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Multi-disciplinary Research Journal*

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The “East Indian Society for the Studies of Social Sciences” was established more than a decade ago; and its official journey was flagged off on the 5th of April, 2011, when it was registered under the societies Registration Act (West Bengal XXVI, 1961) with the Reg. No. S/1L/79269 (2011-2012) of the Government of West Bengal. It is a Non-Government and non-profit organization pledged to carry on the mission of research in social sciences with India in general and Eastern-India in particular as the main theme in its objective of interdisciplinary explorations. As a part of multi-faceted social activities of the society, two bi-annual peer reviewed Journals namely “East Indian Journal of Social Sciences” (in English language) & “Purva Bharat” (Manus O Sanskriti) in Bengali Language with ISSN are being published regularly. Seminars and debates on significant topics are held as many times as financially possible in a year.

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## ***Editorial Column***

In 'The Editorial Reflection' of the previous issue, things relating to the thematic aspects and other essential viewpoints of the journal were delineated in detail; therefore, lest things should get repeated this time again, the present column is written in brevity. Here, now the number 1 of Volume VII of the 'East Indian Journal of Social Science', ISSN 2277-4483, is all set to get into light out of the press. Like the previous occasions, this time as well, the rarity of papers free from the blemishes of plagiarism precluded us from rapid and hasty selection of the best articles to be bundled up for publication. We had to wait for the courtesy of sending the papers back to the authors to brush off the detected plagiarized areas for the purpose of strengthening the ground of the author's originality in presenting and interpreting the theme of each of the papers according to its title. Some papers with the stigma of self-plagiarism involved the risk of copy right violation provided the themes somehow published earlier anywhere; moreover, repetitive publication of the same topic even partially is one of the most unwanted things in the domain of research and scholarship. Next time onward, no leniency in this regard will be reserved to creep in; and such papers will not be sent back to the authors for correction but will directly be set aside for rejection.

The objective of the journal since its inception was to encourage the scholars of Eastern India and elsewhere to portray things of social sciences pertaining to the eastern geographical location of the country in particular and India in general; but the chronic agony of the matter is that many authors simply tune our hope out nearly every time in dispatching their papers to our editorial board. Our request in this regard has been constant ever since; and the authors are again reminded of this to be careful of not to broom our expectation out all the time.

Let us pull together to carry on our collective academic responsibility in arousing popular interest in scholarly activities for the purpose of original research and publication in kindling the lamp of knowledge in the relatively neglected zone that Eastern India has been so long.

***Sailen Debnath***  
Alipurduar.





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## **Early Colonial Scientists and Their Contributions in Meteorological Observations in Bengal**

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### **Abstract:**

The diffusion of modern science and its practices from European metropolitan centres to the non-western societies during the late eighteenth and the early century constitutes a rapidly flourishing area of research in the history of science. Present paper seeks to explore the nature of early meteorological observations in colonial Bengal and its gradual maturation under colonial constraints. It mostly highlights how and why the diverse identities of the weather of Bengal were predicted and conceptualized by the European observers during the early nineteenth century Bengal and its link with the imperial and metropolitan needs regarding meteorological knowledge.

**Key Words:** *Meteorology, Colonial, Imperial, Naturalist, Knowledge*

### **Introduction:**

Sporadic studies of Indian weather different in parts of the country had commenced by the end of the eighteenth century. The East India Company (henceforth EIC) was well aware of the importance of local weather knowledge for fulfilling their commercial and political needs. From the beginning, they wanted to create a body of weather centric information which was needed for fulfilling their colonial goals. However, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Company did not invest much of their attention and money for the systematic development of meteorological investigations in Bengal in particular and India in general.

Since the late eighteenth century some surgeon-naturalists, military engineers and officers, surveyors, administrators, navigators, travellers, explorers played the most important role for cultivating modern instrument based meteorological observations in Bengal.

Perhaps most of them were not specialist meteorologists or not recruited by the colonial government for preparing reports on the weather of Bengal. However, they made significant contributions in advancing modern meteorological practices in non-western societies. They were called 'early amateur scientists' by some scholars.<sup>1</sup> Pratik Chakrabarti has argued that early amateur scientists had an extremely diverse range of interests, from botany to meteorology to electromagnetism.<sup>2</sup> However, in my present discussion I am particularly discussing their contributions in meteorology. During the first half of the nineteenth century, James Princep, Lieut. T. Kater, G. A. Prinsep, John Mac Ritchie, H Barrow and Henry Piddington, M Robertson, Dr. H. Chapman, J. Floyd, Capt. Hannington, C. E. Ravenshaw, Captain H. E. L. Thuillier, Capt. W. S. Sherwill made most important contributions for observing the weather of Bengal. However, for understanding the nature of their meteorological activities, I particularly concentrated few of them who made their contribution before 1830s, such as, James Princep, Thomas Hardwicke, James Kyd and Henry Barrow.

### **Early Meteorological Observers:**

During the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century Asiatic Society played a pivotal role for organising colonial meteorological science and the individual observers also performed a great role for the meteorological investigations. Although these individuals came from administrative, military and medical backgrounds, rather than trained meteorologists or specialised scientists. During this period EIC mainly wanted to gather some primary knowledge about India's weather for perusing their imperial goals. They did not have any strong interest to invest their money for the development of proper scientific meteorology in India. However, meteorological knowledge was increasingly acknowledged as an unique importance to colonial interests. The colonial rulers did not discourage their employees and the other Europeans, who had in interest to study the Indian meteorology. As a result, much of the scientific endeavour of the Company's period took place outside, or the margins of state institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Pratik Chakrabarti has shown, how the 18th century science dramatically changed European philosophy, culture and society.<sup>4</sup>

The Gentlemen in seventeenth and eighteenth century England believed on the rationalist philosophy of science and trusted to speak truth.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps many middle class educated young men of England came in India to make their fortune. Majority of them joined in EIC's service as civil servants, military officers or medical sergeants. Basically they were the representative of modern scientific culture and were motivated by the great European scientists and their activities. Even, it can also be said that they played dual role in the colony, in one hand as a employee of the colonial government they performed their professional duties very carefully for the better fortune of their master and in other side as a representative of European enlightenment philosophy, they tried to attach themselves with the mission of worldwide advancement of European scientific culture.

Majority of early accounts on meteorology were written by surveyors, engineers, military officers, medical surgeons of the Company not as a part of their official duties but for their personal curiosity about the unknown weather or for the requirement of perusing their own jobs. As a representative of European scientific culture some of the early officers of the Company and some other Europeans travellers, missionaries, businessman etc, recorded amateur meteorological observations in Bengal which had a weather so different from their home country. As for example, during the late eighteenth century T. D. Pearse, Henry Trail, Francis Balfour made important contributions in observing Calcutta's weather. However before perusing their meteorological activities, Sir James Rennell also tried to maintain a weather diary for understanding the nature of atmosphere of Bengal. But their methodology for observing weather were not same, for instance, Pearse and Trail followed more scientific techniques for predicting weather than Sir Rennell. However, it can be said that all of the early activities helped to growth of scientific knowledge about local weather which used by the colonists for the extension and inhabitation of colonial space.

### **James Princep:**

James Princep, who was internationally recognised for his Indological and scientific activities in colonial India, was born in London. He proceeded to Guy's Hospital to study chemistry and latter he was appointed as an apprentice at the Royal Mint in

London.<sup>6</sup> After completing his training, he proceeded to Calcutta as an Assistant Assay Master at the Calcutta mint in 1819. However within a year he was posted in Banaras mint. After completing his daily professional duties, he paid his spare time for observing the local weather. Before returning in Calcutta as a Deputy Assay Master of Calcutta mint in 1830, Prinsep started to maintain a meteorological Journal where he noted the nature of daily weather of Benaras.<sup>7</sup> His meteorological journal published in Asiatic Society's journal in 1825<sup>8</sup> and some years later in 1828 it also published in Philosophical Transactions of Royal Society of London.<sup>9</sup> In the Centenary Review of the Asiatic Society of Bengal from 1784 to 1883, P. N. Bose wrote, "The illustrious James Prinsep, to whom this Society, to whom this Society is so largely indebted for its success and prosperity, and whose name is so well and so widely known in connection with archaeological researches, rendered no mean service in the cause of the Mathematical and Natural Science."<sup>10</sup>

During 1830 to 1838, he played a pivotal role for observing the weather of Bengal specially the weather of Calcutta.<sup>11</sup> He also made an important contribution for analysing the nature of storm in the coastal areas of Bengal. In 1832, he tried to prepare a map of the progress of a storm which fell on Midnapur and Ganges delta.<sup>12</sup> However, he did not properly complete this particular work for some technical problems. For understand the nature of this storm, he collected scientific information from the sailors who observed it practically and prepared a chart of air pressure by the use of barometer. Perhaps it may be said that Prinsep's activities on colonial meteorology helped to provide some important models for the early colonial scientists who had interests in colonial meteorology.

Simultaneously he also concentrated to analyse how European weather observing instruments functioned in tropical weather. He wrote few valuable articles on instruments of weather predictions which helped to give us an outline for understanding how faulty instruments affected the advancement of meteorological observations in early colonial period.<sup>13</sup>

Prinsep not only made important contributions in empirical study about colonial meteorology but also he performed a

significant role for preparing a conceptual frame work about it. He made a significant contribution for enriching the theory of wet-bulb hygrometer.<sup>14</sup> As an important members of the scientific committee which was appointed by the British Association for the advancement of Science, he actively participated for gathering and publishing weather information about colonial India. As a representative of European science, he always tried to fulfil the metropolitan scientific requirements for the development of western meteorological science.

From the beginning, he emphasised both to prepare meteorological journals and to make a network with the other meteorological observers throughout India for the introduction of systematic weather prediction system in colonial India. He wrote, 'I have condensed into annexed Table the result of the past years observations upon the climate of Benares presenting in one page, the substance of a volume of figures, each item nearly being the mean of thirty numbers. Though attended with some labour, this is really the only shape in which a Dairy of the sort can be turned to any useful purpose, and if we could obtain similar abstracts from other chief stations on the Indian continent, the advantages would be much enhanced by the correct comparison we should be enabled to draw of their relative climates, the light which would be thrown upon the origin, course and extent of the hot winds; the altitudes of different places; and other interesting phenomena.'<sup>15</sup>

In 1830, he was selected for the post of Secretary to the physical section of the Asiatic Society and in 9th January, 1833 he was elected as the honourable General Secretary of the Asiatic Society.<sup>16</sup> During the phase of his secretary ship, Prinsep took important initiative for making Asiatic Society as an important repository for gathering raw weather information of the different parts of India. He mainly emphasised to maintain a link with the early colonial meteorological observers for getting their meteorological registers. He also requested the colonial government for providing weather observing instruments to the individuals who had interested in meteorology and wanted to participate in fulfilling the European requirements of first hand weather data throughout the world. In his scientific papers, Prinsep acknowledged the activities of the early colonial weather



observers in constituting and articulating of colonial metrological knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps it can be said that his enthusiasm for the growth of colonial meteorological knowledge opened a new door for its further improvements and helped to establish Calcutta as one of the main centres for meteorological researches in British India.

### **Thomas Hardwicke:**

Another early colonial scientist connected with the growth of meteorological knowledge about Bengal was Thomas Hardwicke. He became famous for preparing a systematic meteorological register in early colonial Bengal. In 1778, he started his career as a Lieutenant of Fire-Worker of Artillery of Bengal army under the command of T. D. Pearse, one of the pioneers in colonial meteorological investigations.<sup>18</sup> However in 1781, he proceeded to Madras and continued his military career under Sir Eyre Coote.<sup>19</sup> During this year, he fought against the army of Hyder Ali. Under the command of General W. Medows, he also performed a vital role for capturing several forts like, Caroor, Daraporum, Arivacoochy, Eroode etc.<sup>20</sup> He also played an important role in concurring the powerful Mysore state. After the third Anglo-Mysore war, he was reappointed as an officer of artillery division of Bengal army. In 1794, he took part against the war of Rohillas as a Captain of Bengal regiment and in 1797, he was appointed as Commissary of ordnance.<sup>21</sup> In 1816, he was selected as the acting Commander of the regiment of Bengal artillery division.<sup>22</sup> He was promoted the rank of Major-General in 1819.<sup>23</sup> He returned in Europe in 1824.

During his long military career of forty six years in India, he played significant role for progressing the territorial expansion of the colonial government throughout India. Simultaneously, he was also respected for his scientific activities.<sup>24</sup> He made important contributions in colonial meteorology and zoology. During 1816 to 1823, he prepared a valuable meteorological register which was an important source for understanding the weather of early colonial Calcutta.<sup>25</sup> He started to observe the weather with modern instruments and modern scientific techniques. Markham wrote few words about Thomas Hardwicke and his contributions in meteorological observations. He expressed, "General Thomas

Hardwicke kept a meteorological register at Dum Dum, from 1816 to 1823. It contains daily and monthly means of seven daily observations of the thermometer; barometrical observations taken daily at sunrise, noon, and evening, with monthly means; a register of the hygrometer; an enumeration of days of rain, and prevailing winds.”<sup>26</sup>

Like other colonial meteorological observers, Hardwicke also wrote how the moist and dry atmosphere effected the meteorological observations in Bengal.<sup>27</sup> He also took some new initiatives for placing the meteorological instruments with a view to getting proper readings. He wrote, ‘The instrument always stood at a distance from any door or window, but both doors and windows being open, it received all the influence of a dry atmosphere. The low numbers indicate a very dry state of the atmosphere. The low numbers indicate a very dry state of the atmosphere .....’<sup>28</sup>

By taking the daily weather data from Dum Dum, eight miles North-East of Fort William in Bengal, he mainly tried to understand the nature of wind flow, storm, rainfall, lightning. By analysing the barometric readings, he tried to predict the nature of weather<sup>29</sup> which helped to catalysed the future development of systematic weather prediction system in Bengal in particular and in India in general.

### **James Kyd:**

One other interesting but obscure character is James Kyd. He was a shipbuilder who came in Bengal in 1800 from England after completing his training in ship building. His father, General Alexander Kyd, and uncle, Colonel Robert Kyd, both were popular for their military, survey, scientific and engineering activities under East India Company in Bengal. His father performed an important role as a Surveyor General of Bengal during 1788 to 1794. His uncle was most popular throughout the world for the foundation of a Botanic Garden at Shibpur near Calcutta.<sup>30</sup> After coming in Calcutta, he appointed as an assistant of Mr. Waddell, the Master Shipbuilder of the EIC. After the retirement of Waddell, Kyd started the second phase of his career as the Master Shipbuilder of the EIC. According to P. N. Bose, Kyd was the founder and the then proprietor of the Kidderpur

dockyard.<sup>31</sup> In his Dictionary of Indian Biography, C. E. Buckland wrote that twenty-five vessels were built at the Kidderpur under the supervision of James kyd.<sup>32</sup> It is no doubt that Kyd made important contributions in making ships during the early decades of the nineteenth century Calcutta. Side by side, he was also acknowledged for his contributions in colonial meteorological science. James Kyd played an impressive role for preparing a register for observing the day and night tides in the river Hugli during 1805 to 1828.<sup>33</sup>

Archival literatures help us to understand that Kyd tried to observe the nature of tides in river Hugli for mainly fulfilling his professional needs.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps, he tried to monitor the time, heights and characters of the tidal waves for constructing and developing his shipyard project in Central-West part of the Calcutta. On the other hand as a representative of colonial government, Kyd focused to gather weather centric knowledge which helped the Company for elaborating their colonial projects. His approaches which published in Asiatic Researches in 1829, provided an appropriate focus that why tidal observation was an important part for making a new empire. Kyd wrote, "These tide-tables, formed from a register kept for twenty-two years, establish, beyond dispute, the lowest fall and the highest rise of the Hooghly, and thus from natural points for the construction of a River Gage, for the purpose of obtaining, at all times, the levels that may be required for the formation of canals, docks, wharfs and drains. They also shew the height of the river at all times of the year, a matter of considerable importance in the formation of public works, especially as the variation is so great, at its different periods."<sup>35</sup>

Although his activities in maintaining a daily register of tidal waves of river Hooghly, catalysed to advance meteorological science in Bengal. Kyd prepared some important statistical charts which helped to identify the high and low water levels in river Hooghly during 1805 to 1828. After the twenty two years observations of the tidal waves, he tried to draw a picture by which he analysed how the water levels of river Hooghly were affected in different seasons, mainly in monsoon.<sup>36</sup> He analysed how South-West winds stimulated to rise the water level both in Bay of Bengal and in river Hooghly.<sup>37</sup> He had also tried to point

out the meteorological causes of flood in river Hooghly.<sup>38</sup> From these perspectives, it can be said that his empirical and elaborate observations on tidal waves played an pivotal role in popularising these kind of activities throughout India.

### **Henry Barrow:**

Henry Barrow made important contributions in the development of weather observations in early nineteenth century Bengal. He was an scientific instrument maker who came in India in 1830 and started his career as a 'mathematical instrument maker' of Survey of India. He set up his workshop in Calcutta and prepared some important instruments for perusing survey operations more smooth and speedy. Simultaneously he performed significant role in understanding the nature of weather of Calcutta. He published his observation reports on Calcutta's weather in the Journal of Asiatic Society in 1836 where he discussed about nature and method of his observations. He used mainly three instruments like Barometer, Thermometer and Wet-bulb Thermometer, which were made in Calcutta, for his experiments. As an instrument maker, he also tried to examine how European weather observing instruments functioned in tropical environment. He did not prepare huge documents on weather observations. However it cannot be ignored that his little initiatives on this respect helped to stimulate the process for accumulating colonial meteorological knowledge.

### **Some Other Individuals and their Meteorological Activities:**

It is important to note that besides these persons, whose activities I have discussed during this article, there are some other notable persons who pursued their meteorological activities from Bengal, for instance, G. A. Prinsep, J. MacRitchie, G. W. Lamb, M. Robertson, Dr. H. Chapman, Captain Hannington, Henry Edward Landor Thuillier, J. R. Withcombe, etc all of them made important contributions in observing and predicting the weather of Bengal. G. A. Prinsep, an British businessman who came in Calcutta for fulfilling his trading purposes in the early 1820s<sup>39</sup>, examined the water temperature of river Hooghly.<sup>40</sup> It can be said that his observations on water temperature of a riverine system was not only helped to catalyse in the improvement of meteorological activities but also influenced to develop the researches on riverine ecosystems in early colonial Bengal. J. MacRitchie prepared some valuable meteorological tables on the

weather of Bankura, an important region in the Southern Bengal, for the years 1830 to 1833.<sup>41</sup> Simultaneously G. W. Lamb prepared a meteorological register for noting rainfall in Dacca during 1827 to 1834.<sup>42</sup> One other interesting character was Dr. H. Chapman who tried to maintain a meteorological register for understanding the weather of Darjelling during April to August 1837.<sup>43</sup> Captain Hannington was an army officer of Bengal native infantry.<sup>44</sup> He used the barometrical data for finding out the proper altitude of the Purulia.<sup>45</sup> Henry Edward Landor Thuillier started his career as an army officer of Bengal artillery in 1832 and after four years he was shifted in survey department where he made important contributions as revenue surveyor and surveyed an extensive parts of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.<sup>46</sup> In 1860s and 1870s he served his valuable duties as a Surveyor-General of India and the President of Asiatic Society of Bengal. Simultaneously, he was also admired for his meteorological observations. After collecting weather information, he prepared important papers on the rainfall and some other weather phenomena in Calcutta during 1829 to 1847.<sup>47</sup> J. R. Withcombe tried to observe the rainfall and temperature of Darjeeling during 1848 to 1855.<sup>48</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Consequently, it can be said that Early colonial meteorological observers played an important role as a formative element for the blooming of meteorological science in colonial India. However their activities helped to evolve the quantitative meteorological observations rather than qualitative research practices. Though, it can't be ignored that they pursued their scientific works within colonial constraints. Simultaneously they made important contributions in colonial government's fact finding project about India's physical environment. Perhaps it can be said that they gave an assistance during the late eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century in making a framework for the progress of modern weather prediction techniques throughout India. Even, it can also be claimed that they attempted to pay their attentions for understanding the variety of colonial weather. By influencing the European moral principles of a search of 'truth', they always tried to explore the unknown character of colonial weather. They faced many problems for collecting weather data but they didn't give up their perseverance in reconnoitring the India's unreadable atmospheric environment. It is important to note that majority

of the early colonial meteorological observers derived their success from personal effort, and their knowledge from personal investigation. During the early colonial period the EIC paid very little attention to the systematic expansion of meteorological investigations with a separate meteorological institution in Bengal. But the activities of the individuals and their published literature on the weather of Bengal, incited the colonial government to set up a observatory in Bengal for the growth of colonial meteorological knowledge. Side by side, both the imperial and international importance of detailed weather centric reports and statistical weather records of Bengal was grew from the second decades of the nineteenth century. For fulfilling the metropolitan and colonial demand of meteorological knowledge, the EIC gave green signal for the establishment of Calcutta Observatory and it stated its journey from 1829.

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## **A Study on the Evolution of Medical Science and Technology in Cooch Behar Princely State (1819-1950): The Impact of Colonialism**

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### **Abstract:**

In the age of Globalized medicine and also when medical research is leaping forward not only in the developed nations but within the country too, it is pertinent to read about the actual impact of colonial medicine on India's indigenous society. Western medicine occupied a significant role both in expansion and consolidation of colonial power not only in British India but also in native Princely States. Colonial medicine was primarily associated with the institutions established by European imperial powers to manage the health problems of their dependent territories. Medicine and associated institutions were part of colonialism. An attempt has been made through this paper to see how the spread and control of epidemic disease, the medical setting and associated institutions themselves could serve as a suitable medium to understand the process by which western medicine was institutionalized in the Cooch Behar Princely State after it came under British control, through various steps like hospitals, dispensaries and also the study attempts to look into the responses and reactions of the colonized society (the recipients) of this state towards this institutionalization process of western medicine.

**Key words:** *Colonialism, Western medical science and technology, Princely State of Cooch Behar, impact of medicines, public health.*

Mounting interest has recently been seen in the studies of the development and history of Medicine and public health in India, and so many researchers have already made extensive contribution. Some of their main thrust areas are: British policy regarding medicine and public health in colonial India, the impact of epidemic diseases on Indian society, indigenous responses to this Western science and practices, the relationship between Western and indigenous medicine in the colonial period, the process in which Western medicine became a

part of cultural hegemony in India as well as the creation of discourses on India and colonialism by western medicine.<sup>1</sup>

Possibly one of the difficulties of these scholarships is that they are almost totally restricted to British India, in which the British directly ruled and played a major role in familiarizing Western medicine. The Princely States, which occupied two-fifths of India before 1947, have been almost wholly overlooked by these studies on medicine and public health. What type of policies with regard to Western as well as indigenous medicines were implemented in the territories ruled by the Indian princes? Is there any difference in regard to the medical policy of the area of indirect rule? One of the goals of this essay is to response these questions by investigating the medical policies of Cooch Behar Princely State, one of the small princely states of Eastern India.

The indigenous medical system in India was well developed and left considerable influence on the development of medicine in Europe before the arrival of the British in India.<sup>2</sup> According to The Imperial Gazetteer of India, "The works of great surgeon and physician of the Buddhist era, Charak and Sushrut found great reflexes on the works of Ar-Razi the notable Arabian physician who died in 932 A.D. Razi's works remained the principal source of information to the European physicians. The whole system of medicine practice in India came to be grouped under one head known as Ayurveda which has been taught in India throughout centuries and even now. The system narrates vast knowledge of use of herbs, and their chemical formulations, use of metal internally, bold and skillful surgery including amputations of limbs. Students were trained to operate on the tissues and cells of the vegetables, and upon the dead animals."<sup>3</sup> But W.W. Hunter says, "With the growth of Buddhism the high caste Brahmins avoided practicing medicine which involved touching of human blood and morbid matters. There followed a pause in the indigenous system of medicine as the Arabs conquest favored Unani System. The Muslim doctors or hakims monopolized the patronage of the Muslims Princes and nobles of India."<sup>4</sup> This condition sustained almost till 17th century.

The British power succeeded in establishing its hegemony and superiority over the indigenous system of medical practices by the introduction of the European medicine in the early days of its contact in India. Medical discourse became an important trick in their hands

to achieve this end and proved to be a critical site of communication and conflict.<sup>5</sup>

The progress of public health in British India and the history of disease prevention in the part of world in the 19th and early 20th century provide a valuable insight into the period that witnessed the development of new trends in medical systems and a transition from surveys to microscopic studies in medicine.

The arrival of transmittable diseases and tropical medicine was a direct consequence of colonialism. The history of diseases and their prevention in the colonial context traces back the epistemology of infectious diseases, many of which are still prevalent in third world countries. It reveals the development of enquiry systems and the response to epidemics by the imperial government. It depicts how the establishment of health systems under the colonial power shaped disease control in British India to improve the health of its people.

Muhammad Umair Mushtaq, a researcher of Medical College, Pakistan says, "The history of western medicine in India dates back to 1600, when the first medical officers arrived in India along with the British East India Company's first fleet as ship's surgeons. In 1757 East India Company established its rule in India, which led to the development of civil and military services. For rendering medical services to the troops and servants of the company, medical department was established in Bengal as far back as 1764. At that time, it consisted of 4 head surgeons, 8 assistant surgeons, and 28 surgeon's mates."<sup>6</sup>

Biswamoy Pati says, "Hospital Boards were formed in 1775 to administer European hospitals comprising of the Surgeon General and Physician General, who were in the staff of the Commander-in-chief of the Royal Indian Army. In 1785, medical departments were set up in Bengal, Madras and Bombay Presidencies with 234 surgeons. The medical departments involved both military and civil medical services. In 1796, hospital boards were renamed as medical boards to look after the affairs of the civil part of the medical departments."<sup>7</sup>

In 1857 the Sepoy Mutiny led to the transfer of administration of India in the hands of the crown and different departments of civil services were developed. According to Imperial Gazetteer, "It was in 1868 that a separate civil medical department was formed in Bengal.

In 1869, a Public Health Commissioner and a Statistical Officer were appointed to the Government of India. In 1896, with the abolition of the presidential system, all three presidential medical departments were amalgamated to form the Indian Medical Services. After the development of Indian Medical Services, medical duties for the royal Indian Army were performed by the Army Medical Department. Medical departments were under the control of the Central government until 1919. The Montgomery-Chelmsford constitutional reforms of 1919 led to the transfer of public health, sanitation to the provinces. This was the first step in the decentralization of health administration in India. The Government of India Act Of 1935 gave further autonomy to provincial governments.”<sup>8</sup>

Imperial Gazetteer also gives us information that, “Provincial medical departments were under the control of the local governments of their respective provinces. Principal advisors to the government were the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals, Sanitary Commissioner for the province, and the Director of Public health”<sup>9</sup>

Mostly military surgeons of European origin who were selected in England were the officers of the Indian Medical Services. In 1788, Lord Cornwallis, Governor General of India, issued orders that medical officers were not permitted to join civil services until serving 2 years in the army and the situation changed little during the rest of the British rule.

With the opening of Calcutta Medical College in the year 1835, the Indian medical service was opened to the natives of India trained in Calcutta who were selected to serve in subordinate military medical services or as Assistant Civil Surgeons to serve in sub-divisional civil hospitals. From 1890 to 1900, ten Indians entered the medical services. Later, State medical faculties were established at major provincial headquarters to train technicians who served as Sub-Assistant Civil Surgeons in rural hospitals and dispensaries.<sup>10</sup>

The Madras General Hospital was the first hospital in India in 1679. In 1796 the Presidency General Hospital, Calcutta was formed. About four hospitals were formed in Madras between 1800-1820. To satisfy the increasing requirement for health professionals, Calcutta Medical college was established in 1835, which was the first institute of western medicine in Asia. Medical college and hospital, Calcutta

was formed in 1852. Afterwards a network of hospitals was set up throughout India. In 1854, the Government of India agreed to supply medicines and instruments to the growing network of minor hospitals and dispensaries. Government Store Depots were established in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Rangoon. The All India Institute of Hygiene and Public health was established in Calcutta in 1930.<sup>11</sup>

So, from the above discussion it can be concluded that the British Imperial government developed a strengthened and structured medical system in colonial India that replaced the indigenous Indian or Ayurvedic and Unani or Arabic medicine systems. Almost all the diseases widespread in India like small pox, leprosy, and malaria were controlled by western medicine. But the British administrators in India in its early days did not interfere in the internal matters of the Indian people and whatever best it did in matters of medical health was fulfilling the need of its army, civil servants and European communities who were allowed for the medical facilities. Majority of the Indians did not have access to the new methods of treatment, hospitalization and western medicine. Hospitals provided the needs of the Presidencies and the health condition of countryside was totally neglected. Municipalities were suffering from funds to support any large-scale public health programme. Cholera, plague and other vector borne diseases have been regularly being a problem in the villages. It cannot be denied that availability of the first moving railway transport system enabled the successful functioning of the hospitals and mobility of the lifesaving drugs. But the funds were insufficient comparable to the dimension of the problem. As a result, epidemic often struck and took toll of millions of lives. Nevertheless, the British pursued its established policy of Whiteman's superiority and hegemony by destroying whatever indigenous system in Indian medical system prevailed. This policy was also implemented in the areas of the indirect rule. The Western Medical system also developed in the Princely states which were indirectly ruled by the colonial power.

### **Development of Medical System in Cooch Behar Princely State:**

The study of development of medical system in Princely State of Cooch Behar demands a brief political history of this native state. Cooch Behar, a former Princely state is situated in the far eastern part of northern West Bengal surrounded by Bangladesh, Assam and the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. The political status of the district

has kept on changing, from a Koch Kingdom to a Princely state, then to a revenue paying state to the British, and finally it became a district of West Bengal by its merger with India in 1949.<sup>12</sup> The political metamorphosis of conquest, superimposition, and assimilation ultimately led to the formation of Koch kingdom or the Cooch Behar state in the first decade of the 16th century.

