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Edited by
Dr. Anjan Saikia

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EVOLUTION OF ARTIFITIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Editorial

Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla: one of the doyens of cultural History of Assam

Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla, one of the celebrated doyens of Assam, exerted immense influence in the history of national movement in Assam. Born on 17th June, 1903 at Tamulbari Tea Estate of Dibrugarh, Jyoti Prasad hailed from a well-to-do middle class family. He passed his matriculation from Tezpur Government High School in 1921. Then in 1926, he entered the prestigious Edinburg University of Scotland. But he left without completing his higher studies and obtained film training in Germany. However, after returning from Europe in 1931, he devoted himself to social works.

Jyoti Prasad gradually realized that material things are meaningless in this mortal World. So, he relinquished the aristocratic way and began to lead a simple life in order to absorb himself among the masses. In the meantime, the wave of the freedom struggle spread all over India including Assam and Jyoti Prasad joined the movement. In the undivided Darrang district, he began to take leading part in organizing the peasantry through various cultural programmes of Ryot Sabha. Noteworthy that, the *Ryot Sabha*, a popular organization of the peasantry of the Brahmaputra Valley, played a significant role in the freedom struggle. In fact, through the *Ryot Sabha*, Jyoti Prasad wanted to infuse the national spirit among the common rural masses. Like a humble volunteer, Jyoti Prasad organized the local masses against the alien British rule. Not only this, he wrote about his experience and true aspect of the society to liberate the downtrodden commoners from bondage and that established him as their friend, Philosopher and guide. In fact, everywhere around, he was admired like a beloved leader. People listened to him whenever he sang or danced or spoke. To emphasise the importance of the Movement, Jyoti Prasad sang, '*Luitor pararse Ami Daka Lara Mori Bolo Bhoi Nai... Aji Deka Lorai Jibon pon Korise Muhar Sakulu Kolijar Aie*'. (We are the youths of the banks of the Brahmaputra and we know no fear for death...). In a similar vein, he sang in the mass Processions from Chaiduar to Biswanath, '*Jaga Jononir Santan, Jaga Saktiman Jaga Mukti pran Mritu Gasoki Ana Joi Jini, Kori Dujoi Ahbijan*' (Awake O the sons of motherland, Awake O the strong ones, Awake O freedom lovers, treading over death, conquering the invincible victory). Likewise, he also sang, '*Biswa Bijoy Nabo Juwan, Biswa Bijoy Nabo Juwan... Mritu Bijoy Koribo Lagibo, Swadhinatar Khuli Duwar*'. (O the world conquering new youth ! O the world conquering new youth ! you are to defeat death and open the door of freedom).

The above mentioned patriotic songs had a powerful effect. Those songs were sung while the freedom loving people marched through procession from Chaiduar to Biswanath over the night under the leadership of Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla (a distance of forty Kilometres from Chaiduar to Biswanath). It is true that this historic successful procession not only was a remarkable achievement, but also helped in mobilising the rural masses and soon became a popular subject of discussion throughout the period.

It is well known fact that the contribution of the Vaishnavite *Satras* of Assam in the freedom movement was immense. Among them, the role of Nikamul *Satra* of Tezpur and Garmur *Satra* of Majuli must find special mention. It was Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla who, along with *Satradhikar* Gahan Chandra Goswami, transformed the Nikamul *Satra* as the revolutionary epi-centre and it was here that he strongly organized Ryoti Sabha. As a result, such anti-British activities became a serious concern for the British government and in 1932, Jyoti Prasad was arrested and imprisoned in jail for six months.

In the meantime in 1942, the news of the arrests of M.K. Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad and other leaders created great excitement among people of whole of India. In Assam also, there was great excitement. Convening Ryot Sabhas in different areas of Assam, Jyoti Prasad organized *Shanti Dal*, *Yubak Dal* and women's organizations to respond to the changed scenario. It was Jyoti Prasad who inspired peasantry to valiantly face the armed repression unleashed by the British.

In fact, Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla virtually passed a restless and revolutionary life. For him, freedom movement was a relentless war against the forces that tried to dominate the common masses. He felt that politics for the common people was also an art. Significantly, Jyoti Prasad was an artist of the masses and also one of the doyens of the cultural history of Assam. His contemporary historical consciousness and analysis which in many aspects can be viewed from the point of political consciousness and nationalistic approach are spread all through his dramas, articles, lectures, songs, poems and stories. The writings of Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla embraced the socio-economic and political scenario of Assam based mainly on authentic and scientific sources because he analysed the facts and contemporary situation from the historical point of view. Needless to say, it is the responsibility of the social scientist to decipher the truth. The most interesting aspect is that Jyoti Prasad had the recourse to the glorious history and the rich cultural heritage and tradition of north-east India precisely to inspire and stimulate his contemporary and future progeny to build up a new society. Another cherished objective of Jyoti Prasad was to bring forth the idolised concept of larger Assamese identity and preservation of the unified socio-cultural aspect in the light of his

writings. So a comprehensive perusal of Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla's works would lend a new dimension and a new meaning to the analytical approach of the new school of Indian historians and social thinkers as referred to.

Anyway, it is our tenth and humble approach to publish this volume of Journal of the department of History of our College. This editorial does not claim any originality. Much of the thoughts expressed here have been picked up from numerous publications. Not a perfect volume in many ways, nevertheless we feel that the completion of this volume, in a way, is redemption of our pledge to the subject of history. In addition, we are emphasizing and trying our humble endeavor to popularize the strong root of history and its research for today and for tomorrow and to establish the link in academic and true research reciprocity among the colleges, interested and learned section of the country and beyond. In this context, special expression of our gratefulness goes to our founder Principal Sjt. Ananda Saikia, who is also a devoted scholar in the field of historical research and Dr. Girish Baruah, one of the prolific philosophers of north-eastern India including our peer reviewers of the Journal. Their inspiration and guidance, in fact, has enabled us to sustain through all odds. We would forever remain grateful to all the contributors for their research papers, learned Advisory Board and peer reviewers. Finally, we offer our sincere thanks to Mr. Latu Gogoi, L.G. Computer & Printing Centre, Lichubari, Jorhat for taking up the computer work with much care and patience.

Expecting healthy criticism and encouragement from learned section,
With regards,

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Editor

The question of women's enslavement: Was Thanthai Periyar ahead of his times?

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Abstract

South India, especially Tamil Nadu and Kerala, has a long history of anti-Brahminism. This research article deals with the upper caste social reform movement of nineteenth century with its focus on the condition of Indian women especially in Madras presidency. Different evils which were in practice in Indian society like- sati, child marriage, polygamy, illiteracy among women, and widow remarriage etc. In an attempt to bring the reforms in line with modernity, sawarna males and others came ahead to improve their condition in colonial India. Reformers like- Sir Syed Ahmed, Rammohan Roy, M.G. Ranade, Keshab Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Phule and E.V Ramasamy Periyar came ahead. The paper has highlighted the works done by Periyar for the upliftment of women. He called for the destruction of masculinity, validation of divorce and remarriage, caste system prevalent in the society and other issues related to the emancipation of women folk. He argued that the onus of their liberation lay on the women themselves.

Key words: Madras presidency, Bhramanism, Social Reform, Women's emancipation, Masculinity, Polygamy, Caste system, Sati, Congress.

If a man has the right to kill women, a woman should also have the right to kill men. If there is a compulsion that women should fall at men's feet, then men should also fall at women's feet. This is equal rights for men and women. Anything else is selfishness and stupidity and not love. (Periyar, 12/02/1928).

We recommend women to stop having children because pregnancy is an enemy to the freedom and liberation of women. Not only that, because

of having many children, even men are unable to live with autonomy, courage and independence.(Periyar, 06/04/1930).

Introduction

The upper caste social reform movements in India during the nineteenth century focused attention on the wretched condition of Indian women from a variety of perspectives; education, child marriage, polygamy, widow remarriage and abominable practices like sati. This reform was based on a reinterpretation of Indian traditions in an attempt to bring them in line with modernity. While these reformers, almost all of them *savarna* males, were concerned about the condition of Indian women the solutions they offered to the women's question in colonial India were framed in a framework best described as liberal patriarchy, the ideals of which were provided to these reformers by the British rulers of India. In pre-colonial India social reformers, in general, were not preoccupied with gender questions. Even the *Shramanic* heterodox tradition, opposed as it was to the *Brahminic* traditions, did not dwell much on the wretched condition of Indian women throughout the ages. Many of the Nineteenth Century reformers shied away from the real causes of women's enslavement even as they adopted a reformist public posture. In private life many of them exposed their hypocrisy. Rammohan Roy opposed widow remarriage and advocated a chaste widowhood; widows were not supposed to entertain sexual desires. M. G. Ranade, opposed child marriage, but married a child. He also performed penance for having transgressed caste norms. Keshab Chandra Sen founded a branch of Brahmo Samaj and criticized child marriage but got his own child daughter married into a Princely family. In most cases Indian society failed the reformers. For instance, the saintly Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar advocated widow remarriage but Bengali society failed him. On the other hand, reform-revivalist movements like the Arya Samaj desired the conversion of Hindu women into ideal *Arya* women whose lives were supposed to revolve around family males, especially their husbands. This jelled with the values of the *sanatana* males. From the late nineteenth century till independence and thereafter nationalism(s) wanted women to be *ideal female nationalists* dedicated to the family, a microcosm of the masculine patriarchal nation. On the other hand, the Dalit-Bahujan revolutionaries, like the Phule couple and their counterparts in south India, attacked Brahminical patriarchy and the caste system, holding them responsible for the wretched condition of women in India. The Muslim reformers, like Sir Syed of Aligarh, emphasized women's education but their position on women's reform was identical to that of the Arya

Samaj. Women's educational curricula had to safeguard the Muslim community and promote Islamic values; education would produce good obedient Muslim wives who could count money, read and write. Women's position in this view, aimed at the creation of a hybrid between tradition and modernity, would be circumscribed by patriarchy. They would be denied true agency in history. Community control over their sexuality was the cornerstone of the family and nation.

Periyar

Compared with such ideas and movements, Periyar stood out as one who understood the true nature of this male led and dominated social reform. The ideas and work of E. V. Ramasamy Naicker 'Periyar' [1879-1973] must be viewed against the patriarchal background of women's reform in colonial India. In the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century, Brahminism was challenged and undermined by the Phule couple, the founders of the Bahujan Samaj movement, in the Bombay Presidency and later, Periyar in the Madras Presidency. At the same time Brahminism was attacked with productive results by the ruler of the Kolhapur State, Rajarishi Chatrapati Shahu and his descendants. Brahmin hegemony was also attacked by the anti-caste reformers in the Princely states like Baroda and Travancore-Cochin. Periyar's ideas emerged from a worldview which developed in south India during the colonial period and dates back to at least the Nineteenth Century. This worldview developed and sharpened its edge in the political atmosphere of the time marked by intense competition between the *savarna* and non *savarna* castes in all fields of life. An investigation of these socially subversive ideas also reveals their connection with widespread popularity of *shramanic* movements in south Indian society, the roots of which can be traced to at least the medieval age. During the first half of the twentieth century, when Ambedkar established himself as a critic of the Congress, Hindutva and became the leading representative of Dalit voices in India, the movements referred to above created a large social space for the politics of anti-Brahminism in peninsular India. The rise of Brahminical Hindu Nationalism, and its main organizations the Hindu Mahasabha (1916) and RSS (1925), were reactions to the growing social influence of the anti-caste movements on the one hand and rising Muslim communalism on the other. The feminist views of Periyar stand in contradistinction to the pathological patriarchy preached by ultra-nationalist Hindu and Muslim Nationalism. Periyar's views also clashed with the half way house views on women promoted by the Congress.

Periyar's decisive break with the Congress in 1925 and the development of the Self Respect Movement in the Madras Presidency during the 1920s and 1930s must be located in the legacy of anti-caste anti-Aryan ideas which preceded his rise as a revolutionary politician. In contemporary India the widespread prevalence of masculine militaristic nationalism and toxic patriarchy would prevent the ideas of Periyar from gaining social salience. Here it must be noted that *Feminism* as a concept arose in France during the nineteenth century and the word was rarely, if ever, used in India before the 1950s but Periyar was a *Feminist* without having used the term much before the time for a *Feminist* movement arrived in India. He wrote a number of explosive articles between 1926 and 1930 on a variety of issues related to the slavery of women in a patriarchal society which prove that he was many decades ahead of his times. *I would venture to say that no thinker in colonial India comes close to his thoughts on women's emancipation.* In his considered view anything which hindered women's liberation from patriarchy had to be *destroyed* both in theory and practice. These articles address the following issues; chastity, Valluvar and Chastity, love, divorce, widow remarriage, prostitution, plight of widows, property rights, birth control and finally masculinity which he said 'must be destroyed for Women's Liberation'.¹

Without beating about the bush Periyar called for the destruction of masculinity, a *sine qua non* for women's liberation, in a 1928 essay. Taking a clear feminist position on women's emancipation he wrote, 'everybody knows that the number of associations and activities in the name of women's liberation across the world keeps increasing day by day. Men pretend to be highly concerned and make a great deal of pretense. In our opinion, any liberation movement created by men cannot give real liberation to women'. Further he was aware that many of the male led so called women's reform movements were in fact designed to reinforce 'the restriction that enable the enslavement of women'.² In his writing we notice an equivalence between the slavery of women and the slavery of non-Brahmins and he uses allegories from nature to buttress his argument: 'Will rats be liberated by the effort of cats? Will goats and cocks be liberated by foxes? Will the wealth of Indians increase because of the British? Will the non-Brahmins attain equality by the efforts of Brahmins'? This argument, which flies in the face of the *trusteeship theory* of Gandhi, flowed from a simple but underestimated historical realization – the oppressed can never expect liberation from the oppressor. Further his reading of the Hindu texts convinced

him that women's liberation was impossible in Hinduism. Without using the word 'hegemony', as Antonio Gramsci would have in the case of the oppressed sympathizing with their oppressors by various social mechanisms, Periyar argued in the favor of destroying the masculine/feminine binary. This was possible only when women stopped believing in this separation of idealized identities because, he wrote, 'even women hold this true on the basis of religion'. Any religious doctrine which came in the way of male-female equality had to be destroyed. Where the masculine and feminine both were exalted by a god ordained religion it was 'essential to destroy the concept of godliness that is responsible for the god-created 'masculinity' and femininity'.³ Ultimately slavery prevailed because the slaves believed in it, likewise the greatest barrier to women's liberation was their belief in patriarchy. They were conditioned to think that they could not live without men who were necessary to protect them and their children which, truly speaking, were foisted on them by the males. So, what of child bearing? In his view unless the problem of child bearing itself was destroyed patriarchy would continue to rule the roost even if women had men on their payroll. To the question what would happen to the human race if women stopped bearing children Periyar offered an acidic answer, 'we don't know of any benefit that has come out of the human race that has multiplied for so long'! Those concerned with the burden of human population on the earth's resources today would concur.

Periyar's view of love and divorce was revolutionary and militated against the common idea of heterosexual eternal love. In his view love, pleasure *and* satisfaction should co-exist in a relationship because the ideal of romantic love is ephemeral. What is the purpose of men and women living in matrimony? 'The world', he wrote, 'has attributed an extraordinary quality to the word love ingrained into the minds of people and unnecessarily dimmed the purpose of men and women living together'. Quite often, he observed, 'for the sake of love, people lead a troubled life lacking pleasure and satisfaction.' If marriage degenerates into a loveless slavery of habit, it must be destroyed by the means of divorce. If love can arise and disappear then it is not eternal. Anyone who blows love "out of proportion is foolish by nature".⁴ These ideas make marriage a problematic proposition and oppose patriarchal Brahminical *sanatan* marriage which enjoins being married to the same person even in afterlife. If the purpose of marriage is child-bearing, sex and continuing the household where is a love based on equality in it? If women's conception of love differs from that of men, what does love mean? Periyar dismissed 'true' love as infantile, 'generally

speaking, it is natural for human beings to look at and think of a particular thing and desire it, but have liking and kindness towards many. Likewise, it is natural for human beings to become frustrated with anything, to hate it and part from it. Is it not natural to get fooled at moments of weakness, to try to rectify the mistakes when we have become stronger, to get bonded when we are inexperienced and try to get liberated when we have gained experience’?⁵

He closed the argument by asserting that to most people the imagination of being in love is more important than understanding love: “Because a lot of things have been imagined about love and fed into men and women, they too think that they have to put on an act to show that they are true lovers. . . . Because it has been said that pious people behave in such and such manner, a lot of people (who want others to call them pious) apply sacred ash on their bodies, keep visiting temples continuously, sing songs and cry, and always murmur ‘Siva Siva’, ‘Rama Rama’.

There are other aspects of women’s liberation connected with the issues discussed above on which Periyar expressed revolutionary ideas. If transience was a possibility in love, was there merit in a system which forbade divorce or re-marriage? Logically following the critique of eternal love Periyar arrived at the validation of divorce and remarriage. Periyar first considered the scriptural and other evidence regarding remarriage. Tradition and religion were not necessarily opposed to remarriage and both Hinduism and Islam permitted polygamy. In fact, Prophet Muhammad restricted polygamy by permitting Muslim men not more than four wives on certain conditions. Hindu religious evidence points out ‘that gods themselves were polygamous’ and history speaks of Kings and Princes having numerous wives and concubines. Hence, in principle, even believers would not oppose remarriage although in many beliefs the initiative for remarriage lay in the hands of men because it was their prerogative to remarry if they experienced discomfort in a marriage. Women were often seen as a cause of this remarriage. Periyar did not oppose marriage but promoted the idea of marriage based on equality and reciprocity knowing well that it ‘was not easy to liberate the suffering people from superstitious practices and meaningless restrictions of the world’.⁶ Marriage had evolved as a contract of mutual happiness, love, pleasure and responsibility between men and women. This contract could be annulled if the parties or even one party felt unhappy with it. As a consequence of such ideas the ‘annulment of marriage’ became an important doctrine of the Self Respect Movement and a resolution to this effect

was passed by the Chengalpet Conference. Following this another resolution for the annulment of marriage was passed in Erode Conference. The Self Respect Movement promoted inter-caste marriage, supported 'a man marrying a second time as he continues living with his first wife' [on the assumption that the first wife did not object], and the right to divorce enjoyed equally by men and women, As far as we are concerned, anything that has been said for men, applies to women as well. We feel that real freedom will come into existence for women only when women possess what men possess, when they too behave like men, when they too have the same rights and comforts as men in worldly life, society, laws, and religion. Only then they can attain real satisfaction, pleasure and love.⁷

Since remarriage was inconceivable without the right to divorce, Periyar advocated divorce in strong words. A marriage could never rest on incompatibility of any kind. In fact, unhappy marriages produced violence and also the murder of wives by deranged and suspicious husbands. How did this make marriage divine? Since traditional patriarchal marriage principles promoted 'the enslavement of women by men' and marriage rituals were 'performed only to hide that enslavement' the institution of religious marriage had to be destroyed to liberate women. These ideas should be viewed alongside Periyar's view on prostitution, birth control and property rights.

Concluding remarks

South India, especially Tamil Nadu and Kerala, has a long history of anti-Brahminism going back to the medieval period. The name of fiery Ramalinga Swamikal *Vallalar*, a contemporary of Sree Narayana Guru of Kerala in the nineteenth century, is well known. The medieval anti-Brahminical Tamil epic *Thirukkural*, a reaction to the spread of Brahminical hegemony in the Tamil speaking region, is often quoted by Tamil anti-caste activists. The history of the *Siddhar*, a medieval Bhakti movement propagating social egalitarianism, must also be noted to comprehend the historical context inherited by Periyar. The anti-Aryan, anti-Brahmin, movements of south India created the social space for the growth of atheism, secularism and rational thought which fructified in the founding of institutions like the Madras Secular Society. This society, a recent article claims, was inspired by the London Secular Society established by Charles Bradlaugh 'an English politician and atheist.'⁸ Experts opine that a strong current of anti-Brahminism was present in Tamil society and politics in the Nineteenth Century. Periyar was born in 1879 and became a young rebel against the caste system due to his experiences in Varanasi in 1904. In his youth he was impressed

by the atheist, rationalist and Buddhist Tamil scholar Iyothee Thassa Pandithar who debunked the caste system and Hindu religion. In addition, Periyar kept abreast with international events. He was impressed by the steps taken in the Soviet Union and Germany towards the liberation of women. He noted that both countries had made divorce easy in the 1930s. After the First World War Periyar was attracted to Gandhi and joined the Congress which he quit, because of the prevalent upper caste hegemony in that organization, in 1925 to found the anti-caste and atheistic Self Respect Movement. This movement later metamorphosed into the DMK led by his followers. The promotion of social justice and scientific temper in the country is an important national objective underlined by the Constitution of India. The liberation of women from the slavery imposed on them by patriarchy is crucial to achieve social justice and so is the ending of the caste system enjoined by the Sanatan Dharma. Periyar understood and deconstructed patriarchy in his articles on women's liberation and gender equality. This paper has highlighted his revolutionary ideas on almost all issues related to the slavery of women by men in Indian society in the hope that his words will continue to inspire young Indians to work towards the creation of a truly just, egalitarian and scientific society in future. Since the educator must be educated himself or herself, Periyar knew that the onus of their liberation lay on the women themselves – unless they disabused their minds of patriarchy they would remain slaves of men and even the most liberal sounding reformers would use this mental slavery to reinforce patriarchy in new ways.

Notes and References

¹Why Were Women Enslaved?, (First Published 1942), The Periyar Self-Respect Propaganda Institution, Chennai, 2021.

²*ibid.*, p. 61.

³*ibid.*, p. 63.

⁴*ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵*ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶*ibid.*, p. 31.

⁷*ibid.*, p. 33.

⁸Arun Janardhanan, 'In Tamil Nadu, critiques of caste are resonant, go back deep into history,' *Indian Express*, 05/09/2023.

Guruchand Thakur: the Messiah of the Namashudras and other marginalized communities in Bengal

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine the role of Guruchand Thakur as the pathfinder of the Namashudra community as well as other marginalised communities in Bengal. This community was previously named Chandal, Charal, Chang etc. They faced a struggle for survival in their daily life because they are an untouchable community in Bengal. Guruchand Thakur was the Messiah of these Dalit communities who fought against various forms of socio-economic and political injustice. The census authority of Bengal identified them as the Chandal caste in the census report, which the conscious leaders among the Namashudras saw as a social humiliation and degradation. They took the initiative to rectify this report during the 1901 and 1911 censuses. Eventually, the identity of the Namashudras was corrected in the 1911 census, leading to the emergence of caste consciousness and a social movement among them. This movement opened the door for protests against social injustice and inequalities and played a significant role in determining their social status and caste identity during the first half of the twentieth century. Additionally, the movement provided education opportunities for the Namashudras and other disadvantaged groups.

Keywords: Namashudra community, degradation, social status, injustice.

On 13th March 1938, during the commemorative event of the first death anniversary of Guruchand Thakur at Albert Hall in Calcutta, Subhash Chandra Bose, the newly-elected All India President of the Congress, referred to Guruchand Thakur as a 'Super human' in the presence of fourteen Bengali Congress intellectual leaders. Subhash Chandra Bose's statement was, 'Guruchand Thakur revives

the new life force or discipline in the Hindu society through his resonance. The lower castes within Hindu society experienced a lower social and political status in comparison to the caste Hindus. Guruchand Thakur endeavoured to uplift them to an equitable position'.¹ On the eve of the sanctified memorial gathering for Guruchand Thakur, Mahatma Gandhi, in a letter addressed to Pramatha Nath Thakur (grandson of Guruchand Thakur), remarked that, I see that you are the grandson of Sri Guru Chand Thakur, Orakandi. I understand that your grandfather was a great 'Guru' having many disciples. I hope that you will by adopting life of simplicity and service like your grandfather dedicate yourself to the cause of the down-trodden'.²

Based on the two statements provided, it can be inferred that Guruchand Thakur established an unprecedented approach to assisting the neglected, impoverished, and exploited community of Bengal to guide a life of dignity under his effective leadership. After the demise of Harichand Thakur, Guruchand Thakur adeptly carried on the approach of both spiritual and social movements that his father had initiated. Guruchand Thakur upheld the ideals of Matua, keeping a keen eye on every corner of Namashudra and untouchable society, focusing on science, rational social equality, and upliftment. He emphasized two key factors for uplifting the backward communities. He recognized in his heart that the Dalit community needed to be awakened or enlightened first. With this objective in mind, Guruchand Thakur emphasized that Dalits should overcome any feelings of inferiority and wholeheartedly embrace a strong devotion to the spirit of self-empowerment. He had a clear understanding that the prime path to emancipating this community was through a collective movement. In this context, the communicator would like to mention the Dalit movement in India encountered a crisis after the weakening of the Revolutionary Party of India (RPI) in 1959, albeit this realization came much later. Subsequently, in 1972, under the leadership of Namdeo Dhasal, Arjun Dangle, Raja Dhale, and J. V. Pawar, the 'Dalit Panther' organization was established in Maharashtra. The leading objective of this organization was to adopt a militant and revolutionary outlook. Amidst various aspects, the primary notion was to convey to the Dalit people that they are human beings. That is to anticipate while being ensnared in the web of caste-based servitude, they have forgotten the meaning of living independently, living with self-respect, or living as human beings. What does this concept truly entail? Creating their mental strength or wisdom and awakening them remained the primary tasks for the members of the Dalit Panther organization. The vision that Guruchand Thakur had envisioned long ago and subsequently took on the responsibility of awakening the Dalit community in Bengal according to that

philosophy. On May 30, 1887, from Almora, Uttarakhand, Swami Vivekananda wrote a letter to certain Promada Das Mitra, 'The conviction is daily gaining on mind that the idea of caste is the greatest dividing factor...and all caste either on the principle of birth or merit is bondage'.³ In his opinion, the most destructive force against harmony is casteism. The seeds of servitude remain concealed within the determinants of birth and intellect. Exploring the noteworthy actions of Guruchand Thakur, through which he awakened the Dalits, involved them in movements, guided their educational advancement, illuminated the route to economic independence, and provided advice for political awareness. The author will endeavour to elaborate on these aspects based on factual information.

From Chandal to Namashudra

When the census commenced in Bengal in the 1870s, there was a growing concern among various communities in establishing a permanent identity, and they sought social legitimacy through census enumeration. This pattern can be seen in the following communities-the Rajbanshis of North Bengal indicated that they should not be identified as *Koch* in 1891. They claimed their supremacy bloodline and Kshatriya position themselves. The Namashudra Movement of 1872-1873 arose from a sense of caste and self-dignity. In March 1873, the District Police Superintendent, W.L. Owen, handed down a report to the District Governor of Faridpur, demonstrating that the objective of this movement was to elevate themselves in the Hindu social hierarchy.⁴

From historical fact, the author has endeavoured to shed light on this historical backdrop. The great poet Rabindranath Tagore shows the disdainful attitude that the Namashudra farming community of Bengal received because of their lower caste status. Rabindra Nath Tagore stated, 'I went to a village and saw that the Namashudras there are not allowed to cultivate in other caste's fields, Rabindranath Tagore also explained that they are not permitted to harvest paddy, nor are they permitted to construct dwellings. In other words, our culture has deemed them unworthy of the collaboration that humans require from one another in order to exist in this world. We have made their life a voyage of sorrow and pain without any crime or illegal activity. Every day, from birth to death, we have condemned the Namashudras to pain'. This representation depicts the Namashudra community's persecution and oppression, which was denied even the most fundamental rights to engage in traditional livelihoods and build dwellings. Rabindranath Tagore's statements emphasize that the prevailing societal attitude regarded them as unworthy of critical human assistance and cooperation. He highlights the profound injustice society perpetrated against the Namashudras, subjecting them to ceaseless mistreatment from birth to death, even though they

were acquitted of any offence. It is critical to acknowledge such past injustices as well as the efforts of individuals such as Rabindranath Tagore who drew attention to the condition of the marginalized.⁵

Due to the persistence of the caste system in the formation of Indian society, the life journey of different races in this country has been compelled to take diverse paths. No society could disregard the peculiar rules of the scriptures. The stark manifestation of the caste and caste-based system became more pronounced in the early 19th century. The oppressed segments of this country raise questions about caste discrimination through various perspectives and opinions. During this time, the Namashudra community was the largest in terms of numbers in East Bengal and the second largest in the entire province of Bengal. The majority of people belonging to the Namashudra community lived in the districts of Bakherganj, Faridpur, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Jessore, and Khulna.⁶ According to the 1901 census, nearly half of the Namashudra population in the entire province of Bengal resided in the specific areas mentioned above, making this region naturally identifiable as the primary area of the Namashudra community. This specific geographical concentration, the main reason for which was probably their historical background.⁷ The comprehensive population of the Bengal province resided at the lowest tier of the social hierarchy within the Bengali Hindu community, with regard to their social standing. They were formerly identified as *Chandala*, and as per ancient scriptures, *Chandalas* were regarded as untouchables.⁸ While the *Mangalkavyas* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries described that the *Chandals* lived in villages or towns, it is noteworthy that Manu, who uttered them as untouchable, stated that they lived outside the village or town. As a consequence, in Bengal, people of the *Chandal* caste have faced various forms of social discrimination, leading to a significant vacuum between them and the privileged upper-caste individuals.⁹ While the upper castes harboured a disdain for the untouchables in their actions, they consistently spoke out against untouchability in their words and expressions. This practice was perpetuated primarily to safeguard their social status and prestige.¹⁰ These social differences continued to widen, especially for the specific class hierarchy of these regions.

According to the 1911 Census report, approximately 78% of the population of the Namashudra community depended on direct agricultural work. Various testimonies indicate that a significant portion of them were landowning farmers. Some were landless, while others were sharecroppers or tenant farmers. It's important to note that a massive segment of the land in this region was controlled by upper-caste Hindu zamindars or Muslim Syeds. The most salient distinction

within Bengal's agrarian society was between the *khajnahogi* (revenue-enjoyer) and those who provided revenue. Over time, this division evolved into a form of caste-based separation. Unfortunately, this division facilitated the outbreak of diverse forms of oppression.¹¹ On one side, there was the exploitation of the revenue-enjoyers through forced labour, illegal taxes, increasing land revenue, and the conversion of the easily payable cash revenue to the burdensome sharecropping revenue. As a result of these factors, the life of this community had become extremely complicated. The segment of the Namashudra community was involved in various activities beyond agricultural labour. They were also involved in crafting boats, construction work, and trade and commerce. Some among them were initiated small-scale businesses, including money lending and other trades, gradually transitioning into education and other professions. However, if one was to trust the statistics of the 1911 Census, then the entire progressive group of this community accounted for less than 2% of the total Namashudra population.¹² In this context, due to prolonged undignified living conditions, a sense of self-respect gradually emerged among them. During the eighteenth century, local spiritual leaders like Shah Lal Peer and certain inclusive religious sects, such as the *Sahajiya* Vaishnavism or the *Kartabhaja* sect, had also come together and assimilated with them. These communities absolutely discarded caste discrimination and propagated the message of equality among all human beings, promoting unity.¹³ There is no doubt that this had a far-reaching impression on the oppressed and marginalized individuals within society.

In the history of Bengal, the emergence of Chaitanya Deva (born on 2nd February 1486 AD according to the English calendar) marks a momentous juncture.¹⁴ He didn't merely popularize the Vaishnava religion; rather, he liberated it from the clutches of caste and made it accessible to all, transcending societal and religious barriers. Prior to Chaitanya Deva, this religion was confined to the upper echelons of society. In other words, Brahmins held the social leadership. On the other hand, the common masses (especially the lower castes) were politically and socially marginalized, oppressed, and excluded. They were subjected to the tyranny of caste discrimination and inequalities, which made their lives miserable. It was within this backdrop of social disparities that Chaitanya Deva appeared, advocating the practice of consciousness and love for humanity. His primary goal was to achieve human liberation through the chanting and glorification of the divine name. He firmly believed that love can only change the world. The arrival of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gifted a new way of liberation to the untouchable, downtrodden, and oppressed people of Bengal. He emancipated the Vaishnava

religion from its limited confines and made it accessible to everyone. From this perspective, he should not be denied the title of the 'first Revolutionary in the History of Bengal'. Absolutely, the vision of Chaitanya Deva to create a casteless society among the lower segments of Bengal's population materializes as events unfold in the future.

In the subsequent years, Harichand Thakur emerged as a prime figure in guiding the marginalised communities of Bengal, particularly the Dalits, onto a path of empowerment. Harichand Thakur was born into a Vaishnava farming family. He commenced a new movement concentrated on improving the lower sections. This movement created a new philosophy known as *Matua Dharma*.¹⁵ Though it builds an innovative religious doctrine for the advancement and unification of the downtrodden. The term *Matua* is derived from *Hari Matua*.¹⁶ It should be noted that Vaishnavism shares many similarities with the religion advocated by Harichand Thakur. Therefore, the Matua Dharma was based on devotion to Lord Hari. Matuas bestowed the *Donka*, a symbol of victory, the Red Nishan, a symbol of revolution, and the Horn, a symbol of Ninad's victory. He commanded the *Nara-Nari* to run at a breakneck speed, to the rhythm of a boisterous dance, to evade the fall or immersion of many ages. The leaders of the Namashudras emphasized internal organization and utilized the Matua religion to cultivate group consciousness. Harichand Thakur played a pivotal role in uniting the lower caste communities under the platform of Matua Dharma. Under his strong leadership, the Matua community upheld various social and economic reforms. They held that caste-based discrimination should be eradicated, and they encouraged solidarity among the oppressed sections of society. This movement was in direct contrast to the existing religious practises, where the dominant Brahminical class held societal and religious control. The Matua movement aimed to break away from this control and empower the marginalised. One of the pivotal moments of this movement was the historic incident in 1872-73 when the Matua community protested against the unequal treatment of lower-caste people during the Shradha ceremony of a Matua leader's mother. The Brahmins were denied entry to the ceremony. This incident further solidified the community's resolve to fight against discrimination. The legacy of Harichand Thakur and the Matua movement continued to influence the socio-cultural and political landscape of Bengal. The movement laid the groundwork for social justice and equality, while its followers aimed to bridge the gaps between castes and classes, paving the way for a more inclusive society. During this scenario, the Namashudra leaders conducted an urgent gathering and agreed on several

decisions: firstly, young females should refrain from attending the market. Secondly, there should be no collaboration with other castes. Lastly, food made by any Hindu caste other than Brahmins is not allowed. Additionally, they proposed to formally adopt their new name, Namashudra, instead of the derogatory term *Chandal*. The authorities who visited the region were also notified of the developments. Entrepreneurs were conscious of the potential negative impact of the boycott programme on the less fortunate. As a solution, they agreed to personally support their own relatives in need and, in the absence of relatives, the village community would provide assistance. Public announcements were made in large bazaars and villages regarding the government's directive to observe these measures.

The boycott movement rapidly extended to other regions of the country as well - the swampy regions of South Faridpur and northwest Bakharganj, and the adjacent areas of Jessore. The strike proved to be exceptionally thorough and successful and just four months after its initiation, the District Magistrate of Faridpur conducted a journey to the epicentre of this area. He witnessed that the fields lay uncultivated, houses remained unwashed, and no Namashudras could be found engaged in Hindu or Muslim tasks, nor was there any Namashudra woman visible in the market. This information is revealed in letter number 340 dated April 8th, 1873, authored by the District Governor of Faridpur and addressed to the Commissioner of the Dhaka Division.¹⁷ Indeed, the British government commenced the first census in 1872, wherein the present-day Namashudras were categorized under the derogatory term *Chandal*. As previously discussed, one of the resolutions adopted during the urgent assembly of the boycott movement was the official endorsement of their new designation, Namashudra, replacing the previous disrespectful label *Chandal*. It is worth noting that the government accepted the name Namashudra to replace the previous term *Chandal* for the Namashudra community. After the 1881 census, the Assistant Commissioner of Sylhet District, W.C. Macpherson,¹⁸ issued an order regarding the change of name, which is being referred to here. Assistant Commissioner hung up the Notice to go to all Stamp Vendors in Tahsil, In Court Office, In English Office, In Nazarat, In Criminal Office, In Municipal outpost. That Namashudra must always be written and not Chang or Chandal for all persons of the said caste that Deputy Commissioner has ordered that anyone who does not write Namashudra shall be removed from employ.

Sylhet Sd/ W.C. Macpherson Assistant Commissioner 9/9/1883

The essence of the mentioned notice is that for all Namashudra individuals, the term Namashudra must be used without fail. Under no circumstances should

derogatory terms such as *Chang*, *Chandal*, or any other offensive word be employed. The order of Assistant Commissioner W.C. Mc Pherson cannot be disregarded in any way. This same sentiment was reiterated by J.M.C. Swinny, the Chairperson of the then Bengal and Assam Census, emphasizing that this ethics should be followed in the subsequent population counts as well. The terminology used in the 1891 and 1901 census enumerations included *Namashudra* or *Chandal*. As a consequence, despite regulations from the government, the term *Chandal* was not completely obliterated. Consequently, even though official orders were in place, the term *Chandal* was not entirely eradicated. In 1907, following Guruchand Thakur's direct involvement and testimony before the *Namashudra* movement, which aimed to replace the term, *Chandal*, was initiated under his leadership. He assumed the role of organizing and providing guidance for this movement, which featured notable individuals such as Shyamlal Biswas from Jessore, Ramkinkar Roy, Dr Dinabandhu Barai, Dr Kalicharan Mandal from Dhaka, Bheeshmadeb Das from Faridpur, Tarini Charan Bala, and Purnachandra Mallik. These organizers were acknowledged for their efforts related to the name change during the census. Concurrently, with the assistance of Dr C.S. Mead, the head of the Baptist Mission in Australia, a mission was established in Orakandi. Guruchand Thakur was aware of this matter, leading him to request in 1911, just before the census, that the Census Director formally request the census authorities use the new name. The organizers promptly shared this message with others. According to Dr C.S. Mead, a considerable number of petitions were swiftly gathered, and the Chief Census Commissioner, E.A. Gait, received them. The petition from Orakandi, as recommended by Dr. C.S. Mead, held substantial significance.¹⁹ In the later stage, particularly in the 1911 Census Report, it was noted that the term *Chandal* was eradicated. This was most likely made feasible by Guruchand Thakur's powerful leadership, and there is no disagreement about his significance in this regard.

Empowering Dalits through Socio-economic and Educational Perspectives

Guruchand Thakur addressed *Namashudras* and *Dalits* about decreasing economic disparities by promoting them to work in agriculture, trade, and commerce. A quote from Mahananda Halder's *Sri Sri Gurucharit* book illuminates that, 'How money grows, Guru teaches; the strategy of earning money is found among *Namashudras*'.²⁰ (কিসে কিসে অর্থ বাড়ে শ্রী গুরু শিখায়, অর্থ উর্পার্জনের নীতিনমঃ শূদ্রে পায়।). By challenging the hierarchical norms of Brahminical society, he embraced an alternative vision of social equality and contemporary ideals. He advocated for the reconstruction of lower-caste society using practical and relevant values. He additionally discussed the issue of illiteracy among downtrodden *Dalit* people and

investigated ways to spread the light of knowledge among them. Guruchand Thakur encouraged the establishment of schools as a means of broadening education and equipping people for government employment.

In order to promote unity and coherence within the Namashudra community, Guru Chand Thakur highlighted specific key aspects *viz.* Eliminating Disparities Through Meetings and Organizations, He stressed the importance of bridging divisions among Namashudras by bringing them together through meetings and social organizations, Addressing Flaws and Issues in Society and Culture: Guruchand Thakur urged for a united effort to identify and rectify various flaws and challenges present in the society and culture of the Namashudra community, Democratic Policies Based on Unity; He suggested the adoption of democratic policies grounded in unity, as these policies would have a significant role in uplifting the downtrodden community.

These endeavours were directed towards establishing a cohesive and well-organized community, tackling cultural and societal deficiencies, and embracing democratic policies that prioritize unity as a strategy to uplift the marginalized segments of society. Guruchand Thakur identified two primary obstacles to the upward mobility of the Namashudras- illiteracy, and ignorance. A community devoid of ignorance or superstition cannot be achieved without education, and education leads to prosperity. Both wisdom and wealth contribute to ascending to supreme positions within society. Guruchand Thakur also emphasized the significance of gaining support from the governing authorities. Consciously, in 1881, a school was fabricated in Orakandi specifically for Namashudra children. Subsequently, efforts were made to establish schools in various other districts, often with assistance from Christian missionaries. However, it is important to note that the rate of educational attainment did not increase significantly. Statistics disclosed that the literacy rate among Namashudras was 3.3 percent in 1909 and 8.9 percent in 1911.²¹ Mukunda Vihari Mallik commented on this context that in Bangladesh, such extraordinary and extreme discrimination social conditions have been observed, as noted by the poet Rabindranath Tagore. 'হেমোরদুর্ভাদাদেশ, যাদেরকরেছঅপমান, অপমানেহতেহবেতাদেরসবারসমান'²² (Translated: O my unfortunate land, those whom you have disgraced, Must rise above disgrace, and be equal for all in your embrace).

Under the prime guidance of Guruchand Thakur, the Namashudras sought a new aspiration and direction to move forward. In 1906, Guruchand Thakur introduced a leading magazine named *NamashudraSuhrid* (Friend of Namashudras) as a platform for sharing their views. Later, two more magazines, *Jagaran* and *Pataka*, were published. The main objective of these publications

was to upgrade their cause and secure governmental job opportunities through administrative machinery. Guruchand Thakur was well-informed of the essential requirement for both education and employment opportunities to progress.

The Matua movement, led by Harichand Thakur, utilized the platform of Kirtan and festive gatherings to promote the doctrine of unity, religion, and social welfare. Various initiatives were implemented to counter the prevailing socio-economic dominance of higher castes and encourage unity within the Namashudra community. In pursuit of this objective, from 1881 to 1930, conferences were organized in different villages, where social issues took precedence. In 1902, the *NamashudraHitaishiniSamiti* was established in Dhaka, to coordinate the movement. The committee worked towards ensuring the synthesis of the movement.²³

These gatherings or conferences were referred to as *Uttolan Sabha*, meaning Elevation Assembly. Following Harichand Thakur, Guruchand Thakur advanced this concept and led the way for *Uttolan Sabha*. Local leaders from different villages would represent their communities in these gatherings, and they were respected by offering betel leaves and betel nuts. Each representative would raise the voice of the concerns and problems of their respective regions, engaging in discussions and reaching decisions that were crucial for the betterment of society. The primary focus was to encourage self-help and self-confidence among the Namashudra community, aiming to enhance their self-esteem and self-assurance. The first *Uttolan Sabha* was convened in 1881 at Dattadanga village in the Mollarhat police station of Khulna district, during the shraddha ceremony of Ishwar Gayen's mother at his residence. Guruchand Thakur himself represented as the president of this gathering. Sixteen responsible leaders from various districts delivered speeches during this event. The core theme of the discussions was promoting mutual support and self-belief to increase self-respect and self-confidence. It was also decided that these assemblies would be conducted regularly.²⁴ Guruchand Thakur's invaluable words during these gatherings led to the fundamental principles and ideals for the formation of society, spreading from village to village. Mahananda Haldar has also documented Guruchand Thakur's statements in his *Sri SriGurucharit* book focuses, শুনহে স্বজাতিভাই-এজাতিররক্ষানাই সবেযদিনাহিএকহও। ভাবমনেনাহিন্দ্রবীর্যমাননমঃ শূদ্র একতালোসবেপাফেলাও। কুসংস্কারআছেযতদূরকরঅবিরত বিদ্যাশিক্ষাকরঘরেঘরে মান, জ্ঞানখাচাইনিজমানরাখাচাই করকাজসবেএকান্তরে। একজাতি, একমাতা, সবেভগ্নী-ভ্রাতা মনেপ্রাণেতাইজানো একসুতেগাঁথা, ক রিয়াএকতা একপখেসবেটানো²⁵ (translated: Listen, my fellow countrymen - without unity, there is no for us. If the community do not become united. Do not think of yourselves as weak and insignificant, unite everyone under one umbrella. No matter how far the superstitious practices have

spread, Communicate knowledge and education from home to home. Desiring honour and wisdom, wanting to uphold one's own dignity, Work together with all, in unison. One nation, one mother, all broken as siblings, Understand this in your hearts and souls, Thread together as one, embracing unity, Guide everyone along the same path).

Under the leadership of Guruchand Thakur, Namasudra conferences were held in the years 1922, 1910, 1924, and 1930 respectively. Influenced by Guru Chand Thakur, an extraordinary decision was made during the ancestral ceremony of Nitai Mondal in the village of Hariyagop, located in the Jessore district in 1891. The decision embodied during this gathering was exceptional, as it advocated for a significant departure from traditional norms. All the superstitious beliefs that were prevalent in the Namashudra (lower-caste) society, such as these included activities like refraining from excavating ponds, abstaining from the sale of fish from ponds, avoiding the use of bricks for house construction, and not planting coconut tree saplings, among others. These practices were considered omens of bad luck or social taboos. Guruchand Thakur spread these changes through conferences and various committees to eradicate such practices.²⁶

In 1908, a proposal was put forth during a gathering to formalize the conference's establishment. Additionally, annual meetings would be held in various districts to address social issues and promote education. In each Namashudra (lower-caste) village, a village committee would be formed, and these committees would then be grouped into unions consisting of fifteen villages each. For oversight, a district committee would be established. To create a permanent fund, these committees were authorized to collect donations. To ensure funds, each family was directed to contribute a small quantity before each feed which the village committee would then collect. Each member was to contribute one anna per month to the village committee, two annas to the union, and four annas to the district committee. It was proposed that a portion of expenses for ceremonies like ancestral rites, marriages, and other rituals be contributed to this fund by allocating three percent from each Namashudra individual. Furthermore, it was suggested that any Namashudra who married off their son below 20 years of age or their daughter below 10 years of age would face exclusion.²⁷

Guruchand Thakur established the Namasudra Kalyan Samiti to propel society forward, enlisting members who were honest and industrious. This organization had a multifaceted role, including promoting education, constructing roads, excavating ponds for recreational purposes, ensuring cleanliness, providing support during times of peril, opposing injustices and oppressions, resolving conflicts through village arbitration without resorting to courts, and more. There was a

structured system in place to report the progress of village initiatives and provide an account of income and expenses. Guruchand Thakur directed the fabrication of the *Lakshir Gola* to strengthen the economic foundation of the village and paid the teachers of the *Lakshir Gola's* schools, assisting underprivileged girls in their marriages, and distributing rice to the poor during the period of famine. This assistance was not limited solely to the Namashudra community; it also encompassed all marginalized sections of society.²⁸ When farmers contributed rice to the *gola* (granaries) a certain portion was stored in this facility. In 1932, the *HariGuruchand Chand Mission* was established, with Guruchand Thakur as its leader (Sanghadhipati); later, it was renamed *Matua Mahasangha*. The primary objective of the Matua Mahasangha was to advance education beyond religious confines, eradicate superstitious beliefs, uphold societal harmony, elevate disadvantaged communities from poverty, break down barriers of caste and religion, create shelters for needy widows, offer education to less privileged scholars, provide aid during times of famine and floods, initiate rural reforms, and undertake various other initiatives.²⁹

Concluding the discussion, Dr Mead's observation about Guruchand carried significant weight. Dr C. S. Mead, when discussing the impact of Guruchand Thakur on the Namashudra community, remarked, 'the ancient patriarchal system still holds significant authority. He stands as the messiah of the community in Orakandi and wields immense and far-reaching influence. He frequently attends our Christian services, aids us in securing land, and maintains close contact with us on various matters. One of my final actions before departing from India was to present him with a large printed Bengali Bible as per his request. In human terms, nearly everything hinges on his actions. All attention is directed towards him. Let us pray for him'.³⁰

Guruchand Thakur was a trailblazer in the awakening of the Dalit community and the unification of Bengal. This is why he could assert that he doesn't have just a team or a ball. He endeavoured to bring the marginalised Dalit castes into the mainstream, countering the dominance of the upper castes. The book *Sri SriGurucharit* by Mahananda Haldar has documented Guru Chand Thakur's words, where he stated, 'although I was born in a Namashudra family (clan), I don't consider myself limited to just the Namashudras. I regard all Dalits, the oppressed, the untouchables, and those lacking education and wealth in their households as my own people'. Guruchand Thakur held a firm belief that one's worth should not be determined by their lower caste if their character is pure. He advised and collaborated with various communities like Telis, Malis, Kumbhakars, Mahishyas, Dass, Chamars, Podds, Tantis, Malakars, and Muslims to foster an

educational spirit among the Namashudra castes and all other backward sections. He emerged as amessiahfor liberation from bondage and the advancement of education among underprivileged communities.

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Indigenous Knowledge System and Retailers of Folk Medicine A Study from Indian Sundarbans

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Abstract

For a couple of decades, the 'history of science, technology, and medicine' (HISTEM) has received widespread attention from scholars all across the world. Historians have paid adequate attention to exploring the scientific and technological contributions of India in the global history of science. Simultaneously, the 'codified' and 'institutionalized' forms of certain medicinal practices and health-seeking traditions of the Indian subcontinent have achieved international recognition for their medicinal values to maintain good health. However, there are many indigenous (tribal/autochthonous/ adivashis/marginal) communities whose medicinal practices have remained beyond the purview of HISTEM. On the other hand, the Indigenous people are accustomed to using certain supernatural items and techniques for healing their illnesses, obstacles, disturbances, and disorders. In such a background, the healing practices of the indigenous people of Indian Sundarbans are quite interesting. Many of them have been engaged for generations in selling different parts of plants, animals, and minerals as well as rings, amulets, stones, and supernatural items to accomplish the demands of the people of the region. So, the retailing of medicinal substances has developed as a profession as well as a means of livelihood for a social group of people of Indian Sundarbans. This paper thus seeks to highlight

the social background of the retailers along with their processual knowledge of medicinal substances and transmission of community knowledge on medicine with a perspective of healing discourse.

Keywords: *Indigenous Knowledge, Indian Sundarbans, Folk Medicine, Folk Healers, Medicine Venders, Astrology, Medicinal Substance, etc.*

For a couple of decades, the ‘history of science, technology, and medicine’ (HISTEM) has received extensive attention from scholars all across the world. Historians have paid adequate devotion to exploring the scientific and technological contributions of India in the global history of science. Simultaneously, the ‘codified’ and ‘institutionalized’ forms of certain medicinal practices (like *Ayurveda*, *Siddha*, *Unani*, and Buddhist medicine) and health-seeking traditions (like *Yoga*, *Yoga* therapy, certain specialized sports, etc.) of India have achieved international recognition for their medicinal values to maintain good health. However, there are many indigenous (tribal/ autochthonous/ *adivashis*/ marginal) communities whose medicinal practices have remained beyond the purview of HISTEM. On the other hand, as an essential feature of their beliefs and healing discourse, the Indigenous people are accustomed to using certain supernatural items and techniques to satisfy wishes, resolve personal problems, prevent damage, gain a bright future, and most importantly get rid of ailments. Many of them believe that the use of amulets, charms, rings, and roots of different plants often brings a kind of positive mental calmness and a miraculous energy dispersion to cure their illnesses, obstacles, disturbances, and disorders. In such a background, the healing practices of the indigenous people of Indian Sundarbans are quite interesting. Many of them have been engaged for generations in selling different parts of plants, animals, and minerals as well as rings, amulets, stones, and supernatural items to accomplish the demands of the people of the region. So, the retailing of medicinal substances has developed as a profession as well as a means of livelihood for a social group of people of Indian Sundarbans. In this paper, we’ll highlight the social background of the retailers along with their processual knowledge of medicinal substances and transmission of community knowledge on medicine with a perspective of healing discourse.

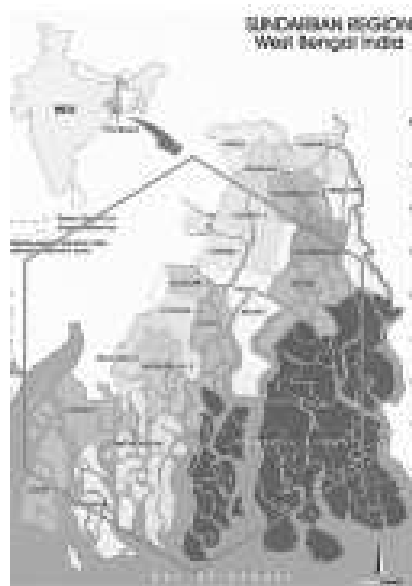
The Background of Indian Sundarbans and Its Indigenous People

The main focus area of the present study is the Sundarbans extended over coastal districts of West Bengal and Bangladesh. This region is covered by a mangrove forest of almost 10,000 km² of which 6,000 km² is located within the

territorial limits of Bangladesh (particularly in Bagerhat, Khulna, and Satkhira districts). On the other hand, the 4,110 km² forest area of this region is located within two districts of West Bengal (North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas).

The Sundarbans region is now considered a notable biosphere of the world. This coastal part of the Bengal Delta has been created mainly by the deposits of silt from the systems of the Hooghly River, Brahmaputra River, Padma River, and Meghna River. It is full of rivers, canals, creeks, and other internal water bodies. The Coastal Sundarbans region of West Bengal is extended from Minakha, Sandeshkhali, and Hingalganj of North 24 Parganas in the east to Fraserganj, Bakkhali, Mausuni Island, and Sagardwip of South 24 Parganas in the west.

However, this present study is limited to a few specific Community Development Blocks (CD Blocks) of Baruipur (Bhangar-1, Bhangar-2, Jaynagar-1, Jaynagar-2, Kultali, etc.), Canning (Basanti, Canning-1, Canning-2, and Gosaba), Diamond Harbour (Falta, Kulpi, Magrahat-1, Magrahat-2, Madirbazar, Mathurapur-1, Mathurapur-2, etc.) and Kakdwip (Kakdwip, Namkhana, Patharpratima, and Sagar) Subdivisions of South 24 Parganas District and Baduria, Basirhat-1, Basirhat-2, Haroa, Hasnabad, Hingalganj and Minakha CD Blocks (of Basirhat Subdivision) of North 24 Parganas district.



Map 1: The Sundarbans Region of West Bengal.

Source: Fieldwork conducted during the period between April 2021 and March 2023 in connection with the INSA-Sponsored Major Research Project under the supervision of Dr. Rup Kumar Barman titled, *The Practice of Folk Medicine by the Indigenous People of Sundarbans: A Historical Analysis*.

The demography of Indian Sundarbans is plural in character. Most of the people of this region have hailed from the indigenous communities. The human settlement began to grow in the Sundarbans region in the pre-colonial period through the processes of reclamation and extension of agriculture. This process was further encouraged in the colonial period. However, the population has considerably increased in both North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas districts including their Sundarbans region after the Partition of Bengal Province in 1947. The available census data show that the total population of South 24 Parganas increased to eight million in 2011 from one million in 1901. It was comparatively higher in the case of North 24 Parganas. In this district, the total population has increased from one million (1901) to ten million (2011).¹

There are a few distinct features in the demographic pattern of South 24 Parganas. Firstly, the net population has grown at an astounding rate since 1961. Secondly, the Hindu population shrieked to 63.2% from the erstwhile 76%.² Thirdly, the Muslim population grew from 23.4% to 35.6% between 1961 and 2011. In some CD Blocks, the Muslims are the majority (such as Bhangar-I, Bhangar-II, Magrahat-I, and Magrahat-II) where the Muslim population increased to 66.77% and 51.09% respectively. Alongside, Canning (I and II [47.16%]), Basanti (41.18%), Jaynagar (I and II [45.60%]), Diamond Harbour (I and II [42.01%]), Baruipur (35.43%), Bishnupur (I and II [32.16%]), Budge Budge (I and II [34.92%]) and Mandirbazar (I and II [33.91%]) CD Blocks have a considerable Muslim population. On the one hand, Sagar, Namkhana, Patharpratima, Kakdwip, Kultali, Mathurapur (I and II), Sonarpur, and Gosaba CD Blocks all have a majority of the Hindu population. Therefore, there exists an overall equilibrium in the percentage distribution of the Hindu-Muslim population throughout South 24 Parganas. A similar trend has been noticed in the Sundarbans region of North 24 Parganas too.

The Muslims of the coastal 24 Parganas are primarily divided into two groups: (i) *Ashrafs*, and (ii) *Atraps or Ajlafs*. The Turkic, Afghan, Persian, and Arabian Muslims who came to India throughout history are socially known as Sheikhs, Sayyids, Mughals, and Afghans. They have formed the 'Ashraf' or the aristocratic community. Their population is very small in the Sundarbans. However, most of the Muslims in this region are originally indigenous people belonging to the lower-caste Hindu communities. They are known as *Atraps* or *Ajlafs*.

Presently these Muslims are included in the Other Backward Classes (OBC-A) category.

