarily, their economic and socio-cultural lives were different from the settled communities of the province, and they were despised by all but their own people. Even the mainstream Muslims would not associate with them.[1] Their way of life resembled neither that of the Muslims nor that of the Hindus.[2] In society, cultural exchange is a normal sociological process. But very little change took place in the lifestyle of the *Bediyas* in the colonial period because they lived an isolated life within their own community, within their own society, and within their own culture.

General Discussion:

In common parlance, *Bediya* is the generic name given to a number of gipsy-like human groups wandering in different parts of Bangladesh. At present, the *Bediyas* live not only in Bangladesh but also in many parts of eastern India. Their ethnicity cannot be determined with certainty. The *Bediyas* do not lead a settled life and travel across the country either on foot or by boat in small or large gangs. They stay temporarily under railway sheds, on some open government land, in temporary shelters like tents, or on water in their own boats. Their occupation, way of life, social customs, food habits, and social organisation are different from the rest of the communities in the country. Risley has differentiated the *Bediyas* into seven distinctive groups: *Babajiya, Bazigar, Mal, Mir-shikar, Samperia, Shandar,* and *Rasia*.[3] Almost all of these *Bediya* classes had a variety of occupations, social customs, and traditions. During the census operations under British rule, the census workers felt much difficulty in counting the exact strength of the *Bediya* population in Bengal. In his Dacca District Gazetteer, Allen described the *Bediyas* as a "gipsy caste". Citing Gait's report on the census of Bengal in 1901, Allen reported the number of *Bediyas* in Dacca district to be 1829.[4]

It is very difficult to ascertain the original homeland of the *Bediyas* because they are a gypsy-like tribe divided into various groups. Most of the *Bediya* population in eastern India, even today, are vagrant tribes divided into various groups. Most of them travel across the country together with their family members, domestic animals, utensils, and other domestic articles to earn their livelihood. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the *Bediyas* wandered mainly in the districts of Bagura, Mymensingh, Pabna, Dacca, Bakarganj, and Noakhali. From the district gazetteers of Mymensingh, it has been learnt that a peculiar *Bediya* caste known as Gains has been living at Kendua Mauza, roughly three miles away from Kendua Police Station, for the past 300 years. This caste used to undertake trading chiefly by boat. This community was also called *Baigars, Paijees,* or *Samajies*. These people were especially distinguished because their daughters, without exception,

[1] Gait, E.A. (1902). *Census of India, 1901*, Vol. VI., Part I., Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, p.439.
[2] James Taylor. (1840). *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*. Calcutta: Military Orphan Press, 1840, p. 237.
[3] H.H Risley. (1891). *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol. I. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1891, pp. 83-5.
[4] B.C. Allen. (1912). *Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers: Dacca*, Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 64.

adopted the professions of dancing, singing, and prostitution.[5] Beveridge, the Magistrate and Collector of Bakarganj, designated the gipsies or the *Bediyas* of Bakarganj as "*bebajias*". He recorded that people belonging to this class lived in the district in boats or in houses raised on piles. They did not undertake the cultivation of land as their occupation but subsisted by selling fish-hooks and small articles. They also kept ducks and poultry. The largest *Bediya* settlements in Bakarganj district were in Amtoli and Bakarganj. They were also found at Jhalukatti, Kalaskatti, Sarikal, and Dakhin Shahbazpur (Beveridge, 1970, p. 228). Jasim Uddin in *Beder Meye* described the habitation of the *Bediyas*. He narrated that the *Bediyas* do not build their houses on land and that water is their courtyard. Wherever they go, they live in boats on the water. Poet Jasim Uddin wrote:

> *Mora ghar bandhi na matir pore uthan moder jal,*
> *Re Bede, uthon moder jal;*
> *E deshe thane o deshe jeye kartyachhe talmal.*
> (Hasan, 2011, p. 154).

Surgeon James Taylor described the *Bediyas* living in the Dacca district as eaters of "all kinds of animal food, and are much addicted to the use of *ganjah* and spirituous liquors, and consequently they are regarded as a very impure race"[6] . He observed about the *Bediyas* that:

> It is difficult to determine whether they are Hindoos or Mussulmauns, their religious sentiments, apparently, being adapted to those prevalent in the country they settle in: a considerable proportion of them here profess to be followers of the Prophet, and like the Gurwarus worship the river deity "Bhuddur." The Bhudiyas reside on the water throughout the year, and move about from place to place generally in parties of eight or ten boats, and according to a custom among them, boats parting company or anchoring at a distance from the fleet at night have to pay a fine before they are re-admitted.[7]

The British census enumerators might have felt much difficulty in enumerating the actual population of the *Bediyas* in Bengal districts since they lived away from the mainstream population of Bengal and always wandered across the country for their livelihood. For example, Hunter, in his *Statistical Account of Bengal*, recorded the numerical strength of the *Bediyas* in Murshidabad district at only 235 and in Pabna district at only 40, which might be too small for their actual strength.[8]

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[5] F.A. Sachse. (1917). *Bengal District Gazetteers, Mymensingh*, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, p.35.
[6] Taylor, 1840, p. 238.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 237.
[8] W.W Hunter. (1876). *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. IX., Trubner & Co., London, pp. 56, 282.

Economic Life of the *Bediyas*:

In the colonial period, the *Bediyas* wandered all parts of Bengal and earned their livelihood by displaying their gymnastics, magic, and sports with snakes and monkeys. Since hundreds of years, the *Bediyas* of Bengal have made money by displaying monkey sports. Quoting the Sanskrit verses of Umapatidhar and Govardhan Acharaya, historian Niharranjan Roy asserts that the principal occupations of the '*antyaja*' castes like the *Bediyas* in ancient Bengal were displaying the snake game and playing magic (Roy, 1416 BS, pp. 251, 471). They also practised native medicine and resorted to the medical treatment of children and elderly people with some selected physical ailments. The *Bediyas* would go to far-off places with their household articles, bamboo poles, tents, ropes and cords, birds, horses, donkeys, and hunting dogs, and female gymnasts to show their performances. A full show of the *Bediyas* was much more expensive which has been supported from the following verses:

Baidyar tamsa koraite koisho teka lage,
Baidyar tamsa koraite aksho teka lage.
(Sen, 2013, pp, 8-12)

A troop of the *Bediyas* travelled throughout the country in their residence-plus-transport boats, carrying with them their family members, their articles for trade, and their domestic animals. In his *Sojon Badiyar Ghat*, poet Jasimuddin has depicted a realistic description of a *Bediya* fleet making their journey on the river Madhumati. The following are the verses composed by him:

Beder bahar bhasia chalechhe kul-e dheu achharia.
Jaler upore bhasaia tara gharbari sangsar.
. . .
Samner naye bouti daraye hal ghuraichhe jor-e.
. . .
Chhaier niche swami bos-e bos-e lathite tulichhe ful.
. . .
Beder bahar bhasia chalechhe Madhumati nadi diya.
Belwari churi, rangin khelna, Chiner sindur niya;
Mayurer pakha, jhinuker moti, nanan puntir mala,
Tarite tarite sajano rayechhe bharia Beder dala.
Naye naye dake morog-murgi jata pakhi posh-mana,
Shikari kukur rahiachhe bandha ar chhagaler chhana.
(Jasimuddin, 2022, pp. 121-2, 124)

Different sub-groups of the *Bediyas* adopted different occupations. Their ancestral trade was catching and playing with snakes. The *Bediyas* were skilled fishermen. Some of them were skilled in cane-work and made cane baskets (*dhama*), chairs, and flower pots. The distillation of wine was their special hereditary knowledge. When a *Bediya* was on his trade in villages, he was accompanied by his *Bedeni*, his

children, snakes in cages, monkeys, goats, and a bamboo flute (Bandyopadhyay, 1368 BS, pp. 106-10). The *Bediyas*, living in different parts of Bakarganj district, subsisted by woodcutting, fishing, and peddling.[9] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the *Bediyas* undertook a variety of occupations. A specific group of *Bediyas* were skilled in certain works. And in earning their livelihood, the *Bediya* women played the leading role.

The *Babajiyas* were pedlars. They dealt in different kinds of wares like gaudily painted wooden bracelets, waist-cords, tape, brass finger rings, nose rings, glass beads, wooden cups for oil, playing cards, looking glasses, sandal wood chains, and fish-hooks. They went to Sylhet and brought shells for making lime and pearls to be used in native medicine. They also kept dancing monkeys and taught their daughters to do acrobatic performances. The *Babajiya* women were believed to have had the reputation of being skilful in the treatment of paediatric diseases. They were said to be competent to cure nervous and rheumatic pains. They were also semi-skilled in tattooing.[10]

The *Bazigars* were known in Bengali villages as *Kabutaris*. Their other familiar name was *Dorabaz*, or rope dancer. They practised juggling and conjuring. The *Bazigar* women and girls were the principal performers. Their men played tricks with balls and knives. Their girls were trained to twist and bend their bodies into the most bewildering figures. The women also practised indigenous medicine and prescribed remedies for children suffering from fever and indigestion. They practised massage for the treatment of rheumatism and affected toothaches. In the Dacca district, the *Bazigars* mainly lived on boats in the rivers and water bodies. But in Faridpur district, they were absorbed into the village population. Here, they would purchase standing crops and sell them at a profit. They also took a grove of date palms on lease and made money on the sale of sugar manufactured by them from date juice .[11]

The Mals were also known as Ponkwah for their dexterity in extracting worms from the teeth. The Mals were petty *Mahajans*, or bankers. They advanced small sums on loans, rarely exceeding eight rupees, upon good security. They charged heavy interest, usually around 50% per annum on the principal amount. But the amount of interest they charged was less than that exacted by town bankers. Their women were employed for cupping, for relieving obscure abdominal pains by friction, and for treating uterine diseases.[12]

The Mir-shikars, or *Chirimars*, were the smallest subdivision of the *Bediyas*. They were mainly hunters and fowlers. The *Chirimars* captured singing birds like

[9] J.C. Jack. (1918). *Bengal District Gazetteers: Bakarganj*, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, p.33.
[10] James Wise. (1883. *Notes on the Races, Castes, and Trades of Eastern Bengal* (Not published). London: Harrison and Sons, p. 216.
[11] Wise, 1883, pp. 216-7.
[12] *Ibid.*, p.217.

Bulbuls and parrots with birdlime or horse-hair nooses and with the *Satnali,* or light lance, divided into sections like a fishing rod. Some of the animals caught by the Mir-shikars were highly prized for medicinal purposes or for charms. Some of the animals which the Mir-shikar caught were highly prized for medicinal purposes or for charms. The flesh of the scaly ant-eater, or Banrahu or Bajrakit (*Manis pentadactyla*), was believed to restore virile energy. It was also believed that if its scales were bound on the arm, they could cure the palpitations of the heart, and if worn on the finger in the form of a ring, they were a sovereign prophylactic against venereal diseases. They also caught the *pan-kori,* or mahokha, the common crow pheasant of India. It was believed that its flesh could cure enlargement of the spleen and puerperal disorders if the bird was killed on Tuesdays and Saturdays. They caught a spotted owlet (*pencha*). Their claws and droppings, pounded with betel nut, were believed to be a very powerful and certain love potion. It was believed that the dried flesh of the dauk (*Gallinula phoenicura*) was very beneficial for rheumatism .[13]

The Samperias were the snake-charmers, hawkers of miscellaneous goods, and makers of fish-hooks and similar articles. One of their principal occupations was an exhibition of snake dancing. They usually exhibited the cobra, Dudh-raj, Mani-raj, python, whip snake, etc., caught by them from the forests. The Samperias tore out the fangs of the poisonous snakes but left the poison bag intact. They collected poison from the snakes and made a profitable trade in it. They sold a *bhari* (10 gms. approx.) of poison for an amount of 15 to 16 rupees. They also dealt in the tick (Kilni), which they occasionally found on the hood of the black cobra. In this article, many fabulous stories were told in the countryside. When a Samperia exhibited snakes, he would play a pipe while his wife or child chanted a monotonous Hindustani song and irritated the reptile to strike with threats and shouts. The Samperias were also sportspersons. They tamed jungle cocks to entrap the wild ones, and the Kora (*Gallicrex cristatus*), a bird famous for its pugnacity. Like other Bediya groups, the Samperias kept tame cormorants to drive fish into their nets. They caught fish for their own consumption. The Samperias were keen sportsmen, and when they got an opportunity near a jungle, they stalked deer and shot partridges, paddy-birds, and egrets .[14]

The *Shandars* were the Bediya divisions who got the reputation of being the most orderly and industrious among their similar classes. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, many of them settled in Dayaganj, a suburb of Dacca. Others lived in boats. The *Shandars* were the only people who could make a special variety of comb (dhangi) through which the warp threads passed. This was in great demand by Tantis and Julahas for their looms. These combs were made of split bamboo, and the teeth (gaibi) of well-seasoned wood. They were also called *manihars*, or

[13] Wise, 1883, pp. 217-8; Risley, 1891, pp. 83-4.
[14]Wise, 1883, pp. 218-9; Risley, 1891, pp. 84-5.

