ISSN : 0368-3308

A Peer-Reviewed International Quarterly

Journal of The Asiatic Society

Vol. LXVII No. 1 2025

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY
1 PARK STREET ● KOLKATA 700 016

IMPORTANT

All communications relating to publication should be addressed to the Publication Officer, THE ASIATIC SOCIETY, 1 Park Street, Kolkata-700016,

e-mail : asiaticsocietypublications1788@gmail.com

Visit our website : www.asiaticsocietykolkata.org

- Information about Books and Journals may be obtained from the Publication Officer, The Asiatic Society, 1 Park Street, Kolkata-700016
- Customers, when order directly to the Society, are requested to observe the following rules:
  - Orders should be addressed to the Publication Officer, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata
  - Payment should be made to the **Account No. 10959203687, IFSC : SBIN0000150**. In case of all purchase, payments to be made in advance.
  - The name, Address, e-mail id and Contact number to whom the books are to be sent should be written in block letters.

DISCOUNT POLICY (WEF 26.08.2024)

Gross Amount	% of discount
BOOKSELLERS / AUTHORS CONTRIBUTORS	
Upto Rs. 5000/-	25%
From Rs. 5001/- to Rs. 10,000/-	$33\frac{1}{3}\%$
From Rs. 10,001/- to Rs. 50,000/-	40%
Rs. 50,001 and above	50%
ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS / LIBRARIES	25% on all purchases
INDIVIDUALS	10% on all purchases

JOURNAL OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY

Vol. LXVII No. 1, 2025

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY
1 PARK STREET ❐ KOLKATA

Journal of The Asiatic Society Vol. LXVII, No. 1

ISSN 0368-3308

Published by
Lieutenant Colonel Anant Sinha
Administrator
The Asiatic Society
1 Park Street
Kolkata 700 016
Contact: director-ask@asiaticsocietykolkata.nic.in

Published in August 2025

Printed at
Desktop Printers
3A, Garstin Place, 4th Floor
Kolkata 700 001

Price : ₹400 (Complete vol. of four nos.)

A Peer-Reviewed International Quarterly

JOURNAL OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY

Vol. LXVII No. 1, 2025

ARTICLES

GLEANINGS FROM THE PAST

'Discipline and Punish': A Historical Account on the Jubbulpore School of Industry in Central India

Maneesh Rawat and Jenia Mukherjee

Abstract

In response to the rising threat of thuggee (a form of collective criminality in Central India) during the early decades of the nineteenth century, the colonial government launched an all-India level campaign in order to suppress this criminal community. While the anti-thuggee campaign focused on mass arrests and judicial trials of the thugs, a significant role was played by old thug associates known as the approvers who, in return for reduction in punishments, provided important evidence and testimony against the other members of their gangs. The article sheds light on the functioning of the Jubbulpore School of Industry – an institution established to train the thug approvers in Central India with employable skills under confinement. Although the Jubbulpore School of Industry is projected as an innovative reformatory step to keep away the approvers from their previous trait of loot and murder and help them avail honest means of livelihood, the strategies applied in the institution turned it into a prison industry where the labour of the thugs and their families was extorted in the name of reformation. This empirical case brings to the fore the political and economic implications of the Jubbulpore School of Industry within the larger context of prison discipline in British India.

***Keywords**:* Thugs, anti-thuggee campaign, prison, industry, family.

Introduction

On 29 October 1859, the Scottish artist William Simpson arrived in India with the purpose of painting the Indian landscape and communities to expose the subcontinent before the world using his

lens of observations and analyses. In almost three years of his stay, Simpson travelled to distant parts of the land, interacted with people and authorities, and prepared sketches based on his perspectives and understandings. During his halt in the Central Indian town of Jubbulpore (Jabalpur), he encountered an institution that was designed to impart training to the confined thugs in different employment skills so that they did not revert to the crime of murder and robbery. The Jubbulpore School of Industry (JSI) was established in 1837 through the strenuous efforts of the British officials working in the town for the suppression of thuggee (the system of habits and practices by the thugs). Simpson was so fascinated with this institution that when thirty years later he published fifty chromolithographs entitled *India Ancient and Modern*, he dedicated one plate specifically to the JSI. The chromolithograph displays a view of the manufactory where old thug approvers, along with young sons were engaged in making carpets while in the corner a woman with her daughter was spinning the thread required for the manufactory. The JSI was an exemplary step initiated by the British government in India to counter collective criminality like thuggee through the application of labour over the confined and the skillful use of the 'family' to check the infiltration of their activities.

In the early years of the nineteenth century when the colonial government was actively engaged in managing the political and economic affairs of its newly-acquired territories, a sudden rise in cases of collective criminality in these new lands made the task of administration difficult for the officials. Although not seemed bothered much by the cases of individual crimes, the government was very cautious against the spread of collective criminality and perceived it as a threat directed against the authority of the state (Freitag, 1991: 230). In an inevitable response, the cases of collective criminality were repressed with colonial authoritarian power and innovative strategies. Although the official response for such cases was usually place-based, it was for the system of thuggee that the government launched an all-India level campaign in 1829-30. In the campaign against thuggee, a

separate department was created and various acts were passed during the 1830s and the 1840s by the Legislative Council to legitimize and smoothen arrests and judicial trials of the thugs.

The Anti-thuggee Campaign (ATC) targeted annihilating the menace of thuggee, being also shaped by changes in the criminal justice system of the West. The beginning of the nineteenth century was marked by the disappearance of the public spectacle of punishment and the abolition of torturous ways to punish convicts (Foucault, 1977: 14). With the growing fear of crime and the threatening menace of criminality, societies gradually shifted towards more humane and rational approaches towards the offender (O'Brien, 1978: 509). Imprisonment emerged as a major form of punishment for convicts across Europe. England herself saw the establishment of modern penitentiaries designed to rehabilitate criminals in addition to preventing them from committing crimes in the near future. The influence of these changes in the West was directly manifested in the passage of Act XXX of 1836 in India which sought to decrease the severity of punishment for thuggee by integrating life imprisonment with hard labour the maximum punishment for the crime. Parallelly, through 'prison discipline' the state devised a mechanism of not only punishing the body of the convicts but also trying to alter their minds through new means of education, training, and employment within the walls. Punishment evolved as a political tactic where imprisonment facilitated the transformation of souls and behaviour of the prisoners (Foucault, 1977: 123). The JSI can be considered a mention-worthy example of colonial efforts to impose prison discipline in India.

This article explores the mechanisms through which the colonial government dealt with the system of thuggee. The first section describes the colonial encounter with the thugs while the next section focuses on the laws and policies adopted by the government to repress them. We also discuss the rise of a new class called 'approvers', analysing their role in ATC. The work then zooms into the case study of JSI, discussing and explaining the political economic rationale behind its emergence and functioning – in tune to the evolving 'prison

discipline' in India. We have consulted primary sources from various reports published by provincial and central governments during the nineteenth century, correspondence, and accounts of the British officials and also reviewed secondary literature related to the rise of thuggee, its nature, and the political and legal mechanisms adopted by the colonial government for its suppression. This empirical case brings to the fore the political and economic implications of the Jubbulpore School of Industry within the larger context of prison discipline in British India.

The Colonial Encounter with Thuggee

It was not before 1799 that the government became aware of the thugs when a large number of them were apprehended near Bangalore shortly after the British conquest of Seringapatam. Although the system did not gain much official attention during the initial years, successive arrests of the thugs in different parts of India compelled the colonial government to take the issue seriously. The arrests of some thugs made between Chittoor and Arcot in 1807 were crucial in developing information about the habits and practices of these people (Thornton, 1837: 03). The concern of the colonial authorities could be felt when in a letter of 28 April 1810, the Commander-in-Chief issued a warning to its *sepoy*s (soldiers) to avoid close contact with strangers and carry cash currency in the form of exchange bills when leaving for their home – in the wake of recurrent attacks of thugs on native soldiers (Sleeman, 1836: 14). Over the next few years, investigations and inquiries carried out by the British officials played a significant role in revealing multiple secrets underlying the system. It was mainly through the records of these officials that extensive information related to thuggee was available as thugs left no independent accounts of their own. Probably the first official attempt to describe the habits and practices of thugs was made by a Madras-based surgeon Dr. Richard Sherwood, who in his essay, which was published in 1816, in the *Madras Literary Gazette*, presented interesting facts regarding the lifestyles and social relationships of *Phansigar*s, another term used for

the thugs in the southern part of India. His findings became a major source of inspiration for William Henry Sleeman who decided to thoroughly investigate the system of thuggee and informed the government about its presence in almost every part of the subcontinent. 'Thuggee Sleeman', as he was popularly known among his associates for his remarkable contribution in the campaign against thuggee, was the first British officer who prepared a detailed account of the depredations committed by various thug gangs across the country through his numerous interactions with the thug prisoners and approvers. He was equally successful in discovering *Ramasee*, the secret language of thuggee which, in the words of James Sleeman, constituted the 'spinal cord of its nervous system' (Sleeman, 1933: 174).

The thugs killed travellers on highways through the use of a silk scarf in pursuance of their motive to loot and plunder. The early colonial accounts used different terms to describe the habits and practices of the thugs. Richard Sherwood called them 'hereditary murderers' who never perpetrated a robbery without murdering their victims (Sleeman, 1836: 330). The thugs were the people recruited from different sections of society whose association was bound with some shared religious beliefs and practices. The entire fraternity functioned as a quasi-religious system to which any Indian could join (Roy, 1998: 45). Thugs were active members of their local society and always went far away from their homes for depredations. They also refrained from murdering the inhabitants of the places where they used to stay in order to avoid suspicion. By the nineteenth century, the system pervaded across the lengths and breadths of the subcontinent with the majority of their activities recorded in the vast and arid regions of Central India that offered the most favourable geographical and political conditions for the sustenance of this collective criminality. Moreover, this belt was a lucrative space ensuring regular travels by the rich merchants of Bombay who carried gold and jewels on their way to Rajputana, traversing through Malwa and Khandesh– frequently falling prey to thug gangs (Sleeman, 1836: 05). A scholar on the Asian History, Steward Gordon (1969) seemed so

convinced for the concentrated activities of thugs in this area that he suggested using the term 'thuggee' in a geographical sense. The thuggee system operated on the basis of local rapport with native rulers and zamindars (landlords) who often provided shelter to the thugs in their territories against certain benefits. These landholders and chiefs, along with some hermits and religious mendicants, were responsible for protecting the thugs, while in return, they enjoyed the share in the form of booty or some taxes (Taylor, 1839: V).

The modus operandi of the thuggee system amazed the colonial officials – their array of criminal practices being very unusual to western experiences. An official of the Bengal Medical Services, Henry Spry (1837: 157-58) wrote,

> The histories of Germany, Spain, and Italy, harrowing as are their details of cold-blooded slaughter, offer no counterpart equal in atrocity or extent to the horrible murders which have come to light in the prosecution of the Thugs.

However, in their representation of thuggee, colonial perspectives were lopsided – certain important factors of their social and professional lives being highly ignored and misunderstood by the British. In most of the cases, these records provided the description and explanation of the religious base for the cult, its divine origin, the rites and rituals, and the danger thuggee presented to the existing social order (Brown, 2002: 81). However, Sleeman remained focussed on recording their habits, practices, and superstitions – though his approach suffers from monotony and reductionism. Recent scholarship on this theme rejects colonial understandings and perceptions, considering some of these as contentious and dubious. Expressing her disapproval of the colonial notion of criminality by 'birth and profession', Radhika Singha (1993: 95) suggests that criminality in many contexts could be seen as a part of life in which societies were involved to subsist themselves. Gordon (1969: 407) rejects the colonial way of portraying thuggee as 'hereditary' by confirming that many of the arrested thugs had no family history of the trait and assisted their families during the agricultural seasons. He also put forward his

disagreement for considering the 'sheer lust of killing', as proposed by Henry Sleeman (1933), as the prime object and claims that the 'plunder' was the main objective of the thugs as they always selected the places and people which could provide rich booty. Colonial accounts did not consider bad harvests as a major cause for the rise of thuggee. While many officials in Central India considered the calamity of the seasons as a reason for the poverty and distress of the agricultural class, they did not relate it to the thugs. Contrary to the colonial perception of the omnipresent nature of the thugs, C. A. Bayly (1983) contends that the activities of many robber bands including the thugs were mostly confined to unstable regions which were fuelled by the distress originating through successive bad agricultural seasons.

Anti-thuggee Campaign: Colonial Legal Framework and Strategies

Thugs always selected the sites of depredations miles away from their native homes which made it almost impossible to identify the potential suspects of the crimes. The support and protection which they enjoyed from the local society was also a big obstacle in judicial trials. In many instances, locals were seen to rescue and provide shelter to the thugs as they had regard for thuggee as 'a fraternity especially favoured by heaven' (Hutton, 1857: 37). Apart from such ground-level difficulties, the colonial police system was also dotted with internal challenges – every official was not skilled enough to deal effectively with the thugs. Officials often chose to hide the murders of suspected thug attacks by declaring the dead bodies as results of tiger attacks and often burnt them as quickly as possible to avert any further investigations from higher authorities (Hutton, 1857: 38). Moreover, the company's courts had no particular framework for the judicial trial of the suspected thugs. The lack of coordination among the magistrates in matters of collecting information and evidences for the prosecutions of the thugs was also a big impediment to be resolved (Singha, 1993: 116). As summarised by John William Kaye (1853: 375),

> the more complicated the machinery, and the more formal the procedure of our courts, the better for these professional stranglers. They throve

> upon the legal niceties and the judicial reserve of the English tribunals, and laughed our Regulations to scorn.

Before the official launch of the ATC in 1829-30, the mechanisms applied by the colonial government to counter thuggee were usually locally-specific and precautionary in nature. As the first extra-provincial effort to counter crime through policing, the government created a separate department for the suppression of thuggee under the command of W. H. Sleeman. The Saugor and Nerbudda territories were selected to launch the operations against the thugs due to the numerous strategic and administrative advantages that this recently occupied province was offering. In its most active period of operation, between 1830 and 1845, the Thuggee Department undertook the task to arrest many thug gangs across the subcontinent and put them before the company's courts for judicial trials. With the help of the chiefs of the native states, the colonial government established separate courts in Hyderabad, Mysore, Indore, Lucknow, and Gwalior which were presided by top-level British diplomats (Sleeman, 1844: 119). In many instances, the family members were detained in order to get information about the absconded thug leader and create pressure on him. Officials justified the arrests of wives and children on their assertion of thuggee as a 'hereditary profession' (Singha, 1993: 125). F. C. Smith remarked in 1830,

> They being usually the only ties by whose misfortunes he can be affected. Thugs are generally hereditary; there could be no injustice therefore in chaining the lion's whelps until the lion himself is disposed of. (Bruce, 1968: 85)

To solve the problems related to the judicial trial of the thugs, the legislative assembly crafted legal enforcements between the 1830s and 1840s, facilitating the ATC. The most significant legislation of this period was the Act XXX of 1836 which ruled that anyone proved to have belonged to any gang of thugs would be punished with life imprisonment and hard labour (Sleeman, 1849: 353). The Act, for the first time, empowered the Company's courts to exercise their jurisdiction beyond their territorial domain in cases of thuggees.

Subsequently, the Act XIX of 1837 was passed with the intention to remove the difficulties for the witnesses of the crimes of thuggee and ruled that no person, 'by reason of any conviction for any offence whatsoever', would be disqualified to be a witness in any court in the territorial domain of the East India Company (Sleeman, 1849: 353). In order to ensure that no thug or any other robber should escape from the captivities of the native states due to official negligence or some other reasons, the government passed the Act XVIII of 1843 which declared that any person, sentenced to imprisonment or transportation within the territories of any native state, could be received and detained within the territories of East India Company provided that a European covenanted officer, duly authorised by that state, was one of the presiding judges when the sentence was pronounced (Sleeman, 1849: 354). Later, through a separate legislation Act XXIV of 1843, the provisions of Act XXX of 1836 were extended for various criminal communities of the subcontinent. It was the passing of these acts, Sleeman believed, that enabled the government

> to relieve society from the depredations of all these associations of murderers and robbers by hereditary profession (Sleeman, 1849: 174).

While the Thuggee Department was successful in apprehending many thug leaders and disbanding major thug gangs across the subcontinent, the measures adopted by its officials were stringent in nature. Suspected people were imprisoned in spite of no proof of their involvement or presence in any specific murder related to thuggee. Moreover, new legislations were filled with ambiguities which, apart from creating confusion in the official circle, often went against the locals. In presenting her criticism of Act XXX of 1836, Radhika Singha (1993: 84) questions the Company's government for using the term 'Thugs' in the act when it did not even bother to define what sort of activities would exactly come under the offence of thuggee. Later, in 1848, when the government tried to define the terms 'Thug', 'Thuggee', and 'Murder by Thuggee' through a separate Act III of 1848, not only the ambiguity relating to these terms remained unresolved but also the crimes like child-stealing and robbery were

put under the acts of thuggee. Many other peripatetic and nomad groups, who had no connection with the robbery or murder of the people on highways, also came under the target of the Thuggee Department. The entire campaign soon became the colonial mechanism to establish its authority over the native subjects. Freitag (1991: 237) mentions,

> Under the British Raj, then, first priority in this alternative legal structure was assigned neither to matters of prevention and protection for those being ruled, nor to safeguard for those pursued, accused and convicted: the usual characteristics of a 'rule of law' were not the point in an imperial social order. Instead, what mattered was a convincing demonstration of the strength and capacity of British authority, as exercised over groups of criminals.

Among all the mechanisms adopted by the Thuggee Department in its efforts to suppress thuggee, a crucial role was played by the system of 'approvers'. An approver was the former thug accomplice who helped colonial officials in procuring evidence and gave testimonies against other members of his gang and in return, enjoyed impunities or relaxation in his punishment. The approver system was already a successful experiment in early nineteenth century Bengal where Mr. Blacquiere suppressed the gang-robbery in Twenty-four Parganas and Nadia districts with the help of *Goinda*s, the local approvers and informers (McLane, 1985). The adoption of this system in the ATC gradually evolved as the central mechanism in 'Sleeman's arsenal' through which he could collect extensive information on the crimes committed by different thug gangs and identify their members (Freitag, 1991: 239). Apart from the reduction in punishment, the thug approvers were often rewarded with employment in local administration based on their levels of loyalty and resourcefulness. Despite being seen as criminals, the thugs received wide appreciation from the colonial authorities for their dignity and manliness (Freitag, 1991: 236). This admiration was visible when Sleeman allowed some of the approvers and their families to live near his cottage in return for their service in the ATC. However, such decisions were always

intended to gather more information about the thugs and strengthen the grip over their system. Besides engendering new techniques of policing and surveillance, the thuggee also gave impetus to new ways of ethnographic narration and documentation (Roy, 1998: 57). It was through the information obtained from the arrested thugs and approvers that Sleeman could compile the detailed family history, social status and personal details of every possible thug.

Discipline in Punishment: The Jubbulpore School of Industry

The campaign against thuggee was launched in a period when the colonial government was seeking validation of its authority through various humanitarian ethos that had originated at the global scale (Singha, 1993: 88). The reforms in the criminal justice system of the West, which featured more humane approaches to deal with the offenders and better treatment for the prisoners, found their reflection in the tenure of Governor General William Bentinck who initiated various reforms to increase the humanitarian approach in the social and political matters of Indian subjects. In his minute on the abolishment of corporal punishment in native armies of India, Bentinck remarked,

> The principle of checking crime by measures of extreme severity, both in the army and out of it, has since been strongly condemned by public opinion, as being no less impolitic than cruel, and has gradually given way to milder penalties. Experience has proved the soundness of this doctrine, and corporal punishment is now maintained rather for its terrors and only applied in cases of the deepest guilt. (Bentinck and Philips, 1977: 1429)

The campaign against thuggee, which was an initiative by the Bentinck administration, witnessed the gradual adoption of less severe punishments for the thugs. Initially, the authorities depended primarily on the punishments of hanging and transportation. An account of V. A. Smith in the republished version of Sleeman's *Rambles and Recollection of an Indian Official* mentioned that in the judicial trial of 1562 people suspected of thuggee for the period between 1826 and 1835, 1404 prisoners were either hanged or transported for life.

Moreover, these punishments were often carried in public spaces to create a feeling of disdain towards thuggee. Mrs. Fanny Parks Parlby, an European traveller who witnessed the execution of twenty-five thugs in Jubbulpore on 9 May 1831, wrote that the accused met their death with utter 'indifference' and 'carelessness' without any 'universal sympathy' (Parlby, 1850: 201). But the period of the mid-1830s, which saw the growing importance of imprisonment in colonial India, impacted upon the operations of ATC. The impact was evident when Act XXX in 1836 ruled life imprisonment with hard labour as the maximum punishment for anyone accused of thuggee. The passage of successive acts in this direction ultimately led to a sharp decline in the number of death sentences and transportation for convicted thugs. Sleeman (1849: 91) himself observed,

> Sentence of death is, however, no longer pronounced either upon a Thug or Decoit, since the passing of Acts XXX of 1836, and XXIV of 1843.

The next big question before the officials was to manage the lives of the thug approvers and their families. While some of the approvers were given employment in various public establishments, there were many whose fate was yet to be decided. Despite their remarkable contribution to the ATC, these approvers could not convince the colonial authorities to release them free in society to live a law-abiding life. Curwen Smith wrote in 1830,

> The lives of approvers should no doubt as a measure of policy be spared, but they should never recover their unrestricted liberty, for numerous proofs exist of the utter impossibility of reclaiming them. (Bruce, 1968: 85-86).

Moreover, the government knew its responsibility to provide the approvers with new means of employment in order to avert the possibility of re-joining their previous occupation. The situation engendered the idea of a manufactory where the approvers could be employed under strict supervision. In his letter to Captain Reynolds, dated 7 March 1837, Sleeman asked,

> If we could establish any kind of manufactory for them, or find any one willing to receive them, it would be the best option of providing for them (Sleeman, 1849: 337).

The period also coincides with the growing debate on the poor conditions of the prisons and the unregulated situation of prison labour in British India. The officials were questioning the poor administration of state prisons and demanding strict provisions for labour within the confined area. Spry (1837: 153), who was also associated with prison administration in Central India, remarked,

> Then, again, what degree of labour do we exact from our prisoners in payment for their keep? The reader will be surprised, perhaps, when he is informed, positively none. Those whose crimes have been somewhat more heinous than ordinary, are sentenced to labour; and, in consequence, are put on the roads for four or five hours a day, but with this exception (which is only the semblance of hard labour), and the working of the shuttle occasionally within the walls, the whole time of the convicts is passed in indolence.