However, census data show that among the Hindus the Scheduled Castes (SCs) have a considerable concentration in Hingalganj, Hasnabad, Sandeshkhali-I, Sandeshkhali-II, Haroa, and Minakhan CD Blocks of North 24 Parganas District (ranging from 24% to 67 % of the total population/[average 36%]). The SCs have similar concentrations in the CD Blocks of South 24 Parganas (ranging from 20% to 48% of the total population [average 35%]). The Scheduled Castes are divided into 60 sub-castes. There are a few specific SC communities that have a substantial presence in this region like the Poundras, the Bagdis, the Rajbanshis, the Namasudras, the Tiyors, the Kauras, Jelia Kaibartyas, etc. On the other hand, the Chammars, Malos, Doms, Haris Mals, Bauris, Kandras, Kauras, and Nuniyas, are minor SC communities of Sundarbans.

It is also a significant feature of the population of Sundarbans that there are several tribal communities (Scheduled Tribes) who were brought to Sundarbans mainly from the Chhota Nagpur region and the western districts of West Bengal. Here, they are known as Sardars, Bunos, Mundas, or Santhals. At present, most of them are living permanently around the coastal Sundarbans region. Their primary occupation is farming, wood chopping, fishing, hog farming, and catching crabs and snails. Their economic condition is severely poor but lately, due to governmental initiatives they have become socially aware and their literacy rate increased significantly than before along with an increase in their overall economic status.

With the introduction of Christianity, a small section of the lower caste Hindus of 24 Parganas embraced this faith. In South 24 Parganas, they are known as Native Christians and their primary profession is farming and providing education. Many of them have small businesses. Their economic condition is comparatively better. They are mainly scattered in Canning, Namkhana, Bakkhali, Patharpatima, Goshaba, Basanti, Chunokhali, Baruipur and Behala of South 24 Parganas and Sandeshkhali, Hingalganj, Hasnabad, and Minakhan of North 24 Parganas. The Christian population in South 24 Parganas was recorded as 66,498 in the census of 2011.³ It was, however, 26,933 in North 24 Parganas District.

Once there was prosperity of Buddhism in the coastal 24 Parganas. At present, the Buddhist population is very low. They have either embraced Islam or Hinduism. However, we have noticed the presence of Mog Buddhists in the Sundarbans region. They mostly live around Hasnabad, Bhangar, Jaynagar, Gosaba and Canning areas. In the distant past, they came here from the Arakan valley and now they have been socially and culturally assimilated with the local people of

24 Parganas. Their economic condition is not that well. The total population of Buddhists in South 24 Parganas was 2,494 in 2011.⁴ It was comparatively higher in North 24 Parganas (5,818). In recent years, a trend has developed among the Scheduled Castes of the Sundarbans region to embrace Buddhism propagated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956). Thus the Buddhist population (including the Neo-Buddhists) has increased considerably in this region.

So it seems that Indian Sundarban is quite rich in terms of bio-diversity with a plural population. The mangrove forest of Sundarbans, an uncountable number of rivers, creeks, and islands are the main sources of economic activities of people of densely populated districts like North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas. Reclamation of jungles, the extension of agriculture and fishing, and the question of resource and revenue management have drawn the attention of the state, administration, and common people. However, the common people of the Sundarbans are relatively backward in terms of their economic status and standard of living. This backwardness is one of the major factors for the continuation of community knowledge of folk medicine.

Folk Medicinal Practices and Retailers of Medicinal Substances

During the course of the present study, it has been observed that irrespective of caste or religion, there is much enthusiasm among the common people of South 24 Parganas District, North 24 Parganas District, and Sundarbans for procuring and purchasing folk medicinal items. To understand their social background, the method of transmission of knowledge from one generation to another generation, the process of collection of substances for preparing medicine, and their uses, we have conducted fieldwork in 11 CD Blocks of South 24 Parganas and 17 CD Blocks of North 24 Parganas.⁵

It has been noticed that the folk healers of this region have preserved their knowledge of medicine and healing practices mainly for community services. Many of them have maintained these traditions as a profession. It is also a means of livelihood for those who are engaged in the collection and retailing of folk medicines and medicinal substances. Thus, there are three categories of people who are involved in the preservation and dissemination of folk medicine in the Sundarbans *viz.* traditional healers, healers-cum-retailers or vendors, and collectors of substances of folk medicine.

The folk healers of Sundarbans are basically the indigenous people who have been living in this region since the distant past. Many of them have established their settlement either in the colonial period or in the postcolonial period. They are now following different religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and animism. From the official parameter of classification, they are divided into

Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The Muslim OBCs have been mostly categorized as OBC-A. While Hindu OBCs got the status of OBC-B, during the course of our study, we conducted interviews among 100 practitioners of SC, OBC-A and OBC-B communities (SC:53, OBC-A:38, OBC-B:5, and G:4). Out of the interviewed healers, 14% are engaged in retailing of the medicinal substance. It has been noticed that folk healers irrespective of their religion and caste, have blended healing practices and medicines with exorcism and belief in supernatural powers. However, despite having no idea about the chemical contents of the roots, leaves, bark, and other substances, they have been carrying out this non-institutionalized form of healing practices in the Sundarbans region.

Table 1. List of vendors interviewed.

Sl. No	Name of the vendor	Police Station	Community	Place/stall of retailing	Retailers of
01.	Rup Chand Sheikh (OBC-A)	Bhangar	Muslim	Champahati Railway Station, Platform No.2	Roots and other folk medicines.
02.	Hani Laskar (OBC-A)	Bhangar	Muslim	Baruipur Puram Bazar	Roots and other folk medicines.
03.	Phanmoi Ganj (OBC-A)	Minakhan	Muslim	Champahati Railway Station, Platform No.1	Roots, folk medicines and amulets.
04.	Raju Sheikh (OBC-A)	Bhangar	Muslim	Baruipur Railway Station, Platform No.1	Roots, folk medicines, and amulets.
05.	Bikram Ghosh (OBC-B)	Canning	Hindu	Canning Railway Station	A black-coloured toothpaste.
06.	Manirul Sheikh (OBC-A)	Bhangar	Muslim	Canning Market	Roots and other folk medicines.
07.	Sheikh Firoj (OBC-A)	Bhangar	Muslim	Ballyganj Market	Roots and other folk medicines.
08.	Azifal Sheikh(OBC-A)	Basurhat	Muslim	Ballyganj Market	Roots, oils, and ointments.
09.	Bhagirath Biswas (SC)	Baruipur	Hindu	Piyali Station, Hawker Market	Powder and oil.
10.	Kazi Md. Ziauddin (OBC-A)	Canning	Muslim	Ghaziyari Sharif Railway Station	Various charms (powder), amulets, and roots of plants.
11.	Khalan Poddar (SC)	Sonarpur	Hindu	Garia Station	Sanctified ornamental ring.
12.	Tapes Sardar (SC)	Namkhana	Hindu	Dakshin Barasat Railway Station	Sanctified amulet.
13.	Nasim Ali (OBC-A)	Baruipur	Muslim	Baruipur Railway Station.	Oil, paste, and roots.
14.	Momin Mondal (OBC-A)	Magrahat	Muslim	Ballyganj Railway Station platforms No.2	Oil and roots.

Source: Fieldwork conducted during the period between April 2021 and March 2023 in connection with the INSA-Sponsored Major Research Project (under the supervision of Dr. Rup Kumar Barman) titled *The Practice of Folk Medicine by the Indigenous People of Sundarbans: A Historical Analysis*.

Inheritance and the Process of Transmission of Medicinal Knowledge

One of the major issues of the present study is the question of the inheritance of knowledge and the process of its transmission. Our field survey data show that the retailers of folk medicine have inherited the knowledge of medicine mainly from their respective families, village elders, or their *gurus* (mentors). In an interview, Kazi Muhammad Ziyauddin (Male, 85) expressed that he has inherited the knowledge of medicinal plants from his family. He sells his herbal medicine at Platform No.3 of Ghutiyari Sarif, a busy railway station on the Sealdah South-Eastern Railway Line.⁶ Similarly, Monirul Sheikh (Male, 36), Raju Sheikh (Male, 34), Kazi Muhammad Ziyauddin (Male, 85), and Rup Chand Sheikh (Male, 49) have procured the knowledge of medicine from their families. It is basically their family business. However, Yakub Sardar (Male, 58) has developed his expertise in healing from the local villagers and advanced it further through his own efforts. Along with providing remedies at home, he sells his homemade products to common people in Baruipur, Sonarpur, and Ballygunge areas.⁷

On the other hand, some of the vendors have been induced by other retailers of medicinal substances. Thus Tapas Sardar (Male, 43) and Bikram Ghosh (Male, 83) have confessed that they have engaged themselves in the making and retailing of folk medicinal items mainly because they did not have any other option to adopt for earning breads.⁸ In contrast, it is purely a business for Khokan Poddar who sells supernatural rings and amulets at Garia Railway Station.⁹ It appears that the community's knowledge of folk medicine is being inherited and transmitted in diverse ways.

What do they sell?

The question that attracted our attention is 'What do the retailers sell'? It is perceived the vendors of folk medicine are engaged in selling their products comprising medicinal substances, roots, and astrological items (like stones and amulets). They prescribe medicines for various common ailments such as gastritis, heartburn, hemorrhoids, diabetes, breathing troubles, rheumatism, toothache, blood pressure, cough and cold, etc.(as given in Table 2). Along with prescription, they sell medicinal ingredients as well as their home-made products including medicinal pastes, and oils.

Table 2: Roots of plants used for healing various diseases.

Sl. No	Disease	Root/ leaves/ Bark	Method of use
01.	Fever, cold, cough	Rambasol leaves	As a tonic (on an empty stomach) made by boiling such leaves.
02.	Abdominal pain, stomach heat	Shweta Shimul	As a juice extracted from such root.
03.	Diabetes	Padmagulacha	As a tonic (on an empty stomach) made by soaking the roots overnight.
04.	Heart disease	Bark of Arjuna	As a tonic in the prescribed dose by adding water with the powder made from the bark.
06.	Toothache	Shweta Akanda leaves	As a paste
07.	Rheumatoid pain	Shweta Akanda, Kalo Dhuturu Raw Basak,	Roots are to be tied together and to be worn with black thread on the waist.
		Tejnar/Bark	As a tonic made by boiling the bark in plain water.
		Baghwakh fruit	Fruit is to be worn.
08.	Hemorrhoids	Shweta Akanda	As a paste
		Shweta Apang	The root is to be worn
09.	Jaundice	Shweta Apang	To be worn with a garland by making it with the stems of the plant.
10.	Blood Pressure	Sarpagandha	To be held on hand or waist
11.	Dysentery	Ramu Basol leaves	Consumption with honey.
12.	Gas, heartburn, skin diseases	Padmagulacha	Soak at night and Consumption in the morning.

Source: Fieldwork conducted during the period between April 2021 and March 2023 in connection with the INSA-Sponsored Major Research Project (under the supervision of Dr. Rup Kumar Barman) titled *The Practice of Folk Medicine by the Indigenous People of Sundarbans: A Historical Analysis*.

The root sellers also often offer verbal advice. They also prescribe some special tips for medical issues of pregnant women and children. Regarding the physical well-being of pregnant women, they advise considering the use of acacia, *Shweta Apang* (*Achyranthes aspera* L.), and *Shweta Akanda* (*Calotropis gigantea* L.) together.¹⁰ During pregnancy, many of them recommend eating white sprouts of *Shimul* (*Bombax ceiba*) tree soaked in water. *Olotkamabl* root is also recommended for tying around the hand or waist to remove any type of fear during pregnancy. The roots of *Guye Babla* (*Acacia nilotica*), *Shweta Apang*, *Banchandal*, and *Anantamul* (*Hemidesmus indicus* Br.), are commonly prescribed for children above 12 years for healing different types of ailments.

The roots of these plants are also offered by some vendors for relief after a snakebite or venomous animal bite. Notable, in this regard are the roots of *Isha*, *Sarpagandha* (*Rauwolfia serpentina*) and *Maniraj* plants. It is said that snakes cannot come near the roots of *Maniraj*. Many believe that the snake bows its head if someone wears the root of *Isha*. According to Sheikh Feroze, a medicine seller of Ballygunje, if someone is bitten by a snake, the poison will gradually dissipate by chewing the roots of *Sarpagandha* with betel leaf.¹¹

It has been already indicated that the vendors of medicinal substances are also retailing different types of oils made by themselves or by other producers of indigenous medicine (as given the Table 3). They use both plant and animal substances along with minerals for making such oils like *Kalajira Tel* (black cumin oil), *Mahashakti Laal Tel* (a red-colored oil), *Danth Byathar Tel* (an oil for healing toothache), *Bater Tel* (an oil for healing rheumatic pain), *Kakra Bichhar Tel* (scorpion oil), joint pain oil, etc. The use of anti-inflammatory ingredients such as ginger, garlic, pepper, cinnamon, sesame, and cloves is quite common in such oils. Natural herbs such as *Telakucha* (*Coccinia cordifolia*) leaves, fruits of *Dhutura* (*Datura stramonium*), *Harbhanga* plant, *German* leaves, and, *Bish Kachu* (wild arum) are also added to the oils for fast relief from pain. Animal-based oils such as scorpion oil, leech oil, cod liver oil, and oil made from fish are also available to the retailers of folk medicine. Besides, they sell sesame oil, cumin oil, cinnamon oil, clove oil, etc. The application of these oils is more common in arthritis, joint muscle pain, back pain, knee pain, and sciatica. They do sell oil in the case of toothache, hair loss, and body massage.

The retailers of such oils produce their marketable products by themselves. They collect the materials, ingredients, and substances from the nearby forests/locality as well as from Barabazar Market (Kolkata), Basirhat Market, Dawakhana Market (Baruipur), Baruipur Kachari Bazar and a few other such markets. Although the specifications of medicinal oil are roughly the same, there is a difference in selling price. The price of a small ampule of *Kalajira* oil (cumin oil) is Rs.40.00 and the large one is Rs.70.00. Again, the price of scorpion oil, *Mahashakti Laal Tel*, and arthritis is Rs.40.00 Rs. 70 and Rs. 50.00 respectively.

Table 3: Different types of oils sold by the retailers.

Sl. No.	Type of oil	Used for	Main ingredients of the oil.
01.	<i>Kalajira Tel</i> (Black Cumin oil)	Fever, cough, cold, headache, hair fall, asthma.	Black cummin, garlic, sesame, olive oil, neem leaves, etc.
02.	<i>Mahashakti Laal Tel</i> (Red Oil)	Used for healing pains, arthritis, back pain, or joint pain.	<i>Harbhanga</i> Plant, <i>dhatura</i> , garlic, ginger, cummin, <i>Asisora</i> , black pepper, papaya flower.
03.	<i>Dantha Tel</i> (Teeth Oil)	Used for any type of toothache like cavities, bad breath, tooth plaque, teeth bleeding, and scurvy.	Clove, cinnamon, <i>ajwain</i> powder.
04.	<i>Bater Tel</i> (Rheumatic oil)	Rheumatism, back pain, pain in the leg.	Neem leaves, mustard oil, sesame, and castor oil.
05.	<i>Kakra Bichhar Tel</i> (Scorpion oil)	Used for any type of pain, cough, cold, tooth pain, fungus, or venomous animal bites.	Black scorpion, mustard oil, sesame, ginger, garlic, clove, black pepper, cinnamon etc.
06.	<i>Danth Tel</i> (Pain oil)	Pain in joints, rheumatism, waist pain.	Mustard oil, garlic, ginger, <i>dhatura</i> seed, etc.

Source: Fieldwork conducted during the period between April 2021 and March 2023 in connection with the INSA-Sponsored Major Research Project (under the supervision of Dr. Rup Kumar Barman) titled *The Practice of Folk Medicine by the Indigenous People of Sundarbans: A Historical Analysis*.

However, the retailers are extremely popular among the common people of Sundarbans, North 24 Parganas, and South 24 Parganas for addressing the astrological issues. They prescribe different types of roots essential for making medicine and satisfying the supernatural forces considered to be responsible for ailments. They recommend wearing the roots of trees as per the astrological and zodiac charts of the customers. They suggest roots mainly for countering the bad impact of nine astrological planets (*Nabagraha* like Moon, Jupiter, Saturn, Mercury, Rahu, Ketu, Venus, Sun, and Mars) on their customers. They think that they generally get those customers who are not capable of affording gems/stones as prescribed by well-known astrologers (*Jyotishis*). Thus in an interview, Raju Sheikh informs us that he prescribes the roots of *Shweta Berela*, *Bilwamul*, *Khirika Briddhadharak*, *Bamanhati*, and *Ram Basak* for healing the bad impact of *Shani*, *Rabi*, *Chandra*, *Budha*, *Brihaspati*, and *Sukra* respectively. Similarly, he suggests the roots of *Anantamul*, *Shweta Chandan*, and *Ashwagandha* for *Mangal*, *Rahu*, and *Ketu* respectively.¹²

Hanif Lashkar (Male, 34), on the other hand, sells the roots of different plants to the people who approach him for solutions to their astrological issues (*Grahadosh*). He prescribes the roots of *Bamanhati* for tying with hands or hips who are suffering from family feuds due to the dislocation of *Brihaspati* (Jupiter). For those who are suffering from stomach aches or arthritis, due to the disposition of *Shani* (*Shani*); he asks them to wear the roots of *Shweta Berela*. To fix the position of *Rahu* and *Ketu*, he suggests people tie the roots of *Ashwagandha* on their hands or hips. Apart from these, Hanif also sells the roots of *Shatamul*, *Beel*, *Shrika*, *Bridhodarak*, and *Guye Babla*. He suggests his customers wear the roots prescribed by him only after taking a fresh shower and cleaning them with water from the Ganga River and *Tulshi* leaves.¹³

Like Raju Hanif, Manirul Shaikh (Male, 36) also sells the roots of plants in his shop which are needed for dispelling the evil impact of the nine astrological planets (*Nabagraha*). He mainly prescribes the roots of *Shweta Berela* (for *Shani*), *Vishwamool* (for *Ravi*), *Kshirika* (for *Mangala*), *Anantamul*, (for *Budha*), *Bridhodaraka* (for *Shukra*), *Ram Basak* (for *Rahu*), *Shweta Chandan* (for *Brihaspati*), *Bamanhati* (for *Rahu*), and *Ashwagandha* (for *Ketu*). According to him 'each root should be worn after bathing and wearing clean clothes at noon'. He also sells the roots of *Ban Bhasma*, *Shweta Akanda*, *Apang*, *Nilakantha*, *Kamini*, *Maniraj*, *Guye Babla*, *Ban Chanral*, etc.¹⁴

There are many other retailers who sell the roots like the above-mentioned healers.¹⁵ Apart from the roots and herbs as mentioned in Table 2 and Table 4,

these retailers often sell *Lajjavati*, *Mahasamudra*, *Sarpagandha*, *Sutaro*, *Shweta Aparajita*, *Shweta Apang*, *Akanda*, *Maniraj*, *Nilakantha*, *Banchandal*, *Kamini*, *Banabhasma*, etc. They collect such roots from Hasanabad, Deganga, and Basirhat of North 24 Parganas District and the College Street Market of Kolkata. They often collect their medicinal substance from the nearby forest of the Sundarbans. They have their retail stalls in the railway stations or in the markets located near the stations. Most of the retailers are Muslim by religion belonging to the OBC-A Category. However, the buyers are both Hindus and Muslims.

Table 4. Roots prescribed by the retailers

Sl. No	Astrological Planet	Stone	Metal used for making rings/amulets prescribed by the astrologers	Roots of plants used as Substitutes for stones prescribed by the root sellers
01.	<i>Rabi</i> (Sun)	<i>Chual</i>	Copper	<i>Bihvamul</i>
02.	<i>Chandra</i> (Moon)	<i>Mukta</i>	Zinc/Silver	<i>Khirika</i> root.
03.	<i>Brihaspati</i> (Jupiter)	<i>Pohraj</i>	Gold	<i>Bamanhati</i> root and <i>Brahmashosti</i> root.
04.	<i>Budh</i> (Mercury)	<i>Panna</i>	Zinc(mercury)	<i>Bridhoxdarak</i> root.
05.	<i>Shukra</i> (Venus)	<i>Hira</i>	Platinum/Brass	<i>Rambasak</i> root.
06.	<i>Shani</i> (Saturn)	<i>Neel</i>	Lead/Iron	<i>Sweta Berela</i> root
07.	<i>Mangal</i> (Mars)	<i>Raktaprabal</i>	Copper	<i>Ananata</i> root.
08.	<i>Rahu</i>	<i>Gomed</i>	Horse's razor	<i>Sweta Chandana</i> root.
09.	<i>Ketu</i>	<i>Cats-eye</i>	Steel	<i>Ashvagandhu</i> root.

Source: Fieldwork conducted during the period between April 2021 and March 2023 in connection with the INSA-Sponsored Major Research Project (under the supervision of Dr. Rup Kumar Barman) titled *The Practice of Folk Medicine by the Indigenous People of Sundarbans: A Historical Analysis*.

Just like retailers of roots and oils, we have noticed the sellers of different varieties of medicinal rings, amulets, charms, and beads in North 24 Parganas District, South 24 Parganas, and Sundarbans. They are usually worn on the hands, waist, neck, and fingers. Amulets, charms, beads, and rings are prepared from the roots of various plants, and metals. These items are sanctified by uttering the verses from sacred religious texts. It is a common belief that wearing amulets, charms, beads, and rings would protect the wearer from any evil energy, harm, or chronic disease. They can be said to act as a type of lucky charm that transmits healing energy and positive vibrations for peace, prosperity, and development in any person's life and can repel the wearer with their power.

During the field survey of folk medicine, we met Tapas Sardar, one such amulet vendor who sells sanctified amulets at South Barasat Railway Station. The amulet he sells is called *Sarvamangala Ma Kamrakshakali Baba Bholenath Amulet*.¹⁶ He visits different places in the state and collects various plants and herbs for making such amulets. He generally uses the thorn of cod fish, roots of *Nagaraj*, *Abrus*, *Tejbal*, *Panchaban*, *Ghat Bamboo*, *Shweta Berela*, *Hemtal*, *Manamani*, *Nag-Nagini*, etc. He said that by using his talisman, the wearer would get relief from all kinds of pain, family disputes, marital discord, business loss, financial distress, depression, ribs, nausea, etc. Additionally, he chants a few sacred mantras for the wearer to strengthen his mental strength.

Khokan Poddar is also a vendor of amulets and rings. He mainly sells rings of different alloys. He has a well-decorated shop near Garia station for selling the rings of an alloy of eight metals (*Ashtadhatu*). The metals used for his rings are gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, zinc, mercury and iron. He collects his rings from the Nabagraha Devalaya Shantidham Ashram located in Ashoknagar of the North 24 Parganas District. According to him, such rings are prepared on the auspicious dates of *Amabasya* (no Moon) and *Purnima* (Full Moon) by chanting the sacred *Mantras*. He sells the rings of *Ashtadhatu* at different rates according to their size and quality ranging from Rs. 51.00 to Rs. 151.00.¹⁷

The process of wearing the supernatural items is also quite interesting. They advise that these roots and amulets should be worn with fresh clothes and on the hand or around the waist. However, new roots should be changed every seven days. According to Raju Shikeh, 'the thread with which the roots should be tied will be of a different colour for each one. Just as the root of *Anantamul* should be tied with red thread. Similarly, the root of *Bridhodarok* should be tied with green thread and the root of *Ashwagandha* should be tied with black thread'.¹⁸

Observations

The brief discussion on the retailing of folk medicinal substances shows that most of the people of the indigenous communities involved in this profession are Muslims. They are also engaged in selling the roots of plants, stones, and rings for rectification of the bad impact of the location of different astrological planets. However, their products are equally popular among the Hindus and Muslims of the Sundarbans and South 24 Parganas District. According to Ariful Sheikh, a seller of roots in Ballygunge, the Hindus buy more of these roots, especially on Saturdays to satisfy the planet like *Shani*. The Muslims also believe in such planets (*Graha*), but many are reluctant to wear rings as they do so with everything uncovered during ablution.¹⁹ The survey shows that the retailing of

folk medicinal substances in rural markets or in busy railway stations has now evolved as a particular form of occupation. Many have chosen the profession of selling medicine as their main source of income and for them, it is a family business. On the other hand, many people have joined this business with the hope of earning their livelihood.

Most of the retailers have their own stalls for selling their products and other medicinal substances. In most cases, they have retail stalls in the railway stations and nearby markets where a large number of commuters are coming regularly. In order to attract the attention of buyers, their own people deliver medicines to the doorsteps of common people by arranging temporary stalls. On many occasions, they try to attract the attention of buyers by advertising their products. They argue that their products are made entirely of natural ingredients. These products are free from side effects. In order to satisfy the psychological desires and fundamental demands of the common people, the vendors of folk medicines often use *Mantras* and exorcisms to popularise their amulets and roots. Due to poverty and ignorance, the amulets are still popular among the common people of the Sundarbans. It is undeniable that there is a huge difference between folk medicine and modern medicine and the acceptability of the former is also very low today. However, the retailers of folk medicine have preserved the traditions of folk medicinal practices of common people to resolve many problems, adverse situations, or obstacles, leaving aside the limited income, geographical distance, lack of infrastructure, etc.

Notes and References

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²*ibid.*

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The Religious Interactions in Early India Ujjayinî at the Sacred Crossroad

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Abstract

The historicity of ancient Ujjayinî is linked to Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain sources. Ujjayinî emerged as a crossroads of convergence of many religions and became India's one of the seven sacred cities. The Avantikûetra Mahatmya of Skanda Purana highlights Ujjain as a tirtha region. It is centre of Shaivism and is still famous for the cult of Mahâkâla. The sources for the study are SkanôdapurâGa, Buddhist texts, and Jaina literature and natya literature and inscriptions and coins. The religious landscape of a city speaks of sacred spaces such as temples, shrines, crossroads as mother goddess sites, sacrificial posts; priestly classes like BrâhamaGas, Bhagavatas, Buddhist monks and nuns; and religious gatherings in the garden, processions, etc. The religious communities of Brahmanism (Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Kâpâlîka, Pâûupata and bhâgavata and other sects), Buddhism and Jainism interacted through convergence, competition, and contestation within Ujjayinî. The construction of temples and stupa and viharas resulted in the alteration of spaces into religious spaces and also led to interactions among city people. On different occasions, city people gathered at these temples. Religious interactions were carried out both within and outside the city's sacred or religious spaces and architecture. City people participated in both inter and intra-religious exchanges. The state also regulated the religious behaviours or religiosities of the people. For example, the Padmaprâbh[taka refers to an officer named

dharmâsanika who is assigned to handle the religious affairs of the city Ujjayinî. Traditions associate Kâlidâsa with King Vikramâditya of Ujjayinî, who founded the Virama Era of 57 B.C. We find cultural continuity in Ujjayinî from the 6th century B.C. to A.D. 600 or even later.

Key words: *Ujjayini, Sacred cross-road, Avantîkûetra Mahatmya Mahâkâla. Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Kâpâlîka, Pâûupata, bhâgavata, Buddhism and Jainism, dharmâsanika, Vikramaditya.*

The historicity of ancient Ujjayinî is linked to Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain sources. The city has been named vividly in historical sources as Ujjeni (in Pali)¹, Ujeni in Prakrit inscriptions² and Ozone in classical literature³, Viûâla in Kathâsaritasâgara, Pusôpakarnadini⁴ (garden) in *Abhidhâna Cintâmanô* of Hemacandra, Ujeniya, on the earliest inscribed coins in Brahmi script of the first half of the second century B.C.⁵ Avantî Khanôda of SkanôdapurâGa mentions that Avantî pura, the capital of Avantî, was given the name Ujjayini in order to commemorate the great victory obtained by lord Mahadeva (Mahâkâla), the presiding deity of Avantî, over the powerful demon Tripura, and the city was named after him.⁶ Tripura is identified with Tripuri, modern Tewar, on the Bank of river Narmada. The city Ujjayini was located on the bank of river Sipra, a tributary of the Chambal River, which according to John Malcom, is now buried under the Sipra River, and modern Ujjain stands 2 km south of the former city.⁷ Along with Pâmaliputra, Mathurâ, and Kâûi, Ujjayinî figure most frequently in early literature as well as in inscriptions as an imperial city, trade, and pilgrimage centre of early India. Being on the trade and pilgrimage route, Ujjayinî was well connected with different imperial and religious cities of early India and stood at the sacred crossroad of many religions of early India, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and many more sects. Buddhist writers considered Avantî and the country around Ujjayini an integral part of Daksoeinapatha.⁸ Tosâlî inscription reveals that Ujjayinî was well connected to Kalinga in the east and Taksôcilâ in the west. At Ujjayinî, various routes or roads conversed.⁹ A road ran from Barygaza to Ujjayinî and from Ujjayinî to Vidiûâ, Bharhut, Kauûâmbî, Prayâga to Pâmaliputra. Ujjayinî is also said to be associated with Kâlidâsa as his residence and King Vikramâditya as his capital. Traditions associate Kâlidâsa with King Vikramâditya of Ujjayinî, who founded the Virama Era of 57 B.C.¹⁰ The Janapada Avantî corresponds with the ancient Mâlawâ.¹¹ Ujjayinî was a seat of power for the Mauryâs, Sâtavâhanâs, Çeakas and Gupta rulers throughout the period; only with the rise of Aulikaras in the fourth century A.D. probably the centre of political power shift from Ujjayinî

to Mandasore from where the Aulikaras controlled the whole of western Malwa until the middle of the sixth century A.D. By the end of the sixth century A.D., Ujjayini seems to have passed into the hands of the Kalachuris. The economic and religious importance of the city remained with it. We find cultural continuity in Ujjayinî from the 6th century B.C. to AD 600 or even later.

Following the roads of commerce and empire, Ujjayinî emerged as a crossroads of convergence of many religions and became India's one of the seven sacred cities. The AvantîkúetraMahatmya of Skanda Purana highlights Ujjain as a tirtha region.¹² On the one hand, it was an excellent centre of Shaivism and is still famous for the cult of Mahâkâla.¹³ On the other hand, Vaishnava Bhâgavatas also lived in the city and competed with Shaivites. Besides Brahmanical sects, Ujjayinî was a centre of Buddhism and Jainism.

The primary literary sources discussing Ujjayini are both religious and non-religious literature. Avantî Khanòda of SkanòdapurâGa, Buddhist texts, and Jaina literature also mention the city. The Kavya-Nâmya literature provides the most valuable information and still untapped that comprises Bhâsa's *Svapnavâsavadatta*, *PratijñâyaugandharâyaGa*, and *Daridracârudattam* (1st-3rd C.E.), Úûdraka's *M[cchakamika* (3rd-5th C.E.); Kâlidâsa's *Meghaduta* (5th C.E.) and *Raghuvamsa*; the two monologue plays (*Caturbhânòî*) viz. Úûdraka's *Padmaprâbh[taka* and Úyâmilaka's *Pâdatâtaka* (The Klick) (all dated 5th-6th C.E.). Dandin's *Kâdambari* and *Daúakumâracarita* also mention the city of Ujjayinî.

Besides literature, inscriptions and coins provide important information about religious affiliations to different ruling clans or elites. However, these sources shed little light on the religious behaviours of the ordinary people but the ruling classes. Being an imperial city belonging to many ruling dynasties, local and imperials, the religiosities of the ruling elite mattered a lot as they influenced the religious behaviours of the masses through patronage and promotions. Ujjayini is also mentioned in a large number of inscriptions, such as the Separate rock edict of Ashoka, rock inscription of SarvanaBelgola, votive inscription from Sanchi Stupa, Sanchi inscription of Sri Satakarni, Nasik cave inscription of the times of Nahapana, Nasik cave inscription of Vasisthiputra, Pulamavi, Junagarh inscription of Rudradaman year 72, the Sanchi inscription of Swami Jivadman 13th year, Paikuli inscription (Sasanian Record), two Udaigiri cave inscriptions of Candragupta second, Gandhara stone inscription of Visvavarman, Mandasore stone inscription of Kumaragupta and Bandhucarman of Malava, the Nandsa Yupa inscription of 3rd century A.D., Indore copper plate inscription of the Skandagupta,

Mndsor inscription of Malwasamvat 524, Mandsor stone pillar inscription of Yasodhavarman, Mandsore stone inscription of Yasodharman and Vishnuvardhan, and the Abhona (Nasik) inscription of Sankargana.¹⁴ Many coins (both uninscribed and inscribed types) have also been recorded from Ujjayini ranging from pre-Mauryan to Gupta times. A newly discovered Bactrian inscription from Rabatak is the longest Kushana inscription in 23 lines. It records that Kanishka's commands were obeyed at Ozono (Ujjayinî), Zagido (Saketa), Kozombo (Kauúâmbî), Pilibothro (Pataliputra) Sro-tchompo (Champa near Bhagalpur).¹⁵ The collection includes pre-Mauryan Punch Marked coins, Mauryan punch-marked coins, Satavahana coins, Saka coins, and Gupta coins. The inscripational and numismatic sources of Ujjayini were earlier used to reconstruct the political and economic history of the city, not the urban religious landscape. Here, varied sources are used for the holistic reconstruction of the religions and religiosities of the city.

As a city and region, Ujjayinî and Malwa have been subjects of study by several scholars. In 1873, Edward Conolly made *Observations upon the Past and Present Condition of the Oujeinor Ujjayini*.¹⁶ B.C. Law made the breakthrough and published a monograph in 1944 titled, 'Ujjayinî in Ancient India'.¹⁷ From 1935 to 1944, he studied ancient literature and wrote about other ancient cities, Sarâvasti and Râjg[ha. Kauúâmbî, Ahichchhatra. He was followed by several books on the political history of Ujjayinî and Malwa, such as R.B. Pandey's *Vikramaditya of Ujjayinî* in 1954, D.C. Sircar's *Ancient Malwa and Vikramaditya Tradition* in 1969, K.C. Jain's *Malwa Through the Ages*. In 1996, I explored Ujjayinî through the lenses of numismatic and epigraphy in her work *Ujjayini A Numismatic and Epigraphic Study*.¹⁸ P.K. Basant's (2012) *The city and the Country in Early India: A Study of Mâlawâ*.¹⁹ This is the recent contribution to Urban studies in which the archaeological and literary evidence are jointly used to show the process of urbanisation as well as various aspects of urbanism in Mâlawâ. Prem Kumar's unpublished Ph.D work (2023) on *Aspects of Urban Landscape and Urbanism: A Study of Nâmya Literature* also focuses on different landscapes such as social, political, economic, cultural, religious, etc., in general, and includes references to Ujjayinî. Earlier scholars have explored various aspects of its history, such as urbanisation, politics, society, and economy, about different periods. However, in the earlier writings, the city's religious landscape, religiosities, religious interaction, etc., were not paid proper attention. By using new genres of sources such as-kavya-nâmya literature, numismatics, and inscriptions, the paper deals with the religious interactions among the different communities of the city of Ujjayinî. In ancient India, religious interactions were

carried through convergence, competitive sharing, criticism, and confrontations. The passive interactions among the religious communities represent toleration. Intolerance results in conflicts, criticism, abuses, and violence.

The religious landscape of a city speaks of sacred spaces such as temples, shrines, crossroads as mother goddess sites, sacrificial posts; priestly classes like BrâhamaGas, Bhagavatas, Buddhist monks and nuns; and religious gatherings in the garden, processions, etc. The socio-religious diversity was deeply embedded in the urban cultural landscape. However, the urban religious landscape was much more conversed and competitive among the cultural landscapes such as art, pleasure, food, dress, etc. The state also regulated the religious behaviours or religiosities of the people. For example, the *Padmaprâbh[taka* refers to an officer named *dharmâsanika* who is assigned to handle the religious affairs of the city Ujjayinî.²⁰ Several Brahmanical sects, such as the Vaisônavite (like Bhâgavata) and Saivites (like Kâpâlîka and Pâûupata) present in the cityscape shared the sacred landscapes among themselves. Besides some popular sects in the cityscape, urban folk worshipped many mainstream gods and household deities. However, people most worshipped and cherished the cupid god (Kâma). A large number of male and female renouncers also lived or visited the city from the outside. Religious interactions were carried out both within and outside the city's sacred or religious spaces and architecture. City people participated in both inter and intra-religious exchanges.

Literary texts refer to religious spaces and architecture of the city, such as temples, shrines, sacrificial halls, sacrificial posts, a public square as a mother goddess site, a household, etc. On the basis of these references, the religious landscape of a city can be divided into four focal locales—the Household, the city square and Sacrificial posts, the temples on highways and roadside, and The cremation grounds. Cities were also perceived as sacred and some goddesses were ascribed to cities as 'city goddesses'. A city was also ascribed to a guardian deity. City people worshipped the guardian deity of the city on different occasions. From households to cremation grounds, all spaces were made for religious interaction.

Routines of rituals were carried out within and beyond the households. Some spaces inside the house were considered revered, where householders worshipped both household deities (*grôhadēvatâs*) and mainstream gods (*siddhîkrôta devas*) and performed daily rituals. The devout householders undertook rituals or oblation giving or sacrifices as part of everyday life. In the *M[icchakamika*, Cârudatta says that worshipping and offering oblation is a bounden duty of a householder.²¹ Household deities were worshipped after mainstream

gods. In the *M[cchakamika*, Cârudatta, the householder, first worships *siddhîkròtadeva* and then offers oblations to *gròhadevatâs*.²² The cupid god was worshipped like *gròhadevatâs* inside courtesan's houses. In the *Daridrâcârudattam*, Sajjalaka (or Úarvilaka of the M[cchakamika), the burglar, was asked to wait at the Kâma temple inside the Vasantasenâ's house.²³ Kâma was worshipped at courtesan's houses and in royal households. Royal families also offered sacrifices. For being symbols of power and royalty, lions are captured and sacrificed in the royal households, mentions the *Pratijñâyaugandharâya Ga*.²⁴

In ancient times crossings (of rivers, gates, squares, etc.) were considered sacred and worshipped. The *M[cchakamika* provides references to the worshipping of *Mâtròkâs* (mother goddesses) at public squares of Ujjayinî.²⁵ *Mâtròkâs* were not household deities. Householders were supposed to finish their daily rituals by worshipping the gods at home and offering oblation (*Bali*) to the public squares. A householder's duty was to make offerings at both places. Evening prayer and offering oblation to the mother goddess at the square were also mandatory.²⁶ City folk worshipped squares by placing deities other than the mother goddess also. The *Pâdatâitaka* refers to the presence of *ÆivapiGdî* at the crossroad (*chatvaraúivapîthikâ*) of Ujjayinî.²⁷ I think the *úivapîthikâ* was made for religious discussion on siva.

Literature provides references to temples in different parts of Ujjayinî. Temples were constructed as the adornment of the city. For example, Kadambari says about Ujjayinî, 'though it is hung with strings of pearls, it is most adorned by its temples'.²⁸ The *kavya-nâmya* sources reveal that people worshipped a variety of deities in Ujjayinî. Temples of *YakciGî*, fire god, *Siva* or *Eankara*, *Kâtyâyanî*, *GaGeæa*, *raktcâmundâ*, *Kârâlâ* or *Bhagwati*, *nagardevatâ*, *grhdevatâ*, *kâmadeva*, *i.e.*, figures in the *nâmyas*. *Kâmadevâyatana* was the most prolific temple mentioned in the *nâmyas*. In cities, temples got erected in different parts- in houses, gardens, on roadsides, at crossroads or even in deserted places. Introducing temples in the cityscape gave urban spaces a new cultural or religious meaning. Initially, temples were made in distant places. By making temples at remote locations, the marginal spaces of the city got converted or reshaped into a sacred landscape. The construction of temples resulted in the alteration of spaces into religious spaces. Temples led to an increase in the sacredness of the space. The temples also led to interactions among city people. On different occasions, city people gathered at these temples.

In the beginning, temples were not essential landmarks of the city; activities at temples were primarily confined to rituals. Early religious spaces

were not considered 'pure space, and the sacredness of a temple remained fluid. Distant-located temple compounds were also used for other improper activities. For example, in the *PratijñāyaugandharāyaGa*, ministers YaugandharāyaGa as a madman, RumaGvân as a monk, and Vasantaka as a beggar; are planning to release Udayana from the captive of Mahâsena nearby the fire sanctuary of an abandoned Ūiva temple of Ujjayinî.²⁹ The presence of unsavoury elements such as madman, monk, and beggar indicate the non-functional character of a temple, particularly in the daytime. All temples are not functional temples; some of them are deserted temples. For example, in the *M[cchakamika*, when SaAvâhaka entered a temple on the public roadside, it was an abandoned temple. This temple was devoid of idols or images, so the gambler made numerous gestures and postures of the goddess to avoid the master and gamester.³⁰ Unsavoury elements of the cities used deserted temples for hiding and playing games. In *M[cchakamika*, the master and the gamester use a deserted temple to play dice.³¹ In the Gupta period, temples became landmark buildings and formed a distinct landscape within the cityscape. It became a site of cultural convergence.

Temples were also located on public roads. Some temples functioned in the early morning or evening but were deserted midday. The *PratijñāyaugandharāyaGa* references the presence of the temple situated on the highroad of Ujjayinî.³² Unmarried Vâsavadattâ goes to worship in the temple of *YakîGî* on the occasion of Kâlâsòtòdamî (the eight-day belonged to goddess Kâlî).³³ The *PratijñāyaugandharāyaGa* also reveals that there was a siva temple in the deserted place of the city of Ujjayinî along the road. The temple was surrounded by high walls that dogs could not cross. The siva temple was situated on platforms above the ground. On an elevated platform, paintings of lord siva and his son GaGeœa with *modakaC* were made. The goddess Raktcâmundâ was also offered *modakaC* or sweet balls. Images of lord siva, Kâtâyânî and GaGeœa were not placed in the temple; instead, they were painted on the wall.³⁴ In later periods, temples emerged so prominently that temples identified cities. Though the famous cult of *Mahâkâla* is absent in the Ujjayinî based plays like *M[cchakamika*, *Svapnavâsavadatta*, *Pâdatâtaka*, *Padmaprâbh[taka*, etc. nâmya literature indicate that Ujjayinî was an important centre of Shaivism during early centuries of the Christian Era. It is also quite possible that the temple of siva mentioned in the *PratijñāyaugandharāyaGa* later developed into the famous cult of *Mahâkâla* of Ujjayinî. City people also worshipped some demi-gods like *YakîGîs*. This also indicates that the absence of a temple of goddess Kâlî in the cityscape or unmarried royal women was not supposed to visit the cemetery. The people of Ujjayinî also worshipped river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna by making

their temples. The *Pâdatâ itaka* refers to Madayanti, the court-bearer of goddesses Ganga and Yamuna.³⁵

Interactions in the form of periodic rituals, cultural events, fasts and festivities were carried out at city temples. Temple became an important site for religious celebrations and cultural performances. People visited city temples on many occasions. On certain auspicious occasions, religious texts such as the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Puranas* were read out. In *Kâdambarî*, Bânòabhatòtòaconfirm listening to the manuscripts.³⁶ In the Gupta period, temples became landmark buildings and formed a distinct landscape within the cityscape. It became a site of cultural convergence.

Sacrificial halls or posts are religious architecture different from temples. The sacrificial post is the signpost (*dhvaja-stambha yûpa*) of the sacrificial hall. A flagstaff and a *khunta* or *yûpa* in *Mattavilâsa-Prahaasana* identify a *Sacrificial-hall*.³⁷ In the city of Ujjayinî, there were many sacrificial posts. In *M[echakamika*, Cârudatta, a merchant BrâhmaGa, adorns the city of Ujjayinî with many sacrificial posts or *yûpas*.³⁸ The making of temples, sacrificial halls, and other minor religious architecture in every part of the city indicates the transformation of non-religious spaces into the religious landscape. It also shows greater interaction among city people. The rich people of the city patronised the sacrifices and sacrificial halls. In the *M[echakamika*, Cârudatta says that his ancestors had patronized sacrificial halls of the city.

The city people carried out multiple religions and religiosities. Throughout history, Ujjayinî emerged as a great centre of religious convergence. The numismatic and epigraphic records corroborate literary evidence and show the interaction between Brahmanism and Buddhism of Ujjayini. Ujjayini-based literature frequently references Brahmanical gods, rituals, temples, sacred spaces and sects such as Bhagavata, Buddhist monks and nuns. The symbol on the unscribed coins links Ujjayinî with the Brahmanical religion. Some divinities are represented in anthropomorphic form on the coins.³⁹ Among them, we could mention Lakshmi seated on a lotus or Lakshmi being sprinkled by the elephant on either side.⁴⁰ Lakshmi is depicted as seated, facing a lotus on the obverse, while Abhiseka Lakshmi is represented with two elephants on either side of the obverse.⁴¹ Solar symbols made an appearance on some coins of Ujjayinî.⁴² The Udayagiri cave inscription of Chandragupta Second also mentions the prevalence of Vaishnavism in the Malwa region. Indore copper plate inscription of Skandagupta says the prevalence of sun worships in the region.⁴³ Vaishnavism was an important religion of the Ujjayini region. From the Sanskrit texts *Pâdatâitaka* and

Padmaprâbh[taka, it is known that there were followers of Vaishnavism known as Bhagavata-Chauksòa. This sect was known by the name of 'Ekayana'.⁴⁴

In Kâlidâsa's *Meghadûta*, Ujjayini is an excellent centre of Shaivism. In the *Meghadûta*, Kâlidâsa instructs cloud messenger to visit Ujjayini and attend the worship of *Mahâkâla*. He says, 'O cloud, till the sun is lost to human eyes and when the evening worship of Siva is performed, you should also attend the full merit of your thundering sounds'.⁴⁵ The Siva worship was prevalent in the third century B.C. at Ujjayini is clear from the numismatic evidence. Siva has been represented on the Ujjayinî coins symbolically and anthropomorphically. A Siva-linga on the pedestal between two different trees inside the railing is represented on the obverse of some coin of Ujjayinî.⁴⁶ In early times, a tree had been generally associated with a phallic emblem of Siva. A single standing figure on many of the coins can be identified with Siva.⁴⁷ The attributes in the hands, viz, Staff on the right and vase on the left, clearly disclose its identity; it is further confirmed by the testimony of another variety of the same series of coins, which shows a bull looking at the deity. Moreover, the three-headed standing figure on the obverse of the Ujjayini coins carrying identical attributes further strengthened it is the figure of shiva. The continuous circulation of uninscribed cast copper coins till the third- fourth A.D. indicates that Saivism was prevalent in Ujjayinî for a long time.

The numismatic evidence shows to what extent Kardamakas gradually Brahmanised themselves. The Kardamakas were inclined towards Rudra-Siva, perhaps indicated by their preference for personal names such as Rudradaman, Rudrasena and Rudrasimha, assumed by the members of the ruling dynasty. That Saivism was prevalent in the Ujjayini region during the Gupta period is informed by the Udayagiri cave inscription of Chandragupta Second.⁴⁸

From Mandasore inscription of Yasodharman,⁴⁹ he was a follower of Saivism. At Mandasore, a large number of imposing sculptures of God Siva have been discovered. The original temple to which they belonged has disappeared. The Huna ruler Mihirkula was a follower of Saivism, as is evident from the Mandasore inscription. Mandasore was a part of western Malwa, and the religion in this region might have followed all over western Malwa, including Ujjayinî. Thus, Ujjayini was a stronghold of the worship of God Siva in early India.

Apart from Shaivism, city people persuaded many religious affiliations. The Chauksòa was one among many. *Chauksòa* was the one branch of *bhâgavata* sects that practised extreme untouchability, says Moti Chandra and Agrawal.⁵⁰ *Chauksòa* were servile followers of religious sects and doctrines. In the *Padmaprâbh[taka*, Pavitraka is a Chauksòa who practices untouchability

on the one hand and visits a courtesan on the other in the city of Ujjayinî.⁵¹ The *vitò* says to him that practising untouchability and visiting courtesans are corollary to each other.⁵² The *vitò* calls the Pavitraka Chauksò *apiæâcha*.⁵³ The *Pâdatâ itaka* also refers to the head of *Chauksòâmâtya* named Visònudâsa. The *vitò* criticised him by calling *vròsòdala* (means *sûdra*).⁵⁴ Visònudâsa is a judge who has a special cane stick (*vetradanòdaka*) and pitcher (*kunòdikabhanò*). According to Manmohan Ghosh, *vetradanòdaka* is his symbol of authority, and *kunòdikabhanò* contains water for ritual purposes.⁵⁵ He is not discharging his duty religiously because of his devotion to meditation.

Ujjayini was a centre of Theravada Buddhism.⁵⁶ According to D.K. Chakrabarti, Buddhism was limited to the central Gangetic plain until the century B.C.E., or more precisely, until the advent of the Mauryan King Ashoka.⁵⁷ Buddhist Stûpas or monasteries were situated outside the city but were on the trade route and well connected with the cities. P C Bagachi argues that the expansion of Buddhism before the time of emperor Ashoka is a matter of conjecture. Its activities in pre-Ashokan times seem to have been confined to Kosala and Magadha, but small brethren communities had probably come to existence in the west in Mathura and Ujjayini.⁵⁸ Tosâlî edict indicates that Ujjayini was one of the provincial capitals of the Mauryan empire. It is possible that Buddhism in Ujjayinî got introduced after the Kalinga War and Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism. It is evident from the two separate Kalinga edicts of Ashoka (Rock edict XV and XVI) that Kumaras were stationed at Ujjayinî and Taxila. Ujjayini and Taxila were probably the two headquarters of Ashoka's empire's western and north-western provinces.⁵⁹ Ashoka personally resided at Ujjayinî and his chief queen at Vidiúâ. According to Buddhist tradition, Devi was a devotee of Buddha before Áoka. In Ujjayinî large no of lay followers resided in the city.

Right from the beginning, Buddhism had a strong presence in Ujjayinî. Buddhism is neither central to the city's religious landscape nor out of the wake. Buddhist establishments like monasteries and viharas were situated outside the city where monks and nuns dwelled. In the *M[cchakamika*, a *vihâra* is located on the boundry of the city, most probably nearby *PucpakaraGdaka* garden. Vasantasenâ is taken to a nearby *vihâra* by a monk for medication. A monastery or *vihâra* is called *dharmâyanò*, and a *bhiksòus* is *dharmâyanòavâsî* in the *Padmaprâbh[taka*.⁶⁰ Buddhism was another religion prevalent in the third century B.C.E., as is evident from the Sanchi inscription.⁶¹ Though from the *M[cchakamika*, it is known that Buddhism was no longer the dominant religion in Ujjayinî. The remains of one huge and two small stupas at Ujjayinî are also attested by archaeology.⁶² The Nasik cave inscription of the time of NahâpaGa

indicates that the rulers of the Kshaharata branch of Ēakas were inclined towards Buddhism. Apart from monks and nuns, the city is inhabited by lay worshippers of the Buddha. They called themselves upāsaka. In the *Pâdatâtaka*, *nirapeksò* calls himself ‘*upasaka*’.⁶³

Monks and nuns had a strong presence in the cityscape. Monks were very frequent in the city. Buddhism, nuns, monks, etc., are so familiar with the cityscape that even the city commoner, like the *vitò* of *Padmaprâbh[taka*, knows about the rules of Sangha and Buddhist philosophies of *trisòndò*, *parinòirvândò*, *pamòchæiksòâpada* (*pamòchæîla*), etc.⁶⁴ In the *Pratijñâyaugandharâyaga*, Rumanòvân adopts the guise of a Buddhist monk (*ksòramanòaka*) when he visits Ujjayinî to free King Udayana. It proves that monks were frequent in the city, making RumaGvân less likely to be identified. Monks were present in every part of the city, including the *veæa*. In the *Padmaprâbh[tak*, Samòghilaka, a *Ēâkyabhiksò*, visits the *veæa* to pacify courtesan Samòghadâsikâ, who is grieved with the death of her mother with Buddha’s words (*Buddhavachana*).⁶⁵ Buddhism had its followers among courtesans. Some nuns also settled in the city. For example, the *Padmaprâbh[taka* refers to a Buddhist nun (*Ēâkyabhiksò*) residing nearby a *brâhmanò* (*Ēaisòikaka* is a *dvijakumâra*) house in Ujjayinî.⁶⁶

Jainism had gained its foothold in Ujjayini during the period of Chandragupta Maurya, as is evident from the SravanaBelgola inscriptions.⁶⁷ Chandragupta Maurya’s conversion to Jainism is ample proof of the prevalence of Jainism in the Ujjayini region. Ujjayini was also connected with Jainism. Inscriptional records at SravanaBelgola reveal Ujjayini’s connection with Jainism. However, the literature does not provide many references to the presence of Jainism in Ujjayinî. SravanaBelgola inscription about 600 refers to one âcâryaPrabhacandra and locates Bhadrabahu at Ujjayini. The passage reads as, ‘Bhadrabahusvami who was acquainted with the true nature of the eight-fold great omens and was the seer of the past, the present and the future, having learnt from an omen and foretold in Ujjayinî a calamity lasting for twelve years, the entire sangha set out from the north to the south and reached by degrees a country counting many hundreds of villages and filled with happy people, wealth, gold, grain and herds of cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep’.

Buddhist and Jaina literature mention Sampadi or Samprati as Jaina devotee. According to the *Divyavadana*, he was the son of Kunâla and grandson of Ashoka. The Jaina records also show Smprati, the immediate successor of Ashoka, who converted to Jainism by Suhastin. He was a great patron of Jainism, and his capital Ujjayinî was a great centre of Jain activities. According to Jaina

tradition, he did for Jainism nearly everything that Ashoka did for Buddhism. He built temples and endowed them liberally and spreading the faith even in the non-Aryan land.⁶⁸ Jaina sources also claim that King Vikramāditya was a convert to Jainism.⁶⁹ Then SiddhasenaDivakara broke the phallic symbol of Mahākāla and installed the image of Parsòvanātha enlightening Vikramāditya.

The urban religious landscape was fluid and flexible. It allowed different religious thoughts to compete for patronage and piety. Religious affiliations of urban people were fluid, and city people (*Nagarajan*) were liberals towards religious patronage. Both Brahmanical religion and Buddhism flourished under the patronage of the state and people. Urbanites patronised religious communities, establishments, temples, sects, and *BrâhmaGas* regarding shelter, food, alms, etc. Buddhist monks, nuns, and parivrâjikâs visited house to house and faced lay worshippers for patronage. In Ujjayinî, both *Brâhmanòas* and Buddhist monks and nuns were invited by householders for befitting gifts. The urban householders carried out befitting and gift-giving to gain religious merits and maintain social prestige. The royal households invited *Brâhmanòas* for befitting for the good of the kings regularly⁷⁰ Cârudatta, the protagonist of the play *M[cchakamika*, is a staunch *brâhmanòa* who used to worship *g[hadevatâs* and *siddhi-deva* daily at one hand. At another hand, he is a great patron of other religious beliefs. In the *M[cchakamika*, the *viducaka* says that Cârudatta has founded a suburb or locality (*Malappuram*) and adorned it with monasteries, *viharas*, gardens (*ârâma*), temples, ponds, wells, and sacrificial posts.⁷¹ In this case, Cârudatta is patronising both dominant religions indiscriminately.

Like Brahmanas of the city, Buddhist monks held respectable positions in society, and they roamed freely on the highways of Ujjayinî in *M[cchakamika*.⁷² Though the Sangha was physically placed outside the city's landscape, they were part of its sacred landscape. City people gave generous donations to all, Brahmanas, monks, nuns, Kâpâlikas, *parivrâjikâs*, etc. *Parivrâjikâ* were also appointed to royal families as nurses. The door of Sangha was open for everyone. Anyone from any socio-economic and cultural ground could join the *Sangha* and become a monk. In the *M[cchakamika*, Samvâhaka, a shampooer who first turns gambler, then becomes a Buddhist monk. The *Bhagavadajjuka* refers to a *brâhmanòa* named CÊânòdòilya who joins *Sangha* just for food. He says, 'owing to lack of food alone, I entered this order, not through desire for Dharma possessing'.⁷³ Very soon, he leaves the Buddha fold because of the practice of food restriction. The conversion from one religion to another was very fluid. New mendicants, mainly Buddhist, could be easily identified with their bright red forehead, no scar on the shoulders produced by the ascetic robe, and bagginess of garments. In the

M[cchakamika, Cârudatta, acting as proxy king, bestows monk SaAvâhaka with the title of the head of all Buddhist monasteries of the entire country (*sarvavihâresòukulapâtî*).⁷⁴ It seems that the state is patronising Samògha and regulating it by appointing their own people to the sangha organisation. The tilt between the two folds was apparent since both were competing for Dana and patronage.