pedlars. They mainly undertook retail in beads and trinkets; waist-strings (Kardhani); and needles, thread, and tape, procured from Mughuliya shops in the rural areas of Bengal. The Shandars were expert divers also. When they anchored in suitable areas, they gathered the common bivalve shells (sipi) and sold them to the lime burners. They also caught birds using the Sat-nali, or bamboo rod of seven joints, tipped with birdlime. They caught birds like bulbuls and other small birds. They kept tame Koras, jungle cocks, and cormorants. The better-off *Shandars* took out a gun licence in order to shoot games. The Gayan, literally a singer and an offshoot of the *Shandars*, was ordinarily a peasant. When their males were absent from their homes, their women looked after their crops and tended their cattle. Away from home, the Gayans sang Bengali songs in public while playing with the violins, *sarangis*, and *behla* to get some money as rewards from their percipients.[15]

The *Rasia Bediyas* occasionally met with the Dacca district. But they were most numerous in the district of Pabna. The *Rasia Bediyas* used boats of a curious construction. Only half of their boats were covered over, while the tilt was bottle-shaped, tapering gradually towards the stern, where there was a small round opening, through which a man could crawl with difficulty. They worked with zinc, which was bought in pigs, melted, and run into moulds. This zinc worker *Bediya* group was called by this distinctive name (*Rasia*) due to the similarity in colour between zinc and mercury (rasa). The *Rasias* made anklets, bracelets, and collars for the neck (*hansli*), which were worn by both the Hindu and Muslim females of the lower orders. At their homes, the *Rasia Bediyas* undertook cultivation as their occupation.[16]

In the western districts of Bengal, the snake-charmer class of the *Bediyas* was locally known as *Bishbediya* or "*Bishbede*". The Bishbediyas approached the Ganges by boarding their fleet of boats. They carried bamboo cages full of snakes, cooking vessels, monkeys, and goats in their boats for play. The *Bediyas*, belonging to various other classes, also arrived in various parts of the country, either by boat or on foot, carrying loads on their shoulders for their hereditary business. The *Bishbediyas* walked around the open fields and riverbanks in different parts of the country in search of snakes to catch. The *Bishbediyas* kept their fixed customers practising native medicine (*Kabiraj*) in and outside Calcutta, to whom the *Bishbediyas* visited and sold venom instantly collected from poisonous snakes caught by them. They made their journey by boat through many rivers and channels and went up to Calcutta. The other classes of the *Bediyas* also travelled from village to village in Bengal, displaying snake dance and games of goats and monkeys. (Bandyopadhyay, 1919, pp. 47-8)

[15] Wise, 1883, pp. 219-21; Risley, 1891, p. 85.
[16] Wise, 1883, p. 221; Risley, 1891, p. 85.

Social Life of the *Bediyas*:

The *Bediyas* adopted a tribal social life. They were divided into many wandering groups. Each of these groups abode by the leadership of a Sardar. Almost all the *Bediya* families owned their family boats. A few families' boats formed a group, and their family boats constituted a fleet. Each fleet of the *Bediyas* took the shape of a sub-tribal identity, headed by a Sardar (Mentioned as 'Nardar' by Dr. James Wise) or Murabbi. The Sardar would divide the fleet into a number of small groups and appoint directors for all groups. He coordinated the community affairs of the *Bediyas* through the directors. The Sardar resided in the central locality, within easy reach of the *Bediya* families under his command. He selected the trade routes and areas of operation for each *Bediya* group. The Sardar promoted the common interests of the tribe and also determined which boats to form a fleet. He punished the offenders in cases of disobedience, such as leaving a pre-formed fleet and joining another. He settled all disputes that had arisen among the tribe. When a serious difference occurred, he took evidence and delivered his judgment. Fees were paid to the Sardar at the time of marriage, and clothes were presented to him on other festive occasions. Once every year, the different *Bediya* tribes gathered on a pre-fixed date and in an agreed place to consult and to lay in a supply of commodities for retailing during the ensuing year. Each fleet brought their own Sardar here. All of these Sardars unitedly elected their supreme head of all the *Bediya* tribes. The elected supreme head of the *Bediyas* directed the affairs of the whole tribe as long as it remained together .[17] In spite of their society being patriarchal, the *Bediya* women always played a vital role both within the family as well as in their outside world.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, it was difficult to determine whether the *Bediyas* were Hindus or Muslims.[18] Hunter observed about the *Bediyas* in the latter eighties of the nineteenth century that they had been rapidly becoming Muslims. The Collector of Dacca district recorded that when he had known about the *Bediyas* for the first time, upon being asked to which religion he belonged, he generally hesitated as to whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim. But at a later period, they invariably professed themselves to be the followers of the Prophet. But they did not abstain from the consumption of intoxicating liquors.[19] In the Bakarganj District Gazetteer, Jack mentions that the census report divided the Muhammadans of Bakarganj into different castes – Jolaha, Nikari, Bediya, Behara, Dhai, Sheikh, Pathan, and Syed. He described the *Bediyas* as being "really vagrants without any definite religious belief, who call themselves Hindu or Mussalman indiscriminately". The *Bediyas* were chiefly found in the southern thanas in the Bakarganj district. They were a wandering gipsy tribe known as the Bebajias. They

[17] Wise, 1883, pp. 212-3.
[18] Taylor, 1840, p. 237.
[19] Hunter, W.W. (1875). *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. V., Trubner & Co., London, p.43.

professed Islam but did not intermingle with other classes of Muhammadans.[20] Even in the twentieth century, when asked about his caste and religion, a Bediya unhesitatingly replied that he was a *Bediya* by caste and Muslim by religion. At the same time, the *Bediyas* could not relinquish worshipping Goddess *Manasa*, the deity of the snakes. They observed the vow of *Mangal Chandi* and paid their devotion to the goddesses *Kali* and *Durga*. They also sang the puranic songs of the Hindus. The mainstream Muslim society kept the Bediyas aloof from having any social relations with them (Bandyopadhyay, 1368 BS, p. 108).

The social status of the wandering *Bediyas* in Bengal was very low. They were despised by both the Hindus and the Muslims. Surgeon James Taylor described the *Bediyas* living in the Dacca district as a "low and impure caste" .[21] Their social position was just like the Hindu untouchable castes. The majority of the *Bediyas* in Bengal followed Islam as their religion. However, most of Muslims avoided any social contact with the *Bediyas*. In Dacca District, the Samperias and Bazigars were classified as Muhammadan functional groups (Taylor, 1840, pp. 244-6). Their social position among different classes of Muslims was very degrading. They were not allowed to pray in the mosques together with Muslims. They were also prohibited from using the burial grounds of ordinary Muslims. The British administrators held them to be a criminal tribe. The *Bediyas* were often charged with being thieves, and whenever a robbery was committed near a *Bediya* fleet, they were suspected. The bad reputation of the *Bediyas* was often taken advantage of by professional thieves who escaped detection by casting suspicion on the *Bediyas* .[22] The Bakarganj police in 1871 reported that the *Bediyas* were "expert pickpockets and notorious gamblers".[23] On the contrary, Beveridge made his observation about the Bediyas of Bakarganj by recording that: "They do not appear to be thieves." (Beveridge, 1970, p. 228). In the Bakarganj District Gazetteer, Jack mentioned that the *Bediyas* of the district were peaceful, industrious, orderly, and honest.[24]

Cultural Life of the *Bediyas*:

Unlike the settled communities of Bengal, the culture of the wandering gypsies was unique in nature. They still possessed some of the cultural traditions of the tribal societies. Their religion, their dress, and their ways of everyday life were quite different from those of the rest of the Bengalis. They speak in their own Bengali dialect. Their variant habitats, their adherence to nature, their own spoken language, and their distinction from the greater Bengali society in their economic, social, cultural, religious, and political activities suggest that they are one of the indigenous tribes of Eastern India. They possessed an unusual capability to adapt to the

[20] Jack, J.C., *op. cit.*, p.33.
[21] Taylor, 1840, p. 237.
[22] Wise, 1883, pp. 214-5.
[23] Hunter, W.W. (Vol. V.), *op. cit.*, 232.
[24] Jack, J.C., *op. cit.*, 33.

unfavourable environment. The *Bediyas* still hold on to the practice of community living and abide by the directives of their Sardars. Their marriage custom, practice of dispute settlement, religious perception, and rituals were and are a combination of those observed by mainstream Hindus and Muslims. Their addiction to alcoholic beverages was very high. The marriage of the *Bediyas* was contracted by a Muslim Mullah. Their marriages and cultural exchanges were restricted within their own community. They did not burn their corpses but buried them (Bandyopadhyay, 1919, pp. 106-8.). A large number of the *Bediyas* assembled at Munshiganj during the *Kartik Baruni* festival, held in October every year.

Since the *Bediyas* followed the customs and practices of the tribal societies, they extended their cooperation to one another in times of need. The *Bediya* societies were patriarchal, but the *Bedenis* took an active part in all important everyday affairs. The *Bediya* women were used to doing all the hard work for the family. The *Bediya* males were lazy. But the *Bedenis* were industrious, and they not only looked after their family members but also earned a major portion of their family income. After their business in Bengal villages in the favourable seasons, the *Bediyas* returned to their fixed habitat where they celebrate their festivals. At the *Bediya* festivals, young men and women chose their life partners. The *Bediya* youths got full freedom to choose their own wives or husbands. After marriage, the bride went to her husband's house. The *Bediya* wife vowed to take care of her husband and their children. The marriage of a *Bediya* girl outside of their own community was permitted. In such cases, the non-*Bediya* bridegroom had to pay some money as a penalty. Child marriage, polygamy, and the joint family system were absent among the *Bediyas*. The *Bediya* widows were permitted to remarry. Divorce was allowed in *Bediya* society. In such a case, their family wealth, including their children, was divided between the wife and the husband, where the wife got the larger share. The amount of penalty realized from the *Bediyas* by their Sardars for violation of any settled norm of the *Bediyas* or for any committed offence, as well as money received from others who took their girls as wives, was used in the mass feast of the *Bediyas*. There was a well-settled rule among the *Bediyas* that at every encampment, both the *Bediyas* and the *Bedenis* must be on their boats before the jackal's howling is heard in the evening. Any *Bediya* member who was absent, especially a female, was immediately expelled from their tribe.[25] The *Bediyas* ate rice, dal, vegetables, fish, and meat. They ate fish caught by them. For meat, they ate animal flesh. At the same time, they ate the flesh of birds hunted by them. Almost all the *Bediyas*, irrespective of their sex, were addicted to alcohol and *ganja*. The *Bediya* men wore *lungis* and shirts. Their women wore *saris* and blouses. The dressing style of the *Bediya* women was peculiar and carried their own customs. Both of their children, men and women, were fond of colourful dresses.

[25] Hunter, (Vol. V.), *op. cit.*, 232.

In the Gangetic delta, boats being the principal means of conveyance, the nomadic tribes would move about in vessels that varied in their construction according to the particular division of the *Bediya* communities. All the *Bediya* communities generally lived in groups on *machans* (platforms) on the river-side or on boats in the rivers or other water bodies. In Bakarganj district, the *Bediyas* lived in boats and had their Sardars, or headmen, at fixed headquarters, principally in the south of the district but also in Jhalakati and similar marts, to whom all disputes were referred.[26] At present, all the *Bediya* tribes assemble at Munshiganj or at Chittagong every year on the full moon between *Kartik* 5 and *Agrahayan* 15, the Bengali year, together with their Nardars.

Many narratives and fabulous stories about the *Bedenis* have been in circulation in the society of Bengal since the long past. Their charming beauty, their magical power to attract handsome boys to them, their attractive physical gestures – all were the points of discussion among the mainstream Bengalis. In the recent past, Swapan Kumar Das, a researcher on the *Bediyas*, had spent three days with the *Bediyas* on their boats in order to observe the lifestyle of the *Bediyas* with his own eyes. According to his observation, the everyday life of the *Bediyas* is full of hardships. But they remain complacent with the minimum and lead a happy life. If a *Bediya* group earns a lot more money than they expected from their village trade, they throw a party to celebrate their success. Researcher Das further narrated some mysteries and secrets of the *Bediya* women, citing the personal observation of Billal, a resident of Kalindi, Keraniganj, Dhaka. Billal was born into a Muslim family. Falling in love, he married Tanu, a Bediya girl. Billal believes that once a non-Bediya gets entrapped in the charming net of a *Bediya* woman, he cannot be free from it. He will be floating on towards the love of the *Bedeni*. It has also been reported that the love-affected man forgets all of his past. One of the characteristic features of a *Bedeni* is that she always remains engrossed in how she can keep her husband happy. There has been a sharp debate about the knowledge of the hypnotisation of the *Bedenis*. Billal discloses some secrets of the *Bedenis* in this matter. He reports that the oriental ratsnake (*daras sap*) has a fleshy body full of fat. The Bedenis severs the head of this snake and takes out the fat from its severed body. They prepare a special kind of oil by heating this fat collected from the body of the oriental ratsnake. On the new moon and full moon nights, the *Bedenis* massage the bodies of their husbands with this oil, extracted from the fat of the oriental Indian ratsnake. The husbands of the *Bedenis* wait for these two nights because they fully enjoy the massages. According to the version of Billal, if a *Bedeni* applies this oil to the body of a man, that man can never part with the *Bedeni*—he will always feel that he is in heaven (Das, 2011, pp. 46-51).