Similarly, the Committee of Prison-Discipline to the Governor General of India in Council, which submitted its report in 1838 on the subject of prison conditions and treatment of prisoners in British India, also recommended the need to improve labour within the gaols. The committee highlighted the 'entirely idle' state of the prisoners in big gaols like Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay and recommended better provisions for their employment within the walls (Report of the Committee on Prison-Discipline, 1838). The committee even desired to put the people sentenced to transportation under labour – till the time they were being transported. The government wanted to utilize the prisons as agencies of productive labour, with colonial administration having full control over the labour force. In this way, the prison system of the early nineteenth century was assisting the colonial administration in its policies of economic exploitation and political control in India (Arnold, 1994: 159). This changing environment engendered the idea of converting prisons into factories of production. The 'Schools of Industries' as they came to be known, were aimed to

contribute towards the cost of the upkeep of the inmates and also provide an important share of profit to the government through their productions. The Jubbulpore School of Industry could be seen as the earliest example of this initiative where the confinement of approvers in a walled place seemed to be the best option with appropriate strategies and mechanisms of upkeeping. Although the colonial authorities projected the institution as an important initiative to impart training on new means of honest livelihood to young sons of the thugs, the strategy to keep the approvers and their families confined within the walls made this manufactory a prison where the inmates were subjugated to live under certain conditions imposed by the ruling authorities. The colonial intentions could be well understood from the statement of Captain Brown, who, in his letter to Sleeman dated 4 January 1838, admitted,

> On no account do I allow any of them to be absent from the lock-up, except at meals, or at their work in the manufactory. (Sleeman, 1849: 336).

The JSI was founded in 1837 by Captain Brown, Assistant General Superintendent of ATC in the town of Jubbulpore (modern Jabalpur). There were several reasons justifying the colonial selection of Jubbulpore for the institution. Already popular for frequent thug movements, this 'Great Central Point', as Sleeman (1849: 341) designated the town, was the headquarter of the Superintendent of operations against thuggee where many thug leaders from different parts of the country were sent for their judicial trials. Moreover, the administrative and judicial conveniences offered by the town made it the most preferable choice of Sleeman for the establishment of an institution like the JSI. The entire structure of the JSI had two main parts in terms of its physical layout – the manufactory in the compound of Captain Brown where the thugs were employed, and a small-walled village where the wives, children, and other family members were confined. Besides the main production unit, some small buildings were constructed as storehouses, hospitals, and other daily needs. Initially, the manufactory produced small items such as lac dye, sealing wax, and cotton wicks for lamps which had

their immediate demand in the market and could secure good returns with minimum investments. With the gradual success of the manufactory, as the raw material was cheap and the demand was high for such products in the valley of Nerbudda (Narmada), Captain Brown decided to increase its production by investing in capacity-building programmes and initiatives.

At a time when the prisoners in almost every part of India were usually made to work in public spaces for non-skilled tasks like road-making, the administration of JSI attempted to employ the thugs in making delicate manufactures like carpets and other products which required specific training and skills. There were some instances where the authorities tried to employ the prisoners in skilled tasks in different parts of British India, but their efforts could not generate desirable outcomes and they had to be abandoned soon. For example, the plan to train the prisoners in weaving *Shataranji*s (cotton carpets) in Benares (Varanasi) was abandoned due to the inability to meet the overall expenses of the employed prisoners within the gaol (Report of the Committee on Prison Discipline, 1838: 17). The experiments in JSI were strategized from the inception of the manufactory itself. In the beginning, the emphasis was laid on the production of crafts that had good market demand and ensured huge profits within a short period of time. The carpets and tents were the best options for the authorities to start for this purpose. Skilled men from Mirzapoor (Mirzapur) were invited to teach the art of carpet-weaving to the young sons, while the adult thugs were given the training of tent-making by the experts who were invited from Futtehgur (Fatehgarh), (Sleeman, 1849: 342). With the growing success of the Indian style of carpets, the authorities in JSI began to take interest in the western style of carpet-making to reach the global market. In 1853, an England-based manufacturer was brought to the institution in order to increase the production of Kidderminster carpets, popularly known as 'Brussels Carpets' (Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department, XV, 1856: 18). The approvers were provided with allowances in return for their work in the manufactory. In many cases,

they were made to work with no wages for the tasks of an institution other than production. While the workers received enough money for their food and clothing, the extra allowance was transferred to their families residing in the nearby walled-village (Sleeman, 1849: 342).

The Jubbulpore School of Industry proved to be a successful experiment for the commercial aspiration of the colonial government. In a few years since its establishment, the institution was able to supply a vast number of products including tents and carpets to different parts of the world. The abstract statement of the operations of JSI for the year 1851, which was submitted by Sleeman on 17th January 1852, stated the following records,

Table Economic Transactions

Article	in	Quantity
Tents of sizes	—	187
Woollen Carpets	—	60
Kidderminster Carpeting	yards	1464
Shataranjis of sizes	—	13
Tablecloths	—-	237
Towels and Napkins	dozens	224
Horse-Clothing and Check	pieces	47

Source: (Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department, XV, 1856: 16-17)

For the year 1851, the institution generated a profit of Rupees 6,730-6-5¾ which, for the year 1853, increased to Rupees 8,600-6-6¾ (Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department, XV, 1856: 17-18). The goods of the manufactory were supplied to distant places as far as the Presidencies of Madras, Peshawur (Peshawar), and Kurrachee (Karachi) in British India (Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department, XV, 1856: 17). The carpets and other textiles made in India were always in huge demand across different countries of Europe. The popularity of goods manufactured at JSI was evident when several

items including table-cloths and carpets were exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition in London and later in 1867 at an international exhibition in Paris. In London, JSI was awarded for its excellent carpet design and colour. The catalogue of the exhibition noted,

> At Jubbulpore, the manufacture of carpets, rugs, and shataranjis (cotton carpets), has been regularly carried on for years; chiefly in jail, where Thugs and other prisoners are extensively employed upon them. The Jubbulpore carpets are considered of extremely good texture, and are remarkable for their cheapness. (Watson, 1862: 222)

The story of the Jubbulpore School of Industry could not be completed without the inclusion of 'family'. They were the family members of the old thug approvers whose inclusion in punishment was a remarkable feature of JSI, making it distinct and unparallel from prison production units. The wives, daughters, and other members of the families of approvers were kept under strict surveillance in a small village adjoining the manufactory. The colonial notion to consider the family as a crucial partner in cases of criminal communities was not a new phenomenon. As early as 1772, Warren Hastings issued Article 35 in Bengal that authorised to apprehend and punish the families of persons accused of dacoity. The rationale behind such acts was that, unlike other criminals, dacoits were professional criminals by birth and formed into regular communities (Singha, 1993: 85). In a similar way, the families of the thugs always remained under official suspicion for their potential connivance in the crimes. This was the biggest reason that the authorities put forward in their justification of the confinement of the thug families in the JSI. When William Simpson arrived in JSI for the first time he noted,

> It was a curious site to see these people, most of them boys and girls, the children of murderers. (Simpson, 1903: 134).

The members of the thug families were encouraged to assist their male counterparts in order to increase the scale of production and profits. While young sons were often employed with their fathers in the manufactory, other members of thug families were entrusted with

different small tasks required for the functioning of the manufactory. Women assisted males in spinning the thread required for making tents; children collected and sold grass and wood in the town of Jubbulpore. The institution was also connected with two schools that were designed to impart elementary education to the children (The Gazetteer of the Central Provinces, 1867: 181). While young boys were mainly taught in vernaculars, girls were trained in additional vocational courses such as knitting, spinning, weaving, etc. (Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department, XXIV, 1858: 56). Despite having no record of crime and docile attitude in the institution, the families of thug approvers did not have the right to live freely. As a general rule, the thugs were permitted to meet their families only during meal times. Moreover, it was not the wish of an approver but the service, dedication, and behaviour of him in the manufactory which determined his chances to be in touch with his family. Thus, the family was used as a tool to check and control the lives and productivity of the prisoners in the Jubbulpore School of Industry. Officials wanted to miss no chance of applying immoral pressure on the approvers if they failed to comply with the orders. In his letter to Brown, dated 19 February 1838, Sleeman wrote,

> Should any approver object to allow his son to be employed in this manufactory, he should be forthwith deprived of the privilege of visiting his family and given to understand that the children he already has, will be sent away to some distant asylum, as soon as one can be found willing to receive them, and his wife deprived of any allowance she may now receive, and be told to go where she pleases. In such a case, he will himself be reduced to the allowance of an ordinary prisoner. (Sleeman, 1849:338)

JSI facilitated the history of the town of Jubbulpore as a thriving centre of production and manufacturing in Central India. While many young sons of the thugs were allowed to open their separate establishments in the town, some boys from the institution were sent to different districts of the country to open new Schools of Industries, following JSI guidelines. In April 1851, the institution sent thirty thug

boys to Meerut where they established separate production units of woollen carpet and table linen weaving (Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department, XV, 1856: 16). Later, with the help from the trained people of Jubbulpore and Meerut manufactories, another institution of such kind, The Experimental School of Industry was opened in Lahore in December 1855 where approvers of native Muzzubee and Choora from Punjab were made to learn new skills of making clothes, table-line and wall-curtains (Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department, XXIV, 1858: 56). The authorities in Lahore followed similar strategies of pressure as were in Jubbulpore to manage the wives of prisoners work for the manufactory. The JSI spearheaded the movement of new prison industries in nineteenth-century India and its methods of education, employment, and reforming prisoners were thoroughly investigated upon by colonisers, interested in transplanting the JSI model in other regions of the subcontinent. By the arrival of the twentieth century, when JSI ceased to exist in its original form and was converted into a reformatory school for the juvenile offenders of the Central Provinces, many prisons in different parts of British India were successfully obtaining profits through the sale of goods manufactured inside the complex.

Conclusion

The Jubbulpore School of Industry as a reformatory experiment was a success story beyond colonial plans and expectations. In a period when the government was struggling to cope with collective criminality in different parts of India, the JSI provided an alternative way to deal with criminality, perceived to be hereditary in nature. The institution, since the very beginning, continued to serve the colonial capitalist interests where the labour of the confined thugs was exploited in the name of skilled training and employment. While the early decades of the nineteenth century were marked by the rise of several prison industries which boasted the moral improvement of the convicts, the manual and mental exploitation of prisoners was a

common phenomenon that was a bitter reality in every such institution. In the words of O'Brien,

> The penitentiary with its vocational training and production for the market was quite literally a workplace and as such exploited the prisoner as worker (O'Brien, 1978: 516).

The situation was even worse in the JSI as the family members of the approvers were kept confined and forced to work by the authorities in spite of having no history of crime. Although Sleeman was not in favour of any extensive policies for the reclamation of the thugs, as claimed by Singha (1993), the enthusiasm and interest he showed in the administration and commercial activities of the JSI clearly reflected his intentions of maximum utilisation of the approvers and their physical labour.

The emergence and consolidation of JSI has to be politically contextualized within the efflorescence of prison reforms and 'discipline' in India – largely transplanted from the West. The JSI was the most successful experiment in suppressing and tackling challenges associated with thuggee criminal activities in Central India. The success of JSI was an enabler in the rise and functioning of other manufactories designed and developed on similar (and improvised) lines in other parts of British India. JSI is an interesting chapter that unleashes embedded elements of crime-criminality, political economy and socio-legal history of the subcontinent during colonial times. Besides representing the 'ethnosurveillance', as suggested by Arindam Dutta (2006: 227), the strategies and tactics adopted by the colonial authorities in the Jubbulpore School of Industry made the institution an apparatus of psychosocial exploitation in British India.

References

Arnold, D. (1994), 'The Colonial Prison: Power, Knowledge and Penology in Nineteenth-Century India, in D. Arnold & D. Hardiman (eds.), *Subaltern Studies* viii: *Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 149-187.

Bayly, C. A. (1983), *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Bentinck, W. H. C. & Philips, C. H. (1977), *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, Governor-General of India, 1828-1835*: 1832-1835, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Brown, M. (2002), 'Crime, Governance and the Company Raj: The Discovery of Thuggee', *The British Journal of Criminology*, 42(1), 77-95.

Bruce, G. (1968), *The Stranglers: The Cult of Thuggee and its Overthrow in British India,* United Kingdom: Longmans.

Dutta, A. (2006), *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of its Global Reproducibility* (1st ed.), United Kingdom: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1977), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage Books.

Freitag, S. B. (1991), 'Crime in the Social Order of Colonial North India', *Modern Asian Studies,* 25(2), 227-261.

Gazetteer of the Central Provinces, Parts 1-5. (1867), Nagpore: Printed at the Chief Commissioner's Office Press.

Gordon, S. N. (1969), 'Scarf and Sword: Thugs, Marauders, and State-formation in 18th Century Malwa', *The Indian Economic & Social History Review,* 6(4), 403-429.

Hutton, J. (1857), *A Popular Account of the Thugs and Dacoits: The Hereditary Garotters and Gang-robbers of India,* United Kingdom: Wm. H. Allen.

Kaye, J. W. (1853), *The Administration of the East India Company: A History of Indian Progress,* United Kingdom: R. Bentley.

McLane, J. R. (1985), 'Bengali Bandits, Police and Landlords after the Permanent Settlement', in A. Yang (ed.), *Crime and Criminality in British India*, Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, pp. 26-47.

Nelson, A. (1909), *Central Provinces District Gazetteer*, Jubbulpore District, vol. A. Bombay: Printed at the Times Press.

O'Brien, P. (1978), 'Crime and Punishment as Historical Problem', *Journal of Social History,* 11(4), 508-520.

Parlby, F. P. (1850), *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque: During Four-and-twenty Years in the East*, United Kingdom: P. Richardson.

Report of the Committee on Prison-Discipline to the Governor General of India: In Council Dated the Eight of January 1838: To Which are Added a Few Tables Extracted from the Appendix. (1838) India: Ordered by the Council of India, Baptist Mission Press.

Roy, P. (1998), 'Discovering India, Imagining Thuggee', in *Indian Traffic: Identities in Question in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 41-70.

Selections from the Records of the Government of India (Foreign Department) No. XV. (1856) Calcutta: Thos. Jones, "Calcutta Gazette" Office.

Selections from the Records of the Government of India (Foreign Department) No. XXIV. (1858) Calcutta: John Gray, "Calcutta Gazette" Office.

Simpson, W. (1903), *The Autobiography of William Simpson*, R.I. (Crimean Simpson), United Kingdom: T. F. Unwin.

Singha, R. (1993), 'Providential' Circumstances: The Thuggee Campaign of the 1830s and Legal Innovation', *Modern Asian Studies,* 27(1), 83-146.

Sleeman, J. L. (1933), *Thug; Or, A Million Murders*, United Kingdom: S. Low, Marston & Company Limited.

Sleeman, W. H. (1836), *Ramaseeana: Or, A Vocabulary of the Peculiar Language Used by the Thugs*, India: G. H. Huttmann, Military Orphan Press.

Sleeman, W. H. (1844), *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official,* United Kingdom: J. Hatchard and Son.

Sleeman, W. H. (1849), *Report on Budhuk Alias Bagree Decoits, and Other Gang Robbers by Hereditary Profession: And on the Measures Adopted by the Government of India, for Their Suppression*, India: J. C. Sherriff.

Smith, V. A., Sleeman, W. H. (1915), *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official,* Kiribati: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, M. (1839), *Confessions of a Thug*, United Kingdom: R. Bentley.

The Gazetteer of the Central Provinces of India (1870), Bombay, India: Printed at the Education Society's Press.

Thornton, E. (1837), *Illustrations of the History and Practices of the Thugs: And Notices of Some of the Proceedings of the Government of India, for the Suppression of the Crime of Thuggee*, United Kingdom: W. H. Allen and Company.

Watson, J. F. (1862), 'A Classified and Descriptive Catalogue of the Indian Department', in *The Illustrated Catalogue of the Industrial Department*, vol. III, (1862), London: Spottiswoode and Co.

Reviewing American Baptist Missionaries' Contribution to the Bodos: A Historical Perspective

Jwngsar Daimari, Sudev Chandra Basumatary and
Junmoni Basumatary

Abstract

Concerned with politics and security rather than with evangelism, the British officials welcomed the missionaries to Assam. Reverend Cyril Barker of the American Baptist Church was the first missionary to establish contact with the Bodos. These missionaries, a part of the spread of the Christianity faith, worked effortlessly to uplift the Bodo society. The welfare measures initiated by the Baptist missionaries resulted in a sea change by transforming the Bodo society. This paper attempts to critically study the contributions of American Baptist Missionaries towards Bodo society. This paper is based on interviews and literary sources available on American Baptist Missionaries.

Keywords: Bodo Society, Education, Baptist Missionaries, Healthcare

Introduction

The American Foreign Missionaries were motivated to evangelisation by the Great Awakening in America and the British Evangelicals in India.[1] In June 1810, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Affairs was established, marking the beginning of a new era in American overseas missionary endeavours.[2] The American Baptist Missionary Union was founded in 1812.[3] However, albeit of its foundation, the name American Baptist Missionary Union was adopted only in 1846.[4] In India, the British East India Company, in its initial years, discouraged evangelising amongst the colonies. They were concerned that it would harm local feelings and, in turn, British trade. The East India Company's stance on evangelisation changed after the Charter Act of 1813 legalised

missionary activity in response to a public demand from British subjects in Britain.[5]

In India, the venture of the Baptist missionary activities can be traced back to when William Carey arrived in India and initiated the spread of Christianity.[6] William Carey was instrumental in establishing Serampore Mission as a branch of the English Baptist Mission in 1800. The English Baptist Missionary Society (B.M.S.) sent missionaries James Rae and Robinson Williams (Jr.) to the Garo Hills in 1867 after they were invited there by the first Political Agent, David Scott.[7] In 1813, on the invitation of the Magistrate of Sylhet, Carey sent a Bengali convert named Krishna Pal from the base in Serampore to Sylhet.[8] However, as far as Assam proper is concerned, there are no records of Christian converts travelling on their own from Bengal or any other parts of India to advance Assam's spiritual life significantly.[9]

In Assam proper, the arrival of the American Baptist Missionaries was due to Captain Francis Jenkins, a political agent and commissioner at the time, who wrote to the American Baptist Mission (A.B.M.) Board in 1834 to seek the dispatch of missionaries to the area. One could claim that political and security considerations were the driving forces behind captain Jenkins' invitation to the American Baptists. Captain Jenkins initially approached the missionaries in Serampore shortly after taking office in 1834 to appease the tribes and maintain peace along the boundary, but their reaction was unsatisfactory. When Captain Jenkins approached William Pearce of the Baptist Missionary Society (B.M.S.) for advice, he suggested that the American Baptists in Burma be asked insofar as they were interested in work among Shans.[10] After communicating with the Home Board, Jenkins sent an official invitation to the Burma Mission early in 1835.[11] With the belief that only by the propagation of the gospel the wild and violent tribes could be stopped and subdued, Captain Jenkins invited the American Baptists to the region.[12] In light of this, two American Baptist Mission missionaries, a qualified linguist named Nathan Brown and a printer named O.T. Cutter, arrived with their families in Sadiya, which is located in North-eastern Assam along the banks of the Brahmaputra, perhaps in March 1836. After a

few years, Miles Bronson moved to Sadiya with his wife, and then they were transferred to Nowgong. The first missionary outpost was at Sadiya, and then they moved to Jaipur, settling in Shivasagar (Sibsagar).[13]

Assam was not the destination for O.T. Cutter and Nathan Brown. They wanted to spread Christianity among the Shan tribes in South China and Northern Burma. However, the missionaries' limited linguistic and topographical understanding proved to be a roadblock. As a result, they were forced to give up on their goal and begin missionary work in Sadiya when a few other missionaries arrived. It was soon discovered that the B.M.S. had given the A.B.F.M.S. access to its Lower Assam field. As a result, the missionaries issued the Home Board an 'Appeal' pleading with it to accept the offer and dispatch workers to staff the field. They requested that at least 12 additional missionaries be sent at the moment, but they did not propose ending the Shan Mission. Instead, they suggested starting a new operation in the Brahmaputra valley. Despite its good intentions, the 'Appeal' lacked substance. After establishing three new fields in 1836, the Home Board was overburdened and unable to set a fourth. The fact that they couldn't have a Brahmaputra Valley Mission and a Shan Mission became clear to individuals on the ground. They would have to pick one of the two options. Eventually, they did make a decision, but not until 1841. The acceptance of the Lower Assam field left the Lower Assam region entirely in charge of the American Baptists.

Assam is the ancestral home of numerous races, each of which has a unique culture and identity. Assam comprises two types of inhabitants: tribal and non-tribal. Bodos are the most populous plain tribe, with the vast majority residing on the northern side of the Brahmaputra river and a smaller contingent on the southern side.[14] The appellation Bodo is derived from the Tibetan word 'Bod', which denotes a place of origin.[15] Hodgson used the phrase 'Bodo' to represent the Sino-Tibetan languages collectively.[16]

While the word 'Kachari' is derived from the word 'Kachar', which signifies a region near a river[17], it can be stated that the appellation Bodo is synonymous with water, i.e., 'di'.[18] In contrast, some scholars have varied opinions on the origin of the word 'Kachari'. Bijaya Laxmi

Brahma Chaudhury says that "the Kachari word comprises of two words Khoro and Hari, meaning a ruling clan."[19] According to J. D. Anderson, the term 'Kachari' is a distorted form of Koss-ari. Anderson relates the word 'koss' for Koches while 'ari', according to him, is a Bodo clan.[20] According to Risley's '*Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, the Kacharis were popularly called Meches, but after they inhabited the Kachar country, the synonym 'Kacharis' came to be widely acknowledged with Meches.[21] However, according to N. K. Barman, the name Kachari is derived from the Mahabharata term 'kach cha'.[22] Amidst the diverse opinion among scholars on the origin of the appellation 'Kacharis', it can be undeniably asserted that, "The Kacharis, who are of the great Bodo race, were allegedly among the Brahmaputra valley's earliest indigenous tribes".[23] Reverend S. Endle also opines that the Bodo Kacharis were the original inhabitants of Assam, albeit of the inability of records on the earliest settlers and immigrants.[24] However, as evidenced in historical sources, the Bodo people are stated to be the indigenous people of Assam who dominated Assam from its inception until about 1854 A.D.[25]

The Bodos are known by different names across the North-eastern Indian subcontinent.[26] For example, some Bodos inhabiting North Bengal and western portions of the Goalpara district are referred to as Mech, while those living west of Kamrup are known as Kachari.[27] However, most Bodos live along the Brahmaputra's northern bank.[28]

Traditionally the religion of the Bodos or so-called Kacharis is linked with the worship of Bathou brai.[29] Bathou is a name for the five creational tenets.[30] But in the early part of the 19th century, some of the Bodos or Mechs, under the influence of the Brahmins, abandoned their traditional religion by giving up alcohol and pork to follow Hindu gurus today, known as the Saranias. The primary reason for this conversion was that Hindus looked down on the Bodos since they used all kinds of animal fleshes. It is evident from William Hunter's report that

> The Cacharis have few dietary restrictions and are fond of every manner of pork and other animal products. However, prejudice against cows,

> picked up through their interactions with Hindus, is the only type of meat they refuse to eat.[31]

Hunter also noted that some Bodo people were constantly on the verge of intoxication. They also consumed a wide variety of animal foods, including the flesh of rats, mongooses, hares, deer, hogs, and fowl, as well as some insects like monster bugs, grasshoppers found in ripe paddy, crickets, and others.