The proliferation of competing religious groups in the cities led to criticisms and confrontations. The *nâmyas* also attest to the presence of fissures between the two dominant religions. An underlined conflict between Buddhism with Brahmanism was present in the city landscape. Negative depiction and criticism were part of internal fissures between them. In the *nâmyas*, monks and nuns were depicted as inauspicious and ill omens. In the *M[cchakamika*, the sight of a Buddhist mendicant is considered an evil omen.⁷⁵ In the *Padmaprâbh[taka*, the *vitò* says about a Buddhist monk, how pure is the rule of Buddha that besides these crooks Bhikcus, it is flourishing (*pratyahamabhipûjyata*).⁷⁶ The *vitò* criticises *SaCghilaka* for visiting the *veæa*.⁷⁷ The *Mudrârâksòasa* also asserts the same notion of evil omen on seeing a Buddhist monk. In act fourth act of the play, Râkúaca does not want to see *ksòapanòaka* at first glance.⁷⁸ According to M.R. Kale, by *ksòapanòaka*, Râkúasòa understands a Jaina ascetic and shrinks from his auspicious sight. According to him, on account of Jaina's bigotry, superstitions, nudity, and uncleanly habits, they made them *bîbhatsadaræana* (horrible sight). Hence, Râkúasòa orders him to appear as normal (*abîbhatsadaræana*).⁷⁹ In the *Mudrârâksòasa*, Jîvasiddhî is a Buddhist monk (*ksòapanòaka*). The term *ksòapanòaka* was used for both Buddhist and Jain ascetics. It means that based on sight, ascetics were divided into two groups-*abîbhatsadaræana* (Buddhist monks) and *bîbhatsadaræana* (Jain monks). In the fifth act of *Mudrârâksòasa*, Siddharthaka welcomes the ill-omened sight of a *ksòapanòaka*, for he wants to be baulked in his pretended mission by Malyaketu van-guards.⁸⁰ In the *Pâdatâtaka*, Buddhist monks are called Bhâgavata Nirapeksa for distancing themselves from Bhagavata.⁸¹ In *Pâdatâtaka*, the *vitò* criticises Visònòudâsa, the Chaukca, by comparing him with Buddhist monks for their indifferences.⁸² The comparison shows that Buddhist monks and nuns were engaged in worldly affairs and did not discharge their religious duties properly. The *Mâlatîimâdhava* depicts the fissures between the Buddhist Tantra and Saivite Kâpâlîka Tantra. The two archrival Saudâmanî (Buddhist Tantric) and Kapâlakundalâ (Kâpâlîka), represents the binary forces of society, indicating that all having miraculous power did not work for good. In the play, the Saudâmanî is depicted as generous and helpful. The two represent

the fight between two religious folds in supernatural power and patronage. And the victory of Saudâmanî indicates the triumph of the non-violence and generosity of Buddhism over the violence and cruelty of Brahmanical religious practices.

The confrontation between Brahmanism and Buddhism is also reflected in the physical and sexual abuses of the Buddhist nuns residing in Ujjayinî. The *Padmaprâbh[taka* and *Pâdatâtaka* refer to two separate cases where two Buddhist nuns get violated by *brâhmanòas*. The *Padmaprâbh[taka* refers to an incident where Ēaisilaka (a *brâhmanòa* boy) violates the modesty of a *parivrâjikâ* in an abandoned house.⁸³ In the *Pâdatâtaka*, a *brâhmanòavitòa* Bhavakritî violates an old nun in his own house.⁸⁴ The physical violence against the nuns is not a general crime against women but is religious in nature. In both cases, the offenders are *brâhmanòas*, and the victims are Buddhist nuns. On the one hand, it reflects the victimisation of public women; on another, it looks like a clash of two ideologies- Brahmanism and Buddhism.

Initially, the temple spaces and architecture constituted very little in making the city Ujjayinî's religious landscape. The process of domination started with the evolution of temples as an institution. In Gupta and post-Gupta periods, the city witnessed the steady rise of temple architecture. The city's sacred or moral spaces increased with the rise of temples. It also led to the immersion or subversion of other smaller sacred spaces within the larger one. This also led to the dwindling of pleasure culture and encroachment on the pleasure spaces of the city. Later, temple establishments emerged huge with residences of priests and service classes. Gardens became integral to temple establishment. Later, the temple emerged as a key cultural space in the city. Periodic rituals, cultural events, fasts, and festivities were performed at temples. The proliferation of temples within the city adversely impacted the Buddhist Sangha outside the city.

The religious communities of Brahmanism (Shaivism, Vaishnavism, and other sects), Buddhism and Jainism interacted through convergence, competition, and contestation within Ujjayinî. Within the Brahmanical religion, Bhagwat Chauka was criticised by others for following extreme purity (untouchability). However, at the end, Ujjayini emerged as a great Shaiva centre. Jainism could not collect favour from the state and people for long, probably for the same reason for extreme such as nudity. Before its decline, Buddhism exhibited syncretism and competitive sharing of Ujjayinî's sacred landscape for extended periods. With the proliferation of temples in different parts of the city and the rise of cults like Mahâkâla and the Sangha being situated outside the cityscape, Brahmanism captured the sacred landscape of the city. For an extended period, from the 3rd century B.C.E. to the 5th century C.E., both religions conversed and competed in

the city of Ujjayinî. The revival of Brahmanical religion during the Gupta period and the beginning of temple construction within the cities such as Ujjayini boosted Brahmanical religion and brought a setback to Buddhism. The infringements of patronage, piety, and sacred spaces by Brahmanical religion led to contestation between the two. In the long run, Buddhism could not sustain the competition, and finally, it lost the urban ground to Brahmanical religion.

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- ¹¹ Avanti had two capitalist-Ujjayinî and Mahishmati. But Ujjayini was the seat of power for most of the ruling dynasties.
- ¹² G. V. Tagare, *op.cit.*
- ¹³ Mahâkâla is one of the twelve jyotirlingas where shiva is self-manifested as a column of light. Mahâkâla is the epithet of Siva in his destructive form.
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Transgender and violation of human rights: Need of legal as well as social acceptance

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Abstract

The transgender community faces tremendous prejudices, despite all efforts by government. Often their rights are violated as mostly they are viewed as offenders and anomaly of society. Till today they are put in boxes by their family, by their religion, by their society, even by their own bodies but now some of them have courage to come out of this stereotyped image. In order to understand their vulnerability and marginalization the understanding of the history and in-depth analysis are required. In the ancient Indian heritage, they were treated with respect. Like every Indian citizen, transgender rights are protected under the constitutional framework and the international human rights instruments but the truth is far from the spirit of the law. This paper has made an attempt to analyze and discuss social exclusion of transgender. The Pandemic has affected this community worse than any other community. It circumscribed their reach to food, health care and basic income. The research methodology and design are empirical and analytical respectively. It is mixed method research of the study, in that the author has done the Participation observation in community and in-depth interviews with stake holders, and some secondary data sources have been collected from Indian census 2011, W.H.O reports, various articles, journals and books on transgender related issues.

Key Words: Transgender, Pandemic, Human Rights, Indian Census.

Introduction

India after independence has made a huge leap in all spheres and has shown advancement in various areas but the position of the transgender individual is still overloaded with the numerous pre-conceived notions and anathemas. Even in 21st century there are a lot of predispositions against them as they face highest social neglect and abuse in the society. A transgender is an individual, who believes that his/her physical body does not correlate with the gender role he/she is assigned and it includes trans-men or trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons having socio-cultural identities.¹ The community includes transgender people of all ages, races, ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds and also comprises a wide variety of gender-related experiences.

Gender signifies Gender Identity and Gender expression and bio-logical sex is determined by chromosomes, hormones and nutrients. The dysfunction of SRY genes lead to another gender. The transgender community faces tremendous prejudices, despite all efforts by government. Often their rights are violated as mostly they are viewed as offenders and anomaly of society. In contemporary usage, transgender has become an umbrella term which originated in the mid-1990s to describe varied range of identities and experiences like transvestites, drag queens or drag kings, inter-sexed individuals, gender variant, gender different, whose appearance or characteristics are perceived to be gender non conforming. Till today they are put in boxes by their family, by their religion, by their society, even by their own bodies but now some of them have courage to come out of this stereotyped image.

Transgender people have been in every ethos, culture, countries and period since time immemorial. In India there is a host of socio-cultural groups of transgender people like hijras/kinnars, and other transgender identities like shiv-shakti jogtas, jogappas, Aradhis, Sakhi, etc. In order to understand their vulnerability and marginalization the understanding of the history and in-depth analysis are required. In the ancient Indian heritage, they were treated with respect. Indian society has always been open and tolerant to diverse and plural sexual identities. They had formed their sub-culture in our ancient society. The concept of *Tritiya prakriti* or *napunsaka* had been an integral part of the Hindu mythology, folklore, epic and early Vedic and ancient literatures.² The first reference of transgender is in Purana where Mohini is the female avatar of Vishnu.³ In the Ramayana, Lord Rama was greatly moved by their love and loyalty and sanctioned them the power to confer blessing on auspicious occasions like marriage, child birth, and inaugural functions. In the sepias, there are abundant illustrations of the third gender holding a noteworthy position and have been portrayed with dignity and

respect. For instance, Shikhandi, a transgender person who was a woman reborn as a man, was considered vital to defeat the Kaurava army in Mahabharata, and held a special place in Krishna's eyes. Lord Shiva manifests himself in a form called Ardh-narishvara which is a composite incarnation (avatar) form of Shiva which is half male and half female. The Nārada Smṛiti and the Sushruta Samhita, two important Sanskrit texts outlaw homosexuals from marrying a partner of the opposite sex. In spite of the rich and varied heritage of transsexual individuals in the form of holiness and protagonists from Hindu mythology, these people are still subjected to various forms of exclusion. It substantiates the fact that they were considered as a normal part of ancient and medieval society. Ancient Sanskrit texts such as Vatsyayana, Kamasutra (8th BCE), the Sufi tradition of erotic poetry known as Rihki (13th CE), and the Mughal erotic canon (17th CE) speak volumes about transgender.

During the later Mughal period they were known as Khawaja-i-Sira and mostly they were in charge of harems. According to Sharma, eunuchs are traditionally powerful figures and mostly in charge of collecting taxes and duties in the Sultanate and Mughal courts.⁴ The change occurred with arrival of the British. They were governing us under Victorian norms and so expected appropriate social behavior. The British imprisoned eunuchs for wearing ornaments and included them in the Criminal Tribes Act 1871 and IPC section 377. Piyush Saxena, the chairperson of Salvation of Oppressed Eunuchs (SOOE), explains the life of transgender in Indian society in mythological context.⁵ He observed that with the coming of the Britishers Eunuchs have been systematically marginalized. The 1857 revolt made the British rule implement Section 377 of the IPC which served as a political tool to reassert their authority.⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi had opposed Sec. 377 of the IPC and its significance for Indian society towards non-normative sexualities.⁷ But in post independent Indian society partly due to cultural stereotypes and partly due to governmental rules, transgender community remained ignored and got ensnared into the cycles of humiliations.

The difficulties faced by the transgender community are of discrimination, being without a job, lack of educational facilities, homelessness, and absence of medical facilities like HIV care and hygiene, depression, hormone pill abuse, tobacco and alcohol abuse, penectomy, and problems related to marriage and adoption. They have no access to restrooms or toilets and public spaces. Most families do not accept such children and they outright repudiate them and coerce them to evict their own homes. Even police, inflict on them physical and verbal abuse, forced sex, extortion of money and materials and false allegations. The census of 2011 did the first count of third gender and as per the census they

constitute 4.9lakhs of their population but Sahodari Foundation and Naz Foundation activists claim that the population is six to seven times higher to this as most of the people till today because of societal pressure don't share their identity. The census data has revealed that there is low literacy rate which is 46% in contrast to 74 % literacy rate in general population. (Census, 2011).⁸ K.R. Murugan and K. Manimkalai in their book has exposed the despicable condition of transgender and they aver that 46% of them are in forced sex, 44% physical abuse, 56% verbal abuse, 31% faced blackmail for money and 24% have threat to life.⁹

Despite Social welfare department's efforts of providing variety of social welfare schemes they are socially and economically in disadvantaged position. Broadly transgender can be divided into four categories such as eunuch/ Hijras (who aspire to and/or undergo castration, as well as those who are inter sexed), Hermaphrodite (born with deformed genitals and have both a penis and a vagina at the same time), Cross dressed/Transvestite (An individual who dresses in the clothing that is typically worn by people of another gender known as cross-dressers) and Gay/Lesbian (who experiences sexual attraction to people of the same gender). In most of the western countries they have not got citizenship but in India, Nepal and Bangladesh they are recognized as third gender.

Methodology

This paper has made an attempt to analyze and discuss social exclusion of transgender. The research methodology and design on the basis of empirical and analytical respectively. It is mixed method research in which the author has done the Participation observation in community and in-depth interviews with stake holders, and some secondary data sources have been collected from Indian census 2011, W.H.O. reports, various articles, journals and books on transgender related issues. The author had visited *humsafar* an NGO on transgender in 2019 before COVID 19 and had collected information about their political, social, economic and cultural status. The narratives of the transgender have offered an insight into the discrimination that they have faced from their biological family and the society at large. The hypothesis derived after analyzing the various case studies and questionnaire that legal reforms are as much important as the positive and constructive social attitudes.

Legal rights of transgender

Like every Indian citizen, transgender rights are protected under the constitutional framework and the international human rights instruments but the truth is far from the spirit of the law. Transgender often find themselves at the mercy of the police- the ground level custodians of law and order. In the Preamble to the Constitution directives are there for everybody's righteousness and

equivalence. The article 14 and 15 of Part-III of the constitution, speak volume about the forbidding of discrimination on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. The Article 21 of Indian constitution ensures right to privacy and personal dignity to all the citizens and Article 23 prohibits trafficking in human beings as beggars and other similar forms of forced labor. It was during colonial period section 377 was passed to reprimand non-procreative sexual groups and their behavior was viewed as an act of sexual perversity. The worst aspect of Section 377 waist made transgender lesser human beings at individual level. The LGBT activists Ashok Rao Kavi had pleaded to advocate Shyam Divan that it is high time to declare a right to intimacy as a core human right as it is discriminatory to article 15 of the Indian Constitution.¹⁰ He avers that the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act, 1956, passed by Government of India, is used less for preventing trafficking than for intimidating. The transgender had been longing for a life of decency, certainty and respect in independent India for over seven decades now. Their destiny like that of a pendulum is waver in gin the hands of law lords, society and administrators.

The transgender people had been demanding for equality since post-independent era but the movement got intensified in 1999. A watershed moment in the history of transgender rights occurred in July 2009 by the election commission,¹¹ which created a column for them as third gender. This right was only for election time.¹² Later on a landmark moment came when Delhi High Court in Naz Foundation vs Government of Delhi decriminalized homosexuality by allowing consensual sex between two homosexuals as long as they are above the legal age of 18 years. It culminated in passing of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014 which was the first big leap towards addressing the grievances of this socially excluded group. This verdict was known as NALSA verdict which documented transgender as a gender and called for immediate remedial action. The initiative was taken by NALSA *i.e.*, National legal state authority, Laxmi Tripathi and Pooja Mata Nasib Kaur ji women welfare Society. It changed the international perception about India that this country is beacon for trans rights. This inspired hope amongst the members of this community and among their supporters, but the leap of modification does not quite seem to match the speediness or stability.

In 2015, DMK, MP Tiruchi Shiva passed a private bill in Rajya Sabha which led to Transgender persons (Protection of Rights) Bill and it banned discrimination in relation to education, employment, job, cultural rights etc. On 19 July, 2019 the bill named Transgender persons Right was introduced by Lok Sabha and got passed by Lok Sabha on 5th August 2019 and finally by Rajya Sabha in November 2019. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act,

2019, drafted by late BJP leader and Union minister Arun Jaitley, was approved by President Ramnath Kovind on December 5, 2019. The Act came into effect on 10th January 2020, which is the first concrete step towards safeguarding well-being of transgender persons. This act is effective as the act prohibits discrimination against a transgender person, including denial of service or unfair treatment in relation to education, employment and healthcare. Its intentions are to mitigate social dishonor attached with them. It also offers them enjoyment of belongings, facilities, opportunities as available to common people to bring them into the mainstream society. Through this act they have right to movement, right to reside, rent, or occupy property. They have been given opportunity to hold public or private office. They opposed the identity card issue where they had to take permission of DM or Collector. They have clashed over the issue of surgery. In this act surgery has become imperative in case of reasserting their gender. The act also sets out lighter sentences for several criminal offences against transgender such as sexual abuse and physical abuse. The act has provided them special health facilities like HIV surveillance, reassignment surgeries. The act demanded for NCT *i.e.* National Council for Transgender Persons which includes five ministers and five transgender.

Some activists and transgender are opposing it due to its discrepancies. According to them this act does not make provision for affirmative action in employment or education despite the Supreme Court's mandate in National Legal Services Authority NALSA V. Union of India (UOI) case (2014). The act also sets out lighter sentences for several criminal offences against transgender such as sexual abuse and physical abuse. They opposed it on the issue of punishment as the punishment of the transgender perpetrator is for two years and for other offenders it will be for seven years. In this case the perpetrator could get bail and also punishment for not more than three years. It also does not mention any punishments for rape or sexual assault of transgender persons as according to Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code. The decision of the Supreme Court's in 2019 in which criminalized gay sex by reversing a landmark 2009 Delhi High Court order which had decriminalized homosexual acts. On the one hand, they are now legally recognized and protected under the Constitution, but on the other hand they may be breaking the law if they have consensual gay sex. This act has made begging criminalized which is not acceptable to them as most of the transgender are dependent on begging for their livelihood.

Swati Bidhan Barua has filed a petition in Supreme Court challenging 2019 law.¹³ Bittu, a gender queer activist and professor of Biology and Psychology

at Asoka University in Delhi, has been protesting against this act. She avers that this act has excluded Sexual and transgender from citizenship rights.¹⁴ Grace Banu, founder of the Trans Rights has criticized this act and according to her the identity card issue is not acceptable to them. According to her it is genocidal for the transgender community.¹⁵ She avers that many transgender people don't have access to their documentation, because most of them were forced to flee from their Tran's phobic family and homes and at young age never thought about it. In most cases documents for proof are not with them so going to District magistrate for identity card issue would be humiliating. They are claiming that some clauses should be amended but despite these legal measures the condition of the transgender has not improved.¹⁶

Despite the act seek to recognize the identity of transgender and prohibit discrimination in the fields of education, employment, healthcare, holding or disposing of property, holding public or private office and access to and use of public services and benefits offences, like indulging transgender persons in forced or bonded labor or denial of access to public places or physical, emotional or sexual abuse are still rampant.

Citizenship and transgender

Richardson and Monro have defined citizenship in relation to the rights and responsibilities of citizens within a given nation state.¹⁷ According to T.H. Marshall, a British sociologist, citizenship has three stages of rights *i.e.* civil or legal rights, political rights and social rights.¹⁸ The other traditional model of citizenship is known as town hall model, which emphasizes the participation of citizens in civil society. In late 1990s the scholars have questioned the two established traditional models and propounded a new concept of Sexual citizenship theories.¹⁹ They emphasis on questioning of the heterosexist assumptions in relation to gender and sexuality that underpin traditional models of citizenship.

In most of the western and neighboring countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan the transgender, sexuality and citizenship are blurred. Riggle and Tadlock (1999) have demonstrated that although LGBT people are a part of the electorate in UK and USA their ability to influence political space has been delimited.²⁰The study shown by Bell and Binnie 2000; Crossman 2007) claim that lesbian or gay have been seen as a disadvantage or even disqualifier for political office in many countries. The society world in general and India in particular hold conservative attitudes towards transgender, where they are marginalized and discriminated. The exclusionary effects have already been experienced by the transgender community in the northeast state of Assam, where the NRC

database was first implemented.²¹ Activists claim that there is documented evidence showing that 2000 transgender people will be left off the database because their gender markers do not match the citizenship list and as they don't have any connection with their families and hold no data. The activists claim that to find out an inclusive approach towards transgender individuals would be an arduous task and would take long time. The accommodating societal change of this degree has always been a slow process in India. The debate developed above specifies that a complex approach is needed for the future development of both gender and sexual citizenships. There is need for the concept of citizenship where transgender community's social and economic rights should be legitimized.

Demand for social inclusion

While interviewing them it was felt that there is essential requirement for Tran's people to attain full personhood and citizenship. Such recognition will result fuller civic participation by Trans people. They say that they have been subject to years of discrimination which has culminated into social, economic and skill deficits. Majority of them said that recruitment criteria must be revised. Majority of them from this community feel that large section of people views them mentally ill or perverted, which is based on wrong notion. They are termed as impure which reflects nothing but the apathy one has towards the community.

They claim that they face a variety of social security issues as most of them run away or evicted from home, they do not get support from their biological family in the long run. The employers deny, all phases of the employment process, including recruitment, training opportunities, employee benefits, and access to job advancement. These extreme limitations in employment have pushed them towards jobs which have limited potential for growth and development, such as beauticians, entertainers or sex workers. They revealed that about 96% of transgender individuals are denied jobs and are forced to take low paying, dangerous or undignified work for livelihood, like sex work and begging. In Uttar Pradesh some of them claimed that some of them are into culinary shops, Tattoo shops or into cultural programs but the numbers are miniscule. Some of them admitted that they are irrational and violent because of marginalization, stigma, and hostile environment. They acknowledged that due to social vulnerability over a life time Trans people get few opportunities to pursue education. Majority of them asserted that due to social injustice they feel dejected and less spirited. Transgender people have faced bias for decades from the society. They are called names, not given opportunities and are excluded from the mainstream.

An in-depth study by Arti Jaiswal revealed that transgender is deprived of both familial and societal love not because they are criminals or have committed

any other folly but because they are suffering from some genetic disorder. Family forced them to leave home at young age resulting inno education and no social protection. They face gender-based violence and are coerced to dance, beg and sing. According to WHO 60% of them suffer from fetal diseases like HIV, T.B. and AIDS and majority of them are addicted to Substance abuse. It is their genuine plea that though they are visibly invisible population they need respect instead of pity.²² This will be effective only when people have unprejudiced approach towards them and have democratic society in the truest form. Social exclusion of this mostly bereaved community not only produces stiffness, vehemence and trouble but also disseminates disparity and denial in Society.

COVID 19 and its repercussion on transgender

The Pandemic has affected this community worse than any other community. It circumscribed their reach to food, health care and basic income. Asoka Kavi, editor Bombay Dost in an interview said that they were beaten by police as they had no other option in lockdown but to be on the roadside for badhai (begging). Laxmi Tripathi stated that most of the transgender died during pandemic not due to COVID 19 but due to starvation. She said that though there are various NGOS which helped them and even government announced a one-time subsistence allowance of Rs 1500 for each transgender as immediate support to meet their basic requirements so Rs 98.50 lakh were distributed among 7000 transgender persons across India but as compared to their real population, this help was infinitesimal. Though there was supply of wheat, rice, pulses and sugar by government because of illiteracy they did not know about it and remained deprived of such benefits. Many transgender people in India lack education and were unaware of precautions relating to prevention of COVID-19 infection, and treatment. They mostly suffer from chronic conditions like diabetes, asthma, TB and HIV and their condition got exacerbated during this time. Majority of them consume tobacco and alcohol, which made them more vulnerable to the COVID19 infection as per WHO report 2020. Most of the transgender expressed psychological symptoms such as fear of infection, anxiety, desperateness and suicide tendency. Banerjee and Nair in their research have discussed the different vulnerability areas of transgender individuals during the COVID-19 crisis and have suggested govt. and NGOs for interventions to mitigate their problems by addressing psychological well-being, economic stability, sexual health, as well as gender-based equality of this community.²³

Implementation of progressive measures

It is essential for organizations to edify workforces around gender inclusivity, assimilation in workplace and greater acceptance for their innate character. It is claimed that after transitioning this community like past will be industrious and would provide incredible worth and quality works. All organizations should emphasis on their support, not only in terms of pay and leave, but also in sensitizing the remaining workforce. There should be facility for rehabilitation, support and counseling. The activists and the transgender are also demanding for adequate complaint redressed devices for transgender individuals to deal with their grievances. There should be provision for obscurity of the grievances. Harish Iyer, Gay Rights activist, opines that sensitivity in education is of utmost importance in all schools and colleges and there should be research also on the subject that People have the right to be what they are and what they want to be more emphasis should be given the points for better life of the transgender people such as scientific enquiry on the origin and history of transgender identity, more researches is needed to examine the nature of relationship between them and the mainstream and adoption should be allowed, transitional shift of Hijras from masculinity to feminism, stress on health hazards and physiological problems, appropriate legal laws are needed to ensure their rights and justice, existing welfare schemes must be evaluated timely for effective results and Hijras/Transgender women require understanding and support of the government, health care Professionals, general public as well as their family members. Apart from NCT various committees consisted of a medical officer, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a district welfare officer, a government official, and a transgender person should be there to redress their grievances.

Breaking Barriers across Fields

The population of transgender is quite visible but now they are opening up to the society. Transgender people have risen regardless of all the prejudice and trials that the social edifice creates in their evolution, and have made a designation across many realms. Kerala pioneered a model for a trans-friendly state with the launch of a 10-day-long state-wide survey. It has served as inspirations to many states of India. They have broken the blockades and have confirmed their grit in their respective fields.

B.Padmini Prakash has scripted history by becoming the first Trans woman news anchor of Lotus News, a local Tamil channel. In 2017, Mondal became the country's first transgender person to be appointed as a judge in a Lok Adalat. Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Bharatanatyam dancer is one of the most influential transgender and carved her niche and became mahamandaleshwar in

the spiritual world. Gauri has formed an NGO called Sakhi Char Chowghi Trust which promotes safe sex and provides counseling to transgender people from Mumbai. Shabi an Indian Naval officer, who was dismissed from her job after the sex reassignment surgery, is still fighting the legal battle to reclaim her position. Dr Manabí Bandyopadhyay is India's first openly transgender college principal in West Bengal. There are quite a few like them who have carved their niche in their respective areas. Despite their adversities and hindrances, they confront from their friends and the social order as a whole, they have carved their places in the mainstream, and paved the way for their fellow beings. They are trying to make people understand that there is nothing shameful in being a transgender. But despite these exception seven today, the transgender is deprived from social and cultural sharing and are spurned by family and society.

Conclusion

Although there are innumerable examples of progress for Trans people but much of these changes are miniscule. Tran's people continue to live in tremendously antagonistic situations. What is required is transformation and growth. The international community's recent commitment towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) guided by the UN Charter and grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is to catalyze and enlarge positive interferences. Now some laws are there in their favor but what is required is to have positive outlook towards them and to revive past Indian heritage where they were the integral part of the society.

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Sustainable development goals and gender equality

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Abstract

The paper argues that the achievement of the UN, Sustainable Development Goals (UN, SDGs) depends on Gender Equality (SDG5). SDG 5 is an important cross-cutting issue. All SDGs have a gender dimension and the achievement of each goal has implications for SDG5, hence policy must assess the impact it will have on women and girls. Insufficient progress on SDG5 hinders the fulfillment of other goals. Mainstreaming gender in policy and budgeting is imperative to achieve SDG5 the accomplishment of all SDGs.

Key words: SDGs, Gender Equality, Cross-cutting issue.

Introduction

The SDG Report (2023) has declared that the SDGs are off-track. UN-SDGs, launched in 2015, to be achieved by 2030, are understood as development goals in sync with sustainable development. Development is concerned with the well-being of people, determined by the freedom to choose a valuable life. Sustainability is inter-generational and conceived to ensure equity and well-being of future generations. SDGs aim to transform people's lives and 'leave no one behind'. They rest on social inclusion, economic development and environmental sustainability. In this context, Gender Equality (SDG 5) affects the successful achievement of other goals because all development is related to the questions of gender. Poverty, hunger, education, clean water, sanitation, decent work, inequalities and housing affect women *more* than men. I argue that public policy must address gender to make development inclusive. Gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting, creation of appropriate legal institutions, access to property and assets and capacity building is seen as crucial to achieve social, economic and political inclusion. This has implications for female empowerment and achieving other SDGs.

Sustainable Development Goals

The UN-SDGs, known as the Agenda 2030, comprise 17 goals, 169 targets, both outcome and implementation, and 231 unique indicators of development in all dimensions.¹ The development outcomes are optimal when all goals are simultaneously and sustainably achieved. Agenda 2030 is a non-binding, inter-governmental agreement intensive in data, funds and global partnerships for providing an enabling environment for these goals. The SDG Report, (2023) underlines the role of public policy, funds, global cooperation and reduction in conflict, monitoring and reporting progress and focus on social inclusion as imperatives for the successful attainment of SDGs. It notes that the achievement on global SDG index falls short of what should have been achieved by the mid-point of the 15-year period. It increased from 64 per cent to 66 percent between 2015 and 2019. It was below 67 per cent in 2022. Further, the *gap* in the SDG outcomes between the High-Income Countries (HICs) and the Low-Income Countries (LICs) is expected to *rise* from 28 to 29 per cent points between 2015 to 2030. It is essential to create sustainable capital assets as ‘long-lasting capital resources’ (SDG Report 2023, 9). These comprise human, infrastructure, investment, innovation, business, social, cultural and urban capital. The G-20 countries with 80 per cent of global GDP, 70 per cent of world’s forests and 60 per cent of population have a huge responsibility in achieving the SDGs. The Global North is obliged to help the Global South build local capacities, provide funds and technology and forge partnerships especially in areas which require global cooperation in climate change, conflict resolution and ability to cope with the after-effects of the pandemic. Efforts to successfully achieve the SDGs have been constrained by global warming, conflict and social exclusion. At the current rate, global warming will overshoot to 2.8 degree Celsius by 2100 (UN, Emissions Gap Report 2022). With climate change, loss of bio-diversity and exploitation of life on land and in water will force crossing of Earth’s planetary bounds. Social exclusion and inequalities, exacerbated by political, economic and class-caste conflicts, are set to increase in future. The overall scores for 163 countries for 2022 and 166 countries for 2023 show that Finland (86.5), Denmark (85.6), Sweden (85.2), Norway (82.3) and Austria (82.3) were at the top in 2022. These are the countries with the lowest social inequality indices. In 2023 the top four of five countries are the same with Norway replaced by Germany. India ranks 121 in 2022 with a score of 60.3. In contrast, China ranks 56 with a score of 72.4 in 2022, Brazil ranks 53 in 2022 with a score of 72.8 and Sri Lanka ranks 76 with a score of 70 in 2022 (SDG Reports 2022, 2023). Recent history proves that social

and economic inequality has increased because of contemporary market dependent Washington Consensus globalization.

Gender Equality (SDG5)

Gender is social and normative. It defines rights, roles, behavior, identities and responsibilities of women, men and peoples of other genders. Gender inequality is the power of one person or category over the other in addition to distributive inequality. The SDGs recognize Gender Equality (SDG 5) as a Fundamental Human Right. The Beijing Declaration (1995) is a platform of women's rights. Gender equality means equal voice and access to education, health, food, skills and opportunities. SDG 5 has six goals and three implementation targets outlined in **Table 1**. However, across 17 goals there are 54 unique gender-specific indicators and 34 gender-related indicators. SDG 5 is pivotal to a cross-cutting issue. SDG5 is unlikely to be achieved by 2030.² Women and girls remain marginal to development. Labor market outcomes are asymmetric and unfavorable to women. Poor education and skills force women into part-time work in the informal sector. Lower participation and wages for women in the labor market obstruct poverty reduction in many ways. A disproportionately larger share of unpaid house and care work cuts into the time that can be allocated to paid work and education for women. Unless the patriarchal context of women's education, poverty and employment changes women's empowerment will remain a dead letter. Time use survey (2019)³ show that all women perform unpaid care and house work compared to only 40% men. More than 20 per cent of a day is devoted to unpaid work by women compared to less than 3 per cent for men for both rural and urban India. Time allocated for employment and self-use for men is 20 per cent compared to less than 6 per cent for women. Globally, in 2020, school closures due to the pandemic resulted in an additional 672 billion hours of unpaid care and house work of which it is assumed that women bore 512 billion hours of the increased burden (UN, 2020). At work women face formidable glass ceilings and discrimination (Becker 1957; Ehrenberg and Smith 2009). Given the current pace of gender reform, it will take 300 years to end child marriage, 286 years to end discriminatory laws and biased legal protection, 140 years to reach leadership positions at work place and 47 years to attain equal political representation.⁴ The majority of countries deny economic equality to women. Almost half of women do not have a say in their reproductive rights and health and nearly 20 per cent of the girls are married before the age of 18 years. Girls are deprived of nutrition and health. According to UN (2020) almost 35 per cent of women in the ages between 15-49 years have experienced intimate partner and sexual violence.⁵ Female genital mutilation (FGM) leads to infection, infertility

and death in young girls. In 2021, only 26 per cent of countries had systems to track gender responsive budgeting (UN, 2020). Climate change has made the lives and livelihoods of women in coastal areas difficult by affecting marine life, increased acidification and eutrophication of sea water. Decline in food production and availability world-wide has spiked inflation depriving women of food asymmetrically. Table A1 in the Appendix presents data on select indicators given in SDR (2023). It shows how performance on various goals is correlated with achievement of SDG5 evident from data on poverty, child health, rates of relative education, urbanization with large mass of population in slums, access to clean water, energy and sanitation, labor force participation, incidence of early marriage, governance and inequality. Economic empowerment of women and lower inequality moves together with better child health and education. Inadequate budget allocations for SDG 5 impact all SDGs. A larger proportion of women live in extreme poverty, around 380 million globally in 2021. One in three women faced severe food insecurity in 2021 and food price increases intensify hunger. Around 1.2 billion women have limited access to safe abortion. Absence of medical care and poor health infrastructure in developing countries keep women unhealthy. In 2021 female life expectancy fell by 1.6 years compared with the 2019. Fifty-four per cent of girls not in school live in conflict-ridden countries. Benefits of education reflect in well-paid employment and lower poverty and child mortality, improved maternal health, prevention of hunger, disease and reduced violence. More than 800,000 women die in the process of fetching water. Absence of clean water and sanitation affects female education, especially in developing countries. In 80 percent of the households considered water-deprived, women provide water to everyone wasting 200 million hours globally. In a quarter of rural households, females devote more than 50 minutes a day fetching water compared with four minutes for men in India. A large proportion of females cannot claim clean or renewable energy sources; they travel large distances for firewood. Almost half of global households rely on biomass and solid fuels. In 2012 nearly 4 million people died of indoor pollution, of which more than 60% were females. Affordable clean energy, health, education and higher productivity are denied to millions of females in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

In the pre-pandemic period women's labor force participation rates were low in formal employment. Most work done by women is insecure, low paid, informal and their jobs are clustered in particular activities and sectors with significant wage discrimination. Often women have poor asset base and less property in their name. Disempowered women are not permitted to take important decisions in the family and society. Lower investment in their health and education

in turn reduces their capability of getting better paid or leadership employment. This adversely impacts SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger) and perpetuates inequalities in the society. The pandemic has driven many more women out of workforce as it has done for many girl students who have not returned to post covid. For girls, pregnancy, violence and insecurity increased due to the pandemic. Few women are in STEM and ICT research and hold only 20 per cent of the jobs in these areas globally. More women were displaced due to war, conflict and climate change. Most migrants to cities are women and half of the women living in cities are unsafe. Conditions in migrant slums put women at increased risk of disease, trafficking and abuse. Environmental degradation affects women more than men and the priorities in use of forest produce differ for men and women with the latter having little say. Post-pandemic income inequalities have increased. Vulnerable groups of women and girls, including migrants, refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), bear the brunt of climate change, war, conflict and human rights violations. Women and girls account for more than half of all IDPs; displacement means loss of property, assets and livelihoods and worsening health.

Conclusion

The SDGs can be achieved *only if* gender inequality is abolished. There are 54 gender-specific unique indicators and 34 gender-relevant SDG indicators. A big challenge to monitor SDG performance is poor data (UN Women 2018). Notwithstanding the targets to be achieved, some of which are difficult to quantify, funding and capacity building in developing countries remains an impediment to the realization of the SDGs. Inadequate funding for gender equality stalls change. Allocations to gender equality programs constituted 4.6 per cent of bilateral ODA in 2020. There is a need for gender-responsive budgeting, allocation of public funds with appropriate monitoring and implementation for gender equality. Policy must focus on women. Women must have a voice in policy making and within the household. They need to have access to technology and are digitally empowered. Child marriage and other forms of abuse needs to be addressed. Women need to have access to education which should be gender-sensitive, to finances, have political representation and be encouraged to achieve their aspirational goals. Labour market discrimination should end and equality in the choice of work needs to be ensured. Investment in education, health, zero-carbon energy systems, resilience to climate change and the curtailment of environmental spillovers is imperative. The 2023 G-20 slogan *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (earth is one family) will be achieved with women's

empowerment. The UN SDGs are premised on the slogan of *liberty, equality and fraternity* given by the 1789 French Revolution. Social justice is the cornerstone of any policy inspired by this and without gender equality social justice is incomplete.

Table 1		Outcome and implementation Targets under SDG 5	
Outcome targets		Implementation targets	
Target 5.1	End all forms of discrimination	Target 5.a	Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
Target 5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence in public and private spheres including trafficking and sexual violence		
Target 5.3	Eliminate all harmful practices including child and forced marriage and FGM	Target 5.b	Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
Target 5.4	Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work in public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and promote shared responsibilities within the family		
Target 5.5	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels in political, economic and public life	Target 5.c	Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.
Target 5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights		

Source: SDGs <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

Country	SDG rank out of 166 countries in 2023 & score	Poverty at Rs 3.25 per day at 2017 ppp%	Idequ quality	Gender			Corruption	Hunger		Sustainable cities	Fundamental labor rights are effective gurantee	Health	Education	Sanitation and clean energy	Sustainable cities
				Palma ratio	Ratio of female-to male mean year of education received (%) & Population using internet %	Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (%) & Gender wage gap (% of male median wage)		Seats held in women in national parliament (%) & Demand for family planning satisfied by modern methods (%) of female age 15-49	Undernourishment (%)						
Bangladesh	101, 65.9	18.9	1.3	84.2,38.9	46.8, na	20.9	25	11.4	9.8,26.4	76	0.5	74.3,74	88,94.5	54.2,25	51.9,35.7
Brazil	50,73.7	5.3	2.9	105.6, 80.7	73.1, na	15.2	38	4.1	3.1, 7.2	50	0.5	75.9,49.1	71.8,99.4	90.1,95.9	14.9,99.8
China	63,72	1.5	3.9	93.3,73.1	84.1, na	24.9	45	2.9	1.9,4.6	85	0.3	77,6.1	99.5,99.8	94.4,79.4	na,91.4
Russia	49,73.8	0.8	1.2	99.6,88.2	78.5, na	16.2	28	25	33, na	61	0.6	73.2, 162	104,99.7	89.4,863	na,96.9
Denmark	3,85.7	0.6	1.0	103.1	87.2, 5	39.7	90	2.5	0.7,0.6	68	0.9	81.3,16	103.9, na	99.6,100	0,100
Finland	1,86.8	0.3	0.9	98.9	90.8, 16	46	87	2.5	0.7, 2.6	61	0.8	81.6,4.1	102.1, na	99.4,100	0,100
Sweden	2,86	8.8	1.0	102.8, 92.8	90.6, 74	47	83	2.5	0.7, 2.6	66	0.8	82.4,3.4	107, na	99.3,100	0.89.2
Norway	7,82	0.6	0.9		96.5, 4.6	45	84	2.5	0.7, 2.6	61	0.9	82.6,2.3	1003.3, na	98.1,100	0,100

South Korea	31,78.1	0.4	1.3	99.9	90,97.6	744,31.1	19	63	2.5	0.2,1.7	72	0.6	853,0.9	902,100	99.9,100	0,00
South Africa	110,64	34.4	6.9	79.5,72.3	79.6,40	46.6	43	43	6.9	3.8, 22.8	66	0.7	653,43.9	804,98.4	78.5,86.8	24.2,98.2
South Africa	83,69.4	12.1	1.8	100,66.7	46.8,40	5.4	36	36	3.4	15.1, 15.9	53	0.6	769,21	100.5,98.9	93.7,32.2	00,79
USA	39,75.9	0.8	1.6	100.8, 91.8	83.6,16.9	27.7	69	69	2.5	0.1,3.6	57	0.6	78.5,16.7	103.8,100	99.7,100	0,99.6
UK	11,81.7	0.7	1.5	100.7, 56.7	88.3,14.3	34.3	73	73	2.5	0.3,2.6	64	0.78	81.4,10.9	99,100	99.1,100	0,100
India	112, 63.4	11.8	3.1	86.5,46.3	32.6,40	14.4	40	40	16.3	18.7, 31.7	77	0.5	70.8,12.2	85.8,91.7	71.3,67.9	49.0,65.9

Source: SDGs <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>
 Source : SDG Report, 2023.

Notes & References

¹The 17 SDGs comprise - No Poverty (SDG 1), Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), Responsible Production and Consumption (SDG 12), Climate Action (SDG 13), Life Below Water (SDG 14), Life on Land (SDG 15), Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17). SDG 1 to SDG 7 form the development agenda and SDG 7 to SDG 10 address the causes of poverty and inequality and bring out the relation between the three pillars of SDGs. The structure of each SDG is made up of outcome and implementation targets. Each outcome target is in turn depends on the data indicators. Hence SDGs are data-intensive and the scores on each goal are aggregated to calculate the country scores. The country scores lie between 0 to 100 and the higher the score greater is the success in fulfilling the SDGs. Of the 17 SDGs, goal numbers 2, 3, 11, 14, 15 and 16 still encounter main challenges (SDG Report, 2023).

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A thriving centre of trade: An exposition of Varanasi as a commercial centre in Ancient India

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Abstract

Varanasi is a city that has existed since times immemorial. During that time, the city has always been perceived as a thriving commercial centre. This is true about present-day Varanasi, as well. This paper attempts to trace the evolution and character of Varanasi as an industrial and commercial centre from the post-Mauryan times till early medieval period. It challenges the Brahminical notion that trade and commerce was a lowly economic practice. Rather, it posits that the rise of Buddhism created an expansive network of urban centres and this aided in the development of trade and commerce, which ultimately contributed to economic prosperity. Taking Varanasi as a case study, this paper investigates the nature of crafts production and trading practices to explain the close connection between Buddhism, urbanization and commercial development. The paper primarily depends on the Buddhist Jatakas as the source for gleaning the story of Varanasi. The paper attempts to mesh a top-down approach with a bottom-up perspective and focuses on both the upper and lower classes of society.

Keywords: *Varanasi, Jatakas, Crafts, Trade, Commerce, Buddhism, Bodhisattva.*

Introduction

Known by varied names, Kashi or Varanasi is one of the oldest urban centres of India which has endured the ravages of time and continues to be a thriving city to this day. The earliest human settlement in this region may be traced to Rajghat, which stretched along the river Varana. It is possible that during the Mesolithic period, human settlers moved along the river and were part of the Allahabad-Mirzapur zone. In the Chalcolithic period, there was increase in settlements in the mid-Ganga valley of present-day Uttar Pradesh. Several sites in Varanasi like Prahladpur, Sarai Mohana, Rajghat, etc., revealed evidence of black and red ware. This type of ceramic is usually associated proliferation of

iron tools which shows that the Varanasi region experienced continuous evolution. From circa 1000 BCE, Aryans began migrating into the mid-Ganga valley, and Kashi gradually became a cultural and political centre. Its location on the bank of the river Ganga ensured that Kashi would always hold a prominent position in Indian history.¹ From 500 CE, the Gangetic Doab witnessed widespread urbanisation and numerous cities started to flourish. Varanasi held a prominent position in this list of cities. This period evinced an expansion of trading activities and the rise of a monetary economy. Copper and silver punch-mark coins started proliferating in society.²

Trade and commerce, notably, trading and commercial activities of Varanasi forms the focal point of this essay. The article begins from the post-Mauryan times and traces the commercial development of Varanasi and its hinterland till the beginning of the early medieval period. Scholars have argued that the rise and spread of Buddhism created a strong network and this aided in economic prosperity. B. G. Gokhale, in an article, claims that the spread of Buddhism was intimately connected with the urban revolution in ancient India. Gokhale claims that social structure in the Gangetic valley was experiencing a transformation in 6th century BCE. On one hand, the concept of class was replacing the idea of tribe and subsistence economy was being replaced by surplus economy. On the other hand, different types of cities such as commercial cities, transportation centres, and bureaucratic towns were emerging. He argues that Buddhism found massive support among the merchants, bankers and kings who were searching for a spiritual-social association and value system that provided an alternative to Vedic theology, emphasis on sacrificial ritual, dominance of the priests, and rigid social hierarchy. By highlighting the follies of Brahminical ritual purity, Buddhism provided this alternative. Instead, Buddhism laid stress on an individual's virtues. Gokhale also highlights that the Great Buddha mostly preached in urban centres. Hence, in its early phase, Buddhism was predominantly present in cities, towns and market-places.³ More recently, Ujjwal Yadav claimed that Varanasi was an important centre of crafts production and trade. Yadav draws a connection between Buddhism and the rise of Varanasi by analysing how commercial groups and crafts production were represented in the *Jatakas*.⁴

However, this assumption is debateable. Evidence shows that *Manusmriti* (composed between 2nd century BCE and 3rd century BCE) displays a low opinion of those who are engaged in trade and commerce. Manu categorises trade and money-lending as *Satyanrita* which he describes as a 'mixture of truth and falsehood'.⁵ In chapter 3, verse 152, Manu proclaims that 'Physicians, temple-

priests, sellers of meat and those who subsist by shop-keeping must be avoided at sacrifices offered to the gods and to the manes⁶. This essay intends to decipher whether the spread of Buddhism led to economic development and prosperity by using Varanasi as a case study. It will do so by discussing how trade and commerce is represented in the *Jatakas*. The article will first discuss the different kinds of crafts and products that were manufactured in Varanasi. It will then situate Varanasi within the contemporary commercial nexus and analyse how far trade and commerce aided in the economic development of Varanasi. But before we delve into the exposition concerning the rise of Varanasi as a commercial centre, it would be pertinent to explain the nature of the *Jatakas* and how they aid in our understanding of the period under discussion.

Naomi Appleton describes the term *jataka*, as a story relating an episode that took place in a past life of the Buddha. She claims that *Jatakas* were birth stories of the Buddha. All the stories include one character who is identified as the Bodhisattva or the Buddha in a previous birth. Appleton goes on to claim that all these stories from the past life were narrated by the Buddha himself.⁷ This still leaves the question: how do the *Jatakas* help in gleaning information about the commercial and industrial activities of Varanasi? For one, Yadav claims that the *Jatakas* mention the city of Varanasi more than seven hundred times.⁸ Thus we can safely claim that the *Jatakas* are pivotal to delineating the history of Varanasi. One of the reasons why Varanasi features so prominently in the *Jatakas* is that the city was an important Buddhist centre. We can go as far as to claim that Buddhism played a critical role in the evolution of Varanasi. The Great Buddha had a strong connection with Varanasi and Rishipattana (modern-day Sarnath). It is here that the Great Buddha delivered his sermon on *Dharmacharkaparvartana* (Turning of the Wheel of Dhamma). He also delivered sermons on certain *sutras* of Buddhism in Varanasi. One of his disciples, Yash was a resident of Varanasi, who along with his friends (Vimal, Punnarji, and Bimal) were initiated into the religion by Buddha at Varanasi.⁹ Therefore, it can be argued that the *Jatakas* form a credible source for understanding the history of Varanasi.

Varanasi: An Industrial Centre

Northern India experienced continuous economic development in the eras preceding the rise of the Mauryan empire which expanded in the years following the decline of the Mauryas. There was a proliferation in terms of industrial activity and a number of specialised professions started emerging. These included professions like *vaddaki* (carpenter), *kamara* (smith), *pasanakottaka* (stonemason), etc. However, these were generic terms which encompassed a

number of activities. A carpenter, for instance, was involved in shipbuilding, cart-making, furniture making, and architecture. Similarly, the blacksmith was a craftsman proficient in working metals and produced a wide variety of products like an axe, a ploughshare and/or worked with precious metals like gold and silver. A stonemason not only quarried and shaped stones, but also worked with other types of stones, such as crystals. There was also considerable degree of organization of industrial activities. Certain industries were localised in particular villages or cities. Even within cities, industries were localised to special streets or areas. Literary evidences also point to the practice of apprenticeship which indicates that the production of different items had acquired a certain level of complexity and specialisation. Different industries were organised into guilds under the leadership of a president. It is possible that the heads of the guilds had close connections with the king or contemporary political elite. Evidence suggests that the first appointment of a supreme leader over all the guilds was made by the court of Varanasi.¹⁰

Varanasi was one of the principal centres of different types of industries and manufactured range of products. Among this, the most important was textile production. Moti Chandra claims that Varanasi was famous for producing textile. Popularly known as *kashikvastra*, it refers to *Resham* textile for which India was famous. This textile was of exquisite quality and displayed superior craftsmanship. It is for this reason the textile produced in Varanasi was priced higher than other contemporary textile centres, like Mathura.¹¹ If we analyse Chandra's claim with the evidence gleaned from the *Jatakas*, it proves to be true. In the *Maha Ummagga Jataka*, the price of robes manufactured is mentioned. It is stated, in the above-mentioned *Jataka* that '...the Bodhisattva rose from his bed, and attended to his bodily needs, and after breakfast adorned and dressed himself, putting on his Kasi robe worth a hundred thousand pieces of money...' ¹²The *Mahajanaka Jataka* mentions that Brahmins of Mithila were dressed in Kasi cloth.¹³ This indicates that textile produced as Varanasi was a prized product coveted by the upper echelons of society. Other *Jatakas* corroborate this story. The *Tundila Jataka* mentions that cotton was grown in large quantities around Varanasi. From the *Tundila Jataka* we also come to know that people in Varanasi clothed in fine textile.¹⁴ The *Bhimsena Jataka* mentions a weaver named Bhimsena who accompanied the Bodhisattva to Varanasi.¹⁵ It might be argued that Bhimsena went to Varanasi because his prospects of employment would be better in a city known for textile production. The *Jatakas* also give the impression that the contemporary political elites particularly favoured textiles and linens from Varanasi. The *Vessantara Jataka*

mention how princes and princesses would dress themselves in 'Benaras cloth'¹⁶ along with manufacturing *Resham* textile, Varanasi textile industry was also known for producing woollen garments and other fine varieties of linens.¹⁷

The *Jatakas* also mention numerous groups who specialised in different crafts that formed the economic lifeblood of Varanasi. These included basket-makers, potters, ivory workers, and many other professions. These groups usually settled in the southern part of the city and manufactured products that catered to the varied needs of urban elite and their products were primarily meant for the consumption of the city folk.¹⁸The *Dalhadhamma Jataka*, provides evidence of the royal patronage received by different craftsmen. It tells the story of a king named Dalhadhamma from Varanasi. One day there was a dearth of earthen vessels in the king's court. To cope with the deficit, the king ordered the potter to make more vessels. But the potter informed the king that he did not possess the oxen to drive his cart which he needs to bring the resources that he needs. Hearing the potter's plight, the king ordered that his elephant be given to the potter so that he can drive his cart.¹⁹The *Kumbhakara Jataka* mentions that in one of his past lives, the Bodhisattva was born into a potter's family residing in suburbs of Varanasi. In this life Bodhisattva followed his father's profession and became a potter to provide sustenance for his family.²⁰ The fact that the Bodhisattva was portrayed as a son of a potter who grew up to follow his father's trade shows the intimate connection between Buddhism and the newly emerging mercantile and industrial classes of ancient India. This is further evident from the fact that the Bodhisattva is portrayed as an expert stone cutter in the *Babbu Jataka*.²¹ Along with production of basic necessities, the craftsmen of Varanasi also manufactured several luxury products like ivory work, sandalwood and perfumes. The *Kasava Jataka* mentions that during the reign of Brahmadata, there was a market dedicated to manufacturing ivory products in Varanasi. The workers produced ivory bangles and other trinkets. In this *Jataka*, a poor man approached these ivory workers with the proposition of providing elephant tusks to make a living. He then armed himself with a weapon, disguised himself and waited in the places which elephants frequented. The story claims that he killed so many elephants that the number of elephants in the area dwindled.²² The *Silavanaga Jataka* mentions that the ivory workers of Varanasi valued the tusks of a live elephant over a dead one.²³ This shows that the craft of ivory work had developed to a point where the workers were able to differentiate between the quality of the finished product based on the character of the raw material. The city of Varanasi

was also famous for sandalwood products. The *Pandara Jataka* mentions sandalwood procured from Varanasi.²⁴

Varanasi: A Centre of Trade and Commerce

Merchants and traders of Varanasi also feature quite prominently in the *Jatakas*. This is not surprising given the wide variety and volume of products manufactured at Varanasi. It is but natural that Varanasi was part of a wide trading network. The *Khurappa Jataka* testifies to this fact by mentioning that the son of a merchant left Varanasi with five hundred wagons. The story mentions that the merchant's son visited a village to hire professional foresters as guides.²⁵ The *Gumbiya Jataka*, corroborates the number of wagons mentioned in the *Khurappa Jataka*. In *Gumbiya Jataka*, the Bodhisattva was born in a merchant household. Once he grew up, he carried merchandise from Varanasi to other places in five hundred carts.²⁶ The *Mahavanija Jataka* provides an idea of the trials and tribulations that merchant caravans had to face on overland trade routes. Without the aid of guides, the merchants often got lost in forests and struggled to find sustenance.²⁷ From the *Jatakas*, we can glean an idea about the items which were brought into Varanasi for trade. The *Tanlanali Jataka*, mentions that once a horse trader came to Varanasi from northern country with 500 horses. In exchange, he was offered a measure of rice.²⁸ In ancient times, trade was carried on through land and water routes. The *Cullaka Setti Jataka* mentions trade that was took place in Varanasi through land and waterways.²⁹ The northern part of India had two major trade routes in ancient times. The northern route started from Peshawar through Saharanpur and Lahore to Lucknow. From Lucknow the northern route goes through Tirhut, Katihar, Parvatipur and stops at Assam. The southern route starts from Lahore through Ferozepur and Bhatinda to reach Delhi. From there, the southern route crossed the Yamuna and went forward towards Allahabad from where it travelled through Varanasi all the way to the Bay of Bengal.³⁰ This shows that Varanasi was connected to the length and breadth of northern India through overland trade routes. The *Jatakas* refer to certain overland trade routes that were frequented by traders and merchants.³¹ The *Kutavanija Jataka* claims that merchants from Varanasi carried merchandise overland to other districts.³² The *Pancavudha Jataka* mentions that the route from Varanasi to Taxila was covered with dense forest that was home to bandits.³³

Trade was also carried out through waterways. The *Sankha Jataka* provides information about the ship-building practices of the time. In this story, mention is made of a ship which was 800 cubic in length, 600 cubic in width and 20 fathoms in depth. The same *Jataka* also mentions that merchants travelled

down river to Tamralipti and even as far as Burma.³⁴ The *Dhammaddhaja Jataka* claims that merchants from Varanasi travelled across the sea for trade. The same *Jataka* also mentions that merchants from Varanasi carried traveller birds with them on voyages.³⁵ From the *Guttala Jataka*, we come to know that Varanasi had active trade relations with Ujjaini.³⁶ The *Jatakas* also provide us with a clue about the monetary value of the inland trade to and from Varanasi. In *Asampadana Jataka*, the Bodhisattva is portrayed as a merchant living in Magadha who was worth 80 crores. But the story also mentions another merchant worth 80 crores, named Piliya who lived in Varanasi.³⁷ Along with inland trade, foreign trade was also a thriving source of revenue. Mention has already been made of *Cullaka Setti Janaka* which refers to foreign ships docking at Varanasi. There are numerous references in the *Jatakas* which provide ample proof of a vibrant foreign trade. There are numerous mentions of merchants leaving from ports like Bharukaccha to distant countries. It can be said with a certain amount of certainty that India during this time had trade relations with Burma and Siam.³⁸ The *Valatassa Jataka* refers to five hundred traders who were shipwrecked on their way to an island, which was probably Ceylon.³⁹

The development of trade and commerce led to two other developments. One, growth in market-oriented production and distribution gave rise to a monetized, urban oriented economy. The *Jatakas* are replete with references to different kinds of coins such as Kahapana, Nikka, Addha-masaka, Suvanna, etc.⁴⁰ The variety and repeated mention of money shows that the economy of ancient India had evolved from its agricultural roots and become diversified and variegated. Another notable factor is the urban character of the society and economy. The majority of the stories in the *Jatakas* show the Bodhisattva being born in different urban centres, notably Varanasi. Another interesting development was the consolidation of the merchants and the craftsmen as a distinct class. In *Kummasapinda Jataka*, there is mention of chief of the garland-makers.⁴¹ Yadav argues this reveals the presence of a certain form of hierarchy and structure among the crafts professionals. He also rightly points out that merchants are frequently mentioned in urban centres of ancient India. But what is interesting is that the *Jatakas* also highlights that lower class and caste community were migrating to the cities for better opportunities to ply their crafts.⁴² This shows that economic situation of the urban centres of ancient India was becoming complex. On one hand, there was a proliferation of diverse specialised crafts and industries which were churning out a variety of products which catered to both basic needs and demand for luxurious products. On the other hand, there was closer integration of the primary producers and craftsmen with the trading community due to

geographical proximity. It may be posited that this gave rise to a composite financial culture which played a pivotal role in giving rise to a thriving urban economy.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this essay, it was mentioned that this article will explore the connection between Buddhism and the rise of Varanasi as an economic centre in ancient India. By critically analysing the Buddhist texts *Jatakas*, this article has revealed that there was indeed a connection between Varanasi and Buddhism. The *Jatakas* not only repeatedly mention the Bodhisattva being born in Varanasi, but also portrays the Bodhisattva being a part of a growing community of craftsmen and traders. He is variously described as a son of a smith, or a weaver or a merchant. As has been mentioned earlier, Varanasi was a notable Buddhist centre and Buddhism was patronised by the emerging mercantile class of the city. This community was economically thriving, but their financial growth did not provide them with social respect. The rigid structure of Brahminical religion did not provide the social upward mobility. Hence, they gravitated to Buddhism which was more inclusive and made space for the individual as opposed to their caste, community or socially prescribed position. The preceding pages also prove that Varanasi was a thriving commercial centre. The *Jatakas* continually mention the presence of diversified crafts, merchants, inland and foreign trade. Varanasi forms a significant component of this economic nexus depicted in the *Jatakas*. This shows that the Buddhist world depicted in the *Jatakas* is an urban, commercial world. It is a world that is vibrant with new opportunities and avenues of economic growth and development. Buddhism was yet to adopt a monastic outlook far removed from society. Rather, its ascetic principles were practiced among the thriving urban centres from which it drew its largest support group. Hence, we can argue that the rise of Buddhism created a significant network which established new avenues of connection and communication that ultimately led to the economic prosperity.