From the very beginning of its birth, Cooch Behar State had to experience frequent attacks at different period of time and by several conquerors such as Muslim rulers of Bengal, the Mughals and sometimes by the rulers of Bhutan. Being threatened by frequent Bhutanese attacks during the period of 1771-72, the officials of the state sought the military help from the East India Company.<sup>13</sup> The appeal was granted by East India Company on condition that the State will pay the half of the share of its revenue to the Company. The East India Company had accepted it as a golden opportunity to expand their territorial boundary as well as authority in the Cooch Behar State. Accordingly, the Anglo-Koch Behar treaty was signed in 1773 and the Cooch Behar State became a feudatory state of the East India Company.<sup>14</sup> From the year 1773 onwards the colonial cultural, economic penetration started to sow its seeds in Cooch Behar State.

The two principal communities in the state were the Hindus and the Muslims. As the Koch/ Rajbansi people were by and far the largest group in the State their manners and customs demands for special mention. Besides the Koch/Rajbansi people, the Bengalee, the Marwaris, the Biharis were also the inhabitants of the Cooch Behar State. The Koch/Rajbansis are a Hinduised tribe.<sup>15</sup> The simple Rajbansi villagers had a common belief that illness and diseases are often the work of unfriendly spirits. Cholera, small-pox, measles are particularly the work of the unseen sprits and can be restricted only by propitiating them. In spite of this belief some herbal remedies are used by the villagers to control or cure some diseases. A few of them are crushed unboiled potato, turmeric, sanctified water, charmed oil etc.<sup>16</sup>

The western system of medicine was unknown in Cooch Behar state before the year of 1819. The Rajas of Cooch Behar who also belonged to the Koch/Rajbansi community had their Kavirajas or Ayurvedic physicians from early times. But this form of treatment was only restricted to the royal family and to the upper classes. It did not infiltrate the masses who by and large had faith in Ojhas or village

quacks.<sup>17</sup>

With the growth and expansion of western medical system in colonial India, native states, like Cooch Behar was not lagging behind from the same development. As the members of the Cooch Behar royal family were trained in English education and adopted the basic tenets of western culture, it is quite natural that they will prefer the western system of medical facilities. Soon the authority appreciated the need of western healing system. Finally during the reign of Maharaja Haraendra Narayan, in June 1814 the Commissioner, Mac Leod applied to the British Government to send a qualified medical man to the State. Due to scarcity of such men the Government was unable to send one. In November 1819 an Indian doctor was sent to Cooch Behar on a salary of Rs.40 per month. There is no record about his qualification or training.<sup>18</sup>

H.N. Chaudhury in his book depicts that, "In 1841, the then Maharaja Sibendra Narayan applied to the British Government for a qualified medical man to attend on himself and at court and in Feb 1842 Dr. Syama Charan Sarkar, a Graduate of the Calcutta Medical College was appointed as Medical officer attached to Maharaja's Court. In 1846, the Maharaja asked for a European Medical Officer to accompany him to Benaras and there remain with him, and Dr. Ralph Moore was appointed on a salary of Rs. 350 to be the medical officer of the Maharaja. Dr. Moore was at Benares with the Maharaja Shivendra Narayan when he died. Babu Syama Charan Sarkar continued to be the resident physician in Cooch Behar up to 1863. Babu Bhagavati Charan Mukherjee was appointed sub-assistant surgeon and was succeeded by Babu Bireswar Palit in Nov, 1868."<sup>19</sup>

West Bengal District Gazetteer of Koch Bihar describes that, "Although there was a qualified Medical Officer since 1842 there was no attempt to open any hospital or dispensary before Colonel Haughton took over charge of the administration during the minority of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan. In 1865, the first dispensary was opened at Cooch Behar with Babu Hari Charan Sen, Native Doctor, in immediate charge. It was a humble establishment, partly supported by local subscriptions. In 1869-70, the medical establishment consisted of a Sub-Assistant Surgeon, two unqualified doctors and four compounders. The private subscriptions were done away with from this year and the establishment paid from the State revenues. The Sub-

Assistant Surgeon remained in charge of the medical establishment till May 1873 when the post of civil surgeon was created and Dr. Thomas Briscoe was appointed to the post. Henceforth an Assistant Surgeon remained in charge of the dispensary at Cooch Behar.”<sup>20</sup>

We also get the information from the West Bengal District Gazetteer that, “The first dispensary to be opened in the mofussil was on 13th June 1873 when the out-patients’ dispensary was opened at Dinhata. Indoor arrangement was introduced in this dispensary from 1874-75. The dispensary at Mekhligunj was opened on 9th August 1874 and the Mathabanga dispensary on 28th September 1874. Arrangements for indoor patients were made in both of these dispensaries in 1875-76. The establishment at each of the dispensaries was consisted of a Hospital Assistant, one compounder, one cook, one servant and one sweeper. At this time there was no qualified Medical Graduate or Licentiate in charge of the sub-divisional dispensaries or hospitals. On June 1885, an aided dispensary was opened at Haldibari for out-patients only and on 5th July 1898 a dispensary was opened at Fulbari which was then the Head Quarters of Tufangunj sub-division. Indoor arrangement was made at this dispensary from April 1898.”<sup>21</sup>

The following figures give a picture of the hospital Statistics of Cooch Behar State:

**Table -1**

Year	In-patients	Out-patients	Total
1880-81	1289	13236	14525
1890-91	1487	16998	18485
1899-1900	1332	19890	21222

*Source: H.N. Chaudhury, The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, Cooch Behar State Press, Cooch Behar.P.342.*

The network of the dispensaries and hospitals were set up at the State Head Quarters and at the sub-divisional headquarters and mostly the people of the towns and those living close by visited the dispensaries. The village people remained indifferent to the scientific treatment and still had reliance in Ojhas and village quacks.<sup>22</sup> when there was a serious cholera epidemic in 1861 only few of cases came to the hospitals. The major diseases of the people attending the dispensaries and hospitals were fever, spleen, rheumatic affections,



skin diseases, and goiter.<sup>23</sup>

H.N. Chaudhury also informs us that, “Prior to 1865-66 the “vaccination” system was the only preventive against small-pox. But as the process was harmful there had been hardly any prevention work done against small pox. Modern vaccination was started in the Royal family and by 1868-69 about 81 vaccinations had been executed. The then Commissioner of Cooch Behar State Col. Haughton protected the services of some vaccinators from the Govt. of Bengal during 1869-71, but there was serious opposition from the people and much headway could not be made. Later some local people were trained as vaccinators and the State set up an organization of its own and vaccination was prohibited. In the beginning the vaccinations were done by salaried staff of the State and Deputy Superintendent of vaccination was appointed in 1869-70. In 1883-84, when the period of the administration of the Commissioner came to an end with the Maharaja attaining majority, the paid vaccinators’ organization was disbanded and only an Inspector was retained. The ex-vaccinators were licensed to practice and they were supplied with report forms, lancets and lymph from the State. These private vaccinators were allowed to charge a fee of two annas per case. They also received a bonus of Rs. 3 per 100 successful cases from which annas eight was deducted and paid to the inspector.”<sup>24</sup>

The figures given below will give an idea of the progress of vaccination in the State from 1873:

Table -2	
Year	Number of persons vaccinated
1873-74	4449
1874-75	7065
1875-76	7825
1880-81	17,447
1885-86	28127
1890-91	13755
1895-96	20709
1899-00	16895

*Source: H.N. Chaudhury The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, Cooch Behar State Press, Cooch Behar.1903,p.344.*

On the other hand, Cooch Behar State adopted all the amenities of western medical system. Even the Rain-fall register was opened at the Sudder Dispensary on the Sep, 1871. The rain-fall is registered in all the dispensaries in the State as they have got rain-gauges. The climatological observations were for the first time recorded at the Sudder Dispensary on the 1st April, 1874. There is no other station for these observations in the State.<sup>25</sup>

The medical issues of women e.g the pregnancy, maternity, child mortality were properly addressed by the State. Even the mid-wife system was prevalent in Cooch Behar State. Mid wives were obtained from Calcutta by Her Highness Sunity Devi and was taken into the medical Department on a salary of Rs.100 per mensem in 1889-90. Since that time a mid-wife has always been a paid staff.<sup>26</sup>

Even post-mortem examination was also done in the State. Prior to the year 1895-96 post mortem examinations on the corpses were held in the sub-divisions by the Hospital Assistants. But this power was withdrawn from the Native Doctors with one exception in 1895-96, and most of the examinations have now to be done at the Sudder by the Civil Surgeon, and, in his absence by the Assistant Surgeon in charge.<sup>27</sup>

The medical set up of the Cooch Behar State had been greatly improved by the year 1937-38 as there was a Medical Department. There was a foreign trained qualified Civil Surgeon in charge of the Department. An Assistant Surgeon as Medical Officer was in charge of the Cooch Behar Sadar Hospital. The clinical laboratory and anti-rabies department was under the charge of a Sub-Assistant Surgeon, while there was another Sub-Assistant Surgeon for the outdoor department. The hospital wards were visited by Civil Surgeon daily and the difficult cases were treated by them. The Sub-divisional hospitals remained under the charge of a sub-Assistant Surgeons. Four dispensaries had been opened at Bamanhat, Sitalkuchi, Sitai and Nishiganj, each under the charge of a Sub-Assistant Surgeon. During the year the scheme of having an X'ray equipment at the Sadar hospital was taken up for execution.<sup>28</sup>

Both major and minor clinical operations were being performed in the Sadar hospital and minor surgical operations were being performed in the sub-divisional hospitals. The surgical operations performed in

1937-38 numbered 1090 against 1004 in the previous year. The people appear to have got rid of their apathy for the allopathic treatment and the hospital statistics show attendance:

**Table -3**

Year	No. of out-patients	No. of in-patients	% of death of in-patients
1936-37	92434	2450	5.30
1937-38	89142	2627	5.59
1938-39	1,17,492	2827	2.86

*Source: Durgadas Majumdar, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar, Calcutta. 185.*

As Malaria continued to be the principal illness, a spleen index survey was regularly conducted. Free quinine tablets were distributed from the hospitals and dispensaries as a self-protective against malarial fever and free dispensaries were started with centers at Rajarhat, Dodearhat, Dewanhat, Tapurhat, Sutkabarihat, Pundibarihat and Baneswar. An anti-malaria department was started from 1937 in charge of a Sub-assistant Surgeon. Still pools of stagnant water were cleaned by sprayed with parricides and jungles and woods were cut. The work was, however, restricted only to Cooch Behar town.<sup>29</sup>

The Annual State Administrative Report of 1938-39 enriches us with the knowledge that, "A vaccination department was there at State cost in charge of a Sub-assistant surgeon with 4 inspectors and 25 paid vaccinators. The number of persons vaccinated in 1937-38 was 47,176 and in 1938-39 the number was 51881. The Cooch Behar State had introduced a system of collection of vital figures. The collecting Panchayats and Chaukidars appointed under the Cooch Behar Village Chaukidari Act were by executive order made responsible for the supply of vital information. The sub-divisional Officers were the Sub-divisional Registrars and the Civil Surgeon was the Chief Registrar of Births and Deaths. The population of Cooch Behar remained almost static for some years upto 1941. This is corroborated by the vital statistics of the years 1936-1939.<sup>30</sup>

The birth rates and the death rates were very close and there was no appreciable imagination during this time. This is corroborated by the vital statistics of the years 1936 to 1939 as follows:

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**Table-4**

Year	Births	Deaths	Birth rate per Thousand	Death rate per Thousand
1936-37	11,978	11,754	20.02	19.04
1937-38	11,796	11,862	19.27	20.08
1938-39	13,584	11,299	22.98	19.81

*Source: Durgadas Majumdar, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar, Calcutta. 186.*

The above-mentioned chart shows that both the birth rates and the death rates were very close and there was no appreciable immigration during this time. The large increase of the population of the district after 1951 is reflected in the above figures which show that though there was an increase in the birth rate per thousand over the figures of 1936-39, the death rate greatly fell from the corresponding figures of 1936-1939.

The Annual State Administrative Report of 1900-1901 gives us information that, "Deaths due to cholera and small pox were few. The preventive and curative aspect of the medical administration of the district after merger with West Bengal has shown excellent results in the suppression of these two diseases. Malarial fever also has been controlled. The figures also show that fever which accounted for the largest number of persons attending the hospitals and dispensaries during the period 1875-1900 was still the chief ailment from which most people suffered and of which they died. Goiter is an old disease of Cooch Behar and was recorded in the hospitals between 1877 and 1900. Whooping cough and epidemic dropsy appear to be diseases which have started in Cooch Behar in recent years"<sup>31</sup>

The following table shows the annual expenditure of the Cooch Behar Sudder Dispensary for all the purpose.

**Table-5**

Annual Expenditure in Cooch Behar Sadar Dispensary			
Year	Total	Expenditure	
	Rs.	A.	P.
1878-79	6394	8	2
1879-80	5606	12	3
1880-81	5506	12	6

1881-82	6531	8	11
1882-83	6338	12	8
1883-84	7067	7	0
1884-85	6142	11	6
1885-86	7571	11	1
1886-87	7487	14	1
1887-88	7909	15	4
1888-89	7860	8	8
1889-90	7659	8	9
1890-91	7834	8	2
1891-92	8128	8	11
1892-93	7741	15	1
1893-94	5920	10	4
1894-95	4503	5	8
1895-96	4572	4	8
1896-97	5421	7	2
1897-98	5708	5	3
1898-99	5424	4	0
1899-1900	5530	14	11

*Source: Annual Administrative Reports of the Cooch Behar State.*

The above chart displays per year annual expenditure in Cooch Behar Sudder Dispensary. The total amount of expenditure was for the purpose of establishment charges, contingent charges, diet, and clothing and bedding, cost of medicine issued to patients and sold, disposal of the dead etc. In the year 1880-81 the civil surgeon Dr. Briscoe remarks the great reduction in the cost of treating each patient at the Sudder Dispensary is because of the increased number of patients.<sup>32</sup>

The study shows that though the Sudder Dispensary was opened in the year 1865, but in the year from 1878-1900 the scope of modern healing system was very limited. According to the population ratio the indoor treatment was very low and outdoor treatment was gradually more popular among the people of Cooch Behar. Only 7% of total population enjoyed outdoor and indoor facility in Cooch Behar Sadder which was very low. Besides it 93% of the total population did not get the modern healing system. There were series of problems, like superstition, false tradition and religious obstacles behind the development of modern medical system in the Cooch Behar Sadder.

The common people were great believer of indigenous or traditional healing system. Instead of these, the people of royal family and common people of Cooch Behar Sudder gradually accepted the modern healing system. The disease-wise figures of attendance at the hospitals show that the common diseases of the state are bronchitis, cough, pleurisy and epidemic dropsy. At the time of the merger of the Cooch Behar State with West Bengal the Medical Department was consisted of one Civil Surgeon in charge of the Maharaja Jitendra Narayan Hospital at Cooch Behar with two Assistant Surgeons.

So from the above discussion it can be said that a proper medical system or set up had developed in the Princely State of Cooch Behar. The Cooch Behar rulers made great efforts to introduce western medicine into its own territory. The figure of the big expenditure for medical purpose in the administrative reports suggests that the Maharajas were well informed about the health of their people and they had tried their best to ease out the health problems of their subjects. Even the issues of maternity were taken care of. For the Maharaja and his government, encouraging western medicine had obvious advantages. On the one hand, they were able to show their “modernizing stance” to the British administrators as Cooch Behar State was a Feudatory State. On the other hand, western medicine was a useful weapon to circulate an idea of a “charitable ruler” which undoubtedly contributed to the legitimization of the Maharaja’s rule. Now onwards the people of the State were getting the taste of western medicine. But most of the village people still believe in indigenous system of medical treatment. In any case, Cooch Behar had generally better medical facilities than many other parts of India, and the growing number of population resorted to it. Western medical system and medicines could not wipe out the indigenous system of medicine in Cooch Behar State. The most of the Cooch Behar is accepted it in unaccepted manner. There was a mixed feeling among the people to use the western medicine in Cooch Behar State. Another interesting thing is that due to these medical facilities and hospitals the people of outside states started to come in the Cooch Behar town and settled there by initiating the process of demographic change. The properly arranged western Medical system of Cooch Behar State used to cater the need not only of the Cooch Behar people but also the whole North Eastern part of India.

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## **Reassessing the Devotional Spirituality in South Asia: A Comparative Study Between Chistiya Sufism and Gaudiya Vaishnavism**

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### **Abstract:**

Religion has always been a part of cultures in the Indian sub continent and Bengal had been the cradle of various religious and heterogeneous ideas and beliefs. Religious and mystic ideas undoubtedly played a vital role in shaping the life, thought and psyche of the region. The encounter between Islam and Hinduism resulted in the cultural accommodation and acculturation and sometime mutual hatred. The emergence of Islam in Bengal led to the ultimate Islamization of the delta. Some Scholars are of the opinion that the Bhakti movement grew in response to the Islamization in India, and sometime it is also argued that the Hindu Bhakti movement is an offshoot of Islamic mystical movements. The relationship between Islamic mystical movement and Hindu Bhakti movement is not only complex but also interesting. The rise of Gaudiya Vaishnava movement in Bengal in 16th-17th century is a milestone in the development of non-Islamic mystical tradition which is based on love and surrender of the devotee to the supreme God. The present study is broadly a comparative analysis between Gaudiya Vaishnavism and Chistiya Sufism. This paper also tries to understand that whether there was any impact of Chistiya Sufism on Gaudiya Vaishnavism in medieval Bengal or it was independent in nature or both had influenced each other? This study also tries to explore the mutual relationship between Chistiya Sufism and Gaudiya Vaishnavism and its co-accommodation in the context of religio-historical development of Bengal.

**Key Words:** *Bengal, Philosophy, Chistiya, Vaishnavism, Bhakti, Islamization*

### **Introduction:**

From time immemorial the Indian subcontinent has remained the land of philosophers, sages, religious preachers and liberal religious traditions. The philosophy and the teachings of these saints and the sages have enriched the culture and civilization of the Indian subcontinent. India from long back had been embracing and synthesizing various philosophies, cultures and practices. History bears the testimony of the fact that in this great land of saints and liberal thoughts a number of religious faith and sects originated and developed through the ages.

In this background the present study is an attempt to examine the nature of esoteric and devotional traditions as well as cross cultural and inter religious exchanges which formed the basis of Indian society with special reference to the comparative analysis between Chistiya Sufism and Gaudiya Vaishnavism

The Muslim invasion in India not only had political consequences but also tremendously impacted the socio-cultural and religious lives of the common folks of India. The study of Islamic impact on the culture, tradition and society of Indian sub continent is not only complex but also multi faceted. Along with the Muslim invaders not only the Ghazis or the soldiers came, but also traders, artisans, medical practitioners, spiritual leaders, Sufi saints etc. flocked to the Indian subcontinent. These spiritual leaders and Sufis started preaching their philosophies, ideas and theories among the common masses of the subcontinent. At the beginning mutual distrust and hatred prevailed between Hindus and Muslims but later on gradually through mutual interaction and cultural influence the two communities i.e. Hindus and Muslims gradually came closer to each other and the tolerance prevailed which can specially be seen in the socio-religious spheres in the liberal religious traditions. Thus, both Hindus and the Muslims had some way or other influenced each other's culture, tradition and beliefs, religion etc. Sindh was the first geographical expansion of the Muslims in India. "Although the commercial and intellectual intercourse between the Arabs and the Indians had existed long before the Arab conquest of Sindh and a number of Arab colonies has sprung up on the Indian coast"<sup>1</sup>. "While the extension of Turkish political influence was stoutly resisted by the Rajputs, the Muslim saints and mystics peacefully penetrated the country and settled at a number of important places"<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it seems that even before the establishment of Turkish rule in India, fragmented Muslim settlements started taking place in the Indian subcontinent especially in Northern India. "There were Mussalman in the country since the days of Mohammad bin Sabuktigin who continued to be faithful to the law of Islam and constant in prayer and good work"<sup>3</sup>. Two important religious groups who came to India along with the Muslim invaders representing the Islamic orthodoxy and Islamic liberalism were the *Ulemas* and the *Sufis*. The *Ulema* (*Ahl e kalam*) "constituted a very influential section of Muslim society in the middle ages. They were held in high esteem on account of the religious leanings and in many traditions of the prophet they are referred to as his heirs"<sup>4</sup>. The use

of the terms clergy and the clerical group for the ulema many times misled one into thinking that they formed a recognised hereditary class or an ordained priesthood of Christian notion, however this is not valid. "As a matter of fact anybody who had acquired religious knowledge up to a General accepted and prescribed standard could become an *Alim* though his prestige and influence over the people depended on personal piety and devotion to the cause of learning" <sup>5</sup>. The Sufi standing on the other side of the orthodox elements in Islam, preached liberal and humanistic philosophies and teachings. The Sufis emphasised to achieve the divine unity by certain practices and through ecstasy. The Sufis used to remain engrossed in meditation in their journey towards god. "Some of them were overpowered by ecstasy and frenzy, but sobriety was generally considered essential to Sufism"<sup>6</sup>. "The term Sufi originated from the Persian word *suf* meaning coarse wool. The Islamic mystics of Central and West Asia used to wear a long garment (*khirqā*) manufactured by suf which cause constant pinching. Such discomfort kept them awake throughout the night and reminded them about their spiritual duties such as *zīkr* (reciting the name of god) and *fiqr* (remembering God)" <sup>7</sup>. In this way the sufis even before the consolidation of Muhammedan rule in India had settle down in small groups in the Northern part of India and were engaged in preaching and postulating their theories, doctrines and teachings. Since the beginning of Muhammedan rule in India their teachings and activities were gradually taking the shape of a devotional or mystical movement which had far-reaching consequences on the socio-religious and cultural history of the subcontinent. "By the 13th century Sufism had become a movement and it not be an exaggeration to say that it brought Islam to the masses and the masses towards the Islam" <sup>8</sup>. The medieval Indian states and their rulers sometimes under the influence of orthodox elements wanted to follow the principles of the *shariat* (Canon law of Islam) in order to run the state but they were also aware of the fact that the principles of Shariat cannot be imposed upon the larger section of the non-Muslim population of India. A more critical attitude towards the state can be discerned with the growth of popular monotheistic movements and popular Sufism during the later half of the 14th and 15th centuries <sup>9</sup>.

The Bhakti movement which emerged in South India during 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century, gradually reached to the other parts of the subcontinent. Eastern India, Northern India and the western India felt the tremendous impact of Bhakti movement. The idea of bhakti can be found in Vedas

and Upanishads and its origin can be traced back from the time of Vedas and Upanishads, Bhagvata puranas but some scholars are critical of this view. Even during 6<sup>th</sup> century BC the idea of bhakti prevailed although the concept of bhakti had been popularised by the Alvars and Nayanars sect of south India in 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century and later on reached to the other parts of the sub continent. These Alvars and Nayanars saints used the Tamil language to propagate their ideologies and composing devotional poetry and songs. Sufism and Bhakti movement both coexisted in medieval India and left lasting impression on Indian society, culture and religion. The impact of the Sufi philosophy and Bhakti philosophy on the society and on the common people was so tremendous that it took the shape of a devotional movement challenging the traditional norms in the society and unnecessary ritualistic complexities inherent both in Islam and Hinduism. During the course of its coexistence both the movements (*Sufi and Bhakti*) had influenced each other which can be inferred from the fact that both had some common characteristics and practices. "After the rise and growth of Buddhism in the country between the 6th century BC and the 2nd century AD, the medieval Bhakti movement was undoubtedly the most widespread far ranging and multifaceted movement that appeared in India" <sup>10</sup>. Many scholars believe that bhakti gained its ground in north India to save the Hindu society from the immediate threat of subversion from Islam and the challenge posed to it by the Islamic doctrines of egalitarianism, brotherhood and simplicity. But there is little evidence to show that during the 13th and 14th centuries the Hindu society was in any eminent danger of subversion due to the appeal of the Islam. "Even in the immediate vicinity of Delhi the imperial capital, the overwhelming majority of the population remained Hindu"<sup>11</sup>. However, it is true that ritualistic complexities and many superstitions, rigid caste system had been engulfing the hindu religion and the down trodden section of the society found it difficult to cope up with the orthodox Hinduism. The common people found a ray of hope in the wake of appearance of bhakti ideology which subsequently turned into a movement. The Bhakti movement stressed on simple devotion, unconditional love and endless faith as a tool for salvation or *moksha* that could be achieved by any one. Complex mantras, hymns, all sorts of ritualism, exclusive ceremonies and all kind of religious obligations were meaningless to the bhakti saints and their followers. The primary goal of human life as per the proponents of bhakti tradition was the union with the Supreme Being by following the path of pure bhakti, love and surrender to the almighty

which is known as *Bhakti Marga*. “The bhakti masters stayed amidst commoners and preached in local languages. So this was one of the reasons behind the immense popularity of this movement among the masses especially with those belonging to lower orders”<sup>12</sup>. The Hindu society which was predominantly caste based was heavily criticised by the bhakti saints. “They held that caste, creed, community or religion of a person did not stand in the way of his or her salvation. So disciples were chosen from the Hindu as well as Muslim communities”<sup>13</sup>. Various historians and scholars have examined and studied the origin and extent of Vaishnava worship in ancient and early medieval Bengal. From the 4th century AD till the last of 13th century Vaishnavism as a brahminical faith was present in Bengal with Buddhism, Jainism and Shiva-Shakti worship. Vaishnavism was a creed which tended towards heterogeneity. The Chaitanya movement which is popularly known as Gaudiya Vaishnavism emerged in rift in the contemporary brahminical society. The Chaitanya movement was placed somewhere between scriptural conservatism and humanistic liberalism. Although Chaitanya and his followers had no hatred against the Muslims but unfortunately many writers still propagate the wrong notion that chaitanya’s bhakti movement grew in response to the Mohammadan rule and Islam but however this is not true.

Shri Gaurang or Shri Chaitanya was born in Navadeepa in 1486 and passed away in a mysterious circumstance in Puri in 1533. “Historians of the Chaitanya movement have derived their information chiefly from the biographical accounts of Murari Gupta, kavi Karna pura, Vrindavan Das and Krishna Das kaviraj”<sup>14</sup>. Chaitanya’s in his entire life experimented with devotion and preached love. He embraced devotion with an uncompromising purpose which made him strong enough to face and overcome obstacles. He was an unending source of guidance and inspiration to his disciples. Gaurapadarangini’s songs portray Chaitanya as the prime Central figure who has given a definite shape to Vaishnavism in Bengal as well as eastern India. The six Goswami’s belonging to Vrindavana had composed the doctrinal theology and the philosophy of the Chaitanya cult which is also known as the Gaudiya Vaishnav cult. These six Goswami who provided the philosophical basis for Gaudiya Vaishnavism were Sanatan, Rupa, Jiva, Raghunath Dasa, Raghunatha Bhatta and Gopala Bhatta. “The Gaudiya Vaishnav order is said to be affiliated to the order founded by the great Vaishnava Saint Madhavacharya. The Madhava affiliation of the Chaitanya order first propounded by

Valadeva Vidyabhushan in the 18th century is however a debatable point”<sup>15</sup>. Vaishnava bhakti have been explained in the precepts of the Narada and Sandilya, the Bhakti Ratnavali anthology of Vishnupuri Rupa Goswami’s Bhaktirasamrtasindhu and Jiva Goswami Bhakti Martanda which follows the explanation of bhakti in the Sandilya’s aphorism <sup>16</sup>. The bhakti philosophy was against that of Karmakandya or ritualism. Bhakti was considered as greater than ritualism, elaborate ceremonies, utterance of mystic words etc. The Gaudiya Vaishnava order has however had a mixed approach towards mixing devotion with ritualism. It seems that Chaitanya proposed the ritualization of good conduct and upholding of morality. “But the question whether he could really affect a compromise between bhakti ecstasy and bhakti rituals will also remain and answered”<sup>17</sup>. Bhakti has generally an anti caste approach and did not discriminate its followers. Even a Chandala or a lower caste untouchable has the right to be a bhakta. It is believed that Chaitanya has taught his followers to treat the physical body of a vaishnava as supernatural body full of divine bliss. The bhakti text also preach non violence and gives extreme importance to it. In bhakti tradition it is believed that plucking a flower with the intention of worshipping God with it, cannot be regarded as violence, thus the devotion and pure love formed the basis of bhakti. The Guru is other significant aspect of the bhakti texts or bhakti tradition. To Guru is like a source of light which can eliminate the darkness from disciple’s life by facilitating the way of union with God. The Chaitanya movement emphasised the path of self surrender to the God or to the Guru. The Gaudiya Vaishnav theology was really the formulation of Sanatan Goswami, Rupa Goswami, their nephew Jiva Goswami and Krishna Das kaviraj<sup>18</sup>. “Krishna as god is conceived of as the supreme being in bhakti tradition. But in Gaudiya Vaishnavism god has a human form because of his Naralila or human behaviour is considered the best of all other divine States”<sup>19</sup>.

While studying the Gaudiya Vaishnava movement propagated by Sri Chaitanya it appears that the movement has striking resemblance with Chistiya Sufism and both might have been influenced by each other. In order to assess the commonalities and many resemblances between these two devotional movements’ i.e Chistiya Sufism and Gaudiya Vaishnavism we should critically examine the basic philosophies and the practices of these two movements. Since there are some similarities between practices of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and Chistiya Sufism, this becomes an interesting theme of study among

the scholars and historians who think that one might have been the product of others. Many historians and scholars have tried to explore the possibilities of mutual influence of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and Chistiya Sufism on each other. Dinesh Chandra Sen a noted scholar observed that "Chaitanya's cult was an off shoot of Vaishnav cult, received direct mystical impacts from Sufism"<sup>20</sup>. Sukumar Sen another scholar too admits the influence of sufism on chaitanya's cult<sup>21</sup>. Vaishnavas generally believe in monotheism and considered Vishnu, the supreme God, but Chaitanya did not agree with the traditional Vaishnavas and regarded Krishna as the supreme God. Chaitanya strongly believed in the notion of unity of being which has similarity with the Sufi philosophy of *Wahdat- al- wajud* (nothing exists but God), given by Ibn Al Arabi which says that both God and its creation is same<sup>22</sup>. But, those scholars who do not subscribe the view that Sufism had direct influence on Gaudiya Vaishnavism find the concept of *Wahdat al Wajud* to be inadequate to establish the theory of direct influence of Sufism on Gaudiya Vaishnavism. The Upanishadic philosophy also says that god and its creation is same, thus the question of Sufi influence on Gaudiya Vaishnavism loses its ground.