Moreover, Hunter also accentuated that

> domestic livestock are common in a typical Kachari village. The Kachari villages are not exactly gleaming examples of cleanliness, albeit the pigs, goats, and cattle are kept in separate buildings some distance from the house.[32]

B. C. Allen also stated that "this population is filthy in their ways and incredibly primitive."[33]

This uninterrupted state persisted amongst the Bodos until the missionaries contacted them. The history of the advent of American Baptist missionaries can be traced back to 1836, after the Burmese, and the British signed the historic Treaty of Yandabo.[34] The American Baptist missionaries were the pioneers in introducing Christianity to the Bodos. Early in the 19th century, the American Baptist Christian missionaries arrived among the Bodos to preach their Christian values. Under the influence of these missionaries, the social and cultural lives of the Bodos witnessed numerous transformations.[35]

Several Mission Societies led waves of Bodo conversion to Christianity starting in the early 19th century AD. The American Baptist Mission, with its headquarters in Gauhati, was the first missionary society to evangelise the Bodos.[36] Reverend Cyril Barker of the American Baptist Church was the first missionary to interact with the Bodo people.[37] In the 1860s, the American Church first began its operation among the Bodos in the Darrang district. It was when Reverend S. Endle arrived in Tezpur to serve with C. H. Hesselmeyer as the tea garden Chaplain and perform missionary work among the Bodos. They successfully attracted a sizable number of Bodo converts

to their cause. The first Bodo Church was founded at Bengbari, and Reverend S. Endle is credited with writing the first monograph of its sort, *The Kacharis*, published in 1911.

The American Baptist Mission, however, at the beginning, were mainly concentrated on the Garos in the undivided Goalpara district, but they sometimes focused on the Bodo people.[38] As a result, between 1894 and 1909, some Bodo families in Fundibari village on the Brahmaputa's southern bank in Goalpara district were converted to Christianity. As a result, the number of Bodo converts grew steadily until the 1940s, when churches could be found in Sidli, Tukrajhar, Baghpara, and Debitola.

These pioneer missionaries did exceptional work among the Bodo-Kacharis. The American Baptist Christian missionaries employed many methods to meet the Bodos' needs. The Bodos were converted through various forms, including the provision of medical care, the translation of literary works, preaching, and education.[39] Besides, the American Baptist missionaries also taught them practical skills like carpentry, tailoring, cooking, teaching, and printing.[40]

Establishment of Bodo Baptist Convention (B.B.C.) and Bodo Baptist Church Association (B.B.C.A.)

The foundation of Bodo Baptist Convention (B.B.C.) in the erstwhile Darrang district has its roots in the Anglican congregation. After the demise of Reverend Sydney Endle, a pioneer Anglican missionary, the Anglican congregation faced a shortage of leadership. Therefore, American Baptist missionaries based in Jorhat sent out converts like Sisuram Saikia from Tezpur and Alfred from Chapai near Mangaldai around this time. In 1913, during the harvest season, they arrived at Borigaon village and convinced the Anglican congregation about the Baptist Christian Mission. Shortly after, Reverend George Richard Kampfer was invited to the Borigaon. The village is located about nine kilometres west of Udalguri town. On January 27, 1914, Reverend George Richard Kampfer travelled to Borigaon and baptised twenty-one villagers.

In 1914, under the direction of Reverend George Richard Kampfer of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (A.B.F.M.S.), the Bodo Baptist Convention (B.B.C.) was instituted. The Bodo Baptist Convention, in its infancy, was known as Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association and then was renamed Darrang Baptist Christian Association (D.B.C.A.). In 1983, when the Assam government divided the Darrang district into the Darrang and Sonitpur districts, the Association's name was changed to the Darrang Baptist Christian Association (D.B.C.A.), with its headquarters located in Harisinga. When the Central Government announced the formation of the Bodoland Territorial Council in 2003, the Association was renamed the Bodo Baptist Convention (B.B.C.).

The first missionary pastor among the Bodos was Ramanus Daimari. On April 20, 1914, Reverend Tanuram Saikia of Golaghat appointed Ramanus Daimari, a former member of S.P.G. Mission who had been baptized by Reverend George Richard Kampfer, to serve as pastor of the Borigaon Baptist Church.[41] Several additional churches were also founded in 1914 at Edenbari, Ambagaon, Belguri, and Phasia villages. Meanwhile, Reverend George Richard Kampfer inspired and directed the new believers to organize themselves under the banner of the Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association. In 1915, Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association organised its first annual conference at Borigaon, followed by Ambagaon in 1916.[42]

After the World War II, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society was unable to provide adequate supervision in those areas or begin any new projects in those areas. This is why the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society transferred control of the Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association to the Baptist General Conference of the United States of America in 1945. In 1946, Reverend J. Warren Johnson and Mrs. Ruth Johnson, missionaries from the Baptist General Conference in the United States, were sent to serve in the Bodo Baptist congregations. Reverend Johnson established the current mission centre at Harisinga. However, by 1969, the Indian government ordered all foreign missionaries to leave the country. Therefore, Baptist General

Conference missionaries asked Khalason Muchahary, the headmaster of M.E. school and member of Borigaon Baptist Church, to lead the Bodo churches.[43]

The Bodo Baptist Church Association (B.B.C.A.) was established in the erstwhile Goalpara district. The American Baptist Mission and the Australian Baptist Missionary Society played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Bodo Baptist Church Association (B.B.C.A.) in 1927.[44] The American Baptist Mission began its mission work in 1867 when Reverend Miles Bronson founded the American Baptist Mission Centre at Goalpara town after buying a plot of land for Rs. 800/- only.[45] Reverend A. C. Bower was the most significant American Baptist Mission missionary who focused specifically on the Bodos. He came to Goalpara town in 1909.[46] The Bodos regarded him highly. He drove himself to several villages and churches. Even while crossing the Brahmaputra river by a steamer, he visited the churches. In total, 78 Bodos were baptised as a result of his efforts. However, in 1922, Reverend A. C. Bower was recalled from Gauhati headquarters. By 1922, five Bodo Baptist churches had been documented in the north Goalpara district.[47]

Reverend Stephen took up missionary endeavours after the retirement and departure of Reverend A. C. Bower. Despite the relocation of the mission station from Dhubri to Tura, Reverend Stephen continued his work from Gauhati. However, his appointment was for a brief time only. For a year, Reverend O. L. Swanson took his place. At Balajhar, close to Tukrajhar, in 1923, Reverend O. L. Swanson organized the first annual conference for the Bodo Baptist Churches of the Goalpara district. From 1924-1928 Reverend A. J. Tuttle took over as in-charge of the churches of Goalpara district[48], and Reverend Tuttle was fortunate to have the assistance of a Garo preacher called Uman K. Marak who was dispatched to Tukrajhar in 1927. In 1927, 'Goalpara Boro Baptist Church Union' was established under the able leadership of Uman K. Marak.[49] In addition, in 1930, Uman K. Marak established the Goalpara Bodo Baptist Church Union's headquarters and a mission facility in Tukrajhar.[50] Uman K. Marak departed Tukrajhar for good in December 1932, after five years of dedicated and fruitful missionary work.

In 1929 Reverend David took over Reverend A. J. Tuttle as in-charge of the Gauhati Baptist Mission.[51] However, he had to leave for the United States in 1932, before he could complete his term, due to his eye problems. In 1933, Dr. V. H. Sword took over as in-charge of the Gauhati Baptist Mission. During his term, Maniram Basumatary, a local missionary, was sent to Tukrajhar in 1933 to take care of the Goalpara Bodo Baptist Church Union. He stayed there until Dr. V. H. Sword called him back to Gauhati in 1938. Miss Marion Bernham, a female missionary, was granted interim control of the organisation in 1938 while Dr. V. H. Sword was on leave.[52] In 1939, Dr. V. H. Sword received a second assignment, which he held until 1943. Reverend J. M. Forbes took over the Bodo congregations in 1943.[53] During his term, he oversaw the transfer of Bodo churches to the Australian Baptist Mission Society due to the scarcity of workers in Goalpara Bodo Baptist Church Union in 1946. The American Baptist Mission began negotiating with the Australian Baptist Missions in 1946 about turning over the Goalpara Bodo Baptist Church Union to the Australian Baptist Missionary Society. On April 14, 1947, the American and Australian Baptist Missions reached an agreement that, beginning May 1, 1947, the Australian Baptist Mission would be responsible for mission work among the Bodos in the region stretching from the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River to Bhutan.[54]

On May 17, 1947, just three months before India gained its freedom, Reverend Wilfred and Mrs. Gwenyth Crofts landed in Tukrajhar. The Australian Baptist Missionary Society did mission work among the Bodos of the undivided Goalpara District twenty-one years ago. Since this was the case, the Bodo Baptists are correct in saying that the Bodo Baptist Church Association was established in 1927. In 1970, the Australian Baptist Mission handed over the task to the local management, and since then, the Bodo Baptist mission in Goalpara has been known as the Goalpara Bodo Baptist Church Union and, most recently, it is known as Bodo Baptist Church Association.

Contribution of American Baptist Missionaries towards the Spread of Education among the Bodos

*Tol*s, *Pathsala*s, and *Gurugriha*s, were important establishments for imparting education in pre-colonial Assam.[55] However, the education imparted in *Tol*s, *Pathsala*s, and *Gurugriha*s was primarily religious and was confined to the priestly class.[56] While in the case of the Bodo people, they were never keen to send their children to schools located outside their inhabited territories established by the colonial government.[57] Nor the colonial authority had any concrete plans for access to education among the Bodos. It was Francis Jenkins, the Commissioner of Assam, who took the first step towards establishing a formal educational system for the Bodo people. As early as 1854, the provincial government began implementing a Christian missionary-led education programme for the Bodo people.[58]

The Baptist missionaries were the pioneer in spreading Christianity along with modern education. In truth, Christian missionaries' activities served a two-fold function. As a necessary condition for the propagation of Christianity among the illiterate and uneducated people, they also served as agents of the state, particularly when state institutions failed to offer citizens access to education on their own initiative.[59]

The apostles (Missionaries) believed evangelisation was the only process to purge and renovate tribal Bodo society.[60] In the undivided Darrang and Goalpara districts, these missionaries, especially the American Baptist Mission, were most active. The American Baptist Foreign Mission Board (A.B.F.M.S.), which had direct contact with the beginnings of Christianity in Assam, did not have a particularly optimistic view of the situation. Due to the slow progress made during the first few decades of Christian activity, they seriously contemplated abandoning the work begun on multiple occasions. It was believed that the Bodo tribes of Assam would never convert to Christianity. This perspective changed significantly because of revitalization.[61]

Education was one of the considerable contributions of American Baptist missionaries. When the missionaries arrived in Assam, there were only a handful of schools to educate the local population. As a result, the Bodo people had no access to formal education until the mid-19th century. The missionaries debated that establishing schools would enable the Bodos to read religious and printed materials. In addition, the apostles believed it would aid in transmitting correct moral and spiritual values and facilitate the proper understanding of religious terms employed by preachers.

Soon after founding the Mission Centre at Gauhati in 1843, Reverend Barker erected a boarding school where some Bodo students were housed. Twelve-year-old Aphinta from the village of Jhargaon in north Kamrup enrolled in the school in 1846. In 1849, he was baptised at Gauhati, becoming the first Bodo conversion to Christianity to be officially recorded.[62] By 1849, students from the tribe were enrolled in the school that Cyrus Barker had set up in Gauhati.[63]

The Baptist missionaries seeking to reach the Assamese and Bodo people of the undivided Darrang district in 1854 planned to establish a station with two apostles in Mangaldai. But they failed in their attempt due to a lack of workforce and funding.[64] Shortly after the failure of the Baptist missionaries, Anglican Mission was given control of the undivided Darrang, followed by the Society for the Propagation of Gospel Mission (S.P.G.) in 1862.

The S.P.G. Mission's initial Bodo outreach was led by Reverend C. H. Hesselmeyer, who was installed as the first in-charge of the Kachari Mission in 1864. During the same time, 12 schools catering to the Bodos were established in Darrang. The Kachari Mission took off after Sidney Endle joined Reverend C. H. Hesselmeyer in the mission. Sidney Endle was the one who first proposed spreading Christianity to the Bodos in their language. In 1870, the S.P.G. had grown to encompass 17 schools. In 1892–1893, S.P.G. Mission had 25 schools open to 356 students.[65] But Endle's unexpected death in 1907 halted the progress of the S.P.G. Mission.

American Baptist missionaries stepped up to fill the void left by S.P.G. Mission. In 1914, the American Baptist Mission dispatched Reverend George Richard Kampher to work with the Bodos in the Darrang area. At Borigaon, a primary school and a church were also built. For the Bodos living in the Northern Mangaldai subdivision by 1917, the number of primary schools had risen to 4. To provide higher education to Christian Bodos in the area, the Mangaldai Baptist Christian Association founded one M.E. School at Borigaon in 1925.[66] The Borigaon Middle English School was relocated to Harisinga and improved to the Middle English level in 1931.[67] In 1945, however, the American Baptist Foreign Mission (A.B.F.M.S.) handed the field to the Baptist General Conference (B.G.C.) due to a lack of men and resources. Through the efforts of B.G.C. missionaries, the institution was transformed into a high school in the mid-1950s. A new school was built in 1950 using the mission fund. As of that same year, there were 275 students enrolled.[68] For many years, a monthly wage grant was given to help with operational costs. Many young people from poor backgrounds were allowed to get an education and experience the light of knowledge by establishing schools. However, albeit the best education provided by the missionary schools, the condition of the schools deteriorated after their departure. This was because of the reliance of the school administration on the students' meagre fees, which prevented them from hiring the best teachers. As a result, the Baptist mission schools fell behind other private and Catholic mission schools.

In the early twentieth century, American Baptist missionaries began evangelism work among the Bodos of the Goalpara District. They focused their efforts on helping the inhabitants further their education. But in the initial phase, the American Baptist Missionaries mainly concentrated on the Garos and Rabhas. Before 1930, there had been no notable advancement. The mission report from 1930–1931 attests to this, stating,

> There are just two village schools, both of which are in appalling condition, and the district's Kacharis are still highly illiterate. Literacy amongst women was nonexistent.[69]

Having relocated Balajhar Primary School to Tukrajhar by 1930, the American Baptist Mission had already opened two other schools for rural inhabitants. The missionary Umon K. Marak was instrumental in increasing access to education for the local Bodo population.

The Gauhati Baptist Mission Headquarters deployed Minaram Basumatary in 1933, and he and his wife, Minnie, took on the activities.[70] Under the locals' initiative, a middle-english school was built in Tukrajhar in 1936, with Minaram Basumatary as the headmaster.[71] In 1941, under the leadership of Minaram Basumatary, Tukrajhar became the epicentre of the mission field. However, the American Baptist Mission eventually decided to leave the area in favour of A.B.M.S. after discovering its inability to commit much time to the cause of Bodo Baptists (Australian Baptist Mission Society). As a result, Goalpara Mission Field was given to the Australian Baptist Mission Society in 1946 by the American Baptist Mission, together with 16 churches and 996 church members.[72]

Bodo Language and Literature

The Christian missionaries were instrumental in developing the Bodo language and literature. Although Bodo is an ancient language, it had no literature before the missionaries' writings. The Bodo community had used this language as a spoken language for centuries. Some researchers' observations indicate that a script called Deodhai was officially used in the Boro language during the Kachari reign in Dimapur, the former capital of the Bodo-Kachari kingdom.[73] It is currently unclear how this script was lost in the past. Regardless of the reason, the contribution of missionaries to the Bodo language and literature is noteworthy.

This is substantiated by the publication of books on religion, folklore, rhymes, songs, and grammar written in Bodo. Most books of the time were written in English, with abundant Bodo language examples. A successful endeavour was made in 1848-49 by the American Baptist missionaries Barker, Danforth, and Ward to publish a few religious books in the Bodo language. However, the script

employed by them is unknown.[74] Reverend C. H. Hesselmeyer of S.P.G. Mission translated holy books into the Bodo language in 1861. But Reverend Sidney Endle's writing did the most to formalize the Bodo dialect into a literary form.

The 1884 CE, publication of *An Outline Grammar of the Kachari Language* by Reverend Sidney Endle in Roman script is notable. This book is based primarily on the dialect of the Bodos of the Darrang district. These developments paved the way for the first written use of the Bodo language. This book also included several Bodo folktales and stories written in both English and Bodo. Therefore, Bodos consider the book to be both grammatical and literary.[75] His monographical book *The Kacharis* comprises social traditions, Bodo grammar, and folktales in English and Bodo.[76] It is unclear why Reverend Sidney Endle chose Roman writing instead of the more common Assamese script used at the time in the missionary schools. Perhaps he was inspired to do so after reading Brian H. Hodgson's *Miscellaneous Essay Relating to Indian Subject*, published in 1880 or to simplify the communication skill of the Bodos to make it easier for the managers of the tea-gardens to understand the Bodo language.[77] J. D. Anderson's book, *A Collection of Kachari Folktales and Rhymes*, was published in 1895. In addition to the original versions in the Bodo language, his collection focuses primarily on 17 English translations of Bodo folktales. This initial version provides a sample of the Darrang district's native Bodo language. Reverend A. Kristiansen wrote a book called *Grammar and Dictionary of Kachari Language* in 1904. The translation of the Holy Bible by the British and Foreign Bible Society of Calcutta in 1938 into a Bodo language was a significant step forward for the Bodo language.[78]

In the period between 1890 to 1930, the missionaries employed Roman script in writing Bodo literature; however, in contrast to writing Bodo literature, the apostles employed Assamese and Bengali scripts during the independence movement.[79] Nevertheless, the use of Roman script for Bodo literature resumed after independence. These literary endeavours of the Christian missionaries caught the Bodos' interest and contributed to the expansion and advancement of Bodo literature.

Healthcare

Along with education, the establishment of medical institutions was one of the most significant contributions of Baptist missionaries. The B.G.C. missionaries initiated the medical mission in the North bank of the undivided Darrang and Goalpara districts. A severe and disheartening problem experienced by the Bodo people inhabiting the North bank of the undivided Darrang and Goalpara district was the absence of medical facilities and general knowledge regarding health problems. Therefore, the American Baptist Missionaries initiated healthcare centres and village clinics to ensure the basic necessary health facilities for the poor and underprivileged Bodos. In addition, these healthcare centres and village clinics enabled the missionaries to spread the gospel along with humanitarian services for the poor Bodos.

The American Baptist missionaries saw healthcare as a top priority, so medical centres were set up in the Bodo-inhabited areas. The medical centres served as an essential foundation in shaping the social structure of the Christian community. The first 70 years, however, were essentially devoid of scientific medical research. The only form of healing was what the missionaries could perform, given their limited training. As a result, the Bodos initially feared the doctors, and it took a lot of convincing before the medical professionals could persuade them to use the missionaries' provided medical-care.

Each mission station had a dispensary where medicines were distributed and minor illnesses were attended to. A national nurse or a missionary nurse provided the services. To handle challenging cases, the doctors frequently went to the district dispensaries run by the Tezpur-based medical staff. After a protracted period, the B.G.C. missionaries built a base hospital in 1952 connected to Tezpur by road and rail. It was established as an outpatient dispensary in July of the same year, and in June 1954, it became a full-fledged hospital with 30 beds.[80] The first missionary doctor at the hospital was Dr. Charles Merchant, who specialized in Kala-azar from the University of Calcutta. The first missionary nurses at the hospital were Miss Arlene. J. Jensen and Miss Joy Philip.

Five students have started from the beginning of the hospital nursing course in midwifery. The nursing school was mainly founded by the efforts of Miss Jensen and Miss Ruby Eliason. In North-east India, they launched one of the top nursing schools. At the nursing school, Miss Ruth Burtell, Miss Lorna Del Nelson, Miss Elsa Knudsen, and Miss Betty Pearson all performed their duties honourably. The nursing programme produced outstanding nurses, some of whom are still working in Arab countries and the U.S.[81] Additionally, the people were given access to mobile hospital services. The mobile clinic's expansion efforts began in 1957. One missionary physician was assigned to a permanent itinerant ministry.

The mobile clinic is a specially-equipped vehicle primarily designed to serve the people of the interior region. The mobile clinic provided medical aid and eye camps for minor procedures.[82] The hospital received positive responses. From 1945 to 1959, more than 40,000 patients visited the Tezpur hospital. Of these, about 4000 were hospital patients. Two thousand surgical procedures and operations were carried out roughly. Over 30,000 patients were treated in the outlying dispensaries during the same timeframe. The mobile clinic saw an additional 7,000 patients between 1957 and 1959.

In Harisinga, the A.B.F.M.S. built a dispensary, which B.G.C. missionaries remodelled and expanded in 1958. Initially, at the beginning of its establishment, the hospital had eight beds, an operating room for child-birth, and additional treatment rooms. As a result, the Baptist Christian Hospital, Tezpur, one of the top medical facilities in the area, had fewer patients than other private hospitals. However, the hospital's state declined to tragic proportions in the late 1990s. Therefore, the hospital's management was given to the Delhi-based Emmanuel Hospital Association (E.H.A.), a Christian healthcare organization, in October 2004.[83]

In the Tukrajhar region, the Baptist missionaries established Crofts Memorial Hospital in 1956. Wilfred and Gwenyth Crofts, the founding members of the A.B.M.S., are honoured with the naming of this medical facility. The hospital presented Christ via the healing ministry by offering low-cost, high-quality medical care, health education, and community

service to everyone, regardless of caste or colour. Australian Baptist missionaries have been involved in Christian humanitarian service and relief efforts since the 1950 riots. Later it actively aided those hurt in the Lower Assam riots of 1996, 2011, and 2012.

Conclusion

The American Baptist missionaries contributed immensely to the foundation of educational and healthcare facilities among the Bodos. The establishment of primary schools in Darrang and Goalpara is a living testament to their efforts to facilitate the Bodos' education. The contribution to healthcare by the Baptist missionaries is also one of their most crucial charitable works. Medical centres such as Crofts Memorial Hospital, established in 1956, Tezpur Hospital and Harisinga Hospital show their zeal and efforts to provide the Bodos with medical facilities. Moreover, the assistance given to the missionaries by government officials can hardly be overestimated. British officials such as Major Jenkins and Captain Gordon fall naturally within the scope of the religious history of Assam. They provided the missionaries with the content to spread Christianity. They opened the path for the apostles and allowed them to enter territories otherwise closed. They shared their homes and their comforts with the evangelists from foreign shores. The Baptist missionaries had a world vision, a dream of a world won to Christ. The missionary thrust of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought to turn the dream into reality.

Notes

[1] H. K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.)*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1986, p. xiii.
[2] ibid.
[3] Biswajit Das (ed.), *Assam Mission in Missionary Magazine, Boston: An Evangelical History of Christianity in Nineteenth Century Assam* (1836-50), Volume-I, Xpress Publishing, p. i.
[4] ibid.
[5] Anupama Ghosh, 'Conversions, Education and Linguistic Identity in Assam: The American Baptists Missionaries, 1830-1890' in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 72, 2011, 863-74, *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44146777. Accessed 24/07/2022.
[6] Victor Hugo Sword, *Baptist in Assam: A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1992, p. 34.