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Notions of traditional healing, belief and faith among the Karbi community of North-East India

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Abstract

The Geographical uniqueness and Ethno-linguistic mosaic have made North-East India a significant place for researchers. Ethno-linguistic research sources have estimated that there were eleven major linguistic waves of migration across various points over time. The Karbis previously known as Mikirs is an important and large ethnic group in the hill and plain areas of Assam and like many other Tibeto-Burmen languages groups, this ethnic groups has migrated from the Burma and China in one of the waves of migration and settled down in the Brahmaputra valley. Basically Karbis have their own indigenous knowledge and thus, their tradition is deeply rooted in nature. Believing in supernatural entity, considering totem and taboos as influencing to handle them is a unique phenomenon among the tribes too.

Like numerous tribal societies of Assam, the Karbis also have a vast archive of traditional ecological knowledge about nature and natural resources. Since, they have been living in close proximity to nature for ages, this view is essentially eco-centric. Eco-centrism can be realized in their attitude towards plants, animals and the mother Earth. Cognitive environmental knowledge among these tribes, concerning useful medicinal plants is nothing but their ecological understanding about the medicinal plants in order to conceptualize their environmental perception as well as social sensitiveness. The traditional healers claim to cure minor and major health issues. From very common plants to the rarest ones of present day are used by the traditional healers. Apart from the botanical anthology, mammals, insects, birds, reptiles and other annelids, fishes, amphibians etc. were recognized by these ethno-medical practitioners for treating different illness. The objective of the paper is to identify various illness that the people

of the community mostly suffer from and also the types of healers they select for their treatments.

Key words: Ecological, Healers, Karbi, North-East, Traditional.

Introduction

The Geographical uniqueness and the Ethno-linguistic mosaic has made North East India a significant place for researchers. The Bodos, Karbis, Mising, Dimasa, Rabha and many others form an important and large ethnic group in the hill and plain areas of Assam. Like many other Tibeto-Burman language groups, these ethnic groups have migrated from the Burma and China in one of the waves of migration and settled down in the Brahmaputra valley. The majority of the populations are descendents from those who migrated here centuries ago from Mongolia, Tibet, China, Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Prof B. M Das is of the opinion that, 'the Mongoloids who entered the North-East from different directions in successive waves of migration at different periods of time, partially or fully absorbed the strains of the Austroloid who had entered the region before them and the Caucasoid who entered after them'.¹ Though the Northeast is home to a multitude of ethnically diverse inhabitants each with its unique culture, rituals and heritage and own dialect, Prof. Das opines that 'all the tribes of Northeast India are primarily Mongoloid'.² Basically all these communities have their own indigenous beliefs and practices and thus, their tradition is deeply rooted in nature.

Origin of the Problem

The Philosophy that lies under the Nature of Ethno Medical Practice is unique. Like numerous tribal societies the tribes of Assam have a vast archive of traditional ecological knowledge about nature and natural resources. Since, they have been living in close proximity to nature for ages, their view is essentially eco-centric. Ecocentrism can be realized in their attitude towards plants, animals and the Mother Earth. Cognitive environmental knowledge among these tribes, concerning useful medicinal plants is nothing but their ecological understanding about the medicinal plants in order to conceptualize their environmental perception as well as social sensitiveness. Apart from the botanical anthology, mammals, insects, birds, reptiles and other annelids, fishes, amphibians etc. were recognized by these ethno-medical practitioners and they demand to cure disease of serious nature as well as common illness through them. Knowledge of traditional healing among the Karbis has been handed down from generation to generation, through oral traditions, practices and beliefs. Healing is tied with the belief system, faith and the support of the community.

Interviews and discussions held with these traditional practitioners during various visit to the field give an impression that ethno-medical practices are grounded on certain philosophy. According to them the mind-body relation is an integrated entity and cannot survive in pieces. Moreover, the concept of purity and sanctity and the norms or tradition of a certain society has high moral value regarding diseases and treatments.

The Concept of Traditional Healing Practices

Traditional healing concepts and practices have long been a central feature of cultures across the planet. Ascribing disease causality to the many health issues that have plagued mankind and the potential treatments that could be used to alleviate these conditions stimulated the rise of traditional medicine and the healers who would practice it. Harmony and balance within the physical, environmental, emotional, and spiritual domains was the goal of these healing practices. Healers used a variety of modalities from botanicals, physical manipulation, prayer, the sweat lodge, magic, to bring about curing. Cultural competency is an important skill for the western health care practitioner working with indigenous populations who may be using traditional medicine while also seeking care from biomedicine practitioners. Thus since ages, man has lived in close contact with nature depending on it for his life as well as his sustenance.

The Discourse

Confidences of the practitioners of this genre, and their arguments have opened up a new window of discourse and the modern medical science has somewhat complicated the situation. The claims of traditional healers regarding curing diseases through folk practices engage us to re-examine incidents and facts involving these activities. This is indeed interesting to observe these facts through personal experiences.

Review of Literatures

According to recent investigative study by the Ministry of Environment of Forests (MOEF), Government of India, under All India Coordinate Research Project on Ethno-biology (AICRPE), the ethnic communities in India are using more than 10000 wild plants in various therapies, edible and other miscellaneous uses. Among these, 800 plants are used for different medicinal purposes by the Indian tribal people (G. Dixit, S. Vakshasya,2013). Traditional Knowledge system among the ethnic groups is a gift to human civilization. This is nothing but the base of many modern medicine and life saving treatments. In India this tradition is quite old, Rigveda, Charak Samhita, Sushrut Samhita and Ayurveda are few important literature that provide us a history of plant medicine and the human

relation to their environment. The first individual to study the emic perspective of the plant world was a German physician working in Sarajevo at the end of 19th century : Leopold Glueck. His published work on traditional medical uses of plants done by rural people in Bosnia (1986) has to be considered the first modern ethno-botanical work (K. Choudhary, M. Singh and U. Pillai, 2008) . Singh in his work *Tribal health in North East India*,(2008), has explored the complex interplay of socio-economic and political factors determining the health practices of the tribal population particularly the Karbis and Rabhas of Assam and the Khasis and Jaintiyas of Meghalayas inhabiting in North –East India. Chaudhuri et al. in their work (2003), *Indigenous Health Practices among the Idu Mishmis of Arunachal Pradesh* have discussed about the indigenous health practices of the Idu Mishmis along with their physical and cultural aspects. Dr. Ritu Thaosen’s *Notions of Traditional Healing and Faith among the Dimasa* primarily discusses about the ancestral way of healing or the traditional healing practices and the continued faith among the Dimasa. The people believe that diseases are caused but malevolent spirits and deities and hence they need to be propitiated for the healing of a sick person. The author establishes that the strength of the traditional healing system lies in the faith of the entire community and the beliefs and the practices of the people evolved in response to adoptive needs and strategies for survival in different ecological systems and hence rooted in nature. Historic-ethno-botanical research have gaining its importance since it is trying to understand how people interact with their environment and acquire knowledge over plant resources to meet their cultural and physical needs.

Field of the study

The Karbis previously known as Mikirs is an important and large ethnic group in the hill and plain areas of Assam. Like many other Tibeto-Burman language groups, this ethnic group has migrated from the Burma and China in one of the waves of migration and settled down in the Brahmaputra plains within the districts of Kamrup and Kamrup Metropolitan, Morigoan, Nagaon which is adjacent to Karbi Anlong and in the districts of Sibsagar, Golaghat, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, and Karimganj in Barak valley of Assam.³ Apart from this, the Karbis are distributed in Meghalaya particularly in the districts of East Khasi Hills and Ri-Bhoi and the Jaintia Hills Division and in the Dimapur district of Nagaland .⁴ This study is based on the practice of indigenous healing systems among the Karbis of Assam.

Objectives

The main objectives of this paper are *viz.* to understand beliefs, rituals and traditions related to the diseases among the Karbis, to understand their views

on illness as well the healers that they select for their treatments and to understand the social psychology lying beneath in the practice and the community worldview.

Methodology

Although the study is based on both primary and secondary data, but more emphasis is given on primary data which are collected by author through field survey. These data have been collected through observation method, and interview. Secondary data are based on different books, periodicals and journals. With a view to substantiate the focused questions, the present study has brought within its purview few case studies out of several such field experiences, the researcher has collected. These are related to the Karbi community of the Kamrup District of Assam.

Folk Medicine of the Karbis is the accumulation of the community's perceptions, beliefs, customs and faith in deities and nature. Don Yonder states that 'there are two varieties of folk medicine which is also true to the Karbis. The first one is natural or rational folk medicine searching for remedy for every disease in nature and its objects such as herbs, plants, minerals, clay, mud, animal substances, human urine etc. The second variety of folk medicine is the magico-religious folk medicine in which the folk use chants and charms, holy words and actions, pray and worship to cure disease'. Religious healing is realized through prayer chanted by healing saints and through their contact with material relics, tombs, holy places, chapels and shrines. Another form of folk medicine is transference of disease from one person to another person or animal or plant or object.⁵ Such varieties of folk medicine are also seen in Karbi folk society. It has been found that a collection of 560 plants which has medicinal value are there in the Recreation Park, Diphu. Lunse Timung in his book *Munjin Kangdir* refers to forty medicinal plants in a Karbi socio-cultural context. There are representations of pictures and ways of cultivation and he also describes its nature and medicinal values relating to different diseases.⁶ Sikari Tisso also refers to 104 plants that has medicinal value in the Karbi society. He describes that, 'the Karbis traditionally have been using these plants for curing different diseases'.⁷ In the Karbi magico-religious traditional healing system, they worship their household deities like *Hemphu*, *Peng* and the deity *Hi-I* for the well being of their family members. In this practices a balance between the good and evil forces of nature is ensured.

There are a few Karbi folk deities who take their names from diseases where they preside or which they are asked to avert. For example-*Chomang-ase* is the deity of fever propitiated with a goat, *Keche-ase* is the deity of rheumatism while *Ajo-ase* is the deity of cholera. *Theng-thon* is the deity of recurring sickness and propitiated with a goat or pig or fowls. Some other deities

are also related to various diseases. Prominent among them are *pi-amir* (small pox), *pok-kangsi* (diarrhoea), *pok kapavi* (dysentery), *Si-I* (cough), etc.⁸

A magico-religious ritual called *Nihu Kasiri*⁹ is celebrated for curing a rare disease which comprises few sub-rituals-*Andum Kehang*, *Arnam Kehang*, *Peh Kehang* and *Vo Kartap*.¹⁰ The first step of the treatment is called *Andum Kehang* in which the parent of the patient honours the maternal uncle with *Toman*, the maternal uncle also gives a copper finger ring and nine number of threads to be hung over the patient's neck. There is another step called *Peh Kehang* in which the maternal uncle is traditionally honoured with *Toman* who gives a few cloths to the patient. A final step of treatment called *Vo Kartap* is undertaken if the patient is still not cured. The parent of the patient, their relatives, co-villagers along with village headmen go to the house of the maternal uncle with three *Horhak* full of items necessary for the ritual. 'Then the maternal uncle worships *Hemphu* and sacrificing a fowl performs the ritual *Vo Kartap* for the recovery of the child'.¹¹

The Karbis practiced the traditional healing system but at times also seek modern medical facilities depending on the nature of disease, thereby emphasizing a parallel acceptance of both the systems. Though modern medicine has been introduced indigenous healing system still has a strong hold on the people. 'Diverse medicinal flora and fauna are used for healing many diseases and ailment such as diarrhea, dysentery, small pox, leprosy, jaundice, fractured bone, injuries from dogs and snake bite, menstrual problem and many more among the whole community'.¹² 'Despite medical supervision of some of these diseases, there is still a belief among the community that these disease and ailments requires traditional treatment to get completely cured'.¹³ 'If children, women and pregnant women experienced evil dreams they are interpreted as the work of supernatural power and hence rituals and prayers are prescribed'.¹⁴ 'The traditional healers of the Karbis are of the opinion that the modern medicines have got certain side effects and hence would deteriorate their health rather than curing'.¹⁵ Although these healers also approach the modern doctors, yet they prefer the indigenous healing system.

First Case Study

The 1st case that I am presenting here was a firsthand experience. While doing my fieldwork near Demoria, a place called Panbari, I experienced a woman being treated by *kathar* (Priest) who was said to be suffering from black magic. In local language this activity of engaging a harmful spirit to someone is known as *Banmora*. The woman was behaving unnaturally and shouting slangs. She seems uncontrolled as she was tied with ropes. Family members were surprised with

her changing behaviour. On a banana leaf some kind of cooked foods are placed and the *kathar* offering these food to the spirit while chanting *mantras*. She was arrogant while *kathar* was asking about her identity. But later on she seemed calm and responding to the *kathar*. After half an hour the ritual was over and she tells that she feels sleepy. She was taken to the bedroom and *kathar* told the gathering that the spirit has left her and that is why she is feeling tired and asking for sleep. While enquiring I found that they cooked a local fish called *Sengeli mas* (A variety of local fish) with brinjal leafs with broken rice that is mostly used to make rice powder. The *kathar* explained to me that *Sengeli mas* and the brinjal leaf is full of thorns and we never used them for our cooking. The rice is also special as we never use this type of rice for normal cooking. So the offerings are also special and specific for the performance.

Second Case Study

This is related to the herbal world of Karbis. I have found this common medicine used by Karbi community when a girl is having some problem during her puberty. This folk medicine is prepared with various herbs available in jungle and made it like a tablet. With some cooked rice they mix raw goat milk and put this tablet in it and making a ball with the preparation. The girl who is having the problem is asked to swallow this rice ball. Surprisingly it works so fast that for the next day she stopped complaining. There are innumerable examples of such incidents. It indicates that the faith on the age old practice and the healers irrespective of educated and uneducated, rich and poor among the Karbi community is still prevalent.

Conclusion

It can be said that this age old practice has its own value and existence in Karbi community. Their belief system and the world view are utterly related to the nature and natural existences. For every problem they engage themselves with the age old practices and knowledge. This is apparently a fine characteristic which keep their identity intact. However to what extent these remedies or metacognitive ideas that these communities are keeping alive are sufficient to deal with all sorts of physical problems is not certain. Moreover it was observed that chanting and *mantras* are known by elderly people, but once a set of such people disappear a huge store house of knowledge gets lost. Many a times it was found that traditional healers avoid others to teach about the herbs and *mantras* because they think if they teach others then these herbs and *mantras* may not work again. So this kind of critical traditional views towards a knowledge system needs to be reexamined. Though the younger generations of the community are in favour of continuing their indogenous practices but most of them, are seen

detached with the philosophy of their folk practices. The traditional practices will gradually die if the new generations do not come forward for acquiring those invaluable indigeneous knowledge of the Karbi society.

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Hinduism in the royal court in medieval Assam A study on the Dimasa

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Abstract

The oral traditions and legends of the Dimasa speak about their early rule in different places of Assam. In the thirteenth century CE, when the Ahoms made their advent to the Brahmaputra valley, the Dimasas were found to be ruling in the southern bank of the Brahmaputra valley and their kingdom extended from the river Dikhow in the east to Kallang in the west including the Dhansiri valley and also the North Cachar Hills. By the sixteenth century the Dimasa royalty shifted their capital from Dimapur to Maibang due to political exigencies.

The penetration of Brahmanical Hinduism in the Dimasa court is noticed from the sixteenth century onwards. Considerable influence began to be exerted by the Rajpandit, usually a Bengali Brahmin in the affairs of the state. By the time the Dimasas began ruling from Khaspur in Barak Valley in the 18th century CE, the proclivity of the rulers towards Hinduism became more marked. Their social and religious functions were consistent with the dictum of the Vedic texts in collaboration with Brahmin priests. The rulers also extended patronage to the Brahmans and temples for the worship of various Hindu gods and goddesses. Some rulers even composed devotional songs pertaining to Hindu deities.

Key Words: *Brahmanical, Dimasa, Deity, Hinduism, Priests.*

Introduction

The early rule of the Dimasa can be gleaned from their myths and legends which speaks about their kingdom at Kamarupa and that after a political turmoil they had to cross the mighty Brahmaputra and settle at Sadiya. However, they are found to be ruling from the Dhansiri valley with Dimapur as their capital by the thirteenth century CE. The clash of interest with the expanding power of the

Ahoms in the sixteenth century, not only resulted in the defeat of the Dimasa but their ruler Dersongpha was also captured and put to death. The Dimasa aristocracy then led by Madan Konwar, the son of Dersongpha shifted to Maibang in the North Cachar Hills and established their new capital.¹ At Maibang the Dimasa state entered into a very significant phase with the penetration of Brahmanical Hinduism in the royal court. As the Dimasa rulers expanded their kingdom in the eighteenth century towards the plains of Cachar in the Barak Valley and ruled from Khaspur, it became a full-fledged Brahmanical state.²

With the establishment of Maibang as the centre of administration of the Dimasa kingdom in the sixteenth century, the penetration of Brahmanical Hinduism in the royal court becomes noticeable. Considerable influence began to be exerted by the *Rajpandit*, usually a Bengali Brahmin in the affairs of the state. In Khaspur, the inclination of the rulers towards Hinduism became more marked. Their social and religious functions were consistent with the dictum of the Vedic texts in collaboration with Brahmin priests. Patronage was extended by the rulers to the Brahmans and temples for the worship of various Hindu gods and goddesses.³

Objectives

The main objectives of the paper are to trace the influence of Hinduism on the Dimasa royal court and the patronage of the royalty and to analyse the impact of Brahmanical Hinduism in the Dimasa State.

Methodology

Basically Historical methodology has been adopted for the study based on both primary and secondary sources. Oral traditions, interview of elders is examined and verified in the light of information given in other sources. Multi-disciplinary approaches are adopted.

Review of Literature

Dipali Danda's *Among the Dimasa of Assam: an Ethnographic Study* is one of the earliest work dealing with the study on the Dimasas. It is a holistic study of the Dimasa life and culture emphasising on their social structure and as such the author has made an immense contribution to this aspect. One gets to understand that though the Dimasa royalty and the subjects residing in the Cachar plains had come within the fold of Hinduism, those living in the hills retained their traditional religious practices. *History of the Dimasa (from the earliest times to 1896)* by S. K. Barpujari is one of the few books on the Dimasa that covers the entire period of their history. It traces the early history of the Dimasa from pre-Dimapur phase and discusses their medieval history and touches upon the modern period. It is a highly commendable work but does not dwell much on the subject under discussion in its entirety. In the *Social and Polity Formations in Pre-Colonial North-East India* J.B. Bhattacharjee has initiated a fresh insight

into the study of the socio-political and economic history of the Dimasa in the pre-colonial north east India. Bhattacharjee while stressing on the crucial phase in Maibang of the Dimasa State formation also discusses the influence of Brahmanical Hinduism on the royalty.

Discussion

It was during the period when the Dimasas were ruling from the Dikhow to Kallang with Dimapur as their stronghold that their interest came into clash with the Ahoms who were then following an expansionist policy. The Ahoms were able to exert their power on the Dimasas who had to face defeat and their king Detsung alias Dersongpha was finally put to death. Their capital Dimapur was sacked and the survivors of the ruling aristocracy later under Madan Kumar, the son of Dersongpha moved towards the south and eventually established their capital at Maibang because of its strategic location in the North Cachar Hills, presently the Dima Hasao district in Assam.⁴ According to J.B Bhattacharjee when the process of state formation and state structure paved into its crucial phase at Maibang, the influence of Brahmanical religion came to be noticed in the Dimasa political system like in many of the medieval states of India. Several legends and traditions are cited by the scholar that speaks of the penetration of Hinduism into the socio-political system of the Dimasas after they established their capital at Maibang. However, the extent to which the Dimasas were influenced by Hinduism at Dimapur during the earlier phase of their state formation is difficult to conjecture or ascertain in the light of the absence of the available sources. Some scholars like S. K. Chatterjee have formed the impression on the basis of the design of the structure and the period of construction at Dimapur, that since the 13th century the Dimasas might have come under the influence of Hinduism.⁵ European visitors like L.W. Shakespear has concluded from the archaeological ruins of Dimapur that the Dimasas were influenced by Hinduism.⁶ Edward Gait on the other hand says, the Dimasas were free from all influences of Hinduism while ruling from Dimapur.⁷ There is not a single coin belonging to the Dimasa kings of Dimapur to trace any influence of Hinduism. But some of the coins dated Saka 1481 indicate a great regard for Hindu Gods and Goddesses.⁸

The son of Dersongpha, who proclaimed himself as the ruler of the Dimasas at Maibang assumed the name of Nirbhayanarayan, though it may be noted that this was the first instance of the Dimasa rulers adopting a non indigenous name. The reign of Nirbhayanarayana is important from the point of view of the beginning and development of a new social and political order in the Dimasa kingdom based on Brahmanical Hinduism. According to tradition, Madan Konwar, during the times of crisis came across a Brahmin who predicted good fortune. As predicted Madan Konwar was able to establish his authority and the Brahmin

was accepted as his Guru and later offered an important position in the court. He advised the king on all important matters and also revealed that the king's forefathers were of divine origin. The Brahmins also convinced the king that their heritage was as old as the Mahabharata as they pointed out that the Dimasa ancestress *Hidimba* was married to *Bhima*, one of the Pandava brothers and their son *Ghatokacha* was the first ruler of the Dimasa. Thus the Brahmins provided the royal family with a favourable genealogy which could be traced to the epic age.⁹ Captain T. Fisher, who was the first Superintendent of Cachar after the British annexation in 1832 collected several lists of kings which began with Bhimasena or Ghatokacha.¹⁰ According to W.W. Hunter, 'it is Brahminical forgery, invented for the purpose of extolling the importance and pure descent of the dynasty'.¹¹ Though the list presented to Nirbhayanarayana by his *Guru* could well have been fictitious or imaginary yet it had a strong impact in inspiring the Dimasa ruler and the aristocracy with intense pride in their Hindu origin and they turned to be the champions of their new faith.¹²

The Dimasa state came to be called *Heramba-rajya* which is corroborated by their coins, inscriptions and other records. The rulers issued coins on various occasions like marking their coronation ceremony, pilgrimage and victory in wars. The coins contained Hindu legends in Sanskrit language and Bengali character. In a gold coin of king Meghanarayana dated 1498 *Saka* (1576 CE) he is proclaimed as '*Herambeshwara*' (ruler of Heramba) and also worshipper of *Ranachandi*.¹³ King Pratapnarayana in his coin dated 1606 CE claims himself as the worshipper of Siva. At Maibang an inscription on a rock-cut temple suggests that it was constructed by Harishchandranarayana in 1761 CE and that the temple was dedicated to *Ranachandi*.¹⁴ The tutelary deity of the Dimasas, *Kechaikati* was interpreted as a form of *Shakti* and later worshipped as *Ranachandi* (Goddess of war). Hymns and verses were also composed by the Brahmins for her worship. *Ranachandi* could easily command loyalty as the Dimasa were locked in prolonged wars not only with the Ahoms and Jayantias but also had to reckon with the Mughal invasions. Hence they believed that worshipping her would ensure victory during the critical times of war.¹⁵

In the royal court in Maibang the *Raj Pandit* who was a Bengali Brahmin exerted immense influence in state administration. The *Raj Durbar* was also attended by a galaxy of Brahmin scholars who translated the *Puranas* and a portion of the epics into Bengali. Some administrative manuals were written either in Bengali or in Bengali with parallel Sanskrit on the basis of the *Shastras*. During the reign of Suradarpanarayana (1708-1720CE), the court poet was Bhubaneshwar Bachaspati, a Brahmin from Sylhet who rendered certain texts into Bengali. That the Dimasa rulers patronized Brahmanical Hinduism can also

be understood from the *Devottara* and *Brahmattara*, land-grant for the support of temples and Brahmins.¹⁶

Sanskritization thus had a spontaneous impact on the members of the royal family and the aristocracy. It was noticeably more marked after the Dimasas shifted their capital to Khaspur in mid eighteenth century. They even started using the sacred thread and came to constitute a Hindu caste called *Barman*.¹⁷ The Barmans continue to use the sacred thread even today. The coronation ceremony of Gopichandranarayan (1745-57) was conducted by eleven Brahmin priests. More families of Brahmins were also brought in from Bengal and granted lands for settlement. Harishchandra II, who constructed the palace complex at Khaspur also constructed the temple of *Ranachandi*.¹⁸ In the village of Bijoypur in Cachar inhabited by the Dimasas (who are known as the Barmans of Cachar), they still continue to worship *Ranachandi* in the temple where the priest is a Bengali Brahmin.¹⁹ King Krishnachandranarayana marrying into the Vaishnavite royal family of Manipur embraced Vaishnavism. A *Visnu Mandir* and a *Snan Mandir* was also constructed in his capital during his reign. The Dimasa rulers patronized all forms of worship of the Hindus- *Sakta*, *Saiva* and *Vaishnava* and also performed expensive religious ceremonies. Krishnachandra and Gobindachandra also visited religious shrines in Nabadwip, Benares and Hardwar. Both the brothers developed a strong reverence to Hinduism.²⁰ Despite the predisposition of the Dimasa rulers towards Hinduism, the more orthodox Brahmins continued to treat them as 'untouchables' on the ground that their genetic mother was non-Vedic in her creed. Even the Brahmin priests who served them were looked down upon by other Brahmins. During a field visit to Cachar it was found that Bengali Brahmins were appointed to perform religious rituals in many of the Dimasa households.²¹ Hence, it has been observed that Brahmin priests have continued to conduct necessary rituals for the Dimasa even in the present times. Krishnachandra, during his reign invited an assembly of the Brahmins to suggest the ways of getting a proper place in the Hindu society. The Brahmins advised that he should undergo the ritual of '*Hiranyagarbha*' ceremony for obtaining a proper position in the prevalent social structure. In 1790 CE, hence both Krishnachandranarayana and his younger brother Gobindachandranarayana with other members of the royal family organised a ceremony and during the rituals that was conducted, they entered the womb of a copper effigy of a cow coated with gold that was made for this purpose. After emerging from it, they were proclaimed by the Brahmins to have taken rebirth and could hence be accepted as Kshatriya caste within the fold of Hinduism. On completion of the ceremony, the Brahmins divided the gold plate among themselves. Some local traditions also suggest that many Dimasas could get acceptance to the caste Hindu society by way of expensive ceremonies subsequently.²²

Through the assimilated adoption of the symbols of Hinduism and by bringing the people within the fold of Sanskritization it helped in the transformation of the Dimasa political system. The Brahmanical myths legitimised the kingship by giving the ruling clan a divine descent which added status and respectability to the rulers. The *Kechai kati* cult was also universalized through the *Sakta* cult of the Hindus and the Brahmins in return settled in and around the capital and had a dominating position in regulating the state affairs by manipulating the court politics. The patronage extended to Bengali literature and use of Bengali language served as an effective instrument in consolidating control over the people. A detailed text of the Penal Code introduced by Raja Govindachandra was also in Bengali.²³

Conclusion

In tune with many other states of Assam and the Northeast like the Chutiya, Ahom, Koch, Jayantia and Tripura, the Dimasa state was a monarchy of the medieval pattern which came under the influence of Hinduism. All these states had emerged from its indigenous base and was hence a significant development in the history of medieval Northeast India. The Dimasa state too emerged from a tribal base and in its final stage in Khaspur Brahmanical Hinduism worked most. The ruling clan was given a divine descent through Brahmanical myths which enhanced their status and respectability in providing leadership. The Kshatriya status gained by the ruling clan in the Hindu social structure was further legitimised with the adoption of the Bengali language in all administrative work. Hinduisation facilitated in formalizing the social stratification and legitimizing kingship and it further helped in developing an elaborate state apparatus.

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Leprosy control scheme in Tamil Nadu A historical study(1947-1981)

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Abstract

The illness leprosy is a neurological disorder. Despite being a treatable disease, it poses a hazard to public health in Tamil Nadu. It is a long-standing sickness in East Africa. During the Vedic time, leprosy was known to as Kushth Rog in India. To heal the condition, they used traditional therapies like Chalmugra oil. Gerhard Armauer Hansen identified Mycobacterium leprae in 1873. Through the 1898 Act, the British government made efforts to prevent and control leprosy throughout the colonial period. Patients were kept in isolation until a treatment was discovered in 1940 to prevent the sickness from spreading to others. This document provides historical context for the Government of India's introduction of a nationwide leprosy control programme.

Key Words: *Neurological, Kushth Rog, Chalmoogra, Mycobacterium Leprae, isolation, and Eradicate.*

Introduction

Leprosy is a chronic, dermatological, and neurological disease. It is infected with the unculturable pathogen Mycobacterium Leprae. Early symptoms begin in cooler areas of the body and include loss of sensation.¹Leprosy is a disease caused by a type of bacteria called Mycobacterium leprae, causing numbness and loss of sensation in those parts of the body. It can also affect the

nose and the eyes.¹ Leprosy is curable yet remains a public health problem even though there is no known ubiquitous reservoir for transmission of *M. Leprae* other than Human beings.

According to historical records, leprosy is the oldest illness in India, and it spread from here to other nations. Its cures were precisely described in Sushruta Samhita for its diagnosis. Radiocarbon dating revealed archaeological evidence in Rajasthan. In 1873, Dr. Gerhard Armauer Hansen discovered *M. Leprae*. There was no treatment to cure leprosy in 1898, especially during the British time, which is why the government established the Leprosy Act the same year. Through this ordinance, patients were segregated from towns and villages in order to prevent and control leprosy. Indian British Empire Council In India, the Leprosy Relief Association was founded in 1925 for leprosy work and was renamed Hindu KushthNivaran Sangh in 1947. The introduction of the Dapsone pill in India decreased leprosy cases. The Vellore Leprosy Headquarters was formed for the Tamil Nadu leprosy preventive and control effort. The state and national governments in Tamil Nadu had recently established leprosy institutions. Survey units were also formed throughout the state's districts to gather information on leprosy patients. Many districts in Tamil Nadu were impacted by the disease, and preventative and control measures were put in place. This study article is described from various angles.

Historical Background

The word leper comes from a Greek word meaning *scaly*. Leprosy is one of the ancient diseases, according to records archeological, anthropological, and linguistic indicate that the cradle of mankind was East Africa. Leprosy was mentioned as 'Kushth Rog' in Vedic.³ It spread to some other countries. Leprosy spread from India to Macedonia by Alexander the Great's soldiers in 325 BCE. Many ancient historical records like Sushruta Samhita around 600 BCE, accurately explain the characteristic features and diagnosis of leprosy, and also described the traditional treatment with *Chaulmoogra Oil* (Tamil: Maravetti, Maravattai, Marotti)⁴ The early leprosy skeletal remains found at Balathal in the Udaipur district of Rajasthan in India were estimated to be 4000 years old by radiocarbon dating. The first *M. leprae* genome to be completely sequenced was that of the Tamil Nadu strain, originally isolated from a patient in Tamil Nadu. The genome sequence of the Tamil Nadu strain of *M. leprae* contains 3,268,212 base pairs.

In 1873, Dr. Gerhard Armauer Hansen, the Norwegian scientist first discovered *Mycobacterium Leprae*. Thereafter, Leprosy was called Hansen's disease it spread through droplets from the nose or mouth of a patient to the skin and respiratory tract of another person. The transmission is by close and frequent

prolonged contact with infected and untreated patients. These bacteria very slowly transfer leprosy which is not highly infectious. Naturally, 95% of people have immunity against leprosy.⁵ In 1898 Lepers Act, was introduced during the British Raj, when there was no medicine to cure leprosy. Leprosy people were banished to colonies far from cities and towns to prevent the disease.⁶

Robert Cochrane, who was to contribute significantly to inaugurating the *Dapsone* tablet era in India and the opening of leprosy outpatients departments in public hospitals and leprosy patients sufferings from other diseases to be treated in general medical wards in the Lady Willington Leprosy Sanatorium at Chengalpattu. Also, as a Principal, his effort to add leprosy was taught in the undergraduate medical curriculum at Christian Medical College, Vellore. He was a pioneer in bringing leprosy into the mainstream of medicine.⁷

In 1925, established the Indian Council of the British Empire Leprosy Relief Associated (Hindu KushthNivaran Sangh in 1947) laid the foundation of organized leprosy work in India. The Indian Council of the British Empire Leprosy Relief Associated (Hindu KushthNivaran Sangh in 1947) created the groundwork for organised leprosy activity in India in 1925. Because there was no therapy for this condition, patients were maintained in isolation until the medication *Dapsone* was introduced in 1940. In 1955, the Indian government began the National Leprosy Control Programme (NLCP), which included case detection, community education, and *Dapsone* therapy. With the advent of Multidrug Therapy in 1983, this was renamed the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) (MDT). There was no treatment for this disease patients were kept in isolation till the introduction of the drug *Dapsone* in 1940. In 1955 the government of India launched the National Leprosy Control Programme (NLCP) with case detection, community education, and treatment with *Dapsone*. This was changed to the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) in 1983, with the introduction of Multidrug Therapy (MDT).

Control Scheme of Leprosy in Tamil Nadu

The highest incidence of leprosy is formed in North and South Arcot Villages. The post of Leprosy Campaign, headquarters was created at Vellore for the prevention and control of leprosy in Madras Province. A research unit worked under the Director of leprosy in close association with the Indian Research Association and Medical Research Council of Great Britain. The biggest leprosy treatment institution was in South India namely the Lady Willington Leprosy Sanatorium at Tirumani in Chengalpattudistrict (now Kancheepuram district), which was managed by the Church of Scotland Mission, later it was taken over by the Government. A home was run in the South Arcot district for women and Children

under the auspices of the Kasturba Trust. There were 24 homes, hospitals, and sanatoria for the treatment of leprosy patients. During the year 1947, the total number of beds available for leper patients was 2,262 and children were treated for leprosy.⁸ The Director was in addition to his usual duties, attending to the supervision work of the General Hospital Madras, the Silver Jubilee Children's Clinic Saidapet, the Rural Leprosy Preventive Unit, and the Research Unit at Chengalpattu. This unit of the Silver Jubilee Children's Clinics devoted its time to investigating into causes, classification, and development of leprosy in children. The Rural Leprosy Preventive Unit at Polombakkam continued in 1947 and examined the experiments made on the partial segregation of infective cases in certain selected villages. Research work in leprosy was being done at Chengalpattu, Madras, Saidapet, and Vellore to determine the efficacy of new drugs, especially the Sulfone derivatives. They also used other drugs like Ayur Vedic practice but it was used in jail.⁹ The government is giving capitalism grants to the private institutions for the Leprosy Asylum in such a way (in rupees), ' Manamadurai (Rs.21,917), V a d a t h o r a s a l u r (Rs.26,974), C h e v a y u r (Rs.33,156), Ramachandrapuram (Rs.20,982), Keerapalli (Rs.17,064), Kankanandy (Rs.17,064), Vizianagaram (Rs.13,014), Salur (Rs.14,817), Kumbakonam (Rs. 51,300) Narasapur (Rs.9,799), Bapatla (Rs.21,870), Kodur (Rs.4,590), Poor Home Society (Rs.4,338) and Mazhuvanthalangal (Rs. 1,596)'.¹⁰

The construction of colonies' by various Christian Missionaries, who played a prominent role in this activity, was the beginning of leprosy relief work in Madras State. There was no widespread leprosy control effort done before to 1955, and the sanatoria were in operation in such a way, Central Leprosy Teaching at Research Institute, at Thirumani, Chengalpattu (Central Government), Government Children's Leprosy Sanatorium at Ethapur, Salem district, Government Gandhi Memorial leprosarium, at Tholurpatti, Tiruchirappalli district (taken over by the Government). Sacred Heart Leprosy Hospital, at Sakkottai, Kumbakonam, Schieffelin Leprosy Research Sanatorium at Karigiri, North Arcot district, Dabendranath Mallie Leprosarium, at Vedathorasalur, North Arcot district, St. Joseph's Leprosy Home Arokiapuram, at Tuticorin, Tirunelveli district, Kasturba Kushta Nivaran Nilayam, at Mazhavanthalangal, Tirunelveli district, Holy Family ,Hansenorium, at Fatima Nagar, Tiruchirappalli district, Dayapuram Leprosy Hospital, at Manamadurai, Ramanathapuram district and C.P. Memorial Leprosy Hospital, at Colachel, Kanyakumari district.

Since 1955, Leprosy Control Work the modern field methods in an extensive area started in this State on the Pattern of the National Leprosy Control

Scheme. The Units established in the five-year plan periods were two types of units. The treatment and study center (one at Tirukkoyilur). The subsidiary centers at various places in the State.¹¹

Two leprosy survey units at Vellore and Cuddalore and one Health Inspector in the South district were carried out in rural areas. A scheme for training public Health staff and social workers in the prevention and control of leprosy was approved by the government.¹² The number of leprosy patients treated in medical institutions during the year 1950, 1,01,359 as against 66,370 in 1949, the increase in the number of cases treated being mainly in the districts of North Arcot, Tanjore, Salem, and Visakhapatnam. The number of leprosy cases treated in various hospitals in each district in 1951. The persons who were treated for this disease numbered 85,262 in the same year. There was a large reduction in the number of persons treated in North Arcot and in Tanjore districts. But some of the districts were a large increase like Krishna and Coimbatore. The provincial Leprosy Survey Unit at Vellore and the district leprosy unit at Cuddalore consisting of one health officer, one health inspector, and one clerk in each unit continued to function in 1951.

A survey of leprosy was conducted in the districts of Chittoor, Madurai, North Arcot, Tiruchirappalli, Salem, South Arcot, and Chengalepattu. A scheme for the survey of leprosy in Shirva town and neighboring villages was sanctioned in the 1950s. The survey was conducted from the end of December 1950 to April 1952. A Health Inspector who was specially trained for the purpose. The work of the Health Inspector was supervised by the Health officer, State Leprosy Survey Unit, Vellore. The survey was extended to further villages – Making a total of 24 villages survey. The total population covered in the survey was 54,562. The number of cases of leprosy traced was 185, the incidence rate being 3.4 per 1000 of the population. Out of 185 cases, 68 were lepromatous and 117 neural types, representing an open case rate of 37 percent. The number of children under 15 years who were found to suffer from the disease was only 22 out of 185 detected in the survey and represents 11.9 percent of the total cases. The survey thus indicates that leprosy was not widespread in the area. There was one local fund dispensary in Shirva Town with an outpatient leprosy clinic. The average attendance, at Clinics, was poor, mainly due to the long distance to be travelled by patients. Necessary suggestions for prevention and control of disease in the area surveys have been made under consideration.¹³

Leprosy Survey Unit also established at Tirukkoyilur was one among the four such centers in India which not only gave mass treatment but also engaged itself in maintaining accurate records of the progress of patients on treatment as

well as epidemiological study of disease. This center had been expanding its activities much more than this now runs OP Clinics at Villupuram and Mannalupet. It had some facilities like Physiotherapy, Hospitalization, Laboratory Investigations, and Surveys also. This centre work was assessed from August 1962 by two officers deputed. There were four important Leprosy Research Centres in the Madras State viz. the Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute, Tirumani, the Hand and Foot Research Unit of the Christian Medical College and Hospital, Vellore, Schieffelin Leprosy Research Sanatorium Karigiri and the Government Leprosy treatment and study centre, Tirukkoyilur. The third plan provision for the allotted amount was Rs. 60 lakhs (additional to the expenditure of the institutions already opened in the I and II plan period.¹⁴ The patients were advised by propaganda to get treatment from nearby approved Clinics. The State Survey Unit, besides supervising and guiding the work of the District Survey Unit, carried out random leprosy surveys in certain villages and detailed surveys in certain special areas of the state district leprosy officer working under the district board. A mobile unit scheme started for both survey and treatment in Chengalpattu district. They surveyed 25 villages in Chengalpattu, and Tiruvallur areas, at the request of the organizer for leprosy control in development areas, and 16 villages in Kallupatti (now a community project area) were undertaken to assess the incidence of leprosy. Pudupatti village, Srivilliputtur taluk of Ramanathapuram district, and area in and around Villupuram Municipality were surveyed for leprosy incidence. Preliminary surveys to assess the state of endemicity of leprosy were done in some villages in Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, and North Arcot districts. The number of patients treated increased in the districts of South Arcot, Salem, Madurai, North Arcot, Tanjore, and the city of Madras. More than two-thirds of the number of cases was treated in the hospitals in the state.¹⁵ The special leprosy Health inspector completed a survey of leprosy incidence in the Shirva area in March 1952.¹⁶

The special Pilot Scheme for leprosy at Tirukkoyilur continued to work in 1953. Six Social workers were trained under a special scheme by the government and they were working in collaboration with the Hindu KushtNivaran Sangh and other voluntary agencies to control leprosy from the state. The publicity and welfare organization set up by the government of Madras maintains a close liaison with Dr. Paul Brand's orthopedic Unit and Rehabilitation centre at Vellore. Several ex-patients had also been trained as injectors, technicians, and welfare workers and absorbed in the various clinics and hospitals in the districts.¹⁷ Leprosy institutions in the state continued to be under the control of the medical department. The government had sanctioned a pilot project scheme for the control of leprosy from

the state with the financial aid of the government of India. According to this pilot scheme, a treatment and study centre for the control of leprosy was established at Tirukoilur and the existing leprosy survey units at Vellore.¹⁸ The unit carried out leprosy survey work in the district of North Arcot, Salem, Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Tanjore, and Tiruchirappalli and covered a population of 179,998 in 177 villages.¹⁹

Leprosy Control Scheme

The Madras government was engaged in local Leprosy work. Dr. T.S.S Rajan, Minister of Health at the time, thoroughly voiced these concerns in his inaugural presentation to the All-India Leprosy Workers Conference in Madras on October 3, 1950. In 1952, the Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation was created. It was running leprosy control units in nine places from eight states of India, health education units were running 11 places in 10 different states of India, there were two training centres, one of its own and another in collaboration with a state government a mass education and a Referral Centre. Since 1961, leprosy control work in urban areas differs from the rural areas works some respects. In urban areas, people were sophisticated not to be examined but literate, could understand the early signs of the disease, and could be relied upon for referring any suspicious skin patches to their Private Physician one of such health education units which was located in the Tiruchirappalli district. The unit was started in October 1962 under the charge of a Leprosy trained Para-medical officer. Six towns had health education units such as Tiruchirappalli, Srirangam, Lalkudi, Kulithalai, Pudukkottai, and Ariyalur. The importance of early treatment was through group meetings, and house contacts; which were supported by printed educational material in the local language. The Para-medical officers also provide press, cinema slides, exhibitions, etc. for educating the people.²⁰ In 1955, Leprosy subsidiary centres were established at Tiruvannamalai in North Arcot district and Gandhigram in Madurai district (present Dindigul district). The Leprosy Treatment and study centre was sponsored by the government of India and was inaugurated on 28th April 1955. This pilot project had been established to study the effects of organized treatment on leprosy with modern drugs and intensive health education on the incidence of leprosy in a rural population for a specific area.²¹ The third five-year plan had seen a slight modification in the pattern of the subsidiary centres, which was called controlit's sanctioned the establishment of leprosy control units at Palani Madurai district, Kanchipuram Chengalepattu district (present Kanchipuram district), Elathur North Arcot district (Now Vellore district), Namakkal Salem district (present Namakkal district), Kallakurichi South Arcot district (present Kallakurichi district), Krishnagiri Salem District (now Krishnagiri

district) and Sivagiri Tirunelveli district. The control units were established in areas with a leprosy prevalence of over ten per thousand. Each unit would cover a population of 1,50,000 and would have 11 Para-Medical workers and other ancillary staff.²² Leprosy control schemes had been sanctioned in the districts of Salem, South Kanara, and Malabari.²³ The survey unit inspected 24 villages with an overall population of 22,864 examined 18,935 individuals and found 154 lepromatous cases and 867 neural cases of leprosy amongst them.²⁴ A proposal for training 100 Assistant surgeons in leprosy at central leprosy teaching and Research Institute, Tirumani, for one week, had been approved by the government of India. A comprehensive survey for leprosy cases in the state takes the work progress in the various parts of the state. Sixteen Health inspectors, Sanitary Inspectors, and Health Assistants were trained in leprosy institutions in the state in two batches for six weeks in each case to enable them to carry out surveys and work for the prevention of leprosy.²⁵ The public health department carried out a leprosy survey under the leprosy control scheme of the government of India, three leprosy subsidiary centres for the control and treatment of leprosy cases were opened during the First Five Year Plan period. Out of the ten subsidiary centres proposed under the second five-year plan five had been sanctioned. From these, three had been opened and the remaining two were proposed to be opened at Ariyalur, Tiruchirappalli district (now Ariyalur district) and Tiruchuli, Ramanathapuram District (now Virudhunagar district). The leprosy treatment and study centre at Tirukoyilur undertook the treatment of cases and carried out the intensive survey in the pilot project consisting of 54 villages with a population of 65,219. So far 54,884 were examined and 2,407 cases of leprosy (454 lepromatous and 1953 non-lepromatous) were detected.²⁶ In 1959, five leprosy centres were opened, bringing the total to 213. The leprosy relief and control scheme for Wallajah taluk in North Arcot district (now Vellore district) with 16 sub-centres was sanctioned and the scheme was implemented. The headquarters of the Scheme was at Ranipet and the General Medical Institutions in the Taluk took part in the Schemes as peripheral centre. The area covered by this project was 395 sq miles with a population of 3 lakhs and consists of 18 Sub-Centres. The government had taken over 1960 the Belgian Leprosy Centre started by Dr. Hamerijekx with the existing staff. The population involved in this area was 5 lakhs and the area covered about 800 square miles.²⁷ adras state branch of the Hind Kust Nivaran Sangh was considered a wing of the leprosy campaign of the state. The Sangh has sanctioned a grant of Rs. 1,300 per annum for running the publicity welfare organization for leprosy in the state. Education on leprosy was carried out in association with leprosy control centres, sanatoria, etc...

Subsequently, educational activity, the attendance at the leprosy clinics improved and several early cases turned up for treatment. The Sangh participated in the All India Khadi, Swadeshi, and Industrial Exhibition at Madras in 1959. It conducted a publicity campaign in September with the slogan 'Rehabilitate the leprosy Patients'. The purpose of the campaign was for persons suffering from apathy and demised to respect in society so a quickened sense of duty in this matter of rehabilitation. Leprosy surveys were conducted by the public health staff and 10,328 cases of leprosy were detected. The leprosy patients were advised to take treatment in the nearest hospitals, clinics, subsidiary leprosy centres, and primary health centres. The infected persons living were separated from the children. But to enable the health staff to carry out surveys and took preventive measures efficiently, 27 health and sanitary inspectors were trained in leprosy institutions in the state in four batches, each batch undergoing six weeks.²⁸

In 1960, fourteen leprosy centres continued to function. A leprosy colony with 25 beds at Elathur, North Arcot district, was opened. The leprosy centre was at Polambakkam, Chingelput district (now Kanchipuram district) run by the Belgium authorities, and was taken over by the Government. This centre covers an area of 80 sq. miles with a population of five lakhs. Later, it was proposed to run this by private management with full grants from the state. The secretary of the Hind KushtNirvaran Sangh, Madras, visited the leprosy centres in South Arcot, North Arcot, Salem, and Coimbatore districts and organized public meetings, and film shows to educate the people on leprosy and its prevention. The Sangh participated in the All –India Khadi Exhibition, Madras, and the celebration of World Leprosy Day on 30th January 1960. It was published two pamphlets on 'What you should know about Leprosy' in English and 'KushtaRogathaipatri' in Tamil. These and other publicity materials with the Sangh were distributed to leprosy control centres. Leprosy surveys were conducted in 333 villages in five districts and the Poonamallee Health Unit area and seven municipalities and detected 5,832 cases (2,201 lepromatous and 3,631 Non-lepromatous)²⁹ and 423 villages in five districts and detected 2472 lepromatous and 2,510 no-lepromatous cases in 1962.³⁰

Achievements of Prevention and Control of Leprosy

Leprosy Control works in Madras state (now Tamil Nadu) achieved substantial progress. The main activities were: the opening of new units and training centres and the convening of social workers' camps to educate villagers about leprosy. The state leprosy officer's Headquarters at Tirukoilur had been shifted to Madras to intensify the leprosy control. All seven leprosy control units including in the third plan were established in the same year. There were 16 survey education

and treatment units in the state including 15 new units which were opened in 1964. These units attached to general dispensaries engage in leprosy work in the areas around the dispensaries under the supervision and help of the general duty medical officers to integrate leprosy relief with general medical services. Under the training programme, one more training centre for Para-medical workers was established at Chetpet, North Arcot district (now Chennai district) in addition to the unit at Tirukoilur. This centre trained ten Para-medical workers for six months. So far 139 workers have been trained, out of whom 125 were in service in the leprosy units of this state. Camps of social workers meant to educate the rural population were held at Tirukoilur, Mazhavanthangal in South Arcot district (now Villupuram district) and in Arokiapuram Tirunelveli district (now Kanniyakumari district) in 1964. Under the Wallajah Scheme of integrated leprosy control at Ranipet, nearly 10,000 patients were under treatment. During the year reconstructive surgery work has been started in this centre.³¹ In the Polambakkam leprosy centre which was formerly run by Belgium social workers, 15,300 patients were under treatment. The government aid was from The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) as sapson tablet 5,40,000, motor vehicles 5 (tour for control units at Eathur, Kancheepuram, Palani and one for the training centre at Thirukoilur) and skimmed milk powder. There were many rehabilitation centres established for cured patients who were taught carpentry, Toy-making, Poultry-farming, and work with plastic materials also weaving, Tailoring, Bee-keeping, Fish net-making, and brush making. There were a large number of voluntary and government organizations engaged in leprosy relief work in Madras State. Dr. Sushila Nayyar, Union Health Minister suggested that efforts should be made to co-ordinate the activities of all these organizations to encourage an exchange of ideas on the various aspects of leprosy work among the leprosy workers of the state. The director of medical services formulated the first meeting of the committee comprising selected research and field workers and government in March 1963 at Karigiri; it was decided to have a meeting at Tirumani in June 1963 to discuss Lepro Reaction and another at Karigiri in January 1964 to discuss Trophiallcer. The second was met at Chingleput in July 1963. Lepro Reaction was discussed.³²

Proposal-I, was to improve teaching facilities for leprosy in the medical colleges, II, to expand treatment facilities in the hospitals, and III, for establishing a rehabilitation centre for ex-leprosy patients at Chingleput were under the consideration of the government.³³ There was the migration of leprosy patients from rural areas to urban areas in search of jobs and livelihood. Because of this, urban leprosy units had been established in all the major urban areas. The

expenditure on the National Leprosy control programme was increasing year by year and the government of Tamil Nadu was fully utilizing the amount allocated by the government of India.³⁴ Between the years of 1976-1977, the government spent Rs.40.83 lakhs and the same has been increased to 71.30 lakhs during the year 1977-78. In 1978-79, the also state allotted Rs.78.00 lakhs than the previous year. According to the 1971 census total of population Tamil Nadu was 41,199,000 population examined during 1978 (upto December 1978) 10,134,118. 6,32,240 were detected in the case, 4,89,942 were treatment cases under the state through subsequently, 90,654 cases were cured. This was an achievement of the state.³⁵ The leprosy control programme in Tamil Nadu was working in the pattern of the National Leprosy Control Programme based on mass chemotherapy supplemented with case detection, case holding, and health education. In the leprosy control programme treatment was given to all the leprosy patients detected by two ways of survey i) mass survey, ii) school survey suspect able contacts living with patients by periodical examination. Subsequently, a decentralized pattern of treatment is adopted by which a mobile team assisting medical personnel and other auxiliary Para- medical staff carrying necessary medicine, held at the Roadside places as nearer to the village as possible for the convenience of all the leprosy patients.³⁶ After a decade in 1981 leprosy cases were examined among the 105.3 lakhs population of Tamil Nadu. 25,475 cases were detected by survey and 2.4/1000 was the new cases detection rate. 25.3 lakhs were examined from school children but 28,296 cases were detected among school children. The prevalence had been reduced from 20.1/1000 in 1971 to 14.3/1000 in 1981 and incidence had been reduced from 3.1/1000 in 1971 to 1.7/1000 in 1981.³⁷

Conclusion

Leprosy was a bacteria-caused disease that spread slowly to those who naturally have immunity to it. It was a treatable sickness. Leprosy is said to be a 4000 year old illness. Prior to 1940, leprosy patients were secluded from the areas, but with the introduction of the medicine dapsone, which means that leprosy patients were often decreased, the government of India started the National Leprosy Control Programme in 1955. The Lady Willington Leprosy Sanatorium at Tirumani, Chingleput district, was South India's largest leprosy treatment facility (now Kancheepuram district). It received assistance from the Church of Scotland Mission before being taken over by the Indian government. Many government and private organizations in Tamil Nadu worked to eradicate leprosy by providing individuals with medications. In Tamil Nadu, the state has paid special attention to leprosy prevention and control. Many programmes were implemented by the state through survey units and control schemes in impacted areas of Tamil Nadu. The

Indian federal government created a five-year strategy for leprosy prevention and control through programmes, and they also invested more money to control leprosy in India. The state is still raising public awareness of preventative leprosy through brochures, exhibits, media, and other advertising items. To eradicate leprosy in India, Mahatma Gandhi served leprosy patients. He stated that 'eliminating leprosy is the one thing I have not been able to achieve in my lifetime', but his goal is to eradicate it from India.

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Geo-political legacy of partition of India: Indus water treaty and the recent Controversies

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Abstract

Among the legacies of partition of India, the water sharing treaty between India and Pakistan is one of the significant geo political legacy. Despite three majors wars the two countries fought, the treaty is still in force. This paper looks in to the historical background which gave way to the treaty. It also looks into the aspect of controversies which this treaty has created since its inception. The recent controversy like Baglihar dam issue and Kishan Ganga issue has found an exclusive treatment in the paper. The conflict resolution mechanism, role of the World Bank and reactions on this treaty has also been discussed in the paper.

Key Words: Indus Water Treaty, Baglihar, Pakistan, Kishanganga, Conflict Resolution

Introduction

Geo Politics stands at the interface of geography, history, politics and international relations. The Partition of India left behind a number of geo political legacies. One of the central issues was how to share the water of six rivers of the Indus basin between the two countries. In fact the dispute of Kashmir and water sharing dispute between both the countries are interlinked. Undivided Punjab was known as a hydraulic society and it developed an elaborate canal and irrigation network. However partition divided the canal system. Most of the irrigated area went to West Punjab, while the water controlling station remained in East Punjab of India. Pakistan feared about the flow of water as most of the waters in the rivers were going to Pakistan through India. A standstill agreement on water sharing between the two nations expired in March 1948 and East Punjab stopped the flow of water to Pakistan which threatened the agriculture seriously. Liaquat Ali Khan, the Pakistan's Prime Minister personally appealed to his Indian

counterpart Jawaharlal Nehru to ensure the restoration of the water supply. This resulted in the 1948 Delhi agreement which recognised the both countries need for water.¹

Indus Water Treaty

After a prolong negotiation in which World Bank also played an important role, finally in 1960 this treaty came into existence. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistan's president Ayub Khan was the signatory of the treaty. Under this treaty three western rivers viz. Chenab, Indus and Jhelum were allotted to Pakistan and three eastern rivers viz. Sutluj, Beas and Ravi were allotted to India. For western flowing river India is the upper riparian state and Pakistan is the lower riparian state. Similarly for eastern flowing river Pakistan is the upper riparian and India is the lower riparian state.



The Six Rivers of Indus Basin is seen

Among the conditions of the treaty is: Pakistan will have exclusive rights over the western flowing rivers and similarly India will have exclusive rights over eastern flowing rivers; as a compensation to build the head works and water controlling station, canals, dams India will give to Pakistan 62 million pound under Article 5.1 of the treaty. The term exclusive rights in the treaty means that the lower riparian state will have the complete rights over the water the way it want

to use. Upper riparian states also will have right for use of water for drinking, navigation and generation of hydroelectricity project provided it should not interfere with the flow of the water drastically. There are also provision of continuous exchange of data and technical details, periodical meetings and exchange of visits. Even after sixty three years of the treaty the treaty is still viewed as a political time bomb.²

Conflict Resolution

It has been observed that water security may cause future wars.³ According to a United Nations report, one sixth of the world population does not have adequate access to safe water and by the year 2025, half of the countries worldwide will face water stress or outright shortages.⁴ What made possible two rival nations India and Pakistan to cooperate and negotiate on the issue of water sharing? Why did not they think for a military solution?