Dr. Enamul Haque, an eminent historian found many similarities and resemblance between the sufis and Chaitanya Dev. Chaitanya Dev at different times went into the state of ecstasy, similarly the Sufis also reached such a condition which is known as *hawal*. Recitation of the name of Krishna was essential in Chaitanya Dev's life, similarly the sufi's were also remains engrossed in *dhikr or zikr* which is the repetition of the name of god or the remembrance of God<sup>23</sup>. *Kirtana* is an important part of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and Chaitanya Dev is often credited to have generated the idea of kirtana by using song and music. Even among the Chistiya silsila similar practice like kirtana was prevalent which was known as *Sama* (Musical gatherings). It is believed that Sama contributed immensely to the emergence of Kirtana<sup>24</sup> but regarding this there are endless controversies among the scholars. On the other hand scholars like M.R.Tarafdar, Ramakanta Chakraborty etc. believe that there is no concrete evidence in support of Dr. Enamul Haq's claim. This is true that both the tradition had given enormous importance to the musical gathering and the state of ecstasy but this can't be firmly said that the concept of kirtana had been derived from the Sufi concept of Sama. Probably the roots of Kirtana can be found among the devotional songs composed by the Alvars and Nayanars saints of South India.



Some scholars are also very much interested to establish a connection between Ishq theory and Radha theory of Sufism and Vaishnavism. Surprisingly there is similarity between the Ishq theory of the Sufis and Radha theory of the Vaishnavas. But by these mere resemblances one should not deduce the idea that Gaudiya Vaishnavism was influenced by Chistiya Sufism. The Radha theory of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas is nothing but the Indianised version of Ishq theory of Sufis<sup>25</sup>. However this proposition is also not unanimously accepted and not beyond the scrutiny. Among the Gaudiya sect the final conclusion of love is attainment of divine or sweetest love. The day when this sweetest love arises in heart gradually it increases and never decreases, at that time there is no difference between the devotee and the devoted and no sense of male and female prevails and thus the devotee becomes one and united with the god, the ocean of love. According to the Sufis one day will come when devotee and the devoted becomes one and the sense of male and female disappears even the idea of physical and metaphysical body eliminates and they become one single entity. This is called *Anal haq* or I am the truth or god<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, it is clearly evident that both the traditions had some similarities and resemblances in its theory and practice which makes this issue a complex one to understand that who was influenced by whom or the practices of both traditions developed in isolation?

Some time scholars argue that Vaishnava Padavalis surprisingly has some similarities with the styles of Ghazals and there is also some conceptual similarities between Persian allegories such as *Ishq* (love), *shama* (candle), *parvana* (moth), *karamat* (miracle) and *Prem*, *Krishna*, *Radha*, *Ishriya*, but this is also not beyond criticism and reassessment. “Persian terms of *Hijr* (Separation) and *wisal* (Union) were termed as *Viraha* and *Milan* in Vaishnavite bengali literature”<sup>27</sup>. “Krishna’s *Bashi* or flute was used in the same fashion and meaning as we find in the *nai* (flute) of Maulana Rumi. These instances underline the tremendous impact of Sufi tradition on the vaishnavite practices that continued in Bengal among the followers of Chaitanya in the 17th and 18th centuries”<sup>28</sup>. But again, it must be mentioned that Krishna the incarnation of lord Vishnu appeared long before the appearance of Rumi. Then how Krishna’s flute was used in the same fashion of Rumi? Rather it may be mentioned that Rumi was influenced by Krishna’s flute. The influence of Vaishnavas fell on a section of the Muslims who turn into vagabond and so-called mystics. In the name of *M’arifati* fakirs these people tried to bring down the Muslims to



the stage of vaishnavas. This group of fakirs were divided into many sections and subsections like Aul, Baul, Kartabhaja, Sahajia etc. Which were nothing but the Muslim edition of Hindu Vaishnavs. These people are said to have been influenced by sufis<sup>29</sup>. But these resemblances and claims are very tough to establish in the light of concrete evidences and genuine historical references.

The scholars have subscribed the view that Sufism in many ways has left an indelible impact on Gaudiya vaishnavism. In this regard it may be noted that a revitalisation movement developed within the Hinduism during the 15th and 16th century. The movement tried to infuse the loving and liberating devotion of Islamic Sufism into the vaishnavite Hinduism<sup>30</sup>. Many scholars are of the opinion that Chaitanya Dev's life and philosophy was influenced by Islamic socialism and liberating principles of Sufism but the evidence of Chaitanya Dev's close and long association with any Sufi mystic or any alim is very scanty. He propounded the merits of Islamic socialism among the common people in such a way that even some Muslims accepted him as 'Yavana Haridasa'<sup>31</sup>. But these claims are lop sided and inadequate to establish the Sufi influence over Gaudiya Vaishnavism. The Islamic Sufi brought a revolutionary change in society behind which equality and fraternity of Islam was the key factors. Imitating the Sufi's Chaitanya Dev also completely used the Islamic idea of equality and brotherhood<sup>32</sup>. Many times when the Sufis used to be faint during meditation, at that time the Murshids or his disciples used to utter the name of Allah to the ear of their Guru or Pir in order to bring them back in consciousness. Similar practices can be seen in the life of Chaitanya Dev. The state in Sufi parlance is known as *fanafillah*, which is Chaitanya Dev's attainment of *samadhi*<sup>33</sup>. The Alvars and Nayanars who claimed to be the early proponents of bhakti also raised their voice against social disparity and inequality in the society which had influenced the bhakti saints in the following centuries. Then how one can advocate that Chaitanya's idea of social equality was influenced by Islamic and sufi philosophies?

Jaynanda, writer of Chaitanya Mangal tells us many Brahmin priests used to read the legendary and immortal Persian Sufi Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi's Masnavi which shows the mutual respect for each other. Some sufi saints had deep respect for the bhakti saints and showed their respect for the Yogis. From various stories of Krishnadasa kaviraj's *Chaitanyacharitamrita* it appears that Chaitanya Dev's

ascetic life was top to bottom influenced by the sufies<sup>34</sup>. But these statements require more evidences to substantiate its claim. The Gaudiya vaishnavite stresses upon poverty and celibacy, ritual poetry dance, kirtana etc. which in general term is called *sadhana bhakti* as per the dictums of his Guru. “The Chisti saints laid emphasis on a life of simplicity poverty humility and selfless devotion to God. Many of them were so obsessed with the notion of poverty that they lived in mud covered thatched houses, wore patched clothes and encouraged prolonged fastings”<sup>35</sup>. Scholars generally study Sufism and Vaishnava bhakti separately, but a study based on collaborative outlook can lead us to the proper understanding of these two movements. Scholars like Raziuddin Aquil have studied the striking similarities between Bhaktism and Sufism and came up with the proposition that – “The similarities between sufism and the mysticism of the Bauls and strands of Vaishnavites in Bengal are clearly discernible in the literatures of these devotional movements”<sup>36</sup>.

The preceptor or Guru is one of the most important aspect in Bhakti tradition. Bhakti Ratnavali advises a bhakta to worship the gurus or the saints. Similarly, in Sufi tradition the Guru or the Sheikh or the Pir holds an important position in the mystical journey towards the God. In the spiritual journey some important mystic practices like recollection of God (*Dhikr*) and contemplation of God (*Muraqaba*), the easiest path for higher spiritual attainments arises from the bond or heart connection (*Rabita*) between Pir and Murid. It is the preceptor that enables the seeker to be benefitted from the concentrated energy and focus of the Shyakh’s spiritual attention (*Tawajjuh*). Many scholars seriously believe that the success of higher spiritual attainments is possible through the cultivation of this relationship with the spiritual guide only, solitary recollection of the name of god without this bond between Pir and his Murid, the attainment of this goal will be very tough if not impossible to reach<sup>37</sup>. Chaitanya’s emphasis on the love for Krishna parallels the Sufi emphasis on love or *Ishq* for absolute. Both Sufis and Chaitanya considered religious rites as secondary<sup>38</sup>. Chaitanya broadly accepting the basic tenets of Hinduism just as the Sufis did in the case of Islam. Thus, Chaitanya laid the foundation of the Vaishnav school solely on love and bhakti (devotion) for Krishna. Chaitanya’s cult was democratic one tending towards equality. In fact, Chaitanya opted for a new Vaishnava society based on principles of social equality. The caste system naturally underwent significant changes<sup>39</sup> and Chaitanya provided for a doctrine open to all. There are

some scholars who subscribe to the view that Gaudiya vaishnavism sometimes apparently was influenced by the Sufi notion of equality and fraternity. They openly raise their voice against the menace of castes and Brahminical superiority and tried to provide a platform based on equality to its followers in particulars and among the Hindus in general<sup>40</sup>. However, it is already mentioned that how the bhakti tradition traces its roots from the philosophy and practices of Alvars and Nayanars of South India. It is interesting to note that we found the some scattered “imprints of Sufi teachings and traditions on the biographical and hagiographical literature produced by the Vaishnava writers in Bengal. The Mahajana Charita a form of biographical literature produced by the Vaishnavites followed the model of Tazkiras of Persian literature”<sup>41</sup>. Veteran scholar Enamul Haque thought that the Muslim Sufis had great influence over the emotional philosophy of Vaishnavim but scholars like Ramakanta Chakraborty has discarded this view. Some of the important devotional exercises of the Sufi like *Hal* (ecstatic condition), *Zikr* (recitation of the name of god), and *Sama* ( devotional music of the Sufi) influenced the Dasha, Krishnanama and kirtana of the Gaudiya vaishnavism<sup>42</sup>. On the other side scholars who don't believe Sufi influence over Gaudiya Vaishnavism argue that Chaitanya Dev never came in contact with any leading sufis or spent a considerable time of his life with any Sufi. Therefore, chances are very less to have a Sufi influence over him. But scholars like M.R. Tarfdar himself says “ ..... The life of Bengal was saturated with Sufistic influences” but it is however not correct to say that the devotional traditions of Bengal traces its origin from the Sufis. Jayananda relates how the Brahmins of Nadia recited Masnavi and Mukundaram describes a Muslim settlement, about a khanqah, dargah and the daily routine of the Muslim settling there. So it may not be possibly incorrect to suggest that the Dasha ,Krishnanama, kirtana and Prem of the Gaudiya vaishnavas were the result of Sufi influence over them<sup>43</sup>. But still one should not deduce that Gaudiya tradition was the outcome of Sufi influence as, Gaudiya Vaishnavism traces its root long before the Muslim incursions and in the Upanishads. This is also true and undeniable that many Muslim poets and writers were too influenced by Vaishnavism and the concept of Radha-Krishna. Chaitanya had to face the opposition and resistance from the upper section of the society because of his liberating and emancipating approaches. Some pretexts on which the Chaitanya cult was challenged were, first the Vaishnava “custom of communal song the kirtan not only disturb the peace but lacked scriptural authority. Second, Chaitanya had identified

himself with God (Gaurhari). Third, he had usurped from Brahmins their monopoly over the use of mantras or sacred oral formulae. And finally his cult was charged with having attracted followers from the lower classes, a point hitting at the social basis of the leading Hindu sect in this period"<sup>44</sup>. The authority of scriptural Islam had been challenged by the Sufis especially by the Chistiya Sufis. Similar trend can be seen among the Gaudiya Vaishnavites who had challenged the Brahmanical orthodoxy and their scriptural authority. The Sufi Shaikh or Pir never discriminated his disciples on the basis of their caste, creed or social status. Similarly, the Gaudiya Vaishnavism was open to all for which the lower caste people of the society whole heartedly accepted the teachings of the Vaishnava gurus. Chaitanya Dev himself regarded as god which led to the misunderstanding of some that this was the imitation of the Sufi philosophy of Anal Haq or I am the truth. The Sufi concept *Wadath al wujud* or unity of being, provides the doctrinal basis for its developments which some time reflects same philosophy of other faiths or traditions. "The cultural ethos was at this level conducive to greater interaction between different sects and mutual appreciation of apparently divergent thoughts and practices for always believe to be one in the ultimate analysis. This idea was also expressed in the Nirguna bhakti assertion of the fundamental unity of Hindu and Turks"<sup>45</sup>. There are many examples and practices which clearly suggest the bhakti influence over the Sufism and in many cases Gaudiya Vaishnavism sharply stands apart from the teachings and philosophies of Chistiya Sufism reflecting its uniqueness. There are references that not only Hindu Vaishnavite poets and writers were influenced by *Tazkiraz or Masnavi* but also many Muslim poets like Musa, Syed Murtaza, Abdul Bari, Nasir Mahmud, Qamran Ali etc. wrote *pads* singing hymns in praise of Radha Krishna<sup>46</sup>. One of the "major difference lies in the fact that a Sufi believes in one God and repeats the word '*Allah hu*' (He is the only God) whereas the followers of Chaitanya sing the hymn '*Hare Rama Hare Krishna*' focusing on the duality of God"<sup>47</sup>. The Nathpanthi yogis by their Asanas, Pranayama and certain spiritual practices had influenced the Sufis. "Interest in Yoga in Islamic circles, particularly among the Sufis is shown by translation of Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutra* into Arabic by Al-Biruni, and *Amrita-Kunda*, a work based on hath yoga, into Arabic by Qazi Rukunud Din Samarqandi and then into Persian by Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus Shattari in 1562-63 AD"<sup>48</sup>. R.A. Nicholson in his *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* opined that "fundamental concept of unity between God and the created beings, the concept of divine grace

as a means of liberation and of the relationship of love between them was the outcome of Christian and even more of Vedantist influence". Thus, the principle Sufi concept of Wahdath al Wajud hardly left any influence over the Gaudiya Vaishnavism in Bengal. In the matter of idol worship Gaudiya Vaishnavism also stands apart from Chistiya Sufism and advocated Saguna bhakti certainly unlike the Sufis. The fundamental aspect of Chistiya Sufism i.e *Khanqah, Langar etc.* were missing in Gaudiya Vaishnavism which in course of time developed its own uniqueness, features and practices which was sharply different from the teachings of Chistiya Sufism.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion it may be said that Islamic devotional movement or Sufism popularly known as *Tawassuf* had many similarities and resemblances with the Gaudiya Vaishnavism in Medieval Bengal. It is also true that there was impact of the Yogi's on the Sufi practices and Sufis used to visit the places of the Yogis. But Some scholars are often more interested to see how Chistiya Sufism influenced the Gaudiya Vaishnavism than to see the influence of the later to the former. This issue is not simple one and from mere resemblances one should not deduce any conclusion about the direct influence of the earlier to the later. While making a comparative analysis between Chistiya Sufism and Gaudiya Vaishnavism one should not be influenced with any pre-conceived notion that in some ways, one was a by-product of the other. Both the movements had some uniqueness and some similarities which show mutual respect for each other which reflects the spirit of peaceful co-existence and cultural pluralism of the Indian sub continent. Thus, this theme provides distinct platform of discussion and deliberation among the scholars and requires fresh interpretation and approach to understand the extent of mutual influence of mystical and devotional movements on each other in South Asia and beyond.

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## **Jatileswar Temple: A Unique Temple of North Bengal**

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### **Abstract:**

As a component of history, architecture takes on a specific significance. We may learn a lot about ancient history by studying the history of Architecture. Among all of these architectural styles, Hindu temple architecture is a distinct topic. Hinduism and temple building are intrinsically bonded. In the past, temples were constructed with the approval of a particular community or under royal patronage. When temples were constructed, a certain deity was consecrated as the object of divinity. There is a temple in Jalpaiguri district that will appeal to anyone who appreciates architecture. From the point of view of archaeology, the temple of Jatileswar, in the village of *Purbadahar* is very important. This temple of *Purbadahar* is seven miles away from the eastern periphery of Maynaguri town. There isn't another temple like the Jatileswar temple in the aforementioned area. The architectural design of this temple is one of its unique characteristics. It is still impossible to determine with any degree of certainty when or by whom this temple was constructed. Many people believe that the temple was erected during the Gupta era based on its architectural design.

**Key Words:** *Hindu temple, Architecture, Purbadahar, Jatileswar temple, Maynaguri, Gupta era.*

### **Introduction:**

A temple is a religious structure or building specifically designed and dedicated to the worship and rituals associated with a particular deity or deities. Temples are found in various religious traditions around the world, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism etc. Temples often serve as the central hub of religious activities and spiritual gatherings for followers of a particular faith. They can vary greatly in size, architectural style, and cultural significance, adequately reflecting the diversity of religious beliefs and practices. Some



temples are small and modest, while others are grand and elaborate, showcasing intricate craftsmanship and ornate decorations. Temples not only serve as places of worship but also as cultural and educational centers, preserving religious traditions, scriptures, and teachings. They often play a vital role in community life, hosting festivals, religious ceremonies and social events. Temples can also be important tourist attractions, drawing visitors from around the world who are interested in exploring the religious and architectural heritage of a particular region<sup>1</sup>.

The religious outlook of any country plays a significant role in understanding its history. Places of worship are particularly linked to religious thoughts. There are several representations of this house of worship<sup>2</sup>. Sometimes the place of worship is connected to nature, and at other times it is a temple with a unique design made of bricks, wood, and stone. Temples are never constructed in a methodical way according to a set plan, common to all regions. The temple's architecture is often particularly influenced by variations in the surrounding landscape. Stone temples have been observed in areas where stone is easily accessible, just as brick temples have been constructed in regions where stone is scarce. These temple buildings hold a significant role in architectural history. North Bengal doesn't have a lot of ancient temples. The environment, persistent rain, and the impact of outside incursions are the chief causes for this<sup>3</sup>.

One of the few temples that is still standing and have a history is the Jatileswar temple in Mainaguri, Jalpaiguri District. Due to its architectural design, this temple demands significant scholarly attention in the domain of historical scholarship.

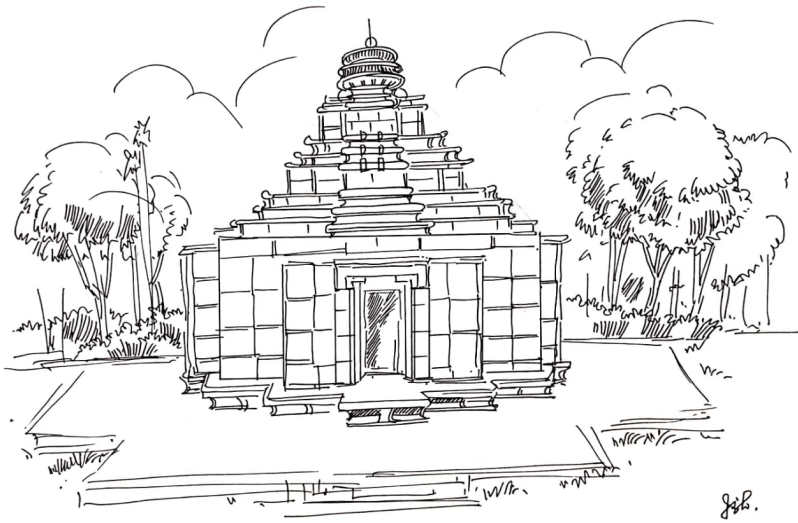
From the point of view of archaeology, the temple of Jatileswar in the village of Purbadahar is very important. This temple of Purbadahar is seven miles away from the eastern periphery of Maynaguri town<sup>4</sup>. Adris Banerji in his article, *Temples of Jalpaiguri* (communicated in September, 1971) Asiatic Society Vol, XIII, 1971, Nos. 1-4, mentions, "The temple of Jatilesvara containing a Svayambhuva lingam is one of the best preserved. But its mastaka has disappeared and has been replaced by modern monstrosity. It lies near the village of Purvadeha in P.S. Maynaguri, at a distance of 14 miles from the district headquarters."<sup>5</sup> The *Nagara* style of Indian temple architecture evident in the temple from, Pabhaga up to Veranda. At present it can only be assumed hypothetically that, if the Jatilesvara

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temple fully belonged to the Nagara type when it was first built, the current structure up to the veranda may be considered to be relatively old and that the *sikhara*, having fallen, has undoubtedly been rebuilt later and therefore doesn't match with the *varandika*. It appears that the temple is at least as old as the Guptas, based on the pabhaga, or plinth part <sup>6</sup>.



*Pic- Jatileswar Temple, Maynaguri, Jalpaiguri*



Pic- *Jatileswar temple in the artist's (Writer's own) imagination*

The name “Jatileswar” would startle even those who are well-versed with the history and culture of the Indian subcontinent because it has never been made widely known. When we discuss Bengal’s history, we frequently romanticize Gaur’s doomed era and the exquisite craftsmanship of terracotta temples. At the time, Kolkata was still a simple rural hamlet. However, there are numerous living histories that, despite relative obscurity, provide a wealth of information. About those earlier times, there are certain papers and stories that are widely circulated. It is still unknown how temples and small fortifications were built in this area, as well as, how widespread popular stories about their building were<sup>7</sup>.

The chapter by Edith Tomory, dealing with Hindu temples, in *Introduction to the History of Fine Arts in India and the West* gives us a general notion about how the architecture or structure of the Hindu temple is split. He wrote – “The regular building of structural temples in brick and dressed stones started in the Gupta Age, although small shrines had been erected much earlier...when fully developed,

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the Hindu temple consisted of a main shrine, called Vimana, which had inside it a small rectangular cella, the Garbhagriha, to house the stature of the symbol of the deity. This Vimana was surrounded by a high tapering tower, the Sikhara, crowned by a Finial. The inner cella was dark and had only a door which led through a small vestibule. The Antarala, to the Mandapa, a pillared assembly hall, in front of which was often a porch called Ardha- Mandapa. The structure was the same for the Vaishnavite and Saivite sects, but in different style details, as well as the names of the parts vary somewhat.<sup>89</sup>

The area around this temple is referred to as “Purbo Dahor” by locals. Regarding the name, there is a popular legend. It is said that by performing *sadhana* here, Mahadeva’s attendant, Nandi gained siddhi. Mahadeva, pleased with his work, granted him the gift that he should perform puja at this temple first before performing puja elsewhere in the area. Since that time, the area has been known by the name “Purba Dahar,”<sup>90</sup>. Although the name “Purba Dahar” is the subject of a well-known Hindu story, the Bengali pronunciation is Purbo (East) and Dahor (swamp)<sup>10</sup>. Thus, it is clear that *Purbo dahor* refers to a swampy location on the Eastern side. The most intriguing query currently is, “Eastern side of what?” Although we are unsure of what it specifically means, we do know that Jatileswar Temple’s eastern side does indeed have a swampy area. The lack of an entrance on the temple’s front face will catch the travelers’ attention as a peculiarity; on the other hand, we have such entrances on the western and southern sides. The doorkeepers, which are made of black stone, are undoubtedly the wrong choice if you are interested in the interior



Pic- From the Pabhaga up to Varanda, represents the Nagara style of Indian temple architecture



The *garbhagriha*, or sanctum floor, is also accessible here by descending seven steps. Eleven inches of the floor are fastened beneath the *linga*. The *linga* usually is submerged during the wet season<sup>12</sup>. On dry days, the sanctuary is readily visible. The sanctuary is 9 by 9 feet. (inside measurement). The images of *dwarapalas* on either side of the porch's entry are the temple's most beautiful features. On the *varandika*, there are niches and sculpted figurines. There are three substantial stone cut blocks, which were likely used to house the statues of auxiliary deities. However, a lot of the relief sculptures have been eroded<sup>13</sup>.



Pic- Dwarapala statue in Jatileshtar Temple

The presence of *Dwarapala* in the Jatileshtar temple is a unique feature. Typically, a *Dwarapala* murti in the likeness of *Dwari*, Jaya Vijay of *Vaikunthaloka* was erected at the entrance to the Vishnu temple. However, the architecture of *Shaiva* and *Vaishnava* temples was the similar at that time. Therefore, it is frequently held that the Jatileshtar temple was intended to be a Vishnu temple but was left unfinished for some reason and no worship was conducted there<sup>14</sup>. Later, when a Shaiva king ruled, Shiva worship was conducted here. However, the temple remained abandoned for a considerable amount of time because Dr. Francis Buchanan Hamilton, who travelled through the hills and forests of this area, wrote extensively about *Jalpesh* temple and *Prithuraja Garh* in his description of Rangpur district. Still, he made no mention of Purvadahar or Jatileshtar temple. The Jatileshtar Temple's architectural remains, which are concealed from the public's view in a forested area, could be a significant factor for

this curious epistemological silence.<sup>15</sup>

The many idols that have been carved on the exterior walls of the temple's three side walls of its sanctum sanctorum are its principal draw<sup>16</sup>. On the same plane, the idols are organized in a row. The deities cut in sedimentary rock are the main draw of this shrine, while not reaching the heights of the sculptures. Numerous idols may have been removed or destroyed over time. These statues currently number around fifty. Different poses are engraved onto the idols. The majority of idols are female. There are also statues of dancing Ganesha, Apsara, and other figures<sup>17</sup>. The carvings of the idols in the Jatileswar temple, however, do not exhibit the rich embellishments and fine art that the Pala period sculptors exhibited. As a result, it is believed that the idols date from a period before the Pala era. The idols that can still be seen on the temple walls appear to demonstrate that. As secular Hinduism's influence over society grew, Buddhism also had a considerable impact<sup>18</sup>. Some of the old components of the temple's four walls can still be seen at the base of the three side walls. This antique wall completely encloses the temple's front. But several portions of the wall have collapsed. The southern and western sides of the temple each have one entrance. Despite there being two entrances people typically use the southern door these days. It is still unknown whether there was an entrance on any other side. *Dwarapala* idols made of stone are on either side of the entrance. There are no other temples with *Dwarapala* idols flanking such gateways in North Bengal.<sup>19</sup>

The main approach to this temple is from the east. Nearly all the walls in this square temple are constructed of enormous square stone blocks, and the sanctum sanctorum only has one entrance. The presiding deity Shiva *Linga* can be viewed after entering the sanctum sanctorum and climbing down a few steps.<sup>20</sup> The superstructure of the existing temple is built upon the square wall of the sanctum sanctorum. The female representations of Ganesha, Buddha, Chandi, Shiva, and Vishnu forces us to consider the exemplary craftsmanship of the artisans, even though the sculptures from this temple do not have the same level of finesse as those from the Pala period. There is little doubt that they had their own ideas about how to influence the public's perception of religion in addition to the royal support.<sup>21</sup> It is a wonderful combination of Hindu, Buddhist, and Vaishnav traditions, as can be inferred from its sculptures, architecture, and artwork. The reconstruction of relief works and the separation of sections in

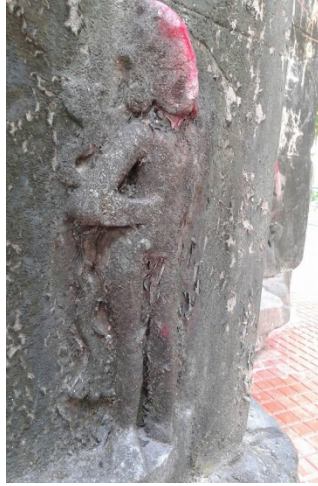
accordance with the gifts and foods offered to the deity speak volumes about both the royal and popular concerns for this temple.<sup>22</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

The question of whether this temple's construction was left unfinished for some specific reason or was destroyed for some natural reason arises since its construction style differs from that of the other temples in the area. The amount of damaged or worn structural components, however, is not enough to imply that the entire temple was destroyed for some cause. From a structural standpoint, the Jatileshtar temple is regarded as part the Gupta era architecture. Though the tale of how a converted Muslim named Kalapahar, General of Sulaiman Karrani, destroyed Hindu gods and images is a well-known incident. The texture of the local stone, which is highly susceptible to erosion, cannot be completely disregarded as a cause behind the gradual decadence of the temples and their decorative elements<sup>23</sup>. There is no doubt that the seismic episodes caused extensive damage to temples, and it's possible that Jatileshtar temple also suffered damage. It is also a fact that Jatileshtar was part of our ancient legacy of acculturation at a time when extreme forces and ideas were once again attacking India. Although it is a well-known Shiva temple today, this building has Vaishnavite and Buddhist roots<sup>24</sup>. Despite being abandoned for centuries and being subject to environmental changes, Jatileshtar still bears the whispers from the past. The personalities and legends from the past have been seized by time, the stones of the temple are silent, yet according to common belief, Jatileshtar awakens every morning.



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*Pic- Playing Drum, Dancing Ganesha, Standing female in  
Jatileswar Temple*

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## **Plague in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Calcutta: Daily Life, Colonial Policies and Public Responses**

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### **Abstract:**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the colonial metropolis of Calcutta was widely ravaged by the Plague menace. This article examines into the condition of daily life in plague stricken Calcutta, the policies of the Calcutta Corporation in dealing with this disease has been critically looked into. Although an effective medical intervention on part of the colonial ruling authorities could have eradicated this threat of plague from the city, but lack of concern towards their subject and very limited resource allocation from the ruling authorities had tilted the picture.

**Key words:** *Disease, British, Urban, Medical, Poor.*

### **Introduction:**

This article delves into the condition of daily life in plague stricken Calcutta, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It also critically examines the policies of the British government in dealing with this disease, their initiatives and inactiveness, and also the role of the Bhadrolok middleclass in extending the health care facilities among the urban poor of the city. By the term “urban poor” I mainly try to mean that group of people who were engaged in waged or salaried labor especially in manual labor occupations and industrial work.