The *Bediya* Sardars practised polygamy. Even in the present day, a section of them keeps more than one wife. The male members of the *Bediya* family are indolent

[26] Jack, *op. cit.*, 33.

while their women earn the lion's share of their family income in the present days. The *Bediyas* pretend to be orthodox Muslims and emphatically claim that their children and grandchildren are studying Islamic education in religious institutions. When asked about their journey routes, the *Bediya* Sardars assert that they travel different parts of Bangladesh and go up to Bihar, Jharkhand, and Assam.[27] The *Bediyas* adopted a culture of their own. Since they wandered from place to place throughout the year due to their occupational compulsions, the *Bediya* parents could never think of sending their children to *maktabs* or schools for their formal education. They always thought that their children would adopt the wandering occupation of their forefathers. Due to their nomadic lifestyle, the *Bediyas* were unable to access the healthcare or other facilities provided by the local government.

Bad Reputation to the *Bediyas*:

The *Bediyas* have always had a bad reputation in the eyes of mainstream society and the British government alike. Hunter recorded that the *Bediyas* had the bad reputation of being expert thieves and also branded them a hereditary robber caste outside Dacca district. While comparing the *Bediyas* with the civil society, he noted: "*Bediyas* are a class of professional thieves."[28] The British government passed the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, to deal with the habitual criminals in British India. Several amendments were made to the Act, and finally, the Criminal Tribes Act, 1924, was enacted. According to the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, "If the local Government has reason to believe that any tribe, gang or class of persons is addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences, it may report to the Governor General in Council, and may request his permission to declare such tribe, gang or class to be a criminal tribe." (Section 2 of the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871). Between the years 1871 and 1949, a large number of tribal groups in India were declared "criminal tribes." The *Bediyas* were included in the list. After the independence of India, the *Bediyas* were notified as a "Criminal Tribe" in West Bengal.[29] Later, the stigma of criminality was withdrawn by the *Bediyas* through legislation.

Recent Trend in Socio-Economic Life:

In recent times, the *Bediyas* have been building their houses in rural areas among the mainstream settled communities of Bangladesh. They are sending their children

[27] Interview of Motaleb Sheikh, a Sardar of Motaleb *Bahar* of the Bediyas, taken by Sufia Khatun on 06.05.2022 at Bagmara in the Rajbari district of Bangladesh. In the interview taken at Bagmara in the Rajbari district of Bangladesh on 06.05.2022, Motaleb Sheikh, the Sardar of Motaleb *Bahar* of the Bediyas, stated that he was the spokesperson of the entire Bediyas, temporarily settled at Bagmara. He was found smoking a cigarette while sitting on a chair. He reported that his three wives had gone to nearby villages for their trade. He revealed that they were Muslims and that two of his grandchildren were studying Qur'an. He further stated that the Bediya troop under his command would go to Jharkhand, Bihar, and Kamrup in India via Kushtia and Jessore in Bangladesh.

[28] Hunter, (Vol. V.), *op. cit.*, pp.43, 232.

[29] *Report: The Criminal Tribes Act Enquiry Committee (1949-50),* Government of India Press, New Delhi, 1951, para.48, p.13.

to schools and colleges to get a higher education. They are buying shopping establishments in the markets and doing small businesses in many places like Savar, Kanchanur, and Dhaka in Bangladesh. The *Bediyas* are voluntarily giving up their hereditary businesses and running businesses like rice trading in the markets in Sylhet, Sunamganj, and Sonapur. A section of *Bedenis* has accepted employment in the garment industries of Bangladesh and established their skill and excellence in the field. Members of the *Bediya* community are exerting their efforts to become owners of landed property. (Laiju, 2020, pp. 139-146). In the medieval and early modern historical periods, the civilization and culture of the *Bediyas* were those of a tribal society. This trend continued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, a change developed in their mental world.

Conclusion:

The wandering gipsy tribes of Bengal are known as *Bediya*. Mention of these ethnic groups can be found in ancient and medieval Bengal from contemporary literary sources. The *Bediyas* were described as an '*antyaja*' caste in this literature. The British ethnographers classified the *Bediyas* of Bengal into seven classes, i.e., Babajiya, Bazigar, Mal, Mir-shikar, Samperia, Shandar, and Rasia. These *Bediya* groups lived either in temporary tents, or in boats, or in houses raised on piles. In view of the above discussion it has been found that different *Bediya* classes had different occupations, different social customs, and different traditions. In order to earn a living, these nomadic tribes sold venom collected from poisonous snakes, or traded in fancy goods and small articles. They would also display magic, gymnastics, and shows of snakes and animals. The practice of native medicine with medicinal herbs and amulets and tattooing was another source of their livelihood. Each small *Bediya* troop was led by their Sardar, elected by them, who guided them in economic, social, and cultural matters. Hundreds of *Bediya* parties travelled across the province by boat or on foot with loads of their household goods, bamboo poles, tent canvas, ropes and cords, snakes, birds, pets, and female gymnasts. The female members of the *Bediyas* were more diligent compared to their males. The *Bediyas* were held in one of the lowest-class communities in Bengal. Their occupations, food habits, social organization, and everyday life were separate from the rest of the settled communities of the province. The *Bediyas* preached Islam but were addicted to alcoholic drinks and *ganja*. They worshipped the goddess Manasa and observed many rituals similar to those of the Hindus. In modern times, a portion of the *Bediyas* shifted from their traditional occupation and lifestyle. The society and culture of the *Bediyas* have changed to some extent in the twentieth century in comparison to what they were in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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Displacement, Rehabilitation and Resettlement: Bengali Migrants from Assam to Siliguri (1947-1991)

Sweety Paul

Abstract: *Siliguri attracted a bulk of immigrants from Assam to settle down in the region. The unnatural population-growth of Siliguri during the second half of the twentieth century indicates the influx of the evacuees from Assam into the realm. In post-colonial India, Siliguri Sub-division confronted with an unprecedented pace in its development. The mercantile amenities, the ample scope of secondary and tertiary sectors in the town helped the people to get engaged in the commercial field of the region. However, the people initiated their journey in a new way in the town through their own initiatives. A voluminous number of them were the East Bengali Hindu refugees and they should be provided with the Refugee Rehabilitation Scheme of West Bengal. But in reality, they did not find any kind of facilities for their resettlement by the Government. There was also significant number of immigrants who entered into this region to settle for their own financial interests as they wanted to grasp the mercantile opportunities of the town to live better livelihood. The words of these displaced people revealed the truth about their struggle for resettlement in Siliguri after being escaped from Assam.*

Keywords: 1947 Partition, East-Bengali Refugee, *Bongal Khedao Andolon*, Displaced People, Resettlement.

Introduction:

The joy of independence of India (1947) was followed by the Partition which made a voluminous number of East Bengali Hindus 'homeless'. The waves of the forced-migration of these Bengali Hindus shook the Assamese society repeatedly. The Assamese people already had their resentment against the Bengali inhabitants in Assam, and these repeated infiltrations of the Bengali refugees into the state gave an impetus into it. The Assamese-Bengali conflict took a new shape through the phases of language movement and the *Bongal Khedao Andolon* (drive out the Bengalis from Assam) in the state. The Bengali mass became helpless as the situation was worsening day by day and they watched out for a new place to migrate. This time a bulk of these *Bongal Khedao Andolon*-displaced people from Assam found a new epicenter, Siliguri for their next resettlement. Their immigration from Assam into Siliguri made changes in the city's demographic scenario. The article intends to review the displacement of the Bengalis from Assam into Siliguri and the population influx, their resettlement in this new arena from historical perspective.

Migration of the Bengalis into Assam during Colonial Period and Post-colonial Period:

The immigration of Bengalis in Assam during colonial and post-colonial phases can be parted into five stages. The phases were distinctive in nature. In 1826 after taking the administration of Assam the British rulers immediately started to employ the Bengali officials for their administrative purposes which caused a huge immigration of Bengali officials largely from Sylhet district of undivided Bengal. There was also continuous influx of *"*tea garden coolies*"* from adjoining Bengal from 1880 to 1930 (Dikshit, Dikshit, 1995, p.459). A large number of Bengali peasants mainly from Mymensingh district of Bengal also immigrated into Assam. These Bengali peasants gradually established their firm foothold, regained wasteland, initiated to cultivate and finally set up their own permanent settlements in this new realm. These people never went back to Mymensingh, Bengal and settled in the new province of Assam (Dikshit, Dikshit,1995, p.459). C.S. Mullan, Census Superintendent of colonial-Assam commented on the migration from East Bengal to Assam that he could compare the immigration as "the mass movement of a large body of ants*"*.[1]At the end of the 19th century Assam turned into *"*a kind of extended Bengali district" as the Bengali immigrants entered into Assam to access the advantage of excessive lands (Ghoshal, 2021, p.122). The Partition of India in 1947 had immense affect on the immigration of the East-Pakistani Hindu refugees and the wave of refugees bit Assam through many decades (Saikia, 2015, pp.11-12). Besides the infamous *Noakhali* incident and the other obscure incidents-*Soneswar* and *Habibganj* in 1949, the persecution of the *Hajongs* in North *Mymensingh* and the repressions on the *Santhal*s in *Rajshahi* and *East Dinajpur* in February and March, 1950 spread fear among the minority communities from East Bengal, East Pakistan.[2] It was estimated through the 1951 Census Report that during 1946 to February 1951, the number of refugees who immigrated into Assam was 2,74,000.[3] In 1964 due to severe anti-Hindu Riots in East Pakistan these people found their only hope to be alive in the immigration from Eastern Pakistan to Assam or West Bengal vis–a-vis India (Hazarika, 2000, p.191). By and by the 1965 India-Pakistan War, the East Pakistan Government passed the Enemy Property (Land and Building) Administration and Disposal Order in 1966 (Trivedi, 2007, Part xiv). Professor Abul Barkhat of Dhaka University remarked that 5,000,000 Hindus lost 2,000,000 acres of land and nearly 40 percent of the Hindu families turned into the victims of the Act[4]. After 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, hordes of East Bengalis entered into Assam to be escaped from the vandalism of the Pakistani military forces. (Upadhay, 2001, p.24). The course of immigration continued up to the 1980s

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[1] *Report of the Deputy Commissioner 1937*, Nowgong on the Immigrant, Report of the Line System Committee: Question of that District, p.21.

[2] Baghaiwalla, R.P. (1951). *Census of India*, 1951, *Part 1-A, Prefatory Note on Assam, Monipur and Tripura, Vol xii*.

[3] *Report on the Census of India*, Government of India, Assam, *Vol. XII, Part 1(I-A)*, p. 353.

[4] *Prothom Alo*, 4 November 2004.

when an anti-immigration movement arose in Assam to resist the flow of illegal immigration. Surprisingly, the early Bengali settlers of Assam are not considered by Professor Guha as a part and parcel of the immigrant string as they were recruited by the British administrators. (Guha,1978, p.44). Within the Assamese society the Bengalis spread 'linguistic-cultural islands. (Gosselink, 1994, p.89).

The Resentment against the Bengalis in Post-Colonial Assam:

The migration of the East-Bengali Hindus to Assam after independence was not just a simple issue rather it was much more significant from political and cultural perspective (Saikia, 2016, pp.72-96). The continuous immigration of Bengalis brought a significant change in the demographic scenario of Assam. The massive influx changed the socio-cultural-political spheres of the state. Though the Bengalis made themselves assimilated into the Assamese society but the Assamese people became doubtful about the existence of the Bengalis in various realms of their priorities in Assam. Since the colonial period the Bengalis made themselves advantageous in the spheres of education, job-opportunity, business in Assam and the Assamese became afraid to lose their rights in Assamese society. They had been suffering from an identity crisis which gradually took the form of agitations, movements during the post-colonial era. By time the Bengalis found themselves unsecured in Assam and decided to flee to adjoining Bengal.