There is multiple tier mechanism of conflict resolution under the treaty. There is a Permanent Indus Water Commission at the primary level to look into the issue of conflict as per Article IX of the treaty. This commission comprise one commissioner each from India and Pakistan and they have to observe the flow of water. In case of any dispute the commissioners can negotiate and may try to resolve the matter. If they are unable to reach to a settlement then the matter is referred to the respective government. Even at government level there are three level of conflict resolution. First it goes to the level of foreign secretary of two countries, then at the level of foreign minister and finally at the summit level between the two Prime Ministers. If the settlement at government level fails then it will go to an independent neutral expert. The World Bank has a role to play in appointing a neutral expert at the consent of both the nation.

Neutral expert shall visit the disputed site and observe the flow of water. It may involve a number of visits to the site. Based upon his observation he can term the issue as difference or dispute. The issue has been referred as difference then his decision is final and binding on both the nation, however if he refers this as dispute then the role of neutral expert ends here. Now the matter goes for arbitration. The international court of arbitration will adjudicate over the matter and will pronounce its decision.

Role of World Bank

Eugene Black, the then President of the World Bank, played a key part in bringing out a meaningful resolution to the water crisis. Black's interest in resolving the Indo-Pak water dispute had stemmed from his realisation that it could act as a serious threat to the economic progress of the newly independent states.⁵ World

Bank made it clear that neither it is the guarantor of the treaty nor an adjudicator. It is merely a moderator of the treaty for a fair agreement.

Dissatisfaction over the treaty

In India there is a serious dissatisfaction over the treaty as Pakistan receives a lions's share in the distribution of water as 80 percent of the water goes to Pakistan. The reason is that the rivers allotted to Pakistan under the treaty like Indus, Jhelum and Chenab contains high volume of water in compare to the rivers allotted to India viz, Sutluj, Beas and Ravi.

The governments in Jammu and Kashmir, media, academicians and people have shown their serious concern and dissatisfaction over the treaty as the state would not be beneficial for using the water of Chenab and Jhelum for navigation or irrigation purpose. Omar Abdullah, the former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir terms this treaty unfair which deserves to be scrapped. In 2016 Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a meeting with water ministry officials, 'Blood and Water Can't flow together'.⁶ A section in Jammu and Kashmir even views the treaty as a conspiracy against the Kashmiris.

Controversies

There are various controversies over the treaty such as Salal Hydropower project, Tulbul Navigation project, Baglihar Dam and Kisenganga project. Although all these projects are run of the river projects *i.e.*, there is no major storage or reservoir. The water is diverted so that they fall on the turbine which can generate hydropower. These reservoirs are not for the purpose of mass water storage exclusively. This will also not change the course of the river. India's claim is that the flow of the water in Western River does not dependent on any power project over it but depended on the melting of the snow and rainfall.⁷

Salal Hydropower project is located on Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir. After the conclusion of Indus Water Treaty it was the first power project India constructed in J& K. Construction on this project started in 1970. However due to Pakistan's objection of India's building a project on a western river led to negotiations between the two nations. In 1978 finally India agreed to reduce the height of the Dam from 40 feet to 30 feet and plug the sluice gates made for flushing the sediments. It was hailed as a triumph of bilateralism however it was not without a cost. As the sluice gates to be closed so it is going to kill the life of the dam due to sedimentation. Finally in 1987 this project was completed.⁸

Tulbul Navigation project is a barrage on the mouth of the Wular Lake in Jammu and Kashmir. This is the largest freshwater lake in India. There were a number of objection Pakistan raised such as (a) A barrage may damage Pakistan's own triple-canal project linking Jhelum and Chenab with the Upper Bari Doab

Canal.(b)) A barrage would be a security risk enabling the Indian Army to make crossing the river either easy or difficult, at will, by the controlled release of water,(c) After constructing the dam, India would control the flow of water into the Jhelum, creating drought and flood situations at will in Pak occupied Kashmir and Pakistan and (d) It would ruin Pakistan's agriculture.

There were several rounds of negotiations and subsequently India agreed to forego its rights over the construction of the barrage. Till date due to Pakistan's reluctance the work on the barrage has not begin. However this issue also was tackled bilaterally by the two countries.

Baglihar Dam Issue

Baglihar is also a run of river hydro power project on Chenab river. This is a 450 MW power project with a pondage capacity of 37.5 million cubic feet of water. The construction over the project started in 1999. Pakistan raised the old issues in its objections over the project. During 1999-2004 there were several round of the talk between the two nations, however when the issue could not be resolved then the matter was referred to a neutral expert. In 2005 World Bank appointed Professor Raymond Lafitte, a Swiss engineer and a dam expert as the neutral expert to resolve the issue. The neutral expert terms the matter a difference and so now its decision was to be final and binding on both the party. In 2007 Neutral expert gave it decision that India has not violated the treaty as objection rose by Pakistan. Secondly it suggested the pondage capacity to be reduced by 13.5 percent and height of the dam also to be reduced by 1.5 meter. It also permitted the flushing of the sediment from the lower sluice gates for enhancing the life of the reservoir.

India was able to win this case due to effective sediment management which not only ensures the flow of water but also prolongs the life of the dam. Pakistan also decided not to raise objection on the decision further and accepts the verdict. In 2010 the Permanent Indus Commission met and there were talk between the commissioners. During these talks Pakistan withdraw its objection on the construction of 240 MW Uri-II on river Jhelum and Chutak hydel power of 44 MW at Suru river in Jammu and Kashmir.⁹

Kisenganga Project

It is also a run of the river hydro power project on Jhelum River in Jammu and Kashmir with a capacity of 330 MW. After the Baglihar decision India started number of projects on western rivers in Jammu and Kashmir keeping the power requirements for India in coming years. Kisenganga is one of the projects started in 2007. The height of the dam is 37 meter. Pakistan again objected on the project similar to the line of Baglihar issue. Here contention was also that its hydropower

project Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project will be affected. Negotiations by the respective government failed than the matter was referred to a neutral expert. Michael Lino was appointed by the World Bank as neutral expert which terms the issue as a dispute and subsequently a court of arbitration was constituted as per the request of Pakistan.¹⁰ Judge Stephen Schwbel was appointed as the chairman of the court of arbitration.¹¹ In 2011 the Court ordered to halt the construction of dam. The Court visited both Kisenganga and Neelum valley sites in 2011 and asked India to submit more technical details about the project. In February 2013 the court of arbitration (COA) ruled that India has not violated the Indus Water Treaty so it can divert the water for the purpose of the project. The final award came in December 2013 when the COA said that India can go ahead with the project. The award ruled that India should maintain a minimum flow of 9m³/s. This was much less in compare to Pakistan's demand of 100m³/s. The Court also held that India shall not lower down the water level below dead storage level for sediment flushing. Court rejected the Pakistan's claim that this project will affect the Neelum hydroelectric project by ruling that this project did not exist when India started constructing Kisenganga project.¹² In May 2018 Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Kisenganga project. India has been asserting that under the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), it can undertake projects on the western rivers for general conservation, flood control, irrigation and hydropower generation by informing Pakistani side before starting of any such projects.¹³

There are enough reasons which would have brought the two nations on war. The two nations are part of the wider conflict and Pakistan is more dependent on the waters of Indus basin. There are serious internal violence and rampant poverty in Pakistan which prevents the construction of infrastructure and agriculture in the Indus basin is dependent on these waters. However the war did not have due to availability of these water resources in abundance in the two respective territories of India and Pakistan. Still Pakistan have been raising the issue that India is using water as the geo strategic weapon.¹⁴ The State is endowed with a hydro power potential of 20,000 MWs out of which a mere 11.68 percent i.e. 2336.20 MWs has been harnessed so far.¹⁵

Can India withdraw or renegotiate the treaty?

Withdrawing from the treaty won't bring any better dividend for India as it will **damage** India's global reputation as a responsible and liberal democratic state. India is a recipient of water from China and Nepal also so in any future conflict over water issue from these countries it may found difficult to justify its case. And lastly it can cause serious humanitarian issue as the people will suffer. Re-negotiation over the treaty will dependent on the cooperation of Pakistan.

Pakistan may be reluctant in any change of clause in the treaty which may affect its interest. On Jan 27, 2023 India has issued a notice to Pakistan for modification of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). No response has come from the Pakistan's side so far.

Conclusion

There were enough inflammable present on which both the nations would have gone to war on the water sharing issue. But they choose to cooperate and move on the path of peace building. India has been always tried to response the Pakistan's concern as exaggerated and like 'crying the wolf phenomenon'. This treaty has been praised internationally as a great example of trust, bilateralism and confidence building measure as despite three major wars the treaty continued and water supply were not affected.¹⁶ However, the trust deficit between the two nations continues till date. D. Suba Chandran, professor of National Institute of Advanced Studies Bangalore has rightly pointed out that India and Pakistan should, seriously consider allowing the different communities living along the Indus to interact directly in a Track two dialogue and the dialogue should be institutionalised. The dialogue between the stakeholders of water should be at four levels. First it should be between India and Pakistan, second and third ones within India and Pakistan and the last one between two parts of Jammu and Kashmir to make optimum use of Indus water.¹⁷

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Archaeological study of Ratanpur: a Capital site of Kalachuris of Ratanpur branch

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Abstract

Kalachuris are an integral part of ancient history, with three branches developed: Mahishmati, Tripuri and Ratanpur. The Ratanpur Kalachuris, who first ruled from Tummana (District- Korba, Chhattisgarh) and later from Ratanpur (District- Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh), were distantly related to, and feudatories of, the Kalachuris of Tripuri. Beginning to rule in the early 11th century, they gained prominence under Jajalladeva I in the early 12th century. Early historical documents of their rule continue to Pratapamalla (1188–1217 A.D.) and are then interrupted until the 15th century, by which time the family had split into two branches- Ratanpur and Raipur. The Kalachurians of Ratanpur were famous for their Art related experiments in Dakshin Kosala. The architectural remains say stories of their glorious past. Most of the architectural remains in the area belong to the Kalachuri rule with the inclusion of native culture. Temples, forts and tanks make the majority part of the architectural remains, some of which have undergone additions and alterations over the period. The Kalachurians rulers of Ratanpur Branch were follower of Shaktism. Goddess Mahamaya temple was a main religious attraction of this area as well as Chhattisgarh.

Keywords: Ratanpur, Kalachurians, Dakshin Kosala, Mahamaya, Arpa, Chhattisgarh.

Central India has a history as old as time, with some of the regions completely lost in time while others are enclosed by the mist of mysteries. Some status has been long maintained by the ancient land of Kosala and its history. From being cited in the holy epics to archaeological records, a proper understanding of the area has been created as all the sources are yet to be compiled. Located in

the north-western- part of Chhattisgarh, Ratanpur is a historical city with its earliest existence goes as far as the stone age. Records maintain it as an important religious – trade centre until the British took over the central Province from Maratha. Ratanpur is a Nagar Palika town under the Bilaspur district. Ratanpur (22°28' N and 82° 15' E.) is located around 25 kilometers from the city of Bilaspur enroute towards Ambikapur.

Historicity

Originally named as Ratanpura as the capital of the Ratanpur branch of the famous dynasty of Kalachuris.¹ According to the Amoda Copperplates of Prithvideva, Sankargana or Mugdhatunga – a Tripuri Kalachuri ruler, conquered the area surrounding modern-day Pali, Chhattisgarh. Before moving ahead with the campaign, he appointed his brother as governor (*Mandalesvara*) of Kosala. Another epigraphic record dated 1114 CE Ratanpur inscription of the local king Jajjaladeva I, mentions his ancestor Kalingaraja who occupied Dakshina Kosala (South Kosala) region and made Tumman (modern Tuman) his capital.² Kalingaraja's grandson Ratnaraja founded the city of Ratnapura (modern Ratanpur). In 1407, the Kingdom of Ratanpur was divided into two parts, with its another branch presiding in Raipur. Ratanpur continued to act as the capital of the *Haihaiyavansi* realm until the 18th century until the area passed to the control of the Bhosle and later the British.³ Even today, the city is known for its medieval temples adorned with gardens and tanks. The most famous among them is the temple of *Mahamaya Devi* also considered to be of the *shakti peeth* by the natives. Another name attributed to the deity is Kosaladevi.

Religion and Architecture

Most of the architectural remains in the area belong to the Kalachuri rule with the inclusion of native culture. Temples, forts and tanks make the majority part of the architectural remains, some of which have undergone additions and alterations over the period. Changing religious faith has also shifted the construction.

Kalachuris were mainly Shaivite (followers of Lord Shiva), but they maintained an esteemed outlook towards other religious faiths and practices. An interesting fact associated with Shiva worship is encountered in the form of Shiva incarnations observed in the region. The same thought is manifested in the Upanisadic philosophy of 'EkoshamBohusyami'. A similar character is maintained in others who follow faith in the area. Some of the prominent ones are Shakti-cult, Buddhism - Jainism, Kaula - Kapalika sect which had great influence over the Jainism sect eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁴ Some of the early acharyas of

the tantric sect hailed from the Kosala area, making it more significant for the faith.

In the architecture front Kalachuris although followed the nagara architecture but introduced local elements along with new experiments in their work. It can be observed in different temples constructed during the long span of their realm. Their earliest temples were erected in their first capital of Tumman, having nagara shikhara with high *adhithana* supporting the pillared *mandapa* adjoined with the *antrala*. This remained as the blue print for most of the dynasties' work with additions of *panchayana* and *tri-ratana* style of plan. From single to multiple tanks and wells were also used in the construction of the temple complexes, as can be observed in the temples of Bhoramdev, Amarkantak, Shahdol and Ratanpur.

As mentioned earlier, located near Bilaspur city, Ratanpur maintains a significant position not just in the Kalachuri era but has remained the way long before and after for its religious worth, like Tumman. Ratanpur is also surrounded by hills on two sides adorned with multiple temples and tanks constructed over its long life. Most of the ancient tanks are though still in existence, and some are still in use, but regrettably, not many intact Shiva temples can be observed in the city.⁵ Some of the early temple elements were later used in the construction of new temples, bridges and forts.

Mahamaya Temple, Ratanpur, Bilaspur

This ancient temple is situated at a distance of 25 km from Bilaspur on Bilaspur-Ambikapur road (via Katghora). At a distance of the present ancient historical site, Ratanpur is located on the banks of the pond (Picture- 01). Its front is towards the north, whose pavilion and entrance are artistic and scenic. This temple is inside a quilt which was constructed in the Maratha period, whereas the original temple was built on the Nagar school of architecture in the 11th century A.D⁶ during the era of Kalachuri ruler Ratnadeva of Ratanpur branch. The idol of Mahamaya is, established in the sanctum of the temple, who was the Kuldevi of the Ratanpur branch of Kalachuri rulers (Picture- 02). One feature of this idol is that the image of another goddess appears to be winking behind this idol.⁷ The fair is organized in both the Navaratri in this temple.

A door frame, an ancient door frame dated the early Kalachuri period is presently placed in the *garbh-griha*'s door of Mahamaya temple (Picture- 03). Cunningham and Beglar (1904) mention maintains in the report that the *mandapa* of the temple was added during king Baharsaya which is engraved on an image of Surya, fit in to still earlier period. The cited door frame is adorned with

dvarapalas, a river goddess in *pedya* section, with foliage decoration on the panels above. *Lalatbimba* is equally ornamented with flying *vidyadhars* and *apsaras* carrying garlands. *Tri-ratna* styled *garbha-griha* is reconstructed using cement plastering, and later lime-washed is 8'8" × 10'2".

A *chhatra* a high raised canopy on the pillars belonging to some mandapa of an ancient temple, in front of the *Mahamaya* temple. Under the roof, a few sculptures of the Kalachuri period are arranged. Icons include images of the river goddess, the Yamuna, on *Kurma* in *tri-bangha* posture. Locals have covered the figure in *sindoor*. Other images include *Ganga*, *Chamunda*, *Mahishmardini* and *Uma Mahesvara*. An interesting figure of twelve armed *Bhairava*- a form of Shiva belonging to the early period of the Kalachuri era.

Kanthi-Devala (Picture- 04): This temple is attributed to Brahmadeva, a feudatory of Prithvi deva, even though the ancient temple has been renovated multiple times subsequently.⁸ During one of the reconstructions, upper stories and side caves were added. Some of the original sculptures are still intact in the temple; others are at present placed in Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur. A noteworthy sculpture from the collection is a *Kalyana-Sundaram* image of Shiva and Parvati marriage depiction. Another fascinating depiction is observed in the *Jangha* section showing a worship scene of the *Mukha - linga* form of Siva. The *shiva linga* is further extended and divided into two vertical sections (Picture- 05). The middle shows *abhya-mudra* Brahma, and the upper section is also adorned with Brahma in *namaskara-mudra*. The back wall of the temple which is facing the tank, is marked with a figurine of a *Shalabhanjika* attended by a *suparna*.⁹ Some other temples are also situated in the Mahamaya temple complex identified of the late period (Picture- 06).

Ratanpur Fort

Ratanpur fort (Picture- 07) is situated about 1 km from Mahamaya temple on Bilaspur -Ambikapur road, which is spread over 25 acres of area. It is dated to a much later period but has many sculptures of the early period. An interesting panel shows Ravana offering his head to a *Shivalinga*.¹⁰ Other significant Shiva forms include *asthabhuja* Shiva and *Prasanna-mudra Nataraja*. On entering the fort, one can encounter the images of Rama holding two pointed arrows as his attributes and Lakshmi carrying her attributes of the *Padma*, *Purna* or *Mangala Ghata* etc.¹¹ (Picture- 08). Besides the above-mentioned artefacts, while moving towards Bilaspur city, one can come across a modern bridge which has been decked with sculptures, probably dismembered elements from ancient structures. It's an assemblage of female and male deities, along with other celestial beings. A similar scenario can be maintained in the fort, where authorities have

secured sculptures from the surrounding dilapidated structures within the inner wall. Sculptures are positioned in two bands – the top having gods and goddesses and the bottom one with *Sursundaris* presenting different scenes from mundane life. Artistically it produces a parallel with the *jangha* decoration of Kalachuri temples.

Many more dis-figured sculptures and architectural elements can be observed scattered in the locality. Few others can be found within the residential area of the city, and others have been added in the habitational construction. Most of the temples were established on the banks of tanks, the majority of which were constructed either by the royal patronage or their feudatories¹² (Picture- 09). Tanks had a special place in the Kosala land. They were used by the royals as well as the locals' communities. The temples, hence, built on their banks, probably were used as the most suitable places for different ceremonies.



Picture-1



Picture-2



Picture-3



Picture-4



Picture-5



Picture-6



Picture-7



Picture-8



Picture-9

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Political crisis and Buddhist redressal

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Abstract

Political philosophy as well as governance plays a vital role in framing the roadmap for development and progress of any society or nation. However, unfortunately, what we are seeing and observing from the past few decades that political setup has become the law of jungle where Might is Right. And the people who get interested in politics are the most mediocre thus creating a sense of that this field is not suitable for good people and noble people. The present time world wide violence, protest demonstrations, military and religious gurus' interventions in this field clearly reveals crisis of good governance. So far as the issue of Political Crisis and its solution through Buddhist way is concerned as we know this historic fact that neither the Buddha was a politician nor he delivered any special emphasis on political setup. However in his sermons, he promulgated a plethora of relevant matter in the field of politics and kingship. There are many Suttas in the Dīghanikāya, SaCyuttanikāya, AEguttaranikāya and a number of Jātakastories which contain discussion on kingly conduct. We can find the Buddha's advice and instructions to the rulers, which have been of immense practical value, producing boundless good result. The Buddha's views are completely based on pragmatic realism and reasoned dispensations. It is conducive and compatible with the modern world. The doctrines of AhiCsâ, truth, equality, non-discrimination, brotherhood and of investigative thinking are by and large enforced and practiced by the Governments and rulers of present day world in some form or the other. In the proposed paper efforts are made to have a thorough analysis of present-day political crisis and its redressal available in Buddhist teachings vis-à-vis their applicability and relevance in the modern times.

Keywords: AhiCsâ, Buddha, SaEgha, Truth, Value.

Political philosophy as well as governance plays a vital role in framing the roadmap for development and progress of any society or nation. The political setup whether it is democratic or monarchy, it has the responsibility to do the community welfare programmes and to see that everyone should get benefit from those plans executed for the development of the society at large. However, unfortunately, what we are seeing and observing from the past few decades that the political setup has become the law of jungle where Might is Right. And the people who get interested in politics are the most mediocre thus creating a sense that this field is not suitable for good and noble people. The present time world wide violence, protest demonstrations, military as well as religious guru's interventions clearly reveals crisis of good governance. Besides, the present time multi party system and coalition form of governance is adding fuel in the fire as affecting the good people to keep away as a result in giving edge to corruption.

So far as the issue of Political Crisis and its solution through Buddhist way is concerned as we know this historic fact that neither the Buddha was a politician nor he delivered any special emphasis on political setup. However in his sermons, he promulgated a plethora of relevant matter in the field of politics and kingship. There are many Suttas in the Dîghanikâya, SaCyuttanikâya, AEguttaranikâya and a number of Jâtaka stories which contain discussion on kingly conduct. We can find the Buddha's advice and instructions to the rulers, which have been of immense practical value, producing boundless good result. The Buddha's views are completely based on pragmatic realism and reasoned dispensations. It is conducive and compatible with the modern world. The doctrines of AhiCsâ, truth, equality, non-discrimination, brotherhood and of investigative thinking are by and large enforced and practiced by the Governments and rulers of present day world in some form or the other.

Non-violence or AhiCsâ is the prime concern of any society. Buddhism does not allow or favour any sort of violence so the Buddha's doctrine of non-violence is completely associated with the non-violent, truthful and welfare politics. Truth has an eternal value and Buddhism gives strong emphasis on truth as well as truthful behavior and conduct so the Buddhist doctrine of truth is an essential component of politics. The Buddhist doctrine of equality is very important and relevant because the Buddha advocates for equality in all respects without any prejudice or discrimination. This is a salient feature of the Buddhist doctrine concerning to political activities. Buddhism does not discriminate on the basis of caste, creed, color, gender and region, which is well mentioned in the Vasalasutta of Suttanipâta.¹

The Buddha discusses the importance and pre-requisites of a good government. He shows how the country could become corrupt, degenerated and

unhappy when the head of the government becomes corrupt and unjust. He speaks against corruption and how a government should act based on humanitarian principles. He says, 'When the ruler of a country is just and good, the ministers become just and good; when the ministers are just and good, the higher officials become just and good; when the higher officials are just and good, the rank and file become just and good; when the rank and file become just and good, the people become just and good'.² In the Cakkavattî Sihanâda Sutta, the Buddha says that immorality and crime, such as theft, falsehood, violence, hatred, cruelty etc. could arise from poverty. Kings and governments may try to suppress crime through punishment, but it is futile to eradicate crimes through force.³

The Buddha does not guarantee any political system as the best one, but he pays attention to the way of rule as an important factor. He, thus, lays emphasis not on the form of government but how it works. The Buddha had a close relationship with contemporary kings. We find that whenever the Buddha visited some state, he made himself as a good friend of the ruler and advised him on the appropriate virtues for the stability of each system. He wanted the rulers to be virtuous. When we study the Buddha's approach towards political ideas we find that he was always ready to give advice to the rulers of both forms of government.

The Buddha gives separate teachings for each form of government. For the monarchies, he teaches the duties of a Paramount Emperor, exhorting rulers to use their absolute power as a tool for generating benefit in the community rather than a tool for seeking personal happiness. For the republican form of government, he teaches for the encouragement of social harmony. In their separate ways, both these teachings show how people can live happily under different political systems.

If looked properly and impartially, Buddhism seems not merely a religion of ideas and ideal philosophy but also a religion of practical approach. The Buddha made his teachings applicable to the real life of the people in the society of the time.⁴ Before and at the time of the Buddha, during 6th century BCE, there was no paramount sovereignty in India. What we presently call 'India' was then known as Jambûdîpa, which was neither a single independent country nor a political unit rather it was politically divided into number of small principalities, which according to AĒguttaranikâya⁵, were sixteen in number known as the So7asamahâjanapadas or the sixteen great countries. Among these sixteen, some were monarchical and few were republican set up of government. It is especially to be mentioned here that despite having no single authority in the Indian as a monarch, India was a nation, which is evident from the fact that in the north of India, there is Himalayas, in its south is the Indian Ocean, in the west the Arabian Sea and so on.

Further, in the *Mahâparinabbânasutta*⁶ the Buddha refers the following seven qualities necessary for the community welfare and stability. These are:

collecting together frequently in public meeting of their clan, mutual concord, regard for the ancient institutions of their clan, reverence for elders, protecting the prestige of the fair sex, honoring their shrines, arranging for the safe and convenient stay of the Arhants. Ven. P.A. Payutto summarizes the above mentioned idea *viz.* 'to hold regular and frequent meetings, to meet together in harmony, disperse in harmony and conduct business & duties in harmony, to introduce no new ordinance, to break up no established ordinance but to abide by the original principles, to honor and respect the elders and to listen their counsel, to honor the womenfolk of the community and don't abuse them, to honor the shrines worshipped by the community and not to neglect the ceremonies to be conducted for them and to provide rightful protection, shelter and support for the enlightened beings and to welcome them to the community'.⁷

As we all are well aware about the facts that the Buddhist society generally comprises of two group *viz.* the community of monks and nuns and that of lay disciples. The two groups never have the same kind of relation to political affairs.⁸ On the part of monastic group, though their ultimate goal is the attainment of *nibbâna* through self purification, still they are not free from the socio-political environment as they have to remain in contact with the lay disciples by one way or the other. On the other hand, since, the community of lay people still remains attached with the worldly affairs; they are obviously supposed to engage themselves in practical politics. During the lifetime of the Buddha two types of governmental set up prevailed: the monarchical and the republican ones; but the Buddha did not praise or condemn either.⁹ What he really emphasized was that the government of any system should not ignore and disregard the importance and necessity of moral and spiritual advancement as well as those of material prosperity of the state, and that in order to reach this integral aim the principle of righteousness should faithfully be observed. No doubt, even Buddha himself belonged to a family having a strong ruling set up but he always kept himself away from it and thus strived for the well being of others. One may claim the close proximity of the Buddha with the political activities, but he always stood firmly on the point that the ruler of the state should always work for the well-being of people of his state. According to the Buddha, justice to all should be the sole motive of all the ruler's. *MahâCsa Jâtaka* describes justice as a back-bone of well-being and happiness through the conversation between the king of the gesse and the king of Kâsî in such a way, 'Dost thou my lord, enjoy good health and is all well thee? I trust thy realm is flourishing and ruled in equity. O king of geese, my health is good and all is well with me; My realm is very flourishing and rules in equity'.¹⁰ The further conversation reveals another virtue of the ruler which concerns the equality, 'And is thy realm in happy case, from all oppression free, Held by no arbitrary sway,

but ruled with equity? my kingdom is in happy case, from all oppression free, held by no arbitrary sway, but rules with equity'.¹¹

Also, in the same *Jâtaka*, the Buddha gives ten principles known as *Dasarâjadhamma*. The applicability of these principles is relevant even in modern day political scenario, if the governments wishes to serve the country peacefully. These are¹²: *Dâna* (charity, generosity), *Sîla* (high moral conduct or character), *Pariccâga* (sacrificing everything for the good of the people), *Ajjava* (honesty and integrity), *Maddava* (kindness and gentleness), *Tapa* (austerity in habits), *Akkodha* (freedom from hatred, ill-will etc.), *AhiCsâ* (non-violence), *Khanti* (patience, tolerance, understanding etc.) and *Avirodha* (non-opposition, non-obstruction).

Furthermore, the Buddhist *SaEgha* has always led state and government for peace and harmony. There is a cordial relationship between the *SaEgha* and state. The *SaEgha* in the present time is not only confined itself in imparting the religious and spiritual values, instead it takes active part in ecology balance, child rights, girls education, standing against rapes, settling down the issues between the administration and the civil society and likewise.

In the northern Thailand the Buddhist *SaEgha* has developed some areas for plantation. In Myanmar the *SaEgha* has maintained a very cordial relation between Buddhist recluses and government officials. The government officials gets initiation into the *SaEgha* as monks and nuns for two months during the summer and winter vacations and gets them edify. These sorts of activities have proved very fruitful for smooth functioning of the society and the government.

Thus, from the Buddha's first proclamation we find that the policy of Buddhism was not directed towards serving self-interest of Buddhism, but for the happiness and benefit of the people. It described the method of working and gave a clear purpose, method of procedure and what should be given to the people. The objective of the Buddha through the establishment of the *SaEgha* was to proclaim and propagate the sublime way of life.

Notes and References

¹*Na jaccâ vasalo hoti na jaccâ hoti brâhmaGo / Kammunâ vasalo hoti kammunâ hoti brâhmaGo //* Suttanipâta, verse nos. 21 & 27.

²*AEguttaranikâya*, quoted by K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe*, 5th ed., Taiwan, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993, p. 232.

³K. Sri Dhammananda, *op.cit.*

⁴P.A. Payutto, *Buddhist Economics: A Middle way for the Market Place*, Bangkok, Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1998, p. 80. Also, quoted by Phra Phaitoon Pukkaeo in his *thesis A Study of the Social Aspects of early Buddhist Philosophy*.

⁵AEguttaranikâya I, 213; IV, 252,256,220; Vinaya II, 146, London, Pali Text Society.

⁶Swami Dwarikadas Shastri (ed.), *Dighnikâya II*, Varanasi, Bauddha Bharati, 1996, p. 29.

⁷Quoted by Phra Phaitoon Pukkaao in his thesis, *A Study of the Social Aspects of early Buddhist Philosophy*, 2009, p. 237.

⁸P. V. Bapat(ed.), *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Ladakh: Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre, rpt. 1996, p. 452.

⁹*ibid.*, 453.

¹⁰E.B. Cowell and H.T. Francis (tr.), *The Jâtaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, vol. , V, p. 199.

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An account of Luki Senchowa Baruah and his times

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Abstract

This research paper aims to discover some unnoticed facts about the noted freedom fighter in Assam during 1857, Luki Senchowa Baruah. As he was one of the members of the team which wanted to expel British from Assam and restore former Ahom rule at a time when the famous Sepoy Mutiny took place in different strategic places of India. But unfortunately their plan was detected by British rulers and some of them were executed and others were exiled and imprisoned. Luki Senchowa Baruah was exiled to Andaman. After a few years, when the exiled prisoners in Andaman were released, Luki Senchowa Baruah too came back by a ship to Calcutta. But mysteriously, he jumped into the water of the sea from the ship. His fellow men considered him to be dead. But recent information has shown that he came back to Assam. He never went to his wife Padmawati. Instead he started a new but unknown life with one widow named Parijan Begum in Golaghat. Still there are a few descendents of Luki Senchowa Baruah and Parijan Begum across Assam. From the analysis of the information received through interviews and from written documents, it becomes apparent that the society in Assam at that time was not a liberal one. The then Muslims accepted what the Hindus denied. So, it is in fact an account of the contemporary society at that time. The techniques of British to subdue the natives for a long time are also studied in this paper.

Key words: *Senchowa, revolutionary, Andaman, Exile.*

Introduction

The year 1857 is remarkable in Indian history, as the first freedom struggle known as 'Sepoy Mutiny' took place in that year. The wave of the movement also lashed Assam at that time and inspired a few patriots to plan to make the land free from British rule. They wanted to reestablish the Ahom rule in Assam. Among those patriots, Luki Senchowa Baruah was an active participant. But British arrested him and exiled him to Andaman Jail. No remarkable information

has been found about the later life of Luki Senchowa Baruah. But recently a few important information have come to light which is of worth considering to know about the socio-economic-political scenario of Assam.

Significance of the study

When anyone talks about the rebellion against British in Assam during 1857, most of the researchers focus on studying the role of the two exponents Moniram Dewan and Piyali Baruah. Both were executed by the then colonial government. But very few studies have been conducted to know about the role of Ahom aristocrats and the situation they had to pass through at that time. Luki Senchowa Baruah was such a Ahom nobleman who had to abandon his loving family only to fight against British power. It is a tragic but real accounts which yet to be written about The transformation of an Ahom lady into a vendor of opium to survive in the changing time. In fact it reveals the policy of British how they tried to cripple the young revolutionary forces by distributing opium among them through the agents like the wife of Luki Senchowa Baruah. So, this topic of study is very much significant to know about socio-economic-political scenario of Assam at that time. All these come to the light through the life history of the lesser known freedom fighter like Luki Senchowa Baruah.

Objectives

The objectives of the research paper is to study the background of Luki Senchowa Baruah and his family, the role of Luki Senchowa Baruah in the freedom struggle, to investigate about the life after exile of Luki Senchow Baruah and to know about the Assamese society during the time of Luki Senchowa Baruah.

Methodology

This is primarily a historical research. The entire course of research is done by Collecting and interpreting information about the past events. It studies possible reasons behind certain events to explain their influence on the events that followed. Here, the research includes study of documents, records and archives, chronology (establishing the dates of past events), the study of publications, epigraphy (study of ancient inscriptions), genealogy (study of individuals and families), historical geography and heraldry (study of weapons). Written histories and some unstructured interviews provided some crucial information required to carry on the research.

Background of Luki Senchowa Baruah and his role in freedom struggle

In the medieval Assam (1228-1826), falconry was a very important sport. At that time Ahom dynasty ruled the country. They were the patron of the

falconry. It was a custom to watch the falcons killing wooly-necked storks by the king and other nobles. It was considered to be the royal sport of Assam at that time. To promote this tradition of falconry a sect of people were assigned to rear the falcons, and train those so that during the specific dates, the falcons may entertain the spectators by killing large number of other birds. The sect of people in charge of the falcons was known as 'Senchowa'. If the falcon fails to kill birds, then the owner of that particular falcon was punished for not providing proper training to the falcons. Earlier, the peregrine falcon was reared by the Senchowas. But, during the rule of Gadadhar Singha, crested hawk eagle was reared for the same purpose.¹ Crested hawk eagle is bigger in size than the peregrine falcon. Jean Baptiste Chevalier, a French merchant while visiting Assam during the reign of the then king Rajeswar Singha had the opportunity to witness such a sport. In his account 'Adventures of Jean-Baptiste Chevalier in Eastern India (1752- 1765)' he describes it like this, '...I liked the most was the one with the bird of prey known as baye. It is done on lakes which are covered with teals, ducks, wild goose and quantities of other bird species. A dozen of these perfectly trained bayes are released on the lake. In an instant they fly above the water. The other birds, apparently their nemesis, try to escape. Their numbers darken the air. Then, the bayes demonstrate the most pleasant of all shows. They rise in the sky as far as the eye can see, above all the other birds, then they swoop down on them, knock them over and bash them with their wings. These preys, seemingly unhurt but paralyzed with fear, fall from all sides like hailstones. Small boats patrolling the lake pick them up'. In less than two hours, which is the usual time required for their hunt, thousands of birds are brought to the feet of the king. The baye masters then disperse to call back the birds. It is admirable to see how well they obey their voice. Each one of them unmistakably recognizes the man who takes care of them. They land on their master's fist and as a reward, each is given a bird that he has caught, after it has been cut open through the middle of the stomach.²

Above all the Senchowas, an officer of higher rank was appointed who was known as 'Senchowa Baruah'.³ Luki Senchowa Baruah was also such an officer. His father Mahidhar Senchowa Baruah was also in the same position during his time. They had their ancestral land at Kakojan, near Jorhat. The famous pond known as 'Senchowa Pukhuri' is still there in Kakojan, which belonged to the family of Luki Senchowa Baruah. Luki Senchowa Baruah was the son-in-law of King Jogeswar Singha, who was installed as king of Assam

by the Burmese during Burmese invasion. Wife of Luki Senchowa Baruah was Padmawati. A vast cultivable land known as 'Harucharai Khat' in Malow Pathar, Jorhat was gifted to Luki Senchowa Baruah by King Jogeswar Singha during the marriage.⁴

In 1857 the first freedom struggle, the Sepoy Mutiny took place in India. In Assam too, some people started movement secretly against British. Maniram Dewan was the central figure of that movement in Assam. The associates of Maniram Dewan planned to make Kandarpeswar Singha the king of Assam by making the land free from British rule. The rebels organized regular meeting at the palace of Prince Kandarpeswar Singha at Jorhat town. Among those Madhumallik, Mahesh Chandra Gabharumeliya Baruah alias Piyali Baruah, Mayaram Borbora, Nilakantha Choladhara Phukan, Kamala Charingiya, Bahadur Gaonbura, Luki Senchowa Baruah were remarkable. There was an allegation against Kandarpeswar Singha that he bribed Bahadur Gaonbura to instigate Muslims against British. But at that time the Moriya Muslims made the cannons and guns for the war. Some scholars have the opinion that the Prince gave money to Gaonbura to make weapons for war.

Piyali Baruah was a Brahmin.⁵ He was a handsome young man. He could enchant people with his lecture. He went to the camp of the local Hindusthani soldiers at Nugura of Golaghat district and instigated them against British. He said, 'the days of British has gone. They will not stay at Bengal and Assam any more. We have to make Kandarpeswar Singh our king. If he becomes king, he will increase your salary – All will receive salary much than those Jongi Paltan'. Vicon Singh, Subedar of those Hindusthani soldiers vowed to make Kandarpeswar Singha the King of Assam. He said, 'as you hear the sound of bigul (trumpet), the soldiers in groups of five in each will go to Jorhat on that very night. At first we have to behead Haranath Baruah there. There is a servant of British Raghbir Singh with twenty soldiers. We have to ask him to join us. If he refuses, he will be executed... then we make Kandarpeswar Singha our king. ... Immediately we have to go to Sibsagar and set fire to the bungalow of Holroyd. All the British living there will be executed.'⁶ They resolved to conduct that operation on the Astami of 1779 Sakabda, during Mahamaya Puja.

At that time Moniram Dewan was in Calcutta. He sent a letter to his associates in Assam from Calcutta. But, Haranath Parbatiya Baruah, who was a police officer under British found the letter incidentally and called Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar district Colonel C. Holroyd at his residence in the

wee hours. British made a plan to arrest all the rebels. Accordingly Moniram Dewan was arrested in Calcutta and then brought to Jorhat. Others were also arrested from different places of Assam. On February 9, 1858 the court sentenced to death to Moniram and Piyali Baruah. On February 26, both were executed at Jorhat. Most of the associates were sent to exile. Prince Kandarpeswar Singha was kept in Alipurduar Jail. Others including Madhumallik, Bahadur Gaonbura, Farmud Ali, Nilakantha Choladhara Phukan, Kamala Charingiya, Luki Senchowa Baruah were sent to exile in Andaman Jail. The 'Heritage Jail' in Andaman which was earlier known as Cellular Jail was not constructed at that time. But, the names of Bahadur Gaonbura, Formud Ali, Dutiram Baruah etc. are still engraved there. But like some other revolutionaries, the name of Luki Senchowa Baruah was not found there. While constructing the new Cellular Jail, the authority might not be careful to find the earlier records. Captain Holroyd wrote about it, 'in the month of Asar or beginning of Swan Pealie was deputed to Golaghat with the letters from Saring Raja finally to arrange matters with the Native officers and sepoy on that command. When there he visited other people also of influenc in the vicinity, and arranged that the intended rising should occur about the time of Doorgah Poojah, when Moniram stated he could arrive'. In the month of Asar, Noor Mahommed Jamdr of the 1st Assam Lt. Infy. Came down from Deebroogarh to Joorhat on private leave and had interviews with the Rajah regarding the assistance to be afforded by the sepoy, and of the remuneration they were to receive for placing him on the Guddee. In the month of Sawan (July-August) Rustom Sing Jamdr and tow sepoy went to Joorhat and having visited the Saring Raja by night offered conferred with him regarding the arrangement made with Pealie at Golaghat. In the month of Bhadra Devidutta Sarmah Mouzadar (Brother of Luchie Dutta) received gold from the Raja for the collection of Rassad for the troops; for a similar purpose gold was also distributed to other parties.⁷ Son of Dutiram Baruah, Priyalal, and the first Assamese Deputy Inspector of Schools applied for the release of his father and his companions. Accordingly, the rebels who were not associated in murder or any other heinous crimes were released on 16th September, 1863.⁸ Dutiram Baruah, Bahadur Gaonbura, Farmud Ali, Morongikhowa Gohain Ugrasen and Luki Senchowa Baruah were also among those. They were brought from Andaman to Calcutta by a ship. But as the ship approached the port in Calcutta, a person from the deck of the ship jumped into the sea. He was Luki Senchowa

Baruah. Bahadur Gaonbura and Formud Ali came to Jorhat and informed about Luki Senchowa Baruah, who disappeared in the sea.

The unknown facts related to Luki Senchowa Baruah

The ancestral land and property at Kakojan of exiled Luki Senchowa Baruah were confiscated by the British government. When Luki Senchowa Baruah was in exile, his wife Padmawati with their only son Nomoram shifted to their land in Harucharai Khat in Malow Pathar. British Government offered Padmawati Rupees 120 as pension.⁹ But she was forced to deal in opium. As she had a good relationship with the royal and aristocratic families of Ahoms, she became a good agent for British to expand the opium trade among those people. As she used to distribute opium among the youths of aristocratic families, she was later known as 'Tupuli Aideu'.¹⁰ A lady from an aristocratic family has been reduced to an insignificant vendor of opium by the colonial British power.

The great grandson of Padmawati, from the side of Luki Senchowa Baruah is still alive. He is still living in the place where Padmawati was spending the last days of her life. He is Chittaranjan Baruah, an engineer. In an interview with this researcher he revealed that Padmawati never met her husband Luki Senchowa Baruah after he was exiled to Andaman. She did not know whether her husband was living or not in her lifetime. But after fourteen years, she observed the rituals considering him to be dead.

But another person having faith in Islamic religion, Rafiul Hussain Baruah, a subject teacher in a school in Nalbari district of Assam, in an interview with this researcher said that Luki Senchowa Baruah did not die after jumping into the sea from the moving ship. He swam to the sea shore in Calcutta. Therefrom he came to his own place in disguise. He collected the information about his family. But he never went to his wife and son again.

Then Luki Senchowa Baruah went to his fellow rebel Morongikhowa Gohain Ugrasen in Golaghat. They were planning to fight against British in Assam once more. But for several reasons, their plan remained unexecuted. In Golaghat, he met a Muslim widow who was once his playmate in Kakojan. Her name was Parijan Begum. She was married off to a person of Kacharihat of Golaghat. Unfortunately, her husband passed away prematurely. Luki Senchowa Baruah started staying with her like a family member. The descendents of Luki Senchowa Baruah and Parijan Begum are still in different places of Assam. The interviewee Rafiul Hussain Baruah is also a descendent of Luki and Parijan. It is not known whether Luki Senchowa Baruah was converted to Islam or not. But the

descendents followed the Islamic faith. But Chittaranjan Baruah, while asked, told this researcher that their family believed that Luki Senchowa Baruah, their forefather was lost in exile.¹¹

A poem in Assamese language about the legend of Luki Senchowa Baruah was published in a famous Assamese magazine *Gariasi* entitled 'Senchowa Pukhuri' in the issue of May, 2008. The poet was Tufel Jilani. In an interview, he revealed that the evidences of the activities of Luki Senchowa Baruah is still there in Kakojan. The Senchowa Pukhuri, near the National Highway No 37 is still upholding the age old history of another century. Stories related to Luki Senchowa Baruah are prevailing among the people of Kakojan even today. So, it can be mentioned here that the happenings at that time related to the family of Luki Senchowa Baruah have both historical and literary importance.

The society during the days of Luki Senchowa Baruah

From the above information it can be derived that the society in Assam during the 19th century was not a very liberal one. Luki Senchowa Baruah never came to his former wife Padmawati even coming back from exile. There might be three reasons behind it. First is, during those days anybody who was imprisoned was looked down upon by the society. Luki Senchowa Baruah might be aware of the fact and did not dare to face his wife even coming back from exile. It did not matter for what reason he was sent to exile. The second is, at that time, crossing the sea was considered to be a sin by the contemporary Hindu society in Assam. So, Luki Senchowa Baruah might realized his own position in the society and did not dare to go for reunion with Padmawati. Third reason might be the information he received about Padmawati regarding her opium trade among the aristocrats of Ahom society. As she was a daughter of a king, her degradation from her position to a vendor of opium made him hopeless about the future with her. From these analyses it can be said that the aristocratic Ahom families were completely influenced by Hinduism, which had its own characteristics in Assam. They were not free from the prejudices of the contemporary time.

Moreover, the British wanted to demoralize people by turning them opium addict. At that time, opium appeared to be one of the great evils to the Assamese society. And helpless people like Padmawati were their soft target. British compelled them to sell opium to the youths of the noble families of that time. Another important aspect of this account is about the customs of the two religions. Muslims at that time accepted, what Hinduism denied to do so. Though

there is no evidence whether Luki Senchowā Baruah was converted to Islam or not, but their descendants embraced Islam as their religion. A man outcast from the then Hindu society receives a respectable place in the Muslim society. In other words, Luki Senchowā Baruah was the bridge between the two religions. He was the embodiment of harmony in the 19th century Assamese Society.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is obvious that Assamese society had to go through a dark period during 19th century as the colonialism began to show its ugly face. A society subdued by a foreign power had to suffer a lot causing it to remain backward for ages. Moreover, the morale of the people was also robbed off by the colonial power using numerous cunning tricks. Hopelessness prevailed and perpetuated throughout the land during British rule in Assam. This research is a very initial and novel approach to the happenings in Assam during the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 and their aftermaths. There is enough scope to delve deeper and discover newer facts by the future researchers.

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Re-mapping the history of the *Adivasi* woman-labourers in Tea-plantations of Assam: A critical study of select narratives

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Abstract

The tea-plantations in Assam have long been witnessing decades of suffering and exploitation faced by the Adivasi woman labourers at different levels. Despite their significant role and contribution to the half of the production in the industry, they are left aside. The history under constant revisiting exposes the kinds of discrimination, chapters of sexual exploitation, poor health conditions. Another such important aspect of their discrimination is the prevalence of witch hunting in the Adivasi society where the women seem to exist as the commodities. The aim of this research paper is to re-locate the Adivasi woman-labourers working in the tea-plantations in the historical context. Different colonial and post-colonial narratives available as records are being revisited to contextualize the positioning of Adivasi woman in historical frame.

Keywords: *Adivasi, witch-hunting, discrimination, colonial, post-colonial narratives.*

Adivasi woman labourers in the tea-plantations of Assam play a significant role in the labour force of the tea industry. The socio-political and historical narratives present in Assam refer to such kind of facts to a great extent. At this outset, it is necessary to ponder on the collective identity of the Adivasi labourers in the historical context of the state. There is no denying the fact that the arrival of Adivasi women in this region is associated with the tea-plantations established during 19th century when the migrant workers were able to fulfil the aspirations of the tea-planters. The tendency of the quest for cheap and controllable labours on the part of the tea-planters fuelled predominantly in the migration of the woman

labourers towards the state.¹ A half of the total percentage of the labour force in the plantations of Assam was constituted by women and children unlike the kind of migration in the European settlements.² Women and children were employed as individual labourers rather than on family basis for the minimum wage supply.³ It is evident that since the colonial times, the woman population have been facing continuous discrimination in terms of wages, division of labour etc. The manipulative variations in wages resulted in the fact that women received lesser amount of wage than men although working hours remained the same.⁴ Working women in the tea plantations were allotted tasks such as hoeing, pruning and plucking to a larger extent. But many women also defied the policy of reproduction of the labour force for plantations. Many did not want to let their children be born in such an environment and hence aborted pregnancies.⁵ Apart from the wage structure woman labourers had to undergo sexual exploitation in the plantation industry. The colonialist regime finds representation in many contemporary narratives in large numbers. Renowned Adivasi poet Sanjoy Kumar Tanti's 'Sukurmoni' depicts the life of a female Adivasi labourer. It records the pathetic tale of Sukurmoni, an Adivasi woman who was brutally raped by Charles Webb, an employee of India General Team Navigation Company posted at the then Kakilamukh ghat of Jorhat on 13th April, 1884.⁶ At that time, many Adivasi labourers were imported to Assam as indentured labourers to work in Hулunguri tea-estate in Assam in 1884. Sukurmoni fell prey to the hands of Charles Webb and finally died. Webb was accused later of sexual exploitation by the District Magistrate. The image of Sukurmoni is transformed to one historical figure in many literary narratives, 'You sang songs like brave women / sang songs of freedom from slavery'.⁷ Sukurmoni is now read as a voice against slavery which continues to inspire the Adivasi tea-labourers in present times.

During the colonialist regime, Adivasi women labourers had undergone beating and flogging for any kind of negligence during working hours in tea plantations. The instance of 1888 in the Mesaijan Tee-Garden is a significant one when a group of women labourers including Panu, Khumti and Sukhi were tied to the bungalow of the Manager and were flogged inhumanly with leather strips accusing them of constant casualty in works.⁸ The planters often used their authoritative power upon the Adivasi woman-labourers. Female labourers had often become sexual objects in the hands of the Managers. 'Chokrikhana' or, 'Harem' were used as institutions of sexual abuse where young female labourers were physically assaulted.⁹ W.M.Fraser writes about his experiences in 1890 recording the fact that a senior Manager punished Adivasi woman labourer brutally accusing them of faulty leaf-plucking 'with his tongue and hands fully employed'.¹⁰

Many female labourers were not skilled and therefore had to undergo punishment of the Manager in violent manner. On defial of the instructions of the Manager of the Khowang tea-garden in 1914, Draupati, an Adivasi lady was sentenced to six moth's rigorous imprisonment.¹¹ The woman labourers often took long exodus for unhealthy conditions and lack of facilities. For instance, in Gillaipukhuri Tea-estate, unhealthy conditions, Adivasi female labourers had undergone exodus in large numbers in Gillapukri Tea-estate.¹² Different historical narratives are also available which represent the prevalence of sexual exploitation undergone by the Adivasi woman labourers to some extent, 'Apart from ill-treatment at the hands of the supervisory staff at the workplaces, there was often a strong element of sexual exploitation that they had to face at the hands of the managers and assistant managers. The indenture laws and law enforcement authorities rarely offered any protection against this'.¹³

The picture does not change much in the post-colonial times although little changes are evident in case of the nature of work and the company's attitude towards woman labourers. The lack of a sufficient maternal healthcare system in the tea-plantations conditions Adivasi woman labourers to suffer massively from diseases such as anaemia. The unavailability of support from Government and non-government organisations make it more challenging for the Adivasi woman labourers to overcome their health issues to a larger extent.¹⁴ The Adivasi woman labourers face extreme harassment while applying for maternity leave even on extreme conditions.¹⁵ The Managers seem to adopt patriarchal mindset which decides the livelihood of the Adivasi women labourers working in the tea plantations.¹⁶

Child marriage and other domestic pressures such as desertion by the husbands seem to prevail still now amongst the woman labourers to a great extent.¹⁷ Moreover, they suffer from a number of health issues such as anaemia which results in high maternal mortality amongst them.¹⁸ In a recent protest held by Adivasi woman labourers under the leadership of organisation called North East Network(NEN) against patriarchal subjugation and setting up of drinking dens during Durga Puja, it was observed that this initiative failed especially for the constant threat received from their male counterparts in the garden. They were found utterly manhandled.¹⁹ In another incident in Golaghat Bokial Tea Estate in 2011, a 13 year old girl was raped and murdered and lifted to a tree but the case was converted to a mere suicidal case and the neighbourhood convicted the girl's brother-in-law which only came into notice after the involvement of NEN surveyors.²⁰

Adivasi female labourers hardly find any time to attribute motherly care to their children. Their economic commitments abstain them from engagement in creativity and writing activities also, 'I do also want to write poems/ To recite poems in conferences' (Kurmi, 2015, 1-2).²¹ The speaker in the poem points out the major reason for such condition which haunts the imagination of many poets including herself. 'The labouring mother plucking spring leaves, cuts down the fronts of them, she forgets to feed milk to her newborns, the baskets are not yet filled up and she is thinking how could she increase her wage'.²²

It establishes the fact that the thought of family economy remains always above the head of a woman in the family of labourers. There is hardly any leisure from work for a woman. The image of the 'labouring mother' forgetting to feed her new born enunciates the same before the readers. She keeps working keeping in mind the wage factor as nothing but labour can provide her the required wage for the family. The attention of the Adivasi female writers is always seized by the bigger questions in their front, 'The death of Champa for lack of medicine, is alive in my eyes, I wanted to learn how to write and read, but brother came in as my mother had to go for work'.²³

The image of Champa, as one of the characters of female members in the speaker's family seems to reconstruct the image of an unending dilemma of living a life in sorrows. Champa's death out of medicine also depicts the poor condition of health in the society of Adivasi people where many women have had to accept death untimely. The work load pressure does not leave a woman in the family happy. The lack of economic security engages the female members in work. As a consequence, the responsibility of new born child falls upon the elder child. The speaker in the poem seems to address the issues of Adivasi tea-labourers in her society where there is less space for women to identify themselves.

Along with the kind of domestic violence parallel runs the type of physical violence within the private space. Consumption of alcohol by the males lead towards the creation of unexpected circumstances in the household as a consequence of which, the females become the worst victim of domestic violence. The literary narrative entitled *Cha-Gorom-The Tea Story* written by Arup Kr. Dutta is historically significant as it brings forth the kind of violence undergone by the Adivasi woman labourers to a great extent. The narrative historicizes the prevalence of physical violence executed by a male Adivasi labourer out of rage upon her wife after alcohol consumption.²⁴ As mentioned in the narrative, the Adivasi male labourer wills to gift a sari for her wife but consumes excessive alcohol and arrives home in an uncontrolled mode. Arriving on the house, the

husband seems to behave restlessly and offers a hundred rupees note to the cow on the front yard and calls his wife not worthy of that sari and puts it in fire. The drunken husband offer a hundred rupees of note to the cow out of pity. It establishes how an Adivasi woman has to undergo the unnecessary arrogance of her husband at several times.²⁵ There is hardly any room of one's own for the Adivasi woman. They are speechless and hence powerless. The male labourers always dominate the opposite gender to a great extent. Thus, apart from the exploitation in the hands of the labour force, Adivasi women witness many challenges from the patriarchal system of the society.

The state has witnessed to several incidents of violence which depict the reality of the condition of Adivasi women to a great extent. a young Adivasi female was murdered in 2019 at Barbaruah Tea-Estate at Dibrugarh who offered domestic service at Brahmaputra Chemical and Polymer Limited (BCPL). Allegations flourish regarding the fact that she was raped brutally and was raped brutally by unknown persons.²⁶ Besides, many Adivasi women in Assam partake prostitution as an occupation to run their families to overcome their economic constraints. Human trafficking prevails as an important matter in the lives of the Adivasi women. In a recent research done by Sumit Kr. Sarma, it is found that Adivasi woman labourers working in the tea plantations of Udalguri, Sonitpur and Darang districts of Assam are the worst sufferers in the tea-plantations.²⁷ In this regard, another narrative published in *the Guardian* is significant, 'the UK based newspaper entitled *The Guardian* narrated a number of stories of trafficked girls which brought to light the dark side of the green gold called tea industry. One of the stories is about a young girl of 14 years old, Elaina Kujar. When the trafficker came knocking on the door of Elaina Kujar's hut on a tea plantation at the North-eastern end of Assam, she had just got back from school. Elaina wanted to be a nurse. Instead, she was about to lose four years of her life as a child slave. She recalled a horrific tale of child slavery. Her owner would sit next to her watching porn in the living room of his Delhi house, while she waited to sleep on the floor. She used to be molested by him almost every day. Elaina was in that Delhi house for one reason: her parents, who picked the world-famous Assam tea on an estate in Lakhimpur district, were paid so little they could not afford to keep her'.²⁸ The instance of Elaina Kujar as trafficked girls historically establish the fact that Adivasi woman witness such kind of gross domestic violence perpetuated by their economic conditions. Such instances are available in large numbers across the state as well as the country.