### **Plague:**

Unlike all other diseases, the advent of plague in Calcutta took place in 1898. It was imported from Bombay by ship and not by railways, where it arrived in September, 1896. Wherefrom it arrived in Bombay, whether Hongkong or Afghanistan is a debatable issue, which has not been solved till date. For the colonial city of Calcutta, plague in its intense form swept over the city in the first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Definitely it took a heavy toll on human lives. Towards the end of this decade, its virulence decreased, as we shall see in the article later.<sup>1</sup>

The date of the first arrival of plague in Calcutta, by which

ship the infection came, whether it was conveyed by a sick man or by merchandise, or rats are some questions which have not been answered till date. No primary data has arrived in our hands, whereby we could formulate answers to these questions. Plague was primarily a disease that caused deaths among rats and then was transmitted to human beings through infected fleas, who had come in touch with those rats in any way. Human beings, in anyway were bound to get affected by the danger of rat flea.<sup>2</sup>

When plague first came to Calcutta, it acquired a virulent character and a widespread dimension within a short span of time. The obvious reason behind this was that Calcutta by 20<sup>th</sup> Century had become a overcrowded city, a major portion of which was formed by migrant workers. These workers might have come from the areas where plague had already taken place. So these men acted as agents in spread of the disease within the city. It was either by themselves, or by clothes or by merchandise that the germs of the disease spread. Merchant men were another class who could be traced out as carriers of the germs of plague. Because of their mobility from one place to another, their body could easily catch germs and it was again their body through which plague germs were transmitted among the greater masses. There were thus, numerous agents through which plague virus spread rapidly among the greater city populace. As said earlier, plague had taken a heavy toll of human lives in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Calcutta. Below is a statistics from which we can gather some knowledge regarding the mortality rate.<sup>3</sup>

Year : Mortality rate

1900	: 7373persons
1901	: 7398 persons
1902	: 6925persons
1903	: 7819persons
1904	: 4506persons
1905	: 7011persons
1906	: 2339persons
1907	: 3278persons
1908	: 1495 persons
1909	: 1838 persons <sup>4</sup>

There were usually three kinds of plague prevalent in Calcutta;

Bubonic, Pneumonic and Septicaemic. Daily life in the city was thus constantly being threatened by this plague demon, throughout the decade.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Student community and the plague:**

A sorry picture of panic stricken Calcutta, was reflected in The Hitavadi of March,22, 1901,<sup>6</sup> which urged for the closing of all the schools and colleges on account of plague. It was reported that a servant of the Hindu hostel was removed to the Medical College hospital, on the suspicion that he was suffering from plague, because a women had died of plague in a hut in front of the hostel. The Bengalee, March, 21, 1901,<sup>7</sup> testifies the above mentioned facts, while speaking about the prevalence of plague in the neighborhood of the Hindu hostel. From the columns of The Basumati of April,11, 1901,<sup>8</sup> it is known that three students of the Campbell Medical school had died of plague. It was after this incident that the students of the same institution had applied to the Superintendent that they might be exempted from the liability to attend plague cases in the school hospital.

The above reports points out to the fact, how the fear of plague was alienating the students' community from doing their habitual tasks. This fear which had struck deep roots in the minds of the city dwellers was also responsible for depopulating the students' hostels. A good section of the students from the mufassil towns had become temporary residents of Calcutta. They had migrated to the city for the purpose of studying in various institutions and so they had to reside in hostels. But fear of plague had led many of them to vacate their rooms and migrate back to their own homes. All these reflected the sheer anxiety that had made it's headway among the city populace because of the plague menace. The worries of the students' community reflected only a portion of the plague story, which travelled throughout the city during this time.

The Navayug, April 5, 1902,<sup>9</sup> reported that on 2<sup>nd</sup> April,1902, at 10 a.m. a woman, who used to sell pulses in Simla Bazaar in Calcutta, was found dead in her shop. It was discovered that she had died of plague but no one knew that when she had died. All the pulses in her shop was reported to be carried to the roof of a godown , on the eastern side of the bazaar. It was assumed

that those pulses would be sold afterwards. The paper wondered that none of the municipal employees, whose duty it was to find out plague cases in the town, were found at the place during the day. It reported that these officers shortened their duties by taking the number of plague cases at the burning ghats and the beat constable also took no notice of the woman's death. These newspaper reports reveals before us a clear picture of plague within the city. The negligence of the municipal plague officers in dealing with plague victims is seen. Further the question of the treatment of women suffering from plague also comes to the forefront. The two instances of death that appears from the mentioned news reports, are those of women. One died in a hut and the other, a vegetable seller, died in her shop. Both of them came from the poorer section of the city, of course being the worst victims. The ill ventilated and unhealthy environment of the slums prepared the plague bacillus to thrive well in such an atmosphere. Of course danger prone was the mud walled, earthen floored tiled hut, owing to the facilities it afforded for rat infestation. But equal responsibility lay on the careless habits of the people with regard to the disposal of household refuse. As a result, rat infestation was so universal in the city, that it would be a mistake on our part, if we try to label a particular kind of holdings to be rat infested. All kinds of holdings were liable to be infected.

It can be argued, further, that even a model dwelling constructed in accordance with the contemporary sanitary principles was also seen to be attacked by plague, as was in case of Bombay, because of being infected by rats.<sup>10</sup> This actually made one to realize the truth of Ashburton Thomson's<sup>11</sup> dictum that the only real effective method of preventing plague was to habitually exclude rats from human dwellings. But owing to the negligence of the city corporation, in formulating effective conservancy policies for the native part of the town, exclusion of rats from human dwellings was an absurd premise. As said earlier, the ignorant attitude of the city dwellers regarding waste disposal was another factor for abundance of dead rats in the city.

*From plague report of 1909-1910 it appears*

*Total cases in kutcha houses, 881 ie 68.4% of total cases.*

*Total cases in pucca houses, 407 ie 31.5% of total cases.*

*Total cases in kutcha and pucca houses was 1,288 combined.<sup>12</sup>*

The population living in 68,929 kutcha dwellings, was estimated in the census report at 445,370 and the population in 28,195 pucca houses at 294,559.<sup>13</sup>

Since there were three varieties of plague that occurred in Calcutta, the following statistics shows the percentage of each variety:-

Bubonic 40.8% of all cases.

Septicaemic 57.0% of all cases.

Pneumonic 2.02% of all cases.<sup>14</sup>

In Calcutta, there was relatively heavy incidence of plague amongst old people. The largest proportion of bubonic cases occurred between the ages of 5 and 20 years. It was seen that the Muslim women showed a slightly larger percentage of bubonic cases. Whether Hindu women or Muslim women, the issue of women health care, thus, comes to the forefront. It is seen from the news paper reports that the women were more prone to get affected by the plague virus. It may be assumed that women, being the home maker in the context of Indian society, were constricted within the home front only. Her role as a home maker, demanded her physical labor, ofcourse making her time bound in a family structure. She was expected to perform her duties as a mother, as a wife, as a daughter in law, as a sister in law in a perfect way. In performing all these duties, she herself was neglected. It was of course her health, both physical and mental that had to bear the brunt of this. Women, were always subject of the machinery of patriarchal control and even among the bhadroloks too, this was a tendency.

The inn house premise or “andarmahal” unless vigorously disinfected, was a suitable breeding ground for germs of all kinds and the female body, being the chief actor within the household, was quite prone to catch infection. So it was her confinement that made her infection prone. As far as the working women were concerned, like the vegetable seller, it was once again the need

of the family for which she had to come out and engage herself in selling vegetable. While analyzing her background; it could be ascertained that this lady had a poor background which prompted her to sell vegetables in the open market. Market was an excellent place, where all kinds of buyers and sellers with all kinds of goods met. It was an equally great platform for infections of all kinds to assemble. As far as the issue of plague was concerned, rats could be found in abundance in market places, in goodowns, wherever stacks of vegetables or grains were supposed to be. So it was a natural incidence that the lady selling vegetable caught plague virus from the market place. Otherwise from the locality, where her living room was situated, obviously in a densely packed, ill- ventilated unhealthy surroundings.

In the above section, I have tried to analyze why women were more prone to contract plague bacilli. It was seen that that the rate of Bubonic plague among Muslim women were slightly higher.

It was actually a sense of social insecurity, not only within the Muslim society, but also within the Hindu society, that had prevented the female body to be properly medically treated. Calcutta, in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, as such witnessed no effective measures for women healthcare from the colonial rulers. Dearth of female doctors and lack of medical facilities for females, many a times resulted in higher mortality rates among women. As far as plague amongst men, in the colonial city of Calcutta was concerned, it was seen that plague was very rare a phenomenon among a few class of professionals. Bhari or the class of water carriers and the fishermen or jeles and the fish sellers, throughout this decade were seen to remain mostly unaffected by plague virus.<sup>15</sup>

Thus it is seen how plague had become a source of anxiety, as far as everyday life in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was concerned. It is now time to examine the policies of the colonial government in regard to deal with the plague menace in the city and how effective these policies were for the daily life of the city dwellers. Under the Plague Regulation of Calcutta Corporation (1898), there were demolition of many houses, which were found to be rat infested and hence prone to the outbreak of plague. This in the

other way had created a disruption in the urban layout of the city. A provision was made by which the Engineering Department of the Calcutta Corporation was to submit the weekly returns of the number of dead rats found in the streets of Calcutta. Rat depots were also constructed at many places within the city. It was seen that a very large proportion of the dead rats found in the streets, during the outbreak period, died of plague. An attempt was also made by the corporation to trace out the houses in which unusual rat mortality was occurring.<sup>16</sup>

Dr Neild Crook, in his report on plague in Calcutta(1899) gave a vivid account of the plague stricken city. He wrote that difficulty was experienced in moving patients to hospitals. When they desired it, the gariwallahs refused to take such patients because of the fear of being infected from the patients and loss of their custom. To obviate this, two vehicles were hired and stationed at plague office at 65, Beadon Street and the other at the Town Hall. After use, arrangements were being made for immediately disinfecting these vehicles either at the District Offices or at the hospitals. Patients objected to be moved in hand ambulances, as it drew a crowd of spectators, when such an ambulance was seen on the road, and to disperse this crowd, no less than a police guard was required.<sup>17</sup>

But all the above mentioned attempts on part of the corporation had failed. There was no separate laboratory in the Health Department of the corporation in which plague amongst rats in Calcutta could have been minutely studied.<sup>18</sup> The only rational method of combating plague, thus left with the corporation, was to keep a close watch on the rat population, and to keep a close vigilance on those quarters in which rats were found to be infected and thereby to concentrate all available resources on that section of the town. The Health officers, were instructed to proceed with the members of the vigilance or medical committee, in case they found out any house or any person suffering from plague. They were to enquire into the case and were to examine all or any inmate of the house, to destroy the bedding, clothing and articles of a similar nature and to improve the sanitary condition of the premises. The Health officers in consultation with a competent engineer, was given power to remove all partitions, erections or portions of house walls if it had happened to obstruct light and



ventilation in any way.<sup>19</sup>In keeping a close vigilance on the native part of the town owing to fear of plague, we shall now see how the Health officers, of the Calcutta Corporation neglected the responsibilities which lay on their shoulder, but became over active in some cases in which they were expected to be more considerate. Since it was a practice to burn the bedding and clothes of the plague stricken persons, the plague officers of the Calcutta Corporation, often did this in a careless manner. It is being reported by *The Basumati* (March,15, 1900)<sup>20</sup> that the bedding and clothes were usually collected on the middle of the road, mostly in front of the plague stricken house and set fire to it. But the Plague officers had no time to wait till the whole were burnt to ashes. They used to go away only after setting fire to them. The result was that those things were not fully burnt and the unburnt filthy rags were strewn all over the road by the wind. The dead rats in plague stricken houses, were reported to be often thrown on the road, where they were seen to remain for two or three days together. This newspaper also reported that the disinfecting process was very defective. It was often done in a haphazard way.

Although the municipality had made some arrangements for disinfecting the plague stricken houses and localities, it was the question of effective supervision and control on the municipal Health officers, which ultimately turned the system upside down. This in turn, spread the virulence of plague rather than eradicating it or lessening it within the city. When plague became so virulent within the city, the colonial authorities instituted some check measures at the entry points of the city like the railway stations and the river port. Scholars like Mark Harrison has conducted a detailed study on the measures adopted by the Calcutta Port authorities, in case a ship entering the port was found to carry plague virus.<sup>21</sup> Arrangements were also made to examine passengers in the two railway stations of Sealdah and Howrah. In doing so, many a times passengers who arrived from outside or who were about to depart from Calcutta, were often harassed. *The Sanjivani* (March,15,1900)<sup>22</sup> reported that the manner in which the medical examination of the passengers were conducted, only caused their inconvenience. It was said by this paper, that it was only ten or fifteen minutes before departure of a train, that the plague doctors came. They examined the passengers travelling

by third class for eight to ten minutes. Majority of the passengers remained unexamined. Many of them missed the train as a result. But for the passengers travelling by first class or second class, separate arrangements were made for their medical examination in their respective compartments. Class distinction was thus seen in case of medical examination also. The urban poor who were very likely to travel by the third class compartments, were mostly neglected from being examined in a proper way. When plague had become a disease, so widespread in 20<sup>th</sup> century Calcutta, such attitude of the doctors, who formed a part of the official colonial class, has to be questioned. The Indian Mirror (April,3,1903) reported about a large scale immigration of the Marwaris from Calcutta, owing to fear of plague. According to the paper, it was Chandernagore where these people had taken shelter temporarily.<sup>23</sup>

#### **Inoculations or Vaccinations in the city:**

It has been already pointed out, that there was no laboratory in the Health Department of the Corporation, and so no systematic medical research on plague could be conducted during the time. Inoculations although were performed, but it was on a very small scale. From a report, it appears that 3000 persons were inoculated in 1907 and 2000 in 1908.<sup>24</sup> In performing these inoculations, it was found that most of those, who were being inoculated were actually the miserable outcasts of the city, who were attracted by the compensation offered.<sup>25</sup> But the city dwellers of Calcutta, as it was seen, could never rely on the colonial health policies and as a whole and hence inoculation procedure was seen with indifference by them.

#### **Plague Charity Fund:**

A charity fund was instituted by the colonial government in order to provide a sort of compensation for the family of those who had died of plague. In Calcutta, there were three plague charity funds - The Special Plague Subscription Fund, The Phool Chand Fund and The Plague Charity Fund. But in reality the amount of these funds were so meager, that it was hardly possible for a poor family who had lost an earning member, to thrive on that. In 1910, it was reported that only Rs 25 was expended during the year, under the Special Plague Charity Fund. The widow of one Shiekh Bhurtoo received five monthly

payments of Rs 5 each. Rewards were also given for rats.<sup>26</sup>

But in spite of all the above measures, the British authorities failed to achieve the confidence of the urban masses residing in Calcutta, as far as the Health policies were concerned. While concluding this essay, we can say that sanitary measures of a simpler nature could have been adopted by the corporation such as regular lime washing of the houses, the effective cleaning of latrines and the regular removal of filth or rubbish. But in taking up bigger steps, these preliminary steps were neglected by the corporation, which could have formed the first step of eradicating the plague menace.

Some of the Bengali doctors also made remarkable contributions, in this period in order to extend the health care facilities among the urban poor. Among them, Radha Govinda Kar or R.G. Kar's untiring efforts towards eradication of plague in the city, deserves special mention. When the disease of plague ravaged the daily life of the city to a great extent, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> C, R.G. Kar ignoring his personal gains, transformed a portion of his own house at Calcutta, into a plague treatment center. Absolutely running at his own expense, at this center, patients used to be affectionately treated. Dr R.G. Kar's wife used to cook herself for the poor patients who used to stay there for treatment.<sup>27</sup> To make people aware of this disease, he composed a book himself named "Plague" where he had written elaborately on the treatment of this disease. Among the contemporary Bengali doctors like Mahendralal Sirkar, Dr Nilratan Sirkar, thus, Dr R.G. Kar's name too remains immortal.

### **Conclusion:**

Thus, I have attempted to draw a sketch of Calcutta as a disease ridden city, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. I have tried to show how plague became a source of anxiety for the daily life of the city. But if the colonial state had paid some attention to the health care issues of their subjects, the picture would have been somewhat different. Rather the colonial rulers had given their best efforts to limit these diseases within the Indian quarters of the city only. Further very little amount of money was allocated by the state authorities for the purpose of health care of their subjects. The charitable and the reformist

initiatives of the Indian doctors, although had a wider democratic concern but could not protect the urban poor from mass death during the outbreak of the epidemic.

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## **Traditional Games and Sports in Northern Bengal: Preserving the Cultural Heritage**

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### **Abstract:**

To a great extent, sports sociology is based on the fact that a sport is a sign of social and cultural heritage, which reflects the rituals and values of societies. The northern part of Bengal is famed for its natural beauty and diversity, with all its hills, rivers, forests, and valleys. Besides this natural richness, diversities of ethnicity, cultures, and traditions that demand a study from a historical point of view add a new facet to the root of the richness of the traditions and culture, which lie in the traditional games, which are a manifestation of the customs and traditions of the region itself. They act as the flag-bearers of the cultural heritage and moral values of the people and community living here, as studied through the ages. As these games and sports are confined to a definite geographical area locally, spread, and practiced within a homogeneous ethnic community, it fosters and strengthens the cultural integrity and feelings of oneness among the inhabitants. But these essential traditional games and sports are now on the verge of being lost in the sea of time, finding their repose in historical archives mainly due to the effects of globalization and the subsequent rat race of life, combined with some other reasons. In this study, the author took the initiative to appraise some traditional games and sports spread all over North Bengal and show the methods and essence of these games.

***Key Words:*** North Bengal, Traditional, Games, Sports, Cultural, Historical

### **Introduction:**

India has a rich and multifaceted cultural heritage encompassing various festivals, musical traditions, dance forms, theatrical performances, and various sporting activities, such as cricket, hockey, football, and traditional games. Cricket holds significant cultural and social importance in India, being widely regarded as a quasi-religion due to its extensive following and the sense of national pride it evokes. Hockey boasts a substantial historical background and has achieved numerous Olympic gold medals. In contrast, football, particularly with the rise in prominence of the Indian Super League (ISL), has garnered

a considerable youth fan base. In addition to the sports mentioned earlier, kabaddi, badminton, tennis, wrestling, athletics, and chess are also prominent disciplines that have nurtured exceptional athletes, serving as inspirational figures for aspiring young individuals. The socio-cultural theory places significant emphasis on the role of social interaction in influencing individual development. Traditional games serve as a medium for fostering social interaction and facilitating the acquisition of cultural knowledge. Through engagement in these games, individuals understand the rules and tactics involved and internalise the fundamental cultural values, norms, and behaviour inherent to their community. These games function as a medium for transmitting cultural knowledge across generations, facilitating the development of a collective comprehension of customs, traditions, and societal norms.

In theoretical perspectives, symbol interactionism emphasises the significance of meanings and social interactions in influencing individuals' and collectives' actions and behaviours. Traditional games function as symbolic manifestations of cultural beliefs, values, and practices, allowing individuals to negotiate and interpret these symbols actively. This active engagement strengthens their cultural identity and fosters a sense of belonging within their cultural community. Cultural anthropology offers valuable insights into the intricate interplay between culture, society, and individual behaviour. In cultural anthropology, traditional games are regarded as manifestations of a community's cultural heritage and customs. They fulfil a vital function in preserving and continuing cultural heritage, serving as living embodiments of a society's historical, traditional, and ideological aspects. Through active engagement in these games, individuals can enhance their cultural identity and cultivate a profound sense of pride and belonging within their communities.<sup>28</sup>

India's diverse cultural heritage, sports, and cultural activities are crucial in fostering unity, identity, and pride among its people. Recognising and appreciating traditional games as integral components of cultural expression and comprehension are imperative in cultivating a more inclusive and diverse society. The social and sporting habits of the Rajbanshi people exhibit a wide range of diversity, which can be attributed to the interplay of their geographical location and cultural customs. The community places high importance on fostering social cohesion, maintaining an agricultural way of life, and transmitting ancestral traditions in various domains such as agriculture, music, dance, architecture, and healthcare. Individuals participate in conventional athletic activities, such as football and cricket, which facilitate the development of physical well-being and



foster social engagement. Local tournaments and competitions serve as platforms for Rajbanshi individuals to demonstrate their abilities and engage in competitive activities across various sports. The degree of sports participation exhibits a spectrum, encompassing both casual involvement and more dedicated engagement, contingent upon individual preferences and the availability of sporting amenities.<sup>29</sup>

The objective study represents an analysis of the contents and features of traditional games in North Bengal, focusing on their historical origins, current status, and potential for development. Additionally, the researcher highlights the interactive evolution of conventional games and identifies the correlation or interpretation of such games. The primary objective of this study is to elucidate the games played in the region. This study has the potential to provide insight into the cultural heritage of traditional games and their significance within society. The primary research methodology employed is a survey method that combines interviews and questionnaires. The authors possessed practical experience with certain games and were intimately familiar with the local culture. The assistance provided by scholarly works in the field is noteworthy.

The social and sporting habits of the Rajbanshi people exhibit a wide range of diversity, which can be attributed to the interplay of their geographical location and cultural customs. The community places high importance on fostering social cohesion, maintaining an agricultural way of life, and transmitting ancestral traditions in various domains such as agriculture, music, dance, architecture, and healthcare. Individuals participate in conventional athletic activities, such as football and cricket, which facilitate the development of physical well-being and foster social engagement. Local tournaments and competitions serve as platforms for Rajbanshi individuals to demonstrate their abilities and engage in competitive activities across various sports. The degree of sports participation exhibits a spectrum, encompassing both casual involvement and more dedicated engagement, contingent upon individual preferences and the availability of sporting amenities.

**Dodhi Kado Game:** This game holds a distinct significance in the Rajbangsi culture and is traditionally played during the auspicious occasion of Krishna Janmashtami. The game involves the participation of male members, with the number of participants ranging from two to more, depending on its twofold variations. Initially, the soil of significant magnitude appears arid. However, it becomes saturated with copious amounts of water, resulting in muddy terrain. Consequently, all the players become coated with mud, thereby becoming prepared



for the game. During the initial phase, two participants engage in a physical contest to displace each other from the central area of a muddy terrain while maintaining a grip on the opponent's shoulder.



*PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTED BY THE RESEARCHER, DATE: 11.08.2020, TIME: 11.17,  
PLACE: CHURABHANDER*

The individual who successfully displaces their opponent beyond the confines of the muddy field perimeter is designated as the victor. During the second stage, there could be two or more participants. They engage in playing with intricate fruits, with a preference for coconuts. One participant securely grasps the coconut against their chest using both arms while the other seizes it. The player who successfully obtains the coconut must hold it in the same manner as the initial player. The game persists until the players become fatigued. The game is designed primarily for recreational purposes, although it is associated with religious and symbolic significance.

The players eat the coconut and other fruits as soon as the game is finished. Regarding the game's naming, the villagers named it '*Dadhikado Game*' as the mud seems to be converted into curd (*Dodhi*).<sup>30</sup> This game's remarkable and noteworthy feature is that it is played only once a year on the day after Lord Krishna's Janmashtami; the playground is the temple premises. A high dam is made of mud and shaped like a tub. The special puja is held there, and mainly, men get

involved in the game. The game is called '*Dadhikado*' because it takes the shape of Dadhi in water and mud. Fruits used in this game, such as coconuts, pumpkins, and pommels, are eaten at the end of the game, and their seeds are planted. The homemakers of the Rajbangsi society spread the seeds in the soil while the game continued. It is believed that those seeds will bear good fruit. So, even though it is a part of religion, this game uses fertility-related magic games.<sup>31</sup>

**Gollachhut Game:** The game of '*Gollachhut*,' also known as "touch and run," involves the insertion of a stick into a small hole referred to as a '*Golla*' or the centre of the playing area. This game is typically played outdoors. The designated target is a stationary object, such as a tree or a stone, located twenty-five to thirty feet from the centre. The game's primary objective is for each participant to take turns running and touching the designated goal. '*Chhut*' in North Bengal refers to running, hence the name '*Gollachhut*'. The game is contested by two teams comprising an equal number of members, typically five or seven. The designated leader within the game is called '*Goda*', which translates to 'chief'. The leader rotates the pole positioned at the centre, utilising one hand while restraining a player with the other. The attacking team members form a human chain while holding the hand of the chief. The players manoeuvre within the same parameters and attempt to contact the defending team while simultaneously evading them to reach the goal. At a specific juncture, the final player in the sequence liberates themselves, proceeds towards the designated area, and makes contact with the plan. The players from the opposing team strategically position themselves at various points to intercept the running player. If the opposing team successfully contacts him, he will be deemed out. The final individual to engage in running is the leader of the group. The teams take turns playing the game.<sup>32</sup>

Pictures of the ancient history of human society can be found in traditional games. Society has changed with time. After the Stone Age came the Copper Age and the Iron Age society, and human relations with people changed. Different pictures of this change in society can be found in the games '*Gollachhut*' And '*Ghani*'. '*Gollachhut*' and '*Ghani*' are the same games.<sup>33</sup> In some areas, this game is called '*Golla*'. The players of the insider party are a '*Golla*' each. They escape the enemy's watchful eye.



PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTED BY THE RESEARCHER, DATE: 07/02/2020, TIME: 6.47A.M, PLACE:

MAYNAGURI KHUKSIYA PARK

Holding each other's hands, the players on the side of the insiders walk around in a circle with their feet or hands on a pole. If they get a chance, they touch the opponent player, making them 'more'. Again, realising the opportunity, he can escape the sight of his opponent and flee. If the opponent's players touch them during the escape, and they can return to the roundhouse with three jumps from where they were connected, then the players of the insider party lose their turn in the game. It is also seen that if a runaway player reaches the desired object at a fixed distance or a room, he can no longer be touched. In these games, there are hints of slavery in the ancient social system. The players on the '*Gharati*' side are enslaved people and the '*Barti*' players are the guarding soldiers. Slavery was common in ancient society, and enslaved people fled whenever they could. If caught flying, the enslaved person would be sentenced to death. The enslaved people often ran away and gathered the strength to rebel against the feudal lord. This cruel truth of history is believed to be hidden in this game.<sup>34</sup>

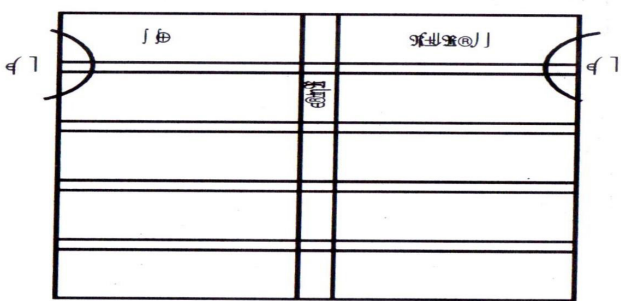
**Kit-Kit Game:** The game is traditionally played using a '*Guti*', a fragment of an earthen pot measuring approximately 1.5 inches in diameter, or a circular, flat stone. A rectangular area measuring around three yards in length and two yards in width has been delineated. The rectangular shape has been partitioned into six squares, each measuring approximately one foot in width. The fourth and sixth squares have

been bisected into two equal parts, and each of these segments has been diagonally intersected from one side to the other. There are several different formats available. The initial player positions herself before the starting line and throws her 'Guti' into the first square.



PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTED BY THE RESEARCHER DATE: 27/12/2020, TIME: 12:37 A.M, PLACE: LATAGURI

**Pakkhi Game:** It was once the most popular game in the rural belt of North Bengal. It is usually played in the daytime after the rainy season when the harvesting is over. A moonlit night gives the most exciting time for this game when it continues till late in the night. It is a seven-side game. The field is usually 40'x20' and each block is nearly 6'x8'. The court looks as follows-



Source: The sketch collected from the book 'Prasanga Lokokriya' by B. Paul. Book World, Agartala,2014, P-157.

The seven offensive players are positioned outside of Field A. The six defending players are on the horizontal lines, with one player assigned to each line. The seventh player, the 'Ghora', is positioned on the central vertical line. At the game's onset, a player from the attacking team named 'Bhut' was permitted to traverse the field without any hindrance. Upon reaching the opposite side, the individual initiated the game by vocally announcing the term 'Bhut' to alert their fellow players. Subsequently, the players enter the initial block B simultaneously or in groups. Individuals attempt to traverse the distinction indicated by the downward-pointing arrow. The defenders positioned along the boundary lines endeavour to contact the offensive players as they span lines. If a player can advance beyond the sixth line without being impeded by any opposing players, they may proceed along the upward arrow marking. The entity known as 'Bhut' also attempts to ascend. If either he or the 'Bhut' successfully traverses the first line without being touched and returns to the starting point, the party shall emerge victorious. If a defending player makes contact with any opposing team member while crossing a designated line, the game will result in a loss for the entire party. Subsequently, the game commences anew, with the attacking team assuming the defensive role and vice versa.<sup>35</sup>

### **Elating Belating Sailo Game:**

*Elating Bellating Sailo ('Elating Bellating Sailo)*

*Kiser khabar Ailo? (What's the news?)*

*Rajar khabar Ailo (The king's news came,)*

*Raja akti balika chailo (The king wanted a girl.)*

*Kon balika chailo (Which girl wanted?)*

*Namdhare Amuk balika chailo,*

*(by name, wanted such and such a girl,)*

*Niye jao niye jao tomader balikake (Take your girl. )'<sup>36</sup>*

*(Translated anonymously from Bengali)*

This game is limited to the teenage girls of Bengal, and this game is trendy all over Bengal. Adolescent girls are divided into two groups and participate in this folk sport. There is a king in each of the two groups. The game is played in an ample space in the yard or the



open space next to the house. Two cells are to be fixed in opposite directions for the two groups, and the boundaries of the two parties are determined by it. The teenage girls are divided into two groups and face each other in their cells, and a limit lies in the middle.<sup>37</sup>

When the game starts, the king of one team will come to the middle and ask, 'What is the news?' Then, both parties will move into their respective areas with questions and answers. The first group will say – 'The king wants a girl.' The second team will answer the first team's question by saying- 'Which girl he wants?' Countering that, the answer comes, 'Such and such girl is wanted.' When the first party does not want to hand over the girl to the king, a scuffle occurs between the two groups. The team that can keep the girl on its side will win. The rhyme is said in the form of a dialogue drama. According to Professor Ashutosh Bhattacharya, *"Physical actions and basic dialogues are both used together with acting. The same has to be done in rhyming games as well. So it cannot be denied that the original form of drama was developed in it."*<sup>38</sup> Many sociologists have acknowledged the importance of the sociological analysis of this folklore. Although teenage girls play the game, the team is dominated by a male king. In this form of folk sports, there are remnants of female greed in feudal society.



**PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTED BY THE RESEARCHER, DATE:27/12/2020, TIME:11:07, A.M**

**PLACE: LATAGURI**

The word 'Raja' is significant in this rhyme. History bears witness to the limitless humiliation of femininity in feudal society. The physical lusts of the feudal lords are also recorded in the historical

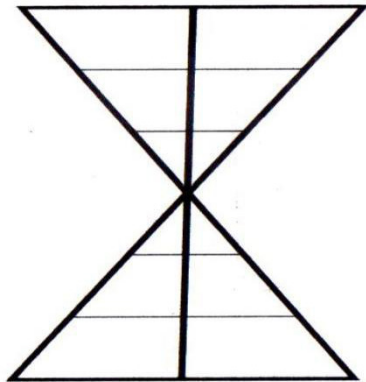
records. There are numerous instances of forced abduction of rural women. The history of the perverted mentality of sending foot soldiers to kidnap women and then keeping them in their homes was a common practice in Bengali society. The memory of feudal lords taking household girls to their beds without their consent is hidden in this game. Professor Ashutosh Bhattacharya has made a sociological analysis of this folk sport and said- *"Here is how a tragic event of one day in society has turned into a game over time."*<sup>39</sup>

**Baghbandi or Pait Game:** These are indoor games typically played during inclement weather. Initially, a court is delineated on the ground, and two participants commence the game employing distinct varieties of cowries, such as tamarind or gourd seeds. The quantity of cowries is subject to variation based on the characteristics of the court, with a range of 16 to 3. It would be beneficial to examine the various courts. In the game of Pait, players take turns placing cowries on the crosses. One participant endeavours to strategically position their cowries on three consecutive crosses, while the other endeavours to impede this objective by strategically placing their symbol to preclude the possibility of the former participant's success. If a player successfully places three characters on three consecutive crosses, they may remove any of their opponent's pieces from the court at their discretion. The game known as '*Bagh Bandi*' exhibits similarities. In the game, a player plays the role of '*Bagh*' or tiger and utilises a small stick, while the other player uses three cowries to attempt to capture and immobilise the '*Bagh*'. In the event that a player successfully places three characters on three consecutive crosses, they may remove any opponent's piece from the court at their discretion. The game known as '*Bagh Bandi*' resembles the activity mentioned earlier.<sup>40</sup>

In '*Bagh-Chhagol*' or '*Baghbondi*', '*Shologuti*', '*Batrishguti*', '*Chhotrishguti*', '*Chhoyguti*', '*Noyguti*', '*Akkelbondi*', '*Payeet*', the two sides of the game can be identified as two separate conflicting groups. In the play '*Bagh-Chhagol*' or '*Baghbondi*', the '*Bagh*', i.e., the tiger and the '*Chhagol*', i.e., the goat, are two totem-believing groups.<sup>41</sup> A. B. Kieth speaks of a group called '*Ojo*' in ancient Vedic literature. Moreover, in various old Indian myths, the Puran and the Upapuran, Mandukya, Kurna, etc. or the ten incarnations of '*Dasavatar*', namely '*Matsya*', '*Kurma*', '*Baraha*', '*Nrisingha*', '*Bamon*' are named after the animals; there are also Puranas with tree names like '*Padmapuran*'. Thus, animals, plants, and even inanimate objects could be a totem. (Like the totem '*Noon*' in '*Nunta*'). So, tigers and goats can be identified as two conflicting groups. No player's name is seen in the other shots,

but the game is played similarly.

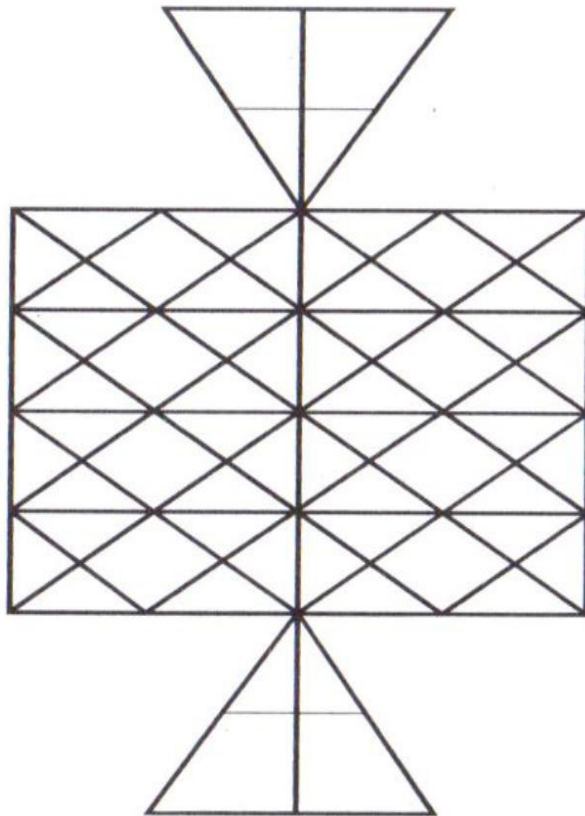
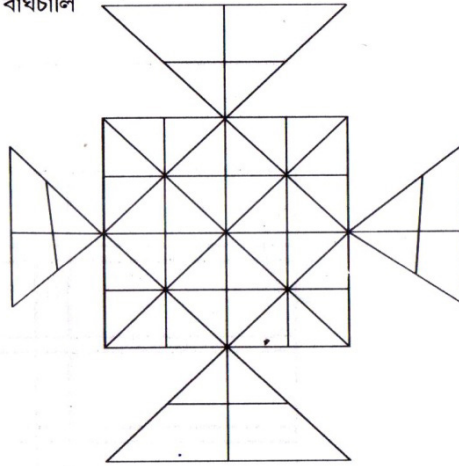
**PHOTOGRAPH OF SKETCH OF THE TRADITIONAL  
GAMES:**

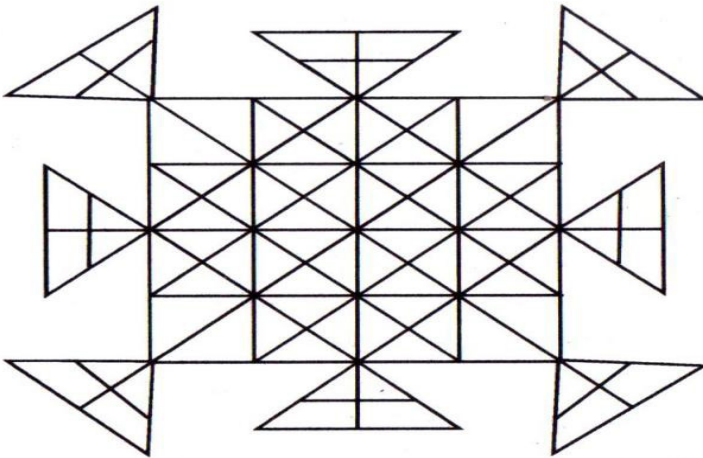
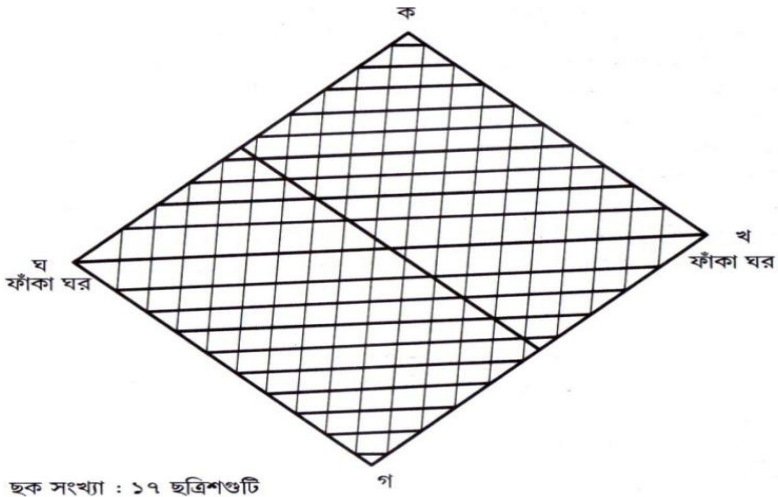


Noy (Nine) Pait, Sholo (sixteen) Pait, Batrish (thirty-two) Pait,  
Chatrish (thirty-six) Pait game :



৩ বাঘচালি





Source: The sketch collected from the book 'PrasanLokokriya' by B. Paul, Book World, Agartala, 2014, P-158.

How to equip the army to corner the opposition or to destroy the opposition's pawn, i.e., to reduce their strength by killing it, lies entangled in these games. The same thing can be noticed in 'Daba' or Chess. In 'Payeet', if the player can bring the pawns in a straight line, then he will win; those whose army is more disciplined and well-equipped will win.

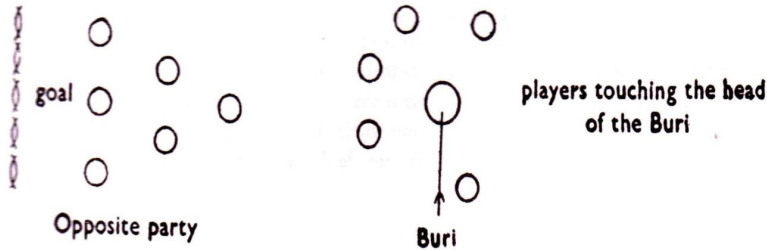
Moreover, it is possible to easily defeat the opponent if the protagonist can run the pawns with good reciprocity and agility.<sup>42</sup> At any time in the forested area, wildlife interference and nuisance would endanger the lives of people and domestic animals. So, how to prepare for a wild animal attack or capture can be seen in the symbolic tiger captive game 'Baghbondi'. 'Shologuti' is also known as 'Mughal-Pathan' in some areas, including the district of Coochbehar.<sup>43</sup> The poetic composition of Bipradas named 'Manasa Vijay' mentions the name of games like 'Baghchali' or 'Baghbondi' and 'Mangal-Pathan'. Experts believe that this game contains historical memories of the Mughal Pathan conflict. Harendra Narayan Chaudhury, in his book 'Coochbehar State and its Land Revenue Settlement', has written about this game. Sir Khan Chaudhury Amantulla has spoken about the origin of the game,

*"At that time, King Naranarayana was called the booster of the Pathan people in the kingdom of Koch. He passed away in 1587 BC. In 1576 BC, when the Pathan king Dawood Khan fell, the kingdom of Bengal was conquered by the Mughals but the Bhuiyan kings and the Pathan chiefs did not readily agree to accept submission to the Mughals. Until 1600 BC the Orissa and Ghoraghat provinces were almost devastated by the Mughal Pathan conflicts. It is well known in Coochbehar that the Mughal-Pathan game was created based on this dispute."*<sup>44</sup>

**Buri Bhushka Game:** The game known as 'Bhuri Bhusa' is commonly referred to as 'Buri Choa' in the North Bengal region. Male individuals frequently enjoy this game, and adults occasionally participate in the activity. The players' disposition is as indicated above. The Buribhusa Game is alternatively referred to as the Buri Choa Game. The game is played with six players on each team. A single participant, called the 'Buri', assumes a stationary position while the other team members encircle him and make physical contact with his head. The game commences with an attempt to score while advancing towards the goal line, situated approximately 30 cubits away. The Buri can tag a player from the opposing team before reaching the goal line and subsequently becomes 'dead' and must exit the field. However, a dead player may be revived and re-enter the game.

As the game progresses, Buri patiently awaits another opportunity to advance towards the goal. If the match Buri is completed, the party will be deemed successful. There exist two parties. Typically, the game consists of six players on each team. When a male individual assumes the role of Buri, he sits at a designated location while the other group members gather around him and place their hands on his head. The opposing group is positioned in a semi-

circular formation at a considerable distance, guarding the designated goal area, approximately thirty cubits away from the Buri.



*Source: The sketch collected from the book 'Rajbanshis of North Bengal' by C. C. Sanyal, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1965, p-83.*

A player on the team representing the bun initiates the customary cry, as in the game of Dor, and advances towards the goal. Suppose a player successfully touches an opposing team member and reaches the destination within a single breath. In that case, the connected player is considered 'dead' and must exit the field of play. If an opposing team member makes physical contact with the announcer after their breath has been expelled, they are considered 'dead' and must exit the field. Suppose the individual can evade the opposing team and reach the designated objective without being physically contacted. In that case, they are deemed to have returned to being 'alive' and may proceed to commence the game anew. Suppose a player on one team is eliminated. In that case, the first eliminated player from the opposing team is considered 'alive' and is incorporated into the former team's roster, allowing the game to continue. The custodian, Buri, is anticipating an opportunity and ventures out of the goal area. If a team possess the 'Buri' successfully reaches the goal without being touched by the opposing team, they declared as winners. If a player from the opposing team makes contact with the 'Buri', it is considered deceased, and that party loses the game.<sup>45</sup>

**Socio-Historic Perspective:** Every traditional game has great value in society. These games are significant in appreciating the social and historical contexts of the region intensely. It carries in the human mind religious beliefs, superstitions and social customs. Entertainment plays a significant role in the games.

In the game of 'Gollachutt', we find the presence of the feudal lord and the customs of slavery. In the social system of that particular period,

enslaved people worked under the feudal lord in the sharp observation of the armed guards. Sometimes, the enslaved people tried to escape by dodging the guards. If caught up, they were killed. And in rare cases, the enslaved person succeeded in escaping. The movement of enslaved people against the feudal lords was also common. The continuous fight among the small belligerent groups in medieval North Bengal is found in the 'Pait' game. How to arrange the army defends the opposition is reflected in the arrangement of cowries (symbols) in lines. In the game of 'Pait', whoever succeeds in aligning the characters in line becomes the winner, indicating whose army is more disciplined wins the battle. Earlier, North Bengal, geographically positioned in the Terai region, was covered with forest land more in percentage than the present scenario. The attack of wild animals in the human habitat was widespread. In the '*Baghbandi*' game, we learn how to tame or capture the wild animals attacking the village. The '*Elating Belating*' game symbolically represents the wretched condition of women in medieval Bengal, mainly focusing on North Bengal in a background of social and economic instability. Slavery and buying and selling enslaved people and women in the slave market were daily during that period. Women were treated as commodities and tools to satisfy the sexual desires of wealthy people.<sup>46</sup>

**Traditional Games and personal development:** Traditional games enhance the personality of an Athlete. It builds up physical and mental strength, giving them an excellent opportunity to succeed. It improves personal behaviour, characteristics, humanity and morality. Traditional games work as a guide, teacher, mentor, and counsellor.<sup>47</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Traditional games serve as a lineal heritage of society. It is our liability to acquire a genuine appreciation for them and safeguard their existence from potential extinction. It is recognised that traditional games and sports can be interpreted through pre-modern, modern, and postmodern lenses. Consequently, their ability to persist or experience a resurgence is contingent upon their assimilation into the contemporary sphere of significance.<sup>48</sup> Gradually, it is our responsibility to evaluate the status of traditional games and sports. Many games have already been lost, and some remains are obsolete due to globalisation and convergence. This trend towards a limited number of culturally similar sports threatens the rich diversity of sports heritage. While traditional games and sports may vary, they serve important purposes such as personal growth, promoting peace and community, developing human resources, facilitating learning, and fostering unity. These conventional games serve the purposes of entertainment, physical well-being,

fitness, and social cohesion.<sup>49</sup>Traditional games are played across different categories, including seasonal, religious, celebratory, and perennial. It has the potential to demonstrate integrity and cohesion among individuals. Traditional games foster the development of social culture and heritage within communities. The conventional games and sports, featuring diverse forms of play across North Bengal, foster physical, mental, and social well-being and spiritual beliefs. The utilization of traditional games are multifarious, these serve as a means to promote global unity, integration, cultural diversity, peace, and physical activity.<sup>50</sup> The recent achievements of Smt. Swapna Barman and other individuals from rural North Bengal serve as evidence to support my belief that participation in traditional games can lead to success for children.

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## **Municipality Vote and Middle-class Humour: Reading a Nineteenth-century Bengali Satire on Election Debacle**

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### **Abstract:**

The article is an attempt to explore a nineteenth-century Bengali farce on election debacle. The introduction of local 'self-rule' in Bengal presidency created varied reactions among indigenous public. The insufficient budget, rampant intervention from white rulers and feuds between Bengali landed gentry and new middle class created mockery in the name of 'civil freedom'. In such background, the vernacular comic literature was taking a dig into such political catastrophe. Parody poems, satire, cartoons, and caricatures featured in Bengali punch magazines like *Basantak*, *Harbola Bhar* were revolving around Municipality jokes. However, this essay takes one such representative text called '*Bhotmangal*'. It was sponsored by Mojilpur theatre group and printed from Kolutola Street, Calcutta in 1888. The farce became historically relevant for several reasons; by using bizarre comic plots, metaphors, double entendre and symbolism, the text was able to criticize the colonial discourse of 'self-rule'. It went on questioning the mainstream 'bhadralok politics' and used humour as a tool to expose the fallacy of election under colonial circumstances. The '*Bengali babu*' was laughed upon for his keenness to join politics but also characters of lower caste Hindus, poor Muslim peasants and women constituted a significant part of the farce. The aim of this essay is to understand the making of various 'collective identities' in Bengal that responded to colonial politics in distinctive ways; also, to treat the satire as a voice of 'lower middle-class' sentiments who exhibited their angst and aspiration through vernacular literary genres at the end of nineteenth century.

*"We read in books that something like madness seizes the people at the period when an election takes place in a country. At such times they lose their proper senses and not only throw stones at each other but dead cats, rats and dogs. Though it is only a Municipal election, yet the people in Calcutta seem to be in a state of frenzy."* - Amrita Bazar Partika (February, 1892)

In 1882, Lord Rippon introduced local self-governance in Bengal which was initially thought to be a liberal move allowing indigenous men to participate in decision-making affairs of the colonial city. The resolution stated how the municipality of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa



would appoint a justice and a salaried chairman in each of their towns who in turn should 'represent all the classes of the community. The clause for fair representation in Calcutta Corporation could never properly be implemented as the municipal candidates, coming mostly from the background of elite aristocracy and educated middle class rarely shared any viable bond with labouring masses. The history of municipal politics, thus, remained an episode of complete fallacy with increasing government intervention in local affairs, insufficient municipal budget, excessive tax burden on Bengali aristocracy and feuds between numerous native pressure groups making the whole affair a mockery in the name of 'civil freedom'. The fiasco reached its zenith with Rate payer's agitation in 1890, revealing that indigenous participation in electoral politics is only a myth within colonial infrastructure.

The official gazettes and proceedings are essential sources to study statistical data on election results, administrative changes and the overall political apparatus of the city but I choose to focus on a different genre of literary production. The interest of the colonial government and their native collaborators was best expressed through extensive publications of vernacular punch magazines, comic chapbooks, cartoons, caricatures and parody poems. Written in a sarcastic manner, with simple colloquial language, these comic genres exposed the corruption of white rulers and gossiped about 'controversial political topics'. Magazines like *Sambad Rasaraj* (1835-39), *Pasanda Piran* (1840-57), *Harbola Bhar* (1874), *Panchananda* (1878-83) and *Basantak* (1874-75) featured satirical columns on municipality vote. Puns, quips, double entendres and metaphors were used to produce a robust critique of imperial government and futile attempts of Bengali leaders to take power in hand. Among all the comic literature that ridiculed municipality vote of Calcutta Corporation during the last half of nineteenth century, the satire called '*Bhotmangal*' stands apart for several reasons.

### **The Text:**

*Bhotmangal* or '*Debasurer municipality bibhrat*' is the exact opposite of the famous farce '*Debganermartyeagomon*' by Durgacharan Ray. While the later satirized visit of Hindu gods to colonial India, especially Calcutta, '*Bhotmangal*' was a mock representation of municipality election in 'Swargolok' or heaven.

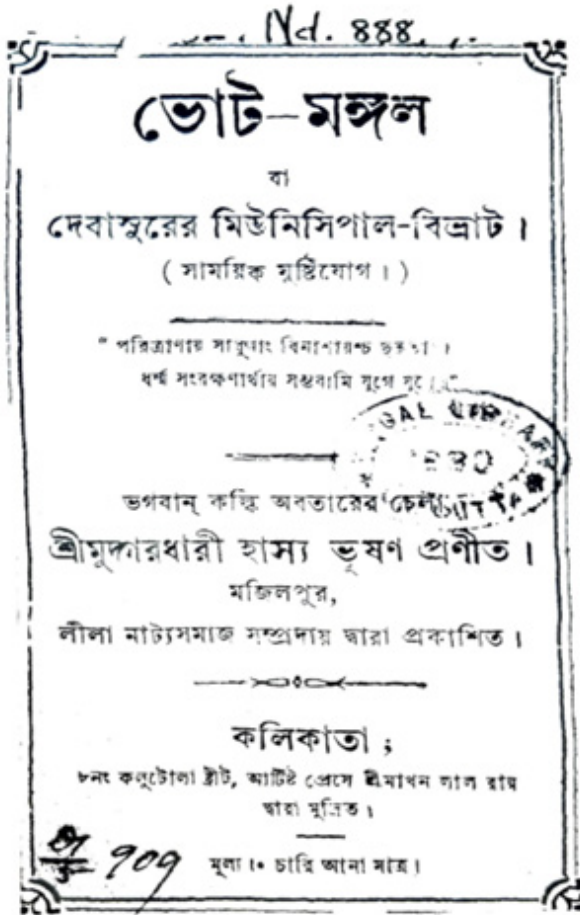


Figure 1: The cover page of 'Bhotmangal' Farce

It was written with a pseudonym called *Sri Mudgardhari Hasyabhusan* who called himself a disciple of god *Kalki*, the last and final avatar of Vishnu in *Kaliyug*. The farce was printed from Calcutta, *Kolutola Street* and said to have been sponsored by *MojilpurLila natyosomaj*. The year of publication is 1888 and the skit was sold at a price of *char annas*, quite cheap compared to other literary genres. The title page began with a *Gita sloka* of destroying evil and warns the reader how dreadful time has come when anything can happen! The frequent mention of 'kaliyuga' in the text and the author claiming himself to be an ardent follower of *Kalki* avatar hints at the production of a dark comic genre in late colonial Bengal. Sumit

Sarkar explained this as the emergence of 'kaliyug literature' which was a popular reaction towards colonial modernity. The contemporary time was envisaged as a disastrous era (kaliyug) that must come to an end with the intervention of *Kalki*. Sarkar argued how a large number of printed farces had the title using the term 'kali', the last phase in the cyclical timeframe of Hindu mythology. A section of lower-class Hindus equated modern age with kaliyug and with it came the vilification of Western education, clerical jobs and anxiety of caste and gender inversion. While lower caste ascendancy and declining Brahmanical authority were feared, there was also rampant criticism about women's education and their increasing visibility in public life. The text '*Bhotmangal*' falls within this category of dark comedy which portrayed colonial modernity as a threat to religious as well as existing social fabric of Bengali Hindu community.

### **Hindu Gods as Bengali Babus:**

One of the important strategies of comic literature is to use metaphor and double entendre. It proficiently conveys the incongruity which is long regarded as a major source of laughter. The text '*Bhotmangal*' creates a bizarre yet funny situation where Hindu gods act like Bengali Bhadrakalok. They are Western-educated, wear suits-boots and even want all the city amenities that a modern urban corporation should provide. The story began with a letter delivered to *Bakasur*, the king of *Asur* community where it is stated:

“একাল পর্যন্ত পরস্পর অধিকৃত মিউনিসিপালিটির সর্বত্র বিজয়ী যশোরাশি চতুর্দিকে বিক্ষিপ্ত হইয়া সর্বলোকে একাধিপত্য করিতেছে। কিন্তু দুঃখের বিষয় এরূপ একটি সুসমৃদ্ধিশীল স্বর্গরাজ্য মধ্যে সভ্যতা, বিদ্যা, স্বাস্থ্য প্রভৃতি মহৎ মহৎ আবশ্যকীয় পদার্থের পূর্ণ উন্নতি হইল না ...এ সম্বন্ধে সর্বভুক সম্রাটের অধীন ব্যঙ্গদেশ একটি প্রধান উদাহরণ স্থল। তদেশবাসী ব্যাঙাচীরা রাজভক্তিগুণে এক্ষণে যেরূপ রাজ-অনুকরণপ্রিয় হইয়া উঠিয়াছেন, বোধহয় অতিসত্বরই তাঁহারা গলগলকৃতশৃঙ্খল হইয়া, তাঁহাদের ভক্তিগুণের পরিচয় প্রদানে ক্রটি স্বীকার করিবেন না”।

In the above excerpts, the all-pervasive paradise lacks three things; *Sabhyata*, *Bidya* and *sasthya*. Out of all the markers of modernity the satirists choose to elaborate on three elements: civilization, education and public health, i.e., the quintessential components of colonial discourse by which the theory of racial difference is established. In 1818, James Mill wrote 'Classical history of British India' where he argued about the civilization validity of a particular country that always depends on its rational thinking, scientific discovery and overall social progress. Well before Mill, it was the oriental philologist

William Jones who went on remarking how “Hindus did not possess a high state of civilization”. The British rule was justified on the ground that it could bring modern legal structures, education and public health which in turn would improve the deplorable condition of Indians vis-à-vis Bengalis. The genre of comic literature was able to provide a sarcastic critique of these imperial ideologies and hollow attempts of indigenous bhadrakol emulating white men. *Bangadeshor* Bengal becomes *Byangodesh* in the farce and their government has been called ‘*sarbabhuk*’. Calling Bengal *byango*(satire), which again points to the interesting juxtaposition of words and an all-eating ruling class who does not show mercy when it’s come to their colonial interest, shows the extraordinary ability of comic literature that could, in rare instances, criticize the imperial raj like no other literary genre.

All the gods and devas were called *Babuin* in the text, a typical derogatory term used to denote Bengali clerks; on one instance, the female folk of heaven complained about the changing trends where even Indra, the king of devas, prefers to be called *Indrababu*:

“এখন আর দেবরাজ ইন্দ্র বলার জো নাই, তিনি এখন ইন্দিরবাবু হয়েছেন”

*Narada* in modern times has learned English, wears imported shoes-dress and knows the value of Western education:

“এখনত দেবতাদের সুসভ্যতার ফেরে পড়ে গোঁপ-দাড়িতে কলপ দিলেম, চোনেটকরা কাপড় চাদর আর বিলাতি জুতাও পরলেম, ইংরেজিও কিছু কিছু শিখতে হয়েছে, এখন যেনতেন প্রকারেণ বিবাদেন মহাফলং। হে নারায়ণ। যেন আমার চিরকেলে নামটা লোপ হয় না”.

The introduction of clerical jobs in colonial cities like Calcutta created a new middle class in Bengal. They became bilingual educated in English-medium school-colleges and was subjected to modern clock time discipline in offices. The saints and monks residing in heaven have been treated like ordinary Calcutta dwellers. They want their children to receive modern education and etiquette. The conversation between two saint-wives *khema* and *Madhumati* is interesting:

“ক্ষেমা: তোর ভাতার নাকি টোলে পড়া ছেড়ে দিয়ে, দেবতাদের ছেলের সঙ্গে ইংরিজি পড়া আরম্ভ করেছে, আমরা বামন পণ্ডিতের বি-বউ, আজকাল কাণ্ডকারখানা দেখে অবাক হই, তুইও আবার ইংরিজি পড়িস নাকি?”

মধু: আমার ভাতার একজন কলেজের প্রধান ছাত্র, মাসে চল্লিশ টাকা করে জলপানি ... ইংরেজি মাস্টারের ডান হাত, আমি মুখ্য হয়ে থাকলে চলবে কেন দিদি!

ক্ষেমা: একেবারে গোল্লায় গেছিস!”

The traditional Sanskrit learning, manuscript reading or managing zamindari or bazaar accounts were typical in *tol* and *pathshala* curriculum. From 1875, new schools in Bengal continued expanding with allocation of more funds to improve the standards of primary schools. The initial impetus came from Bengal governor Richard Temple who favoured teaching English in vernacular schools. All these created varied reactions among indigenous men who were divided between clinging on to their existing *pathshalas* and availing of new opportunities provided in urban school colleges. The almighty gods replicating the life of dhoti-clad Bengali babus and sharing their defiance or dilemmas is what constitutes the crux of this satirical story. They not only look and talk like *native* bhadrakal but brawl like them. The perennial dev-asur conflict has been equated with middle-class feuds trying to grab power before municipality election.

S.N. Banerjee wrote about *daladali* in nineteenth-century Calcutta, how different interest groups migrating from village to urban centers began forming separate power blocks in the city. Every *dal* had specific religious and caste affiliations with a *dalapati* at the top, who were mostly notables from the class of landed gentry. With the emergence of Western education and fair opportunity for social mobility, this old *nouveau riche* gradually lost their influence to the new middle class. The initial years of Calcutta municipality election became a meeting ground for the old and new. Names like *Kristodas Pal*, *Digambar Mitra*, *Anandamohan Bose* and *Rajendralal Mitra* came up forming various political associations voicing their opinion. The split in British Indian Association and formation of Indian League marked the transfer of power from old Bengali zamindars to new educated middle class of the city. This conflict between various interest groups has been satirically portrayed in the farce '*Bhotmangal*' in form of *dev-asur* fight. The skit managed to exhibit every little detail of the election debacle. For example, canvassing was an important part of Calcutta vote where hired men were deployed to convince and manipulate potential voters. Scaring off the rival party even within the courtroom was not out of sight with instances of physical fights attracting city police to patrol and surveil in emergency situations. The description of local riots constituted an important part of the satire as well. Here the canvassers are spokespersons of *Asur* community who are seen visiting villages to bribe poor peasants for casting their votes in favour of them:

“আচ্ছা, গাজী সাহেব! তুমি যত টাকা নেও দেব, আমাদেরকে ভোট দিতে হবেই, নয়ত তোমার

এই খানকার দ্বারদেশে পড়ে রইলুম কাল পেঁচাবাবুর দুটো ভোট! তুই যত টাকা চাস দেবো”

The son of *Kuber* and *yamraj* has been imagined as competitive candidates as opposed to God *Indra*. The good vs evil binary played out its part in most of the satirical narrative, although it is unclear if the author had landowners-educated middle-class divide in mind while charting out the eternal tussle of dev-asur. Apart from Characterizing Bengali *bhadralok*, the satire also type casted women and Muslim population of colonial Calcutta. The next part is an attempt to understand the literary symbolism embedded in the farce creating fixed social identities.