Assam had a predominant Bengali population towards whom the host Assamese society had an entity full of socio-cultural-economic rivalry prevailing for near a century. (Sharma, 2011, p. Introduction). Naturally attitude of the Assamese society towards the huge refugees evolving tension in the newly independent state of Assam was utmost different than the other refugee-absorbing states of West Bengal and North-East India. (Hussain, 1993, p.165). The Bengali refugees were treated as "irritants" in Assam unlike in West Bengal and Tripura. (Dutta, 2013, p.103). Sajal Nag, describes the crucial anti-Bengali strident reactions by the Assamese populace in the post-colonial decades which led to severe damages in the Assamese-Bengali relationship (Nag, 2001, pp.4753-4760). The Assamese were keenly willing to get rid of the Bengali assimilation and felt a little bit relieved with the aftermath of Sylhet Referendum in 1947[5]. But the noteworthy fact is that the Bengalis in disguise of 'Refugees' re-entered in Assam and it caused to kindle the hostility much more amongst the host-community[6]. The 'Bengali Conspiracy' theory since the colonial regime in displacing the Assamese from their autochthon places achieved triumph through the post-Partition Assamese intelligentsia. (Sharma, 2011, p.290). Within such hurly-burly, the language politics took its crucial shape in the name of 'Medium of Instruction Movement' of 1972. It can be assumed as the second landmark in the saga of the Assamese Movement. (Weiner, 1993, p.1742). The

[5] '*Viceroy's Personal Report* No. 13, dated 18th July, 1947', File nos. L-PO-6-123, Pt-1, Neg 9850 (1-105), IOR.

[6] File nos. V-24-1033:1942-1947, IOR.

figurative words of the movement were– *"*Bangladeshi, illegal immigrant, and foreigner*"* (Baruah, 2020, p.64) which turned out the lightening rod of the insurrection. The anti-foreigner turmoil taking place for six years (1979-1985) in Assam can be shaped as the determinant in the departure of the Bengali Hindus from the state. The displacement can be categorized into two phases: firstly, the primary years of the oppression in 1979-80 and the second phase initiated with the greater antagonism centering around the Election holding on February-March, 1983 (Bhaumik, 2009, p.133).

Search for a Second Home, Next Destination Siliguri:

In this context the importance of Siliguri as a commercial town was perceived by the displaced persons and they heartily felt to move forward in the town from Assam as soon as possible. Siliguri had become strategically important due to its geographical location in the political map of India. The Siliguri Corridor connected the rest of North-East India with the entire country. They keenly wanted a sphere where they would not have to be confronted with political turmoil again in their lives and the political stable and calm atmosphere of the town acted as the pull factor for immigration while the untamed atmosphere pushed them from Assam. The evacuees started their new-journey in the burg and assimilated themselves in the prevailing society of Darjeeling Terai.

Siliguri has ever been deemed as a migrant's town. The nature and volume of in-migration have varied continuously over the post-colonial decades. The transformation from a thinly populated hamlet to a thickly populated city becomes the striking feature of this town of Darjeeling district (Das, 2011, p.80). It is a historical fact that in case of Siliguri the multiple waves of migrants shook the city throughout the post-colonial decades and the immigrants found their permanent address in Siliguri. The immigrants were identified as the Marwari settlers or the plantation workers who had come into the city in the nineteenth century. Along with this there were also a gigantic number of partition-refugees who entered into Siliguri during the mid-twentieth century (Ghosh, 2016, p.8). Samir Kumar Das relies upon a sample survey which was conducted in 1990 and through the survey it was found that 60 per cent of the immigrants had come from East Pakistan/ Bangladesh. The percentage of the immigrants from Bihar was 17 while 8 per cent Marwaris had come from western India who mainly controlled the wholesale trade of the region. Das also denotes that 15 per cent among the immigrants came from either South Bengal or Assam (Das, 2011, p.80). Another noteworthy thing is that the city not only grows itself rather it also helps the adjoining suburbs of the town to enhance. It helps to flourish nearly 500 neighboring villages and local hamlets which become dependent on Siliguri for commercial and various other purposes. Along with the prosperity of the town the adjoining suburbs of it like Matigara, Shivmandir and Bagdogra have also been enriching (Bhattacharjee, 2014, p.43).

The demographic index of Siliguri was not such type of high prior to the independence but after 1947 but it has witnessed startling outgrowth in its population due to continuous influx of immigrants. Though a bulk of them immigrated directly from East Pakistan or Bangladesh or a significant portion first came to Assam due to its vicinity with East Pakistan or Bangladesh and after that they were again forced to leave Assam due to the poitical turmoil and immigrated into Siliguri. A significant contributor of the massive influx was the over-stretching Anti-Foreigner Movement or *Bongal Khedao Andolon* of Assam. Due to the tension, anxiety arising in the minds of the Bengali dwellers of Assam a massive section of them found their new home in the Siliguri Sub-division. A question spontaneously arises why did those evacuees choose Siliguri for immigration or why did they want to re-settle here? In answer to this question, it may be said that various pull factors played significant role in this context. The pull factors may be considered as the geo-strategic location of Siliguri, it's connectivity with North-East through railway-road link, the job-opportunities or the commercial importance of the town. Though the exact number of evacuees was not found but it is beyond any doubt that the voluminous number of immigrants from Assam since the 1960s took shelter in Siliguri (Saha, 2004, p.33). *The Bongal Khedao Andolon* produced frequent waves of immigration into the town which hit the town's demographic profile again and again. Siliguri with its growing importance grew spontaneously and with this massive influx the town flourished by leaps and bounds. Siliguri provided an 'urban pull' in the mass-dynamism. The business opportunities of the town acted as the pull factor for the immigration to get rid of the economic imbalances caused by Assam disturbances. A sample survey was conducted by Siliguri Planning Organization in 1966 and the report can be seen through the following table-

Table No - I

MIGRATION TO SILIGURI TOWN FOR LIVELIHOOD

Source	**Less than one year**	**1-3 Years**	**4-6 Years**	**6-9 Years**	**10 Years**	**Total**
North Bengal	17	36	38	7	73	171
South Bengal	13	36	27	8	55	139
Assam	14	30	63	22	11	110
Bihar	20	95	145	164	233	633
East Pakistan	34	112	136	161	1761	2224
Other Places(Mainly Rajasthan)	16	40	63	57	170	264

Source: Roy, Ranajit. 1986. *Economic Changes in Siliguri and Problems of Its Urban Development*. Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of North Bengal, p.160

Change in Population Structure:

The notorious Assam disturbances remained as the major cause for the infiltration of Bengalis from Assam into Siliguri (Das, 2011, p.157). The most striking feature of the population influx of post-colonial Siliguri was that when the entire state went through hardly 3 times urban population growth then this town had been witnessed with that growth over 20 times which was chiefly due to the immigration or massive infiltration (Khasnobish, 2018, p.203). Over five decades during 1941 to 1991 the mass of the town arose from only 10,487 to 2,16,950 which indicated the enhancement of 1015.19 per cent against the rate of total urban population of whole West Bengal which was 197.68 per cent only (Khasnobish, 2018, p.203). The number of souls in Siliguri Municipal Area was 65,000 in 1961 and it drastically increased nearly by 51 per cent in each decade until it extended 2,27,000 in 1991 (Ghosh, Ahmad, and Maitra,1995, p.191). The population growth of Siliguri can be seen through the following table in order to get the profile of Siliguri's attraction for the immigrants (Choudhury, 1988, p.90).

Table No - II

DISTRIBUTION OF THE EFFECTIVE URBAN POPULATION AMONG THE TOWNS OF DARJEELING DISTRICT, 1941-1981

Towns	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Darjeeling	27,224	33,605	40,651	42,873	57,603
	(100.00)	(50.85)	(30.98)	(26.18)	(23.91)
Siliguri	-	32,480	65,471	97,484	1,54,378
		(49.30)	(49.89)	(59.58)	(61.09)
Kalimpong	-	-	25,105	23,430	28,885
			(19.13)	(14.31)	(11.99)
Total	27,244	66,085	13,1,227	1,63,787	2,40,866
	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)

Source: Choudhury, Namita. 1988. *Urbanization in North Bengal in the Post-Independence Period*. Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of North Bengal, p.161

It is needless to say that the partition-displaced Hindu people were bound to leave their homeland and a bulk of them immigrated into this Terai region.[7] The number of souls residing in Darjeeling Terai in 1951 was 1,16,475.[8] According to the Census of 1961 the population increase in total of the Darjeeling district was 35.90 per cent while the Siliguri Sub-division of it had the same of 68.04 per cent (Khasnobish, 2016, p.69). During 1961-1971 the growth rate of urban population

[7] Banerji, Amiya Kumar; Dey, Barun and Others (1980). *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling.* Superintendent of Govt. Printing, Calcutta, p.106.

[8] Mitra, A. (1954). *Census of India*, 1951, *West Bengal District Hand Books: Darjeeling*. West Bengal Government Press, Alipore, p.xxxiv.

in the state of West Bengal was 28.4% and it was 24.06% in case of Darjeeling district while Siliguri alone had the population growth rate during the same phase as 48.9%. It is much astonishing and surprising also as the other towns of North Bengal namely Jalpaiguri, Cooch-Behar did not face the same increase but they were quite old rather than Siliguri (Roy, 1986, p.244).

According to the Census of 1971 the mass-increase of Darjeeling Terai reached to 301,799 people and the population-density was much more than that of the entire district i.e. 360 persons/sq. km. whereas in case of the district it was estimated only 254 persons/sq. kilometer.[9] In case of Siliguri Police Station the population density was far greater than that of entire Siliguri Sub-division. The population scenario of Darjeeling Terai in 1971 can be seen through the following table-

Table No – III

THANAWISE DISTRIBUTION AND DENSITY OF POPULATION IN TERAI IN 1971

Sub-division or police station	Area in sq. K.m	Persons	Males	Females	Density per sq. K.m
SILIGURI SUB-DIVISION	837.4	3,01,799	1,67,090	1,34,709	360
PHANSIDEWA	312.4	71,885	38,252	33,633	230
SILIGURI	174.8	1,34,392	77,443	56,949	760
KHARIBARI	143.5	44,723	23,584	21,139	312
NAXALBARI	206.7	50,799	27,811	22,988	246

Source: Banerji, Amiya Kumar; Dey Barun and Others. 1980. *WestBengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling.* Superintendent of Govt. Printing, Calcutta, p.98

The characteristics of rapid influx of population can be visualized through the density of population taken from the Census of 1981 in Siliguri Municipality numbering 9934 persons per km^2 which denotes much higher than double in case of usual district urban average (Saha, 1991, pp.02-17). The decadal changes can be revealed through the population distribution in entire Darjeeling Terai 1971-1981.

[9] Banerji, Amiya Kumar; Dey, Barun and Others, *Op. cit.* p.96.

Table No – IV

DECADAL CHANGES IN DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN TERAI 1971-1981

POLICE STATIONS	1971			1981			PERSENTAGE OF DECADAL VARIATION		
	TOTAL	RURAL	URBAN	TOTAL	RURAL	URBAN	TOTAL	RURAL	URBAN
NAXALBARI	50,799	50799	-	81175	72467	8708	59.80	42.65	-
SILIGURI	134392	36908	97484	232610	78232	154378	73.08	111.96	58.36
PHANSIDEWA	71855	71855	-	107464	107464	-	49.49	49.49	-
KHARIBARI	44723	44723	-	51646	51646	-	15.48	15.48	-

Source: *Census of India,*1981, *Series 23, West Bengal District Census Handbook, Darjeeling,*1987, *Part XIII-B.* Director of Census Operations, West Bengal, p.10

The continuous influx was going on and as a result of it the urban population of Siliguri Municipal Town grew to 1,54,375 persons which indicates the growth of 56,894 added persons by the years of 1971-1981[10]. During the ten years of 1971-1981 the Siliguri Police Station witnessed an unnatural population growth of 111.96 per cent. It is needless to say that Assam disturbances played crucial role in this massive influx of the town. The accrual of urban population in Siliguri Municipality was 46.83 per cent in the decade 1981-1991 which helps to assume that a bulk of these immigrants were from Assam due to the ongoing turmoil in that state (Khasnobish, 2018, p.201).

Table No – V

DECADAL CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION 1981-1991 IN SILIGURI SUB-DIVISION(DARJEELING TERAI)

NAME OF POLICE STATION	1981			1991			Percentage of decadal variation 1981-1991			Percentage of urban population	
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	1981	1991
NAXALBARI	81175	72467	8708	102537	90473	12064	+26.32	+24.85	+38.54	10.73	11.77
MATIGARA-INVESTIGATION CENTRE	77165	77165	-	84760	80057	4703	+9.84	+3.75	-	-	5.56

[10] *Census of India,*1981, *Series 23, West Bengal District Census Handbook, Darjeeling*, 1987, *Part XIII-B.* Director of Census Operations, West Bengal, p. 10.

SILIGURI	155445	1067	154378	223747	6797	216950	+43.94	+537.02	+40.53	+99.31	+96.96
PHANSIDEWA	107464	107464	-	140045	140045	-	+30.32	+30.32	-	-	-
KHARIBARI	51646	51646	-	64012	64012	-	+23.94	23.94	-	-	-
DISTRICT	1024269	742116	282153	1299919	903859	396060	+26.91	+21.79	+40.37	+27.55	+30.47

Source: *Census of India,*1991, *Series 26, West Bengal District Census Handbook, Darjeeling*, 1992, *Part XII-B.* Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal, p. xxiv.