[7] Nirode K. Barooah, *David Scott in North-East India*, Bhabani Offset Pvt. Ltd., Guwahati, 2015, p. 216.
[8] 'Mahesh Islary, Boro Maharini Solongthai Rao Thunlai Aro Maharini Daogasarnayao Christian Missionarini Bihwm', published in *Laithun* in *8th Issue of Boro Writers Academy*, 1998, p. 212.
[9] Victor Hugo Sword, Op. cit., p. 34.
[10] F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God, A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North-East India: The Mission Period 1836-1950*, Christian Literature Centre, Gauhati, 1971, p. 16.
[11] ibid.
[12] H. K. Barpujari, Op. cit., p. xiv.
[13] Biswajit Das (ed.), Op. cit., p. i.
[14] Phanindra Kalita, 'Early History of the Bodos: A Root Cause of Bodo Struggle for Ethnic Identity Formation', in *Pratidhwani the Echo*, Volume VIII, Issue I, July 2019, 159.
[15] Anil Kumar Boro, *A History of Bodo Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2010, p. 3.
[16] Op. cit., p. 4.
[17] Binoy Kumar Brahma, 'The Bodos: A Study on Socio-Cultural Change', Gauhati University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2007, p. 10.
[18] B. K. Barua, *A Cultural History of Assam (Early Period)*, Volume I, Bina Library, Guwahati, 5th Edition, 2011, p. 7.
[19] Bijaya Laxmi Brahma Chaudhury, *Bodos (Kacharis) at a Glance*, Bongaigaon, Tribal Cultural Institute, 1993, p. 2.
[20] J. D. Anderson, 'Introductory Note to the Kacharis', in Rev. Sidney Endle, *The Kacharis*, London: MacMillan and Co. Limited, 1911, p. xv.
[21] Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Gauhati, 1994, p. 299.
[22] Anil Kumar Boro, Op cit., 2010, p. 2.
[23] Abhijit Bhuyan, 'The Socio-Political Movement for Bodoland and Beyond — A Gendered Paradigm', in *Peace Studies*, Guwahati, OKDISCD, 2007, p. 4.
[24] Snehamoy Chaklader, *Sub-Regional Movement in India*, KP Bagchi & Company, Kolkata, 2004, p. 26.
[25] Yamao Zwhwlao Brahma, (et al.), *Bodoland Movement 1986-2001, A Dream and Reality*, All Bodo Student's Union, Kokrajhar, 2001, p. 20.
[26] Phanindra Kalita, Op. cit., p. 160.
[27] B. K. Barua, Op. cit., p. 7.
[28] Bhrigu Raj Boro, 'Socio-Cultural and Religious Lifestyle of Bodo Tribes of Assam - A Review,' in *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, Volume 9, Issue 5, Ser. III, May 2020, 6.
[29] Bijaya Laxmi Brahma Chaudhury, Op. cit., p. 8.
[30] Anil Kumar Boro, Op. cit., p. 8.
[31] W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Assam*, Volume-ii, Trubner & Co., London, 1879, p. 118.
[32] Sydney Endle, *The Kacharis*, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1911, p. 12.
[33] B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Goalpara, Volume-iii, City Press, Calcutta, 1903, p. 47.
[34] Edward Gait, *History of Assam*, Bina Library, Guwahati, 2007, p. 341.
[35] A. Brahma, 'Socio-economic life of the Boros and the role of women thereof' in *Basiram Jwhwlao Souvenir*, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, 2011.
[36] Rabindra Nath Mosahary, 'Social History of the Boros of Assam: A Study of Oral History', Ph.D. Dissertation, NEHU, Shillong, 1986, p. 169.

[37] Ayilookunell Sabastian, 'Christianity Among the Bodos' in Thomas Pulloppillil & Jacop Aluckal (eds.), *The Bodos Children of Bhullumbutter*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1997, p. 44.
[38] Bimal Kanti Basumatary, 'Influence of Christianity to the Bodos Society,' in *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, Volume 9, Issue 3, March 2021, 2285.
[39] Phungbili Basumatary & Luke Daimary, 'The Humanitarian Service of the Christian Missionaries Among the Bodos', in *Research Guru*, Volume-12, Issue-4, March 2019, 657.
[40] Varshali Brahma & Vibhuti Singh Shekhawat, 'The Bodo Tribal Society: Change in the 21st Century', in Priyanka Jain (ed.), *Noida International University Journal of Social Sciences*, Volume 8, 2020, 3.
[41] Sapan Daimari, Secretary, Borigaon Baptist Church, Udalguri, Assam, Age-50 years, 25/07/2017, (An informant).
[42] Rev. Pranay Daimari, 'Pioneer Missionary in Darrang Distric (Udalguri District): Rev. Gorge Richard Kampfer' in Amal Kr. Moshahary (ed.), Commemoration of Rev. Sydney Endle, *The 38th Annual Conference of the Boro Baptist Christian Board & Youth Fellowship*, 2010, p. 18.
[43] Rev. Prabin Daimari, 'Mission and Vision of the Boro Baptist Convention', Hemol Basumatary (ed.), in *The Canan*, Souvenir of the Centenary Jubilee Celebration of Bodo Baptist Convention 1914-2014, Udalguri, pp. 11-12.
[44] Arjun Basumatary, '*A Historical Sketch of Boro Baptist Church Association*', in Arjun Basumatary (ed.), *Diakonia: The Golden Jubilee Celebration Boro Christian Board Joint Youth Fellowship (1968-2014)*, Souvenir Sub-Committee for BCB and BCBJYF, Tukrajhar, 2018, p. 23.
[45] Dr. Pradip Narzary (ed.), 'Goalpara Boro Baptist Church Union in Sungdo Jarimin', in *Souvenir of the Diamond Jubilee Celebration Committee (2002) of Goalpara Boro Baptist Church Union*, held at Tukrajhar Baptist Mission, February, 2002, p. 36.
[46] Khiren Borgoyary & Dr. Pradip Narzary, 'Pioneer Missionaries from American Baptist Mission and Australian Baptist Missionary Society to The Goalpara Boro Baptist Church Union', in Amal Kr. Moshahary (ed.), in Commemoration of Rev. Sydney Endle, *The 38th Annual Conference of the Boro Baptist Christian Board & Youth Fellowship*, 2010, p. 39.
[47] Arjun Basumatary, 'Bodo Christians, The Bodoland Movement and Nation Building: A Missiological Interpretation', Ph.D. Dissertation in missiology submitted to Centre for Contemporary Christianity, Bangalore (India), 2014, p. 38.
[48] ibid.
[49] Khiren Borgoyary, Ex-Pastor, 1 No. Tukrajhar Baptist Church, Vill - Tukrajhar, District-Chirang, B.T.A.D (Assam), Age-60 years, 19/10/2022 (An informant).
[50] Khiren Borgoyary & Dr. Pradip Narzary, 'Pioneer Missionaries from American Baptist Mission and Australian Baptist Missionary Society to The Goalpara Boro Baptist Church Union', in Amal Kr. Moshahary (ed.), in Commemoration of Rev. Sydney Endle, *The 38th Annual conference of the Boro Baptist Christian Board & Youth Fellowship*, 2010, p. 27.
[51] Ratul Basumatary, *Gospel and Bodos: An Ethnographic Study*, New Delhi 1993, presented to Bible School Tukrajhar, B.T.A.D (Assam), p. 75.
[52] ibid.
[53] Ratul Basumatary, Op. cit., p. 76.
[54] Dr. Pradip Narzary, Superintendent, Croft Memorial Hospital, Tukrajhar, B.T.A.D. (Assam), Age-55 years, 28/07/201, (An informant).

[55] P.C. Choudhury, *The History of the Civilization of the People of Assam Upto 12th Century A.D.*, DHAS, Guwahati, 1959, pp. 377-79.
[56] Priyam Goswami, *The History of Assam from Yandabo to Partition 1826-1947*, Orient Blackswan Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2012, p. 198.
[57] *Bengal Educational Proceeding*, August, 1870, p. 2.
[58] Satyendra Kr. Sarmah, *History of Education Among the Bodos*, N.L. Publications, Guwahati, 2017, p. 78.
[59] Letter No. 64, Jenkins to Wiliam Grey, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Dated - 01/07/1855.
[60] Nirode K. Barooah, *David Scott in North-East India*, Bhabani Offset Pvt. Ltd., Guwahati, 2015, p. 208.
[61] Victor Hugo Sword, Op. cit., p. 11.
[62] Rabindra Nath Mosahary, Op. cit., p. 169.
[63] F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God, A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North-East India: The Mission Period 1836-1950*, Christian Literature Centre, Gauhati, 1971, p. 84.
[64] Satyendra Kr. Sarmah, Op. cit., p. 82.
[65] Satyendra Kr. Sarmah, Op. cit., p. 86.
[66] Nandeswar Daimari (ed.) *Shinga-Dhwani: Souvenier of Diamond Jublee Celebration Harisinga Higher Secondary School*, Diamond Jubilee Celebration Committee, 2006, p. 57.
[67] Pratul Kr. Bhobora, 'Darrang Jilar Bodo Kachari Sakalar Majot Christian Dharmar Agamon' in *Hathorkhi IPIL*, Souvenir, Jisu Krist Jayanti, Sacred Heart Church, Udalguri, 2000, p. 60.
[68] Martin Erickson, *The 1945's in the Ministry of Baptist General Conference*, Chicago, Harvest Publications, Illinois, 1961, p. 94.
[69] *One-hundred Sixteenth Annual Report*, May 28 to June 02, 1930, New York, p. 111.
[70] A. J. Tuttle, *Report from Goalpara Field*, Jorhat, February 1936, pp. 3-6.
[71] V. H. Sword, *Report from Gauhati-North Kamrup,* Mission Conference, 1937.
[72] M. S. Sangma, *History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India*, Volume-I, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1987, p. 142.
[73] M. Boro, *Historical Development of Boro Language*, N. L. Publications, Guwahati, 2007, p. 11.
[74] Satyendra Kr. Sarmah, Op.cit., 92.
[75] S. Brahma, *Religion of the Boros their Socio-Cultural Transition*, DVS Publishers, Guwahati 2006, p. 50.
[76] Anil Kumar Boro, Op, cit., p. 40.
[77] Jadav Pegu, *Reclaiming Identity: A Discourse on Bodo History*, Jwngsar Narzary, Kokrajhar, 2004, p. 78.
[78] K.Borgoyari (ed.), 'Chronology of Bible Translation into Boro Language', *in Commemoration of Rev. Sidney Endle, the 38th Annual Conference of the Boro Christian Board & Youth Fellowship*, 15-17 January, 2010, pp. 41-42.
[79] Mahesh Islary, 'Boro Maharini Solongthai Rao Thunlai Aro Maharini Daogabosamaiyao Christian Missionarini Bihwm', in *Laithun in 8th Issue of Bodo Writers Academy*, 1998, pp. 106-14.
[80] Lucas Bhengra and others (ed.), Baptist Christian Hospital, Tezpur, in *Souvenir Com. Of Golden Jubilee of Baptist Christian Hospital*, Tezpur, 2004, p. 1.
[81] Op. cit., p. 19.
[82] Martin Erickson, *The 1945's in the Ministry of Baptist General Conference*, Chicago, Harvest Publications, Illinois, 1961, p. 92-93.
[83] Lucas Bhengra and others (ed.), Op.cit., p. 10.

The Sufferings of the Indentured Labourers in Assam: An Engagement through Folk Songs

Asish Sarma and Amrendra Kumar Thakur

Abstract

Scholars have documented the economic and social exploitations of tea garden labourers mostly on the basis of colonial records and reports. However, most of them have overlooked oral traditions, which deal with the emotional and lived dimensions of their experiences. These are engrained in folk music and songs, and other aspects of life. Drawing from a rich repertoire of folk songs such as *Jhumair Geet*, *Damkas Geet*, *Tusu Geet*, *Kamjariker Gana* etc., this study reveals the anguish, resistance, and resilience found in the lived experiences of communities brought from regions like Chotanagpur, Bihar, and Odisha under exploitative systems such as the *Girmitiya* and *Arkatiya*. These songs reflect the hardships of migration, exploitative working conditions and search for dignity in the face of systemic repression by colonial planters. They also illustrate how the Tea Garden Labour community became submerged within the broader Assamese Society. This engagement with folk traditions not only preserves the cultural memory of tea labourers but also enriches our understanding of subaltern histories in colonial India.

Keywords: Assam, Exploitation, Indentured Labourers, Tea Garden, Folk Culture, Anguish, Resistance, Emotions, Oral Traditions.

Introduction

From the colonial era to the present, scholars have extensively researched the origin of Assam's tea industry, the exploitation endured by indentured labourers[1] within its tea gardens, and many facets of this labour community, including the socio-cultural and economic

aspects.[2] Drawing upon archival data, eminent scholars such as Dwarkanath Ganguly[3], Amalendu Guha[4] and K. L. Chattopadhyay[5], Prasenjit Choudhury[6] through their writings, exposed the harsh realities faced by the indentured labourers in the tea gardens of Assam. Unfortunately, they did not give much attention to the oral sources, which could have provided significant insights into the sufferings of these labourers. Therefore, through this paper our goal is to shed light on the untold stories of this marginalised community through the examination of their folk songs and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of their history and experiences.

The picturesque state of Assam, located in the north-eastern corner of India, is a repository of cultural richness. One of the most engaging aspects of Assamese culture is its rich tradition of folk songs. Assam is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups. Over time, people from different regions have migrated here, eventually adopting the Assamese identity. The tea garden labourer community is a prominent example, having migrated to Assam in pursuit of a better life. The tea garden labourers were brought to Assam from various regions of India, representing varied tribes-castes, languages, customs, and traditions. Despite these differences, they gradually accustomed to the new atmosphere and constituted a new workforce in Assam, they are neither slaves nor serf[7], instead, they are better defined as indentured labourers.

Over time, these labourers who were bought to Assam through various contracts such as *Girmitiya* and *Arkatia* became an important part of Assamese Society. They adopted Assamese as their mother tongue and brought with them "lingua francas"- common languages that served as bridges between their varied communities, known as *Sadri, Sadni, Sadhani,* or *Khortha*.[8] Moreover, they maintain their individual dialects among their respective castes. They possess a vibrant folk culture, with their folk songs categorised as *Jhumair Geet, Damkas Geet, Sadiker Gana, Kamjariker Gana, Chowa/Chawa/Chuwa Khela Gana, Sahrai Geet, Tusu Geet, Fagua Geet,* etc.[9] After coming to Assam, in the new environment, they composed a new type of *Jhumair, Damkas*

Songs. All of these traditional songs depict the essence of their existence, encompassing the joy, sorrow, and everyday experiences. Just as renowned poet P.B. Shelley famously remarked, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought."[10], some of their folk songs convey the sufferings, anger, and struggles this community has experienced since migrating to Assam. These songs preserve a stirring narrative of their hardships and oppressions through their melodies and lyrics, building an emotional connection between their past and present.

This paper consists of three parts. The first part of the paper briefly discusses folk songs as a way to express sufferings in both global and Indian contexts. The second part provides a discussion of the folk songs that reflect the sufferings and anger of Indentured labour in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. Finally, the third part serves as a conclusion.

I

Folk song which is a fascinating aspect of folk culture plays a vital role in the expression and preservation of human experiences. German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, has eloquently defined folk songs as "those created by a particular folk group, and these songs represent the true spirit of the community that produced and nourished them."[11] He stressed the importance of understanding folk culture as a traditional, anonymous culture that has been passed down from one generation to the next. John Greenway has compiled the definitions and concepts of folk songs.[12] He provides the opinions of Robert Winslow Gordon, Arthur Kyle Davis and Louise Pound. On the basis of above it can be said that folk song is a body of song in the possession of the people, passed on by word of mouth from singer to singer, not learned from books or from print. They are not static and all sense of their authorship and origin has been lost. Throughout history, folk songs have elegantly interwoven the common experiences of communities all around the world, painting vivid portrayals of their joys, challenges, tragedies, and enduring traditions. Among these stories, the plight of those who were enslaved, whether as slaves or

indentured labourers, stands out. These songs offer witness to the tremendous difficulties faced by persons bound in servitude, etching their stories into the annals of history through tragic lyrics.

African-American slaves used songs to express themselves powerfully, categorising the songs into 'religious,' 'work,' and 'recreational' genres. Religious songs, such as *Do, Lord, Remember Me* demonstrated a deep connection to Christianity. The songs depict finding solace in god as a way to escape sufferings and achieve salvation. Work songs aided in task recollection, eased labour burden and miseries, whereas recreational songs provided a medium of expression and relaxation.[13] These songs are a great resource for researchers looking into the atrocities of slavery. They were passed down through generations, preserving African American heritage and providing unique insight into slaves' life experiences. Similarly, in the Indian context, we can talk about the *Bidesia* culture. *Bidesia* refers to Bhojpuri folk songs that powerfully depict the anguish and sorrow of migrants who were separated from their families and transferred to distant British colonies such as Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, British Guyana, Uganda etc.[14] These labourers were primarily sent from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to meet the demand for labour in the plantations in British colonies, which arose following the abolition of slavery by the middle of nineteenth century. The economic need forced these individuals to migrate to distant places. Both men and women were deceived by *Arkatti*s (recruiting agents) with false promises.[15] The labouring masses in Fiji conveyed their displacement and the sufferings through the *bidesia* composition as follows:

Khoonpasine se siche hum bagiya
Baitha-Baitha Hukum Chalaye ne Bidesia
Phirangiyan Ke Rajna ma Chuta Mora Haslu
Gori Sarkar Chati Chal re Bidesia.[16]

(**Free Translation:** With blood and sweat we tilled the soil; O *Bidesia*! The people sitting command us. Under the whims of the Whiteman (Britishers), we lose our scythe. O *Bidesia*! It is the rule of the white government.)

Kahe Mori Sudhi Bisaraye Re Bidesia
Tarhpi Tarhpi Din Rain Gavayo Re
Kahe Mose Nehiya Lagae Re Bidesia.[17]

(**Free Translation:** Why did you make me lose my consciousness, O *bidesia*? I am suffering constantly day and night. Why did you lock your eyes with mine, O *bidesia*?)

Like these, in India, there are numerous folk cultures that convey the sufferings and experiences of various ethnic groups.

II

Since ancient times, the hills and forests of Assam have naturally grown tea plants, and the local Singpho tribe had been using tea as *Phalap* for a long time. However, Mr. Robert Bruce and his brother C.A. Bruce's efforts were the ones that officially led to the discovery of tea in Assam. In 1823, Robert Bruce visited Garhgaon for trading and learned about tea from a Singpho chief of the Bissa clan with the help of Maniram Dewan. The Singpho chief assured Bruce of obtaining tea specimens. Robert Bruce unfortunately passed away in 1824. Despite this setback, Assam tea's journey continued. Assam came under British rule after the treaty of *Yandabo* in 1826. Following its annexation, through the efforts C. A. Bruce, British started to think about the possibilities of this industry. In 1834 the Tea Committee was formed to investigate the possibilities, and Gordon was sent to China to look for tea saplings and skilled workers.[18] Simultaneously, a team from Calcutta investigated soils and collected indigenous tea saplings. The East India Company decided to try their hand at tea cultivation. Thus, first experimental tea plantation was established in Saikhowa near Sadiya in late 1835. These early attempts were unsuccessful, but in 1837, the Chabua tea estate, 18 miles from Dibrugarh, brought success. With this, Assam's tea industry made a significant milestone. In 1837, C.A. Bruce despatched 46 tea boxes to London, but dampness damaged the majority of them before they reached Calcutta, and only a small portion was sent to London. In January, 1838 this tea reached London and the report of the London experts was hopeful about the potentiality of Assam tea, if better

procedures were followed.[19] In order to cultivate and produce tea in Assam, this led to the foundation of Assam Company in England in 1839. In spite of difficulties and triumphs, cultivation started by the company in 1840 and experienced a rapid expansion.

With the growth of the tea industry, since the required capital and land were available, a shortage of workforce started to affect the planters. The Assam Company initially hired skilled labourers from China. However, these workers turned out to be expensive. As a result, the company abandoned its plans for tea plantation with Chinese labourers in 1843. From then, local people became almost the only group providing manpower for the industry until 1859. The Kachari tribe in the Darrang district served as the main source of recruitment. The planters also used the labourers from Naga and Singphao tribe. Additionally, during off-peak hours, contractors engaged peasants from neighbouring villages.[20] Besides these labour forces, the abolition of slavery and servitude in north-east India also provided free labour as a work force in the plantations of Assam.[21] Though, the local workforce could not meet the growing demand, necessitated the need for alternative source of labour supply.

Therefore, the planters made the decision to address the scarcity of labour force by bringing in labourers from outside the region. It is not that company did not bring in workers from outside regions before, in 1840, they first bought 652 labourers from Dhenga village in Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand to the plantations of Assam.[22] They recruited vast majority of the labourers from among the tribal, indigenous and low-caste agrarian communities of Chotanagpur, Santhal Parganas, Ranchi, Palamau, Singbhum, Hazaribagh and Manbhum districts of Eastern India, United Provinces and Central Provinces.[23] Furthermore, labourers were also bought from different regions of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa. These areas have experienced persistent suffering as a result of recurrent floods, epidemics, famines, and the burden of harsh land revenue laws of British. The *zamindar*s also further oppressed and exploited the common people. The people of this regions become so weak from this never-ending suffering that

they are easily tempted by the recruiters' promises of a better life in Assam's tea plantations. These people came to Assam with illusion and found themselves trapped in a cycle of bondage and exploitation. The hardships they faced in their native places are mirrored in their folk songs, like this:

Purab Sey Aayil Baan
Liye Gel Khetor Dhaan
Aaire Bosey Bhabsey Kishan
Zamidarke Ki Dibo Jaban.[24]

(**Free Translation:** The devastating flood destroyed the crops. They're worried about how to explain this to the Zamindar, as they are now empty-handed.)

Edese Rohite Nari Khaite Boro Dukhgo
Purab Deshe Jaya Dekho Gachher Patai Takago
Haire Hai…[25]

(**Free Translation:** We can't live here since it's impossible to obtain food and survive. If you go to the east side (to Assam), you'll see trees adorned with money leaves, symbolising the wealthiness of that area.)

To facilitate the process of labour import to Assam in 1851 an agency was established in Bengal's Rangpur district. They initially brought to the Cachar tea estates in Assam, about 329 labourers. Later, in 1859, they transported another 400 labourers from various locations, including Chotanagpur, Ghazipur, and Benaras. In the meantime, the Planter's Association was established in 1859 to facilitate the hiring of employees from outside Assam.[26] There were two ways of recruitment of labourers, (i) *Thikadari* System (From 1859 to 1915) and (ii) *Sardari* System (From 1870 to 1959).[27] Under *Thikadari* the professional native recruiters *Arkatti*s employed by the company, promised people in impoverished and famine-stricken areas a better life in Assam and convinced them to come. They also used harsh measures like physical threat, kidnapping and other abuses to recruit labourers. In the *Sardari* System, which started in the Cachar district

in 1870, the company entrusted the job of finding labourers to the leaders of the labourers, those who were already employed in the plantations. These *sarder*s also used false promises to bring people to work, offering them fair wages and better opportunities.[28] The illusionary hope and false temptations given by the recruiters were depicted in the *Jhumur* songs, something like this:

Chal Mini Assam Jabo
Deshe Boro Dukh Rey
Assam Deshe Rey Mini
Cha Bagan khulibo
Sobai Mile Gamcha Bichaye Bhat Khabo.[29]

(**Free translation:** Leaving the great sorrow in our homeland, let's go to Assam. We shall develop the tea gardens, and as everyone gathers, spreading our vibrant *Gamcha*s (traditional scarves), we shall join in a grand feast.)