### **The Women, Muslim and the Other:**

Literary humour always creates a ‘self’ and an ‘other’. Farce, as a genre is more prone to develop a ‘collective identity’ because of its quintessential format of deploying dialogue. A first-person conversation, often with a lucid spoken tongue, allows the author to clearly identify his own position in the text and as well as the ‘other’. Not that every satire, written with dialogues, is a simple binary of ‘us’ vs ‘them’ but the text ‘*Bhotmangal*’ can be certainly foregrounded into the very definition of comic literature where identities are carefully ascribed to two or more groups. If upper caste Hindus of Calcutta were raised to positions of *dev* and *Asur* and their duel in heaven, then poor Muslim peasants and female folk also constituted the very ‘other’ of Bengali *Babu* in the farce. Their engagements in municipal politics and other social issues of the day remained very different from their *bhadralok* counterpart. The portrayal of Muslims becomes very interesting when *Asur* King and his canvassers were seen visiting local wards and in one instance they reached ‘*jabanpalli*’ or the village inhabited by poor Muslims. An archetype character has been created called *karimchacha* who is also the *gazi* or religious head of the village, hence, the spokesperson on behalf of the entire rural community of the municipality ward. The demons managed to bribe the *gazi* and manipulated the election while the gods remain honest and blamed the Muslim *pir* for such a shameful act. In the satire, *karimchacha* was given the title of ‘*nemokharamgazi*’ as soon as the benevolent gods came to know about his repulsive behaviour. The identity of a ‘traitor Muslim’ who takes unnecessary advantage of corrupt political leaders is something to ponder upon.

Rajat Kanta Ray while studying the nature of political mobilization

in late nineteenth-century Bengal talked about the existence of numerous 'pressure groups' which were predominated by 'landed notables' and 'educated professional men'. These higher-caste Hindus neither had connections with the urban working-class including servants, cooks, sweepers, washer men, cart drivers, nor they associated themselves with rural peasants. Even the migrated Marwaris had some form of voice to defend their commercial interest by forming alliances with Hindu landlords but not the indigenous lower caste and Muslims of Bengal. It was just a few years before the introduction of Calcutta municipality election, that W.W. Hunter wrote his famous work 'The Indian Musalmans' (1871). Through this, he argued about the reluctance of Bengali Muslims in taking Western education leading not only to shrinking opportunities for government jobs but also scarcely representing Muslim candidates in local governing bodies. This invisibility became more observable when Bengali Muslims initially showed reluctance when government amendments in 1875 were to include elected members in municipal board. Soon the attitude changed with names like Abdul Latif, Nawab Amir Ali, Sayyid Ashgar Ali (Advocate of high court), Mir Mohammad Ali (Zamindar of East Bengal) becoming nominees in the corporation. However, in spite of increased Muslim participation in Calcutta Municipality affairs, the divide between Hindu Babu and Muslim notables were to persist for a long time. The British often took sides with Muslim candidates to curb the power of Hindu *bhadralok* in local administration ultimately paving the way for the communal divide planned by Lord Curzon in 1905. In short, the history of Calcutta municipality elections remained an episode of factions between Hindu, Muslim and Anglo-Indians trying their best to seize political opportunities from British authority. Given the background, it is not surprising to witness circulations of satirical tracts like '*Bhotmangal*' which vilified Muslim population and attempted to preach didactic lessons through humour.

In order to create a parody of *Bengali babu* in vernacular comic texts, most of the authors rely on the characters of its female folk. A distinct spoken dialect that has been called '*meyelibhasa*' and her distance from Western education shaping a different social world from her *bhadralok* counterpart is what fascinated the comic writers. The world of colonial modernity seemed unintelligible to her, she thinks, perceives and deduces social issues with a sense of ambiguity (at least in the farces) and makes witty comments on racial tensions between *Babu* and *saheb* creating a series of humorous plots to laugh upon. Sudipta



Kaviraj, in his study of Bankimchandra's *Kamalakanta* analyzed the character of lower caste milkmaid, *Prasanna goyalini*. In the narrative structure, she becomes the 'negation' of Babu *Kamalakanta* because of her gender and class identity. The same kind of character inversion has been shown in the famous Bengali comic magazine, *Basantak Patrika*. If *Basantak* is the core observer of every little activity of the city then her wife *Basantika* is also present in every edition of the magazine making witty remarks on public issues. She, although, resides in the domestic sphere of her home but nonetheless, gathers enough information to talk about every *sabha*, *samiti*, fair and theatre activities of Calcutta. The farce '*Bhotmangal*' also created similar plots.

The parallel between Bengali women and monk-wives of '*swargalok*' is hilarious. Just like a rustic woman visits riverbank every dusk and dawn to carry water, the '*hrishi-kanya*' or saint-daughters also visit *Manas Sarobar*. It becomes a space for female socialization where local women meet everyday to banter and gossip about all the things going on around them. *Khemadidi*, *Sarbamangala*, *Madhumati* are the residents of heaven who were seen talking about the recent rumour on election feuds. The most significant thing in their conversation is the language:

Khema: আচ্ছা, তোকে একটা কথা জিজ্ঞাসা করি, তুই ইংরেজি পড়া মেয়ে, মিছরিপালীর খবর-টবর কিছু জানিস?

Madhumati – “ভাল বুড়ির হাতে পড়েছি, লেখাপড়া না জানলে এই দশা হয়।” (প্রকাশ্যে)  
- “ওগো, মিছরিপালী নয়, মিউনিসিপালিটি...”

*Khemadidi* is an elderly woman, who has never in her life heard of local self-government, not only she mispronounced 'municipality' as '*michripali*' but also 'election':

Madhumati: শশধরবাবু আর অন্য অন্য দেবতারা মিলে যে মিউনিসিপালিটি এনেচেন, তারই তিন বছর অন্তর একটা করে ইলেকশন হয়...

Khema: “আমলো! এ-লো-কা-শু-ন-দি আবার কি?”

মধুমতীঃ “তোমার মাথা। এলোকাশুন্দি নয়, ইলেকশন, অর্থাৎ একটা নূতন বন্দোবস্ত হয়ে, মিউনিসিপালিটির কর্তা বাছা হবে, স্বর্গের সব লোক মিলে যারে পছন্দ করে, সে ওই কর্তা পদটি পায়, তাই এত ভোটের গোলমাল হয়েছে।”

The stammering and mispronunciations are not only representative



of the unintelligible English language that *khema*, the elderly woman suddenly had to discover but show the incomprehensible nature of Western political institutions to most of the uneducated and functional-literate of the city. *Khema*, although a fictional character and dweller of heaven, nonetheless becomes a metaphor for the vast population of Bengal and other presidencies who carries an ambiguity in understanding the political apparatus of colonial rule. Yet, with their less knowledge of Western philosophy and institutions, these women were seen providing wise advice to their men actively engaged in politics. For example, *Amodini*, the wife of demon king *Bakasursings* to comfort her husband:

“যেওনা, যেওনা, প্রাণনাথ, আমার মাথা খাও...  
মিছে ভোটের আশে কেন, দিবানিশি কষ্ট পাও..  
বারোজন্য কুমন্ত্রণা, ও প্রাণনাথ, আর শুনোনা,  
ভোটেরে সে সুখ হবে না, যে সুখ সংসারে পাও।”

A large number of satirical literature were pointing to the futility of introducing self-governance under colonial circumstances. It gave limited seats to colonized individuals, with compromised situations to act and speak on behalf of the indigenous community. The educated middle class and landowning men were part of the municipality board but not the urban working class, rural peasants and of course the women who were excluded from any public activity of the time. So, the judgment of female folks on complex historical processes, like self-rule in colonial times, is what constituted major themes of satirical literature. Their social position was doubly dependent in terms of race and gender i.e., the subservient role to play at home in relation to their ‘native’ husband and of course the racial difference with British men and women. This made their opinion a lot more extraordinary because it addressed both the incongruity in colonial relations as well as the complexities of domestic spheres. Hence, *Amodini*, the demon wife warns her husband to not to have high hope over election result, ‘মিছে ভোটের আশে কেন, দিবানিশি কষ্ট পাও’ but seek comfort in the arrangements of home, ‘ভোটেরে সে সুখ হবে না, যে সুখ সংসারে পাও’. *Sangsar* or the private domain appears here as an alternative to corrupt election procedures in public life. The entire text of ‘*Bhotmangal*’ creates these kinds of binary which requires further elucidation.

**The Binary World and Image of *Kali*:**

The Bengali scholar Nirad. C. Chaudhuri, who has written extensively on the self-identity of Bengali community, published an article called '*sekale bangalir chokhe election*' in *deshpatrika* (1983). Through this article, he studied the '*Bhotmangal*' farce which is under the purview of this essay. Chaudhuri's intention was to show how colonial Bengalis were distasteful about contemporary elections and this made him to equate vote bank politics of late twentieth-century Calcutta. Apart from making parallels with his own time, he also argued how the text creates alternative worlds of '*sonaton dharma*' and foreign political apparatus like elections. The narrative strategy of the farce depends on making binary opposites between good and evil, *dev* and *asur*, the honest and corrupt political leaders. It talks about sincere Hindus on one hand and opportunist new middle-class taking a huge interest in municipality politics on the other. The Hindu-Muslim binary and men-women dichotomy also constituted a significant part of the farce. However, among all these opposing forces, the one character to stand out is the restorer of power, *Kali*, the last and final phase of Hindu conception of cyclical time.

Sumit Sarkar conceptualized how '*kaliyug*' became the 'most degenerate of time' marked by caste and gender inversions. He also situated the very idea of dreadful times when sufferings in clerical jobs or *chakri* in colonial cities became associated with injustice in *Kaliyug* epoch. One of his aims was to understand the lower middle-class psyche through these '*Kaliyug* texts' because they constituted a popular reaction to modern clock-time discipline. Texts like '*Bhotmangal*' is also representative of such lower-middle-class sentiments. Written by an obscure writer, who even denies disclosing his identity and takes a pseudonym by calling himself the follower of *Kalki* avatar of Vishnu, is something that makes the text historically relevant. The farce was not even produced by Calcutta dwellers, but by local theatre groups from remote *muffosil* town of *Majilpur* making sarcastic comments on mainstream political scene of the Calcutta corporation. The text ends with corrupt officials taking power in 'heaven municipality election' and a closing prayer hailing *kaliraj Kalki*. The metaphor thus foregrounds the lower-middle-class despair and a complete loss of faith in modern times.

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8. Mojilpur is currently a suburban town of south 24 Pargana, West Bengal.
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18. Ibid.
19. The 'self' and the 'other' in literary humour have been extensively dealt by Sudipta Kabiraj in his analysis of Bankim's Kamalakanta, for more see, Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The unhappy consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the formation of nationalist discourse in India'. Oxford university press: New Delhi, 1995. p. 51-67.
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23. Kaviraj, Sudipta. *Op.cit.* p. 52.
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25. earthen pot to carry water, typically called 'Jol soite jawa' in Bengali parlance.
26. The occasional visibility of bhadramahila in public spaces (like of Tagore's family) cannot be regarded as women participation in social issues at large.
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## **From Crisis to Resilience: A Historical Analysis of Public Health and Health Condition of Sundarbans**

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### **Abstract:**

*"Disease is the result of a person's lifestyle habits and the social environment in which they lived." – Greek physician Hippocrates*

Adequate healthcare services foster the quality of life of people in a region. Sundarbans, South 24 Parganas is a part of Deltaic Bengal and is home for almost Four and half million people. The region is not only recognized for its unique biodiversity but also known for numerous public health challenges faced by its inhabitants. The region of Sundarbans is grappling with dire public health condition. Though Sundarbans is very close to the cultural capital of India, Kolkata, but this region and its people are so much deprived from modern healthcare system due to its remote geographic location. Although WHO (World Health Organisation) is providing "Alma Ata", Health for All initiative, these rural areas are facing ultimate destitution. The combination of poverty, inadequate healthcare infrastructure and environmental challenges has led to a grave situation. The lack of awareness about preventive healthcare practices and limited medical facilities contributes the poor public health condition in the area. There are several research have been done about great biodiversity, climate change, socio-economic condition and other natural and social topic, but very few focused on the health condition of the population of this region. This article shed light on the prevailing public health issues in Sundarbans and shows the vulnerability of healthcare infrastructure in the region.

**Key Words:** *Sundarbans, Public Health, Population, Healthcare Services, Socio-Economic Status, Community, etc.*

### **Introduction:**

We all know that, 'Health is wealth' and good health is a symbol of Brightness of Life and symbol of brilliance. The constitution of WHO (World Health Organisation) defines '*Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity that enables one to lead a social and economically productive life.*' Social, economic, cultural development

depends on our good health and socio-economic development of an entire community depends on the health of the population. Health is a concept which requires continuous attention and care. In achieving the good health of the society, environmental factors play an important role. In that case we must look into some remote places of Sundarbans where public health and the healthcare system struggle to provide a good and satisfactory service to those residents. Sundarbans is a collection of 102 islands and 29 blocks. This area has been built around numerous islands by enclosing the salt water with mud dams and forested most of the islands, and this river dams are the life line of entire Sundarbans.<sup>1</sup> Generally the people have to depend on primary health centres here, as hospitals are about 70-90 km away from the isolated islands. 34% of men and 40% of women in this region are always suffering from some unknown diseases, which is much more than the statistics of West Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

Socio-economic development of the entire nation is related to health and human development. Even if our body and mind grow normally, it depends on environment. Human society is dynamic. With the new flow of time, new needs are appearing, values are loosening, and new diseases are being affected and people of Sundarbans lag behind in health awareness. Due to the pressure of urbanization, the development of agriculture, the population is increasing in Sundarbans. Now the natural balance is lost due to the development of township by clearing forests. As a result, some super cyclone like *Aila*, *Foni*, *Bulbul*, *Amphan*, *Yaas* and the strong flood on the river is a daily companion of the people here. As a result, the population of Sundarbans face several health challenges, such as infectious diseases, maternal and child health issues, malnutrition, lack of healthcare infrastructure or environmental health risks. In addition to this, the Sundarbans are in a poor condition and the worst affected areas are mainly in south 24 parganas, as this district is widely exposed to Bay of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> In assessing the health status we have to evaluate the overall health status of the population in Sundarbans, including the prevalence of diseases, healthcare access and healthcare utilization. In order to study this area, examination of social, economical factors influencing the health of the population in Sundarbans, including poverty, education, and access to clean water, sanitation facilities and exposure to natural disaster is necessary. We need to evaluate the availability, accessibility and quality of healthcare services in Sundarbans including primary healthcare facilities, hospitals and outreach programs and identify the gaps and

barriers in delivering healthcare services to the population. Such as lack of trained healthcare professionals, inadequate transportation and various cultural and social factors affecting health-seeking behaviour. Though the area of Sundarbans is widely scattered from the apex part of Kolkata to coast of Bay of Bengal, we usually see that the southern part of this region is the most sufferer than the north. Such blocks are like Gosaba, Basanti, Namkhana, Kakdwip, Patharpratima, Sagar Island and some areas of canning block. We will discuss and project light on some of this area. For these reasons the study based on primary as well as secondary data. Analysis of several publications of various years, district statistical handbook, Bureau of Applied Economic Review, Census data of District and Human Development Report etc has been used as Secondary data. To verify and strengthen the primary data and three months survey programme had been done in the villages of Sundarbans area, mainly in south 24 parganas with a set of structured questionnaires and at the Block Health Headquarter (Block Primary Health Centre) had been visited.

### **Public Health and Health Condition of Sundarbans:**

The health condition of the population of a region is closely interlinked with its socio-economic status. The socio-economic factors significantly impact the health outcomes and well-being of the people of that region. In order to discern about the public health of Sundarbans we must look into the socio-economic status in this area as this factor plays a significant role to show us the generalized picture of disparity of minimal healthcare services. However not only the socio-economic status of the population of Sundarbans is affecting the health condition of the inhabitants, but also other various factors play an important role for the vulnerability of the health status of Sundarbans. Most of the places in Sundarbans are forested land and wet lands therefore nearly 95% of the population primarily depend on agriculture in this region. About 50% of agriculturists are landless labourers. All the area of Sundarbans especially the remote island area has a higher poverty rate compared to other parts of West Bengal. Limited economic opportunities, especially in remote areas, contribute to the vulnerability of the population. A visible percentage around 31.67% of family respondent had migrated to other cities to seek employment. Those persons usually returned back to their own house during monsoon or mainly on the crop season and engaged themselves in farming.<sup>4</sup>Most of their places of migration were Kolkata, Chennai, Gujarat and Kerala. Poverty is often linked to limited access

to education, healthcare and basic amenities. Economic opportunities are limited and unemployment rates can be high, leading to financial insecurity for many households. In search of socio-economic vulnerability, we can find some natural causes which are affecting the income of the population. One of the main reasons is sea level rising and frequent flooding in the region.

The combination of sea level rising, coastal flooding and land loss can lead to the displacement of communities in the Sundarbans area. People are forced to leave their homes and seek shelter in safer areas, disrupting their livelihoods and social fabric. The loss of productive agricultural lands and fishing grounds further undermines local economics and exacerbates poverty. As per data prediction by Intergovernmental panel, Global Warming will persist till 2100, and the temperature can be raised up to Three degree Celsius. Global sea level rose at a rate of approximately 1.7mm per year from 1950 to 1992 at an average rate of 3.3mm per year from 1993 to 2009. Sea level rising increase salinity of soil and decline crop yields in cultivated area.<sup>5</sup> Due to global warming, the water level of the Bay of Bengal rise at a rate almost twice that of any other ocean in the world. Estimates of the annual rate of sea level rise in the Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta estuary are available from the Permanent Service for Mean Sea Level (PSMSL) database. This database of tides created by England's National Oceanographic Centre using satellite images and models from around the world.<sup>6</sup> Large salt water intrusion affects not only the salinity of drinking water but also cause the soil erosion, loss of fish habitat, hampered fish production and mostly damage the earthen and concrete dams and the coastal infrastructures. The people of backward villages of South 24 Parganas mainly the riverside blocks suffer from malnutrition and face various types of vectors and water borne diseases. Some areas are affected by food borne diseases due to inappropriate diet in their food habit. Another major health issue of Sundarbans is Arsenicosis. The evidence of Arsenic in the ground water of this Geo-climatic environment is very prominent. Due to high concentration of Arsenic, the majority of the people in this area are affected by contamination of this poisonous element. And the evidence of Arsenicosis is pretty much visible by noticing the hands and legs of the people in this villages.<sup>7</sup>

Researchers link the rise in water salinity in the Sundarbans and the associated health problem to environmental factors such as tropical



cyclonic activity, climate change is now exacerbating the intensity and frequency of tropical cyclones. Warming oceans and rising sea levels have resulted in at least 15 high intensity cyclones in Sundarbans in the last 25 years. With that, saltwater has reached more than 100 kilometres inland. Whereas in the past, the 10200 sq. kilometre of mangrove forests protected the region from the harshest impact of cyclonic damage, their large scale destruction has left the region's 4.5 million residents with very little environmental safeguards.<sup>8</sup> The district South 24 Parganas including Sundarbans region, is prone to recurrent cyclone attack, due to its coastal location and proximity to the Bay of Bengal. Cyclone brings strong winds, heavy rainfall, flood and storm surges.<sup>9</sup> This flooding can damage crops, and displace communities. It can also contribute to the loss of livelihoods, particularly for those dependent on agriculture or fishing. It can cause extensive damage to buildings, roads, bridges and other infrastructure in the Sundarbans. Strong winds and storm surges can result in the collapse of structures and disrupt transportation networks, making it challenging for people to access essential services and aid. Coastal flood increases the water salinity by intrusion of the saltwater into the mainland, which eventually creates the water scarcity for the habitants of the population of Sundarbans. Water salinity in the Sundarbans region can contribute to water scarcity in several ways.<sup>10</sup>

As the whole Sundarbans region is located in the coastal area, where rivers and estuaries meet the Bay of Bengal, during cyclone or high tides, seawater can enter the freshwater sources such as rivers, creeks and ponds in the Sundarbans. This intrusion of salt water makes the water unfit for consumption and irrigation, reducing the availability of freshwater sources. The contamination reduces the availability of safe drinking water sources, especially for communities that rely on groundwater wells as well as the saline water also reduces the availability of freshwater for irrigation, further impacting agricultural activities and causing water scarcity for farming and daily household activities resulting poor sanitary hygiene day by day. Limited access to basic sanitation infrastructure such as toilets, sewage systems, and waste management facilities can contribute to poor sanitation.<sup>11</sup> This particular area is characterised by its unique geography, with dense mangrove forests and network of very complex river and waterways. These geographic challenges can make it difficult to implement sanitation infrastructure effectively. For example, constructing sewage system, or providing piped water supply can be challenging in the areas

with waterlogged or unstable soil. The area is very prone to natural disaster such as cyclones, floods, and storms. These events can damage or destroy sanitation infrastructure, disrupt waste management system and lead to further deterioration of sanitation condition. However poor sanitation can have a significant impact on health in Sundarbans. Lack of proper sanitation facilities often leads to contamination of water sources, such as rivers, ponds and wells. This contamination increases the risk of water-borne diseases like cholera, typhoid, dysentery and hepatitis-A. Poor sanitation including improper waste management and inadequate toilet facilities, creates an environment conducive to the breeding of disease-carrying vectors like mosquitoes. Sundarbans is very much prone to vector borne diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and Japanese encephalitis.<sup>12</sup> These diseases pose a significant threat to public health and cause widespread outbreaks. The overall imbalance of nature and other influencing factors for socio-economic devastations are the result of climate change direct or indirectly.

This Ganges delta often faces severe cyclonic storms, storm surges and flooding. These events can cause injuries, displacement, and loss of life. The destruction of infrastructures, including healthcare facilities, during such events also hampers access to medical services. Climate change influences the distribution and prevalence of various diseases. In Sundarbans, rising temperature and changes in rainfall patterns can contribute to the proliferation of disease vectors such as mosquitoes. This increases the risk of vector borne disease like malaria, dengue fever. Additionally, water logging and stagnant water after floods provide breeding ground for mosquitoes, exacerbating the problem. Another impact of climate change is agricultural productivity and disrupts traditional livelihoods in the Sundarbans. Changes in rainfall patterns, salinity intrusion and increased frequency of cyclones affect crop production, fisheries and livestock. This can lead to food shortages, malnutrition and a decline in overall health. One study estimated that the amount of salt consumed by women in certain parts of the Sundarbans was 2-8 percent higher than the levels considered safe by the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation.<sup>13</sup>

In order to discuss the public health, we should look into women and the child health intensively, as they are the most affected by these factors. Since the physiology of women is complicated, and the health problems are also different for women, the natural calamity, social and

economical factors trigger the cause of health hazards, and that's why we need to emphasize the discussion about women health, as well as child health, as they are closely related to mother and an inseparable individual of society.

Women's health condition in the Sundarbans can be influenced by several factors, including limited access to healthcare, poverty, lack of education and cultural norms. It can be categorised by maternal health, reproductive health, malnutrition, water borne diseases and other factors. The most challenging part of remote Sundarbans is to provide proper access of maternal healthcare as well as prenatal and postnatal care and moreover safe delivery of the antenatal mother. Lack of skill birth attendants, inadequate transportation and poor infrastructure contribute to high maternal mortality rates. Such cases have history of death due to severe labour pain which couldn't be tolerated by antenatal mother and the lack of transportation is the main factor of these cases. Menstruation is one of the sensitive topics that people shy away from discussing. According to survey, 23% of rural girls are forced to drop out of school due to menstruation. About 61.9% of rural women in Sundarbans are affected by some kind of Reproductive Tract Infection(RTI) and infertility issues due to not using sanitary napkins during menstruation and this is because lack of awareness about menstrual hygiene. The number of Pelvic Inflammatory Diseases (PID), Urinary Tract Infection (UTI), Cervical Infections are rising day by day.<sup>14</sup> The reason behind this illness is mainly due to washing cloths and bathing in the highly contaminated pond water and long exposure of saline water. With frequent storms over the years, the salinity of most of the rivers and ponds has increased in almost all areas of the Sundarbans, an ASHA worker<sup>15</sup>said. *'I visited 25 homes everyday and most of these homes have women who have one or the other problems related to menstruation.'* The women who involve in catching prawns in waist deep water for long time are the most affected. The women who usually catch prawns in knee deep or waist deep water mostly develop low back pain due to constant pressure of forward and backward bending. The worst thing about prawns catching is a chance of attack by crocodiles, sharks and snakes in the river. In addition to that, water borne diseases and other co-morbidities are a major matter of concern. Diarrhoea, Dysentery, Cholera, Enteric fever, Rheumatoid arthritis, Bronchial Asthma, Diabetes is also at a higher risk to impact on their health. Another notable alarming issue is maternal malnutrition. Most of the antenatal mothers are suffering

from malnutrition affecting the newborn child remains malnourished after delivery. This is a marked situation to look after cautiously.<sup>16</sup>

Women and child health corresponds with each other. When we emphasize the women health, the topic of child health comes accordingly. The condition of child health in Sundarbans is miserable. Malnourishment is a matter of concern in this area. Around 30% of children in Sundarbans area face some kind of ailment and at around 26000 of neonates and children below age group of 5 years get admitted in hospital in every year. Poorer sections are severely affected by malnutrition and noticeably increasing numbers are between the age group of 13 to 36 months.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the ailments of paediatric age group are Respiratory Tract Infections (Like Cold, Cough, Fever, and Allergic Rhinitis), Gastro Intestinal Tract Infections (Like Acute Gastro Enteritis, Diarrhoea, Enteric Fever), Various Skin Diseases (Itching, Skin Rashes, Scabies). This is worth noting that Antenatal care of the mother at gestational period are satisfactory but after delivery there is no proper awareness about Exclusive Breast Feeding of the infants and Postnatal care of the mothers. Even in today's time 55% of delivery is not institutional and about 5% of this home deliveries are conducted by a medical professional. Local healthcare providers have taken care of excellent immunization program but those providers are not properly trained about the nutrition advices to the mother. About 25% of infants between age group of 0-12 months spend their initial phase without any medical guidance. A significant percentage of neonates are deprived from immediate start of Exclusive Breast-Feeding practices and the number is 60%. This resulted lack of immunity in their body and frequently suffer from Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI), Lower Respiratory Tract Infections (LRTI), Pneumonia and severe chest infections, Enteric Fever, Measles. Where the percentage of Respiratory Distress affected children is 13% in West Bengal, the percentage in Sundarbans is about 30%. Similarly gender of infants play an important role of suffering in these diseases. The girls are more prone to Diarrhoea (about 8.2%), than boys (6%). On the other hand, age is related to get affected by ARI. The older children (age group of 12-23 months) are more affected (40%) than the younger's (0-6 months of children suffer about 28%). The geographic location is a significant factor to differentiate the intensity of diseases. Such as the southern part of Sundarbans are more vulnerable than the northern

part, as these areas are closer to mainland and easily communicable to the central cities of the state.<sup>18</sup>

As the unfavourable environment and low standard of living of the people affects physical health, the mental health of the people needs special attention. The recurrent natural disaster, economical crisis, chronic ailments, displacement of house all the factors indicate the dire situation of the people in Sundarbans, which affects an impact on the people's mental health. If we do research on that topic, we can see 14.6% of the population are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), followed by Somatoform Pain and Adjustments Disorder. Another important noticeable thing is reluctance and lack of awareness about the physical health and the sanitary system of the women and as well as the family. A woman named Ruksar Gazi (27years from Gosaba block) stated about her health condition after her delivery, who is suffering from severe Urinary Tract Infection and 1<sup>st</sup> degree Uterine prolapsed, but didn't consult with any doctor neither in the govt. hospital nor private physician. She has a boy who is only 7 years old and suffering from some neurological problems and the parents regularly visit SSKM Hospital for the problem of the child, but this sick woman was not entertained for her problems, and everyone of her family told her that, 'It is very normal thing, and you should not worry about that.'<sup>19</sup> This kind of example is very common in this area. Many names are like Saraswati Mondal, Kamala Das, Sabita Halder from other blocks has this same kind of story. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder leads an individual to commit suicide. Most of the cases of suicide (around 55%) are seen by consuming pesticides. The reasons are very obvious, which includes loss of land and home due to rise of sea level at an alarming rate (3.14mm per year). A famous project manager of an international NGO named Chittapriyo Sadhu stated that, the women are most susceptible individuals in Sundarbans, as they have to balance between household works and cope with the children. Not only that, they usually go for work in the fields to help their husband or the family members. About six government hospitals have been visited and collected the clinical records about the numbers of suicide or attempted suicide. The result was shocking. It was found that about 65% of the victims of the following are women.

Now the question is, how sick are the people of Sundarbans? Data shows a remarkable finding, the death rate is 7.6% in Sundarbans

whereas 6.3% death rate in all over West Bengal. Expectedly the rate should higher in above 60years of age group followed by children at the age group of below 5 years. Surprisingly 40% of death caused by gastrointestinal problems and around 38% of male and 40% of female population suffer from some sort of illness in entire Sundarbans. However, the NSSO data shows the comparative study in the year 2004, that the average ailments in Sundarbans higher than the state average (24% male and 26% female). A fascinating thing to be noted that the morbidity is slightly bended towards female population in the middle age groups (15-59 years). About 2, 40,000 people in the Sundarbans are highly vulnerable to Chronic Heart Disease (CHD). The age group of above 40 years people are highly prone to arthritis and 42.4% pf the population are already been diagnosed with Osteoarthritis. The data shows the higher percentage than the whole state data at around 35.3% Not only that, the rate of Bronchial Asthma is critically high in the Sundarbans area, about 8%.<sup>20</sup> There is a concern about the outbreak of vector borne diseases like Malaria, Dengue Fever, Dengue Haemorrhagic syndrome, Kala Azar, Japanese Encephalitis in this geographic location, even the prevalence rate of Bronchial asthma is about 6 times higher in the poorer section of people than the middle or upper middle class people. A statistic in 2006 shows that about 1 lakh 27 thousand cases of water borne diseases like Diarrhoea and Enteric Fever had been treated in government hospital. The blocks of Canning-1 and 2, Mandirbazar, Magrahat-1 are diarrhoea prone blocks reporting high incidence. Some statistical analysis from marginal blocks, like Sagar, Namkhana, Canning-1 & 2, Mandirbazar, Gosaba shows the increasing cases of Water borne diseases, such as Enteric Fever, Typhoid, Amoebic Dysentery etc. Not only vector or water borne disease, lifestyle changes, pollutions, increase tobacco smoking and drinking alcohol habits flare up the risks of cardio-vascular diseases. The dwellers of backward villages of south 24 parganas, especially marginal blocks of the Sundarbans area, suffer from various diseases.