It is needless to say that the nature of this population influx is 'Exogenous'. It means that the root of this influx lies elsewhere. The cause is migration (Dasgupta, 2010, p.45). The last decade of twentieth century attested the continuity of unprecedented growth of population in Siliguri Sub-division. Siliguri became these Bongal Khedao Andolon-displaced peoples' first choice for various reasons as discussed earlier. Before 1994 Dabgram was assumed as a separate town during the Census of 1991 which adopted spectacular population influx resulting 92.29 per cent increase of mass which reflects the immigration of the Bengalis from Assam who particularly settled in Dabgram region over the years of Assam disturbances (Majumdar, 2001, p.xi).

Resettlement and Rehabilitation:

The immigration of Bengalis from the adjacent state of Assam into Siliguri makes the town potential enough to get an important locus in the socio-economic-political scenario of West Bengal. The Bengalis from Assam tried devoutly to be diluted in the existing society of the town. The people of Darjeeling Terai also protested against the *Bongal Khedao Andolon*. The people displayed their agitation while Mr. Hareshwar Goswami, the Minister of Assam reached at Siliguri Junction on 9th July 1960 (Chattopadhyay, 2000, p.42). The burning of ambassador car, death of five people in firing, injury of 10-12 people made the environment of Siliguri argent. 'Bangla Hartal' was observed in the town on 16th July against the expulsion of Bengalis from Assam. Acharya Vinoba Bhave, renowned founder of 'Bhoodan Movement' passed through Siliguri on the way to Assam on 16th February, 1961 and he made an appeal to the local leaseholders to distribute their non-agricultural or vested lands to the immigrated people in Siliguri and many of them distributed their lands on his proposal and got entitled as 'Bhoo-dani'. To satisfy the commercial need of the immigrated people into Darjeeling Terai Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy former Chief Minister of West Bengal also took step for the foundation 'Bidhan Market' which now becomes as one of the biggest and most important market-place of Darjeeling Terai (Chattopadhyay, 2000, p.40). The people after leaving Assam built their new address in the various areas of Darjeeling Terai like–Dabgram Unnayan (1,2), Deshbandhu Para, Baghajatin

Colony, Subhash Nagar, BBD Colony, Adarsho Nagar Colony, Notun Para, Jyoti Nagar (2), Pati Colony, Sukanto Pally, Swami Nagar Colony, Panchanoi Colony, Lichubagan Colony, Santoshi Nagar Colony, Prantik Pally (Bharat Nagar) (Chakraborty, 2015, p.231). Through interviews it is known that many of these people were the victims of Partition of India and Bongal Khedao Movement also.

People belonging to Bengali Hindu family in newly created East Pakistan had to first leave their own primitive birthplace and then they took refuge in adjacent Assam primarily. *Dr. Nagendra Chandra Das* (Personally Interviewed at Hakim Para, Siliguri on 08/11/2020) also spent his childhood at Bajrajogini village in Bikrampur District, Dacca of East Pakistan. After 1947, he had to take shelter in India. He then joined Hatibari Tea-Estate Hospital, Rangapara, Assam in 1952 as a doctor. In 1953, he opened Nowgong Pharmacy at Nowgong. But his apparently settled life began to be affected by the political turmoil in Assam during the 1960s. During the Official Language Movement in 1960 he was wounded by a '*Chaku'* (pen knife) at his chest. He also witnessed the killing of a Bengali reporter in front of him. In 1972 he was invited to join a meeting proclaiming in favor of Assamese language. There was also a demand that in the Nowgong Bengali Girls' High School the girls from class vii would wear the traditional dress of Assam i.e., *'Mekhla'* instead of Saree. He was also threatened that if he did not join the meeting then the Nowgong Bengali society would be burnt. He ultimately decided to leave Assam to protect the future of his family. He used to hide himself at '*Goyal ghar*' (cattle shed) at night for many days. His family fled to take asylum at a *'Bangali Para'* (The Colony of the Bengali dwellers). They used to hear from the Bengali protectors of the Para– *"aschhe, aschhe"* (coming, they are coming). In the meantime, he sold his house, clinic, car at nominal value to Dr. Barkakoti. The Nowgong Pharmacy was transformed into Barkakoti Clinic and Dr. N. C. Das's house took the shape of Barkakoti Nursing Home. To be alive he immigrated to Siliguri in the year 1971 and set up 'Das Medical Hall' at Bidhan Road. Unfortunately, he faced the tyranny of majority Muslims against the minority Hindus in East Pakistan and then he again confronted the dogma of the Assamese against the Bengalis in Assam.

Another immigrant expressed his sorrow that how partition did not only make sections of the country but it also sectioned the lakhs of Hindu refugee families. At first, they went Assam but they could not stay there permanently and turned into a Bongal Khedao Andolon-displaced family. *Sajal Roy,* (Personally Interviewed at Sevoke Road, Siliguri on 10/11/2020) an enriched businessman of Siliguri belongs to Assam whereas his forefathers immigrated into Assam from Satgaon, Bikrampur, Dacca after the Partition. Through the link of their relatives they settled at Golaghat, Upper Assam first. But due to the Assam disturbances in 1971 they moved for Siliguri. He described that how they were financially annoyed by the *ULFA* and *Dasmohun Roy,* his elder brother got kidnapped by ULFA. After

providing the demand-money they readily immigrated into Siliguri in 1989 and started hardware business at Sevoke Road.

One biased incident also needs to be mentioned in this regard that only for being a non-Assamese a Bengali's name was cut from the job-list though he ranked first in the examination. He faced such type of discriminations during his days in Assam. *Samiran Chanda* (Personally Interviewed at Milan Pally, Siliguri on 14/11/2020) came into Siliguri for resettlement in 1982. He resided in Jamunamukh of Nowgong district, Assam for nearly 35 years and directly experienced the violence conducted by the Assamese anti-Bengali groups. Their house was burnt. He with his entire family had to pass seven days beside the railway-lines. For a week they used to eat only boiled arum. His sisters had to hide themselves behind cattle-shed. He came to Siliguri to get relief from such turmoil in Assam and he joined as the Supervisor of a tea-estate nearby Siliguri.

As many of these displaced people left Assam without any of their possessions these families suffered a lot in their resettlement in a new town. They shared their experience about the Assamese annoyance against the Bengalis. *Priyolal Majumdar* (Personally Interviewed at Mahananda Para, Siliguri on 04/11/2020) originally belonged to Noakhali District of East Pakistan, immigrated into Assam in 1968. He stayed in Assam for 20 years and worked as an Assistant Manager at Kulikuchi Tea Estate in Nowgong suburbs. But the Assam agitation compelled him to migrate again. The Assamese threatened to burn his abode and they took shelter behind the Kulikuchi hummock for three days. Fortunately, the Assam Military Force rescued them and they got the chance to migrate into Siliguri. Here he joined as the Manager in Saraswatipur Tea Estate near Salugara.

The cordial connection among the relatives or the neighbors earlier residing in the same locality in East Pakistan played significant role in the immigration in both cases of Assam and Siliguri. In this context *Balaram Aich*, (Personally Interviewed at Raja Rammohun Roy Road, Siliguri on 05/11/2020) an evacuee from East Pakistan to Assam was largely helped by his elder brother Late Jogesh Chandra Aich to resettle in Siliguri. After partition he settled at Lamding of Nowgong district of Brahmaputra valley in Assam. But there already had begun the Assam disturbances in 1960s. In 1962 he came to Siliguri and gradually he started 'New Variety Stores' at Hill Cart Road at only 30 Rupees rent per month.

People facing hazards by the different anti-foreigner parties of Assam were compelled to leave Assam. *Gouranga Das* (Personally Interviewed at Deshbandhu Para, Siliguri on 17/11/2020) earlier established his own sweet-store *'Mamata Sweet Centre'* and clothing business *'Shilpi Dresses'* at Dhemaji in Upper Assam in 1979. But his business was extremely hampered by the ongoing *Bongal Khedao Movement* in Assam. Many local leaders of *ULFA* became perilous for him and his business as they paid nothing after having food and buying cloths from his shop. He readily returned to Siliguri for the sake of his family and started a new business

with his lump sum amount. But here he failed to continue his merchandise activities. His children found extreme difficulties in their study in the Bengali-medium schools of Siliguri as they earlier had to study in Assamese-medium school of Assam.

A lady compared her situation with the Hindu refugees of East Pakistan as her family had to leave their home in Assam for getting rid of socio-political tensions. She felt sorry as she perceived "*Ami amar pranta Nowgong-te fele chole esechhi"* (I left my heart and soul in Nowgong). *Mitra Das* (Personally Interviewed at Church Road, Siliguri on 07/11/2020) remembered the black days of Assam disturbances. She saw that how the Assamese agitation made the apparently calm city to an untamed one. During the chaos of Language Movement the slogans like *"Bangali hathao"* (Drive out the Bengalis), *"Ahomiya Bahako Mul Baha Koriba Lagibo"* (Asamiya language should be the main language of the state) tempted the atmosphere of the city. She witnessed that the agitators threw big bolder aiming at the window-glass of their house. The anarchy in 1972 made her family bound to leave Assam. She discussed that her elder sister had to stop her study due to her mother's sickness and she became traumatized during Assam disturbances. She remembered that she started again her education life from Siliguri Girls' High School being admitted in the mid of the session in 1973 and initially became very shy and lonesome as she was teased by her classmates because she could not pronounce 'A' properly. As a result of earlier living in Assam her pronunciation of 'A' was like 'O' and her language was seemed like *"Bangal"* (the language of the primitive Bengali people of East Pakistan). She used to be scolded by her teachers in school for this reason and she gradually rectified herself. She told that though the city remained to her as a *"Praner Shohor"* (the city very close to her heart), but still today the disturbances of the city haunts her. She suffered from trauma and depression due to the displacement.

Accommodating and Searching for New Economic Arena:

It can be noted that the dimension of anti-Bengali movement in Assam was not same in the entire state. The Brahmaputra valley was more untamed than the Barak valley of the same state in the context of anti-Bengali agitations. Naturally the level of immigration from the districts of Brahmaputra valley was affected by the political turmoil going over the decades in Assam while the volume of immigration from Barak valley of Assam into Siliguri was regulated by the immigrants' own monetary interests mainly. Many of them migrated from East Pakistan into the Barak Valley of Assam as the area was geographically nearer to them. At the first phase they immigrated into Cachar, Hailakandi, Karimganj etc. and then they moved again to Siliguri for grasping the better chance of livelihood in the second phase.

Another Partition-refugee expressed his sorrow about how the Hindu people in the post-partition era became stymied by the majority Muslims in East Pakistan. Many

immigrated to Bengal or the rest did the same to Assam, whichever was nearer to them. *Sanjay Kumar Paul* (Personally Interviewed at Vivekanada Pally, Bagdogra on 27/11/2020) was born in 1951 at Habiganj Thana, Sylhet district in East Pakistan. He remembered that when he was in class vii then the number of Hindu teachers and students in the school had reduced instantly. He regretted to see that the Hindu–Muslim conflict had already entered into the minds of school-students also. He entered into India through the *'Katlamara'* border of the-then East Pakistan. He confessed that not all the Muslims were perilous for the Hindus in East Pakistan. However, he ultimately reached at ChhotoJalenga nearby Silchar in 1965. He showed that the linkage of relatives in the post-partition era played crucial role in infiltration of Hindu partition-refugees. He again migrated to Siliguri to earn himself. Thus, he had to go through major displacement twice, at first from East Pakistan being a Hindu refugee and then from Assam to Siliguri in search for work.

The Sylhet Referendum drastically changed the lives of the Hindus of the district. Many Hindu *'Sylhetti'* families had faced with dacoities which were conducted by the Muslims and were also beaten and threatened to leave their abode. They had no chance to live furthermore in East Pakistan and being compelled they left their home, agricultural land, their possessions etc. *Late Biresh Chandra Paul* (Personally Interviewed with Mrs. Usha Paul, Wife of Late B.C. Paul, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri on 29/11/2020) a *'Sylhetti'* spent his childhood in East Pakistan. His family also could not remain untouched from the aftermaths of Partition. He with his brother migrated to Guwahati in 1962 and started his new journey as hotel stuff at 'Delight Hotel' in Guwahati. One by one all of his family members immigrated to Cachhar district of Barak valley of Assam as it was adjacent to their earlier residence at Dawpara village, Habiganj Thana of Sylhet district. However, B.C. Paul was offered to move forward for Siliguri where the construction of Indian Oil Pipeline was going on. Gradually in the 1960s *'Mahananda Stores'* at Airview More, Hill Cart Road was established by him in which *Haripada Paul*, another *'Sylhetti'* immigrant invested the requisite money. Thus, one can see that Siliguri was popular as a commercial hub among the people of Assam also. Many of the refugees like B.C. Paul turned into fortune seeker to establish themselves in the new economic sphere of this new city. Sometimes they became successful to lead better livelihood or sometimes many of them failed to gain expected economic prosperity after passing through timid life-struggle.