Aam Lagey Thopa Thopa
Tetul Lagey Beka Go
Jaye Dekho Assam Deshe
Chayer Gache Taka Go.[30]

(**Free translation:** Let's go and see in the land of Assam, Money is in the tea gardens, symbolising the richness of this region.)

Assam Desher Saher Pata
Paani Boro Mitha Go
Chal Sakhi Chal Jabo
Bagane Tuilbore Pata Aananda Mone.[31]

(**Free translation:** Assam, the land of tea, where the water is supposedly sweet. Let's go, Friends! We will joyfully pluck tea leaves from the gardens.)

Thus, migration of the labourers to the tea plantations of Assam started. With the help of private recruiting agencies, the labourers were initially sent from their respective districts to Calcutta. From Calcutta, they were routed through a long, difficult journey by steamers, then via roads to Goalundo (in Bengal), and then transit to

Dhubri (western most point of Assam). In Dhubri there were depots, owned by recruiting agencies or contractors. From there, Weekly or daily steamers carried workers to the tea estates of various parts of Assam.[32] This entire journey was so challenging that during the latter half of the nineteenth century, labour transportation via steamers was associated with substantial mortality rates.

From December 15, 1859, to November 21, 1861, approximately 11 per cent (250 people) of the total labour force of 2,272, brought by the Assam Company, died along the way.[33] Between 2 April 1861 to 25 February 1862, 2,569 persons were recruited and dispatched to Assam in two batches via the Brahmaputra River route. During the journey, 135 people perished and 103 were absconded.[34] According to a committee appointed in 1861 by the British Government to monitor the emigration of labourers to Assam highlighted the harsh conditions that the labourers had to suffer during steamer and boat journeys to Assam. They pointed out that there was no proper accommodation for the labourers, nor any arrangements to secure cleanliness, insufficient and unsuitable food, over-crowding and inadequacy in medical attendance.[35] During this pathetic journey, some of the labourers wanted to escape in order to find relief. However, the British stopped the workers from escaping either during the journey or from the tea plantations by enforcing the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act of 1859, Sections 490 and 492 of the Indian Penal Code (1860), which granted planters the power to arrest and punish the labourers without a warrant for 'absconding'.[36] The intense pain they endure during this journey is also reflected in the folk songs like this:

Nana Morlek Nadir Majhe
Nani Morlek Ghatey
Bapkey Dil Police Thanai
Bhagai Jabar Doshe[37]

(Free Translation: During the journey to Assam, my grandfather died in the middle of the river, while my grandmother passed away the riverbank. Meanwhile, my father was arrested by the police for attempting to escape.)

Paka Khatay Likhaeli Naam
Re Lampatiya Shyam
Fhanki Diye Chalali Assam
Dipughare Mari Tari
Uthaile Terene Kari
Hoogly Sahare Dekhali Akash[38]

(**Free translation**: Our names have been written in a permanent register. *Shyam*, you cheated us and sent us to Assam. In the depot where the labourers were kept, we were beaten. We were transported to Hoogly town by train, where we saw the sky for the first time.)

Ki Bolibo Britisher Kotha,
Bolile Go Laagey Betha,
Majdur Chalan Korile Assamey
Railgari Chale Ghane Ghane[39]

(**Free Translation:** What can we say about the British? It is disturbing and sorrowful to talk about them. They transported labourers to Assam by train.)

After undergoing challenging and tiresome journeys, the labourers reached their assigned plantations. According to Assam Labour Reports: 1873-1932 and Emigrant Labour Reports: 1934-1947, the total number of labourers imported to Assam from 1873 to 1947 was 32,72,800.[40] In the midst of their new reality in Assam, they remember their homelands through some folk songs. These songs became a form of solace for them, supporting in the preservation of memories of their own lands. These songs captured the essence of their cultures and the longing for their native lands. For examples:

Chhutloi Rajapat Chhutloi Dewaniya,
Chhuit Geloi Mor Zila Gharbariya
Chhuit Geloi.
Chhutloi Mai-Baap, Chhutloi Swajaniya
Chhuit Geloi Mor Golake Jhumoria
Chhuit Geloi.[41]

(**Free Translation:** We have lost a lot, including royal throne, our position, our native place, and even our parents and loved ones. Our cultural identity has also lost. Everything we held once is now gone, leaving us with a deep sense of emptiness.)

Britisher Sashoneor Kaale, Murgi Chengena Lekhe,
Bharoter Purba Deshe,
Anoloi Assam Hairae, Anoloi Assam.
Toi Tore Gora Chahab Koroli Dipu Chalan,
Desh, Jamin, Nadi, Parhar Chhidke Assam.
Herali Jagah Jamin, Herali Dada Bhai,
Aar Herali Mor Jatiker Naam.[42]

(**Free Translation:** During the British rule, they bought us to Assam in the eastern part of India through the Depot Challan. We lost our homeland, our family members, and our regional identity.)

Britishe Anilo Assam,
Herali Go Jatir Naam
Kola-Kristi Hey Shyam Rakhibo Joton,
Ahite Lage Humder Jatiker Nishan.[43]

(**Free Translation:** The British brought us to Assam, and even though we may have lost some of our regional identity, we are dedicated to preserving our culture, which is a symbol of our people.)

After reaching their designated plantations, the labourers found an entirely unexpected working environment, contrary to the recruiters' fantasies. Here, they had tightly regulated and rigorous work schedules. The reflection of this tough and stressful day-to-day work life found in the folk songs, as follows:

Jhot-Pot Ach Kor,
Chahpani Gorom Kor.
Khaaye Daaye Jaabo Kamjhari,
Bagan Kaame Boro Tarataari.[44]

(**Free Translation:** Oh dear, please make my tea quickly! I am in a hurry to go to work on time, and I don't want to face any

consequences for being late. You know how demanding the tasks are in the garden, and I cannot afford any delays in the morning.)

Surujer Uday Hol Kamer Samay Bhel Rey,
Mathai Tupa Hate Chata
Bagane Jai Sakhi
Hat Tor Gohona Jhata Bhari.[45]

(**Free Translation:** The sun is rising; it is time to leave for work. Friends are headed to the garden with a basket on their heads and umbrellas in their hands. I must leave as well, otherwise I will face the consequences.)

In the plantations, the labourers encountered significant hardships and exploitation at the hands of the planters. They have to work continuously, almost resembling machineries rather than humans. The prime objective of the planters is to maximise production, at any cost. If the labourers fail to meet the demanding expectations set by the planters, they are subjected to harsh treatment and wage cuts. The exploitation and oppression of the labourers were so terrible that Lord Curzon himself wrote in a letter to the English authorities like this:

> On many plantations, harsh and cruel and abominable things go on, and the coolies get nothing like the wage which is stipulated for by the law. It is also true...that when cases of collision come before the District Magistrates, or before the Session Judges, or even before the High Court, there is one scale of justice for the planter and another for the coolie.[46]

The "harsh and abominable things" stated in Curzon's letter perhaps indicated physical and sexual exploitation suffered by the labourers. Majority of the planters treated the labourers very badly, considering themselves as masters and treating the labourers like slaves. This exploitation was so widely recognised that, in 1866, the British authorities admitted that the planters had inflicted physical torture on the labourers in Assam, often in secret.[47] These hardships and sufferings they experienced on a daily basis are eloquently depicted in their folk songs. For instance:

Sardar Bole Kam Kam
Babu Bole Dhore Aan
Saheb Bole Libo Pither Saam,
Hey Nisthur Shyam Faki Diye Aanilo Assam
Adha Kame Pare Pura Dam, Hey Nisthur Shyam
Faki Diye Anilo Assam.[48]

(**Free Translation:** The *Sardar*s (leaders) tell the tea workers to work, the *Babu*s (officials) catch anyone who neglects their work, and the *Saheb*s (planters) tear the skin of their backs by beating. When these labourers are transported to Assam, they are promised reasonable wages for half of their job, but this is not the reality. They must work long hours without receiving the promised benefits. Spading and picking tea leaves for whole day are difficult activities.)

Asam Desher Chitla Mati,
Pichole Poriche,
O' Hai! Thaaiche Thaaiche,
Kaile Marishein Shyala (Sahab),
Aijole Dukhache.[49]

(**Free Translation**: The pain of being beaten and thrashed by the *Sahab* (planter) has not been relieved yet, and once more I fell down on the slippery soil of Assam.

Kodal Chalai Rey Mora
He Doulat Kore Dei
Humder Tobu Khana Milena
Jangal Katia Mora Bagan Bonai
Humder Khune Chaiyer Pata Ranga
Babulokey Khun Bikiye
Munafa Lute Go : Saat Mohola Bangla Bonai.[50]

(**Free Translation:** We spaded the jungle and established the tea gardens, which provide income to *Sahib*s (Planters). But we are in hunger. The red colour of tea is made from our blood (a symbol of their work sacrifice), and the *Sahib*s earn from selling our blood (a symbol of the planters' exploitation to maximise their profit), and they build large bungalows.

Ghan Shirish Niche Chah Gaache Majhe Majhe,
Har-bhanga Kam Kori Kot Jatoney,
Hairey Shirish Tor Kotha Janey Kojone.
Dhup Ki Borosan Chhaya Dili Charakhan,
Morom Diye Ki Paili Tor Jivone,
Hairye Shirish Tor Kotha Jane Kojone.[51]

(**Free Translation:** This song symbolises the unnoticed efforts of the tea garden labourers, just like the overlooked shade of a *Shirish* tree (*Albizia lebbeck*). Despite toiling in extreme weather to cultivate tea by cutting forests and ploughing the land, their hard work remains unseen and unappreciated.)

Kodal Mora Jemon Temon
Paata Tola Taan Go
Kolom Kora Boroibe Jhonjhal.[52]

(**Free Translation:** Spading is not too difficult, but plucking tea leaves can be difficult. Grafting tea plants, however, is the most challenging task.)

The workers' extreme suffering as a result of the planters' harsh repression drove the workers to a state of desperation, leading them to seek solace in God. The *Tusu* songs, performed in honour of the goddess *Tusu,* eloquently capture this suffering and anguish, like this:

Chand Kande Suraj Kande,
Kande Go Swarger Tara.
Patale Basuki Kande,
Bohe Go Papor Dhara.
Nodi Kande Nala Kande,
Kande Go Gulachi Phul.
Iniye Biniye Kande,
(Hamder) Pranor Dhadhki Phul.[53]

(**Free translation:** This song holds deep symbolism. The moon, the sun, and the heavenly stars shed tears. Even the *Vasuki Naag* (serpent) is crying in the *Patal* (underworld). The river, the tree and the whole

nature is also crying. Witnessing this injustice and oppression, even our Supreme Soul sheds tears.)

Ki Bolbo Go Masi-Pisi
Ki Bolbo Go Dukher Kotha
Kacha Baashe Ghun Lageche
Temni Hamader Dukh Durdasha.[54]

(**Free Translation:** Aunty! What can I say about my pain and suffering? It is like *Ghun* (little bugs: Weevils) inside a tender bamboo tree. Over time, that little bugs eventually weaken and degrade the bamboo, by slowly eating away at it from the inside. Similar to this, I feel like my suffering is also slowly eating away at me.)

Desh Gel Zamin Gel
Taait Hami Bhavi Na
Manush Le Golam Holi
Monostape Mori Go.[55]

(**Free Translation:** Our country has been lost, as well as we lost our homeland. Despite this, we haven't suffered as much. We came here with great hopes, but find ourself trapped in a form of servitude. Now, a sensation of anguish overwhelms my thoughts, akin to being burned alive.)

While discussing the exploitation of the labourers we have touched on Lord Curzon's observations. He made the observation that exploitation affected both men and women. To illustrate this, let me recount a tragic historical event that occurred in Kakilamukh. Kakilamukh is a ship wharf in Jorhat, where the labourers were temporarily housed and from there, they were sent to various tea plantations of Assam. Charles Webb, an employee of the General Steam Navigation Company was appointed there to supervise the labourers. In an unfortunate event, Webb raped a married labour woman named, Sukurmani. And Sukurmani was tragically killed in the ensuing struggle. Despite witnesses, Webb's trial resulted in a nominal fine due to lack of concrete evidence.[56] The incident emphasises the harsh and terrible experiences that workers, particularly women, have to endure. This theme is also mirrored in folk songs, something like this:

Kolkatai Giyechile
Makordomaai Ki Hoil
Makordomaai Jeet Hoil
Sahab Shyalar Haar Hoil.[57]

(**Free Translation:** We went to Kolkata. What happened in the court case? We won the legal battle, whereas *Sahab*s lost. Despite the British officer being charged with a minimal fine as punishment, it is a huge victory for individuals who have been exploited for years. It symbolised a triumph of justice for the oppressed.)

Another form of exploitation encountered by the employees was related to registration, which they were required to complete upon arrival in Assam. Unmarried labourers had registration issues because colonial law required the names of both husband and wife, otherwise, their registration would be declined. To avoid this, the authorities forced two strangers to pretend to be a couple. As a result, in the registration papers, they were listed as husband and wife. This procedure was known as *dipu-shadi* or depot marriage.[58]

Thus, the planters exploited the labourers to such an extent that their living conditions became intolerable. As a result, the frustrated workers started to desert since they believed it to be the only way to get away from the brutalities of life in the plantations. The folk songs depict this emotional condition in the following ways:

Chal Sarada Chal Baroda
Assame Boro Dukh Re
Railley Charhe Desh Jabo
Aar Ekhane Thakbo Na.[59]

(**Free Translation:** Let's go Sarada and Baroda. There is a lot of suffering in Assam. We will board the train and return to our homes; we won't stay here anymore.)

Chandpurey Ticket Katey
Ogo Chale Jabo Guwalande
Sahab Shyalader Chah Baganey
Aar Kadam Rakhbo Na.[60]

(**Free Translation:** After getting the tickets in Chandpur, we will go to Goalundo. And we won't ever come to the *Sahab*'s (Planter) plantation.)

According to the annual reports on immigrant labour, 2,584 desertions were reported in the year 1877, 9,855 in the year 1884, 6, 432 in the year 1897, and 10,244 in the year 1900. Desertion was challenging, as the labourers' quarters were observed by the *chowkidar*s (watchmen) and trained watchdogs. The planters used various methods to recapture the deserters, including advertisements, offering rewards in the market towns (through posters and newspapers). Once captured, the deserters faced flogging and the captors' reward was deducted from their future wages as a fine. And the labourers were punished either by imprisonment or imposing a fine or both. Fines ranged from Rs. 20 to Rs. 100, and imprisonments ranged from one month to six months. In 1885, 482 of 558 labourers arrested on desertion charges were convicted, while in 1892, 992 of 1055 arrested were convicted.[61] Only a few labourers managed to desert, while many were either arrested or lost their lives. Despite of these challenges, the workers continued their attempts to depart from the plantations.

The standard of living and suffering of these people have not altered all that much since the beginning of the tea industry until today. To provide a clearer understanding, between 1 May 1863 and 1 May 1866 a total of 84,915 labourers were transported to the tea plantations of Assam; by June 30, 1866, it was believed that 30,000 of them had died. There were two key causes for this high mortality rate: the cholera outbreak caused by the prevailing unhygienic living conditions and the low wages that left the labourers undernourished.[62] A commission of inquiry appointed in 1867 discovered that many tea gardens did not pay their labourers the minimal wage, and a male labourer in a plantation earned 3 rupees per month. Shockingly, even labourers' wages were kept in arrears for as long as six months.[63] With the use of this strategy, the *Sahab*s (planters) kept the labourers confined to the gardens and prevented them from pursuing alternative work. R. G. Gryphon, Special Officer for Hookworms in Mines and

Tea Plantations in Bengal, made the following observation about housing and hygiene in 1920:

> Ordinary thatched or some tin roof huts are provided. They are generally overcrowded owing to insufficiency of accommodation in comparison with the number of people living in them. The houses are not laid out with any idea as to utilising sunlight for drying the immediate surroundings and plinths do not exist or are insufficient. In many cases where water is scarce and deep wells have to be sunk, labour tends to become congested, as coolies' houses are congregated in the immediate neighbourhood…The labourers were forced to rely on rivers, natural springs, or wells for their water source.[64]

The agony they underwent, as well as their standard of living, is both vividly reflected in the following folk songs. Each song adds a different perspective of their challenges, resulting in a through picture of their situation as a whole:

Ki Dhup Ki Borokhun
Kam Kori Sabkhyon
Saul Bhuja Sapani
Rakhil Poran.[65]

(**Free Translation:** The hardworking labourers work amidst the burning sun and rain. Despite their efforts, they must subsist on puffed rice and red tea, which is not enough to meet nutritional needs.)

Sokal Belai Kamjhari Jaai,
Jok Bichai Tez Khai,
Tobuje Hazra Naahoi,
Chutir Pore Ghor Jai,
Ghore Kichu Khaitey Nai,
Pasi Niye Dourini Godam,
Saaul Dekhi Dhaner Soman,
Bhunsai Diye Khonsa Hey
Hey Nisthur Shyam.[66]

(**Free Translation:** We go to work early in the morning. We have been bitten by hairy caterpillars and leeches. Yet our work isn't finished

as the *sahib*s want it. After the end of the work, we go home. There is nothing to eat at home. We run to the warehouse for ration. There is a high amount of rice husks in the rice given as ration, Hey heartless *Shyam*).

...Du Takar Bajar Kori Baki Ani Laopani,
Chara Din Pata Tori Hapta Hisab Pai.
Babuder Chana-Pina Eschool Porhe Zai Re,
Mazdur Chana Poka Biche Zai.[67]

(Free Translation: The tea gardens labourers work hard every day, and at the end of a week they receive a minimum wage. With this income they buy their daily necessities as well as country liquor. Their children are employed to remove insects from plants, while the *Babu*'s (Manager and staffs of a tea garden) children go to school.)

Ghar Hoil Serek Chenda- Tara dekhache,
Subona Suna Ghore Bahire Bichai De.

or

Bhanga Futa Ghar Babu,
Bhanga Futa Ghar Bey,
Dine Dekhai Tara Rey.[68]

(**Free translation**: Babu (Planter), Our house is broken, the roof also has holes, so we can see the stars during the day, it is better to live outside than in such a house.)

Jila Chahore Maya
Sabhe Paka Ghar Rey
Chah Bagane Rey Maya
Bhangal Tutol Ghar Rey.[69]

(**Free translation**: There are only concrete houses in the towns and cities, but the labourers on the plantations have to live in broken huts.)

Lahukey Pani Khaikey
Paisa Kamaili, Hairey Paisa Kamaili
Ohi Paisai Bangala Bonali, Hairey Bangala Bonali
Majdur Bhai Rahal Bhanga Ghorey.[70]

(**Free translation**: We have worked quite hard to establish these tea gardens. Meanwhile, you've (the planters) profited from them, utilising

the earnings to build lavish residences. However, as labourers, we have remained in the broken huts.)

Choto Choto Chana Puna
Obhab Swavab Bujhe Nai
Voker Jwalai Kande Sara Raait
Udhar Dharer Goti Nai
Kemone Basbo Bhai
Mahajone Bole Choto Jaait.[71]

(**Free translation**: The little children are unaware of poverty. Because they were starving, they wept all night. I had no choice but to borrow money to keep them from going hungry. The debt is now growing day by day. As a result, the *Mahajan*(lender) humiliated me by referring to me as a *Choto Jaat* (low caste).

In light of our discussion, it is evident that, the labourers who came to Assam in search of a better life have endured substantial struggle. As time passed, an amazing shift became visible. The once-dominant desire of these labourers to leave Assam progressively shifted. They gradually began to merge into the greater Assamese society, showing a process of integration. At present, these communities constitute around 20% of Assam's total population. This process of integration is also visible in folk music:

Assam Desher Baisakh Parab, Lagey Boro Bhal Go
Madol Baaje Banshi Baaje, Baaje Karotaal Go.[72]

(**Free Translation:** Assam's lovely Bohag Bihu festival holds a unique place in our hearts. The resonance of the *Madol (Dhol)*, the melodious tunes of the flute, and the rhythmic beats of the *Taal* are truly captivating.)

Humra Lagey Assam Bashi
Nana Jaati-Upajaati Re
Sobai Miley Gorhibo Sonar Assam
Assam Humar Praner Pran.[73]

(Free Translation: We are the Assamese; a diverse community comprise of many castes and sub castes. Together, we will work to enhance Assam's fame. We all have an unending love for this land.)

III

On the basis of above discussion, thus, by the way of conclusion it can be suggested that the story of the people from diverse ethnic backgrounds such as Santhal, Munda, Ho, Bhumij, and others who were brought to Assam from various regions of India to address labour shortage in British-owned tea plantations is full of pain and suffering. These sufferings and agonies are best reflected in their folk songs, as elaborated upon above. These songs vividly represent the range of emotions that covered their life, from pleasure to sorrow to surrender to God or fate. They also reflect the helplessness of the labourers. Neither the colonial writers nor the Indian writers who depended upon the colonial sources for their writings could use this significant source and hence, could not highlight the sufferings of the tea garden labourers of northeast India. Due to the limitation of the length of a paper, some of these aspects have not been elaborated upon in this paper and will be researched upon on other occasion(s). Studying these songs extensively, can provide valuable insights into history and help in the preservation of the cultural heritage of the tea garden labourers and thus, has a lot of potential for future researches.


Nya Ghogra Tea Estate
Majgaon Part
Google
Nya Ghogra Tea Estate, Assam, India
WJ37+2P2, Nya Ghogra Tea Estate,Gohpur, Assam 784168, India
Lat 26.9026770603249°
Long 93.61448930132363°
09/08/2023 2:05:18 PM +05:30


PURUPBARI TEA ESTATE
Google
Purupbari Tea Estate, Assam, India
VJ54+6MP, Purupbari Tea Estate, Biswanath, Assam 784168, India
Lat 26.858402573232517°
Long 93.60667594232795°
08/08/2023 2:52:22 PM +05:30

Notes

[1] Indentured labour was the bridge between slavery and modern forms of contract labour. The term 'indenture' is originally derived from 'a document in duplicate having indented edges.' This is "a contract binding one party into the service of another for a specified term. The key component of this system was 'imposition of force', which prevented the labourers to move from one employer to another or terminating their contracts." For details *see,* Robin, Cohen (ed.), *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2010 (reprint), p. 47.; Thio, Thermorshuizen, 'Indentured labour in Dutch Colonial Empire: 1800-1940,' in Geert, Oostindie (ed.), *Dutch Colonialism, Migration and Cultural Heritage*, KLTV Press, Leiden, 2008, pp. 262-263.