Narratives representing witch-Hunting and the society of Adivasi Woman labourers

Witch hunting and lynching are some of the aspects where the Adivasi women can be seen as the utmost sufferers. Witches are incorporated in the Adivasi belief system where incidents related to these are normalized. Witches are believed to bring calamity to the lives of Adivasi individual, family or the village by different means. As a practice, the witch seems to bundle at the corner of one household and people believe that the calamities will definitely occur in the family.²⁹ Bar-Pahri (for the Mundas) and Dangri Nad (for Oraons) are some of these evil spirits which are believed to be possessing the members of an Adivasi family. Amongst the evil spirits, Barda is believed to be a male spirit who always tries to capture women in the society.³⁰ It is also believed that during the death of a pregnant woman, she is buried outside the graveyard. She is believed to be a failure in meeting union with the ancestral spirits of the family tree. The witches are categorised as special categories well-excelled in performing dances, practicing magic spells, witchcraft etc.³¹ But things take a different direction when those Adivasi women practicing creativity are mistaken for witches under different social circumstances. In 2015, a group of Karbi people in Bhimajuli village of Biswanath district of Assam brutally murdered Poni Orang, an Adivasi woman of 63 years old when Anima Ronghangpi, a Karbi village quack spread the rumour that Poni is the cause of many deaths in the village (Karmakar).³² Besides, in another similar incident in Rongajan tea-estate in Tinsukia district of Assam, Aghani Ghatowar, a 50 year old Adivasi woman was branded as a 'witch' at a religious function. People rushed to her house and dragged her afterwards as a consequence of which she met a tragic death.³³ In Nagaon, two Adivasi women namely Salmi Gaur and Sagu Gaur met tragic death after accusations by their family relatives of polluting the village well by spreading insects and pesticides in water branding them as 'witches'. The relatives buried the two middle aged women alive in the well with mud and earth.³⁴ In an instance, one Adivasi couple names Sukra Kusua and Balamidna Tirkey living in the Doomni Tea-plantation of Baksa district in Assam was killed brutally by Surja Ekka. A per report, Suraj Ekka suspected the couple of sorcery and had allegation upon them for the ill health condition of his wife.³⁵

In the year 2019, Maloti Bhumij and Rajmoni Bhumij from Hooloonguri Tea-estate in Upper Assam were beaten by their fellow Adivasi Te-labourers suspecting them of witches.³⁶ In the year 2017, another Adivasi couple living in the Hahchara village of Doomdooma in Rinsukia district became victims of witch-hunting. Dilip Kisan and Sivaratri Karmakar were beaten to death after allegedly

torturing them for hours suspecting them of series of diseases in families living in that village.³⁷ In the year 2016, another Adivasi girl of 4 years old became the victim of black magic. The daughter of Hanuman Bhumij and Many Bhumij lost her phone and that made her father seek help of the sorcerer who in turn advised him to sacrifice his daughter. They allegedly kidnapped the girl and finally killed her whose body was found in the Ratanpur Tea-estate on 24th October, 2016.³⁸ Such instances historically establish woman as a commodity in the tea gardens.

Witch hunting in the Adivasi society is also associated with power relations in the family and the society at large. In this regard, the instigator is the *bej* or, the priest who is involved in a conspiracy against a particular woman who seems to be his competitor. Denial of sexual favour also fuels in the cause of witch hunting in large number of cases.³⁹ In an instance, it was Surat Modi who instigated the villagers to go against two Adivasi women under suspect of witch craft and bringing calamity to the village people but here the sexual motive controlled as the sole force behind to a great extent.⁴⁰ As a consequence, the male members of the family were killed earlier and the two women were brutally raped in a ditch at night and killed. This shows that behind witch hunting, sexual concerns are apparent to a great extent. D.P. Nath figures out the lack of state-owned medical facilities as marginalization of these people in the hands of the opportunistic priests and Kabiraj, Ojha, Bej etc. as traditional healers in the community.⁴¹ Amol Kumar Horo's fictional narrative *Daini Hotya* (Witch Hunting) is a historically significant narrative which re-historizes the cases of witch hunting through creation of literary landscapes. The narrative explores how the male instigator named Lutku Bej presents Kuili Burhi, the old Adivasi woman responsible for all sorts of diseases and deaths in the village which infuriates its inhabitants and finally leads to the murder of the old woman. Such narratives present the horrible representation of witch hunting as a historical case.

The Adivasi population is not free from the abundance of social, economic and political challenges in the state of Assam. Illiteracy, poverty and the isolation of the Adivasi population mostly prevail in the especially in the central and western part of the state, from the rest of the people as the basic factors behind the continuous prevalence of such practices.⁴² Women in the Adivasi society suffer thus in the hands of witch-hunting and such superstitious beliefs. In such context, it would not be wrong to say that Adivasi woman population in Assam tea-plantations has long been in the position of the 'Other' where they have not been assigned any space historically as vivid through the narratives discussed here. The problem of incorporating the perspective of Adivasi woman in the domain of power lacks social understating and serious strategic associations.

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The emergence of the people's war in India: myth or reality?

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Abstract

The 'Great Mutiny' lasted from May 10, 1857 till April 1859. In certain aspects, the fighting during this period in South Asia approximated the paradigm of a people's war. All the elements characterising a people's war were present in varying degrees in the conflagration of the Mutiny. The East India Company's wars with the indigenous powers between 1770 and 1849 were similar to the European 18th century wars. But, combat during 1857 represented a lethal increase as regards scope, intensity and impact on society. Thus, this paper tries to examine how far the model of people's war which has been developed by the historians in the context of European and American warfare is tenable for India during the Mutiny of 1857.

Key words: *Revolt of 1857, People's War, Nature of Warfare, Rumour.*

The 19th century witnessed the beginning of a new form of warfare. The 'limited war' of the 18th century was replaced by the 'people's war' in the mid-19th century which resulted to 'total war' during the first half of the 20th century. The wars of 18th century Europe were of limited liability fought without any moral or ideological issues. Such kind of warfare comprised conflicts between the armies raised, equipped and fed by bureaucratized monarchies. While waging warfare, such armies made clear distinctions between the armed forces and the civilians.¹ However, all these restrictions were wiped away in the era of people's war. According to Stig Forster and Jorg Nagler, it was the people's armies that conducted the people's war. In such armies, citizens became soldiers and the

home front was also mobilised to support the war effort. The watertight compartmentalization between the home front and the battlefield vanished gradually and public opinion asserted an important role in shaping the conduct of such wars.² Soldiers were motivated more by ideology rather than cash or monetary considerations. Eric Robson said that unlike the 19th century wars, the revolutionary wars of France and the US marked the beginning of the ideological war which reached its zenith in the two world wars of the 20th century.³

In 1789, the French Revolution generated the military philosophy known as 'the nation in arms'. According to this idea, a state with popular sovereignty was stronger than an absolutist monarchy because its people willingly contributed their blood in defence of the country they considered their own and this marked the rise of the people's war. It is to be noted that, people's war in this context refers to interstate warfare and hence is different from the Maoist concept of people's war which involves the political mobilisation of certain classes by the communist party for conducting guerrilla and conventional warfare against the ruling classes. Alexander Llewellyn asserts that in 1857 both the sides aimed at the complete destruction of the enemy. Moreover, the British during the Revolt fought in India with greater ruthlessness than was evident in the Crimean war of the same decade.⁴

It has been observed that instances of prisoners being put to death by the East India Company's troops were few before 1857. But, execution of prisoners became common during the campaigns conducted between 1857 and 1859 in India. On May 20, 1857, the 55th Infantry Regiment rebelled near Peshawar and Colonel John Nicholson and his forces killed 150 of them and captured another 100. Of these prisoners, 40 were blown away from the mouth of the guns and the rest were hanged.⁵ As the Company's troops advanced towards Lucknow in November 1857, one British participant wrote, 'During the day when we were encamped, I saw several men hanged, without trial, by the soldiers, who had been taken with arms in their hands'. On January 29, 1858, when Hugh Rose's Central India Field troops occupied the Fort of Rahatgarh, about 84 rebels were captured and 24 of them were executed.⁶ Both the rebels and the Company's soldiers attacked non-combatants and private property in an urge for revenge. For the rebels, the prime targets were the white people, their houses and business enterprises. On May 4, 1857, Archdale Wilson wrote to his wife from Meerut, 'The 85 men (3rd Cavalry) who refused the cartridges are to be tried in lump, they have taken now to burning bungalows. Last night they burned an empty bungalow and that of the Q M Sergeant and some days ago a picket's stable, and one of the men's huts.'⁷

One of the British officers who fought in the 1857 Mutiny, calculated that in the North West Provinces, about one-fifth of the European inhabitants were killed by the mutineers.⁸ In Delhi also, the mutineers killed the Europeans and destroyed and burnt the Delhi bank where Europeans kept their money. Such kind of incidents continued in the areas like Allahabad, Lucknow and Jhansi. On June 5, 1857, the 37th Infantry Regiment attacked the Indigo factories of the British Planters and the houses of the British officers at Jaunpur.⁹

To challenge the legitimacy of the Company Raj all the symbols of state institutions were attacked. The Rebels attacked everything that stood for the 'west' not only because of their symbolic values but also for the fact that they were aware of the military advantages of destroying advanced dual use of technology products of the Raj. Military operations during both the 1857 Mutiny and the Civil War of the US were characterised by the use of field telegraph.¹⁰ Before its invention, messengers on horses carried order and instructions to their destinations. During the second Anglo-Maratha War (1803-1805), letters written by General G. Lake, campaigning in north India took about 12 days and sometimes even more to reach the Governor-General at Fort William. Thanks to the electrical telegraph, the authorities at Calcutta and the field commanders operating in north India during 1857 could communicate with each other within a few hours. On May 30, 1857, while camping at Karnal, Colonel Keith Young wrote to his wife, 'The telegraph is invaluable. The signaling apparatus goes on with us this afternoon, and will be set up at our new halting place, Garunda, so that when we arrive at our ground we shall know at once what is going on at Ambala'.¹¹

The Rebels attacked the telegraph lines not only to harm the British but to use that technology to the best of their advantages. But most unfortunate was the fact that, both the rebels and the British inflicted violence on the civilians. J H Sylvester, a medical officer with the army stated in his diary on 25th October, 1857 that the native soldiers of 86th Artillery were frightfully drunk having seized the native liquor shops and then commenced looting and killing everything black, old men, young women and children. He saw a room full of dead women with children sucking at their breasts.¹² On the other hand, when James Neill with the Madras Fusiliers marched from Benaras to Allahabad, he ruthlessly executed 6,000 Indians. The men killed were shopkeepers, artisans, peddlers and porters. They were hanged at the market places or on the branches of tree. The objective was to frighten the people into submission and docility. There were many instances during 1857 similar to Neill.

The Indian collaborators of the Raj were also targeting of rebel attack. Resaldar Mowla Baksh of Ramgar Irregular Cavalry refused to join the mutineers despite threats as well as inducements from the rebels. Due to his tact and leadership, his division remained loyal to the British during the Mutiny. But in retaliation, the rebels burnt his house and looted his property.¹³ Those Indians manning the non-military branches of the Company state were also attacked. In Jhansi, the Bengali's became the special target of the rebels as they were manning the clerical establishment of the Company state.¹⁴

For survival both the East India Company's troops as well as the rebels looted the civilians, a feature which was absent in the pre-1857 warfare in India. On June 12, 1857, the situation was desperate for the rebels inside Delhi as they were left with only three days provision. So, the rebel soldiers resorted to looting the merchants and traders of Delhi. As a result, on June 18, 1857, Bahadur Shah Zafar issued an order that looting by the troops inside Delhi will not be tolerated. Those soldiers who indulged in pillage and plundering were ordered to camp outside the city of Delhi.¹⁵ During the Anglo-Sikh and Anglo-Maratha Wars, only rarely did the Company's troops resort to pillaging. But 1857 was an exception in this regard. Raffi Gregorian has shown that after recapturing Delhi, the Company's soldiers engaged in looting Delhi with unprecedented ruthlessness motivated by a spirit of retribution.¹⁶

Unlike previous conflicts in South Asia, women became an integral part of warfare. The horror of warfare during the Mutiny also touched the white women. On the other hand, the emergence of people's war allowed the women in India to come out of *purdah* in order to direct public affairs. The participation of women in warfare in India before 1857 was very limited. The Nizam of Hyderabad had two battalions of female sepoy of 1000 each. In 1795, they took part in the battle of Khardah against the Marathas. In 1857, the most famous female warlord to emerge on the Indian side was Wajid Ali's Begum Hazrat Mahal. In 1856, when Wajid Ali Shah was deposed by the British and left Lucknow for Kolkata, she remained in Awadh. Her ambition was to make Awadh independent of the British and to place her son Bajris Qadr on the throne. Hazrat Mahal got her son's enthronement legitimised by the rebel government in Delhi. In Awadh the chief centre of Rebellion was Lucknow, where the rebels under the leadership of the Begum went on a strategic defensive. Hazrat Mahal used to hold *darbar* where she provoked the chieftains and the soldiers to fight the British with vigour. Though Hazrat Mahal was not a battlefield commander, she was a first-grade strategist and a good administrator. Due to the heavy pressure exerted by the Company's troops, in March 1859, the Begum's forces of almost

50000 soldiers were compelled to cross river Gandak and move into the Terai region of Nepal.¹⁷The Begum's force suffered horrendously from disease and inadequate food. Due to pressure from the British, Maharaja Jung Bahadur refused political asylum to the Begum and instead gave her an ultimatum to lay down arms. But she never surrendered and ultimately died in Nepal in 1879.¹⁸

Another memorable women character of 1857 was the Rani of Jhansi. The mutineers at Jhansi received Rs. 35,000 in cash, two elephants and five horses from the Rani. She also raised 14,000 men and two guns which were hitherto buried within the fort to escape the scrutiny of the British. Ultimately, she died in the battlefield fighting bravely against the British. Along with elite women, there was also spontaneous involvement of women at the subaltern level. On April 30, Hugh Rose wrote as regards the siege of Jhansi, 'The Women were seen working in the batteries and carrying ammunition'.¹⁹ But women did not get a fair deal from the men in arms. However, in the 1857 Uprising, few women actually took position on the firing line. The women played a very important role in strengthening morale, sustaining the home front and in vital non-combat jobs associated with armies, *i.e.*, providing food, ammunitions and other logistical back up.

In people's war, most of the participants risk their lives not for tangible incentives but for ideological reasons. Along with the secular ideology of nationalism, religion played an important role in egging the participants to participate in the war front. C. A. Bayly writes that at least in some portions of India, the Rebellion assumed the proportions of a patriotic revolt. In mid- 19th century India, a complex compound between religion, caste and racial feelings gave rise to some kind of anti-white men nationalism among major portions of Hindus and Muslims in north India. The rebels to a great extent relied on mobilising the Indians on the issue of religion. The civilian bureaucrat George Clerk commented before the Peel Commission that religious fanaticism played an important role in the 1857 Rebellion.²⁰ The rebels did not fight merely for professional pride or the lure of monetary gains. Those who joined the side of the rebels had an ideology to fight and die for. The use of religion as a motivating ideology was partly spontaneous. On June 6, 1857, a group of 50 *sowars* and 300 *sepoys* led by Bakshi Ali, the jail *daroga* in Jhansi raised the cry of *deen ki jai* (victory of religion).²¹ Lt. Colonel Thomas L Harington remarked that the rebel soldiers occasionally used religion to legitimise their grievances.²² The rebels used religion to legitimise their actions within the wider Indian society and the Indian leaders used this card with ruthlessness. The Rani of Jhansi utilised this issue of religion for gaining recruits to her standard. She used religious mendicants to fan the embers of religious

hatred among the people.²³ Nana Sahib also played the religious card.²⁴ Actually, the rebel leaders painted the conflict as a religious- cum racial war to motivate their followers. Besides the strategic objective of using religion to mobilise the masses for a struggle against the British, the religion was used for immediate tactical advantages also. The rebels used religious symbols for ensuring desertion within the Indian Military Contingents loyal to the East India Company. In many places, the rebels projected the idea that they were fighting for Islam against the heretics.

In the 19th century India, caste was a very serious and sensitive issue, and for the Hindus, this was associated with their religion. So, when the rumours were rampant, the Indians perceived the struggle of 1857 as a 'caste war'. When the cartridge issue came into light, the people think that Company government intended forcibly to make them Christians. Rumour being the principal means of communication played an important role in mobilisation of the insurgents. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes that the mindset of the illiterate peasants is influenced by the phono centrism of a tradition where 'sruti' (that which is heard) has the greatest authority. Her observations are all the more applicable to the peasants of mid-19th century India.²⁵

Generally, in times of trouble, people tend to believe in rumour. At that time, another rumour was circulating among the men that white troops were killing Indian women in an act of vengeance.²⁶ The Begum of Awadh deliberately spread rumours in order to encourage last ditch resistance among the rebels. As the military situation worsened, the Begum's followers spread the rumour among the inhabitants of Awadh that the British would not only disarm the populace but would also deprive them of their caste and religion.²⁷

The British were not free from the evil effects of rumour. The terrible anxieties of the British officers and civilians which made them susceptible to rumour raised their passion. In mid- May 1857, a rumour circulated among the British inhabitants of Lucknow that the rebels were exposing the dead bodies of the British soldiers in the streets of Delhi instead of giving a Christian burial.²⁸ Rumour was also circulating far away from the battlefields. It resulted the upsurge of a kind of raw passion among the white civilians far removed from the scene of carnage. On May 16, 1857, a British woman residing in Lucknow noted in her diary, 'You can only rule these Asiatics by fear; if they are not afraid, they snap their fingers at you'.²⁹

One of the sources of rumour among the inhabitants of India was the free press. In 1857, the press, by modern day standards, showed some signs of behaving irresponsibly. In May 1857, the papers published in Persian language

encourage the Muslim inhabitants of the city to fight the *feranghis*.³⁰ Interestingly, even in the US, newspapers of the period, which especially enjoyed a wide circulation among the military camps fanned emotions of the citizens of both the Confederacy and the Union.

Military manpower mobilisation of the British

As regards the highly intense warfare during 1857-59 in India, the level of popular participation in the subcontinent was much less than the American Civil War. Just before the outbreak, there were 3,11,000 sepoys, *sowars* and gunners commanded by 5,362 British officers and only 40,000 European soldiers.³¹ The estimate also includes the mounted police raised by the government as they also participated actively infighting the insurgents. In May 1857, the most exclusive Bengal Army units were deployed west of river Sutlej, in Punjab the British had 38,500 soldiers (12,000 European troops, 16,000 Punjab Infantry, 9,000 Punjab Cavalry and 1,500 Gurkhas).³² The Bengal Army units in Punjab either mutinied or were disarmed and the British raised troops from Multan, Ferozepur etc. In 1857, the 1st and 2nd irregular Sikh Cavalry regiments were raised from the ex-Khalsa soldiers who were disbanded after the second Anglo-Sikh War. Between 1857 and 1859, the number of Indian soldiers in the Punjab Frontier Force (PFF) rose from 25,000 to 52,446.³³

On April 1, 1858, the loyal elements of the Bengal Army and the PFF comprised 80,053 Indians (1,715 in the artillery, 209 sappers and miners, 11,453 cavalry and the rest infantry). Of them there were only 8,818 low caste Hindus and 572 Christians. The Rajput and the Brahmin personnel were drastically reduced to 8,526 and 10,363 respectively. The biggest portion of manpower came from Punjab.³⁴ During the Mutiny, the size of the Madras and Bombay armies did not register any quantum leap. The increase in the number of European soldiers of the Bombay Army between 1857 and 1859 was significant but not massive. By April 1858, there were 96,000 British soldiers in the subcontinent backed up by large number of loyal Indian troops.³⁵

After the recapture of Lucknow in March 1858, the rebels spread all over north India and conducted sporadic low-level warfare against the British. The guerrilla war continued till April 8, 1860, when Raja Man Singh betrayed Tantia Topi to the British. The prolonged attritional struggle forced the British to mobilise additional manpower. Marginal groups were allowed to serve in the armies during the 1857 Uprising. As the high caste personnel of the Bengal Army turned against the Company, the British compelled to mobilise low castes. In Awadh, where the anti-British bias among the high caste was most intense, the British raised several levies mainly composed of middle and low castes. One

such levy was the Aligarh Levy which was composed of Anglo-Indians and low castes.³⁶ Another low caste force was the Fatehgarh Levy. The Awadh Police force was composed of Ahirs, Passis, Kurmis, Bhungies, Chamars, Lodh, Koree, Dhannock and Bhauts.³⁷ The British also mobilised 'wild tribes' during the emergency. As early as 1825, the British had raised a Bheel corps for policing the hilly tracts of central India. In 1857, the British raised the 2nd Bheel corps composed of 1000 Bheels. It was used against the mutinous troops of Sindhia.³⁸ However, the total number of low castes and tribes inducted in the irregular units of the British-Indian Army was much lower than the number of regular soldiers.

The British also depended on the armies of the Indian Princess who remained loyal to the Company. The princess ruled over a large chunk of territory and the total number of inhabitants under their rule numbered 40,000,000.³⁹ The Jammu Contingent of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Kashmir and the Subsidiary Force of Hyderabad did good service for the British during the Mutiny. The army of the neighbouring friendly princely state of Nepal was also put in the field against the rebels.

The British also ordered several Indian chieftains and landed magnates to raise armed men for maintaining law and order on behalf of the Company. For example, Saifullah Khan, a Muslim gentleman in the Rajput state of Karauli in central India raised 600 matchlock men for aiding the British.⁴⁰ However, the number of such informal forces raised by the British was much less than the size of the regular units at the disposal of the Company.

Military manpower mobilization of the Rebels

The rebels depended on those sepoy and *sowars* who had mutinied and also raised men from the territory which they briefly controlled. A rough estimate of the sepoy and sowars in the rebel camp could be made. The Bengal Army's cavalry regiments recruited Muslims from Awadh and Rohilakhand and the infantry regiments were composed of high caste Hindus from Bihar and Awadh. Very few middle castes like Ahirs were in the Bengal Army. Low caste and Eurasians were not allowed to entry.⁴¹ The *Bhumihars* from Bihar started joining the Bengal Army infantry from the late 18th century. Most of the Brahmins of the Bengal Army infantry came from Baiswara and Banoda districts of Awadh.⁴² According to P.J.O Taylor, about 100,000 Indian soldiers rebelled. By July 1858, due to death and desertion, only 15,000 of them remained.⁴³ Stephen P Cohen remarked that out of 1,30,000 Indian soldiers of the Bengal Army, 70,000 joined the revolt, 30,000 deserted or were disarmed and 30,000 remained loyal to the Company.⁴⁴

Armies of the several Indian princely states also joined the rebels. For instance, the Gwalior Contingent which comprised seven infantry regiments, two cavalry regiments and five artillery battalions also joined the rebels. The Mehidpur, Malwa, Bhopal and Kotah Contingents along with Bharatpur Cavalry revolted during 1857. The rebel leaders also raised several levies of armed men. The total force of the Begum of Awadh which crossed river Gandak was estimated as numbering 40,000 men.⁴⁵ However, no accurate estimate of the princely units and levies in the service of the rebels could be made due to lack of records.

As regards the casualty, the Mutiny of 1857 witnessed much less casualties compared to the contemporary European wars. During the Mutiny, about 2,034 British soldiers died in action and another 8,978 died from disease. The number of civilians and Indian soldiers killed exceeded 1,00,000.⁴⁶ The rebels mobilised a larger force compared to the Company but suffered greater casualties. Lack of proper leadership was a serious problem for the rebels along with inferior hardware. Most of the Indian officers of the Bengal Army units which mutinied provided leadership to the rebels. In the Bengal Army the sepoys were promoted to officer ranks on the basis of seniority. A minimum 35 years of service were required for getting promotion to the rank of *jemadar* and about 13 years' service as a *jemadar* was required for promoting to the rank of *subadar*. So, the average age of the *jemadars* and *subadars* were about 65 and 70. Because of the age issue, most of the Indian officers were infirm and not capable for effective leadership.⁴⁷ Moreover, a huge percentage of the Indian officers were illiterate. They did not have to pass any test or trial for a promotion from a lower grade to a higher one. Hence, they were unable to lead the rebels in a proper way.

The outbreak of 1857 also witnessed the rise of several civilian leaders among the Indians. The best commander on the rebel side was Tantia Tope. His real name was Ramchandra Pandurang and a brahmin aged 41. He was a companion of Nana Saheb but had no military experience or training. As a result, he was no match for the professionals of the Company. The inability of the rebel leaders in grasping tactical complexities resulted in the military defeat of the rebels in most of the battles. In contrast, the British officers were truly professional. Professionalism consisted of expertise in the application of organised violence. They had entered commissioned ranks through education and training in military academies and their career advancement depended on acquiring further knowledge in their profession. The British officers in terms of technical expertise and education in the theories of warfare were far above the Indian rebel leaders.

In the end, it can be said that, violence inflicted on each other and the non-combatants and civil society had an instrumental function by both the rebels

and the British. By doing this, both the colonial state and the rebel regime tried to shore up their own war effort and weaken that of their enemy. This kind of large-scale violence was sometimes necessary to destroy the financial and demographic potential of the enemy and also affect their morale. So, there was nothing uniquely colonial about the savagery against non-combatants displayed by both the British and the rebels during 1857-59.

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1857 uprisings in Haryan : A case study of Ahirwal regions

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Abstract

After the decline of Mughal rule we see the expansion of British Empire in India. Through different policies Britishers established their hegemony in different parts of India. The people of India revolted against this hegemony in 1857. The revolt which started from Meerut and Ambala on 10th May 1857 soon spread to different parts of India. This research paper highlights the center if 1857 uprising in Haryana in general and Ahirwal regions in particular. The leaders of Ahirwal regions who revolted against the British authority have been highlighted in the paper. The Ahirwal Regions with a great history during the 1857 uprising still remain a strong centre for the nationalist inspiration of the contemporary world.

Key words: Uprising, Ahirwal, Mutiny, Haryana, South-East Punjab, Empire, Hegemony.

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 a gradual decline of Mughal rule can be traced. Soon after the battle of Plassey in 1757 we see the establishment of British rule in India. The transition from Mughal rule to the establishment of British rule was not a smooth transition. There were various instances of resistance to the new British power, the greatest being the uprisings of 1857. The establishment of British rule is seen by the historians as the extension of British Empire in India. The events of 1857 aroused passions both among participants and observers up to a new level. For historians the revolt of 1857 has been a cornucopia.¹ The 1857 uprisings which could be seen in northern, central, western and in some parts of South India has been discussed by the scholars under different names. The British historians have tried to lessen the importance of 1857 uprisings by simply calling it the sepoy mutiny.² Some historians called it a 'popular revolt' of the Indian population. Term 'Uprising' has been used by William Dalrymple.³ According to

Eric Stokes, 1857 was not one movement but many.⁴ Every aspect of this history has been contested, re-imagined and re-invented in the last 150 years. The uprising was interpreted as a Muslim conspiracy to restore the Mughal Empire, which was immediately countered in a passionate pamphlet written in 1858.⁵ Historian Peter Robb considered it primarily a mutiny of the sepoys, later joined by the unruly mob, taking advantage of the chaos and disorder in the administration. On the other side Benjamin Disraeli and Karl Marx saw in it the elements of 'military mutiny.'⁶ In 1864 John Kaye wrote the official history of 1857, *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857-58*. James Fitzjames Stephen, the conservative utilitarian ideologue of the empire, immediately used the book in defence of the empire, and declared that no one in the country 'had in him any power of improvement or any wish for it.'⁷ Hence they needed the enlightening touch of the Raj! According to historians Charles Ball, John Kaye and George Trevelyan the history of 1857 uprising in itself became the history of its suppression, a history of the valour and courage of the English race and the glory of the empire.⁸ Historian Tony Ballantyne has highlighted how indigenous Maori population in far-off New Zealand were being told the stories of the suppression of mutiny in India, to pass onto them the possible consequences of futile resistance to the empire.⁹

In the words of British historians the 'sepoy mutiny' was 'wholly unpatriotic and selfish.with no native leadership and no popular support'.¹⁰ On the other hand, Indian patriotic Veer D. Savarkar called it as the 'First War of Independence.'¹¹ This argument of Savarkar inducted the history of 1857 into the narrative of nationalism. According to Jyotirmaya Sharma the word 'first' was a later day interpolation. The term-'first War of Independence' has been officially endorsed on the 150th anniversary of the uprising. According to the media reports the endorsement has not gone without contestation in the Indian Parliament.¹²

The 19th century uprising in Haryana

This research highlights the 1857 revolt in Ahirwal Regions of Haryana. The 19th Century was an epoch making social, political and economic upheaval in the Indian history. Peasants, artisans, feudal lords and local rulers displayed their skills and fought bravely against the British rule. Some religious symbols like Wahabi's also played a significant role in this century. The present day Haryana was part of South East Punjab during 1857 uprising. This region was very close to Delhi which was one of the main centers of 1857 uprising. The British authority was resisted through different popular revolts of which 1857 was very important. This revolt spread in different parts of Haryana such as in Delhi regions-Delhi Proper, Sonapat; Panipat Regions-Panipat, Karnal, Jalmana; Thanesar Regions-Thanesar, Ladwa; Hisar Regions- Bhattu, Hansi, Rania, Loharu; Ambala

Regions-Ambala, Rupar, Jagadhari; Rohtak Regions- Kharkhaudah, Sampla, Dojana, Dadri, Jhajjar and Ahirwal regions- Rewari, Narnaul, Mahendragarh, Mewat, Palwal, Faridabad, Ballabgarh, Pataudi, Farrukh Nagar and some part of Gurgaon.

The primary sources dealing with the popular uprising of 19th century in South East Punjab are kept in National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi, Punjab State Archives Chandigarh, Punjab State Archives Patiala, Haryana State Archives Panchkula and its Regional Repository- Rohtak, Hisar, Gurgaon and Ambala; and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library New Delhi. Among the important local tracts are- Rao Man Singh's book 'Abhir Kuldepika', Subedar Vaidya Shivdhan Singh Yadav's work- 'Yadav Parivar'. K.C. yadav's works such as- 'Undoing the Bondage; A Study of Life of Rao Tula Ram Hero of 1857 and Ahirwal ka Itihaas throws light on the history this region. The work of Griffin and Massey, James Mill, John Kaye's work- History of Sepoy War 1857-58 Vol. I and History of Indian Mutiny Vol. IV written by Kaye and Malleson, the Rajas of Punjab written by L.H. Griffin are of great help. Dr. Boodh Prakash's work- Glimpses of Haryana, The Punjab and Delhi in 1857 written by Cave Brownie, Caste and Tribes of Punjab written by Denzil Ibbetson are important sources to know the history of this part of India. Wahabi movement in India written by Qeyamuddin Ahmed, Elementary aspects of Peasant Insurgency by Ranjit Guha, Our Indian Musalmans written by W.W. Hunter, etc. are invaluable sources for writing the history of 19th century. In the political, economic and social history of this region the period of 19th century marks a great momentous. The changes witnessed during this period had far reaching consequences.

The Ahirwal regions and the uprising of 1857

The sound of uprising in Haryana regions had begun to be heard from the month of April, its full fury was seen on 10th May 1857, about nine hours before its occurrence Meerut.¹³ The sepoys stationed at Ambala Cantonment- the 60 NI, 5 NI and 4 LC- were the first to blare the bugle of revolt. Soon the revolt spread into the different parts of present day Haryana. There were many great warriors who took active part in the 1857 uprising at national level. Among them were Bahadur Shah II and Bakht Khan in Delhi; Begum Hazrat Mahal and Birjis Kadar in Lucknow; Lakshmi Bai in Jhansi; Ahmadullah Shah in Rohilkhand; Babu Kunwar Singh in Jagdishpur (Araha, Bihar). In Haryana regions Sadruddin in Mewat, adjacent to Ahirwal was very active. Among the greatest leaders during 1857 uprising in Ahirwal Region were Rao Tula Ram, Rao Gopal Dev and Raja Nahar Singh. The people of Farrukhnagar were led by their Nawab, Ahmed Ali Khan. Similarly the people of Rohtak, especially the Ranghars led by Sabar Khan

of Rohtak raised the standard of revolt. The Jats, Rajputs, Ahirs, Gujars and others cooperated with them. In Jhajjar area General Abdus Samad Khan, a close relative and commander of the forces of the Nawab, Abdur Rehman Khan organized the movement with the help of latter. Prince Mohammad Azim Beg led the people in Hisar regions. Hukam Chand and Munir Beg were the leaders of the movement. In Sirsa Nawab Nur Samad Khan held the standard of revolt high. The sepoy regiment stationed in the district also took part in the movement. The 4th Haryana LI, and their comrades effected massacre of Europeans at Hansi and Hisar and marched to Delhi. Same situation prevailed in the districts of Panipat (Karnal), Kurukshetra (Thanesar) and Ambala. The towns along the GT road, and a few jagirdari estates remained inactive due to heavy presence of British authorities. The chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Karnal and other petty jagirdars remained loyal to the Britishers.¹⁴

Tula Ram's ancestors were great people in Ahirwal during 16th century.¹⁵ We found a great deal of legends and traditional account pertaining to them.¹⁶ The first historical reference to this family is found in 'Abir kuldepika' that a scion of this family, Ruda Singh obtained a jungle in Jagir near Rewari from the Mughal emperor Humayun in the year 1555 AD for his meritorious service during the latter's encounter with Surs.¹⁷ Ruda Singh settled at a village (Bolni) 12 k.m. south-east of Rewari. He cleared the jungles and created the environment for a progressive village settlement.¹⁸ Later members of this family worked very hard and created a conducive atmosphere in which Rao Tula Ram was born on December 9, 1825. He was the only son and third child of his family. When Tula Ram was five year old, his mother Rani Gian Kaur, started giving him rudimentary lessons in Hindi reading and writing, in the 7th year he was entrusted to the care of the family tutor Ghulam Jilani to give the child lessons in Urdu and Persian and other Social Sciences.¹⁹ Tula Ram lost his father named Rao Puran Singh, in the last week of November 1839. After this incident whole Ahirwal Region had a touch of grief and sorrow.²⁰ By 1856 Rao Tula Ram got the paternal *gaddi* at this moment of time he felt insecure without a fort. He constructed a strong mud fort around his palace and courts. He enlisted a small force comprising footmen and cavalry. The united efforts of Tula Ram and Gopal Dev, made their age, an age of plenty and splendour. Dr. K.C. Yadav calls him the Shah Jahan of Ahirwal.

Rao Tula Ram played a veiled but active role in the destruction of the British in 1857. He became very popular not only in India but also in Iran, Russia and Afghanistan and other parts of Asia. On hearing the news of outbreak or revolts at Meerut and Delhi,²¹ Tula Ram took no time in deciding to take side against British. Emperor Bahadur Shah of Delhi sent a shuqqa bearing His

Majesty's signature to Tula Ram asking for help.²² After this incident, Tula Ram became very active. On May 17, he went to Tehsil headquarters at Rewari with four to five hundred followers and deposed the Tehsildar and Thanedar. The cash in the Tehsil treasury amounting to Rs 8364 and 27 paise was impounded by him.²³ All government buildings came under his possession and he took over the governance of the parganas of Rewari, Bhora Kalan, and Shahjahanpur.²⁴ He declared himself independent and took the title of King. In the beginning of 1857 there were disturbance in Gurgaon district including Ahirwal Regions.²⁵ In the middle of May the British rule came to an end in the Gurgaon district. Mr. Ford, the Deputy Commissioner fled away to Mathura along with other European officers. Those nationalists who were responsible for this act, they failed to establish a strong and sound government here. Consequently rowdy and goonda elements raised their heads in the region. But the Pargana of Rewari was well under the control of Rao Tula Ram. A very high degree of law and order was maintained by him, which was even appreciated by Mr. Ford, Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon. He recommended Tula Ram to be saved from public ordeal if he surrendered to British, despite his being 'a leader and the prime instigator of the rebellion in this part of the Haryana', simply for the reason that 'society received many benefits even when that rebel was in arms against the government'.²⁶ During this time there were lots of disturbance in Mewat and Farukhnagar areas. The Meos had created problems in Sohna, Tauru, Firozpur, Punahana and Nuh.²⁷ Tula Ram gave a befitting reply to the trouble makers. He also gave monetary help to the people as long as he was in the power.²⁸ He sent a financial help of Rs 45000 through General Bakhat Khan ten days before the Delhi fall off.²⁹ Tula Ram also paid nazars to Emperor Bahadur Shah regularly. He supplied the Delhi forces with the large quantities of commodities they needed. He also supplied grains for the rebel forces at Delhi.³⁰ Tula Ram was so powerful during 1857 revolt that even after the fall of Delhi, British officials was afraid to re-enter in Gurgaon. After the fall of Delhi in September 1857 British forces tried to regain the Haryana regions but the supporters of Tula Ram were always ready to face British officials. The Britishers reached Rewari on 6th October, 1857 and found that the chief Tula Ram had evacuated the fort which was armed with 12 guns and mortars all in ready position.³¹ In the main battle which was fought on November 16, 1857 at Nasibpur-Narnaul, he lost his more than 5000 soldiers.³² Commander Jerard and Captain Wallis were killed by him in the battle field. Later he tried to meet Tatya Tope, but due to latter's arrest by Britishers he left India in December, 1859. He tried to establish contacts with Czar of Russia and rulers of Iran and Afghanistan to demand support to fight a war. Captain Hodson, who was part of British army

found Tula Ram very clever. He wrote to his wife that Tula Ram had extensive preparation and had a large workshop for the preparation of military equipments of all kind, guns, gun-carriages, gun-powder and materials of all kind. According to him Tula Ram had been the soul of the region, if Britishers would not have recaptured the area. He further informed that had our empire fallen, Tula Ram would have mastered all surrounding villages and districts and probably extended his power on all sides and formed his 'Raj' like that of Patiala, Jhind and others.³³ Tula Ram was also an inspiration for the rising people in Rajasthan and other parts of the region. He died at Kabul on 23rd September, 1863.

Conclusion

The uprising of 1857 was suppressed by the British superior force. Hindu-Muslim unity prevailed throughout the uprising. The Nawabs of Jhajjar, Farrukhnagar and Raja of Ballabgarh were hanged. Even though the nationalists were not successful in regaining self-rule, this uprising became an inspiration for the future Indian National Movement. The leaders like Rao Tula Ram who stood with the Indian masses are really the makers of new India in general and Haryana in particular. In spite of limited resources he tried to organize a strong uprising against the Britishers in Ahirwal Regions. During this uprising all symbols of British Raj such as district office, tehsil office, railways, police-stations etc. came under people's attack. Symbols of imperialism were attacked to dismantle the hegemony of British Raj. He raised the flag of revolt against the British on 17 May, 1857 and kept it fluttering, through thick and thin, till his last breath. He not only obliterated every vestige of the British rule from Ahirwal Regions of Haryana but also helped the rebel forces fighting in the historic city of Delhi with men, money and material. The 1857 uprising started with the sepoys, who were mainly Indian subjects, soon the Indian natives took over the leadership. The main communities who participated in the movement were Ahirs, Rajputs, Jats, Gujjars and low castes. This movement shows a perfect unity between Hindus and Muslims. Although movement was crushed by British administration, it created the base on which the future struggles against the imperialist forces was to take place. The Ahirwal Regions with a great history during the 1857 uprising still remain a strong centre for the nationalist inspiration of the contemporary world.

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M.S.Randhawa: A Great son of soil

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Abstract

This paper discusses about M.S. Randhawa's efforts for Punjab advancements and related areas. An attempt has been made to unfold the efforts of M.S.Randhawa for the promotion of Punjabi Culture. As an administrator, he became an inspiration for Punjab's all over development. This paper intends to focus on his role in building up an environment conducive to the appreciation and encouragement of rural life and cultural life of Punjab how through his position as an administrator he extended his role to support politician and in his individual capacity. His main objective was to broaden the minds of the people to give an inspiration to the people to promote the cultural and rural of Punjab.

Keywords: *Culture Heritage, Villages Life, Agriculture, landscape schemes all over Punjab, Museum of Rural Life in Punjab.*

The study has been based on primary, secondary and contemporary sources to evaluate the topic of research. Primary sources like Government reports, Census report, Journals, Newspaper were used to collect and gather information about M.S. Randhawa's activities of that time. Personal diaries and other source material such as Literature available in various libraries and archives in India were also used to cover various facets of the protagonist. Apart from it, an important source used was the *Letters written by M.S. Randhawa* in his different administrative capacities to his contemporaries reflecting upon various issues of public. They bring to life the administrative structure prevailing at that time and how it was responsive to the grievances and the problems of the people. It is a reflection on the painstaking efforts made by M.S. Randhawa for the beautification of Punjab. The secondary sources in the form of available literature in Punjabi and English written by various authors also are used.

Introduction

M.S. Randhawa is considered as one of the makers of the modern Punjab. He was born on the midnight of 23-24 September, 1908 to Mata Bachint Kaur and Tehsildar Sher Singh Randhawa in Zira, District Ferozepur, where his father was posted, though his parents came from an affluent family belonging to the village of Bodal in Hoshiarpur district.¹ S.Randhawa was born in a peasant family. He loved the farmers from depth of his soul and yearned to see them prosper and live in good houses in congenial environment. The most important step taken by M.S.Randhawa to modern Punjab.² He had experienced the hardships of rural life in his village Bodal in Hoshiarpur.³ In 1934 he was selected in the prestigious Indian Civil Services (ICS)⁴ and from there he started his career as an administrative officer and became the great builder of modern Punjab.

After successfully completing the capitol project, M.S.Randhawa was given the responsibility of setting up the first Agricultural University in Punjab. Due to his interest, he was instrumental in setting up Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana with the help of Partap Singh Kairon, Chief Minister of Punjab at that time. M.S.Randhawa was appointed as the founding Vice Chancellor of Punjab Agricultural University and served in that capacity till 1976. Most of the ornamental trees we find in Punjab were planted after M.S.Randhawa took over as Vice-Chancellor of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana and started landscape service in 1968. M.S.Randhawa used to see everything in proper order in University. He got designed nameplates and even frames for displaying calendars in the offices from the University architects. Nameplates of shady and flowering trees were also fixed on the trunks of tree for identification.

In 1968, Lachhman Singh Gill became the Chief Minister of Punjab. He had a slender majority and knew that he would not last long. M.S.Randhawa had known him since 1947 and had admiration for his integrity and courage. He came to M.S.Randhawa for advice and asked if M.S.Randhawa could tell him with some scheme that could make an impact on the rural people in short time.⁵ M.S.Randhawa told him that he should lay aside sophisticated schemes and should put all the available resources in a crash programme for constructing rural links road, which would transform the economy of villages, which remained primitive because they were cut off from the markets by a couple of kilometres of dirt road.⁶

Lachhman Singh Gill, the Chief Minister of Punjab was thoroughly convinced with the sound advice and launched a crash programme for the construction of village road in 1968. Since the rural link roads ultimately join the main roads, there has been great improvement in transport and communication

between the rural areas and the urban centres. One healthy effect of the increasing intercourse between the rural and urban areas has been the improvement in the living standards of the rural people. There is a close relationship between the programme of rural links road and the green revolution in Punjab.⁷ The declaration of introducing Punjabi as a state language or the official language of the State was done by Lachhman Singh Gill as Chief Minister in 1969 on the able advice of M.S. Randhawa. It was M.S. Randhawa who suggested to the then Chief Minister Justice Gurnam Singh for the establishment of Guru Nanak Dev University and many others colleges in Punjab on the 500th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak.⁸

The environment of Ludhiana was polluted by industrial waste and smoke, slums further added to its worsening sanitation. The city lacked green areas, there was only park, Rakhbagh in the heart of Civil Lines, and that too was in the state of neglect. The Park area had been considerably reduced due to building of houses, which constantly encroached upon open spaces. On 4 November 1970, M.S. Randhawa visited the Rakhbagh area. At that time this area was lying waste and infested with vegetation. Actually, this piece of land was acquired by Municipal Committee of Ludhiana in 1881 for their water works. Water supply to the town was commissioned from 24 wells in 1902. In 1970, Punjab Government constituted a local implementation committee for the development of Ludhiana city under the chairmanship of M.S. Randhawa. On realizing the potentialities of this land, M.S. Randhawa proposed to the implementation committee on 26 November 1970 to develop this area as Rose Garden.⁹ M.S. Randhawa also suggested the installation of big sculpture at the Rose Garden. This work was entrusted to well known sculptor, Ram Sutar who had worked in Ellora Caves. As advised by M.S. Randhawa, he created a 20 feet high 'Ganga Sculpture' on red cement giving an impression of a red stone sculpture. This was the first time that a monumental sculpture was erected in Punjab. After that this site has been developed into a beautiful recreational spot where people enjoy their morning and evening walks and relax during their leisure time. The Chief Minister of Punjab, Giani Zail Singh on 14 November 1972, formally inaugurated this garden.¹⁰ Rose Garden now is the only green spot in the town, which provides breathing space to the residents of Ludhiana.

Giani Zail Singh, the then Chief Minister of Punjab constituted 'Beautification Committee' as part of the Public Works Department, under the chairmanship of M.S. Randhawa.¹¹ In its first meeting held on 31 May 1972, the chairman stated that from the point of view of beautification which includes landscaping with colourful trees, selection of suitable sculptures and statues, Punjab

has been practically neglected in spite of the fact that it has the best available expertise. This committee was to prepare schemes of landscaping of roads, parks and open space within municipal areas and public institution such as colleges, schools and hospitals. The committee also decided that renovation of old forts and other building of historical importance would also be taken up.¹² M.S.Randhawa writes that having been brought up in drab countryside of Punjab, where the only common trees were *Shisham*, *Kikkar* and *Phakahi*, he was not aware of the wealth of colour in the vegetation. He developed love for ornamental plants and was highly fascinated to see glamorous yellow Amaltas and red blossoms of Gulmohar. He had special love for 'pink cassia', which remained his favourite tree.¹³ M.S. Randhawa was keen to give boost to the tourism in Punjab as Haryana had taken the lead. As per discussion in the second meeting of the committee for beautification under M.S.Randhawa as a chairman, Chief Conservator of Forests reported that they have taken up the planting work of 50,000 ornamental trees along *Grand Trunk* road and other major roads at nodal points.¹⁴ The committee also decided development of five lakes on Grand Trunk Road near Doraha, Neelon, Rayya, Phillour and Madopur.

M.S.Randhawa prepared hundreds of landscape schemes all over Punjab. On the request received from Inder Kumar Gujral, the then Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, M.S. Randhawa visited Amritsar on 22 May, 1973. He visited the Wagah Border; Jallianwala Bagh, Rambagh gardens and some other areas and suggested plans for giving the city a new look. A meeting was held on 10 December 1973, presided over by M.M. Choudhry, Governor of Punjab and Inder Kumar Gujral was also present, M.S. Randhawa suggested the establishment of a picture gallery in the waiting hall of JallianwalaBagh. He also suggested the development of some grassy lawns and some decent stalls to meet the requirement of the visitors. Under the chairmanship of M.S. Randhawa, a committee decided to install statues of Bhagat Singh, Udham Singh, B.R. Ambedkar, Master Tara Singh and Darshan Singh Pheruman.¹⁵ The Government of India accepted the suggestions of M.S. Randhawa for the establishment of art gallery, statues and landscaping.¹⁶

After the completion of this work, Chattar Singh Park with meandering walks and a central fountain was developed near railway crossing of model town. Shady and flowering trees were planted after the approval of planting plan by M.S. Randhawa. The then president of Municipal committee, Mandi Gobindgarh approached M.S.Randhawa in early 1974 for developing a similar garden for the municipality of the town. He agreed to develop this area into a rose garden as a deposit work. M.S.Randhawa called a meeting where the Senior Architect, Chief

Engineer and XEN of Punjab Agricultural University were briefed about the project and told them to go ahead with the job. Accordingly, a layout plan with terraced water channel fitted with fountains and informal meandering paths for leisure walks was prepared. The Plan was approved by M.S.Randhawa. The construction of the park stimulated improvements in the environment. Dirty sewerage water was diverted, filth removed from the area and required earthwork done. This area became a place of recreation for public. Under the direction of M.S. Randhawa landscape schemes for all canal rest houses and PWD guest houses were prepared for landscaping.¹⁷ Under M.S. Randhawa's directions landscape schemes for all important Canal Rest Houses was prepared.

The setting-up of 'Museum of Rural Life in Punjab' on the campus of Punjab Agricultural University was an unparalleled feat to preserve the old culture and glorious past of the Punjab state. It is a self-explanatory museum replica of 18th century socio-economic and religious life, which reminds of the charms of ancient Punjab amidst dust and din of modern trends. The museum was the brainchild of M.S. Randhawa, who conceived the idea and initiated the project.¹⁸ He took keen interest in this project where the idea was to collect and preserve each and every item concerning the cultural heritage of the villagers. The foundation stone of the building was laid on 1 March 1971 by Dr M.S. Randhawa.¹⁹ The main aim of M.S. Randhawa behind this project was to create awareness among the younger generation about the evolution of Punjab's farming and rural life and to create love among the people for the glorious past.²⁰ This museum and art gallery was inaugurated by Khushwant Singh in 1974.²¹ Ancient agricultural implements, each and every aspect of rural and folk art are all displayed at this museum. The interior of the museum is divided into various sections.²²



Photo taken by Ravidit Singh, author of this paper.

The Water and Power resources of Northern Indian Museum were initiated in the 1970 at the instance of Dr M.S. Randhawa. The foundation stone of the model was laid on 17 April 1972 by Pt. Hans Raj Sharma, then the Finance Minister of Punjab.²³ The museum of Water and Power Resources of Northern India near M.S. Randhawa Library in Punjab Agricultural University Ludhiana is a clear reflection of the pre-independence Punjab. Soil maps of India and Punjab, monolithic of representative soil profiles of Punjab, specimen of rocks and minerals etc. are shown in this museum.²⁴

The proposal for the construction of a war memorial to commemorate the Anglo-Sikh Wars was mooted in 1959. It received the support of Chief Minister of Punjab, Partap Singh Kairon. The Punjab Government built Anglo-Sikh war memorial at Ferozepur. M.S. Randhawa started taking interest in this project and proposed the idea that it should not merely be a memorial, but also a museum and a picture gallery from which people should learn about the history of Punjab in the 18-19th centuries.²⁵ The memorial was built to honour the soldiers who died fighting against British army at Chillianwala on 13 January 1849; Sabraon on 10 February 1846; Mudki on 18 December 1845; and Ferozeshahr on 21–22 December 1845.²⁶ When Dr.Randhawabecame the Vice Chancellor of Punjab Agricultural University in 1968, he was instrumental in the construction of the Anglo-Sikh Wars Memorial near Ferozepur which were completed in February 1976.²⁷ He was the chairman of the committee on construction of Anglo-Sikh War Memorials at Ferozepur.²⁸

In October 1968, M.S. Randhawa joined the Punjab Agricultural University as Vice-Chancellor. He asked H. S. Chopra, the senior Architect of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana to design a building based on his conception near Sirhind feeder and on the banks of Rajasthan Canal at Ferozepur. He prepared the design in 1972 and it was formally approved by GianiZail Singh, Chief Minister of Punjab on 10 November, 1972.²⁹ M.S. Randhawa was Chairman of the Ferozepur memorial Committee, made by Punjab Government.Landscape design of the memorial was done by Hari Singh Sandhu, the then XEN Horticulture PAU. The memorial is in a plot of 2 hectares where one of the Anglo Sikh war had happened. The ground floor of the memorial is 2 meters above the surrounding area.³⁰

The monument has collections of murals, portraits and paintings depicting battlefield made by renowned painters,Jaswant Singh and Kirpal Singh.³¹ The bronze carved quotes of Cunningham's history; the 'vars' of Shah Mohammad; the Anglo-Sikh war weapons donated by the Punjab Government from the Patiala Museum, is displayed in the Memorial.³² The establishments of the Anglo-Sikh War Memorial near Ferozepur, which H.S. Chopra completed under the

supervision of M.S.Randhawa in February 1976, are his immense contribution to show-case the military and social history of Punjab.³³ This memorial has materialized due to the guidance of Dr M.S. Randhawa who has taken keen interest in the project. Thus, he combined a passion for History, Science, beauty and documentation. It was due to his tireless efforts that we have an authentic history, in art and agriculture. This was a unique contribution of M.S. Randhawa for the people of Punjab as the present generation is not aware of the rich culture and heritage of Punjab. The setting up Punjabi Bhawan at Ludhiana was conceived and executed by Dr. M.S. Randhawa. The foundation stone of the building was laid by Dr S. Radhakrishnan, the Vice-President of India on 2 July 1966.³⁴ Dr Randhawa took keen interest in this project and named the Open-Air theatre in the Bhawan after Balraj Sahni, a theatre and film actor.

Jasdev Singh Jassowal tells us that the network of link roads, Punjab Market Board, Thermal Plant Bathinda, Guru Nanak Dev University, and Punjab School Education Board were established or initiated during the period of Justice Gurnam Singh Government on the advice of M.S.Randhawa.³⁵ In 1979, Punjab Government established Punjab Tourism Development Board under the chairmanship of M.S. Gill, Principal Secretary of Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal. On the recommendation of Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, M.S. Randhawa became advisor of Punjab Tourism Development Board.³⁶ He himself designed the landscape of all the tourist complexes in Punjab and named all the complexes on flower names. Such a deadlock situation needed an immediate and concrete solution because the project was of great importance for Punjab as well as India and was watched by the top political leaders and bureaucrats, both in India and abroad. The architects and few bureaucrats in Punjab had been acting selfishly, which had been a major reason in the slow pace of the project. Dr M.S. Randhawa with his administrative foresight and skill found a quick solution by transferring the department to himself and executing the project without any delay

Conclusion

In the end, we can say that M.S.Randhawa as a history lover was instrumental in the establishment of Anglo-Sikh war museum at Ferozepur and a museum depicting the rural life of Punjab at Ludhiana, which is his invaluable gift to the people of Punjab. It portrays all aspects of rural life of Punjab. Dr. M.S. Randhawa's contribution to the development of Punjab cannot be contained in few words. There is not a single field that has not benefitted from his able foresight. Dr.M.S.Randhawa was a multi-faceted and intelligent son of his soil whose carvings have shaped into beautiful trees today.

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- ³⁰Parminder Singh Grover & Davinderjit Singh Grewal, *Discover Punjab*, Golden Point Private Limited, Ludhiana, 2011, p.17.
- ³¹Letter to Kirpal Singh from M.S. Randhawa, Vice-Chancellor and Chairman War Memorial Committee dated on 9th November 1972, No.VC:72/6045.
- ³²M.S. Randhawa, *Anglo-Sikh Wars Memorial*, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, 1976, p.1.; see also *The Times of India*, 23 March, 2017
- ³³*The Tribune*, 12 March, 2018.
- ³⁴*District Census Handbook Ludhiana: Village and Town Directory, Series-04, Part XII-A*, Directorate of Census Operations Punjab, 2011, p.102.
- ³⁵Jasdev Singh Jassowal, *AmbarJiddiKanvas da Chitera*, Kanwaljit Singh(ed.), *Chetyan ChVasda: Mohinder Singh Randhawa, op.ci.t.*, p.91.
- ³⁶*Punjab Mail*, 22 June ,1979.

Savoring sacred traditions: exploration of the Vaishnava religion and food heritage of Nadia in Bengal

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Abstract

Bengali cuisine incorporates wide range of flavor and technique including the use of mustard oil, panch phoron (a blend of five spices), the art of tempering or phoron to enhance the taste of dishes. Vaishnava food is a vibrant celebration of flavors, reflecting the region's cultural heritage, agricultural abundance, and love for culinary excellence. Food plays a central role in Bengali culture, with festivals and celebrations occurring yearly. Traditional Bengali recipes are influenced by the six seasons of the Bengali calendar, integrating unique indigenous ingredients. Vaishnava cuisine is known for its wide range of sweets and desserts. In the realm of Vaishnavism, food holds sacred significance, with a focus on vegetarian dishes. The ancient texts of Manu Smriti and Rigveda provide insights into dietary practices and philosophical perspectives on food. Food is seen as a reflection of cultural identity and social values. This research paper aims to contribute to the existing knowledge about the food culture of the Vaishnava religion in Nadia. It aims to fill the gap through a comprehensive analysis of contemporary historical literature, religious texts, and other relevant source materials. By shedding light on the food practices, rituals, and beliefs of the community, this study intends to provide valuable insights into the cultural and religious significance of food within the Vaishnava tradition.

Keywords: *Bengali Culture, Cuisine, Festivals, Desserts, Local ingredients, Vegetarianism, Cultural identity, Community bonding.*

Bengalis are indeed known for their vibrant and sensorial approach to festivals and celebrations. The Bengali calendar is marked by numerous special *tithis*¹ and occasions, and food plays an important part in the Vaishnavite festivities.