The situation for the Hindu Bengalis in East Pakistan was worsening day by day. The Hindu parents wanted to send their children to India by hook or by crook for at least to be alive. *Badal Kanti Chowdhury* (Personally Interviewed at Surya Sen Colony, Siliguri on 30/11/2020) shared that there was always the tendency among the Hindus to leave East Pakistan or later Bangladesh. The father of esteemed *Dr. Sunayan Chowdhury* of Siliguri has shared his immigration-journey from East Pakistan to Siliguri via Assam. He was born in 1946 and brought up in Mujaffarabad, Tarapatia, Chittagong district of undivided Bengal, India. There he

became a teacher of Govt. Primary School. He was also awarded 'Presidential Award' as a Primary Teacher in East Pakistan. But during the East Pakistan days their live became drastically changed. However, in 1973 he came to Silahati, Assam and got a job as stuff in a cloth-store. One can see here the aftermath of partition in the life of a Hindu refugee from Bangladesh. The tragedy of his life was that once the reputed school teacher of the Bangladesh turned into a stuff working at public forum in Assam. He again migrated into Siliguri in 1982 in search of better livelihood. The connectivity among the relatives also worked in this context. Though once he was an enriched person in Bangladesh but after coming to India his financial condition was deteriorating.

As many of the immigrants in Siliguri were from Assam, therefore, the people who had connection with Assam also invited the immigrants from Assam into Siliguri. Thus some of the inhabitants being connected with Assam and their relatives staying in Siliguri influenced Rajib Saha's family to immigrate into this town and the father of *Rajib Saha* (Personally Interviewed at Deshbandhu Para, Siliguri on 30/11/2020). *Mr. Rabindra Lal Saha* always preferred Siliguri as being a businessman he perceived the commercial importance of this town. He acknowledged that the marketing scope is far better in Siliguri than any other town in Northeast. Due to the town's mercantile amenities and its connectivity with Northeast he settled in Siliguri in 1989. For moving forward to live prosper economic livelihood they immigrated into Siliguri, the land full of commercial opportunities.

Conclusion:

These immigrants from Assam who settled in Siliguri can be categorized as forced and voluntary immigrants. Many families immigrated into Siliguri and surrounding areas as they found the presence of their friends, relatives in this area and their social acceptance encouraged them to leave Assam. They found social and political security, hope of peace and tranquility, more liberal society, religious tolerance and more business opportunities in this region. They migrated voluntarily. On the other hand, the lack of social-financial security, the unfavorable political condition in Assam forced the Bengalis to leave Assam. Leaving Assam these people again started their live-struggle in new way. The trauma which they had faced at first in East-Pakistan (Now-a-days Bangladesh) and then in Assam devastated their live. They had lost their mental peace and economical prosperity. They had to leave their own native land and already established financial platform. They had to face many struggles and hardships to secure their economical safety. Though many of them were refugees from East-Pakistan later Bangladesh in Assam at the first phase and then they again migrated into Siliguri but unfortunately they did not get any recognition as refugee from government and naturally they were not provided with any financial help from the government. They had to start their new journey in a new realm and gradually they diluted in a new society. The irony in the lives of these displaced people is that these people still can feel their cordial connection

with East Pakistan or later Bangladesh largely. They still give their unofficial identity as *'Sylhetti'* (earlier resident of Sylhet district of East Pakistan), *'Daccaiya'* (resident of Dacca district), *'Barishalya'* (resident of Barishal district), *'Chatgaiya'* (resident of Chattagram district) or as the sons of Noakhali district, Bikrampur of East Pakistan which shows their deep-felt affection for their birthplace. The old generation of these immigrants still prefers to establish matrimonial relationship with the people belonged from their *'desher bari'* (original homeland of East Pakistan or present Bangladesh). Whenever they get chance to speak in their own local language of East Pakistan they unhesitatingly start to speak out in that *'desher bhasha'*. Till now they are keenly interested to follow the traditional ethics-rituals of their earlier residence in East Pakistan during any kind of social occasions. But the picture is not same in case of the young generation of these displaced families. Thus, it can be concluded that these partition-distressed people or rather these evacuees from Assam at last finally got their shelter in Darjeeling Terai.

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Nepali as a *matribhasa*: Tracing the growth of Linguistic identity among the Nepali-speaking people in India

Topgyal Zimba

Abstract

This article traces the historical trajectory of language based identity formation among the Nepali speaking people in India. The paper focuses particularly on colonial Darjeeling Hill, where these people were concentrated. The article explores the geo-political and ethno-linguistic context of Nepali speakers in Nepal and India till the establishment of Nepali Sahitya Sammelan (1924), to understand the emergence of Nepali linguistic identity. The paper argues that the political and cultural necessity induced by the colonial policy led to the emergence of language-based identity among the Nepalis in British India.

Keywords: Nepali linguistic nationalism, identity formation, ethnicity, Nepali public sphere.

Introduction:

Language is considered an essential symbol of cultural identity which can differentiate one community from another. India as a multi-lingual country has nurtured diverse linguistic communities since early times. In the pre-modern period, language was not the primary marker of human identity, the growth of language based community identity is considered a product of modernity. Scholars like Bernard Cohn, Sumathi Ramaswamy, Lisa Mitchell, Papia Sengupta, and Mitilesh Kumar Jha have traced the beginning of linguistic identity in India during the colonial period. In Europe, the differentiation of linguistic communities was an essential factor behind the rise of nationalism and the creation of nation state (Anderson, 2015, pp. 37-46) (Sengupta, 2018, p. 48). Therefore, the term linguistic nationalism has also been used by scholars to denote such a process. But the linguistic nationalism in India did not run parallel to its European counterparts because it did not lead to the formation of nation state in India (Mitchell, 2009, p. 21).

In colonial period, there was an emergence of various language based identity movements in different parts of India, one such movement was the Nepali linguistic movement in North India. The emergence of identity formation among the Nepali speakers in India centred on the concept of *matribhasa* (mother tongue) and its *unnati* (progress). The development of Nepali linguistic identity was undertaken by diverse ethnic people of the Himalayan region who ultimately adopted Nepali as their *matribhasa*. Why did they accept Nepali as their *matribhasa*? Why did these people worked for the *unnati* of Nepali while neglecting their ethnic language in India? This article essentially tries to explore the answer to such questions.

What did Nepali mean?

Kumar Pradhan has given three different connotations of the term Nepali – first, it denotes language; second, it has a political connotation as it denotes nationality of Nepal, and third, it is used in a cultural sense to denote various Nepali speaking people living beyond the political frontiers of Nepal (Pradhan K. , 2010, pp. 1-2). The Nepali speaking people in India come in the third category. The use of the nomenclature of Nepali or Nepalese was of recent times. It was first used by J.A. Ayton in his *Grammar of the Nepalese Language* (1820), gradually the term Nepalese changed into Nepali. The Europeans used it to denote the language and nationality of Nepal. Partha Chatterjee calls such usage as a 'derivative discourse'. Language based identity was derived from European nationalism where language delimited the nationality of the people. Europeans basically used the same notion of language and nationality in Asia. But unlike Europe, the Indian sub-continent was composed of ethnically diverse people.

In Nepal the term Nepali was not used to denote the language. There were various names for the language, like *Gorkha bhasa*, *Parbatia* and *Khas Kura*. The term *Khas Kura* denoted the language of the Khasa (place), *Parbate* was the term given by the Newars, the inhabitants of Kathmandu valley, to denote the language of the mountain and *Gorkhali* meant the language of the Gorkha, which was the nucleus of Shah Dynasty who later conquered the Kathmandu valley. Before the advent of the British, the language was known after the place where it was used. Lisa Mitchell in her study of Telegu has rightly argued that in the pre-modern times, "language was regarded as a feature of the local environment rather than a feature of the common people." *Nepal bhasa* (language of Nepal) was the only term which was nearly similar to the European notion of Nepali. But *Nepal bhasa* was used for language of the Newari people and the term *Nepal* denoted only the Kathmandu valley. The government of Nepal officially approved the nomenclature of 'Nepali' only in 1930s (Hutt M. J., 1988, p. 34). It was the Nepali speakers in India who first accepted the term Nepali to denote both the people and language.

Nepali as a language belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of language family. Nepali descended from Sanskrit.[1] Similar to other Indo-Aryan languages, Nepali also evolved from *Apabhramsa.*[2] The earliest known Nepali is found in a series of epigraphs, dating as early as thirteenth century C.E, belonging to Khasa ruler Asokachalla. Khasa at the height of power had carved out an extensive empire in western Nepal and included even Gharwal, Kumaon and some parts of southern Tibet during the twelfth century C.E. This speech came into contact with the speeches of the Brahmins and Rajputs of India after their migration to western Nepal in the wake of the Muslim invasion. It was from this cultural interaction that

[1] Turner, R. L. (1931). *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language.* London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Teubner & Co Ltd., p. i

[2] Chaterjee, S. K. (1942). *Indo Aryan and Hindi.* Calcutta: Sri Bharati Press., p. 3

Nepali evolved. (Pradhan K. , 1984, pp. 5-10) Unlike most of the other Indo-Aryan languages Nepali literature developed lately. The earliest known prose is the biography of the Gorkha King Ram Shah, written in seventeenth century C.E, while the earliest known Nepali poem belongs to eighteenth century C.E.

The advent of the high-caste Indians into Nepal coincided with the decline of Khasa kingdom. The disintegration of Khasa resulted in the emergence of several small principalities called *Baisi* (twenty two) and *Chaubisi* (twenty four). Drabya Shah, the descendant of the Rajput, carved out a principality of Gorkha in 1559. It was his descendant Prithivinarayan Shah, who through his conquest merged the entire fragmented nation into one. By 1769, the Gorkhas overtook the Kathmandu valley from the Newar ruler. Prior to this unification, the term Nepal was used only for the Kathmandu valley, but after its conquest, the name was eventually applied to all the territories within the ambit of the Shah Dynasty, which corresponds to the modern nation state of Nepal.

The establishment of the Shah Dynasty in Kathmandu Valley and its subsequent expansion in other areas of present day Nepal gave a new fillip to their language – Nepali. It became the official language used throughout the kingdom. But Nepali was used in Kathmandu valley even before its conquest, as inscription using Nepali has been found. In this context, T.W. Clark remarks that Nepali was in use in Kathmandu at least 130 years before the Gorkha invasion (Clark, 1957, pp. 167-187). But the political consolidation achieved by the Shah Dynasty helped in the dispersion of the Nepali language, geographically and ethnically, among the diverse populations settled in different parts of Nepal.

When the term Nepali is used to denote the people, it is generally used as a blanket term to include people of various ethnicities. Its social composition consisted of two broad divisions – *thagadari* and *matawali*. *Thagadari* were the upper caste Hindu - Brahmins, Thakuris and Chettri. They shared a common Indo-Aryan racial and linguist affinity and were entitled to wear the sacred thread. Their language was Nepali. The *Matawali* were the ethnic people of the Himalayan region who shared the tradition of drinking alcohol. In this category comes - Gurung, Magar, Sunwar, Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Newar, and more. Racially, they belonged to the Tibeto-Burman race. Geographically, they were settled in different parts of Nepal. Linguistically, all the ethnic community had their own language. Religiously, these peoples were not originally Hindus, they were either the worshipper of Buddhism or Shamanism or nature worshipper.

The Gurungs originally belonged to the place between the Bheri and Marsyandi rivers in Nepal. Their language *Tamu-mai* was closely related to Tibetan. The Murmis, popularly known as Tamang, were said to be one of the earliest settlers of Kathmandu valley. Their language was closely related to Tibetan[3]. Generally, it is

[3] Dalton, E. T. (1872). *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal.* Office of the Suprientendent of Government Printing., Calcutta, p. 105.

believed that they originally came from Tibet. The Sunwars were from the place called Simungarh in Western Nepal. The Magars, belonged to the central and lower parts of Nepal, between the Bheri and Marsyandi rivers. The Newars were the people who ruled Kathmandu valley, before its conquest by the Gorkhas. Their language was the official language of Nepal before 1769, and was used for literary purposes at early times. Yolmo belonged to the place called Helembu, their language Yolmali, shared certain linguistic traits with Tamang and Sherpa. The Limbus, Khambu and Yakkha were the principal tribes of Eastern Nepal and together they were known as Kirata or Kirati. They share a common linguistic, racial and cultural origin. They are regarded as the original inhabitants of eastern Nepal. The British resident at Kathmandu, Brian Hodgson had divided the country inhabited by the Kirats into three parts-*Wallo Kirat* or Hither Kirat, from the Sunkosi to the Likhu; *Majh Kirat* or Middle Kirat, from Likhu to Arun and *Pallo Kirat* or Further Kirat, from the Arun to the Mechi river and the Singhalela ridge. Owing to the geographical settlements of *matawali* in different parts of Nepal, culturally these ethnic people were able to seclude themselves and maintain their language in Nepal. Although, they were located in different places in Nepal, but due to the political consolidation achieved under the Shah Dynasty, these ethnic people had slowly started to accept Nepali as their second language.