[2] William Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Assam* (e-book), Sanskaran Prakashak, Delhi, 1841 (reprint). Available at <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.279285>, accessed on 06-07-2023.; Edward Gait, *A History of Assam* (e-book), Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta, 1926 (Second Edition), pp. 352-362. Available at <https://ignca.gov.in/Asi_data/9404.pdf>, accessed on 06-07-2023.; H.A. Antrobus, *A History of Assam Company: 1839-1953* (e-book), T. and A. Constable Ltd., Edinburgh, 1957. Available at <https://archive.org/details/dli.pahar.3096/page/n5/mode/2up>, accessed on 12-07-2023.; P. Griffits, *History of the Indian Tea Industry*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1967.; K.C. Willson and M.N. Cliford, *Tea Cultivation and Consumption*, Springer, Netherlands, 1992.; D.H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India*, Macmillan, New York, 1962, pp. 54-74.; Surya Kumar Bhuyan, *Early British Relation with Assam*, DHAS, Shillong, 1949, pp.29-30.

[3] Dwarkanath Ganguli, *Slavery in British Dominion*, Jijnasa, Calcutta, 1972.

[4] Amalendu Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle & Electoral Politics in Assam*, ICHR, New Delhi, 1977.

[5] K. L. Chattopadhyay, *Tea Labour in Colonial Assam and the Brahmo Samaj (H. L. Gupta Endowment Lecture-(6)*, NEIHA, Shillong, 2012.

[6] Prasenjit Choudhury, *Asomar Sah-Banuaaru Unoish Satikar Bidyat Samaj*, Student Stores, Guwahati, 1989.

[7] A person who was forced to live and work on land that belonged to a landowner whom they had to obey.

[8] Sukdev Adhikari, *Chah Janagosthir Lokageet, Loka Parampara aru Utsavar Ruprekha*, Saraswati D.N. Publication, Guwahati, p. 30.

[9] Data collected from the field studies and interactions with Sanjoy Kumar Tanti, President, Assam Chah Janagusthi Sahitya Sabha, Indiranagar, Tezpur, third week of August, 2023 and Manomati Kurmi, General Secretary, *Sadou Asom Lekhika Samaroh*, Tezpur, second week of August 2023.)

[10] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound with Other Poems*, Charles and James Ollier, London, 1820, pp. 201-206.

[11] Cited by J. R. Freedman, 'What is a Folk Song?', in J. R. Freedman, *Peggy Seeger: A Life of Music, Love, and Politics*, University of Illinois Press, Champaign, p. 134.

[12] Cited by John Greenway, *American Folksongs of Protest*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, p.5.

[13] 'Songs From Slavery', *African American Cultural Narratives*, Available at <http://africaamericancultural narratives.weebly.com/songs-from-slavery.html>, accessed on 20-09-2023.

[14] Badri Narayan Tiwari, 'Bidesia Migration, Change and Folk Culture', *International Institute of Asian Studies: News Letter*, 30, March 2003, p. 12.

[15] For details *see* Raj Sekhar Basu, 'Bhojpuri Folk Songs of Indians in Fiji', *Studies in People's History*, 5(1), 2018, pp. 92-93,95. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/2348448918759874.

[16] Raj Sekhar Basu, Op. cit., p. 94.

[17] Badri Narayan Tiwari, '*Bidesia* Migration, Change and Folk Culture', Op. cit., p.12.

[18] Prasenjit Choudhury, Op. cit., Op. cit., p. 9.

[19] For details, *see* H.A. Antrobus, Op. cit., pp. 263-264.

[20] Amalendu Guha, Op. cit., p. 15.

[21] Amrendra Kumar Thakur, 'Resistance to British Power in the Hills of North-East India: Some Issues', *Dialogue Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 1, July-September, 2014, pp. 117-128.

[22] Sukdev Adhikari, Op. cit., p. 26.

[23] Rana P. Behal, *Indian Migrant Labourers in South-East Asian and Assam Plantations under the British Imperial System*, V. V. Giri National Labour Institute, Noida, 2017, pp. 4-5.

[24] Song collected during my field study from Sanjoy Kumar Tanti, Indiranagar, Tezpur, President, Assam Chah Janagusthi Sahitya Sabha, 16-08-2023.

[25] Song collected during my field study from Nilotpal Ravi Das, Secretary, Assam Chah Janagusthi Student Association: Biswanath District, Gohpur, 02-08-2023.

[26] For details *see* 'Import of labour from Central India', *Tea world KKHSOU*, available at < http://teaworld.kkhsou.in/page-details.php?name=Import-of-labour-from-Central-India&page=c1859116d1f1799a76f9cf482 >, accessed on 06-07-2023.

[27] Ushamoni Kakati, 'Sanskritik Patabhumit Chah Jonogosthir Samajik Lokasar', in Debajit Borah (ed.), *Uttar Purbanchalor Jonogosthiya Loka-Sanskriti*, M.R. Publication, Guwahati, 2016 (reprint), p. 323.

[28] For details *see*, 'Import of Labour from Central India', *Tea world KKHSOU*, available at < http://teaworld.kkhsou.in/page-details.php?name=Import-of-labour-from-Central-India&page=c1859116d1f1799a76f9cf482 >, accessed on 06-07-2023..

[29] Song collected from Sanjoy Kumar Tanti, 16-08-2023.

[30] Song collected from Ghana Bagh, Naya Ghogra Tea Estate, Gohpur, 10-08-2023.
[31] Song collected from Sanjoy Kumar Tanti, 16-08-2023.
[32] Santosh Hasnu, 'Coolie Labor, Tea Planters, and Transport in Colonial India' in Andrea Komlosy and Goran Musiæ (eds.), *Global Commodity Chains and Labor Relations*, Brill, Boston, 2021, p. 206.
[33] Amalendu Guha, Op. cit., p. 18.
[34] Prithiraj Borah, 'The Impact of Trade Unions on Tea Plantation Workers: A Study of Dibrugarh District of Assam', M.Phil. Dissertation, Department of Sociology, Sikkim University, 2014, p. 41.
[35] Santosh Hasnu, Op. cit., p. 207.
[36] Rana P. Behal, *Indian Migrant Labourers in South-East Asian and Assam Plantations under the British Imperial System*, op. cit., p. 6.
[37] Song collected from Manika Gudia, Gohpur Tea Estate, Gohpur, Assistant Teacher, 05-08-2023.
[38] Song collected from Sanjoy Kumar Tanti, 16-08-2023.
[39] Song collected from Biswa Bakti, Bisa Kupi Tea Estate, Doom Dooma, Tinsukia, Assam, 28-07-2023.
[40] Rana P. Behal, Op. cit., p.5.
[41] Basanta Rajowar (ed.*), Ganesh Chandra Kurmi Rasanawali*, op. cit., p. 689.
[42] Song collected from Biswa Bakti, 04-08-2023.
[43] ibid., 08-08-2023.
[44] Song collected from Manika Gudia, 06-08-2023.
[45] Song collected from Dipan Kongari, Office Staff, Naya Ghogra Tea Estate, Gohpur, 12-08-2023.
[46] B.B. Mishra, *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961, p. 379. Available at < https://archive.org/details/indianmiddleclas0000misr>, accessed on 08-07-2023.
[47] Prasenjit Choudhury, Op. cit., p.40.
[48] Song collected from Dipan Kongari, 12-08-2023.
[49] Song collected from Bandhu Orang, Purupbari Tea Estate, Gohpur, 13-08-2023.
[50] Loknath Goswami, 'Aaji Kune Gabo Britto Bhongar Gaan? Prasanga-Chah Jonogusthi Samaj', in Rajen Rohidas (ed.), *Injhar: A Souvenir of Chah Janajati Sanskritik Mohotsab-2002*, Chah Janajati Sanskritik Samaj, Tezpur, 2002, p.2.
[51] Song collected from Biswa Bhakti, 01-07-2023.
[52] Song collected from Sanjoy Kumar Tanti, 16-08-2023.
[53] Basanta Rajowar (ed.*), Ganesh Chandra Kurmi Rasanawali*, op. cit., p. 690.
[54] ibid.
[55] Song collected from Dashrath Deep, Monabari Tea Estate, Biswanath, 18-08-2023.
[56] Dwarkanath Ganguli, *Slavery in British Dominion*, op. cit., pp. viii-ix.
[57] Basanta Rajowar (ed.*), Ganesh Chandra Kurmi Rasanawali*, op. cit., p. 693.

[58] Biraj Jyoti Kalita, Rajib Handique & Alpana Borgohain, 'Sex, Sahibs and Bodies: Women Workers in the Tea Plantations of Colonial Assam', *Labor History*, August, 2022.
[59] Basanta Rajowar (ed.), *Ganesh Chandra Kurmi Rasanawali*, op. cit., p. 735.
[60] Song collected from Manika Gudia, 06-08-2023.
[61] Rana Pratap Behal, 'Forms of Labour Protest in Assam Valley Tea Plantations', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 20, no. 4, Jan. 26, 1985, 20.
[62] Santosh Hasnu, Op. cit., pp. 208-209.
[63] Amalendu Guha, Op. cit., pp. 16-17.
[64] Sharit K. Bhowmik, 'Living Conditions of Tea Plantation Workers', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 50, no. 46/47, November, 2015, 30.
[65] Song collected from Biswa Bakti, 07-08-2023.
[66] Dimbeswar Tasa, *Chah Janagosthir Samaj-Sanskriti*, Assam Prakashan Parishad, 2012, p. 48.
[67] Song collected from Dipan Kongari, 18-08-2023.
[68] Jagadish Sarma, 'Asamar Sah-Silpa aru Sah-Jonogusthi', in Rajen Rohidas (ed.), *Injhar: A Souvenir of Chah Janajati Sanskritik Mohotsab-2002*, Chah Janajati Sanskritik Samaj, Tezpur, 2002, p. 9.
[69] Song collected from Bandhu Orang, 13-08-2023.
[70] Sukdev Adhikari, Op. cit., p. 98.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Song collected from Sanjoy Kumar Tanti, 16-08-2023.
[73] Song collected from Manomati Kurmi, 21-08-2023.

Colonial Rule in Bengal and Occupational Mobility: A Brief Historical Study

Chanchal Chowdhury

Abstract

In mediaeval Bengal, people carried on their caste-centric occupations for their livelihoods. The economy could hardly produce opportunities for new callings for the Bengalis. After the Battle of Plassey, the servants of the colonial government destroyed the cottage industries and drove out the native merchants from the business sector. The zamindars dispossessed a large number of the peasants from their arable land. A segment of these uprooted people were compelled to adopt alternative callings generated under British rule. The foundation of caste-centric occupations collapsed heavily, and the pace of occupational mobility became faster in Bengal in the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Caste, Occupation, Colonial Rule, Oppression, Opportunity, Mobility.

Introduction

Mobility of occupation for individuals and groups is a common feature in every society. The pace of this mobility largely depends on the economic structure and state policy of a country. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, people were divided into many castes and lived in villages, adopting their ancestral occupations. The Brahmins undertook priesthood or teaching in *tol*s; the Baidyas practised medicine; the Kayasthas took clerical jobs or were employed as revenue officials. Among the Muslims, communities like the Jolaha, Hajjam, Kagati, Rangrej, and others carried on their hereditary callings from generation to generation. In society, the Brahmins, Baidyas, and

Kayasthas were recognised under the *Bhadralok* category in the caste hierarchy. The peasants cultivated land. The artisans and traders pursued their caste-centric occupations. People would not ordinarily undertake occupations other than that of their ancestors. The necessity or opportunity for an alternative calling was very limited. In the villages, every Hindu caste had its own periphery (*para*), customs, and traditions. The pillars of the economy of Bengal were based mainly on agriculture and cottage industries. The society was very conservative. The caste system of the Hindus was sanctioned by their religious scriptures, and everyone had to abide by its rules and restrictions. Among the Muslims, too, the caste system prevailed in the same way as it did among the Hindus. The birth pride of the superior caste Hindus was considered more honourable than the money-power of the trading classes. Among the Muslims, the Saiads, Mughals, and Pathans were considered much superior in status compared to the converted indigenous Muslims. People were rarely required to go beyond their village *hat*s for their essential commodities and daily necessities. The mobility of occupations was much slower and was not visible in society. The present paper explores under what circumstances the immobility of the caste-centric occupations in Bengali society got diluted in the nineteenth century, producing a social space where ordinary people adopted alternative occupations, giving up their traditional ones.

In the Indian society, the caste system is a unique social institution. The foundation of the caste system was built on caste-centric occupations. Those who carried on their occupations by applying intellectual labour occupied higher precedence in the caste hierarchy and were held in high esteem in society. But the wealth-producing classes that performed their work through manual labour were not only economically exploited by the ruling classes but were also held low in society. The *Brihad-dharma Purana,* which was composed in Bengal in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, has classified the people of Bengal into three classes: high (*uttam sankara*), intermediate (*madhyama sankara*), and low (*antyaja*s *or adhama sankara*s).[1] In the late

sixteenth century, Mukundaram Chakraborty composed his Chandikabya, where he mentioned the names of different communities in Bengal and their occupations. Mukundaram referred to the names of castes like the Brahmin, Baidya, Kayastha, Tantubay, Das, Bagdi, Koch, Chandal, Hari, Sunri, Kagati, and Rangrej with their respective hereditary occupations of teaching and priesthood, practice in medicine, revenue official, weaving of clothes, cultivation and selling of fish, *paik* soldier, fishermen, trader of salt, fruits, and roots, grass-cutter, distiller of wine, manufacturer of paper, and dyer of clothes.[2] Raigunakar Bharatchandra also mentioned the names of thirty-six Hindu castes and their thirty-six caste occupations in the mid-eighteenth century.[3] The names of the castes mentioned by Bharatchandra are almost identical to those referred to by Mukundaram. Divided into many castes, the people of Bengal lived in their ancestral villages for centuries, adopting the callings that they had learned from their forefathers. The peasants, artisans, and other manual classes, divided into many castes, hardly got any respite from economic oppression or social discrimination, nor did they get any opportunity to raise them upwards on the social ladder of caste hierarchy. Yet extreme conflict could not be produced in society since the hereditary occupations approved by the caste system were linked to economic security for each and every member belonging to different castes.[4] In Bengal, the priests, teachers, physicians, peasants, artisans, and manual labourers would carry on their trades after being trained by their families or by members of their own caste in the mid-eighteenth century. Opportunity or compulsion towards an alternative livelihood was absent in the society. In this socio-economic backdrop, the East India Company captured political power in Bengal. Within a hundred years' of colonial rule, this age-old economic structure of Bengal got ruined, and new thoughts and ideas developed in society.

After the Battle of Buxar, the British Company got the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa in 1765. From the very beginning, the servants of the Company and their local associates had been oppressing the

peasants, artisans, and native traders of Bengal in order to accumulate illegal wealth. Their degree of oppression, both corporal and economic, towards these indigenous communities was to such an extreme extent that a segment of them were compelled to relinquish their traditional occupations and adopt new callings for maintaining their families. At the same time, the new economic space that evolved under the Company administration generated new opportunities for some of them. Under colonial rule, a segment of the Calcutta-based Bengali Hindus relinquished their traditional occupations and adopted the callings of *diwans, banians,* or *mutsuddis* under their European masters. They were clever enough to perceive that they could accumulate enormous wealth by taking advantage of their proximity to the ruling classes, and in reality, they became millionaires. Most of them came from humble family backgrounds. Their money-power and wisdom overshadowed the traditional caste superiority of the Brahmins of Bengal to a great extent.[5] Among these millionaires, Nakur Dhar, Baboo Mutty Lall Seal, Nemychurn Mullick, and Rajah Rajendra Mullick Bahadur belonged to the Subarnabanik community. Prince Dwarkanath Tagore was a Pir Ali Brahmin. Krishnakanta Nandi and Baboo Joy Chand Paul Chowdry of Ranaghat were Teli (Tili).[6] They abandoned their caste occupations, took on a new profession, and became leaders of society. On the other hand, a large proportion of the peasants, artisans, and traders could not continue their ancestral trades on account of the oppressive economic policy of the British government. The foundation of the caste-centric occupations of the Bengalis began to collapse when economic security was withdrawn from them under colonial rule.

Under Mughal rule, no *ryot* could be lawfully dispossessed of his hereditary holding of land as long as he paid his rent. It does not mean that the *ryot*s were not exploited or oppressed by the Mughal revenue officials. The rent was much higher under the rule of the Mughals. Sebastein Manrique, the Portuguese missionary who travelled to Dacca in 1640, recorded a shocking description of the

maltreatment of the rent-defaulting *ryot*s by Mughal authorities.[7] But neither the Mughal emperor nor the local zamindar was the legal owner of the land according to the rules. Under the Mughal land revenue settlement, the *ryot*s enjoyed two main rights, i.e., the permanence of tenure and the fixity of rent, as determined by the sovereign authority of the state. These two principles relatable to the ownership of land and the fixity of rent by the State authority were withdrawn by Lord Cornwallis with a single stroke of the pen under the Permanent Settlement of 1793. The settlement of Cornwallis created the proprietary rights of the zamindars in land. The customary occupancy rights of the peasants were ignored, and they were reduced to the status of tenants. At the same time, the peasants were thrown away at the mercy of the greedy zamindars.[8] The subsequent regulations of 1799 and 1812 authorised the zamindars to seize the property of the tenants in case of default of rent without any permission from a court of law.[9] Under the land revenue settlement of Cornwallis, the zamindars could charge any amount of money from their tenants and evict them from land at any time. It became a common practice for the zamindars to transfer their rights to collect land rent to sub-tenants, who in-turn would transfer these rights yet again for a still higher sum. In this way, a regular hierarchy of five to six sub-tenants grew up in each and every estate of a zamindar. This system produced a long chain of sub-tenants whose rights were handed down from father to son.[10] The tenants were more acutely exploited and persecuted by the sub-tenants like the *patanidar*s, *durpatnidar*s, and *izaradar*s in comparison to the zamindars, who collected rent from the tenants by themselves.[11] On the one hand, a large number of poor cultivators turned into agricultural labourers after being dispossessed of their own land. On the other hand, a segment of the well-off peasants, *mahajan*s, and traders of rural Bengal purchased smaller estates and became petty zamindars like *izaradar*s or *taluqdar*s.

The victory of Clive in the Battle of Plassey in 1757 was a great turning point in the political and economic history of Bengal. When

the English East India Company was awarded the *Diwani* of Bengal, the industrial revolution had already begun in Britain.[12] The economic policies of the Company led to the destruction of the prosperous cottage industries of Bengal. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the most important articles of export from Bengal were cotton and silk-piece goods, raw silk, sugar, saltpetre, and opium. For internal consumption, salt, articles made of brass and bell-metal, sea-going vessels, and paper were produced in large quantities. People belonging to different castes were engaged in the production of these commodities from generation to generation.

The handloom cotton fabrics of Bengal were famous throughout the world for centuries. Thousands of Hindu Tantis and Muslim Jolahas were employed in this industry and earned their livelihood. Huge quantities of woven cotton fabrics were exported from India. Under the oppressive administration and colonial economic policy, the once prosperous handloom textile industry of Bengal began to deteriorate. The British Company servants exploited the innocent weavers in different ways. Their *gomastaha*s executed contracts with the weavers in order to ensure a regular and abundant supply of cotton goods at a certain price within a stipulated time. The weavers were paid for their goods much less than the fair prices, sometimes even less than the cost of materials. On the other hand, they were forbidden to work for any other party out of fear of corporal punishment.[13] The same policy of economic oppression was also adopted by the Company's servants towards the workers in raw silk. To prevent being forced to wind silk, the winders of raw silk would cut off their own thumbs.[14] With the installation of powerlooms, Manchester began to produce huge quantities of cheap cotton textile fabrics, which soon flooded the markets of India. The Company Government took no initiative for the protection of the handloom industries of Bengal by legislation or through modernisation processes in the industry in order to save them from their inevitable ruin.[15] Dacca was the principal centre of cotton textile industries in Bengal

in the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1747, woven cotton goods amounting to an estimated value of 28½ lakh rupees were exported from Dacca.[16] During the Company's rule, the cotton textile industry of Dacca began to decline, and the pace of its downfall became very rapid after 1818. It has been found from the official documents of the Dacca Custom House that the value of the export of cotton goods through it was upwards of 15, 24, 974 rupees in 1817–18. The quantum of exports declined year after year and was reduced to only 3,87,122 rupees in 1834–35.[17] On account of the ruin of the cloth-weaving industry, the once-populous industrial town of Dacca became a deserted place. The population of Dacca town declined sharply. In 1814, the *Chaukidari* tax was collected from 21,361 houses in Dacca. The payment of tax in the town for the year 1830 was only on 10,708 houses.[18] The abandonment of houses was due to the weavers moving to other places where they took on alternative callings, giving up their hereditary occupation. Once, cloth-weaving was one of the best two manufactures in Nadia, and the cloth manufactures were spread throughout the whole district. As a result of the overall decline of the industry, the weaving population of the district decreased sharply and became centralised mainly in Santipur.[19] The cotton textile industry in other weaving centres of Bengal, namely, Dhaniakhali and Bishnupur, was also ruined due to the policy of the East India Company.[20] In the Katwa subdivision of Burdwan district, the handloom cotton cloth industry had disappeared sharply on account of the import and use of cheaper and finer European-piece goods. A large number of Tantis in this subdivision were compelled to abandon their looms and take up other pursuits.[21] By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Tantis and Jolahas from all the weaving towns had to relinquish the occupation of their ancestors and resort to other trades for their livelihood.

Spinning was the part-time occupation of a sizable portion of the women of Bengal. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the weavers of Bengal began to prefer the imported thread from England

to the local thread produced by women spinners. The reason for the preference of British thread was its uniform size and easy availability in the market.[22] As a result, numerous self-employed women lost their source of income. From the petition of a distressed widow of Santipur published in the *Samachar Darpan* dated January 5, 1828, it was found that she had been maintaining her family of six heads with the income generated through her spinning wheel. But she found herself helpless due to the import of cotton threads from Britain.[23] Not only a large number of Tantis and Jolahas but also a sizable number of cotton-spinners in Bengal lost their livelihoods under the impact of the economic policy of the Company government.