Traditional Bengali recipes are often classified according to the six seasons in the Bengali calendar, which are each two months long. Each season has its unique sensorial feelings and fruits, vegetables, and ingredients that are used in traditional Bengali cuisine. Bengali cuisine is also known for its rich variety of sweets and desserts, which are an essential part of any celebration or festival. Some of the traditional Bengali sweets include *Sandesh*, *Mishit Doi*, *Jilabi*, *Roshogolla*, etc. Bengalis also has a rich tradition of street food and snacks, such as Phuchka,² Jhal muri,³ Ghugni,⁴ and many more, which are enjoyed throughout the year. Therefore, food is an important aspect of Bengali culture and is deeply intertwined with the various festivals and celebrations that take place throughout the year. At present, Bengalis have assimilated various cultures and cuisines from ancient to modern times. The culinary traditions of the Turks, Afghans, Mughals, Portuguese, British, Chinese, and others have blended with Bengali cuisine. The diversity of food habits is an inseparable part of Bengali culture. Alan Dundes was a prominent folklorist who defined folk and he stated that, 'any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is-it could be a common occupation, language, or religion-but what is important is that a group...has some traditions that it calls its own'.⁵

Vaishnavism is a major branch of Hinduism that emphasizes the worship of Lord Vishnu or his incarnations,⁶ especially Lord Krishna. In Nabadwip and Mayapur, Vaishnavism has a significant influence on the culture and traditions of the region, including its food habits. Vaishnavism has had a profound impact on the spiritual, cultural, and traditions of the region, including its food habits. Vaishnavas are known for following a vegetarian or lacto-vegetarian diet, as they believe in the ethics of ahimsa or non-violence towards all living beings. This has led to the improvement of a unique cuisine that features a wide variety of vegetarian dishes, many of which are based on locally grown produce and traditional cooking method. The Vaishnavite food habits in Nadia are vegetarian, and the devotees of this faith usually avoid eating meat, fish, eggs, onion, and garlic. *Manu Smriti*, or the Laws of Manu, is a Hindu text that dates back to ancient times and contains guidelines for the social, moral, and religious conduct of individuals in society. Although it does not specifically illuminate food in great detail, it does mention certain dietary practices and restrictions that were prevalent in ancient India. According to *Manu Smriti*, a Brahmin (a member of the priestly class) should avoid certain types of food, such as meat, fish, alcohol, mushroom, garlic, and onions.⁷ The text also recommends that one should eat food that is fresh, clean, and prepared in a clean environment. In addition, *Manu Smriti* emphasizes the

importance of performing certain rituals and offering food to the gods. For example, the text states that before eating, one should offer a portion of the food to the gods and then share the rest with others. This practice is known as *prasad* and is still common in Hindu temples, hermitages, and homes today. *Manu Smriti* also discusses the concept of 'ahimsa', which means non-violence, and encourages individuals to avoid harming living beings, including animals. While the text does not explicitly prohibit the consumption of meat, many Hindus interpret this as a call to follow a vegetarian or vegan diet. It is important to note that *Manu Smriti* is an ancient text that reflects the social and cultural norms of its time. Today, dietary practices vary widely among Hindus and are influenced by a variety of factors, including regional cuisine, personal preference, and religious beliefs. The Rigveda⁸ describes the cosmic order and the interdependent relationship between all beings in the universe. It states that all beings are interconnected and that they rely on each other for survival. This hymn implies a respect for the interconnectedness of all life and suggests a reverence for nature. In Rigveda, different hymns narrate the offering of vegetarian food to the gods during yajnas (sacrificial rituals). These offerings typically consisted of grains, fruiter plant-based foods, which suggests that plant-based foods were an essential aspect of Vedic culture. While the Rigveda does not explicitly mention vegetarianism, it does include several hymns that imply a deep reverence for all living beings and place importance on the principle of ahimsa (non-violence) and the value of respecting nature. This interpretation has led some to view it as an implicit endorsement of a vegetarian or plant-based diet. The *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* mentions 'foods that promote longevity, enthusiasm, strength, health, happiness, increase mental clarity, and enhance taste, as well as provide pleasure and satisfaction, are dear to a person of a sattvic nature. Such foods are described as being delicious, wholesome, and nourishing'.⁹

Roland Barthes, emphasizes the importance of understanding food as a cultural phenomenon and how it reflects and shapes social identities, power dynamics, and cultural values. One of the essays in the book entitled *Toward a Psycho-sociology of Contemporary Food Consumption*, discusses the role of food in society and argues that food is not just a physical substance but also a signifier of social values, power dynamics, and cultural identities. Therefore, 'an entire world (social environment) is present in and signified by food'.¹⁰ The diet is centered on the concept of 'sattvic' food, which is believed to be pure and beneficial to the body and mind. The food is cooked with minimum spices and mustard oil, and emphasis is laid on the use of fresh vegetables, grains, fruits, and dairy products. The Vaishnavite cuisine in Nadia is diverse, with many unique dishes and

preparations. Some of the popular dishes include *Khichdi*: A simple and nutritious dish made with rice, lentils, and vegetables. *Chholar Dal* (chickpeas pulse): the dish is often garnished with fried coconut flakes and served with rice or roti. *Chholar dal* is a nutritious and flavorful dish that is popular throughout Bengal, particularly during festivals and special occasions. It is a rich source of protein, fiber, and essential nutrients and is often considered a staple in Bengali cuisine. The coconut and spices used in the preparation of *Chholar dal* give it a unique and aromatic flavor that is sure to please the palate. *Alu Posto*:¹¹ a popular dish made with potatoes and poppy seeds. *Shukto*: A mixed vegetable dish flavored with bitter melon, mustard, and Panch Phoron.¹² *Payesh*¹³ is a sweet dish made with rice, milk, and sugar, often served on special occasions. Apart from these, Vaishnavite cuisine in Nadia also includes various sweets and desserts, including Sandesh, Rasgulla,¹⁴ and Rasmalai, which are popular not only in Nadia but also across India. Overall, the Vaishnavite food habits in Nadia emphasize a simple and nutritious diet, with an emphasis on fresh vegetables and dairy products. The cuisine is flavorful, and diverse, and reflects the rich cultural heritage of the region.

According to the Ayurveda, and Yoga philosophy, the human body is composed of five primary elements, known as the *Pancha Maha Bhutas* (consisting of the five primary elements). These elements are believed to be the building blocks of all matter in the universe, including the human body. The five elements are Earth (*Prithvi*): This element represents the solid and dense aspect of the body, including bones, muscles, and tissues. Water (*Jala*): This element represents the fluid and flowing aspect of the body, including blood, lymph, and other bodily fluids. Fire (*Agni*): This element represents the transformative aspect of the body, including digestion, metabolism, and body temperature. Air (*Vayu*): This element represents the movement and mobility aspect of the body, including breathing and circulation. Ether or Space (*Akasha*): This element represents the space and emptiness aspect of the body, including the empty spaces within the body and the subtle channels of energy. According to Ayurveda and Yoga, a healthy body maintains a balance between these five elements, and any imbalance or excess of any element can lead to physical or mental health issues. The objectives of these systems of foods are to restore balance to the body and promote overall health and well-being. The supreme form of protection for the human body and living things are diet. With the emergence of all living things on earth, the first realization is hunger. Humans and other living things alike must consume food to stay alive and retain optimal wellness. Hunger is a natural biological response to the body's need for nourishment and energy. When we go without food for some time, our body starts to signal to us that we need to eat through the

sensation of hunger. Food provides us with the nutrients and energy our bodies need to function properly. These include carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water. Without adequate intake of these nutrients, our bodies can experience a range of health issues, such as malnutrition, weakness, fatigue, and impaired immune function. While hunger is a normal and necessary biological response, it's important to remember that psychological and social factors can also have an impact on it. For example, stress, anxiety, and depression can influence our appetite and lead to overeating or underrating. Additionally, cultural and social factors can also influence what and how much we eat. Overall, hunger is an important signal from our body that we need to eat and provide it with the nutrients and energy it needs to function properly. Maintaining a balanced and healthy diet is important for our physical and mental health.

Food is also an important aspect of Vaishnava festivals and rituals, with extraordinary dishes being arranged or prepared to celebrate important Vaishnava festivals in the Vaishnava calendar. The Vaishnava tradition also places a powerful emphasis on community and the sharing of food with others. Many Vaishnava temples in Nadia offer free meals to visitors and devotees, known as prasad seva,¹⁵ as a way of fostering a sense of community and devotion. Nadia's Vaishnava religion and culinary heritage offer a unique and rich experience for those interested in exploring the region's culture and traditions. The temple serves Prasadam, a Sanskrit word meaning mercy or blessing. In the context of the temple, Prasadam refers to food that has been offered to Lord Krishna and then distributed to the devotees as a spiritual blessing. The concentrated feature of food in Nabadwip and Mayapur is the emphasis on offering food to God before consuming it. This is a common tradition among Vaishnava devotees or followers, where food is prepared with great care and devotion and is offered to the deity before being served. The act of offering food to God is believed to purify the food and make it spiritually potent. The food in Mayapur is a reflection of the region's rich cultural and spiritual heritage. The cuisine of Mayapur is prepared with great attention and dedication and is an essential component of the Vaishnava tradition, ranging from straightforward rice and pulse dishes to sophisticated sweet creations. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (Abhay Charan Dey) was a spiritual leader and the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in New York City in 1966 (ISKCON), also known as the Hare Krishna movement. His teachings on food reflect the principles of Vedic culture and spirituality. According to Prabhupada, food plays an important role in one's spiritual and physical well-being. He emphasized the importance of a vegetarian diet that is free from meat, fish, and eggs. He believed that consuming such foods could lead to negative

effects on the mind and body, as well as harm to animals and the environment. Prabhupada also stressed the importance of consuming food that was offered to Krishna, which is known as Prasadam. He believed that by offering food to Krishna, it becomes purified and spiritually potent, and consuming it helps one to advance spiritually. Furthermore, Prabhupada encouraged the practice of cooking and offering food with love and devotion, as this helps to develop a personal relationship with Krishna. He also believed that cooking and eating are spiritual activities that should be performed with mindfulness and gratitude. Prabhupada's food ideology promotes a vegetarian diet, the offering of food to Krishna, and the importance of cooking and eating with devotion and mindfulness.

Nabadwip and Mayapur serve as important spiritual centers where devotees gather to engage in devotional practices, study scriptures, participate in kirtans (devotional singing), and deepen their understanding of the teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. These places hold a rich cultural heritage and continue to play a vital role in promoting Vaishnava philosophy and spirituality. It is the birthplace of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a prominent Vaishnava saint, and founder of the Gaudiya Vaishnavism tradition. One of the major festivals celebrated in Nabadwip and Mayapur is Gaura Purnima, also known as the Appearance Day of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1533). This festival celebrates the full moon day (Purnima) in the month of Phalguna (February/March) according to the Hindu lunar calendar. During this festival, devotees from all over the world gather in Nabadwip and Mayapur to participate in various spiritual activities such as Kirtans-Bhajan,¹⁶ discourses, and other forms of devotional practices. The festival usually lasts for several days and culminates on the day of Gaura Purnima with a grand procession, where the deities of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu are carried on a palanquin around the temple. Apart from Gaura Purnima, other important festivals celebrated in Nabadwip and Mayapur include Radhastami, Janmashtami, Nityananda Trayodashi, and other important Vaishnava festivals. These festivals are also celebrated with great enthusiasm and devotion by the Vaishnava community in Nabadwip and Mayapur and around the world. Chaitanyacharitamrita¹⁷ is a biographical work of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, written by Krishna Das Kaviraja Goswami, an important figure in Gaudiya Vaishnavism. While the text primarily emphasizes the life and doctrines of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, it also includes descriptions of the food and meals that were served to him and his followers. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a prominent saint and religious leader in the 16th century, was known for his simple eating habits and preference for vegetarian food. He advocated a simple and humble lifestyle, including his approach to food. He believed in the principles of moderation, detachment, and offering food to the divine before

consumption. His emphasis on simplicity and vegetarianism reflected his spiritual teachings and the values he espoused. His disciples also followed a strict vegetarian diet and would often gather together to cook and share meals. Some of the foods mentioned in *Chaitanya Charitamrita* include rice, dal, vegetables, fruits, milk, yogurt, and various sweets and desserts. দশবিপ্রঅন্নরাঙ্কিকরেএকস্তুপ। জনচাবি পাঁচরাঙ্কে ব্যঞ্জন দিসূপ।। বন্যশাক ফলমূল বিধি ব্যঞ্জন। কেহোবড়াবড়িকড়িকরেবিপ্রগণ।। জনপাঁচ সাতরঙটিকরেরাশিরাশি। অন্ন ব্যঞ্জনসববরহেঘুতেভাসি।। নরবস্ত্রপাতিতাতে পলাশেরপাত। রাঙ্কিরাঙ্কিতারউ পররাশিকৈলভাত।। তারপাশে রুটিরাশিউপপর্বত হইলো। সুপব্যঞ্জনভাঙসবচৌদিকেধরিল।।¹⁸ (Ten Brahmins cook one pot of rice, People gather around and prepare various side dishes. Wild vegetables, fruits, and roots are prepared for the feast, Some prepare large pots of curry to serve the Brahmins. Five to seven people produce a pile of bread, And all the food is generously smeared with ghee. New clothes and fine clothes are spread out on Palash leaves, The rice is piled on top in heaps. Next to it, piles of rotis are stacked like a mountain and pots of soup and curries are placed all around).

The text also describes how Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his followers would often engage in kirtans and other devotional practices while cooking and eating together. In addition, the text also emphasizes the importance of offering food to the deities and honoring prasada, which is food that has been sanctified by offering it to the deity. একান্তভারেআশ্রিয়াছেচৈতন্যচরণ। মধ্যমধ্যেপ্রভুকেতেহঁকরেনিমন্ত্রণ।। ঘরেভাতকরিকরেনবিবিধব্যঞ্জন। একেলাপ্রভুকৈলএগকরানভোজন।। তাঁরপিতাবিষয়ীবড়সাতানন্দখান। বিষয়-বিমুখআচার্যবৈরাগ্য-প্রধান।।¹⁹ (Chaitanya Charan affectionately welcomes the Lord alone, occasionally inviting Him with a humble tone. Various delicacies are prepared and served at home, Alone, He enjoys the meal with the Lord. His father is the renowned Satyananda Khan, Indifferent to worldly affairs, a foremost ascetic).

This practice is a central aspect of Vaishnavism, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his followers were known to place great importance on offering food to the deities and distributing prasada to others as a way of spreading love and goodwill. 'Vaishnavatirtha Nabadwip has now become a famous international pilgrimage center, and throughout the year, devotees from all over the countries of the world visit this sacred land for the attraction of spirituality. However, during important Vaishnavite festivals like Rashayatra, Dolyatra, and Janmashtami, the number of devotees, and visitors, increases significantly.

Ekadashi

It is believed that fasting on Ekadashi²⁰ is a way to purify the body and mind and show devotion to Lord Vishnu. Nowadays, food is being prepared and decorated for devotees who observe fasting on Ekadashi at various hotels and dharamshalas situated within the temple premises in Mayapur. In the Vaishnava

religion, Ekadashi is a sacred day that occurs twice a month, on the eleventh day of the waxing and waning phases of the moon. It is believed to be a day of spiritual purification, and many followers of Vaishnavism observe a strict fast on this day. During Ekadashi, Vaishnavas typically abstain from consuming cereals, pulses, and certain vegetables, as these are considered to be *tamasic* (impure) foods that may hinder spiritual progress. Instead, they focus on eating *sattvic* (pure) foods such as fruits, nuts, and dairy products. The Chaitanya Charitamrita emphasized that Chaitanya deva also observed Ekadashi fasting very strictly and would not consume any grains or cereals on that day. He would spend the entire day chanting Krishna's divine names and meditating on the Lord's pastimes. The scripture describes that on the day of Ekadashi, the devotees should involve in devotional activities and offer special prayers to Lord Vishnu, who is the presiding deity of this day. They should also abstain from eating grains and cereals and instead consume only fruits, vegetables, and dairy products. The Chaitanya Charitamrita emphasizes the significance of observing Ekadashi fasting and highlights how practicing it with dedication and sincerity can lead to mental and physical purity, as well as spiritual growth. Fasting on Ekadashi is believed to assist individuals in detaching themselves from worldly attachments and strengthening their spiritual connection with the divine. According to the Chaitanya Charitamrita, Ekadashi is considered a profoundly important day for Vaishnavas, who are encouraged to fast and engage in devotional practices to seek the blessings of Lord Vishnu and progress in their spiritual journey.²¹ Some common foods that are traditionally eaten on Ekadashi include fruits and fruit juices: Many Vaishnavas choose to consume only fruit on Ekadashi. Popular choices include bananas, apples, oranges, and grapes. Nuts and seeds: Almonds, cashews, sunflower seeds, and pumpkin seeds are all good options for Ekadashi. Dairy products: Milk, yogurt, and paneer (cottage cheese) are considered to be pure and sattvic foods in Vaishnavism, and are commonly consumed on Ekadashi. Vegetables: Some vegetables are allowed on Ekadashi, including green leafy vegetables, potatoes, and sweet potatoes. However, onions, garlic, and certain other vegetables are generally avoided. Fasting: Some Vaishnavas choose to observe a complete fast on Ekadashi, consuming only water or milk. It is important to note that the specific foods that are allowed or prohibited on Ekadashi may vary depending on the particular tradition or community of Vaishnavism that is being followed. Additionally, some Vaishnavas may choose to observe Ekadashi differently based on their individual needs and circumstances.

Janmashtami Festival

The goddess Earth, being oppressed by the heavy load of tens of thousands of Daitya hosts, who were born as arrogant kings, sought the shelter of Brahma...²² The History of Janmashtami can be traced back to ancient times, as Lord Krishna was born in the city of Mathura known as Brajabhumi. According to Hindu mythology, Lord Krishna was the eighth avatar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu, who was one of the three main deities in Hinduism. The story of Lord Krishna's birth was a popular legend among Hindus. It is said that Lord Krishna's parents, Devaki and Vasudeva, were imprisoned by Devaki's brother, Kamsa, who had been told that Devaki's eighth child would be the one who would kill him. When Lord Krishna was born, Vasudeva managed to take him to safety across the river Yamuna, and he was raised by his foster parents, Nanda and Yashoda, in the village of Gokul. On Janmashtami, new clothes are worn for Krishna or Gopal. The newly dressed clothes make Sri Krishna look beautiful. Devotees take a bath with various substances like raw milk, honey, and water from the Ganges as a part of the bathing ritual. Then they offer different kinds of food items such as Bhog²³ (offering) to Sri Krishna. It is important to note that for celebrating the birthday of Gopal or Krishna, making Taler Bora (a type of sweet fritter made from palm fruit) is a must. Luchi or Khichuri Bhog is also offered. Additionally, various types of savories, chutneys, and sweets like Payesh or Paramanna are prepared.²⁴

Janmashtami is a major festival in Vaishnavism that celebrates the birth of Lord Krishna with great enthusiasm and devotion. One of the most important rituals of this festival is offering food to the deity. Devotees prepare a variety of dishes as offerings to Lord Krishna, which are known as *Bhog* or *Prasad*. These offerings usually include a variety of vegetarian dishes, such as sweets, fruits, milk, curd, butter, and other dishes that Lord Krishna is believed to have enjoyed. In some regions, special dishes like *panchamrit*, which is made with a combination of milk, curd, honey, ghee, and sugar, and *chappana bhog*, a platter of 56 different dishes, are also prepared. The food is first offered to the deity and is believed to be sanctified by their blessings. After the offering, the prasada is distributed among the devotees as a token of blessings and goodwill. Many Vaishnava temples celebrate Janmashtami with great pomp and grandeur, preparing a large quantity of food as an offering to the deity, which is then distributed among the devotees as prasada. The offering of food to the deity on Janmashtami is an important ritual in Vaishnavism. It represents the devotee's love, devotion, and gratitude towards Lord Krishna.

Radhaastami Celebration

According to Hindu beliefs, Radha represents the divine feminine aspect of God, and her love and devotion towards Krishna inspire devotees to cultivate a deep and loving relationship with God. Radha is often considered to be the embodiment of devotion and love, and her devotion towards Krishna is seen as the ultimate expression of love and surrender. The celebration of Radha's birth anniversary or Radha Ashtami is an important festival in the Hindu calendar, particularly in the Vaishnavism tradition. The Gita Govinda, a celebrated work of poetry by Jayadeva, is another important text that describes the love story of Radha and Krishna in great detail. The text portrays Radha as the epitome of devotion and love, and her love for Krishna as the ultimate expression of divine love. The text also highlights the various emotions and feelings experienced by Radha as she navigates her relationship with Krishna. তোমারসহিতযেইনিকুঞ্জকাননে,সিদ্ধি-লাভহয়েছিলমদন-সাধনে, পুনরপিহৃষিকেশআসিয়াসেবনে, চিস্তিছেনআজিসদাতোমাকেই মনে। জপিছেনতবকথামল্লমতন, কুচ-আলিঙ্গন-সুধাভূঞ্জিবরেমন।²⁵ (In the groves and forests where I found success in love with you, I return to those woods again, to Hrishikesh, thinking of only you. I repeat your words like a mantra, and my mind longs to enjoy the nectar of your embrace.).

The exact origin of the Radhaastami festival is not clear, but it is believed to have been celebrated for several centuries by the devotees of Radha and Krishna. The festival had gained significant prominence in the 16th century, during the time of the Vaishnava saint and scholar, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Radha Astami is a major festival celebrated by the followers of Gaudiya Vaishnavism in Nabadwip and Mayapur, located in the Nadia district. The festival is celebrated on the eighth day of the bright half of the month of Bhadra (August-September) and marks the appearance day of Radha, the consort of Lord Krishna. According to the legends, Radha was born in a village called Barsana near Mathura, where her appearance day is also celebrated with great enthusiasm. However, in Nabadwip and Mayapur, the festival is celebrated lavishly with devotees performing various rituals, bhajans, and kirtans in honor of Radha. Nabadwip and Mayapur have a significant association with the history of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. It is believed that Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is considered an incarnation of Lord Krishna, appeared in Nabadwip and started the Hare Krishna movement, which later spread to various parts of India and the world. The Radha Astami festival celebrated in Nabadwip and Mayapur is a significant event for the followers of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, and these places have a rich history associated with the development and spread of the Hare Krishna movement.

In Nabadwip, the festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm, especially in the Radha-Madhava temple, which is located in the heart of the town. The temple is beautifully decorated with flowers, lights, and colorful fabrics. Devotees sing and dance to the melodious tunes of kirtans and bhajans, and the atmosphere is filled with joy and devotion. In some temples, devotees offer a special preparation made with flattened rice, called poha, along with jaggery and coconut, which is known as 'Chura Doi'. This delicacy is believed to be Radha's favorite dish, and devotees offer it as a special offering to her. The prasada (sanctified food) is prepared with great care and devotion and is distributed to all the devotees who visit the temple on this auspicious day. It is believed that by partaking in the prasada, one can receive the blessings of Radha and Krishna and attain spiritual advancement. The atmosphere in the temple is filled with joy and devotion as devotees relish the delicious prasada and celebrate the divine love between Radha and Krishna.

Jhulan Utshav

Vaishnavite hermitages and temples in Nadia district are decorated with lights and flowers during Jhulan Yatra. This is a festival dedicated to Lord Krishna and Radha, where swings (Jhulan) are installed in the temples and decorated with flowers. Devotees offer the deities various types of food, sweets, and fruits during this festival. The food culture during Jhulan Yatra includes preparing a variety of vegetarian dishes, including sweets like rasagulla, Sandesh, and ras malai, along with dishes like khichdi, dal, and sabzi. Devotees fast on some days during this festival, particularly on Ekadashi, and offer special prasada to the deities on these days. Overall, Jhulan Yatra is a time of great devotion and festivity for Vaishnavites in the Nadia district. Jhulan Yatra is celebrated with great enthusiasm in the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition. The festival usually takes place in the month of Shravan (July-August) and lasts for about two weeks. During this time, a swing is set up in the temple, and the deities of Krishna and Radha are placed on it, symbolizing their divine love. Food plays an important role during Jhulan Yatra, as it is considered a way to please the deities and offer them bhog (offering of food). Devotees prepare various kinds of sweets and delicacies, such as *rasgulla*, *Sandesh*, *laddu*, *peda*, and *gajor ki halwa*, to offer to the deities. In some places, devotees also prepare special dishes such as *khichdi*, *chutney*, and *pakoraa*, which are offered as *prasada* (blessed food) to the devotees.

During Jhulan Yatra, devotees also perform kirtans (devotional songs) and dance performances, which are accompanied by musical instruments such as the mridanga, kartals, and harmonium. The festival is a time for devotees to come together and celebrate the divine love of Krishna and Radha, and to offer their

devotion through various acts of service, such as preparing food, decorating the temple, and performing devotional activities. Over time, the Jhulan festival has spread to other parts of India and has become a significant part of the Vaishnavite tradition. Today, thousands of devotees from all over the world gather to engage in the festivities. The festival is viewed as an opportunity to connect with the divine and experience the joy of devotion.

Rasayatra

The Rash or Raas festival is an important celebration observed by Vaishnavas, particularly in the northern, western, and eastern regions of India. It is an annual festival that is celebrated on the full moon day (Purnima) of the Hindu month of Kartik (October-November).²⁶ The history of the Raas festival can be traced back to the ancient texts of the *Bhagavata Purana*,²⁷ which narrates the story of Lord Krishna's Raas Leela with the Gopis (milkmaids) of Vrindavan. According to the legend, Lord Krishna used to play the Raas Leela dance with the Gopis in the forests of Vrindavan on the night of Sharad Purnima, which is the brightest full moon night of the year. The festival is celebrated to commemorate this divine dance of Lord Krishna. During the Raas festival, devotees gather in temples and perform the Raas Leela dance and sing devotional songs in praise of Lord Krishna. The dance represents the love between the Lord and the Gopis, and the devotion of the devotees towards Lord Krishna. It is also a time when devotees fast, perform puja, and offer prasad (a sacred offering) to Lord Krishna. Apart from its religious significance, the Raas festival also has cultural and social significance. Raas festival has a rich history and is celebrated with great enthusiasm and devotion in different parts of India. It is a time when people come together to celebrate their faith, culture, and traditions.

Raas festival is celebrated in different parts of India, including the eastern parts such as Nabadwip and Mayapur, which are important centers of the Vaishnava tradition. The festival holds great significance for devotees of Lord Krishna and is celebrated with fervor and devotion. It is a time to come together, to sing and dance, to offer prayers and offerings, and to immerse oneself in the love and devotion of Lord Krishna. It is also a time to celebrate and strengthen the cultural and social fabric of the community. Rasayatra is a traditional cuisine of the Vaishnava community, particularly popular in Nabadwip and Mayapur. Rasayatra food is considered pure, sattvic (meaning, pure, nutritious, and conducive to spiritual development), and is made without onions, garlic, or any other pungent vegetables. The food is primarily vegetarian and is prepared in a way that enhances its taste and nutritional value. Some popular dishes in Rasayatra cuisine include khichdi, sabzi, dal, pilau, payesh, chutney, and desserts such as rasgulla, Sandesh,

and payesh. These dishes are prepared using fresh vegetables, grains, milk products, and other ingredients and are cooked using traditional techniques and experiences such as slow cooking in a clay pot. During this festival, thousands of devotees, disciples, travellers, and people visit Nabadwip to assimilate into the celebrations and partake in the delicious Rasayatra food. Rasayatra food and ambiance are unique and tasty cuisine that is an integral part of the Vaishnava tradition, and the town of Nabadwip is a great place to experience it.

Rathayatra

Rathayatra is a popular festival celebrated by Vaishnavas, in honor of Lord Jagannath, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The festival is also known as the Festival of Chariots and is celebrated with great enthusiasm and devotion in many parts of India, including Nabadwip. In Nadia, Rathayatra is celebrated with much fanfare and is one of the most important festivals of the year. The celebrations start with the construction of a chariot for Lord Jagannath, which is then decorated with colorful cloth, flowers, and other ornaments. The chariot is then pulled through the streets by devotees, accompanied by music and dancing. One of the unique aspects of Rathayatra celebrations in Nadia is its food culture. During the festival, devotees prepare and distribute a variety of delicious dishes, which are offered to Lord Jagannath as bhog or prasad. The *bhog* includes traditional Bengali dishes such as *khichdi*, *chutney*, *dal*, vegetables, and sweets like *rasgulla*, *Sandesh* and *payesh*. Apart from these, other traditional dishes like *Luchi*, *Alur Dum*, *Cholar Dal*, and *Mishti Pulao* are also prepared and served during the festival. These dishes are not only delicious but also represent the rich cultural heritage of Bengal.

Jilipi is a popular dessert in Bengal, typically made from flour, sugar, ghee, and sometimes semolina or khoya. The dough is kneaded and shaped into a spiral or pretzel-like shape, then deep-fried until golden brown. Once fried, the *jilipi* is often soaked in a sugar syrup flavored with cardamom, saffron, or rose water, giving it a sweet and fragrant taste. In addition to being a popular sweet dish at fairs and temples during Rath Yatra celebrations, *jilipi* is also commonly served at weddings, birthdays, and other special occasions in Bengal. It is often accompanied by other traditional Bengali sweets like *rasgulla*, *sandesh*, and *mishti doi*. *Jilipi* is also a popular street food, with vendors selling freshly-made *jilipis* from carts and stalls throughout the region.

Cultural exchanges between India, Persia, and the Middle East in the Medieval Ages centered on trade and economic transactions and led to some variation in food culture. This likely led to the introduction of Jalebi into India, which soon became a popular dish. Jalebi gradually spread to different parts of

the country, with different regional variations in pronunciation, form, taste, and quality. In North India, it is called Jalebi, while in the South, it is known as *Jilebi*. In Bengal, it is called *Jilipi* or *Jilapi*, and in Andhra Pradesh, it is known as *Imarati*. In some parts of Bengal, it is famous as *Amriti*. With such diversity and influences from various cultures, Jalebi has become a beloved dessert in India, and in Bengal, it is even known as *Jillipir's Patch*. *Mistanna Pak* is a famous Bengali book written by Bipradas Mukhopadhyay that provides a comprehensive guide to Bengali sweets and their preparation techniques. The book includes a section on *Jilipir*, which is a popular sweet in Bengal and other parts of India.²⁸ The *Sundara Vilasha* of Annaji mentioned the *Jil-abi* as an item of food served at an *Ishwar Puja*.²⁹ Overall, Rathayatra celebrations in Nadia are a beautiful amalgamation of devotion, tradition, and food culture. The festival brings people together to celebrate and enjoy the delicious offerings, while also paying homage to Lord Jagannath and seeking his blessings.

Dolyatra

The Vaishnava celebration called Dolyatra, also known as Basanta Utshav or Dol Purnima, is celebrated in Bengal. This festival is also very much popular in the district of Nadia. Dolyatra is a spring occasion that is often observed in the month of March. It heralds the start of the colorful season and is comparable to the well-known Holi festival. On this day, people dance and sing to the beat of drums and other musical instruments while dousing one another in colored powder and water. Dolyatra is widely observed in Nabadwip with considerable fervor. The famed saint and social reformer Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who was born on this exact day in the 15th century (1486), is honored in the festival, which is centered around his temple. People assemble to pray and seek blessings in the temples, which are festooned with flowers and vibrant lights. Since Dolyatra is a Vaishnava celebration and many devotees, disciples, and guests adhere to a vegetarian diet, vegetarian cuisine is frequently provided during this time. Before being served to the devotees, the meal is often offered as *prasad* (blessed food) to the gods. This food is made with utmost purity, care, and dedication. In Nadia, food plays a significant role in the Dolyatra celebrations. Large quantities of sweet foods like *rasgulla*, *Sandesh*, and *malpua* are cooked and served to devotees and guests. Traditional Bengali snacks like *chanachur*, *muri*, and *singara* are also popular during the event. To commemorate the occasion, people often prepare unique delicacies including *chutney*, *khichuri*, and *pulao*. In Nadia, the Dolyatra festival is a colorful celebration of springtime and a sense of togetherness. People gather during this period to joyfully celebrate life and seek divine fulfillment.

Annakut Festival

The Annakut Utshab, also known as the Annakut festival, is celebrated by arranging rice or food in the shape of a mountain. The festival is primarily associated with the worship of Govardhan, a sacred mountain in Hindu mythology. During this festival, a symbolic representation of the Govardhan mountain is created using rice and cow dung. This represents a revered form of offering food and worship.³⁰ Nadia Vaishnavi Annakut festival is a religious festival celebrated every year in the month of Boishakh (April-May) in the Nadia district of Bengal. The main purpose of this festival is to spread love and respect for all humanity. In Vaishnavism, the act of providing food (*annadan*) is considered a fundamental principle, which is highlighted in this festival. People from different backgrounds come together to worship Lord Shri Krishna and offer food donations during this festival. The Nadia Vaishnavi Annapurna Utshab was first established in 1700 and has been celebrated ever since. It continues to be observed annually in the month of Boishakh.

Chandanyatra Festival

The festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm and devotion. Devotees offer various services and performances during this festival, including music, dance, drama, and other cultural activities. The festival is also an occasion for devotees to seek the blessings of the deities and express their devotion to them. Chandan Yatra is also celebrated in Vaishnabtirtha Nabadwip, which is known for its rich cultural and spiritual heritage. The festival is celebrated with great fervor and devotion in Nabadwip, and it lasts for 21 days. During Chandan Yatra at Nabadwip, the deities of Lord Chaitanya and Lord Nityananda are decorated with sandalwood paste and various other floral decorations. Devotees offer prayers and perform various rituals to seek the blessings of the Lord. One of the important rituals of Chandan Yatra in Nabadwip is offering food to the Lord. Devotees prepare a variety of vegetarian dishes and offer them to the deities. This is known as bhog and it is considered to be a way of expressing one's devotion and gratitude to the Lord. Apart from offering food, devotees also perform kirtan, which is a form of devotional singing that involves the chanting of the names of the Lord. Kirtan is an integral part of the celebrations during Chandan Yatra in Nabadwip. Chandan Yatra in Nabadwip is a time for spiritual reflection, devotion, and celebration. It is a time when devotees come together to express their love and gratitude towards the Lord and to seek His blessings for themselves and their loved ones.

Conclusion

Since the dawn of human civilization, faith and conviction have been deeply intertwined, giving rise to concepts of purity, impurity, faith, disbelief, sin,

and virtue within religious contexts. In the rich tapestry of Indian civilization and culture, religion is intimately linked with the act of consumption. Furthermore, spirituality encompasses a range of practices and rituals that are integral to religious observance. Religion, moral principles, and cuisine have all served as dividing factors throughout history, influencing how people live, what is taught in society, and what they believe. The orthodox or conservative views on these issues have frequently caused a rift in society. The idea of food's sanctity and impurity has played a big issue in how individuals and their cultural ideas differ from one another. Such variations, despite attempts to eradicate them, have endured throughout history. In many religious traditions, including Vaishnavism, food is of utmost importance. Foods are considered sacred in Vaishnava's spiritual writings, and they are accompanied by numerous rules and conventions that control how they should be prepared and consumed. For instance, because they adhere to the ideal of Ahimsa, or non-violence, toward all living things, followers or devotees may embrace vegetarianism. Many Vaishnava adherents also observe particular dietary restrictions at certain times, such as fasting on holidays or staying away from certain foods on days considered auspicious. Devotees also offer food to deities as part of their daily worship; the food is said to be blessed and is subsequently devoured by the devotees as Naivadya. Food has a significant part in spiritual and religious practices and is generally regarded as a vital aspect of Vaishnavism.

Notes and References

¹*Tithi* is a Sanskrit term that refers to a lunar day in the Hindu calendar. The tithi is determined by the position of the moon in relation to the sun. There are 30 tithes in a lunar month, and each tithi lasts for approximately 24 hours. Tithes are very significant in Hindu astrology and are used to determine auspicious times for various activities, such as weddings, housewarming (entering the new house) ceremonies, and other significant events.

²Phuchka, also known as Golgappa or Pani Puri in other parts of India, is a popular street food in Bengal. It is a cherished and well-known snack that can be found in practically every part of Bengal. Phuchka consists of small, round, hollow puris made of semolina or wheat flour as the main component. These puris are filled with a mixture of savory and spicy chutneys, boiled and mashed potatoes, and tamarind water. Additionally, the filling may include black gram, spices, and cooked chickpeas.

³Jhal Muri is a very popular street food snack in Bengal. It is a spicy and tangy mixture made with puffed rice, selected vegetables, peanuts, and various chutneys and spices. It is loved by people of all ages and is known for its delightful blend of flavors and textures.

⁴Ghugni is a delectable and popular street as well as household food in Bengal. It is prepared from dried yellow or white peas (also known as Matar Dal) cooked with spices and served with variety of toppings and accompaniments.

⁵Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore*, Prentice Hall, 1966, p. 2.

⁶Lord Vishnu is a prominent deity in Hinduism, according to Gitagobinda Lord Vishnu is associated with ten main incarnations or *avatars*. The incarnations include Matsya (a fish), Kurma (a turtle), Varaha (a boar), Narasimha (half-man, half-animal), Vamana (a dwarf), Parashurama (a sage warrior), Rama (Prince Rama), Balaram or Krishna, Buddha, and Kalki (a warrior on a white horse). Each incarnation is associated with important events and eras in Hindu mythology, and Lord Vishnu is believed to take these forms to protect the world and restore balance to the universe.

⁷Manabendu Bandyopadhyay, *Manu Samhita*, ed. And translation, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Calcutta, 2008, p. 41.

⁸*Rigveda*, 10.87.

⁹*Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, XVII, 8.

¹⁰'Vers une psycho-sociologie di l' alimentation modern' AES, N (5) 1961, p.23.

¹¹*Alu Posto* is a very popular vegetarian dish from almost all-over Bengal. It is an ordinary dish prepared with potatoes (Alu in Bengali) cooked in a poppy seed paste (Posto in Bengali) and other ingredients in gravy. The dish is commonly served with steamed rice.

¹²Panch Phoron is often used in vegetarian and fish dishes in Bengali cuisine. It is also used as a seasoning for pickles and chutneys. The spice blend is typically used in equal parts, although the ratios may vary depending on the recipe and personal preference. Panch Phoron is a versatile spice blend that adds a unique flavor and aroma to dishes, making it a popular ingredient in Bengali cuisine and beyond.

¹³*Payesh*, also known as rice pudding, is a popular and delicious dessert in the Indian subcontinent, including Bengal and Tripura. It is usually made by cooking rice in milk and sugar or date molasses until it becomes creamy and thick and is often flavored with cardamom, cashew, raisin, or bay leaf.

¹⁴*Rosogolla* is a popular sweet from Bengal made of chhana soaked in sugar syrup. Its origin is debated, but two stories attribute its invention to confectioners in Calcutta and Odisha in the late 19th century. Regardless, it has become an iconic sweet in India and is recognized as a Geographical Indication product.

¹⁵Prasad seva is a significant part of Vaishnavism, a branch of Hinduism that worships Lord Vishnu and his avatars. It involves offering food to the deity as an act of devotion, which is then distributed among the devotees as prasad. Prasad is considered to be blessed and carry the deity's blessings, and the act of distributing it is seen as an act of service and devotion. In many Vaishnava temples in Bengal, prasad seva is offered as a free meal to visitors, promoting community and equality regardless of their social or economic status. Prasad seva is a way of connecting the devotee, the deity, and the community and is believed to bring good karma and blessings to the giver.

¹⁶Kirtans and Bhajans are religious activities in Hinduism that involve singing or chanting hymns, prayers, or devotional songs dedicated to deities or spiritual entities. These practices are accompanied by musical instruments and rhythmic melodies. During religious, spiritual, and festival gatherings, devotees express their love, surrender, and

devotion to the divine through kirtans and bhajans. Regional languages are employed in kirtans and bhajans to foster spirituality, devotion, and inner growth. Through the medium of music and devotional singing, kirtans and bhajans inspire spirituality and evoke a profound sense of grace.

¹⁷The Chaitanyacharitamrita is a sacred book in the Hindu Vaishnava tradition, offering a detailed account of the life and teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a 16th-century saint and spiritual teacher. Written by Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami, a devoted follower of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the text is divided into three sections: Adi-lila, Madhya-lila, and Antya-lila. It presents Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as an incarnation of Lord Krishna, emphasizing his teachings on devotion (bhakti) and the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra as a path to spiritual liberation and divine love. Through exploring profound philosophical concepts, devotional rituals, and the ecstatic experiences of Chaitanya and his followers, the Chaitanya charitamrita serves as a comprehensive guide in the Vaishnava tradition.

¹⁸KrishnadasKabiraj, *Chaitanya Chartiamrita*, Madhyalila, sloke- 68, 69, 70, 71, 72.

¹⁹*ibid.*, Antalila, sloke-85, 86, 87.

²⁰Ekadashi is a Hindu festival observed twice a month on the eleventh day of the waxing and waning phases of the moon. Devotees of Lord Vishnu fast, engage in devotional activities and perform puja rituals on this day. It is believed that by observing the fast and engaging in devotional activities, one can purify their mind, body, and soul and attain spiritual advancement. There are twenty-four Ekadashis in a year, and Vaikuntha Ekadashi is considered the most auspicious.

²¹KrishnadasKabiraj, *Chaitanya Charitamrita* extensively discusses the significance of observing Ekadashi in the Madhya-Lila section, specifically in Chapter 24, Chapter 25, and Chapter 26.

²²Purnendunarayan Sinha, *Bhagavat Puran*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Madras, 1950, p.367.

²³The term *Bhog* or *Naivedyam* refers to the food that is offered to the deity during worship or puja. It is believed that the divine presence sanctifies the food, and it becomes blessed. The consecrated food is then distributed as Naivedyam among the devotees, symbolizing the acceptance of the offering by the Lord and his grace being shared with the devotees. The Bhog offered to Lord Vishnu typically includes a variety of vegetarian dishes, fruits, sweets, and milk products.

²⁴Debashis Bhowmik, *Banglar Debdebi O Puja Parban*, Punascha, Calcutta, 2020, p. 397.

²⁵Joydev, *Gita Govinda*, Sri Sarachandra Bandyopadhyay(ed.), Calcutta, 1895, p. 24.

²⁶AshokMitra, *Paschim Bongor Pujaparbon O Mela*, Vol-II, ed. Anu Presh, Calcutta, 1968, p. 48

²⁷However, the term *Rash* or *Raas* festival is not specifically mentioned in the Bhagavata Purana. The festival is celebrated based on the description of the Raas Leela episode in the text and is a part of the cultural and religious traditions of the Hindu community.

²⁸Biprodas Mukhopadhyay, *Mistanna Pak*, Second edition, Bengal Medical Library, Calcutta, 1905, p. 142.

²⁹K. T. Achaya, *A Historical Companion of Indian Food*, Oxford Indian Press, 1994, p. 155.

³⁰Milan Dey, *Bangalir Khadyokosh*, Deys Publishing, Calcutta, 2015, p. 18.

Revisiting public health system in colonial Bengal: A brief historical analysis

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Abstract

Colonial India served as the impetus for the development of public health in the modern era. Since Bengal was the first province to come under direct colonial rule, the introduction of colonial rule in the second half of the nineteenth century marked significant changes in the political and philosophical ideas of the Indian subcontinent, particularly in Bengal. The health system, in particular the severe epidemic and the great invention of western medicine, were remarkable areas of medical perspective in colonial India, more specifically in colonial Bengal. After more than a century of British control, the modern healthcare system slowly began to emerge. It is important to remember that the public health system has different notions than medical services. The public health system broadly serves different objectives like sanitation, reducing control of mortality, prevention from different epidemics providing modern education and enhancing food safety to the society at large. The primary objectives of the public health service are to deliver fundamental health care, including vector control, oversight of waste disposal, and health education explanations. Public health policy occupied an important strategy of the Central and State government to control and eradicate killer diseases in contemporary India. Following the emergence of subaltern studies and in the age of postmodernism, the topic of public health policies is not limited to the research of medical professionals; it also attracts significant interest among scholars and academicians across the academic disciplines in different global and national universities. Academics

and experts in the social sciences, in particular social history academics, are demonstrating an eagerness to explore the origins of various epidemics and their effects on society.

Keywords: Colonial Bengal, Public Health, Sanitization, Vaccination.

Introduction

The British, who primarily came for commercial zeal, became the virtual rulers with little knowledge and interest in Indian land and its people. How the natives of Bengal were treated by the alien administrator is still a subject of historical debate. During the rule of English East India Company, the British officers and the administrator gradually came to understand the tropical climate and different tropical diseases of Indian sub-continent. Due to the company officials' limited understanding of indigenous medicine and its practices, the business hired doctors to serve as their civil servants for the care of English officers and European soldiers.¹

No grant was given until the Charter Act of 1813 for the aims of health care and cleanliness; therefore, the natives were left to practice traditional medicine because they were generally hesitant to adopt western medical practices. Sum of rupees one lakh was allotted for the health care system though the procedure and modality were not established for the spending for the allotted fund. No department was assigned to handle any Indian nation-related health issues.² However, as new British administrators sought to introduce western education with the aid of the newly formed Bengal intelligentsia and the utilitarian idea of development, which Lord Bentinck greatly admired, the situation gradually shifted towards the introduction of western medical practice.³

In anticipation of the growing concept, Calcutta Medical College was founded in February 1835. It was the first formally established western-style medical college in British Bengal. Though the company administrative did not undertake any vast legislative or executive actions to medicate the control of epidemic like's smallpox and cholera. The English military and government, as well as the educated urban middle class, were the only groups using the western medical system.⁴ After the great insurrection of 1857, England's government underwent a historic transformation. The British government elected by the British adult's male to take charge of the administration following the historic queen proclamation. The number of British soldiers has increased significantly, and all senior positions have been given to Europeans, especially British officers. The act of 1861 subsequently opened a new chapter for the welfare policies to cool down discontent of the people of India and regained of the natives towards the

British rule. In the changing political context, the health system also received a new figure. The emergence of public health receives the primary step to embark its long and historic journey in colonial Bengal. Here is a brief overview of the advent of western medicine before the central government of India established the public health department in 1864.⁵

Early initiatives

In 1600 A.D., the first ship of the British East India Company arrived in India, bringing with it the first introduction of western medicine. In 1764 a medical department was established under the purview of English East India Company regulation and Charter for the medical necessity of civil and military personnel of the company. The department had twenty eight sergeants, four head sergeants, and eight assistant sergeants. By including the sergeant general and physician general under the control of the commander in chief of the Indian army, the hospital's board was founded in 1775 to administer European hospitals.⁶

Following the regulating Act of 1773, the distinct medical branch was constituted in the three already-existing presidencies of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras with strength of 234 sergeants. To incorporate more services for the general public, the hospital board was renamed the medical board in 1796.⁷ The civil medical department was not established before to 1868. According to the public health statute of England from 1858, the civil medical department was established in 1868. In the following year of 1869 a public health commission and a statistical officer appointed to the government of India to primary look after the improvement of sanitation and keeping record of mortality.

After the government's 1896 decree abolishing the three-presidency system. Shifting adjustments also occurred in the medical division. The Indian Medical services was established by amalgaming all three presidential medical department following the introduction of Indian Medical Services. The medical services of the civilian and military were formally separated. The medical board and the public health commission were given the task of managing the civil health system, particularly with regard to the unique concerns of sanitation, mortality, and vaccination. The royal army medical board was established and given the responsibility to oversee the medical services provided to the military and royal navy.⁸

The public health department was still governed by the central ministry's local autonomous government prior to the 1919 Montague Chelmsford reform. The scope of the government occasionally extends to local matters. In 1888, while Lord Dufryn was India's governor general, the municipal medical board was established. The neighborhood Indian officers were tasked by the municipal

medical board with the crucial tasks of sanitation and immunization. However, no financial obligation was accepted by the government.⁹ The municipalities were given money to merge for the purpose of paying local employees' salaries. Particularly in the province of Bengal, an overly centralized government and a lack of effective employees had very little of an impact.

In Bengal, the sanitation movement was locally managed to reduce the epidemics of cholera, malaria, smallpox, and other ailments. According to the official record, the succeeding empower officer had divergent opinions about the highly contagious epidemic being addressed by the mitigation opuses in both native and English. The local authority periodically assigned different departments to control the diseases.

The police department was assigned a unique responsibility starting in 1880 to report to the health officer on the census of epidemics, particularly in rural areas. The local police station was informed about the pandemic diseases on a daily basis by the Chowkidar.¹⁰ The report wasn't independently examined, though.

Since the English East India Company began to occupy Bengal, epidemic prevention has become a top priority for British administrators. The corporate records indicated that cholera became a highly lethal disease for British military and navy personnel in 1830.¹¹ The epidemic was highly regarded as dangerous health complication even in western world. As the treatment was unknown and limited available medicine. The government's main priority was display, notably regarding the British army and navy. Otherwise, the poor Indians' diseases would have been addressed instead of this fatal illness.¹² The Indian government introduced new guidelines and viewpoints for its prevention following the Constantinople sanitary conference in 1862.

As it is officially treated the atmospheric condition of its prime causes. After the outbreak of cholera in 1868, special committee was constituted to identify the proper causes of this infection disease. The committee headed by the principle inspector of the medical department. Came to the conclusion that frequent religious festivals and fairs in many sections of the country were the main causes of cholera. The committee also came to the conclusion that travelers and pilgrims were the primary disease carriers.¹³ The commission advised establishing new hospitals in detention facilities and prisons, managing pilgrim centers properly, and enhancing hospital sanitary standards. To fully analyze the cholera illnesses, notably in Bengal, the epidemic specialists were specifically asked.

The recurrent cholera outbreaks, especially in Bengal's North-Western region, have been attributed to environmental factors, according to epidemiologist

Jhon Murray, who also served as inspector general of a civil hospital in North-West Bengal. Though sergeant W.R. Cornish have objected the environmental proposition as the main causes for the outbreak of cholera, as sanitary commissioner of Madras W.R. Cornish investigated, the cholera in 1870 and Sekendrabad in 1871, concluded in his study that unsanitary circumstances were the main cause of cholera, especially in urban areas. In 1890 the environment cause of cholera was rejected by the government and adopted new method for the treatment of this disease.¹⁴

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, various fevers developed into another significant health concern. Malaria, which is spread by mosquitoes, frequently strikes large areas, especially in Bengal. Bengal experienced the growth of malaria in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a result of the establishment of the railway in 1850 and the building of cutting trees, canal embankments, and tiny rivers.¹⁵ Aside from a few military officers in Punjab who were personally investigated, the government did not initially place much emphasis on preventing this dangerous illness. Sergeant Ronald Ross, who joins the Indian medical service in 1881, started the study of malaria particularly in Bengal, since 1882 after a long research on this disease. He eventually learns about the true parasite and its life cycle, which is mostly to blame for malaria fever. Sergeant Ross was given the Nobel Prize in medicine in 1902, and his discovery shed new light on efforts to prevent and treat malaria.

During the early stages of British control, a British sergeant discovered another fatal disease: TB. The Indian subcontinent had the sickness much earlier. The Tuberculosis Foundation of India was founded in 1939 to combat this illness. There no medical treatment was available for Tuberculosis in colonial India. Special centre were established in the hill areas for the respite of the hardship of this disease. Tuberculosis research was prohibited, despite the fact that this group of people in society was disproportionately socially and economically afflicted.¹⁶

It must be proven that the protection and treatment of society's most vulnerable groups were not prioritized as highly as the avoidance of epidemic diseases. As the British government allocated meagre fund to the researches of the medicine and others curative meajers for the permanent abolition of virus and bacteria's responsible for the deadly diseases.

When the British Empire was founded in India, the British commanders gradually became accustomed to various geographical features, including mountains, plains, jumbles, and deserts. The imperial administrator gradually realized that the strange ailments could not be treated with the resources at hand. The colonial government in time to time adopted such regulations, policies and

laws that could prevent the spread of diseases in general, particularly the British military and navy. Since there was no private organization in existence at the time, the colonial administration was in charge of that show.¹⁷

Sanitization

After the great insurrection of 1857, the colonial authority gave sanitization its first and foremost priority. Discontent among the native Indians was brought on by the mass deaths caused by several illnesses under company administration. In order to avoid infections, the parliament suggested that the sanitary administration be founded and funded by the government.¹⁸ The first sanitary commission was appointed in 1864 and the first report commission was table to the parliament in 1869.¹⁹ Following the appointing of the sanitary commission the real history of public health in colonial India has started. The first sanitary report detailed the poor hygienic conditions in three presidential offices, including Calcutta. The report went on to say that in order to enhance the sanitary conditions in both the military cantonment and the community at large and avert the spread of fatal diseases, adequate administration and mechanisms were needed. The report also highlighted the sanitary commission's shortcomings and the lack of skilled workers.²⁰

There wasn't a separate sanitary officer for the general populace in Bengal. Only a few vaccinator positions were filled without the required duties and obligations. A health officer was appointed for Calcutta in 1864 as a result of the study. Every presidency received a sanitary commission in the same year, which had three full-time members, including two military officers and an Indian medical services officer with specialized training in public health who served as the commission secretary. The primary objective of the commission was to reduce the mortality of the army and the improvement of sanitary condition in army cantonment. Bengal got its first sanitary reorganization committee and first public health branch from the department of self-government in 1920 and 1921, respectively. Calcutta, Chinsura, Jalpaiguri, and Dacca are the first four sanitary circles of Bengal; they were established in 1912.²¹

Vaccination

Since the foundation of the public health system, the administration of vaccines for many infectious illnesses, including cholera and smallpox, has been a part of it. But not all presidents received the vaccination with the same degree of success. Early in the second half of the nineteenth century, a vaccination campaign was launched. The vaccination drives only administetar to the European soldiers and civil officers. The vacation was not extended to the rural Bengal due to the large apathy of the local natives, lack of resources and severer constrain of professional vaccinated. In the Bengal self government act of 1885, constituted

three classes of local authorities, these are District boards, having the jurisdiction of whole district, the local boards of each subdivisions and union committees with in a sub-division which works under district board²². The union board completely relied on district board in terms of resources and fund. The district board had the authority to manage water supplies, hospitals, and dispensaries. A sanitation committee that would report to the district sergeant was required by the district board of the jurisdiction. This sanitary group was given responsibility for local area vacations. A district health officer who is fully qualified was recommended by the sanitary commission for the same year, 1917. The importance of including civil authorities in the immunisation procedure was stressed by the sergeant general of Bengal. A district health officer was assigned to each district full-time in June 1919. The civil sergeant took great care to promote vacations in rural Bengal.²³

The vaccine campaign still has a long way to go before it is successful. Due to administrative indifference, a lack of coordination, and the significant presence of illiterate people, this was true even during the period of independence, notably in Bengal. Furthermore, starting in 1921, the provincial government showed a real interest in starting an academic campaign for a smooth vaccination in rural Bengal.²⁴ The under consideration document also made note of the Bengal intelligentsia's mostly urban lifestyle and lack of enthusiasm for the vaccination campaign in colonial Bengal.

Conclusion

The idea of public health was not well known among the natives in early colonial Bengal. The colonial authority did not allot any funds for the local population's health improvement. In the initial stages, the business administration was largely responsible for the British army's sanitization and other public health efforts. In order to safeguard the foreign stakeholder, the firm and later the British colonial administration largely set up limited public health mechanisms in major cities like Calcutta. The available literature clearly showed that vaccine that prevented the endemic like cholera and small pox was not popularized in rural Bengal. A significant limitation had to be put into effect with the public health rules that were adopted during the colonial era. In terms of resources (financial and human), neither the central nor the provincial governments in colonial Bengal took full responsibility for establishing an effective public health system. In addition to that, the first and second world wars occurred in the 1940s and the second decade of the twenty-first century, respectively. The serious drawbacks of the public health system resulted in the deaths of a large number of people in Bengal due to different epidemics like the Spanish flu and cholera. The colonial government

took miserably limited action and proper initiative to prevent the epidemics and improve the health system of colonial Bengal.

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Education scenario of the Santhal in the North Bengal since colonial rule: a historical study

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Abstract

North Bengal as well as the northern part of West Bengal has historical significance from the beginning of the Kaibartya rule. In the colonial period, the British are trying to utilise many resources of the Indians without legal complaints (mode of monopoly). After the Charter Act of 1813, the monopoly of British trade was abolished and opened for all. By the treaty of Shinchula (1865), the British captured the Dooars (Duars) region from Bhutan. After this area gave security from the Bhutanese movement, they economically established a tea plantation industry which makes changed this region. In the Western Dooars which popularly known as Jalpaiguri (from 1869) established many teagardens by British planters. This plantation needed a required number of labours. However, local peoples were not interested in plantations or other political reasons and planters brought many immigrant tribes from Chhota Nagpur, Santhal Pargana, Natarhat district etc. Basically, the Santhals of the Western Dooars (Jalpaiguri) district came from the Santhal Pargana. This research will be highlighting the Education scenario of the Santhal an immigrant tribe of Western Dooars since Colonial rule.

Keywords: Tribe, Colonial, Education, Plantation, Labour, Immigrant, Indigenous

Introduction

The Northern part of West Bengal as well as western Dooars is a tea-growing area and deeply economically interested by the colonial ruler. According to the report of 1931 reported that 151 tea gardens were established in Western Dooars and Mr Haughton was the pioneer tea planter in this region which lies in the plains of Bhutan hills. This area was annexed by the British through the *Treaty of Sinchula* in 1865. Britishers are thing about the recapture issue from Bhutan again in this area, so they began to establish an industry like tea. They

started the tea industry (1874) and included the labour force which was drawn from tribal communities of Bihar, Jharkhand, Nepal, Odisha, etc. Tea plantations started after the labour requirements in 1874. After the establishment of the tea industry, the labour began settling in the agricultural sector vicinity of the tea plantation. When they returned from work in the tea garden they engaged in the agriculture. Even they complete retirement from the work they take to cultivation for their feeding.¹

North Bengal is of historical significance from this tea plantation, dynasties and any other movement by the many communities. Among North Bengal, Dooars has an important identity from colonial rule, especially through the tea plantation. This region was annexed by the British from Bhutan in 1865 and divided into two parts such as Western Dooars and Eastern Dooars. This Eastern Dooar was Popularly known as Jalpaiguri in 1869.² The British government realized to utilise the resources of Dooars which were huge and fertile and not properly suitable for the cultivated.³ The probability of Bhutanese depredation for this reason Britishers planned for the tea plantation. After the plantation, immigrant communities increased day by day. According to the 2001 census reported Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri consisted of 204167 tribal populations.