Home away from home:

The Nepali speaking people were settled in different parts of India, but it was in Darjeeling hills, that they formed the demographic majority. Darjeeling hills had a chequered history shared by Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan and India. Although a small place, Darjeeling being strategically located, shared boundaries with Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim and Tibet. Darjeeling originally belonged to the kingdom of Sikkim, ruled by the Chogyal Dynasty since 1642. It was transferred to British India in 1835, in lieu of allowances, by the Deeds of Grant. In 1861, Darjeeling was annexed by British India by the terms of Treaty of Sinchula. In 1865, Kalimpong was annexed by British India from Bhutan after the conclusion of treaty of Tumloong. In 1866 Kalimpong was merged with Darjeeling district and Darjeeling hills took its final shape. In geographical and academic discourse Darjeeling hills represents Darjeeling sub division, Kurseong sub division and Kalimpong sub division (at present Kalimpong is a separate district since 2017).

Sikkim-Darjeeling Himalayan region before its contact with British India was inhabited by Bhutias (*Lho*), Lepchas (*Mon*) and the Limbus (*Tsong*) (McKay, 2021, pp. 17-18). After the transfer of Darjeeling to British India, the immigration of economic migrants from Nepal led to a demographic change. The migration of people between India and Nepal had been a common practice since pre-modern period, due to same religious belief and geographical proximity. During the British rule, there was a dramatic increase in migration from Nepal and an organised form of migration took place under the colonial patronage.

Scholars have worked on understanding the factors behind the immigration. They have theorised the factors in a binary form - 'push' and 'pull' factor. Various causes found in Nepal became a push factor like the rigid Hindu laws, hierarchical social norms, caste system, slavery, *jhara* (forced labour), high land tax and the decline of *Kipat* (communal land holding). Pull factor behind the immigration are found in favourable condition and opportunities prevailing in colonial India, like the establishment of tea plantation in Darjeeling, the recruitment of Gorkha soldiers in the Indian army, favourable land policy, works in railway and road construction, cinchona plantation and more. The colonial officials like Archibald Campbell and J.C. White were instrumental in encouraging Nepalis immigration to India.

In 1835, when the British took over Darjeeling, the Darjeeling district gazetteers recorded a population of not more than 100 souls. In 1850, the population rose to 10,000. In 1869 the population numbered 22,000. The first systematic census of 1872 records 94,712 people and in 1901, the census recorded 249,117 persons. In Kalimpong, when this part of hill was acquired by British India in 1865, the population was estimated to be 3,536 people and in 1901, the population rose to 41,511.

Owing to the migration of people from Nepal, there was a drastic increase in the population of Darjeeling Hills. The demography of Darjeeling became heterogeneous, consisting of three different communities - Lepchas, Bhutias and the Nepalis. They were known in the official records as the Hill tribes. Lepchas were the autochthonous of the Sikkim-Darjeeling Himalaya. Bhutias in Darjeeling were generally composed of four different groups – Sikkimese Bhutias regarded as a product of intermarriage between Tibetans and Lepchas, Sherpa who came from East Nepal, Drukpa who were Bhutanese and Tibetans who were from Tibet.[4] Darjeeling became a hotspot of ethnic diversity as such colonial writing has described its people as a 'bable of tribes and nations.'

Out of three major hills community, it was the Nepali who became the most dominant community in the demography of the hill. By the beginning of twentieth century C.E, most of them had settled permanently in India. The colonial official reports reflected the birth of Nepali people in Darjeeling.[5] They had created a new home outside Nepal in India. Unlike Nepal, geo-culturally, Darjeeling was small place, which became concentrated with a diverse linguistic culture. There was a need for a common tongue for communicative purpose among the hill people. Out of all the ethnic language it was Nepali which was adopted as the lingua-franca.

Nepali was already the language of power in Nepal, where owing to the authority enjoyed by the language, Nepali was used as a second language in Nepal by diverse people whose primary language was not Nepali. The colonial official records of the

[4] Hunter, W. (1876). *A Statistical Account of Bengal: Darjiling.*Trubner & Co., London, pp. 45-46.

[5] O'Malley, L. S. (1907). *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling.* The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot., Calcutta, p. 39.

mid-nineteenth century mentions the use of Nepali in Darjeeling, like the Report of W.B Jackson, but the Report mistook Nepali as 'Hindee'.[6] Nepali, which was used as secondary language in Nepal by the ethnic people ultimately changed into primary language in India. Various areas around Darjeeling were named in Nepali. Towards the end of nineteenth century, L.A Waddell had prepared an etymological list of regional names of places around Darjeeling hills. From the evaluation of his list, published by the Journal of the Asiatic Society, it can be deduced that much of the places around Darjeeling hills were named in Nepali, Tibetan and Lepchas languages.[7] Therefore, a sense of belonging and identity with the language and the region was already developed by the Nepali speakers by the end of the nineteenth century C.E.

Darjeeling as an epicentre of identity formation:

The life of the people who migrated from Nepal underwent a far reaching change in India. The agents of colonial modernity, like western education and the print media instigated a new socio-cultural outlook among the people. There was a growing awareness regarding their backwardness and need for *unnati* (progress). Nepali language was considered lagging behind other Indo-Aryan languages. The progress of the language was considered necessary for the progress of their *jati* (community).

The Nepali speaking people started to give importance to the cultivation of modern education in India. The Christian Missionaries, made the pioneering work of providing education, to the natives of the Darjeeling, during nineteenth century. The most success in this field was achieved by the illustrious Rev Macfarlane, who opened up many schools in the second half of nineteenth century. With the growth of Missionary schools, the colonial authorities also started to take its initiative to educate the natives of Darjeeling hill. The missionary had taken lead in the establishment of primary education and at the higher educational level the government established Darjeeling Government High School in 1892. This was the only high school in Darjeeling hill until 1922. Unlike Nepal, the people in Darjeeling hills got the opportunity to avail the privileges of modern education.

Although the Nepali speaking people in Darjeeling were among the first generation to receive modern education, but there was no provision for learning Nepali as a vernacular subject and as a medium of instruction in the schools. Hindi was used instead of Nepali for the purpose of education. It is in this context that the new emerging Nepali intelligential considered it as an obstruction in the *unnati* of their *jati*. The Nepali intelligentsia believed that such condition prevailed because Nepali was not advance as the other major regional languages of India.

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[6] Jackson, W. B. (1854). *Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government: Report on Darjeeling*. Calcutta: Calcutta Gazette Office. p. 7.

[7] Waddell, L. (1891). *Place and river names in the Darjiling district and Sikhim*. Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, 60, part 1, pp. 53-79.

Since the time when the Christian Missionaries established schools in Darjeeling, Hindi was used for imparting education. There were reasons for the Christian Missionary's pioneer educationist Macfarlane in disregarding Nepali in favour of Hindi: first, as Macfarlane he had some knowledge of Hindi unlike Nepali which was not known to him; second, there was a dearth of text-books in Nepali (Dewan, 1991, p. 109) and lastly, Nepali had linguistic affinities with Hindi and most importantly both the language used the same *Devanagari* script for writing. In the nineteenth century, various colonial administrators and missionaries tried to learn and develop some knowledge about Nepali. Although grammars of Nepali were also written by the Europeans but most of them had classified Nepali as a 'dialect' of Hindi. Even one of the grammarians S.H. Kellogg, claimed Nepali to be a dialect of Hindi.[8] As a result Nepali was considered to be a variant of Hindi by most of the colonial scholars in nineteenth century. But by the time of the publication of the Linguistic Survey of India by G.A. Grierson, Nepali was clearly recognised as a distinct language.[9]

Before Darjeeling became the centre of Nepali literary activities, Banaras the religious centre of the Hindus, had been the traditional centre of learning and literary activity for the Nepalis in India. The autocratic Rana's rule established in Nepal since 1846 was not favourable for the development of literary activities in Nepal. The printing press in Nepal was under the monopoly of the government. There was censorship against expression of liberal ideas, which could endanger the autocratic regime in Nepal. Colonial India although was not free of imposing restriction on the freedom of expression, but in comparison to Nepal the cultural aura was better. Nepali people mostly from upper caste used to come to Banaras to learn and to express their literary freedom in the form of writings. Earliest Nepali periodicals in India were published from Banaras, their work in Banaras paved the way for linguistic consolidation among the Nepali speakers of Darjeeling hills. The Nepali periodicals published from Banaras were subscribed and read by the Nepali intelligentsia of Darjeeling hills.

Unnati of the Nepali language:

Print media played an important role in creating awareness and *unnati* of the Nepali language. Various Nepali periodicals were launched from Banaras and Darjeeling for promoting the language. In 1914, a Nepali periodical *Chandra* was launched in Banaras by Madhav Prasad. Although short lived, *Chandra* was quite influential. In the very first issue, the editorial held that:

[8] Kellog, S.H. (1876). *A Grammar of the Hindi Language*. Kegan Paul Trench, Trubner and Co. Limited., London, Reprint (1938), p. 120.

[9] Grierson, G. (1916). *Linguistic Survey of India : Indo Aryan Family, Central Group, Vol. 9 Part 4.* Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt Ltd, Delhi, Reprint (1967), p. 17.

> The reason behind the progress of the English, French and German peoples lay in the development of their respective languages. (Pradhan, 1984, p. 75)

Another influential Nepali periodical *Gorkhali* was published in 1915 from Banaras under the editorship of Suryabikram Gyawali. It actively campaigned for the progress of Nepali language. The editor believed that one way of making progress of the language was through the publication of periodicals. In the first issue of this Nepali weekly the editor wrote:

> It is most regrettable to note that while people of all *jati* are engaged in the development of their language, our Gorkha brothers have allowed their language to lag behind all others. Calcutta University considers our language to be weak and does not recognise it in its curricula. (Onta, 1996, p. 44)

Before the publication of *Chandra* and *Gorkhali* in 1901, the first Nepali periodical in Darjeeling called *Gorkha Khabar Kagat* was launched by Rev Ganga Prasad Pradhan. He had bought the press from the Christian Missionaries and gave the name Gorkha Press. The primary objective was to spread the Christian missionary ideals among the hill people through the medium of regional language. But the publication of this periodical was monumental, as it reflected the rise of Nepali language consciousness. It was not only the first Nepali newspaper to be published from Darjeeling hills, but was also the second Nepali periodical published in India, after *Gorkha Bharat Jiwan* published from Banaras. The application of the term 'Gorkha' in the name of the periodical and his press displayed the rising affection toward the *jati* and the language (Rai R. , 2012, pp. 1-3).

A poem entitled *Ghazal* was published on 1st Oct 1916 in *Gorkha Khabar Kagat*:

Oh! Gorkhali you are in slumber,
You are behind other *jati*…
Nepalis are more than fifty lakhs,
Alas! Language is yet to advance,
There is no language here there is no language there,
Even in school there is no language. (cited in, M N Pradhan, 1991, p.24)

The above poem written by Parasmani Pradhan, who was a student at that time, showcases the concern about the dismal state of Nepali *jati* and language. It also showcases the census awareness and the disaffection against the schools for not providing Nepali in the curricula. Another poem entitled *matribhasa* by the same writer was published in Gorkhali. The writing noted that the language of the Gorkhali (people) was in great danger and implored the people to "start preaching your mother tongue." (Pradhan N. M., 1991, p. 22). The ethnic people in Darjeeling had accepted Nepali as their *matribhasa*. In the academic discourse, scholars generally believed that the concept of language based identity and the concept of

mother tongue was absent in India before the advent of colonialism. It was in the colonial period that we see the germination of such phenomenon, owing to the colonial practice of maintaining census and various other official reports, where the diverse people were differentiated based on various features, one among which included language. In the earlier period, in nineteenth century, Nepali poet Bhanubhakta simply used the word *bhasa* (language) to denote the language. By the early twentieth century the concept of *matribhasa* started to gain currency among its speakers. Nepali language became an intrinsic part of cultural identity. Nepali as a *matribhasa* was further disseminated with the inauguration of Nepali Sahitya Sammelan in 1924, where its founder like Parasmani Pradhan and Suryabikram Gyaweli frequently used and propagated the idea of *matribhasa unnati.*

The Nepali language which became the lingua-franca of the migrated people in colonial India was given the status of *matribhasa*. This not only raised the prestige of the language, but it also helped in connecting and binding the Nepali speaking people emotionally. By considering language in danger, a notion of fear was used by the Nepali intelligentsia, to mobilise the people on a linguistic basis. The first quarter of twentieth century, witnessed the growth of emotion towards the mother tongue in India. Unlike the Tamil or Telegu language movement in South India, during the early twentieth century, where language was personified in the form of Mother Goddess, (Mitchell, 2009, pp. 12-13) (Ramaswamy, 1997, p. 79) the emotional attachment towards the Nepali language did not precipitate into such language personification. The important feature of the growth of the concept of mother tongue among the people of Darjeeling hills was that it was able to unify diverse ethnic people based on a common language - Nepali. This does not mean that ethnic language and dialect had completely disappeared in the hills, but the people accepted Nepali as their primary language instead of the ethnic language.