Besides cotton-woven fabrics, silk fabrics were a prosperous industry in Bengal in the seventeenth century. Between 1760 and 1790, the general occupation of almost all classes of people living on the banks of the Mahananda in the neighbourhood of Maldah was rearing silk worms and producing silk fabrics. By 1810, the state of production of raw silk and that of silk fabrics in weaving industries had fallen into decay.[24] Sericulture as well as silk weaving were famous cottage industries of Murshidabad during the Mughal period. The prosperous silk industry of the district declined for the most part by the forties of the nineteenth century.[25] Silk-weaving was one of the principal industries in Bankura District. Bishnupur town was famous for the manufacture of embroidered silk scarves, plain or floral sarees, and dress materials for women. *Tussar* silk fabrics were woven at the village of Barjora. The cheaper goods from Britain caused the decline of silk-weaving in Bankura.[26]

Salt-manufacturing was one of those industries in Bengal that became victim of the profit motive of the East India Company in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The main centres of salt production in Bengal were the coastal regions of Tamluk, Hijli, Chittagong, Khulna, 24-Parganas, Noakhali, Bakarganj, and Sandip. The *Malangi*s engaged themselves in the production of salt from generation to generation. After the Plassey episode, the British

Company began to deprive the *Malangi*s and the traders of salt and created anarchy in the production and marketing of this commodity. The native traders of Bengal would advance money to the salt-producer *Malangi*s and execute a contract with them for the supply of an agreed quantity of salt in a specified time so that they could dispatch salt throughout the country in accordance to its demand. A great proportion of the manual workers in the salt-producing centres earned their livelihood from the salt industries.[27] According to the analysis of James Grant, a total of 60,000 salt workers were employed in the salt industry of Bengal at the end of the eighteenth century.[28] After the East India Company became the ruler of Bengal, the native traders were gradually ousted from the field of salt trade, and the English merchants captured their position. The salt-producer, *Malangi*s, became easy prey for the monopolistic exploitation of the British merchants. The Company government levied heavy duty on salt and collected huge amounts of money in the form of government revenue. The English Company did not pay heed to the development of the salt industry in Bengal. The British merchants earned huge profits from trading salt. Bengal began to import the cheaper machine-made salt from Britain in 1817. In the end, the manual salt industry of Bengal could not stand in competition with the mechanical salt industries of Liverpool.[29] Thousands of salt-producing *Malangi*s were compelled to give up their caste-occupation and engage in other manual occupations that they found available for their survival.

Sugar was produced in almost all parts of Bengal in the mediaeval period. But the chief centres where sugar was manufactured in large volumes were Rangpur, Birbhum, Burdwan, Midnapore, Santipur, and Alamdanga.[30] The district of Jessore was famous for the production of date sugar.[31] Besides catering to the demand of the indigenous market, the sugar of Bengal was exported to overseas countries in Europe, Africa, America, and Asia. Sugar was a staple commodity in Bengal, and its voluminous trading was carried on to Madras, the Malabar Coast, Bombay, Surat, Sind, Muscat, the Persian Gulf, Mocha,

and Jedda.[32] The production of sugar and its trade suffered a huge depression in the mid-eighteenth century because of an abnormal rise in the price of the commodity. The sugar imported from China, Manilla, and Batavia captured the sugar markets of Bombay and its adjacent regions. Java came out as a producer of huge quantities of sugar.[33] Much of the sugar produced in Java was imported into the western regions of India, particularly Surat and the hinterlands of the coast of Malabar.[34] The sugar imported from Java was cheaper. At the same time, its quality was much better. In the sugar industry of Bengal, thousands of people, comprising both Hindus and Muslims, earned their livelihood. The decline of the sugar industry caused an occupational shift among its producers to some other trades.

Opium was an important article for trade in India from an economic point of view during the rule of the Mughals. This crop was cultivated in different regions of India, particularly in extensive areas of Bihar and Bengal. Its cultivation was profitable to the peasants. In Bengal *Subah*, Dinajpur, and Rangpur were the two districts where a segment of the peasants were dependent for their livelihood mainly on its cultivation. Taking advantage of the monopoly, the contractors of the East India Company bought opium from the peasants at a nominal price and sold it to the English merchants at much higher prices. The *ryot*s would deny cultivating opium in order to get rid of financial loss and oppression. But the contractors compelled the *ryot*s to cultivate opium for them by misusing the authority of the state.[35] On account of the extortionate policy of the foreign rulers, opium production in the district of Dinajpur ceased to exist in the last decade of the eighteenth century. The opium industry in Rangpur was shut down in the early nineteenth century.[36]

During the eighteenth century, saltpetre was produced in the districts of Rangpur, Malda, and Purnea in Bengal. It was used as an article for the preservation of meat, as an ingredient of glass-making, and as an antiseptic material. But saltpetre was the major ingredient in the manufacture of gunpowder.[37] That is why its demand was

much higher among the European nations during their wars in the 18th century. It was an important export commodity, and its trade was a monopoly of the East India Company in Bengal.[38] Thousands of people belonging to the manual classes of Bihar and Bengal were employed by the Company for the production of saltpetre. But, due to the exploitative dealings of the Company's servants and middlemen, the production of saltpetre in the district of Rangpur was shut down in 1773. Purnea produced saltpetre till the year 1788, and after that, its production also ceased. Only a few families residing to the North of the district of Malda were engaged in the extraction of saltpetre from saliferous earth by an ordinary process used by the Nunias until the first decade of the twentieth century.[39] But the vast majority of the saltpetre producers were compelled to give up their occupation during the Company's rule.

Paper was manually produced in Bengal in the eighteenth century. This paper was rough, uneven, tainted, scaly, and yellowish in colour. It was produced by a very simple process with the ingredients meshta, or jute, lime, and water. Jute was soaked in lime-water, and a pulp was prepared. The pulp was pounded in a *dhenki.* Finally, the manufacturing process of paper was completed by laying the well-pounded stuff on a bamboo mat and drying it in the sun.[40] The handmade paper of Bengal was sold to other provinces in India. The Baptist Missionaries set up their own paper mill at Serampore in 1809–10, which was damaged by an accident. So, the missionaries imported a pounding machine from Holland in 1820 and began to operate the machine by steam power.[41] Later in 1867, the Royal Paper Mill was set up at Bally, which began to manufacture paper of the modern variety according to the European method.[42] The hand-made paper of Bengal could not stand in competition with the superior-grade paper manufactured in modern paper mills. The native paper manufactories were shut down, and thousands of paper-producers lost their jobs. Only a few of the papermakers survived in this trade, producing only a coarser variety of paper.[43] The majority of the paper-

producer *Kagatis* of Bengal adopted new occupations that were unknown to them. The Sutradhar communities of Bengal were very expert in the building of seagoing vessels. Dacca and Chittagong were the two places that were famous for their ship-building industries. The Sutradhars were engaged in this manufacturing industry for generations. Even during the period between 1781 and 1821, ship-building was a prosperous industry in Bengal. With the advent of steamships and the restriction of ship-building by the British, this gradually led to the complete disappearance of the country's ship-building industry in Bengal.[44] The woodcutters and Sutradhars associated with this industry gave up their traditional occupations and took up alternative callings.

Taking advantage of the settlement of Cornwallis, most of the zamindars accumulated huge wealth in their treasure vaults by collecting exorbitant rents from their tenants. They would never utilise their surplus wealth for the purpose of developmental activities or welfare measures for their tenants. There was hardly a single village where a zamindar had spent money on its development.[45] On the contrary, the zamindars resorted to a series of methods for the exaction of illegal levies or for snatching the wealth of their tenants. The *Sambad Prabhakar*, in its 11.06.1260 (B.S.) issue, reported that a new zamindar of Medinipur had demanded additional rent from the *Kumbhakar*s (potters) because they used earth and collected firewood from the jungles for the production of their potteries. The *Kumbhakar*s had refused to pay additional rent to the zamindar and left Midnapore to settle in a new place.[46] Harichand Thakur, the founder of the Matua sect, and his family members were evicted from their ancestral village of Safaldanga by the local zamindar, Suryamani Majumdar, who levelled on them a fabricated charge of default in arrear rent.[47] A segment of these uprooted tenants would go to faraway places where they were compelled to undertake those occupations for their living that their castes had never adopted.

In the nineteenth century, many Muslims and Hindus also relinquished their traditional occupations to find more lucrative trades. It is observed that the caste-occupation of the Sunris was the distillation and sell of wine. But most of them had given up their hereditary occupation and taken employment in trading, clerkships, etc. with their new surname of Saha.[48] The Ray family of Bhagyakul (Dacca) and the Dey family of Srirampur (Hooghly) became big merchants, giving up their caste occupation, the extraction of oil from seeds.[49] In the eighteenth century, the trades and professions of the Hindus in Burdwan District were hereditary. But under colonial rule, many of them gradually abandoned their caste-centric occupation, retaining their old surnames.[50]

The English Company became the master of Bengal after its victory in the Battle of Plassey in 1757. But long before the Plassey episode, Job Charnock, the erstwhile Chief of the English East India Company's factory at Patna, laid the foundation stone of Calcutta on the eastern bank of the Hooghly in 1690. Since the latter half of the eighteenth century, Calcutta had attracted people from all parts of Bengal, offering various types of new jobs. Calcutta needed a large number of male and female servants, cart-pullers, water-carriers, cooks, coolies, watchmen, boatmen, material-suppliers, clerks, and bilinguals. Many new callings evolved in the Company's regime that were not known in pre-Plassey India. There have been many instances where men from different castes arrived in Calcutta from their rural abodes and became affluent by taking up these new trades. Between the caste-centric occupations and the desire to earn liquid money, they stood with the latter. In Calcutta, a large number of servants (slaves), particularly female servants, were employed. In 1785, Sir William Jones, the Chief Judge of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, observed,

> Hardly a man or woman exists, in a corner of this populous town, who hath not at least one slave child.[51]

On June 15, 1839, it was reported in the *Samachar Darpan* that in the town of Calcutta, there were over two thousand and five hundred

palanquins and eleven thousand and some hundreds of their bearers, most of whom were from Orissa, who earned and remitted to their village homes not less than three lakhs of rupees per annum.[52] The palanquin-bearers would also come into the town from Cooch Behar. The water-carriers of Calcutta came from the boatmen communities of Dacca and Natore and the Behera castes of Orissa and Cooch Behar.[53] The manual labourers from Orissa and Bengal got a new source of income in nineteenth-century Calcutta.

After consolidating their power in Bengal, the colonial rulers made Calcutta the centre of their economic, political, administrative, and military activities. They introduced English as their official language and reorganised the functioning of the court of law and government offices. In and around Calcutta, printing machines were installed. The Christian missionaries founded educational institutions with the curriculum of western education. In the rural areas, European indigo planters founded hundreds of indigo factories. In eastern Bengal, the cultivation and trade of jute gained new momentum. The introduction of steamships, railways, and telegraphs and the revamp of the postal networks produced a new socio-economic space and centre of intellectual activity in Bengal where money-power, proximity to the British rulers, and modern education superseded the vanity of caste. Krishnakanta Nandi, a Teli by caste, became not only a great zamindar of Cossimbazar estate but also the president of the *Jatimala Kachahri* in Calcutta.[54] The traditional occupation of the Kaibarttas was cultivation and fishing. Preetiram Das (Marh), a Kaibartta (Mahishya) and a native of Howrah district, was a successful trader of bamboo and agricultural produce in the Beliaghata region of Calcutta. He amassed huge wealth towards the end of the eighteenth century. Later, he purchased the estate of Pargana Makimpur and became a zamindar. Rajchandra Das (Marh) was his youngest son, who was married to Rasmani Devi on April 21, 1804, who later became famous as Rani Rasmani.[55] Gangakishore Bhattacharya was a Brahmin and a native of Bahara, near Serampore. He came to Calcutta in the second decade

of the nineteenth century and started his business of printing and publishing books independently. He earned a sizeable profit in the business of books and expanded his business activities by setting up a Bengali printing establishment named Bengal Gazetti Press, the first of its kind, not later than the year 1818.[56] During the Company's rule, the three most successful book publishers were Gangakishore Bhattacharya, Kazi Safiuddin, and Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.[57] In nineteenth-century Calcutta, the caste-centred occupations got so diluted in the face of money-power that Babu Ramdulul Dey, a Kayastha and the multimillionaire Bengali business tycoon of Calcutta, emphatically said that "the caste was in his iron chest."[58] In nineteenth-century Calcutta, a barber like Ramlochan Napit could become a teacher of English, a Dhoba like Ratan Sarkar (Rattu Dhoba) could become bilingual, and a Tanti (Tantubanik) like Gourdas Basak could become a Deputy Magistrate.[59] Many people took up the professions of lawyers, traders, clerks, teachers, contractors, and supervisors in nineteenth-century Calcutta, irrespective of their caste, creed, and religion. They could not shake off their caste identity, but their caste occupations could make no barrier to the mobility of their caste-centric occupations.

Nineteenth century brought many changes in its economic and social fields. As a consequence of the ruin of prosperous cottage industries, millions of artisans in Bengal were compelled to give up their hereditary occupations and become agricultural labourers. Pressure on agriculture mounted, and it was hardly possible to maintain the families of a large number of agricultural labourers in the occupation related to land where the zamindars and their officials got unbridled domination. The artisan classes, like the Tantis, Jolahas, Malangis, Chhutars, *Kagati*s, Kapalis, *Kumbhakar*s, sugar-producers, cotton and silk-spinners, and those of other ruined industries, ultimately came out of the industrial zones or their rural abodes and began to adopt alternative occupations generated under the colonial economy. On the other hand, much change had also developed in the lives of the peasant communities like the Kaibarttas, Chandals,

Rajbansis, and Sadgops. The lower-caste rural people were attempting to raise themselves in social hierarchy from their traditional position when a segment of them adopted respectable occupations.[60]

In rural Bengal, the majority of the indigenous Muslims earned their livelihood through cultivation and other manual occupations. But in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a portion of them began to capture the new opportunities available in the colonial economy. By this time, a few of these Muslims had raised themselves to the position of zamindars. Transport services by boats and animal-carts became a good source of income for them. Moreover, by trading in grains and jute, a proportion of them amassed wealth and spread influence in society. The Muslims and the Chandals (Namasudras) were the largest cultivating classes in eastern Bengal. The rapid production of jute and its trade had improved the material condition of the peasants in this part of Bengal. In Faridpur district, the greater portion of the Muslims were engaged in husbandry, and among the rest were traders, boatmen, oil-manufacturers, weavers, and palanquin-bearers.[61] It was found from the report of the Jute Commission submitted to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal on December 18, 1873, that the buying and selling of jute in Bengal was conducted through the native *paikar*s, *faria*s, and *beparis*, a portion of whom were Muslims like Ameer Dallal of Goberdhone, Rangpur, and Mahomed Jan of Kurimgunge, Mymensing.[62] A part of the Muslims in Bengal became zealous to improve their economic and social status by carrying on trade and other callings that evolved under colonial rule. This is why there has been a proverb in Bengal:

> Last year I was a Jolaha, this year I am a Shekh; next year if prices rise I shall be a Saiad.[63]

By the end of the nineteenth century, many Muslims had given up their ancestral occupations and taken up alternative callings.

The European planters founded a large number of indigo factories in many parts of rural Bengal in the first-half of the nineteenth century. A portion of the Chasi Kaibarttas of Nadia got huge employment in the factories of the planters. Under the planters' patronage, they became affluent. The land-owning Biswas families of Bholadanga,

Bhowanipur, and Kola rose to prominence during the indigo days. The foundation of their prosperity was due to their services under the planters.[64] In some places in rural Western Bengal, the many Chasi Kaibarttas left their traditional occupation of cultivation and became zamindars, traders, teachers, and service-holders in government offices.

The Chandals were the largest Hindu community in eastern Bengal and were mostly concentrated in the districts of Jessore, Faridpur, Bakarganj, Dacca, Mymensing, and Sylhet in Eastern Bengal.[65] Though they undertook all sorts of callings, their principal occupations were cultivation and boating. They were known for their bravery, and there had been an excessive and inborn zeal among them for independence and self-reliance.[66] In the latter half of the nineteenth century, a section of the Chandals became affluent, taking up the new trades developed under the colonial economy. On account of their superior knowledge of riverine transportation, the Chandals were the only Hindu community employed in the boats (*bajra*) hired by the Europeans. Very soon, a proportion of the Chandals became shopkeepers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, oilmen, and successful traders.[67] The economically advanced segment of them became so aware of their self-respect and civil rights that they convened and staged a general strike towards the end of the year 1872 for their indignant social position. The impact of the strike was complete, continuing, and widespread in the districts of Faridpur, Bakarganj, and Jessore. The Magistrate of Faridpur, during his official inquiry into the strike-affected areas even after four months of its inception, found

> the fields … untilled, the houses unthatched, and not a Chandal in the service of Hindu or Mahomedan, or a Chandal woman in any market.[68]

The leaders of this strike were those who became rich and influential by acting on the opportunities produced by the colonial economy.

Hunter classified the Rajbansis as a 'semi-aboriginal caste' along with the *Palis, Koches,* and other castes.[69] They were 'cultivators,' of whom many were sharecroppers or *adhiar*s. But by the nineteenth century, a segment of them had also become wealthy peasants like *Jotdar*s or *Chukanidar*s, while a few had raised themselves to the position of big zamindars like the *Raikat* family of Jalpaiguri.[70] The

Rajbansis were a 'versatile race' and engaged not only in the occupation of cultivation but also were blacksmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters, fishermen, and money-lenders in the nineteenth century.[71] Later, they began a movement for Kshatriyahood for their caste under the leadership of Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma.

In the Mughal period, Bengal was a combination of thousands of self-dependent villages. With the introduction of colonial rule, this self-sufficient village economy of Bengal was gradually ruined. The large body of artisans living in villages or in industrial zones with their traditional occupations could not sustain themselves under oppressive colonial rule. Numerous peasants were also evicted from their paternal land by the zamindars or their tenure-holders for not being able to satisfy their greed. For their survival, the majority of them were compelled to become agricultural labourers. But there was not sufficient earning opportunity to maintain their families. On the other hand, colonial economic and administrative policies produced a new socio-economic space where many indigenous people became affluent by taking up alternative callings other than those of their ancestors. We can observe its ample testimony in the following tabular data:

Table: Occupation of selected Hindu Castes as per the Census Report of 1901[72]

Caste and Numerical Strength (including Patna, Bhagalpur, Orissa, Chota Nagpur, and Feudatory States)	Occupation at the end of Nineteenth Century						
	Officers of Govt.	Clerks, Inspectors, etc.	Rent Receivers	Agents, etc., of Landed Estates	Professors, Teachers, etc.	Lawyers & Law Agents	Medical Practitioners
Brahman	326	6308	87811	2714	9722	2801	7175
Baidya	88	1033	4871	269	888	553	4236
Chasi Kaibartta	3	349	10715	389	1204	138	849
Kayastha	372	9915	72856	4022	10881	4252	6987
Sadgop	10	395	860	197	452	97	410
Subarnabanik	17	497	940	45	154	79	160
Sunri or Shaha	5	268	5066	129	230	97	361
Sutradhar	-	24	370	-	28	-	60
Tanti and Tatwa	9	299	1002	19	249	50	192
Teli and Tili	7	132	4106	95	310	54	276

We also find that some of the low-caste people like Chandals, Bagdis, Dhobas, Jugis, Napits, and Rajbansis left their traditional occupations and took up prestigious ones. Among the lawyers of Bengal (including Patna, Bhagalpur, Orissa, Chota Nagpur, and feudatory states), it has been reported that there were 27 Chandals, 37 Napits, 8 Pods, and 14 Rajbansis. There were 70 Chandals, 32 Dhobas, 253 Napits, and 246 Rajbansis among the teachers. In healthcare services, there were 95 Bagdis, 500 Chandals, 141 Dhobas, 876 Jugis, and 2757 Napits practising medicine. On the other hand, the number of rent-receivers among the Bagdis, Chandals, Dhobas, and Rajbansis were 164, 4606, 253, and 5710, respectively.[73] The mobility of occupation also occurred among the indigenous Muslims to some extent. In the nineteenth century, it has been found that many of them became petty zamindars like Haji Shariatullah, the founder of the Faridpur *farazi* sect.[74]At the same time, some of them rose to the position of petty traders and transporters of goods on land and in the rivers.

It is found from the above discussion that a large number of the Brahmins had given up priesthood or teaching and adopted professions like zamindari (rent-receivers), agents of zamindars, or even medical practitioners. On the one hand, a segment of the lower classes of contemporary society, like the Chasi Kaibarttas, Sadgops, Subarnabaniks, Sunris, Tantis, and Telis, had become not only zamindars or their agents but also government officers, clerks, inspectors, teachers, lawyers, and medical practitioners. On the other hand, some of the Bagdis, Chandals, Dhobas, Jugis, Napit, and Rajbansis took up dignified professions. A section of the indigenous Muslims also became successful traders, commission agents, and transporters.

Conclusion

People undertook their caste-centric occupations for their subsistence in traditional Bengali society. The peasants and artisans would engage themselves in the production of agricultural and industrial commodities, and the priests, ferrymen, barbers, and washermen would provide

services. The priesthood of the Brahmins and the caste-occupations of the Baidyas and Kayasthas were much respected in society. A Brahmin enjoyed much more honour in society compared to a wealthy Subarnabanik. The structure of the economy was self-sufficient, which brought up caste-centric occupations and social order. The colonial rulers destroyed the cottage industries; occupancy rights were abolished for the peasants; and the native traders were ousted from the business by the East India Company on the strength of patronage from the rulers. On account of the ruin of industries and the oppression of peasants and traders, millions of artisans, cultivators, and traders in Bengal were compelled to give up their traditional occupations and had to live in utter distress. On the other hand, a segment of these uprooted classes, together with the respectable castes like the Brahmins, Baidyas, and Kayasthas, occupied the new opportunities generated under the colonial administration. They relinquished their caste-centric trades, took up alternative callings, and became affluent irrespective of their caste and family background. Their knowledge, financial power, and social influence overshadowed the vanity of caste in nineteenth-century Bengal. The fixity of caste-centric occupations got diluted, and the pace of occupation mobility gained momentum. In this way, the British rulers in Bengal produced a social revolution, though it was not their intention.

Notes

[1] Panchanan Tarkaratna, (ed.) *Brihad-dharma Purana* (in Bengali), Nababharat Publishers, Kolkata, 1420 B.S., pp. 339-340.

[2] Mukundarama Chakraborty, *Kabikankan Chandi* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1332 B.S., pp. 86-90.

[3] Bharatchandra composes,
Chale Ray pachhkori kotaler thana,
Dakhe chhatrish jati chhatrish karkhana.
Raya Bharatchandra, *Annadamangal,* Part 2, in Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das, (eds.) *Bharatchandra Granthabali* (in Bengali), Vol. II., Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, Kolkata, 1350 B.S., pp. 12-13.

[4] Narendra Krishna Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal: From Plassey to the Permanent Settlement*, Vol. II., Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960, p.196.

[5] John William Kaye, *The Administration of the East India Company; A History of Indian Progress*, Richard Bentley, London, 1853, p. 654.

[6] Nagendranath Laha, *Subarnabanik Katha O Keerti* (in Bengali), Vol. II., Oriental Press Limited, Calcutta, 1941, pp. 1, 11, 490; *Kissory Chaund Mitter, Mutty Lall Seal*, ed. Syamal Das, Calcutta, Toolat Reprint, 1993, pp. 5, 8, 10; Dinabandhu Chatterjee, *A Short Sketch of Rajah Rajendro Mullick Bahadur and his Family*, Calcutta Printing Works, Calcutta, 1917, pp. 2, 23, 24, 36, 47; Blair B. Kling, *Partner in Empire: Dwarkanath Tagore and the Age of Enterprise in Eastern India*, Firma KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, 1981, pp. 29-49; E.A. Gait, *Census of India 1901*, Vol. VI., Part-I, The Report, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1902, p. 366; *Minute by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal on the Report of the Indigo Commission appointed under Act XI of 1860*, Bengal Secretariat Office, Calcutta, 1861, p. 15.

[7] Manrique, II, p. 272, cited by Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India: 1556-1707*, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1963, p. 323.

[8] Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2006, p. 84.

[9] Ibid.