Now, the question is, who provide health care and how much? More specifically, there are three major healthcare providers in Sundarbans area. (1) Government Hospitals, such as Primary and Block Primary Health Centres which are the Public Health Sectors (2) Non-Government Organisations who provide Mobile Health Services and (3) The Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPs).

The healthcare system of Easily accessible part and Difficult

Accessible part of Sundarbans are delivered by multi-tier healthcare infrastructure which are primarily funded by public funds. The private healthcare providers may be classified into several groups as per their qualification and economical motive to serve the locality: (i) The doctors (qualified private providers) practicing individually or at private institutions, (ii) nursing home and private hospitals with capacity to provide in-patient care, (iii) unqualified private providers or RMPs, and (iv) preventive and curative services provided by not-for-profit organizations through different programs and facilities, especially through mobile health units under a unique P-P-P model (public-private-partnership) program and institutional birth delivery centres. There are 13 blocks in Sundarbans, South 24 parganas. As per report, there are One District Hospital, 635 sub centres, 46 Rural Hospitals (RH), along with Primary and Block Primary Health Centres (PHCs & BPHCs). The Three tier referral system of government health facility is as follows:

- Sub centres, govt. clinics, dispensaries which offers only outpatient care are at the lowest tier
- Primary Health Centres which offer basic in-patient services are at the middle tier
- Block Primary Health Centres, Sub Division hospitals and District hospitals which offer full fledged out-patient and in-patient services to the district population are at the top tier.

The Health Care services organised by various NGOs is an outstanding step in this regard. A medical team is formed consist of a social worker, a paramedical worker, and a doctor who visit the projected villages periodically to provide support and expedite development activities. The Mobile health team serves as the intermediary between village and health centres. The idea of Mobile Boat Dispensaries is very unique to provide healthcare facilities Sundarbans particularly in the inaccessible areas of the Sundarbans. The idea is to provide preventive and curative healthcare services in those areas. This mobile health services usually provide the facility of BP examination, Random Blood Sugar check up, First Aid, Outdoor Clinic, X-Ray, ECG, Vitamin-A prophylaxis, treatment of malnourished cases which are linked up to Rural Child Health programme, Immunization and Antenatal screening with difficult pregnancies, and postnatal checkup.<sup>21</sup>

The entire region of Sundarbans is highly dominated by RMPs.



Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPs) are the unsung heroes of those climatically fragile and inaccessible Sundarbans. RMPs are those people who know the grass root problems of the people in those areas, because they live in that community for over the years. Without any formal medical training the RMPs gather experience from many renowned doctors in the cities and applied their experiences to treat the locality.<sup>22</sup> About 62% of outpatient clients sought treatment from RMPs while government facilities were visited by only 11%. The southern part of Sundarbans where many remote blocks are situated, the economic condition of the people is very compromised, that's why the poorer section of the people of those areas are heavily dependent on RMPs. The reason is very obvious; acute ailments which need urgent treatment, can't reach the big facilities in the golden hours. Most of the patients about 53% are being treated by RMPs is Arthritis pain. The proportion is however relatively low for patients with Acute Cardiac Problems or Diabetes (22% & 25%). Besides of these cases, they are also doing minor surgical procedures in their clinic such as Appendix, Hernia, Hydrocele, Gall bladder stone. Now question is, why do people prefer RMPs? After taking several interviews of the residents of the Sundarbans and searching for an answer to this, the most evident answers are easy accessibility and affordability. They are easily available, closely located and the medicines written by them are much cheaper and usually the local brands which they sell by themselves. Not only the factor of affordability but the other important factor behind the spread of RMPs is people's trust which often manifests in people's long memory of favourable results produced by RMPs (and short memory of undesired results).<sup>23</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Built in previous findings Sundarbans is characterised by its interstate network of rivers, creeks and dense mangrove forests. This poses considerable challenges in providing timely healthcare services. The region's vulnerability to natural disaster, such as cyclones and floods, further exacerbates the already fragile healthcare infrastructure, often resulting in disrupted services and limited access to medical facilities. The primary status of health in the population of Sundarbans is marked by high rates of communicable diseases, including malaria, dengue fever, and water borne illnesses. Unhygienic practices, poor sanitation facilities and difficult access to safe drinking water contribute to prevalence of these diseases. Moreover, the region is also grappling with non-communicable diseases like hypertension, diabetes and

respiratory ailments, which are on the rise due to changing lifestyles and limited awareness but preventive healthcare. The availability of primary healthcare centres and hospitals is insufficient, particularly in remote areas, making it difficult for the residents to access even basic healthcare services. The limitation of healthcare facilities in the region often falls short, with limited diagnostic capabilities and a lack of specialized care.

To address these challenges, concerted efforts are required at various levels. First and foremostly there is a need for increased investment in healthcare infrastructure, including the establishment of well-equipped hospital, primary health centres, and diagnostic facilities in underserved areas. Additionally recruiting and training healthcare professionals who are familiar with the unique needs of the Sundarbans region is crucial. Furthermore, community-based healthcare initiatives should be prioritized to raise awareness about preventive measures and promote healthier lifestyle. This can be achieved through education campaign, outreach programs and collaborations with local organizations and community leaders. Increasing the access to safe drinking water and good sanitation facilities as well as improving hygiene practices, should be integral components of these initiatives. By prioritizing these areas and implementing effective strategies, it is possible to improve the health outcomes and overall well-being of the population in the Sundarbans region.

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## Speaking the Unspeakable: Articulation in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*

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### Abstract:

The political act of drawing boundaries across nations has long borne the traumatic history of widespread bloodshed and inhuman violence perpetrated in the name of nationalism. Amidst this warped humanity, it is the women who have had to endure unimaginable torture. While being hailed as the embodiment of the *mother-nation*, they have been brutalized physically and emotionally by the frenzied men folk.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* poignantly shows how women are reduced to metaphors of conquered territory on which victorious men celebrate their triumph. The young narrator, Lenny relates the complete silencing of her Ayah who is a victim of such ruthless cruelty. Raped and prostituted by men she once counted among her friends, Ayah loses her speech and Lenny loses access to the horrific experiences she encountered. The text too, thus, remains silent regarding those dark, degrading incidents.

This paper traces the way silence of the women during Partition has been dealt with, highlighting the heterogeneity of experience. Language was conceived as a masculine structure that reestablished socio-sexual discrepancies and reinforced the patriarchal values of society. Using Julia Kristeva's theory of the *semiotic* and the *symbolic*, this paper aims to explore the boundaries of this narrative which seeks to lend voice to a woman using an essentially male language.

"If a man doesn't lay claim to my body, the country  
will send someone to do so."

- Shauna Singh Baldwin.<sup>1</sup>

The end of British imperialism in India, in August 1947, birthed two sovereign nation-states, as India and Pakistan were gripped by a misplaced notion of patriotism. As the world witnessed their celebration

of independence from colonial rule, ensconced within the officially sanctioned discourse lay the horror and trauma of post-Partition violence that jeopardized the very premise of 'independence'. The date of Partition between India and Pakistan embodies the indeterminate nature of this catastrophic event. Celebrated in India on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August and in Pakistan on the 14<sup>th</sup>, it acts as a border between two days and two different dates of independence, conveying and performing the incredible simultaneity of different subject positions from which varied experiences and interpretations of history emerged. What was it a freedom from? The 12 million people uprooted during this period of population-exchange would vouch for the fact that it was not liberty as we understand it; it was, in fact, a disengagement from humanity. The liberation of a country came at the cost of its *cracking*.

As has historically been the case, the women of these newly formed 'neighbouring' countries became the bearers of the most dehumanising form of violence in the feverish frenzy following Partition. *Bearing Witness: Partition, Independence, End of the Raj* by Sukeshi Kamra depicts a woman, with an anxious look, acting as a magician's assistant; she is seen to be lying in a box with 'Pakistan' and 'Hindustan' written at two ends, while Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru saw her into two. John Bull, a cartoon figure that illustrators used as a metaphor of Britain, nervously comments from the background, "I only 'ope Nothing Goes Wrong Madam" (Kamra 76). The deft use of this cartoon underscores the centrality of women's bodies, both at the ideological level of treating them as the symbol of nationhood, as also in terms of the essentially physical violence perpetrated on them. Portrayed as the 'mother' of the nation, their bodies are encrypted with religious overtones, and hence become the bearers of the symbolic violation and contamination in between conflicting communities. Urvashi Butalia speaks about the 'kafila', the "massive human columns" that crossed the borders:

As kafilas crossed each other, moving in opposite directions, people who looked exactly the same – for little in their appearance would, at first glance, tell whether they are Hindu or Muslim – and were burdened with poverty and grief, would suddenly turn in murderous attack on each other. Of the thousands of women who were raped and abducted, large numbers were picked up from the edges of the kafilas. (Butalia 61)

Describing peasant proprietors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French agrarian society, Karl Marx argued that the 'absent collective consciousness' of the disempowered peasant proprietor was represented by a political proxy from the middle class, who spoke on their behalf. Marx talks of *darstellen* (aesthetic representation) and *vertreten* (political representation). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that these two meanings of representation are conflated so that aesthetic representation of the disempowered groups becomes subordinate to the political proxy which ventriloquises for them. Spivak attacks this process of indirect silencing stating that hegemonic discourse must consider the aesthetic aspect of political representation in order to really give the subaltern a voice. Otherwise, it too will gag the latter, hijack their right to be heard.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) is an incisive exploration of the building of a nation amidst social unrest, political tumult, gender politics, and refugee rehabilitation, copiously fed by religious fanaticism. Later also published as *Cracking India*, this novel explores the official and unofficial processes deliberately put into action to produce national identities of Hindus and Muslims as Indians and Pakistanis respectively. The narratorial voice in the novel belongs to a young Parsee girl, Lenny, whose naiveté renders the surrounding ruthlessness even more devastating. Her tender age tempers her narrative with an innocence that cannot comprehend the magnitude of communal violence. Lenny is confused at being unable to fathom the concept of a nation's 'partition'. In a poignant way, she calls attention to its futility when she wonders, "Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is?" (*Ice-Candy-Man* 92).

Lenny's narrative voice problematizes the issue of representation. The brutality meted out to the women in this novel is not a direct assault on Lenny. It is her Hindu Ayah, Shanta through whom the novel traces the horrifying aftermath of Partition and the distinct and uneasy silence that accompanied it. Sidhwa draws a brilliant parallel between Lenny and the partitioned nations. Lenny, like Sidhwa herself, is afflicted by polio. Her physical handicap corresponds to the struggle of both Pakistan and India to stand on their own feet as independent nation-states. Unsteady and vulnerable, the three of them coalesce into one as struggling fledgling entities desperate for survival.

This novel traces Lenny's coming-of-age as she slowly but surely,

becomes cognizant of the socio-political dynamics of the times, as also of the issues of sexuality and gender. Lenny's Ayah was one of the countless women who were forced to negotiate the tenuous borders of their selves even as the arbitrary re-structuring of the national borders was being completed in haste by the Radcliffe Commission. Ayah's sexualized body and her power over the male gaze would *educate* Lenny. Embodying the symbol of the mother of the nation, Ayah was the ubiquitous figure who had at her feet the Popsicle seller, the Masseur, Sher Singh, the Gardener, the Butcher, a Chinaman, Sharbat Khan, Hari, the wrestler, Yousaf and many more. Sidhwa points to the irony of the situation when it is these same admirers, who abduct her, violate her modesty and engage her as a 'tawaif' in the area of Lahore called Hira Mandi. Rape and mutilation of the female body during Partition was used as a metaphor of dominance to be brandished before the male members of the opposing nation. The patriarchal lineage of the 'enemy' was sought to be disrupted thus. Women would only represent a lifeless, inert figure, bereft of feeling and emotion, with her womb acting as the creator of the future of her nation, as also a sign of religious chastity. It is this fractioned signification of the feminine self that defined women as no more than a corporeal entity. Kamla Bhasin and Ritu Menon argue, "As a retaliatory measure, it was simultaneously an assertion of identity and a humiliation of the rival community through the appropriation of its women." (Menon and Bhasin 3) The layers embedded within the "covetous glances" (*Ice-Candy-Man* 3) of Ayah's wooers are shown to conceal this patriarchal bias who get their claws out with the climactic event of Partition. Lenny notes that Ayah is shamed not by strangers, but by those she trusted.

The usual response to any traumatic incident is to treat it as being distant, away from one's immediate reality. This collective disinclination of the society to acknowledge its proximity to a disturbing reality is what Sidhwa attempts to prod awake through the relentless gaze of Lenny. Belonging to the Parsee community, Lenny is outside the binary Hindu/Muslim division and hence has the privilege of uninhibited movement into various social circles. The young narrator is witness to the dreadful aggression and hostility that are heightened in the politically turbulent period post-Partition. As friends turn into enemies, Lenny realises, "It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves – and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols." (*Ice-Candy-*



*Man* 93) In a moment, the nationality of Ayah's body becomes charged with religious significance.

"Memory," as Dipesh Chakrabarty notes, "is a complex phenomenon that reaches out to far beyond what normally constitutes a historian's archive, for memory is much more than what the mind can remember or what objects can help document the past." (Chakrabarty 109) Thus, history is always created, bent and shaped out of multiple versions of *truth* where the author consciously chooses to highlight one narrative among many. Toni Morrison defines this as 'National Amnesia', a convenient glossing over the bitter realities of life that are somewhat lost in translation. The history of Partition, as we know it, is actually about the nature of collective and private memory, about the fictional aspect of history. Antoinette Burton notes that this difference between *history* and *literature* was specifically gendered. Women's writings were conventionally designated as *literature*, "while men claimed the more 'objective' task of writing truth-telling 'History'" (Burton 20). Sidhwa exposes this paradigm as a rather crafty method of erasing the agency of women from history. The parallel voices of a young Lenny narrating the events from the present time of the novel and the much older Lenny attempting to remember those events create a simultaneity between the present experience and the remembered past. The narrativization of history becomes important in this context. Sidhwa plunges into the discourse of silence – the 'unspeakable thoughts, unspoken'. As Lahore is ravaged by the riots, Lenny's ability to narrate fails her. Gaps and hyphens punctuate the narrative as linguistic and grammatical marks of silence. Words come halting as she describes the carnage: "Despite all the ruptured dreams, broken lives, buried gold, bricked-in rupees, secreted jewellery, lingering hopes ... the fire could not have burned for months and months..." (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 139)

The positionality of Sidhwa finds its correspondence in Lenny as a liminal figure in the sense that both of them inhabit a distanced standpoint, one because of her diasporic identity and the other owing to her religion. Sidhwa seeks to find a balance between the aforementioned significations of 'representation' as *darstellen* (aesthetic re-presentation, as in art) and *vertreten* (political representation, as in 'speaking for'). In portraying trauma, she had to remain conscious of her own diasporic position, so that 'speaking for' did not merely mean ventriloquizing and repressing the felt reality; by

the same token, she had to depict sexual oppression in such a manner that it did not eroticize it for the voyeuristic pleasure of the readers. This explains the silences in her novel regarding Ayah's exploitation. Even as Lenny awakens to the changes in her pre-pubescent body, she cannot narrate the sexual abuse that Ayah is subjected to. So too, in case of the women in Ranna's village, the narratorial voice shifts from Lenny's to that of Ranna's. Sidhwa, thus, brings to the fore the difficulty of representation as the narrative fails to speak about the actual events regarding the violence Ayah and the women of Ranna's village experience. The text, therefore, becomes a testimony to the national border as the historical and yet unintelligible locus where identities implode in deafening silence. This silence emerges from a sense of failure, an utter inability to address the reality of Partition.

The difficulty arises from the argument that the language of representation itself is conflated with the hegemonic patriarchal discourse. Julia Kristeva identifies two modes of significations in which language operates – the *semiotic* and the *symbolic*. The semiotic is the phase that occurs within the pre-linguistic and pre-Oedipal state. This mode of expression originates in the unconscious where linguistic rules of syntax and grammar do not function. The psychosomatic drives being pre-Oedipal, this phase is associated with the mother. The symbolic, on the other hand, is the social state, in which a child undergoes the socialising process, whereby its untamed desires are controlled and repressed, and it begins to recognise the authority of the father. Thus, the ordered symbolic is masculine, whereas the spontaneous natural semiotic is feminine (Mc Afee, 16-17). It has been noted that feminine writing is characterised by disruptions in the text with the semiotic continuously dislocating the realm of the symbolic which are characterised by gaps, silences and recurring images. The narrative technique adopted by Sidhwa in this novel is marked by such essentially semiotic dimensions, as voicelessness assumes the importance of a trope, signifying the inadequacy of the male grand narrative to represent what women went through while men were busy determining the shifting national identities.

This silence is also communicative of Partition as a historical trauma. Lenny's nightmares effectively, albeit silently, communicate the indelible impact Partition-violence had on her, connecting her "to the pain of others" – "No one had taught me to fear an immaculate Nazi soldier. Yet, here he was, in nightmare after nightmare, coming

to get me on his motorcycle” (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 21-22). The element of dread embodied by the Nazi soldier as a historical referent to the Holocaust is a reminder that the historical trauma associated with it had passed on to the collective memory of even those who had not experienced it directly. Lenny’s recognition that nothing within the realm of her particular cultural experience had taught her to fear a Nazi soldier crystallizes the effect of historical trauma as undefined, unlocatable. Sidhwa seems to suggest that Partition, too, has become such a historical referent which impacts a collective conscience. Interestingly here, Sidhwa plays with the conventional, linear narrative structure by blending the accounts of the young and the older Lenny. The description of the nightmare becomes a parallel recounting of one Lenny for whom the dread of the Nazi soldier was a present reality and for the one for whom it became a retrospective knowledge. They are equally bound to the nightmare through the fear inspired by the fractured historical referent that the soldier symbolised. The voices of the older and the young Lenny are thus joined in a simultaneity of presence, existing within a temporal border between the past and the present, narrating a historical as well as an individual story. Lenny’s second nightmare is connected far more intrinsically to the violence of Partition. Dismembering of children in a warehouse and the conspicuous absence of pain thereof, is a corresponding account of the Partition of a country, similarly dismembered and benumbed –

The atmosphere is businesslike and relaxed. Godmother sits by my bed smiling indulgently as men in uniforms quietly slice off a child’s arm here, a leg there. She strokes my head as they dismember me. I feel no pain. Only an abysmal sense of loss – and a chilling horror that no one is concerned by what’s happening (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 22).

The possibility that this could be an exaggerated image of Lenny’s surgeries remains true. Thus the young narrator’s individual pain becomes conflated with the collective agony of all those witnessing the Partition. Yet another nightmare depicts the “hopeless moans of crucified children” (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 132). Their “collective sighs” (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 133) delineate their inability to articulate their pain and re-emphasise the failure of language to verbalize such horror. Soon, Lenny’s nightmare becomes a ghastly reality, with a mob descending on the street as a “naked child, twitching on a spear struck between her shoulders, is waved like a flag” (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 135).

With the description of this gruesome confrontation between Sikh and Muslim mobs, the image radically challenges the assumed religious specificity of a crucified body. Sidhwa's intention, perhaps, is to reveal the pervading nature of violence, regardless of any particular religious community.

As a mode of response, literature assumes a creative freedom that allows for the exploration of painful events without the theoretical restraints of trauma, thus granting literature a linguistic space in which trauma can be addressed as an essential part of Partition. At the same time, however, fiction is not beyond the effects of trauma. Sigmund Freud explains that if the traumatic event overwhelms us to the extent that it cannot be consciously experienced as it occurs, and thus cannot be completely integrated into our psyches as a completed event, then trauma is always about the linguistic and psychic inability to locate and identify the traumatic event, and not the refusal of the occurrence of the traumatic event. To talk about trauma is therefore to already be in the language of metaphors. Thus, language inhabits a bordered existence whereby trauma is voiced through metaphors and images with the simultaneous acknowledgement of its unspeakable nature. Lenny's narrative, then, becomes another border between the specificity of the history of Partition and its traumatic impact.

As mentioned earlier, it is not Lenny, but the male narrative voice of Ranna that documents the terrifying events of Partition in the villages. The textual silence regarding Ayah's violation and subsequent experiences in Hira Mandi is interrupted and replaced by Ranna's experiences. A frightening picture of religious bigotry is presented when Ranna describes the Sikhs invading their homes and unleashing bestial violence on their women. It is a war waged between the men, the scores of which are settled through the violation of the women: "He saw babies, snatched from their mothers, smashed against walls and their howling mothers brutally raped and killed." (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 207) A reference to the process of *jauhar* is hinted at, when Ranna explains the plan to enclose the women inside their homes and light fire to them, in order to "protect" their honour. Butalia foregrounds the word *izzat*, in the Muslim context (Butalia, 196). Such is the nature of patriarchy that women in a war zone are left with the choice of either being brutalized by the enemy or burnt by their own menfolk.

The desecration of women plummets into the darkest abyss with the description of the gunny-bags carrying mutilated breasts in the train from Gurdaspur. The train acts as the messenger between the two countries – a symbolic courier system, connecting the violence. It is an act of significant proportions, functioning as the signifier of the disfigurement of the female body and, truncating nourishment for the subsequent generations of the enemy-population – an attack on womanhood as well as motherhood. As Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin have famously argued in *Borders and Boundaries*<sup>51</sup>, women's bodies became corporeal metaphors for the conquest of territories. In this revisionist history of an embattled terrain, the disfigured nation thus finds its parallel in her desexualized mothers.

The irrepresentability of the victims' experiences looms large with Lenny's depiction of the plight of the abused women in the women's camp. Lenny mistakes it to be a "women's jail" because it is padlocked from outside, with a sturdy powerfully built Sikh guard keeping vigil (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 189). In her innocence, she terms one of them a "criminal" when her mother interviews her for the post of governess (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 191). Lenny notes that there is "little chatter among the women." (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 189) But their "inhuman" cries are heard at night, emphasizing their inability to communicate through the discourse of the symbolic. Urvashi Butalia comments, in this context: "For those who had been taken away from their families through rape and abduction, the loss was even more profound: would they even be able to find the words to articulate their feelings?" (Butalia, 285) The sound of silence resonating in the camp is almost palpable as Lenny is informed that abducted, tortured and raped women who are rejected by their families inhabit that enclosed space. Not only are the borders of their bodies rendered suspect, the concept of 'home' also becomes charged with gendered discrimination as even their families disown them for no fault of their own.

It is Ayah's silence, though, that speaks the loudest in the novel. On being unintentionally betrayed by Lenny, Ayah is dragged out of the Sethi-house, by a Muslim mob, led by her erstwhile suitor, the Ice-Candy-Man. The haunting image of her silent cries disrupts the monolithic construction of approved historiographies. The terror in her eyes reflects her knowledge of what lies ahead - something that is lost on naive Lenny. The horrifying events that follow is engulfed in silence, for Lenny has access neither to the experiences, nor to

the language that might represent them. Such moments of silence become the most poignant articulation of the Partition as a rupture in the history of the subcontinent. By even including naive Lenny as part of those who let down Ayah, Sidhwa implicates everyone in the victimization of women during the historical trauma of Partition. When Lenny and her Godmother finally trace her to Hira Mandi, she has a new identity, but no voice, “as if someone has mutilated her vocal cords”. (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 261) On being Ice-Candy-Man’s bride, Shanta is now Mumtaz. The politics of dressing can also be discerned here, with Ayah’s bridal finery restricting her physical freedom – “teetering on high heels, tripping on the massive divided skirt of her *garara*, jangling gold bangles” (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 260), she is a shadow of her previous confident, self-assured self. The religious extremism of nationalist zealots not only tarnishes her chastity but warps her selfhood too. The reader is never comprehensively informed about Ayah’s future as she crosses the Wagah border to return to her ‘homeland’. Silence thus emerges as a new kind of articulation of the history of Partition with a problematized notion of borders as dividing not just places, but identities. Testimony thus emerges not just in the inadequacy of language, but more profoundly in the poetic license of memory that opens a creative space in which the failure of fiction becomes an allegory for the story of its own ineptness.

The novel provides an indictment against the patriarchal perspective that viewed women as signifiers of territory, to be invaded and conquered. The trope of portraying them as the mother of the nation, thereby elevating them to a pedestal, is but a means adopted by the parochial male discourse to retain control over women’s sexuality. It conceals a perversion which manifests itself at the slightest provocation, be it nationalism or religious fervour. Reading trauma necessarily engages memories and representations of *histories* that lie beyond our immediate familiar realms. The silence pervading Sidhwa’s novel is thus constituted by histories that challenge regulatory, referential modes of understanding. Sidhwa recognizes the challenge of narrativizing the trauma that Ayah and so many like her underwent at the wake of Partition. These experiences of savage violence and absolute ignominy cannot be translated into words which largely belong to the realm of the patriarchal symbolic. Thus, even though Lenny wants to “kiss her ugly experiences away”, structured language does not possess the power to vocalize Shanta’s experiences (*Ice-Candy-Man*, 254). Derrida had argued that testimony

does not claim itself to be truthful; rather, it announces the inability to talk about an overwhelming event as an experienced presence in the present tense. Testimony which, therefore, tells the story of its own failure, becomes an ambiguous reality between what is spoken and what remains unspeakable. The focus on the moments of silence indicates the shift from the fictional status of Lenny's narrative to testimony. Sidhwa's novel, therefore, represents a critical feminist voice in conversation about the ways in which violence is both a known fact and an incomprehensible part of the history of Partition. Erasure from national historiographies is the only future that women like Ayah can encounter. This silence emerges from a sense of inadequacy to talk about Partition as a history of cruelty. Such absence of enunciation is an acknowledgement of Partition, not as a political reality but as a national tragedy.

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3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988) 24-28.
4. In an interview with Julie Rajan, Sidhwa says that the title was changed thus because her publishers in America felt that with such numerous publications each year, the title *Ice-Candy-Man* might not attract the attention of the reading public. *Cracking India*, on the other hand, would draw those interested in India and its political history. Hence the novel was published in America with the revised title in 1991. The interview was published in *Monsoon Magazine* in the year 2000. It has been reprinted in Shakti Batra's *Bapsi Sidhwa: Ice-Candy-Man* (New Delhi: Surjeet Publications, 2011).
5. On 8th July, 1947, Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a lawyer, was given the charge of dividing British India into India and Pakistan. Equipped with incomprehensive maps and census-statistics, he was asked to draw what later came to be known as the Line of Control. Urvashi Butalia writes in *The Other side of Silence*: "With a bare five weeks in which to decide [...] Radcliffe got down to the momentous task of deciding a boundary that would divide a province of more than 35 million people, thousands of villages, towns and cities, a unified and integrated system of canals and communication networks and 16 million Muslims, 15 million Hindus and 5 million Sikhs who, despite their religious differences, shared a common culture, language and history. (65-66)
6. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's*



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## **Land Tenure and Agrarian Relations in Colonial Bengal: A Historical Study of Darjeeling Hill Areas**

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### **Abstract:**

In India, a significant portion of the population relies on agriculture, either directly or indirectly, for their sustenance. Consequently, land plays a pivotal role in the rural economy, and the ownership or non-ownership of land creates a fundamental divide within rural society. Therefore, in addition to examining cultivation methods, understanding the system of land measurement, land taxes, land revenue, and land productivity is of utmost importance. During the pre-colonial era, the Darjeeling district did not have a prevailing permanent land tenure system. At that time, the tribes residing in the area were granted the right to cultivate the land for a nominal fee. Following the annexation, the British Government implemented a new land policy in the hilly regions of the Darjeeling district. Unlike the districts in West Bengal, the Darjeeling district did not witness the establishment of a permanent settlement or the zamindari system as part of its land tenure arrangements. The entire land in the Darjeeling hill areas is occupied by the government departments; these entities either have direct ownership of land or have granted possession to private individuals or public organizations under various terms and conditions. In this research paper, aside from analyzing the landholding patterns and agrarian relations, transformations like land relationships and associated information are discussed to gain insights into the role of landowners and the subsequent implications for agrarian relations.