The linguistic consolidation among the people of Darjeeling was further encouraged by the growth of political consciousness. Since 1907, the people of the hills – Nepali, Bhutia and the Lepchas collectively demanded for a separate administrative unit for Darjeeling hill based on various distinct reasons. One among such reasons was the language, which was different from mainland Bengal. By 1917, the first political party from Darjeeling, known as the Hill's Men Association, was established. The growth of political awareness and their demands reflects that the people from the hill regarded themselves as distinct linguistic community.

Nepali Public Sphere and linguistic consolidation:

In 1914, Gorkha Sahitya Samaj was established by the Nepali speaking students of Darjeeling government school. It was one of the earliest societies established to work for the promotion of Nepali language. The creation of this society was one of the first events in the Darjeeling hills to showcase the dissent of Nepali students against the dominance of Hindi in the school. The Darjeeling Government High

School had a library named Hindi Sahitya Samaj, which had collections of different books and periodicals only in Hindi. The Hindi Sahitya Samaj was not interested in collecting Nepali books and periodicals. Therefore, the students of this school protested and founded Gorkha Sahitya Samaj to collect Nepali books and periodicals. (Pradhan, 1985, pp. 1-2). However, Gorkha Sahitya Samaj was not the first society to be formed by the hill people for the promotion of Nepali. Perhaps the first concerted effort can be seen in the formation of Gorkha Library.

Gorkha Library was established in Kurseong in 1913. (Chalmers, 2009, pp. 109-147) It is regarded as first Nepali public library established in India. Among the objectives of the Gorkha Library included the promotion of Nepali language, education and creation of an amiable relationship among the hill communities. Gorkha Library was one of the first public institutions established not only to work for the progress of language and education but also for the unity among the hill people through Nepali language. On January 1919, during the inauguration of a new permanent building for library, Dharnidhar Sharma read his influential poem *Udbodhan.* This poem was also published in the local periodical *Chandrika*. Sharma implored the people to awake and work towards the path of progress.

Before 1918, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu and Tibetans were taught in the schools of Darjeeling as a vernacular with the exception of Nepali. During the visit of the Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University in Darjeeling Government School, the Nepali students presented a petition requesting permission for the use of Nepali in the schools. But the lawyer accompanying the Vice Chancellor remarked Nepali as a "coolie's language". (Onta, 1996, p. 42) This event caused much indignation among the hill people. The incident was published in *Gorkhali*, and a campaign was launched for the recognition of Nepali in the schools. The students also made a request to the headmaster, Sarada Prasad Mukherjee of Durbar High School of Kathmandu to contact the Calcutta University. Durbar High School was opened by the Ranas of Nepal in the second half of nineteenth century, for educating the ruling aristocratic family of Nepal. Chandrika, published from Kurseong in its 5th May 1918 issue, implored that bringing uniformity in the language was the way to get approval for Nepali by the Calcutta University. In July 1918, Calcutta University recognized Nepali as a vernacular which could be used at Matriculation, Intermediate and B.A level.

In 1924 Nepali Sahitya Sammelan was established at Darjeeling. It was the first Nepali literary society in India. The creation of this institution led to the acceptance of a broader meaning of the term Nepali. The first Chairman of Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, Hariprasad Pradhan in his inaugural speech defined the meaning of the term Nepali. He said:

> We should call this organisation Nepali Sahitya Sammelan because the word has a broad meaning. It refers to all races of Nepal – Magar, Gurung, Kirati, Newar, Limbu, etc…Different people might use

> different tongues but there is no person who cannot understand Nepali language… No particular race can claim that this language to belongs to them alone. (Hutt, 1997, p.117)

Similarly, another founding member Parsamani Pradhan said in his speech:

> We are Nepalis. Within the fold of Nepali there are many *jatis.* Newar, Gurung, Rai, Tamang, Bhutia, Lepcha, Tharu, Sunwar are all Nepalis. All the *jatis* have their own independent language, but owing to the fact that all can speak and understand Nepali, we should first work for the progress of Nepali language. (Pradhan, 2010, p. 35)

Therefore, the establishment of Nepali Sahitya Sammelan marked the official beginning of a new identity based on the Nepali language. In Nepal, the authorities and the common people did not accept the European nomenclature of Nepali for people as well as the language. The foundation of this literary society was important as the Nepali was accepted instead of terms like *Gorkha bhasa* or *Khas-Kura* or *Parbatiya.* In Nepal, *Gorkha bhasa* was preferred until the word 'Nepali' got its official recognition in the decade of 1930s. Given this context, the establishment of Nepali Sahitya Sammelan was a historical event in forging the linguistic identity of the Nepali speaking people in India. The Nepali speaking people in Darjeeling officially regarded themselves as well as their language as Nepali.

Conclusion:

The adoption of Nepali as a common tongue and as a *matribhasa* by the diverse ethnic people in India was not a drastic event. It took over a period of time, and the initial groundwork was prepared in Nepal where Nepali had been used as the official language since its political unification. In Nepal, cultural unification of diverse people was not achieved due to its geo-political factor owing to which ethnic people used Nepali as a secondary language. It was in India that various ethnic people, emigrated from Nepal, adopted Nepali as their primary language as *matribhasa* and started to work for its *unnati*. The concept of *matribhasa*, although influenced by the British colonial policy, helped in binding the people with the language emotionally. The concept of *matribhasa* was further consolidated by the political developments and educational needs in Darjeeling hills, which necessitated unity among the people. This unity among the people of Darjeeling hills was achieved through the means of Nepali linguistic identity exemplified by the establishment of Nepali Sahitya Sammelan.

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BOOK REVIEW

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Rup Kumar Barman, *Paribarta Anusandhan: Rashtra, Nagarikatwa, Bastuchuti O Itihascharcha (Search for Alternative: State, Citizenship, Displacement and Historical Research)*, Kolkata, Gangchil, 2022, Page: 170, Price: 450 INR, Hardbound.

Historical writing on a region, nation or continent, even of 'universal history' gives immense pleasure to its readers by maintaining a perfect balance of literary flavour and historical reality. This type of perfect amalgamation can be noticed in a recently published work like *Paribarta Anusandhan: Rashtra, Nagarikatwa, Bastuchuti O Itihascharcha (Search for Alternative: State, Citizenship, Displacement and Historical Research)*, Kolkata, Gangchil, 2022.

Rup Kumar Barman, the author, connects the history of a region with national and international history in *Paribarta Anusandhan*. In the book, the author has connected his journey (from the Dooars region of the Indo-Bhutan border to an Indian metropolis through Darjeeling and Cooch Behar) with regional, national, and international events. In this process, he seeks to highlight the various genres of historiography from the 1970s to 2020. The author began the writing while narrating the scenic view of his native village, Chhoto Chowkir Bos, beside the *Raidak* River. While reminiscing about fifty years of his life experiences, the book presented an unwavering tale starting from Mahakalguri, Samuktala, Kamakshyaguri, Alipurduar, and Cooch Behar down to Kolkata. The book is not a monotonous recollection of memories, instead an excellent amalgamation of the author's life sagas with the local histories and cultural and ethnographic illustrations of the places he visited. He linked local history with regional history and depicted how various international events affect personal lives and contemporary local and regional waves of life. His far-sighted eyes could draw a resemblance between the desolate village of Mahakalguri in the Dooars and the European village narrated by William Wordsworth (1770-1850) in *Solitary Reaper*. The rich literary enthusiasm and profound knowledge of history have adorned the memoir with the utmost uniqueness.

The author has divided *Paribarta Anusandhan* into four chapters. The first chapter is *Jatra Suru Hala* (the journey begins). In this part, the author gives a glimpse of the initial days of his life at the little village named 'Chhoto Chowkir Bos', enriched with natural scenic beauty, situated on the bank of Raidak river near the Indo-Bhutan border. He carefully crafted each memory of his childhood, largely imbibed with the region's archaeological, historical, and cultural identity along with the

melody of Nepali and Assamese folk songs and provided detailed and picturesque descriptions of the diverse folk culture and festivals of the region. All these descriptions give the author's profound memories of Mahakalguri, Samuktala, Alipurduar and Kamakshyaguri, as well as the enriched local history and folklore of these places to the readers competently. Furthermore, the author presented the contemporary political situation of West Bengal, like the Communist political affairs of that time and its impact on regional politics. The author opined that the Assam Movement (1977–1985) and the Bangladesh Liberation War were crucial in changing the demography of his native place. Besides, the chapter reflects that a few regional movements in the 1980s and 1990s (such as the Bodoland Movement, the Kamtapuri Movement and the Gorkhaland Movement) profoundly impacted the region of North Bengal. The discussion also highlights several international issues, such as the Cold War (1948-91), the Liberation War of Bangladesh (1971), the GATT Treaty, the downfall of the Soviet Union (1991) and the extent of their effects on the people and society. Lastly, the chapter highlights that after moving on from the springs of college life, the author embarked upon a new journey in the 1990s with new prospects, faith, and experience.

The book's second chapter mainly revolves around Prof. Barman's life at the North Bengal University and Siliguri (in the Darjeeling district). In this chapter, the author has shown how harmony lies among the pupils of different language groups, castes, and creeds in the university campus. The unity in the campus, on the one hand, used to fascinate the author. On the other hand, the author encountered demeaning questions of casteism, which was a completely new and unexpected situation for him. During his university days, he came across the famous novel *Titas Ekti Nadir Naam* by Adwaita Mallabarman (1914-1951). This book left an everlasting influence on his mind. While describing life in university and his travelling experiences, the author highlighted the historical background of the Naxalbari movement. Simultaneously, Prof. Barman made the readers acquainted with various historiographical streams along with topics like the increase of labour migration in North Bengal, the agitated political circumstances in North Bengal in the late 90s, class and clan-based politics in university and sensitive issues such as the Kargil War (1991). The chapter ends with transcending the author's marvellous student life to set foot into professional life.

The third chapter begins with Professor Barman's journey as a permanent faculty member at ABN Seal College in Cooch Behar. In this chapter, he discusses the history and heritage of the former princely state, now an important district of West Bengal, Cooch Behar, from the early mediaeval period to the twenty-first century. Concurrent incidents around the world, such as the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre (2001), and the Durban Declaration (2001) got a special mention in the chapter. The author regretted that despite being a significant incident, the Durban Declaration failed to receive as much response from the masses and educated people as the first incident, although it was extremely important. The

Durban Conference blamed the colonial rule and its impact on generating racism and racial discrimination in the world. In this prospect, the author introduced Bengali society and colonial epistemology to the readers. In this process, Prof. Barman precisely reviewed the reaction of Indian intellectuals and the attitude of subaltern historians towards the lower caste. He opined that students from small towns and rural areas were subjected to innumerable problems and discrimination while adjusting to metropolitan areas. Repeatedly, they get rejected for being unknown and they fall victim to the intricacy of bureaucratic affairs. The author was no exception as well. Prof. Barman has written that in an interview, he faced an unexpected question that had gone "You are born and brought up in North Bengal, why do you want to join Jadavpur University?", needless to say, he was quite astonished by the question. Despite all these hindrances, Professor Barman made his way to success with his knowledge. The chapter ends with a hopeful note by depicting Professor Barman's journey to Kolkata to join the prestigious Jadavpur University.

To earn better opportunities and reach a better place, people often tend to leave their homeland, grow up years behind, and ship across the country, which is a common feature of 'voluntary migration'. The fourth chapter highlights the idea of 'voluntary migration' and depicts how the author's quest for better opportunities uprooted him from his homeland and embraced voluntary migration by settling in Kolkata to join Jadavpur University. In the first portion of this chapter, the author mentioned the distinct differences between rural areas and Kolkata's city life, and the discriminatory behaviour of colleagues, but he did not hesitate to give prominence to the new horizon of research works Jadavpur University had presented before him. While dealing with various personal experiences, the chapter also provides the details of Prof. Barman's dealing with various historiographical aspects, his two-decade-long research work by providing a deep insight into how he has always walked unconventional paths in quest of finding alternatives. While discussing all these issues, the chapter offers an insight into the heterogeneous issues like the partition of India, displacement of people, forced migration and anomalous topics such as environmental history, history of rivers and folk medicine, which were closely imbibed with the lives of Scheduled Caste refugees. According to Prof. Barman, one must derive information from archives and indigenous knowledge systems to write a history of the common people. To achieve this, the author advised the researchers to keep their foot on the ground to accumulate local beliefs and wisdom from the indigenous people. In this context, the author introduced the reader to Dalit Discourse and its various aspects. This chapter reflects the influence of historical awareness on Rup Kumar Barman's life and personality.

In conclusion, it can be said that *Paribarta Anusandhan* is an exceptional memoir that relates the unique saga of an academic to contemporary society and events that span almost fifty years. The book provides a glance at the author's views on the

different historiographies, the apparent effect of future administrative rules and regulations on lives and thrives to provide a guideline for future researchers to break the structure for acquiring necessary data. The memoir of Prof. Barman is not a mere collection of data or an anthology of contemporary historiography; it also tells the story of a man from a middle-class family in a remote area of North Bengal who fought and gained a significant place among the intellectuals in the cultural capital of the state.

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