All these communities have their unique own culture and lifestyle entirely distinctive and the population is one of the largest from the beginning of civilization in India. Especially they show their culture by dancing accompanied by instruments, Flutes, Dhol and Cymbals.⁴ Admiring their ethnic culture of dance, music is shown in the form of paintings and art on the canvas of the painters describing their joy of dance in spring and autumn. They generally married in their own community, and if someone gets married to a different group they will be isolated in the previous days, however, this scenario has changed till today. They believe in the worship of ghosts or evil spirits and God is known as *Marangburu* and *Bonga* respectively in West Bengal. However, after the Charter Act of 1813 many Christian missionaries entered India and spread their religious thoughts among the tribal communities and others too. Many people are converted to Christianity and more over still their religious beliefs. From many sources, as illustrated in the Christian books their description of the ethnic tribe and culture has been described. In the tribal area, the tea garden recently has a school, hospital. In the house sanitation and educating them about proper free health check-ups and informing them about their rights, the different scope of living our central government has provided them with seats in scheduled tribes for their better development. However, though their living is restricted to forests cutting trees and agriculture, lack of education

has made them the most backward. They have limited themselves to their zone unaware of the development; this is because of the financial drawback for higher studies leading to the lack of information and understanding of suffering from poverty.

Most of the Santal tribes of Dooars have a typical tribal lifestyle but exceptions among the jobholder family. They fulfilled their need for forest resources and weekly wages from the planter and also engaged in cultivation and fishing in their free time. They use good skills in craft making. The study concentrates on the influences of modern values and institutions on the day-by-day. After the migration, they brought their knowledge of various skills and carried generation to generation such as craft, agriculture etc. they were exposed to the system of globalization and related to modernization which impacted the many changes that can be seen in their changing culture and occupational structure and role perception. The significance of the administration in social life is primary evidence. Among the communities of North Bengal, they have a specific role in their society and both the men and women are maintaining the unique tradition. They come into the new style of form of life, and institutional values which make the social transformation in their society.⁵ This work concentrated on the various educational scenarios of Santals through an ethnographic study. They have come under the Austro-Asiatic group, and speak the Santali language (an Austro-Asiatic Group) is one of the national languages of India.⁶ In Dooars apart from agriculture, they can be seen in the tea gardens plucking tea leaves, residing in the nearby villages. They stay in communities or groups occupying a particular land or village but are found in a very minor population spread in different parts of the eastern part of India. They are the oldest tribes in India forwarded from the Pre Aryan times. They are still found in a few regions of eastern India such as West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand from British rule.⁷ The Santals are the largest tribal community in Jharkhand. The other major tribal communities are Munda, Oraon, Mahali, Ho and Lohara. They have lived in the Dooars from the tea plantation for several generations and have imbibed a number of Hindu beliefs and rituals, but some of them have been converted to Christianity. Some sections of Santals are well-educated and have settled in the towns in recent times, however, in the British period in Dooars they were totally deprived.

In the Western Dooars as well as Jalpaiguri district is a non-regulation district and is included in the list of scheduled districts to which Acts of the Indian Legislature extended by executive order with or without modification.⁸ After the annexation of Dooars the British planters introduced the tea industry. The labour force engaged in the tea plantations of Jalpaiguri and of the Terai region of

Darjeeling district is predominantly from Chhotanagpur and Santhal-Parganas in Bihar.⁹ According to the J F Gruning, a founder of the district gazetteer, observed that most of the tea garden's labours work for a time of their extra income which use in the future in the district. In the field of hard work, they are always ready for such excellent cultivation. Education incorporates all human knowledge because where language goes, so goes our role in facilitating its learning and development. In 1857 established three Universities Kolkata, Madras and Bombay has an impact on Indian education part. But the beginning of the British rule in the Dooars area was a different scenario. Santhal of the tea isolation tribe of this region was deprived of modern education since the beginning of the tea plantation. However, the British planters were mainly involved them as tea workers. They believed that if they (Santhal) got educated then they united and demand rise day after day. No school or college was set up for them in the isolated tea plantation area of the western Dooars. They are primarily established as a stage and type of society for their future generation. They represent a society that lacks the positive traits of modern society and thus constitutes a simple, illiterate and backward society. After the change in education, modern work conditions, and introduction of new technology in their society which makes change their lifestyle and educational scenario, however, sometimes find that in remote areas is not available for their use. If transformation is in the direction of caste society, then it is described as having become a caste society. If the reference is peasant, then it is posited as the peasant society and if the general direction of transformation is social differentiation, then it is described as stratified or differentiated of their own society.¹⁰

In the tea plantation, workers are isolated from the local people and their children have little access to modern education and employment other than on the plantation or in low-productive agricultural jobs within the neighbourhood during the colonial rule. From the tea garden, they were also mostly unable to find employment in the towns and popular crowded areas because Bengali-speaking states at the beginning of the tea plantation in this area by the Britishers. Although lack of education restricts their choices of alternative occupations, this is not the full explanation. Residents are also marginalized in the area, a factor that tends to make them group together in their own plantation communities. Therefore, they look toward the plantation in the Dooars for employment in the beginning of the plantation and present.¹¹ When in earlier years there were acute labour shortages, planters could attempt to overcome these by offering higher wages and better living conditions. This would cause them to spend more on labour, and the planters knew that this situation would in effect reduce the huge profits the plantation

industry was amassing. Given that plantations the world over began by employing slave labour, planters tried to find similar types of labour even after slavery was abolished. They developed a new category of bonded labour known as indentured labour. The early plantations in Dooars engaged such labour from the tribal areas. The labours of the Dooars are not used by indenture which makes the planters a bad reputation in the national press by exploiting labour. However, plantation workers still found themselves unable to leave or return to their places of origin. Santhal at this time was not able to move outside for better education during the British era.

Dooars was a non-regulated area of British has been historically important from the Ancient to colonial period as well as recent times. After the plantation, the British brought many tea labours for tea plantation from the beginning but they no looked into the proper modern education from the beginning. The Britishers only involved themselves in the tea plantation work. According to the survey of tea plantation areas in the colonial period, the Dooars have record and there is no British educational institution for the tea labours inside the tea isolation area. However, the British were not willing to provide outside education for the Santhal. The Santhal are one of the largest tribal communities in India who come from Santhal Pargan for the tea plantation after the forest act (1865). This act prohibited access to forest resources and they search for different jobs for their survival. In this situation, they came to this Dooars through the Sardari system. They were great fighters during the British regime in India reason they fight against the British in 1855 by the Sidhu and Kanhu most remarkable. The indigenous people of neighbouring areas did not show any interest to work in tea gardens, as well as did not find any interest to join in the profession of tea workers and other political reasons of the British. Whatever, maybe the fact the immigrated and isolated tea workers had hardly any social contact with the people and happenings of the neighbouring areas of that region and even language was also the main problem in it, one of them community is Santhal.¹² Thus, they used to take early bed because of their exhausting work right through the day and gave their labour upto night. For this reason, they could not provide proper education for their children during this period. The British planters also intentionally kept them alienated and to transformed their intention into work. However, the Santhal did not think about their position to change their occupation. Besides, the Santhal failed to provide good education to their offspring for the reason that the British planters did not make any arrangement of good quality education for the children of the Santhal. The planters had no time to waste to think about the career and future of the kids of the workers. In fact, the relationship involving tea worker Santhal and

the land owner was simply a profit-making relationship. Even after the alternation of ownership from the hands of the foreigners to the Indian planters that profit-making relationship or money-making relationship is unchanged.¹³ However, Darjeeling was exceptional pertaining to the case of educational perspective.

In the Dooars area, the Santhal continued to face better facility problems during the colonial period. They were not able to move outside for education to their children. For this reason, this society come backwards for education or they did not benefit from the British era on education. The continuity is backward in modern education for a long time. Even now they are gradually educated and holding the higher position in the institution or other working professions. But they are deprived of modern society by the shameful mind of this situation. Understanding current their society needs a basic respect for the historical processes, which have determined the course of consecutive changes in the ideological, political, economic and socio-economic life of the tribal communities one of them Santhal.¹⁴ They are scattered throughout the natural primitive places and live mainly in the remote tea garden of Dooars after the tea plantation. They are increasingly subject to exploitation and dispossession of their education by the planter's pressure. The Santhal community have faced isolation and social discrimination like Dalits from the mainstream society.

The Santhal in the twentieth century started to upgrade their position to get equal social rank as the higher caste and indigenous peoples. Santhal was politically and Socio-economically suppressed by the British planters. They suffer from existential crises, and even their language should not be considered in literature but one of the national languages of India after the independence. The Santhal is one of the examples, among their community mostly seen the dropout students. They require very sympathetic attention in the existing socio-political life. Santhal in the tribal society has traditional rituals and customs. Most of the isolated Santhal habitation areas are under the non-access of schooling zone in the colonial time. The Santhals also made their way into the district as tea garden coolies and in 1901 they numbered 10,857.¹⁵ In Assam where they can be compelled to work, they are looked on as first-class labourers, but in the western Dooars, they are not held- in such high esteem. The unique feature of the tea industry is the employment of large numbers of the labour force in all spheres of work in the tea estate. The tea workers constitute a very special kind of labour force with a colonial past, used to live in *Basti* called the labour line, lack of education and very low literacy level and in the true sense had no alternative employment opportunities for the Santhal.

The Christian Missionaries gave a significant impact on education, especially among the tribal communities as well as Santhal. In 1813, got permission to enter missionaries to India from the British Government. As indicated, the occupation of all villagers was of the unskilled casual variety. No Santhal in the village had attended secondary school and few had attended or were attending primary schools at the time of the survey. The majority of the villagers are, therefore, employable only as tea labour or coolies. They are involved in the tea garden work flicking leaves, and other work purposes of the tea gardens. The Santhal are seems rarely to become an artisan, mechanic, or clerk is a reflection not only of his lack of education and training, but also the fact that his outside-village work is considered to be temporary, and there is little incentive to learn skills.

The Santhal in the isolation tea garden area predominantly depends on the planter's instruction. If they provided any better facilities in their favour then the Santhal accept all the things. The missionary will spread the Gospel while performing a practical service, such as working at an orphanage or providing medical care and English education. Once locals become believers, they must be disciplined, trained, and even educated to become pastors in their community and Santhal has no exception.¹⁶ Christian missions are an intentional effort to lead others to save faith in Jesus Christ. All missions include the idea of leaving the comfort of the fellowship of other believers to engage with those who do not know Christ and also provide education, this may be in the village or the other side of the globe.¹⁷ From this time the tribal communities of the tea plantation area come into contact with them and adopted the Christian thought and education, no exception in Santhal. By the time of the Charter Act, the western Dooars and the hills surrounding it were still situated outside the Company's direct rule. However, the Bhutan War (1864) incursions and the first Ingo-Bhutan war led the British into the region, which became formally annexed in 1865 by the treaty of Sinchula.¹⁸ After this incident, the British government discovered the tea industry as a policy-making for permanent economic development. An early key player in tea cultivation was Charles Alexander Bruce, who became the superintendent of tea culture in Western Dooars. This interest served the missionary enterprise and gradually started to provide modern education to the Santhal isolated community. Missionaries should also prepare, learn about the culture, gather supplies, and discover what will be expected of them. The people of the Santhal society mainly depend on subsistence farming. They lead a very simple and distinct life. They are also engaged in fishing and cultivation. More particularly they have been exposed to the processes related to modernisation and globalization. In the

traditional tribal society, a specific role was assigned to men and women for the maintenance of their age-old traditions, customs etc. Dependency on a forest-based economy also influenced their cultural norms, traditions and values.

Conclusion

In the Western Dooars, gradually the Britishers and Missionaries founded a number of educational institutions for the tea workers as well as open to all of this area also got lake opportunity to imbibe quality education from these institutions. However, the underprivileged children of the workers of the Western Dooars had no such opportunity in the beginning. Subsequently, after the independence of India, a few Hindi medium primary schools were established in the tea garden area of Western Dooars. However, there were fewer secondary and higher secondary schools within the periphery of the tea garden and missing in most of the areas. Consequently, the tea worker of the Western Dooars stayed alienated generation after generation, they remain underprivileged year after year. The statistics will totally disappoint us if we make an effort to calculate the numeral of highly educated and higher post holders from the children of the tea garden workers. Immigrant tribes of this area were deprived of the means by which they might improve their position and condition. In the year 2003, the Santali language has been included in the eighth schedule of the constitution of India. Literature also presented the great dedication of Santhals towards nature. Santali language and people started getting their identity all over the world. Lastly, the scenario of the British period or beginning time is changed but needed more improvement in the educational sector. This research might be helpful in future work in this field of study.

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Religious travel, sacred landscape and place-making: An analytical critique on *Nabadwip Parikrama*

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Abstract

This present research paper intends to do a practical as well as a theoretical field inspection on the 18th century Vaishnava scholarship Nabadwip Parikrama which has been a traditional legacy for millions of devotees of Bengal Vaishnavism to historicize the sacred places and landscape at Nabadwip. In this research paper I will explore in greater detail of the Nabadwip Parikrama and the ways in which patterns of sanctification have created a strong sense of the imagined landscape locally. Since there has been a glaring debate¹ regarding the exact birth place of Chaitanya at the land of devotion, my focus attention will not be locked the spot rather showing the intricacies of Narahari Chakrabarty's work and how it led the most renounce Vaishnava leader Keddarnath Dutta in the 19th century and his followers including Vaishnava scholars of recent times.²

Key words:parikrama ,miyapur, mayapur, sacred landscape, tirtha khetra.

Introduction

Few sacred lands have been as central to Vaishnava theological identity as the Vaishnava spiritual leader Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's (1486–1534) birth place Nabadwip. Followers of the Vaishnava faith and community usually refer to

Nabadwip as *dhâma* and not as *tîrtha* (Perun, 2018, p. 99). The fundamental difference between *dhâma* and *tîrtha* lies in their theological episteme. The places pilgrims seek out are called *tîrtha* literally fords or crossings coming from a verbal root meaning cross over, whereas a *dhâma* is the home of God (Eck, 2012, p. 69). All the hagiographies of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu refer Nabadwip as the great learning centre. So Nabadwip is not only a *dhâma* but also known for its great reputation as the Oxford of the Orient. It has produced the finest scholars of medieval Bengal: among them Basudeb Sarbavoumo (1450-1540), Raghunath Siromoni (1477-1547), Sankar Tarkabagish (18th century), Krishnananda Agambhaish (16th century) gained unprecedented popularity across the Sub-continent for their high adroitness in the study of logic, *sastra*, classical-philosophy, furthermore, their contribution on the field made Nabadwip to become the seat of *NabyaNaya*, by destroying the superiority of Mithila. That is why Bholanath Chunder argued that much of Nuddea's fame rests upon its being an ancient seat of learning, which has exercised a great influence upon the politics, morals, and manners of the Bengalees. It is chiefly noted to be the great school of Niaya philosophy. But it has produced scholars in laws, whose opinions still regulates the disposal of Hindoo property in Bengal, and rule the fate of Hindoo widows. It has produced theologians, whose works counteract the progress of the Vaishnavas, Kurtavajas, and Brahmos. It still produces an annual almanac regulating the principal festivals, journeys and pilgrimages, launchings of boats, sowings of corn, reaping's of harvests, and celebrations of marriages, in half Bengal (see, Chunder, 1869, p. 38).

Diana Eck argued that the landscape is larger and more sweeping than any single feature (Eck, 2012, p. 693). To this contrast the sacred landscape of Nabadwip has been determined by the spread of literature and theological concept. *Parikrama* means the path surrounding something in Sanskrit and is also known as *Pradaksina* (to the right), representing circumambulation. Both words are mostly used in the context of religious practice of circumambulation of sacred entities that could be a shrine, temple, sacred landscape or a place. Nabadwip *Parikrama* has been regarded as an important spiritual journey for centuries and one that happens every year during the celebration of Chaitanya's birth is also connected with the theological notion of sacred landscape. Hence, this paper will focus entirely on Narahari Chakrabarty's *Nabadwip Parikrama* and its intricacies regarding place making and religious travels (i.e. *Parikrama*) within the sacred land of devotion. Further this research paper shows how this scholarship leads the most renounce Vaishnava leader Keddarnath Dutta in the 19th century and his followers including Vaishnava scholars of recent times lately.

Nabadwip Parikrama is entirely focused on the various facets of religious cartography, sacred landscape and travel based on the epicenter of Vaishnavism as is evident in the title itself. Initially the book was divided into two versions; one of them is the 12th chapter of *Bhaktir-ratnakara*, which was edited and published by Nagendranath Basu in 1909 AD as a separate book while the other one survived (unpublished at that time) only in the form of three manuscripts: two of them are conserved in Bangiya Sahitya Parishad (#1533 and #1670) and the another one in Kolkata University (#6480) (Perun, 2018, notes).

The two versions of *Nabadwip Parikrama* are very similar to each other and they were written in Bengali in the style of a *padya* (i.e. a form of *payar* verse) that includes ample Sanskrit quotations and songs from *puranas*, *srivadvagabatagita*, *srichaitanyacharitamrita*, *srichaitanyavagabat*, *sri Krishna chaitanyacharitetc* (see, Chakrabarty, 1909). The second version is an condense form of the 12th chapter of *Bhakti-ratnakara*, which consists of 4076 verses, though, *NabadwipaParikrama* has only 811 of *payar* verses directly related to it (see, Chakrabarty, 1909). The unpublished *Nabadwipa Parikrama* is only 148 verses in *payarmeter*, written on 4 folios 11.8"x 5" (see, Kamilya, 1976). Apart from, condensation another difference between the two works is that *Nabadwip Parikrama* from the 12th chapter of *Bhaktir-ratnakara* is that the first one is written in a standard *payarmeter* with 14 syllables in both lines, while the second version of the work is written in a shortened *payar* with 10 syllables in the first line and 14 in the second (see, Chakrabarty, 1909).

Sacred Landscape and intricacies of Narahari Chakrabarty

Primarily, Narhari Chakrabarty (who is also known as Ghanasyam Das) was regarded as the last scholar of medieval period on Goudiya Vaishnavism. His exceptional scholarship makes Vaishnavism as standard means of living tradition in modern times, specifically, with its wide range of acceptance and illustrious description of the landscape of the medieval city of Nabadwip. It is feasibly clear on the account that several historians of the 19th-20th century such as Kanti Chandra Rarhi (1896), Kumudnath Mallik (1910, 1911) treated *Nabadwip Parikrama* as a primary source to write the history of the place of devotion, while Dr. Biman Bihari Majumdar opined that even though the 18th century book is rather theological than historical, it can provide historic sources for historians (see, Majumdar, 1939, P.165). However, recent scholars like Mrittunjoy Mondal (2002), Jogheshwar Choudhury (2018) not only condemn its blind use but also they critique its shortcomings before using it to their writings. For instance, it is in *Nabadwiper Itibritta* (2002) where Mondal refuses the nine island theory and argued that Nabadwip and Nadia are synonym which means new island (See,

Mondal, 2002, p. 26). In support of his claim he quoted from Futuh-us-salatin (1360 A.D), Ain-i-akbari (1596 A.D), Manasa Bijoy (1495 A.D), SuddharthSndipani (1494 A.D) showing that Nadia and Nabadwip simultaneously used by those authors in their scholarship as a place newly formed from the bed of the river Ganges (See, Mondal, 2002, p. 28).¹

Thus *Nabadwip Parikrama* still maintains its relevance among the scholars such as Kostiatyn Perun cited ample verses from the *NabadwipParikramin* his article entitled as *Navadvîpa as VaicGavaTîrtha* (2018). Here again, as is Kedarnath Dutta, Perun also misunderstood the interpretation of Chakrabaty's allegorical Mayapur as a real place. Further his claim of present-day Mayapur, which is a corrupt form of Miyapur (a Muhammadan village) as the birthplace of Chaitanya, is unhistorical (Mondal, 2002, p. 71). The fabrication of Miyapur as Mayapur is well established by Satyendralal Majumdar in his book named as *SriChaitanya JanmosthanBitarko Tar Truti O Samadhan* (1985). Historian Jangeshwar Choudhury opined that the concept of Mayapur is entirely a fabrication and imagination of Narahari Chakrabarti (Choudhury, 2018, preface). Nonetheless, Vaishnavas from each corner of the world come every year during Holi to celebrate Mahaprovu's birthday by travelling or *parikrama* all the places in Nadia, and all the pilgrim follow the *NabadwipParikrama* as a standard guidance for the *parikrama* (*i.e.* religious-travel) to these days. Therefore, the book's geographical elaboration of Nabadwip became a legacy for the inhabitants of the sacred land and anyone who visits it. The literary composition starts with the blessing *slokas* জয়লক্ষ্মী-বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া-পতিগৌরচন্দ। জয়বসুধা-জাহ্নবা-জীবন নিত্যানন্দ।^১ জয়শ্রীসীতারনাথঅদ্বৈতঈশ্বর। জয়জয়শ্রীবাসপণ্ডিতগদাধর।।^২ (Hail Gourchanda the lord of Lakhhi-Bishnupriya. Hail Nityananda life of BasudhaJahnavi). Its pensive details on contemplative ethos and praxis in Vaishnavism are inclusive. One of the distinguishing features of the book is that its etymological depiction of the nine islands (dwip) that constructed the meaning of Nabadwip in a whole new perspective which cannot be found in any other Medieval Vaishnava literature (see, Mondal, 2002, P. 26); all of his predecessors defined Nabadwip as an (new) island which we can also trace in EruMisra's *Kulokarika* (13th century), NuloPanchanan's *Sammndhanirnoy* (see, Mondal, 2002). Similar similarity we can see in Krittibas Ojha's Ramayana. He stated that, সপ্তদ্বীপমধ্যেসারনবদ্বীপগ্রাম (The village Nabadwip is most important among the seven islands). Furthermore, on the 19th February 1666 Tavernier mentioned Nabadwip as a large city. Tavernier stated that on the 19th February, 1666, toward evening, he passed a large town called Nadiya and it is the furthest point to which the tide reaches (see, Tavernier, 1889, p. 132-33). Notwithstanding, Chakrabarty writes, শ্রীনবদ্বীপেনবদ্বীপনাম।

পৃথকপৃথককিন্তুহয়এককগ্রাম।।^{১৩} (Sri Nabadwip is named as because there are nine islands in it, although separated, they constitute one village). He omitted to trace Nabadwip as a singular village. Further, it provides the geographical interpretation of each island i.e. *simntadwip*, *godrumdwip*, *madhydwip*, *antadwip*, are in the eastern bank of the Ganges whereas *koldwip*, *ritudwip*, *modrumdwip*, *janhudwip*, *rudradwip* are in the western bank of the river, however, it also provides a contradiction visa versa by quoting from *Bishnupurana* that out of nine island i.e. *indraddwip*, *kaserudwip*, *nagdwip*, *soumydwip*, *gandharwadwip*, *barundwip*, *tamraparno*, *gavastiman*; and Nabadwip is one of them though not mentioned by the name in *puranas*, রতস্যাস্যবর্ষস্যানবভেদানিশাময়। ইন্দ্রদ্বীপঃ কশেরশচতাসবর্ণেগভস্থিমান।। নাগদ্বীপপস্থথাসৌম্যাগান্ধর্বথবারুণঃ। অয়ংতুনবমস্তেষাংদ্বীপংসাগরসম্বৃতঃ।।

Even if we admit that the ninth island is Nabadwip, it raises a serious question regarding Chakrabarty's definition on the earlier nine island theory which proves the authenticity of the contradiction in a great manner and thus it is feasibly clear due to its religious characteristics rather than a scientific history. Regardless of the fact that it mainly deals with theological places and sometimes entwine with myths and legends, almost every neighboring places and villages were given a monographic detail such as the Brahman Puskarana, the pond of priest modern day Bamanpukur village, Samudragarh, Champakhatta, Uchchahatta, Bidyanagar, Baikunthapur, Mahatpur, Bilbapakhxa, Varadwatila, Subarnabihar etc. Ghanasyam Das came Nabadwip in the latter half of the 18th century, by that time all the places related to Chaitanya has already been washed away by the Ganges (though many sites were still surviving such as the MadhaiGhat was still there when he arrived at Nabadwip town). Naturally, he assumed many things to fulfill his scholarly ambition for instance his cartographical description of Mayapur regarding the birth place of Chaitanya was not mentioned in earlier scholarship either by Brindaban Das or by KrishnadasKaviraj or in any other scholarly work that has been done previously (see, Choudhury: 1997). He wrote that, নবদ্বীপমধ্যেমায়াপুরনামেস্থান। যখাজন্মিলেনগৌরচন্দ্রভগবান।।^{১৪} য়েছেব্দাবনেযোগপীঠসুমধুর। (It is Mayapur at Nabadwip where the lord Gourchandra was born) Notwithstanding, his assumption of the allegorical *mayapur* will soon get attention by the most renounce Vaishnava, during the colonial period, Kedar Nath Dutta (1838-1914) who embarked on a mission to mark Chaitanya's exact birthplace near the town of Nabadwip¹. Based on *Nabdwwip Parikrama*, he identifies the sacred spot as in the village of Miyapur² (i.e. a small Muhammadan village), however, the exact location of the birthplace is highly contentious even to these days. Though the book elegantly shows almost every place of sacred shrines, landscape of different sites related to Chaitanya at the medieval city of Vaishnavism, however, as mentioned earlier the birth place

of Chaitanya had already been submerged in the bed of the Ganges by that time (see, Sri SriNabadwiptatta: 1889); therefore, the act of locating Chaitanya's historical birthplace raised complex questions regarding the divinity of the saint and the relationship between mythic geographies and modern constructions of space Vaishnavism. Notwithstanding, Kedar Nath Dutta was greatly inspired by the *Nabadwip Parikrama* and expanded the work, developed it into *Nabadwip Dham Mahatma* (1890) providing further theological explanations for Nabadwip. Nevertheless, in verse no. 83-84 when the birth-place of the lord is being shown to Janhava Devi and others by Ishan, the name of Nabadwip is again and again reiterated," নবদ্বীপলীলাস্থানঅতিমনোহর। আনেরকাকথাব্রহ্মাদিরঅগোচর।।^{১০}

But whenever he tries to explain the mystical and metaphysical significance of the place, he utters the name of Maya or Mayapur (see, Chattopadhyay). Nabadwip Parikrama achieved a great quantity of admirer over the centuries. It not only gives a similar biographical presentation of Chaitanya, his childhood, neighborhood, companions, and followers, philosophical history of Vaishnavism as in other hagiographies of Chaitanya but also meticulously represents mythic-geographies, sacred-aura, place name, vaishanva-religious ethics, praxis of the later followers, their emotive articulation of *bhakti* etc. The marriage of Nityananda with his wife Jahnavadebi, their successor Ramchandra, their thoughts and ethos preaching incident of minutest details, Birhambir the king of Bishnupur, was among many characters that have been traced in the book. Chakrabarty eulogized the sacredness of the land of Nabadwip দ্বীপনামশ্রবনেসকলদুঃখক্ষয়। or সর্বপ্রকারেভেনবদ্বীপশ্রেষ্ঠহয়। (Nabadwip is the best in terms of supriorty in every means, hearing the name all the misery became less), compared with Vrindabana, and gave details of many temples and their worshiping deities with numerous examples of Chaitanya as incarnation of Krishna the god himself. Here we can find many lost temples that remain there during Chakrabaty's time beginning of 18th century; it may not be possible to identify the birth place based on the book, though. Dinesh Chandra Sen once wrote it quite elegantly regarding the fate of holy cities and their landscape in India that. When a river changes its course near a holy city, many of its sacred spots are washed away and form the bed of the river, but the priestly class cannot afford to lose their income. They get hold of the images and sacred relics and select a new part of the city to lodge them in and mark it with well defined boundaries. They preserve the sacredness of the shrine and their own sources of income by continuing to name the new place after the old name of the shrine (see, Sen, 1917). This is still relevant in the case of Nabadwip and evidently depicts the real circumstances of the holy city. Furthermore, Bholanath Chunder wrote that the caprices and changes of the

river have not left a trace of old Nuddea. It is now partly char land and partly the bed of the stream that flows to the north of the town. The Ganges formerly held a westerly course and old Nuddea was on the same side with Krishnagar(see, Chunder, 1869, p. 25).

Sacred-Aura, Dreams and Place Making

It is widely prevalent to almost every sacred shrine that dreams are often played a great role in legitimizing the holiness of pilgrim places. Dreams from gods help to theologize any place into a great important *tirtha khetra*; even deity's worship greatly depends on it. To this contrast Kedarnath's dream of Chaitanya legitimized Mayapur as sacred as any holy place in Nadia related to Chaitanya. Even though it is only in 1972 that ISKCON made Mayapur its main centre, however, its rapid transformation made his dream into real space of Vaishnavism i.e. place-making into a *tirtha khetra*. Despite the fact that Rarhi made strong opposition against Mayapur making the place of the Lord's arrival, it overcome his prediction and became a land of systematic temples, magnificent shrines, even challenge the fame and authority of the Goswami's of Nabadwip. Middle class Bengali's are much more fascinated by the aspects of globalized infrastructures that made Mayapur as secure *tirtha khetra* from *gossai*.i.e. traditional orthodox priests.

Rarhi made theoretical approaches as well as practical exploration of Mayapur just after its proclamation. To some extent Rarhi showed that it was a consequence of lack of respect in tradition especially due to colonial rule (see, Nabadwip Mahima, 1891). He laments on colonial perspective to analyze Hindu culture such as Shiva was being credited as the God of tribal's, causes great controversy, at that time (see, Nabadwip Mahima, 1891). It is evident from his writings that *ramchandrapur* was given much more trace as will be by the scholars of his later days. He visited the place immediately where the house of Sachi discovered by Kedarnath, explored contemporary rivalry between traditionalism and colonialism. He mentioned there were neither *amrita tulsī* nor any sign of old ruins as was supposed by Dutta rather he found a handful of small *tulsī* in the newly formed bed of the Ganges. It has been stated in *Nabadwiptatta* that Rarhi took only three days to complete the book showing his great depth on the subject. Nevertheless, his assumption of *ramchandrapuras* the birth place of Nimai came to known as *prachinmayapur*. And now it has become the seat of Gaudiya Mission and their devotees whereas *mayapur* getting attention worldwide with the help of ISKCON.

Nabdwwip Parikrama is not able to answer whether or not Mayapur or Ramchandrapur is the birth place of Chaitanya. Generally, his idea of *mayapur* connotes a place of illusion i.e. *mayawhere* Krishna was born in Brindavan, therefore, his comparison is allegorical (see, Choudhury: 1997). Recent studies show enormous development revolving ISKCON, though, failed to achieve agreement (see, Mondal, 2002) rather it must be admitted that the genealogy of Nabadwip had been destroyed much before the times of Chakrabarty and it would be wise to say that the medieval city of Nabadwip has the root of the movement, however, it is Mayapur who holds the fruit of the tree. For future approaches both the places needed to consider each other claim so that they can continue to flourish.

Conclusion

Gupta showed that travel is a human experience which contains a spectrum of transformative possibilities and uses for individuals, groups and nations. It reconstitutes the self, and the others in the traversed areas. It also has the lure of the still unseen and future possibilities (Gupta, 2010, p. 1). The very notion of travel in India was entwined in Religion (Gupta, 2010, p. 2). The Geographic historic entity in India, glimpsed through the pilgrim's prism was not just a utopic space, but a lived in interregional arena, where religion, journey's, place, people, modes of worship, mutual interactions and conduct all concatenated (Gupta, 2010, p. 22). Further she argued that, place-making occurs through visits to and residence in specific (holy / historic) places, connecting them, caring for them, and relating their history with their contemporaneous characteristics. It is an indispensable part of history, and individual and group identity for 'we are', in a sense, 'the place-worlds we imagine' (Gupta, 2012, p. 1). Religious travel/*pilgrimage* i.e. *Parikrama* in the envisioning of regional spaces in Bengal is entwined in religion. Religious travel was sanctioned by the *shastras*, *puranas* and epics (Gupta, 2012, p. 2). Pilgrimage cleansed the human soul, and ultimately brought salvation (Gupta, 2012, p. 2). To this contrast, for the historians and theologians of Vaishnavism, the book *Nabadwip Parikrama* offers insights on the sacred-geography and religious cartography of the NabadwipDhama as a Vaishnava *tirtha khetra*, "নবদ্বীপনামবিখ্যাতজগতে। শ্রবনাদিনববিধভক্তিদীপ্তযাতে।।"^{১৮} (Sacred fame of Nabadwip is well known to the world) Chakrabarty's explanation of different past time of Krishna's incarnations and their devotees that took place on each of the nine islands of Nabadwip is first among its kind. Even though there was no dearth

of scholarly works on Vaishnavism during Medieval period; among the Six Goswamis (*i.e.* Rup, Sanatan, Rahgunath Das, Raghunath Goswami, Gopal Vatta, Jib Goswami), KrishnadasKabiraj, Brindaban Das, Kabikarnapur, Loknath, Lochan Das and others have definitively produced the finest gems of Middle Bengali and Sanskrit literature, in stark contrast, *Nabadwip Parikrama* reveals much more on the latter development of the movement rather than Chaitanya's contemporary perspective it linked the *sampradaya* with the sacred landscape and places.

Narahari Chakrabarty studies the Vaishnava scriptures from the angle of a theologian, his expert knowledge of hagiographies of Chaitanya and of Sanskrit corpus makes this work an important contribution to the study not only for the religious history including sacred cartography of Nabadwip but also for the transcendental transformation of the Vaishnava movement in the Sub-continent, hence, its thread proves to be the most important in the later development of the movement. His extensive work embarks upon in the fore front of the study of Vaishnavism.

Notes and References

¹The debate was first forwarded by Kanti Chandra Rarhi in his Sri SriNabadwiptatta, giving stark contrast against Keddarnath Dutta and his identification of Miyapur as the birth place of the lord. Rarhi's systematic analysis of the sources gave a serious draw back to the claim of Keddarnath Dutta, however, Bhaktivinod amassed a crowd of 50,000 to celebrate the consecration of Chaitanya's birthplace in 1894 and it was highly publicized by several modern vadrals such as Sisirkumar Gosh. Notwithstanding, Rarhi tried to prove that ramchandrapur might have been the place where Ganga Govinda Sing, the diwan of Warren Hastings, erected a 60 feet high temple. This temple was washed away by the river in 1820. Nevertheless, Rarhi's explanation of the birth place as ramchandrapur is not beyond the contradiction either. The article also tries to give an answer to the question put forward by several scholars such as Kanti Chandra Rarhi and orthodox Vaishnavas regarding the saint's divinity whether or not he fabricated Mayapur the birth place of Chaitanya just for the sake of his personal illustration of his dream? In order to answer, I chose to go through the entire NabadwipParokrama the voluminous vernacular corpus which remains untapped in scholarship on Bengali Vaishnavism and recent scholars view point in order to understand the complex way of place making within Vaishnavism of the colonial times.

²I skip those recent scholars who are not directly deals with Chakrabarty's Nabadwipparikrama such as Varuni Bhatia (2017), Sukanya Sarbadhikary (2015), Lucian Wong (2015), Tony Stewart (2010) etc. My field inspection evaluates those scholars who are not only engaged with the Nabadwipparikrama straight forwardly with having experience of living geography at Nabdwip but also have started the initial analysis of the book based on their practical as well as theoretical envision and practical experimentation. Notwithstanding, I traced Kostiatyn Perun who has neither well

acquainted with the landscape and cartography of the sacred land nor has the access to the large vernacular sources. For instance in his article he has not quoted leading scholars work such as Mrityyunjoy Mondal (2022), Satyendralal Majumdar Mrityyunjoy (1985) and Jangeshwar Choudhury (2018) etc.

³Mondal also mentioned that KantichandraRarhi's explanation of the name Nabadwip by the story of a yogi who came to live in the secluded place where Nabadwip now lies and he lighted nine lamps to practice his tantra sadhana; people from nearby village would call that a place of nine lamps i.e. Nabadwip is nothing but Rarhi's own fabrication as there is no such account or lore found anywhere near or far at his times (Mondal, 2002). Whereas, Jogeswar Choudhury in his Bijoypurektibismritrajadhanishows that Bijoypur, the capital of Sen Dynasty is Nabadwip.

⁴Since as it is well known to almost all the inhabitants of Nabadwip that one day Bhaktivinoda saw Sri CaitanyaMahaprabhu in a dream in Tarakeshwar who told him not to go to Vrindavan but "to do some work in Nabadwip. After that, Bhaktivinoda came to Nabadwip town and there he had another mystical experience—one night while on the roof of RaGiDharmasala with his fifteen-year-old son Kamala Prasad Dutta and a clerk he had a vision of a shining palace in the north on the other side of the Ganges. His son also saw it but the clerk did not. The following Saturday Bhaktivinoda went to the place on the other side of the Ganges where he saw the light and again had the same mystical experience.

⁵Mayapur became a pilgrim destination of Bengal Vaishnavism not only because of its glossy buildings and globalised formation but also because of its reforming attitude towards bhakti specifically educated people are attracted because of their rational thoughts and superiority in character than traditional orthodox Vaishnavas. They continue the legacy of Chaitanya's nagar kirtan, organizing the parikrama each year made ISKCON a famous spot for vajan kirtan even they made a gurukul here following the Vedic rituals to teach pupils.

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Book Review



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Historians' engagement with the environment in understanding its character in the shaping of the past has become more pronounced in recent times. As the world today grapples with the consequences of human-induced climate change, the impact of a transforming environment emphasizes the diverse and complex relationships which human beings have with the environment. The magnitude of such metamorphosis and the subsequent impact highlight the corresponding patterns of adaptation, visible in the changes to the realms of contemporary socio-political, cultural and economic dispositions. Thus, the endeavour of examining, observing and interpreting the role of environment in

shaping history is a fascinating innovation in strengthening the procedure and methodologies of inquiring into the past.

In this monograph, Rup Kumar Barman emphasizes upon the role of river basins, which are deeply tied to the growth of diverse socio-cultural motifs, demographic dynamics and the shaping of the history of the eastern region of the Indian subcontinent, especially northern West Bengal, Assam, Bhutan and Bangladesh. In the monograph, the author puts forward a detailed study of the following river basins, the Titash river basin, the Tista river basin, the Kalahi river basin and the Raidak river basin. Through this study, he highlights the dynamics of the association of the people inhabiting these river basins have had with the rivers and their tributaries. Furthermore, he uses these river basins as the focal point in showcasing a multitude of complex themes, which include the impact of ecological changes in river systems on account of floods, soil erosion and siltation thereby inducing forced migrations, the phenomenon of demographic shifts inducing land redistribution which paves the way for some degree of discontentment among the indigenous inhabitants and the migrants, eventually leading to political overtures and sharpening ideologies of provincialism and finally the growth of a distinct cultural identity and a phenomenon of cultural plurality which is woven together with the river. Developing a sound historical consciousness from the perspective of the river basin, this monograph highlights the approach of understanding the region, its people, its social, political and cultural history without removing itself from the immediate environmental surrounding. The river and the river basins are considered in holistically understanding the region.

One of the more interesting facets of this monograph is the methodology employed. In order to understand this region from an environmental perspective, the author goes beyond the bounds of the academic discipline of history and engages with a wide variety of Bengali and Assamese literature, which portray the stories of river basins and the lives of the people who inhabit these river basins. Apart from engaging in an interdisciplinary approach, he also complements his archival research with extensive fieldwork. In the three chapters of the monograph, the first two have extensively drawn upon the writings of Bengali and Assamese literature. The first chapter uses the celebrated Bengali novel titled 'A River Called Titash' by Adwaita Malla Barman to extensively highlight the phenomenon of ecological changes affecting rivers and its corresponding

impact on the fishermen, more specifically those belonging to Malo community who are dependent upon it for their sustenance. In the second chapter, the author engages with two novels, a Bengali and an Assamese written by Debesh Roy and Jitendra Das, respectively. Both the novels talk about the feature of migration and demographic shifts producing pressure on resources such as land and thereby paving the way for growth of a firm political consciousness centred around indigeneity and subsequently being expressed in organised political movements which have a bearing on the region as a whole. As the author shows, the two river basins of Tista and Kalahi become the microcosm of this burgeoning political development which reflected a similar phenomenon happening in other regions of postcolonial India. While Debesh Roy's novel 'Tista Parer Brittanta' tells the story of the Rajbanshi community of northern West Bengal, Jitendra Das's novel, 'Kalahi Nadi: Ikul Hikul' on the other hand depicts a fascinating portrayal of the anti-foreigner movement in Assam in late 1970s. Thus, these two chapters of the monograph, highlight not only the methodological approaches of interdisciplinarity while studying environmental history, but also showcases the more inclusive themes of understanding the region from the prism of demographic transformations, changing environment and the accompanying developments in ethnic identity formation. Needless to say, by breaking away from the confines of the academic discipline of history, the author's work opens the door to addressing critical questions of the interrelationship between humans and environment.

Of the three chapters of the monograph, the first chapter details the vulnerability of the fishermen from the Malo community, whose livelihood is dependent upon the flow of the Titash river. Through a skilful reading of Adwaita Malla Barman's novel, the author also sheds light on the structuring of the Malo community and their collective association with the river. Furthermore, he shows the differentiations inherent within the Malo community which were especially linked to their ability to earn a comfortable living off fishing from the Titash river, thereby highlighting importance of the river in not only bringing livelihood to the Malo community, but also at the same time becoming the basis for bringing in an element of social hierarchy. However, apart from observing the relationship of the fishermen of the Malo community with the river Titash in colonial Bengal, the author also undertakes a fairly detailed account of the Malo community itself, highlighting their communal consciousness and solidarity, their fight to gain upward social mobility within the Hindu caste system by attempting to establish themselves

as a Kshatriya community in the early decades of the twentieth century and the forced migration of the members of the community for better livelihood. His writings put forth a fascinating account of the Malo society, which is never represented without associating with the Titash river. Thus, through the first chapter, the author brings to light the diverse social and economic aspects of the Malo society, primarily in their association with the Titash river.

The second chapter adds another key dimension of indigeneity and provincialism while studying the region's history. Using the works of Debesh Roy and Jitendra Das, the author highlights the consequences of migration induced competition of resources, primarily land. While, the previous chapter showcases the environmental causes which force migration, this chapter highlights the environmental impact of migrations which may not have necessarily been induced by environmental factors. The competing claims for land and the lack of a proper policy for addressing a demographic shift provide the fertile ground for opposing communities who are perceived as nonindigenous and therefore a threat to the stability of the indigenous lifestyle and traditions. It's interesting to note that in Roy's 'Tista Parer Brittanta' and Das's 'Kalahi Nadi: Ikul Hikul', the two river basins of Tista and Kalahi, respectively become the backdrop for the rising tensions between the indigenous communities and the so called 'foreigners' or the nonindigenous immigrants. In case of Roy's novel, the bone of contention were the three phases of the land redistribution policy and migration which weakened the hold of the Rajbanshi community over land ownership in northern West Bengal. Subsequently, the members of the Rajbanshi community began asserting their identity which was indistinguishably tied to the land. Similarly, 'Kalahi Nadi: Ikul Hikul', highlights this tension between indigeneity and migration, by touching upon diverse issues such as ethnic and linguistic identity along with economic exploitation in the broader canvas of the Assam agitation of the late 1970s.

The third chapter highlights the role of the Raidak river basin, which is a transnational river, in building a distinct socio-cultural identity for the region it passes through. The author highlights that the Raidak river, which originates in the Himalayas in Bhutan is named Wang Chhu. He also shows how the Wang Chhu is integral to Bhutan in the spheres of economy, especially following the construction of key hydroelectric projects and the boulders, dolomite and stones which are used in either the cement making industry or are exported to Bangladesh

in large quantities. However, the Wang Chhu river is also critical for Bhutan's religious identity and the author deftly explains its role in the creation of a national culture of Bhutan which is drawn heavily from the cultural significance of the river. However, once the Wang Chhu enters India through the district of Alipurdar of West Bengal, it is referred to as the Raidak and is further subdivided into two branches. The author engages in a detailed study of these two branches of the Raidak, starting with pre-colonial documentation of the people inhabiting the river basin. He provides a comprehensive perspective of the cultural life of the Raidak river basin, including the element of demographic shift beginning with the growth of tea plantations during the nineteenth century, the growth of Vaishnavism propagated by Srimanta Sankaradeva and linguistic and religious plurality.

The three chapters of this monograph provide three captivating portrayals of the river basins in affecting the socio-cultural, economic and political aspects of human societies. The aim of the monograph in reconnecting historical inquiry of a region with its environmental surrounding, is achieved with unquestionable clarity. Furthermore, the most alluring aspect of the author's research is highlighting a region of the Indian subcontinent which abounds in ecological diversity along with exhibiting the history of the people who've inhabited this region and whose lives are deeply connected to their surrounding environment. This monograph is a valuable contribution in extending the boundaries of environmental history writing in India. Beginning with an insightful and well-constructed foreword by Ranjan Chakrabarti, this monograph forms a part of a fascinating series of monographs titled 'Reconnecting with Nature: New Histories', with other contributions coming from Mahua Sarkar, Anuradha Roy and Nupur Dasgupta.

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Book Review



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There are two types of history: first, the history of the universe as a whole including man and secondly of a place either being a country or a particular place. The present book written by one of the professional historians of repute is of the second type. It has been written on a small town Mariani in Jorhat district. It is a town that has grown depending on the Mariani Junction in the North-Eastern Railways. It is situated in the Nagaland border and at a distance of 19.1 kms from Jorhat town.

The speciality of the book is that it has been written with a scientific outlook. The writer knows how to write a historical book. The book no doubt deals with a very insignificant town without any special or historical importance

apart from being a railway town with a variegated population speaking different languages and having different religions and cultures. Yet the writer tries to delineate the common theme prevalent among the people living there from time immemorial as brothers and sisters without any animosity.

Mostly history books are written to appease the royal families or in favour of those who are in charge of the administration. Saikia has not written the present book with such a motive; there is nobody to appease for him. He has written the book as he loves his place very much. In his own opinion one should not neglect a small place, because a local history may contribute to enrich world history.

To go to write about a place its name is important, because the very name of a place may give a great clue to its history. So Saikia has tried his level best to trace out the origin of the name Mariani. As I have mentioned Mariani being a railway town so the writer has dealt with the past and the present of the place along with its importance as a railway colony.

To trace out the history of a place we must deal with its religious, political, academic, intellectual, cultural, re-creative (sports etc.) situations including health, trade and commerce, administrative systems, industries, facilities of burial grounds, the present situation and the contributions of the hinterland in building the place.

The writer has opined that during the Ahom administration Mariani was a neglected place. When the British took over the administration of the state they covered all the areas with administrative set ups so that they could rule well. So they looked to Mariani also and started a Sub-Deputy Collector's office in 1895. Since that time onward the place claims an independent status as regards administration, and it still enjoys so. The people of Mariani although have been demanding the formation of a district of the greater Mariani but the Government has not paid any heed to this demand. It is now within Titabar District.

To write a history one cannot have an eye-evidence. He has to depend on inference. He is to examine the old records from various sources. Saikia has not failed to do so. He has left no stone unturned in his effort. If you read the book minutely and between the lines you yourself will feel this truth. Saikia has not only churned the available records but also has met every person who can give even a minor clue to the past events. Mostly some old people are walking encyclopedia in this respect. Saikia has met such people by going from one place to another. Thus he has depended on oral history also.

We need to read history because it "is an unending dialogue between the present and the past" as E.H. Carr says. We cannot know the present of a place without knowing its past. So to write a history is something going on a pilgrimage. In this respect Saikia has played the role of a local historian, and thereby he has

unearthed the hitherto untold stories of Mariani. Thus he has written the history of Mariani with a story-telling method. If you read the book you will feel that it is a story book written by an expert in the field.

I cannot say that the book can claim that it is all perfect. It has limitations. Every man is a limited being. He cannot be omniscient. It is very difficult especially to write history, because in history we have to write about the past. We do not have eye-evidence in this respect. Many important facts might escape our notice. Yet we appreciate the sincere effort of the writer in bringing out a valuable piece of literature. The book is not only important from the historical standpoint, it has also literary value. That the book has contributed to enrich Assamese literature there is no doubt about it. The more such books are produced the more is the enrichment of Assamese literature.

I congratulate Professor Saikia for presenting us a very lucid book. We hope he will write more books of this nature in future also. Of course he is now an aged person, and for an aged person it is difficult to engage in such works. Yet we cannot stop expecting more from a person, because it is the human nature to hope more. Let Professor Saikia live long and contribute to explore the unknown world either human or terrestrial.

Dr. Girish Baruah

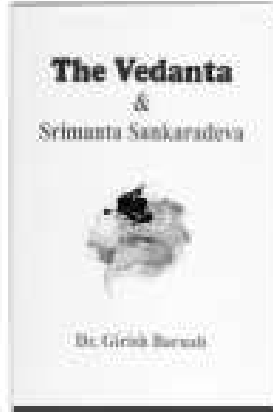
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Book Review



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'The Vedanta and Srimanta Sankaradeva' written by Dr. Girish Baruah is a unique book on the subject. He has written five books on Sankaradeva including the present one both in English and in Assamese. He has also edited on book on him.

The present book is published by Mohan Chandra Mahanta Samaj Vigyan Adhyaya Govesana Kendra, Cinnamara College, Jorhat. This Govesana Kendra *i.e.* the Research Centre has been established to augment research work in social sciences. Though the book is a monographic the most of the matters included here have already published in different journals.

The very name of the book indicates that it is on the Vedanta and on Sankaradeva, one of the Vaishnava saints of India who flourished in Assam, a North-Eastern State of the country. The book deals with the Vedanta because Sankaradeva's religion is based on Vedanta philosophy.

The writer has tried to delineate the history of the Vedanta. He has traced out its elements in the Bhagavadgita and the Bhagavata Purana. As Sankaradeva's religion is designated as Vaishnavism, so the writer has tried to relate his religion with Vedantism and that too with Advaita Vedanta. In the Indian context the Advaita Vedanta is especially adopted by Shankaracarya and by Radhakrishnan to be their philosophies. The writer shows how Radhakrishnan interprets Vedanta with modern vocabulary and that too in English. Thus he has popularized this philosophy in the western world also.

There cannot be a religion without a philosophical background. So the writer tries to trace out this background and he clearly states that this background is of surely Vedantism. But Sankaradeva's Vedantism is not sectarian. He looks into it with a universal outlook and goes to trace out its sources in the Upanishads and in the Brahma-Sutra.

As we know Brahman is the main theme of the Vedanta philosophy so the writer has tried to bring out the nature of it. In this respect he tries to explain the relation between God and Brahman being a counterpart of the western Absolute. He has not forgotten to write a critical estimate of the Vedanta philosophy also.

The second part of the book deals with Srimanta Sankaradeva. Although he is mainly a religious preacher yet his religion is not devoid of philosophy. We may regard him to be an Indian philosopher of repute like Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbarka and Caitanya. But Sankaradeva has been neglected in the all-Indian perspective due to the reason best known to the scholars. It may be their pitiable ignorance or deliberate negligence.

We must recognize that Sankaradeva has contributed a lot to Indian philosophy. He flourished in Assam in the fifteenth/sixteenth century A.D. Assam is a land in which all the three religions viz. Shaivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism developed. So the present author tries to trace out the origin and the development of these three religions in the State of Assam. In the light of this development he tries to make an estimate of Sankaradeva's philosophy.

As we have stated already that Sankaradeva's religion is known as Vaishnavism, so the writer tries to theorize his Vaishnavism. He does so comparing his philosophy/religion with that of other saints of Medieval India.

We know that Shankaracarya is an outstanding Vedanta philosopher. As the author recognizes Sankaradeva to be also a philosopher he goes to compare his philosophy with Shankaracarya's. He has also not forgotten compare the saint's philosophy with Guru Nanak, who introduced the Sikh religion. This religion as we know is full of Vedantic and Vaishnavite elements.

In philosophy we find two major isms viz. monism and monotheism. Monism is a metaphysical theory while monotheism is a theological one. Monism states that there is only one reality which is transcendental in nature. This theory denies the ultimateness of the world and assigns only a relative reality of the same. Monotheism believes in one God and this God creates the world with his power maya. In Sankaradeva both these theories are present. He accepts monism from the philosophical/metaphysical standpoint and monotheism from the religious standpoint.

We know that Vishnu is the principal god of Vishnavism. But in course of time he has been replaced by Krishna infusing in him the content of Brahman which was absent in Vishnu being one of the three deities viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. From this point the author has suggested two names of Sankaradeva's philosophy: (1) Brahmesvaravada and (2) Murtadvaitavada. Brahmesvaravada is the name ascribed from the point of view of his religious philosophy and Murtadvaitavada is so from his metaphysical philosophy. His religious philosophy is known as Brahmesvaravada because in Krishna the content of Brahman is there as already mentioned. Physically he is man-god, but spiritually he is Brahman. His metaphysical theory has been named as Murtadvaitavada because his advaitism is not abstract like that of Shankaracarya but a concrete (murta) one.

The author has not forgotten to write on Sankaradeva's aesthetics as he is not only a religious person but also an artist of high order. He was expert in creating literature, dance, music, drama and what not! He has introduced many new concepts in the cultural field of the State. With his religio-cultural message he has enlivened the Assamese nation. His literary forms are unique. He was expert in translation also and translated a greater portion of the Bhagavata Purana. He has written an outstanding book Kirtana which has eulogized the name of

Krishna. The write-up on his aesthetics the author has dealt with almost all the areas of art and culture.

Rasalila is one of the important features popularized by the Bhagavata Purana. Sankaradeva also has dealt with the Rasalila episode in which Krishna has danced with the milkmaids. The episode has been introduced in order to instill devotion in the minds of the milkmaids who were engaged only in household works. The episode teaches us that in the midst of playing the role of a house wife one can be devoted to God if she so wishes.

Sankaradeva flourished in an age which was characterized by feudalism. All religions have a feudal character. Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism is also not devoid of it. But we do not have at present the days of Sankaradeva and we cannot return to his age. So as the present age is mainly characterized by capitalism the importance of religion has largely diminished. Yet we cannot underestimate Sankaradeva's teachings and if we sincerely follow his philosophy of nishkama bhakti then we can avoid many wrong doings in which people engage themselves for their desire for money, fame, wealth etc. One may not follow is religion in practice, but one can follow his preaching so that one can make himself a person of high morality.

Definitely Sankaradeva was a progressive thinker in relation to his time. In the present context many of his theories may be obsolete; yet we cannot deny some of the eternal values as presented by the saint. He has left behind a rich tradition for which the Assamese people have been able to recognize themselves as rich at least culturally.

A great thing Sankaradeva introduced in Assam is Naamghar. Naamghars are not only prayer halls but also they are the centres of culture. Moreover Naamghars play the role of meeting halls in which people can get together to discuss some important social matters concerning the people catered by a particular Naamghar. So apart from being a religious institution Naamghar is also a social institution, and village people find a place in it to have their diversions from their daily routine works.

While discussing on Naamghar the writer has especially mentioned Athkelia Naamghar. It is one of the important Naamghars of Assam situated in Golaghat district. Once the writer lived in Golaghat and he visited several times to the Naamghar. So he has written on it as an eye witness. He has vividly described the

activities of the Naamghar and its contributions in spreading the religion in the area. Many people come to it from far and wide to offer their devotion. It has become something like place of pilgrimage for the people of Assam.

Dr. Baruah has done a yeoman service by writing the book. Being a Vedantin by himself and being a professor of philosophy teaching in both undergraduate and post-graduate philosophy classes he has delineated Sanakaradeva's philosophy in unequivocal terms. I hope people who are interested in religious studies might accrue benefit from it. Much more books expected from his pen although he is now an old man of eighty three years of age. May Dr. Baruah long live in order to enlighten the people with the knowledge of philosophy and religion.

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The Mirror, a peer reviewed annual Journal (having impact factor), department of history, Cinnamara College, Cinnamara, Jorhat-785008, Assam in collaboration with Assam State Archive, (Listed and indexed by international Institute of Organized Research) welcomes the contributors from the scholars, academician, historian and social scientists of various branches of history and allied disciplines which have interface with history. All the research papers must contain a statement about the existing knowledge on the topic concerned so that there is no repetitive research. This should include preferably the following:

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Professor Anirudh Deshpande

Department of History
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Delhi

I have opportunity to go through 'The Mirror'. It is not just a journal of history: rather it a continuum of the past and present which marches forward to the future. It presents the kaleidoscopes mosaic of our Country. It is a rare addition to the documentation of our history, archeology, spirituality, values, literature and culture.

Prof. Srinibas Pathi

Professor of Public Administration
& former Dean
School of Social Sciences
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Prof. N.V. Aski

Former Principal
Govt First Grade College
Terdal, Karanataka

I congratulate the department of History, Cinnamara College, Jorhat, Assam for bringing out a prestigious journal, 'The Mirror' Publication of journal by a single under-graduate college is truly a hard task and needs sincerity, efficiency and cooperation. It indicates the hard working and good cooperation among the faculties in the department of history of this college. I hope this journal will give a fruitful result in historical research in north east India.

Dr Malsawmliana

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