**Key Words:** *Tenure, Jhum, Pakhurias, Kuthdars, Mandal, Ryot, Khasmahal, Adhiars.*

The primary source of revenue for all governments in India, including the British administration, was derived from land revenue or land tax. The British rule in India spanned from 1757 to 1947, and during this period, land revenue or land tax played a vital role in government finances.<sup>1</sup> Various systems were adopted for revenue collection in different regions, such as landlord-based systems, individual-based

systems, and village-based systems. Around a century ago, the British introduced a relatively modern land tenure system in the hill areas. Unlike the zamindari system that characterized land tenure in other districts of West Bengal, it was never implemented in the Darjeeling hill areas. In the plains, there was typically a clear distinction between a cultivating peasant and a non-cultivating Zamindar. However, such a system is uncommon in the hill areas, where most farmers are also landowners and pay rent directly to the government. The territory of Darjeeling comprised areas that were previously under the control of Sikkim, which encompasses the Darjeeling Sadar and Kurseong hill subdivisions, along with the Terai region, as well as Bhutan, which includes the Kalimpong subdivision and portions of Dooars, had unique land ownership systems, production methods, and tax policies due to their historical adherence to what appeared to be a feudal social structure before colonization. It should be mentioned; that all the lands of hill areas were in a primitive condition and were called 'waste land'. In the beginning, these wastelands were settled under The Waste Land Rules of 1839, 1859, and 1862 under very favorable terms and conditions to attract people for settlement and agriculture. Subsequently, the Bengal Rent Act of 1859 regulated the rights and responsibilities of tenants, along with the terms of their leases. Land revenue settlements were carried out under the Bengal Rent Settlement Act of 1879 in these regions, with the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 not applying to them.<sup>2</sup> According to Act X of 1859; tenants do not acquire a hereditary right of occupancy in any land they have held for twelve years or longer. Additionally, they are not authorized to transfer or sublet their land without obtaining permission from the Deputy Commissioner. It is not typically encouraged to transfer land or sublet it from hillmen to plainsmen, and it is also uncommon to permit Lepchas or Bhutias to transfer or sublet their lands to Nepalis. The rights and responsibilities of tenants in the Darjeeling district are governed by Act X of 1859, known as the Bengal Rent Act of 1859, while the land revenue settlements are conducted following Act VIII of 1879, referred to as the Bengal Rent Settlement Act of 1879. It's important to emphasize that the Bengal Tenancy Act does not have jurisdiction in this region. The distinctive aspect of the land tenure system in the district is that the government acts as the sole proprietor of all estates, and, no private landlords or tenure holders are intermediating between the government and the rayots.<sup>3</sup> Despite the Government being the sole proprietor and the absence of intermediaries between the State and cultivators. Unauthorized subletting, which is prohibited by law, is

relatively common in practice. In these hill subdivisions, particularly in Kalimpong, there are three categories of under-tenants: Pakhurias, who pay cash rent to the primary tenant of the land; Kuthdars, who pay a fixed produce rent; and Adhiars, a group of under-rayots who receive half of the crop. Notably, Pakhurias, who are considered tenants-at-will, essentially function as landless labourers.<sup>4</sup> Initially, after the Darjeeling territory was ceded in 1835, there was seemingly limited demand for land, and any applications made were handled directly by the superintendent based on his discretion. However, by 1838, a significant increase in applications for land, particularly for building sites, prompted the British Government of the time to establish specific regulations for granting land. These rules stipulated that any conditions set in previous grants made by the Superintendent would be upheld by the government. Yet, moving forward, land would only be allocated under the following circumstances:

- a) Land suitable for building purposes, with a specific reservation of a 200-yard wide space on both sides of the main road from Kurseong to Darjeeling.
- b) Clear spaces, of unspecified size, were set aside for Bazaars at Pankhabari, Maldhram, Darjeeling, and Kurseong.
- c) Land not needed for the said purposes but suitable for farming leases would be made available.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, since 1866, specific small areas had been allocated for special purposes. For instance, a stretch of land on both sides of the Cart Road from Siliguri to Darjeeling had been reserved for road-related uses. In some instances, settlers had been permitted to construct houses along this road, although they were considered more as tenants-at-will. This arrangement generated modest revenue from these individuals. In the areas of Katapahar, Jalapahar, and Lebong, specific parcels of land had been allocated to the military department for their use. Furthermore, an area measuring 116 acres below Darjeeling had been reserved for the construction of a jail. Additionally, the Darjeeling Municipality had retained 622 acres of land, originally intended for use as grazing grounds.<sup>6</sup> The majority of revenue-paying non-tea estates in the district were categorized into the following groups: (a) The Sadar and Kurseong Khasmahal, (b) The Kalimpong Development area and Kalimpong Government estates, (c) The Terai Khasmahal. In these Khasmahals, except for the Darjeeling Town Khasmahal, the territory

is subdivided for taxation purposes into 'blocks,' which are essentially comparable to villages as outlined in the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. Each of these 'blocks' is supervised by a Mandal who collects rent from the tenants on a commission basis. In the initial stages, revenue settlements were made with individual farmers who were entrusted with the responsibility of paying the fixed revenue amount for the blocks or blocks leased to each of them. The initial comprehensive settlement of these Khasmahals was conducted in 1884. The approach employed at that time is commonly referred to as the joint rayotari system, in which the settlement was jointly established with both the mandal and the tenants of each block. However, in 1894, the 'joint rayotari system' was abandoned. The blocks were then categorized into three classes based on the predominant quality of soil in each. Settlements were directly established with each rayot, who was provided with a separate lease for their specific holding.<sup>7</sup> After the British took control, Kalimpong underwent significant changes in land management. It was divided into 48 blocks, each overseen by a Mandal responsible for collecting rents from tenant farmers (rayots) and paying revenues to the British government based on predetermined terms set by the government. Out of the total annexed land covering 401 square miles, they set aside 213 square miles as reserved forests, and an additional 10 square miles were allocated to four tea gardens. The remaining 178 square miles were reserved for local cultivation.<sup>8</sup> The British government also set aside extensive forest and cultivable lands on both the western and eastern sides of the Tista River as Khas Mahals, which were managed by the Kalimpong Government Estates. Across the entire district, there existed a complex array of land tenure systems, including Revenue-paying tenures, Free-hold tenures, and lands directly controlled by the government. Interestingly, the majority of the population, roughly five-sixths of it, resided on these Khas Mahal or State-owned lands. However, there were also some lands, including those owned by monasteries and a few Mandals, where rents were exempted, and these arrangements persisted even after the annexation of the British. Under Revenue-paying tenures, land locations were established in perpetuity following the Building Location Rules of 1839, while others were granted locations for a fixed term of 99 years under the same Rules as amended in 1840. Farming leases were established based on the Rules of 1859, cultivation leases with duration of thirty years were implemented following the Rules of 1864, and lands were granted to Chebu Lama, initially on a tenure basis and later as permanent ownership during the mid-1800s. Tea

cultivation leases were governed by the Waste Land Rules of 1882, subject to periodic modifications. In addition to these, there were various other types of leases and government-controlled Khas Mahals were directly managed.

Agriculture in the hill regions of Darjeeling district evolved differently from that in the plains due to the unique physical characteristics of the area. The district's physical geography results in highly diverse agricultural conditions. Many of the slopes are rocky and steep, rendering them inhospitable to anything except scrub jungle. However, on the more gently sloping terrain, the soil often displays remarkable fertility. Elevation and aspect have significant impacts on agriculture. Due to the extreme cold, agricultural activities do not extend beyond 9,500 feet above sea level in the hilly regions. Potatoes can still be cultivated at such elevations, but for crops like rice, maize, and millet, cultivation occurs at lower altitudes. Furthermore, below 2,500 feet, much of the terrain is steep and not conducive to farming. The higher temperatures in these lower areas are unsuitable for many crops typically grown at higher altitudes. Consequently, in the zone situated just above the foothills, ranging from 1,000 feet to 2,500 feet, agricultural practices are relatively limited, with most of the area covered by forests.<sup>9</sup> Due to these inherent limitations, the agricultural practices that have evolved over more than a century in this region primarily focus on food production. Major cash crops such as jute, cotton, sugarcane, and pulses are not cultivated here due to the unfavourable soil and climatic conditions. The farming methods remain as rudimentary as they were a hundred years ago. Land that is not excessively steep is ploughed, while hoes (kodali) are utilized on steeper terrain. Weeding and harvesting tasks are typically performed by the cultivator and their family, with assistance from neighbours who receive help in return. This reciprocal labor exchange system is known as *purnna*. Hired laborers are engaged solely when their services are required.<sup>10</sup> Bullocks and tractors are not utilized for ploughing the land because of the challenging mountainous landscape in the region. As previously mentioned, agriculture plays a significant role in the rural economy of Darjeeling district's hilly areas. Approximately 34.17 percent of the total workforce is involved in agricultural activities within these regions. Land reforms have had a multifaceted impact on the agrarian class structure, leading to changes such as the emergence of sharecroppers, a rise in the number of owner-cultivators, the diminishing influence of feudalistic and traditional forms of land

tenure, and their substitution with more exploitative and extensive lease agreements.<sup>11</sup> It may be pointed out that the dichotomy of the landowner and the landless and their relations influenced the agrarian structure. Beteille has highlighted that the agrarian class structure encompasses various groups, including landlords, owner-cultivators, tenants, sharecroppers, and agricultural laborers. The interactions and relationships among these categories form the core of what can be referred to as the agrarian hierarchy.....and their interrelations to the process of agriculture constitute the agrarian class structure of the village.<sup>12</sup> When the British administration initially assumed control of the district, the hilly regions were predominantly covered by forests, and agriculture was essentially non-existent in the hill areas of Darjeeling district before 1835. The development of agriculture for commercial purposes began with the influx of Nepalese immigrants after the area had come under British governance. When the British administration initially assumed control of the district, the hill regions were largely covered by forests. These forests in the hill areas are typically categorized as 'reserved' by the Forest Department, except for a small area in the Kalimpong sub-division, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Deputy Commissioner. Additionally, there are substantial areas dedicated to tea and cinchona cultivation. The allocation of land among forests, tea plantations, cinchona plantations, and other types of cultivation differs in various parts of the district. While it's believed that the forested area under Khasmahal administration has been decreasing since 1907, substantial portions of land under tea leases are used by leaseholders for growing different non-plantation crops. In the past, the forests were notably dense and damp, which made them unhealthy. Although many of these forests remain intact, a significant portion has been cleared for establishing tea plantations and for general cultivation.<sup>13</sup> The sole form of cultivation in the region was the primitive method known as Jhumming, which involved clearing and burning forests in the remote hills by the Bhutias and the Lepchas, and on the foothills by the Meches and other indigenous tribes. The Terai region had some level of cultivation, but it also contained extensive uncultivated grasslands, forests, and riverine areas at that time. During the mid-19th century, there was a rapid expansion of cultivation in the region. Jhum(shifting cultivation) cultivation started to decline due to forest reservation policies, the allocation of land for tea cultivation, and the increased adoption of plough-based agriculture by diligent and skilled Nepalese settlers. These Nepalese immigrants didn't just view agriculture as a way of life but as a thriving business



opportunity. Consequently, they began cultivating various crops, including rice, millet (kodo), cardamom, maize, mustard, wheat, spices, fruits, potatoes, and more.<sup>14</sup> It is noteworthy that the entire territory westward to the river Tista, covering an area of 138 square miles at the time of the cession in 1835, was completely covered by forests and largely uninhabitable. However, early historical documents do refer a few Lepchas, totaling perhaps around 100 individuals, who had settled in the region, likely due to their practice of jhum cultivation. The initial inhabitants of the land that was ceded to the British in 1835 were not accustomed to conventional settled agricultural practices. Instead, they practiced jhum cultivation, which involved shifting cultivation methods without advanced techniques, resulting in limited production that sustained their livelihoods.<sup>15</sup> In 1850, when a larger region, encompassing 640 square miles and essentially comprising the entire district's geographical space except for the Kalimpong Subdivision, became part of the British territory to the west of the Tista River, it was observed that this entire area was not significantly different from the previously mentioned 138 square miles in terms of its conditions. It's worth noting that the development of agricultural capabilities in the Darjeeling Hills was entirely driven by local efforts. In contrast to the attention given to the establishment of tea plantations, agriculture in the early years did not receive any special focus or support from either the colonial authorities or European entrepreneurs, who were primarily occupied with establishing tea estates one after another. This is evident in the initial government effort to establish a set of regulations for land allocation on September 4, 1839. These regulations designated all lands in prominent locations, which could have otherwise been suitable for agriculture, as reserved areas for either building purposes or as market spaces.

Additionally, it stipulated that a minimum of 10 acres of land could be leased for farming purposes for 30 years. The 1839 Regulation affirmed lands unsuitable for construction or market use as suitable for agricultural leases. Additionally, it stipulated that a minimum of 10 acres of land could be leased for farming purposes for 30 years. In cases where the land remained unclear, it was suggested that the land should be exempt from rent for the first five years. Subsequently, a rent rate of Rs. 2 (rupees) per acre was established for the remaining duration. Despite these provisions, the 1839 Regulation failed to attract native cultivators, resulting in no plots being leased out between 1839 and 1850.<sup>16</sup> In a report from 1850, Dr. Campbell noted

that until 1849, it had not been feasible to collect any revenue from the indigenous population residing in the old Darjeeling Territory. From 1850 onward, Dr. Campbell made efforts to establish native cultivators as leaseholders, and he achieved limited success in this endeavour. Throughout this time, a substantial portion of the 89 land was transformed into tea plantations. Nonetheless, the full agricultural potential of the entire area west of the Tista River was not realized, and the revenue administration for the agricultural sector in this part of the district continued to be informal until the fertile Kalimpong Region on the eastern side of the Tista River was integrated into the district.<sup>17</sup> The Terai Region, in contrast, has not undergone formal land revenue administrative measures since its annexation in 1850. On the other hand, the areas situated below Pankhabari, stretching from Naxalbari to Siliguri, including Phansidewa, have had formal land revenue administration measures in place since that time. In the case of seven Khas mahal of Kalimpong region, a substantial amount of village land is owned by outsiders who do not live in this region. These absentee landowners, who mainly live in the urban area, control the major amount of land of this region and play a very crucial role in the agrarian system as besides being the landowners, they are also the businessmen and or money lenders of this region. In other parts of West Bengal, the number of these absentee landowners has sharply decreased in the recent past due to the various land reform programs.<sup>18</sup> In this particular region, which has retained its feudal character to a significant extent, a specific group of landowners still maintains control over a considerable portion of village land, unlike in other parts of West Bengal. The division of society is primarily based on the ownership or non-ownership of land, creating two broad classes: landowners and the landless. However, this distinction alone does not adequately explain the intricate class structure within the agrarian system, as some landowners have a limited amount of land, while others have larger holdings. Consequently, the landowners have been categorized into three groups based on their landholdings: marginal farmers who own below 2.5 acres of land, small farmers who own between 2.5 to 5 acres of land and medium to large-scale farmers who own more than 5 acres of land. Between the landowner and the landless, there exists an intermediate category known as the sharecropper. It is noteworthy that in this region, the sharecroppers, who fall within the category of landowners, still exercise significant control over a considerable amount of village land. This can be attributed to the region's enduring feudal character.

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## Book Review-1

**Babulal Bala, Congress in the Politics of West Bengal: From Dominance to Marginality (1947-1977), Kunal Books, New Delhi, First Edition (Paper Back), 2022, Pages-394, Rs-1395.**

The birth of Indian National Congress in the land of India on 28<sup>th</sup> Dec, 1885 was an important turning point in the political history in India. Later, Congress Party actively participated in various freedom movements against British aimed at organizing the countrymen and achieving the India's independence. After the India's independence, the Congress Party was elected in election in the various states of India and took over the governance of the states. Congress Party also won a majority in the general election of 1952 in West Bengal and formed government. Here the discussion is Congress in the politics of West Bengal and its ups and downs.

This book 'Congress in the Politics of West Bengal: From Dominance to Marginality (1947-1977)' predominantly concentrates on partition colossus, politics of Bengal, role of Indian National Congress after India's independence, necessity and reconstruction of state entrepreneurship in the era of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, strains and challenges during 1962-1967, marginalization of INC and formation of non-congress coalition government etc. The present book under the review is one of the latest additions to this topic. Babulal Bala, revered Associate Professor of Raiganj University, is the author of this valuable book. It is an outcome of a revised and updated version of the author's research work. In this book, author has tried to describe the political ups and downs in details of West Bengal mainly from 1947 to 1977. He shows how the congress party was gradually changed from the majority to the marginality in the political arena of West Bengal and the rise of the Left front. It is author's expectations that this book would provide opportunities to students, scholars, researchers and others. Most of the historians had been published books regarding this area like Dr. Chandan Basu's 'The Making of the Left Ideology in West Bengal: Culture, Political Economy, revolution-1947-1970', Joya Chatterjee's 'The spoils of Partition, Bengal and India, 1947-1967', Partho Chatterjee's 'The Present History of West Bengal- Essays in Political criticism' etc.

The book is disunited into six chapters namely.....

1. The Partition Colossus and the Politics of Bengal.
2. Task and Goals of the Indian National Congress in West Bengal after Independence (1947-1949).
3. State Entrepreneurship and the Congress Party in the Era of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy: Ideology verses Necessity and Reconstruction.
4. Dominance with a Difference: Strains and Challenges (1962-1967).
5. Period of Marginalization (1967-1971): A. Non- Congress Coalition Government and B. Presidential Rule.
6. Progressive Democratic Alliance (PDA) Government- Promises and Performances (1972-1977).

In the first chapter author discussed the role of Deshbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das, Fazlul Huq, M. A. Jinnah and H.S. Suhrawardy in the political and administrative premises of Bengal. Lahor resolution which is called 'Pakistan Resolution' was the brain child behind the demand of Pakistan. Unrest political crisis made volatile situation and a secret negotiation formed newly Progressive Coalition Party in 1941. Second ministry was constituted under the leadership of Fazlul Huq after getting a promised responsive cooperation of others political parties. This chapter describes more about Governor's rule and coalition government under Khwaja Nazimuddin in 1943, famine of Bengal in 1943 under Bengal's Government, role of Newly formed communist party of India, Cabinet Mission's proposals in 1946, Muslim League's declaration of Direct Action Day, the great Kolkata killings, Holocaust in the area of Noakali and Bihar, Communal disturbance in Bengal and born a new idea of Bengal's partition etc. Author mainly concentrates searching the various roots of the expansion of loathsome communal politics in Bengal.

In the second chapter, Bengal faced partition, after the partition every political party also faced the different challenges, unbalanced and unstable situations in the newly made province. Indian national congress took very supreme role in the yard of West Bengal. This section is mainly discussed the role of Gandhiji's ardent disciple Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and appearing of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy as Premier of West Bengal. At the beginning of the chapter Dr. P.C. Ghosh and Abhaya Ashram, role in Tripuri Congress, way to partition, unexpected problems like food crisis, communal, corruption etc., Indian and Pakistani flag hoisting in the different parts of

Bengal, Gandhiji's fasting to eradicate the communalism with the help of Shanti Sena, Bangaal vs Ghoti sentiment are discussed. Lastly Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy emerged as the main and impartial political leader and took the seat as chief minister of West Bengal. He smoothly tried to solve many obstacles like unemployment, refugee problems etc.

In the third chapter, author tried to briefly discuss about the era of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and his state entrepreneurship. On 23<sup>rd</sup> January in 1948, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy was sworn in as the second Chief Minister of West Bengal. He was not a politician by profession and always engaged himself to his own medical profession. He was tireless, intelligent, calm minded, not a man of fleeing character, unbiased chief minister of West Bengal and considered as the architects of Modern West Bengal. In the decade of 1950 one of the major issues was food crisis. Main causes behind the food crisis were low food grains production, shortage of grains and deeply impact of partition of Bengal etc. And his government launched some mechanisms to overcome crises like first food movement in 1951 and 1959, measures for the production of more food etc. He took numerous welfare schemes on the sphere of cottage industry to carry out state's economic growth like improvement of fish farming, milk industry, considerable development in the field of communication and transport etc. Many educational institutions were established and many constructive measures were step out in the field of medical and public health services so the decade of 1950 is considered as the era of nation building. Eventually refugees crisis, new township, administrative steps, population, briefly Chinese aggression, Assam holocaust, general election of 1952, 1957 and 1962 etc. are discussed in the chapter.

Strains and challenges from 1962 to 1967 faced by newly formed West Bengal are elaborated in the fourth chapter of the book. Many issues such as factionalism within the congress party, emergence of Bangla Congress and the leadership crisis in Congress party due to the sudden death of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy have been come into account meticulously. Contributions of Prafulla Chandra Sen and Ajay Kumar Mukherjee have been discussed in details. Grouping came in Congress and out of which birth of Bangla Congress made the background and thereby first time congress government lost absolute majority in the fourth election of West Bengal in 1967 after independence.

In the fifth chapter, writer mainly focused on after the Indian independence first time non congress political party formed a non congress coalition government in the name United Front in the politics of West Bengal. The entire chapter has two angles, formation of non congress coalition government and imposition of presidential rule in West Bengal and also discussed the various ups and downs of political incidents in West Bengal. A notable event of this period was Naxalbari episode which created a stir in the entire country. Author briefly detailed the formation of the various government consecutively first (2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1967 to 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1967), second (25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1969 to 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1970), UF and DCF (2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1971 to 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1971). This chapter has interestingly also interpreted the government of Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) and for the second time Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh sworn in as chief minister in 1967. Imposition of presidential rule in West Bengal in 1968, 1970 and 1971 are also the third area of discussion. Moreover, about Jyoti Basu, Naxalite violence in the campus of Calcutta University, Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 and role of Chhatra Parishad under the dynamic leadership of Priya Ranjan Dasgupta are also the principle discussion of this chapter. A significant issue is taken up here to show how acute anti congress feelings helped to unite the various political parties skipping their own ideological views. And at that time, CPI (M) party rose more than any other parties.

In the last chapter, West Bengal faced its 6<sup>th</sup> general election on 11 March in the year of 1972 which directly or indirectly impacted in the politics of Bengal. On 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1954; the establishment of Chhatra Parishad was another brave step in the premises of student politics of colleges and universities. And it should be mentioned here that Shri Bidhu Bhushan Ghosh was the first president of Chhatra Parishad of West Bengal. Role of Siddhartha Sankar Ray and his various developmental activities are major elaboration of this chapter. He considered as one of the important person behind the success of the congress party in the West Bengal General Election of 1972. He was unwilling to become the Chief Minister but due to the willingness of Smt. Indira Gandhi was sworn in as Chief Minister. He executed so many developmental works which remained in a stagnation position for long time. At the end of the chapters author has briefly interpreted the conclusion of the book which is very rare.

The book 'Congress in the politics of West Bengal' is one of the



## Book Review-1

best and authentic to know more about the political history of West Bengal after the independence of India. No doubt it will enrich the reader community also. According to historian professor Ichhimuddin Sarkar, 'This is an extraordinary research to open new dimensions in the field of further research on post – independent period.' Although, this book has some merits and demerits, author could interpret or insert more information or incidents in the mentioned time period. After carefully studying the book there is some spelling mistake like forth etc. Author used endnotes, bibliography, appendices, picture of contemporary news papers, index and the images of contemporary political leaders at the end of the book but did not use footnotes in the each chapters of this book. It is noteworthy that author should use political atlas of West Bengal to create concrete knowledge or concept of the time span. It is also our hope and expectation that all the deficiencies of the book will be filled up in the next edition.

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## Book Review-2

**Engseng Ho, The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across Indian Ocean. Berkeley: University of California Press, November, 2006, Pages-400.**

Engseng Ho in his texts tries to formulate an alternative epistemological framework regarding the concept of 'Mobility' and delinks it with the notion of 'Modernity' that is very prevalent within the academic space of anthropology. He opines that the Eurocentric concept of mobility and its association with 'mobility' is the product of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and due to the arrival of globalization in the late twentieth century it is very difficult to conceptualize 'mobility' outside of the theoretical framework of 'modernity'. But in this text, Engseng Ho raises some important methodological questions and he asks whether it could be possible to trace the concept of 'mobility' before the eighteenth century and the advent of 'portfolio capitalism' from the ontological framework of modernity. He portrays that it is impossible to inject the notion of time-space compression to understand the nature of mobility before the advent of the era of the imperial capital in global history and he specifically focuses on the pattern of 'mobility' in the global south for two major important reasons. The first is to criticize the Eurocentric notion of mobility where the pattern of mobility is very much restricted within both the 'geographical' and Lefebvrian 'social' space of Europe which is historically 'hot' and the second is to understand 'mobility' as a process where both 'Presence' and 'Absence' play an important role in contrast to the Eurocentric notion of 'mobility' where 'compression of time creates a bias away from absence towards presence'.

In this text, Engseng Ho predominantly focuses on the trans-cultural and trans-geographical mobility of peripatetic 'Alawi Sayyids from Hadramawt who is the patrilineal descendant of Prophet Muhammad through Ahmed Bin 'Isa, "the Migrant" in the early modern and modern times from the place of origins i.e. Hadramawt to the regions around Indo-Pacific and Pacific. Instead of confining the history of Alawi Sayyids in the Hadramawt region, this text examines different strata within the networks of mobility and how the network of mobility transforms with the metamorphosis of oceanic trade structure

from the thirteenth century onwards. 'The Graves of Tarim' is a text where we find a vivid description of the trans-regional mobility of Muslim inhabitants where Hadrami Sayyids plays an important role.

Ho opines that the cross-cultural interaction and assimilations with the native inhabitants around the region of the Indian Ocean are very different from the European merchant class in terms of their nature. Here, He introduces the concept of 'local cosmopolitans' to understand the nature of interactions, and through presenting different examples like the process of interactions between Alawi Sayyids and native inhabitants of Gujarat, Malaya, or Java region he portrays that, unlike the interactions with European merchant class, the nature of the interaction between Alawi Sayyids and native inhabitants is resilient and assimilationist where one culture doesn't subjugate others by incorporating the notion of 'racial' superiority. Rather this cultural interaction and assimilations between Alawi Sayyids and Native inhabitants around the macro space of the Indian Ocean lead to 'creolization' rather than 'colonization'. Most importantly due to the cross-cultural and trans-regional interactions, we find a newer form of 'trans-local' identity among the Creoles Hadrami diaspora where both 'local' and the 'identity' from where their forefathers migrate exist through the productions of genealogical textual literature. But the 'local cosmopolitanism' is very much distinct from the idea of 'globalization' of the late twentieth century where indigenous local identity becomes compartmentalized and hierarchized through the controlled channel of 'nation' states and as a result, the non-identical properties within the local identity become extinguished forever due to the uneven assimilation process.

'The Graves of Tarim' examines 'the discourse of mobility, by their pervasiveness, are ways in which movements are represented and objectified' (P.23) because 'This creates the conditions of possibility for movements to be channeled, controlled, diverted and argued over (P. 24). He tries to portray that even though the Hadrami Sayyids migrated to different regions from their places of origin i.e. Hadramawt but Brobdingnagian discursive traditions bind them together and in the process of producing the discursive tradition the 'burials' of dead saints at Tarim plays a very dominant role. Through examining the sacred history of the region and how the patrilineal prophetic descent comes into the region as an emigrant to expand the 'ideology of Islam' and establish the Sayyid line which later merged

with the institutionalized Alawi way because of the contribution of the First Jurist and his descendant Abd-al-Rahman-al-Saqqaf ho opines the religious sacredness of the region and in this religious sacredness 'Burial' plays a very important role because it acts as signifier through which the consciousness of lived being assimilated with the prophetic 'spirit' of saints and it somehow transcends the 'spirit' of deceased saints into the present being. That is why 'Burial' acts as paraphernalia to bind the Hadrami diaspora who had left the sacred spaces of the ancestors after the thirteenth century and to construct a collective consciousness among the Alawi Sayyid diaspora scattered into different regions the canonical texts based on the prophetic genealogy and spiritual sanctity of Hadramawt region plays a very constructive role.

Ho in this text castigates the positivist way of reading text to extract possible 'data' rather than situating the texts within the colossal framework. While reading the text 'The Travelling Night Unveiled' by 'Abd al-Qadir al- 'Aydarus Ho emphasizes how the author of the texts somehow places his own identity within the genealogy of Hadrami Sayyids and to do so Aydarus provides an 'alternative chronology' that 'begins with a cosmogony in which the prophet Muhammad figures as the primeval, first substance before the rest of creation. By connecting the 'Hadrami Sayyids' with the prophetic genealogy and situating the institutionalization of Alwai way by the first Jurist within the larger spiritual framework of Hadrami Sayyids Aydarus tries to trace his own identity and to trace this 'identity' his imagining 'master narrative' plays a significant role. Ho studies this text, not as a discrete unit but places this text within the larger tradition of writing canon by creoles Hadrami diaspora who are trying to trace their own identity through patrilineal descent rather than matrilineal descent. The experience of that trans-cultural Hadrami diaspora is somehow reflected within the larger canonical tradition and it is somehow reflected within the text produced by Aydarus because in this text we find a glimpse of the experiences of peripatetic Hadrami Sayyids Sufi scholars in the trans-cultural world of Indian Ocean.

At the same time while examining the canonical literary productions of Hadrami Sayyids Ho opines that through invoking the inter-connections between Creole Hadrami diaspora and the prophetic descents i.e. the Hadrami Sayyid community in Hadramawt regions they are trying to distinguish themselves with the other Muslim

communities and it somehow helps them to place themselves in a superior social position that in turn prove to be beneficial for them. The major reason behind that is the patronage of local Muslim rulers and their newly formed slave-noble communities for gaining legitimacy within the society.

Besides examining how 'genealogy' is somehow important to reclaim and rejuvenate the patrilineal identity of the Creole Hadrami Sayyid diaspora he portrays that within the larger framework of reclamation, we cannot neglect the dimension of how 'genealogy' constructs a set of moral actions for the Hadrami Sayyid descents that in turn help the Hadrami diaspora to maintain the 'purity' of the descent in the trans-cultural context. Through analyzing Al-Shilli's text 'The Irrigating Fount: Biographical Virtues of the Alawi Sayyids' he argues that the moral injunctions within the texts regarding the matter of marriage are very important to study from a larger context. Within the text, Al Shilli elucidates that Sayyids could marry the women belonging to the other community but any person belonging to the other community including Muslims could not marry a woman belonging to the descendants of Prophet Muhammad. The 'Sada' marriage between the Hadrami Sayyids and non-Hadrami community produces the community of 'muwallads' who are 'local cosmopolitans' in nature. In the last part of that section, Ho argues that the 'muwallads' produces another form of migration from the eighteenth century onwards.

In the third section of his book, Ho examines how the process of migration among the 'Hadrami' diaspora cannot be portrayed as unidirectional because the flow of migrants doesn't follow the concept of 'periphery' to 'center' where the periphery is the spaces of origin i.e. the Hadramawt region. Through examining the written travelogues (Rihla), oral testimonies of the Muwallads, and canonical texts in the early nineteenth and twentieth century he portrays how the nature of the 'spiritual' homeland and 'host' society transform for the Muwallads who are born and brought up the so-called material spaces outside the homeland. For them, the 'spiritual' sacred spaces of their ancestors are no longer moral but it is spaces where they have lost their agency and control over their lives. That is why Ho opines that in canonical texts the voices that we find regarding the normative and moral value of the spiritual sacred spaces of the Hadramawt region are somehow very contradictory with the lived experiences of Creole Hadrami communities.

But the fundamental problem that I find while reading the text is that the major focus of this text is on exclusively the history and culture of the Hadrami Sayyid communities and somehow the voices and history of other Non-Sayyid Hadrami communities are not reflected within this text. The over-emphasis on the history of Hadrami communities which is already produced by the previous historian somehow imposes a kind of narrative regarding the history of Hadramawt as nothing but the history of Hadrami Sayyid communities. Besides the absence of an alternative history of Hadrami communities, we don't find a proper discussion about the intra-theological confrontation within the canonical discourse in the early twentieth century properly regarding the concept of 'Sada' marriage. But it is very pertinent to acknowledge that Engseng Ho in his text provides a very 'comprehensive' history of the migration of Hadrami Sayyids which is bidirectional from the early twelfth century to the first half of the twentieth century and beautifully situates how the process of migration in early nineteenth and twentieth century affected due to the advent to the colonial regime and rise of the 'nation-state' based on the concept of territoriality and racial superiority.

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