[10] K. Antonova, G. Bongard-Levin, G. Kotovsky, *A History of lndia*, Book 2, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979, p. 52.

[11] Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, 'Bangadesher Krishak', in Kanchan Basu, (ed.), *Bankim Rachanabali*, Part 2, Reflect Publication, Kolkata, p. 261.

[12] Toynbee has denoted the year 1760 as the beginning of the industrial revolution in England. Arnold Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1956, p. 19.

[13] William Bolts, *Consideration on India Affairs; Particularly Respecting the Present State of Bengal and its Dependencies*, London, 1772, pp. 192-193.

[14] William Bolts, Op. cit., p. 194.

[15] B.D. Basu, *The Ruin of Indian Trade and Industries*, Prabasi Press, Calcutta, Second Edition, pp. 81-83.

[16] B.C. Allen, *Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers (hereinafter BDG): Dacca*, Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1912, p. 106.

[17] James Taylor, *A Sketch of the Topography & Statistics of Dacca*, G.H. Huttmann, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1840, p. 191.

[18] Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, (ed.) *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha* (in Bengali), Vol. II., Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Mandir, Calcutta, 1340 B.S., pp. 243-244.

[19] W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. II., Trubner & Co., London, 1875, pp. 94-95.

[20] W. W. Hunter, *op. cit*., Vol. III., 1876, pp. 374-375; W. W. Hunter, *op. cit*., Vol. IV., 1876, pp. 276-277; L.S.S. O'Malley, *BDG: Bankura*, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot (herein after BSBD), Calcutta, 1908, p. 113.

[21] J.C.K. Peterson, *BDG: Burdwan*, BSBD, Calcutta, 1910, p. 123.
[22] James Taylor, Op. cit., p. 171.
[23] Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, *op. cit*., Vol. I., 1339 B.S., pp. 110-111.
[24] W. W. Hunter, Op. cit., Vol. VII., 1876, p. 95.
[25] W. W. Hunter, Op. cit., Vol. IX, 1876, p. 151.
[26] W. W. Hunter, Op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 276.
[27] J.C. Jack, *BDG: Bakarganj*, BSBD, Calcutta, 1918, p. 81.
[28] Ven. Walter Kelly Firminger, *The Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company*, Vol. II., R. Cambray & Co., Calcutta, 1917, p. 262.
[29] L. S. S. O'Malley, *BDG: Midnapore*, BSBD, Calcutta, 1911, p. 128; J.C. Jack, *BDG: Bakarganj*, BSBD, Calcutta, 1918, p. 81; L. S. S. O'Malley, *BDG: Khulna*, BSBD, Calcutta, 1908, p. 115.
[30] W. Ward, *A View of the History, Literature and Mythology of the Hindoos*, Vol. I., Mission Press, Serampore, 1818, p. 84; J. H. E. Garrett, *BDG: Nadia*, BSBD, Calcutta, 1910, p. 93.
[31] J. Westland, *A Report on the District of Jessore: Its Antiquities, Its History, and Its Commerce*, Bengal Secretariat Office, Calcutta, 1871, pp. 207-226.
[32] William Milburn, *Oriental Commerce; Containing a Geographical Description of the Principal Places in the East Indies, China, and Japan with their Produce, Manufactures, and Trade*, Vol. II., Black, Parry, & Co., London, 1813, p. 270.
[33] William Milburn, Op. cit., p. 271.
[34] John Splinter Stavorinus, *Voyages to the East-Indies*, Vol. I., trs, Samuel Hull Wilcocke, G.G. and J. Robinson, London, 1798, p. 232.
[35] J. C. Sinha, *Economic Annals of Bengal*, Macmillan and Co. Limited, London, 1927, p. 189.
[36] J. A. Vas, *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers: Rangpur*, Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1911, p. 90.
[37] William Milburn, op. cit., p. 238.
[38] J. C. Sinha, op. cit., p. 176.
[39] G. E. Lambourn, *BDG: Malda*, W.B. Reprint, Siliguri, p. 72.
[40] W. W. Hunter, op. cit., Vol. VII., pp. 305-306.
[41] Atul Sur, *Bangla Mudraner Dusho Bachhar* (in Bengali), Jijnansa, Calcutta, 1385 B.S., p. 30.
[42] W. W. Hunter, op. cit., Vol. III., p.372; Atul Sur, Op. cit., p. 30.
[43] W. W. Hunter, op. cit., Vol. IX., pp. 331-332.
[44] Narendra Krishna Sinha, ed. *The History of Bengal* (1757-1905), University of Calcutta, 1967, p. 121.
[45] K. Antonova, G. Bongard-Levin, G. Kotovsky, Op. cit., p. 52.
[46] Binay Ghosh, (ed.), *Samaikpatre Banglar Samajchitra*: *1840-1905* (in Bengali), Vol. I., Bengal Publishers Private Limited, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 90-91.

[47] Tarakchandra Sarkar, *Sri Sri Harileelamrita* (in Bengali), Durgapur, Faridpur, 1323 B.S., pp. 45-48.

[48] W. W. Hunter, op. cit., Vol. II., p. 278.

[49] Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, Papyrus, Calcutta, 1981, p.100.

[50] W.W. Hunter, op. cit., Vol. IV., pp. 133-134.

[51] Syud Hossain, 'Slavery Days in Old Calcutta', *Bengal: Past & Present* (*Journal of the Calcutta Historical Society*), 2(3), 1908, 271-276.

[52] Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, Op. cit., Vol. III., 1342 B.S., p. 296.

[53] Pramathanath Mullick, *Sachitra Kolikatar Katha* (in Bengali), Madhyakanda, Juno Printing Works, Calcutta, 1935, p. 55.

[54] L.S.S. O'Malley, *BDG: Murshidabad*, BSBD, Calcutta, 1914, pp. 193-194; Pramathanath Mullick, Op. cit., p. 45.

[55] Nirmalkumar Roy, *Rani Rasmanir Jivanvrittanta*, (in Bengali), Udbodhan Karyalya, Kolkata, 2003, pp.28-34; Jogendra Nath Bhattachraya, *Hindu Castes and Sects*, Thacker, Spink and Co., Calcutta, 1896, p. 281.

[56] Binay Ghosh, *Janasabhar Sahitya* (in Bengali), Papyrus, Calcutta, 1362 B.S., pp. 155-157.

[57] Barunkumar Mukhopadhyay, 'Bangla Mudroner Charyug', in Chittaranjan Bandyopadhyay, (ed.), *Bangla Mudron O Prokason* (in Bengali), Kolkata, 1981, p. 101.

[58] Shib Chunder Bose, *The Hindoos as they are: A Description of the Manners, Customs, and Inner Life of Hindoo Society in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1883, p. 179; Pramathanath Mullick, Op. cit., p. 134.

[59] Harihar Seth, *Puratani* (in Bengali), Vol.I., Rameshwar Dey, Chandannagar, 1335 B.S., p. 59; Nagendranath Seth, *Kolikatastha Tantubanik Jatir Itihas* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1357 B.S., pp. 91, 144.

[60] Pradip Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History*, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1965, p. 7.

[61] W.W. Hunter, op. cit., Vol. V., 1875, pp. 288, 433.

[62] Hem Chunder Kerr, *Report on the Cultivation of, and Trade in, Jute in Bengal, and on Indian Fibres available for the Manufacture of Paper*, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1874, para. 166, p. 60, appendix B, para. 33, p. xxiii, para. 57, p.xxxviii.

[63] E.A. Gait, Op. cit., p. 441.

[64] J.M. Pringle and A.H. Kemm, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Nadia 1918-1926*, BSBD, Calcutta, 1928, p. 22.

[65] H. Beverley, *Report on the Census of Bengal 1872*, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1872, p. 182.

[66] H.H. Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol. I., Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1891, p. 184.

[67] H.H. Risley, Op. cit., p. 188.

[68] *Letter from the Magistrate of Furreedpore to Commissioner of Dacca Division* vide Letter No. 340, dated Khalia Khal, the 8th April 1873, Para. 15; W.W. Hunter, op. cit., Vol. V., p. 285.

[69] W.W. Hunter, op. cit., Vol. VII., pp. 219-220.

[70] Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *Caste, Politics and the Raj: Bengal 1872-1937*, K.P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1990, p. 108.

[71] J.A. Vas, op. cit., p. 47; H.H. Risley, op. cit., p. 499.

[72] E.A. Gait, *Census of India, 1901*, Vol. VI A, The Lower Provinces of Bengal and their Feudatories, Part II., The Imperial Tables, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1902, pp. 502-506.

[73] Ibid.

[74] J.E. Gastrell, *Geographical and Statistical Report of the Districts of Jessore, Fureedpore and Backergunge*, Office of Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1868, p. 36.

Striving for a Healthy Body: Bengali Women and Physical Fitness in Colonial Bengal (Circa 1900-1947)

Basudhita Basu

Abstract

Portraying the condition of women in nineteenth-century Bengal, one of the important Presidency towns in British India, this article unveils those socio-cultural barriers which restrained women from coming out in the public to participate in physical exercises and modern sports. It also aims at observing those factors that conditioned the social perceptions about the female sporting endeavours in the inception; and identifying those causes which brought about changes in such perceptions over time. The paper also engages in an argument regarding how gendered the sporting field was in colonial Bengal? Taking the myriad social factors into account the paper aims to link women's sporting activities with women's education, motherhood and their emancipation. The article aims to bring about a more nuanced understanding of the condition of women in colonial Bengal and how it evolved with time.

Keywords: Bengali Women, physical education, infant mortatity, molestation, sports.

Introduction

Gerda Lerner, an American pioneer in the field of women's history has stated that "Women have a history; women are in history."[1] In the spirit of Lerner's assertion, it can be claimed that the account of the participation of Indian women in several socio-political movements, projects a unique and independent trajectory in the chronicles of modern Indian history. Portraying the condition of women in nineteenth-century Bengal, an important British sattlement in India,

this article unveils those socio-cultural barriers which restrained women from coming out in public to participate in the world of sports. It also aims at observing those factors that conditioned the social perceptions about the female sporting endeavours; and identifying those causes which brought about changes in such perceptions over time.

I

Residing within the Four Walls: Bengali Women and their Melancholic Life

The societal norms of early nineteenth-century Bengal posited women on the altar of special importance as the significant emphasis was given to their behaviour for, and within, the framework of the *Bhadralok*[2] social identity. This phenomenon, however, was not the signature of the *bhadralok* community alone. For centuries, age-old social customs had upheld the sanctity and purity of women's bodies as the icon of the prestige of a community. A society is supposed to be certified in terms of progress and superiority by the nature of treatment towards it's women and also by the behaviour of its womenfolk. The revivalist nationalists who tied nationalism with the issue of conjugality preferred to refer to marriage as a system of "non-consensual, indissoluble, infant marriage."[3] The issue of a woman and her body was considered a theme of utmost importance in the discourse of nineteenth-century Bengal. The female body was used as a domain for the expression of patriarchal hegemony, confirming the male control of society. The status of a 'good wife' depended on her permanent placement inside the *antahpur* (interior of house), her passivity and submissiveness.[4]

The depiction of the female body and sexuality in Hindu society as a symbol of male honour demanded the protection of the female body from the male gaze.[5] Thus, the practice of *purdah* (The curtain behind which the women had to stay) gained importance to govern women's behaviour. The strictness of *purdah* system ensured the

confinement of women inside *antahpur* and their 'invisibility' in the closed carriages when they stepped out of their homes.[6] Such responsibilities towards her family and community needed her dwelling in a disgraceful state of "ignorance, illiteracy, superstition and physical seclusion."[7] The upbringing of the men and women was also different in multiple ways, which in turn affected the health of the women. While men were prepared for *chakri* (Job) in their schools and colleges as well as they practised physical education and sports, the women on the other hand were groomed in domestic works and rituals within the confinement of four walls of the house. They had to undertake *bratakatha* (A Hindu tale recited everyday for a month, which mostly falls in January and February) in order to shape their personality and make them fit into the patriarchal mold of their household. Unaware of the importance of *bratakatha* the young women mistook it as a game. *Bratakatha*s helped the women to be disciplined and prepared for their lives. Thus, from a very tender age, these young girls were accustomed and normalized to gender discrimination. Through these indoor games they were prepared for the actual role of a bride, wife, and mother. Her leisure was *ranna-batikhela* (playing with miniature cooking dishes) and *putulkhela* (playing with dolls).[8] Moreover, her most important task was considered as giving birth to a child and outdoor games were declared as a threat to it. Physically, women were associated with frailty and were advised to stay away from strenuous activities as they might harm their reproductive organs. Medically, doctors suggested that women who would be actively involved in sports would suffer from a fractured or sagging organ.[9] This myth was a patriarchal construction intending to keep women away from entering the field of sports.

Another reason behind the impossibility of engagement of the women in outdoor sports was their attire — a *saree* which was a strip of unstitched cloth, four to nine meters in length that is draped over the body in various styles. Traditionally, Bengali women used to put

on only a single piece of cloth with no undergarment. They also had to cover their face with the *saree*.[10] Fanny Parks's book confirms that the women in Bengal wore only a *saree* without any undergarments. Thus, her attire was considered vile as it was almost transparent. Hence for the security of female sexuality from the public gaze, only their husbands were permitted to enter the *zenana* and the women were not permitted to come out in public.[11] In a way, the *saree* also created obstacles for free movement, which is a primary requirement for any sports. Thus, it can be said that a woman's attire imprisoned her and deprived her of the liberty of unhindered movement in the pre-colonial and colonial Bengal.

II

Breaking the Shackles: Sketching the Portrait of a New Bengali Women

The deplorable situation of Bengali women started to change by the end of the nineteenth century. New literature that started to emerge by the late nineteenth century was focused primarily on the theme of social changes. Partha Chatterjee writes, "Everything was changing; nothing was likely to remain the same'."[12] An image of 'New Woman' was constructed as an educated lady refined in taste, in contrast to the image of a woman devoid of education and therefore "vulgar, coarse, and quarrelsome."[13] Women's education was given importance in the late nineteenth century as one of the agendas of the emerging reform movements in Bengal.[14] Female education, in the Presidency, got a fillip through the foundation of Bethune School in 1849.[15] The school had started with only 11 students, and shortly the enrollment decreased to seven. However, as a result of the dedication of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar[16] and his friends, and their incessant efforts for about fifteen years, the number of students rose to sixty-four.[17] By 1870s, a section of the educated urban elite of Bengal began appreciating the positive effects of female education. From the writing of a contemporary writer, we come to know that the demand for educated wives was on the rise:

> The educated young man wants to get educated girls as their wives. Why will they not? If you educate your boys, you must educate your girls as well. Soon it will be difficult to get bridegroom for girls of upper and middle-class Hindu families, unless these girls were given some education. These days the relatives of girls look for college-going bridegrooms and the college-going bridegroom are looking for school-going brides. A marriage between an educated man and an illiterate girl cannot be a happy one, discord and disagreement will naturally be the result of such a marriage.[18]

There was an important shift in the early twentieth century regarding the image of the Hindu women's public role in Bengal.[19] The census of 1911 tells us about the remarkable decrease in the number of joint families and a substantial rise in the number of nuclear families. The urban elite started to discard the idea of women as property and began to admit the figure of a girl as a wife tied to her husband "as a companion."[20] Earlier, the absence of proper female education made both the husbands and wives unhappy in their marital relationship, as pointed out by Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein[21] and Kamini Datta[22], who expressed that lack of education causes ignorance of a wife regarding her duties to her husband. Few women were brought to the forefront with the abolition of the 'purdah system'. When Satyen Tagore took out his wife in an open carriage, it evoked a sensation.[23] All these created paths for the women to undertake several public roles in late nineteenth-century Bengal.

Another reason behind the confidence of women was the change in their attire which was not restrictive to their movements. The women of *thakur bari*[24] brought about the change in female attire by draping the *saree* in a new style. Jnanadanandini Devi, a respectable woman of nineteenth century Bengal, published an advertisement in the newspaper for training women to wear a modern *saree*. Many women from the elite background gradually adopted this modern way of dressing up. The petticoat (*saya*), blouse (*jama*), undershirt, jacket and 'chemize' were also introduced. Jnanadanandini's daughter, Indira

Devi, further simplified this style.[25] This novel pattern of draping the *saree* was convenient for their movement which helped them to come out in public.

III

Restructuring Female Education and the Need of Physical Exercise

The previous section briefly argues how Bengali women were gradually introduced to the public world. The late nineteenth century also observed some changes in the condition of women as some of them displayed their ability to contest the age-old dictums of Bengal's patriarchal society. There were considerable advances made in the field of women's education. Akin their male folks, Bengali women also understood the importance of physical exercise. Previously, physical strength for a woman was not considered beautiful as she was supposed to be fragile and submissive. Questions began to be raised by the women against this stereotypical image of women. Gradually, women realized that they should not be satisfied with their lean and beautiful appearance only, but they should also aspire to make themselves capable of appearing in the outer domain.[26] Even important political figures like Annie Beasant[27], advised the young girls of India to practise physical exercises in the open air as that enhanced strength and vitality.[28]

More than organized western sports, physical exercises through drills and gymnasium were first introduced in schools and colleges for the improvement of the health of women. Missionary women educators used to believe in educating girls along with boys and to them physical education was an important part of the curriculum. Hence, they included physical education in the school's curriculum for Asian girls with the aim that such education would guide the Asian girls and women and they would discard their inferiority and as a consequence would develop better minds and improved bodies.[29] Both men and women in Bengal joined the venture to propagate the importance of physical education through their writings. In a letter to the editor of *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, Manindra Chandra Nandy of *Kasim Bazar Patrika*, expressed his views,

> Although literacy among Hindu Girls is increasing, it is perfectly true that they were not of much help to these Girls subsequently…it will be better if the authorities show some concern about the physical fitness of girls.[30]

In one of her letters to the editor of *The Statesman*, Miss Sarajubala Datta of Chinsurah (a place in Bengal) expressed her gratitude to the British for their initiative to improve the social status of the Bengali women. She also expressed her lamentations over the deplorable weakness of the girls mostly belonging to middle-class families who, according to her, seemed to be affected by malnutrition. Her regret was also for the lack of the culture of physical training in Indian schools for girls. According to her, a school or college curriculum was not complete without physical training. She further commented:

> As without good health education proves meaningless, cannot the authorities of the Indian managed schools include physical culture in their School curriculum? As yet there is not a single tank reserved for women for swimming purposes; Parks are very few. These things do not entail heavy expenditure and the Corporation authorities can do these things very easily.[31]

IV
Healthy Mothers Lead to a Healthy Nation

Nineteenth-century Bengal witnessed the emergence of a new form of patriarchy that demanded to mould the educated women according to their preferences. This patriarchy required an educated wife who will fulfill their demand and reorganize their domestic life. These consorts of the neo-patriarchs were also advised to take part in physical exercises. It was believed that physical exercises would make these ladies physically strong and only a strong mother would give birth to progenies who would be the future leaders of the Bengali communities. This belief was linked to the larger social problem of contemporary Bengali society. As Samita Sen writes, the infant mortality rate together with the British notion that Bengalis were 'effeminate' and unhealthy

made the nationalists emphasize more on the need of having an enlightened mother.[32] The derogatory comments of the British overlords concerning the lack of physical strength of the Bengalis, fired up the nationalists to take the culture of physical fitness seriously. *Anandabazar Patrika*[33], for instance, reverberated the question of mortality and the physically fit babies in the same breath. The situation was so critical that it became a national concern, as the rising statistics of infant and maternity mortality rates came to the forefront. After the corroboration of the Census of 1872 and 1881, the Dufferin Fund was established to handle the situation.[34]

The onus of infant mortality was put more on the mothers than poor medical facilities. It was believed that the children expired because the mother was careless and ignorant. To combat the crisis of infant mortatlity much attention was given to the health of the mothers. The solution to these problems could not be solved in crèches or by improving health facilities but by educating expecting mothers.[35] Using a plethora of vernacular literature, this section of the paper argues that physical education for women was considered important like mainstream education. There is a large number of articles, essays and tracts belonging to the late nineteenth century that indicate the growing interest in the physical fitness of women. But, surprisingly, the advice of keeping themselves healthy was not always meant to encourage women in fighting for their nation (as was the case for men) but for ensuring the production of healthy children.[36]

Most of the contemporary Bengali newspaper articles and journals mentioned that the future of any nation and its people depended upon the child and the bearer of that child i.e. the mother. A child was a miracle of creation that needed to be handled gently. Bengali mothers needed to be schooled to make them aware of their responsibility as mothers.[37] Thus, women should take physical exercise to secure a healthy and prosperous child. The previously mentioned article of *Cooch Behar Darpan* pointed out that these strong women

would become wives, then mothers. The health of the future citizens of a country depended on the physical health of the women. Therefore, like their male counterparts, they should be allowed to do physical exercises.[38] Another article published in *Bharatvarsha* reiterated the similar statement that women who would become mothers in the future should ensure their proper education. Therefore, she would have to be taught the significance of physical fitness.[39] Both the articles were advocating the participation of women in exercises like skipping and drill. Playing *lathi*, sword-fighting and swimming also had the same importance for the enhancement of their physical strength.[40] Dr. Ramesh Chandra Roy advises women to be conscious about the fact that they are the procreators of the next generation as well as the future of the nation. Therefore, as weak mothers cannot produce healthy generations, the Bengalis were consequently lagging behind the people from other states.[41] Sarojini Devi advised every Indian girl to take part in sports to attain strength, bravery, independence, beauty and to bear physically healthy sons for the greater glory of the motherland.[42] Sushoma Devi, niece of Rabindranath Tagore in her speech at the Mahila Vidyapith in Uttar Pradesh, emphasized the importance of physical training of every female child as the mother of the future race.[43] Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, the founder of Bharat Stri Mahamandal, introduced games with batons and swords among women, thereby encouraging physical culture among women.[44] However, in retrospect, it must be mentioned that the protectors of patriarchy, with their inclination towards future generations of healthy male children, actually paved the way for women's emancipation. To fulfill their selfish desire to acquire educated wives and healthy wombs to bear their progenies, they had to loosen the firm hold over the *antarmahal* which allowed women to step into the light and make them stronger, both physically and mentally. All of these would ultimately culminate in women getting a stronger foothold in the public realm to assert their rights and voice their opinion.

V

The March towards Self-Defence

Apart from being a healthy mother, the print journals also urged women to gain strength and physical fitness to ensure the safety and dignity of women as well. Several incidents of molestation and rape had been reported during the 1920s. There arose several proposals in the press that the property of the criminals convicted of gang rape of a woman should be confiscated but Government did not lend their ears to such proposals. Apart from the steps from the administration, people on the spot were urged to try their level best to stop the miscreants from perpetrating the evil. However, as such courageous acts had not been observed, women were advised to increase their physical strength and independence, rather than waiting to be rescued by men. The argument was gaining currency that they themselves should discover ways and means to protect their self-respect.[45] Both Hindu and Muslim women became prey to abduction and torture by the miscreants. The case of the wife of Keshab Chandra Mohanta is an instance of this. Nearly 20 miscreants had kept Mohanta's wife in their hide-outs. With the intervention of the district magistrate and I.P., the miscreants were arrested.[46]

The urgent need for launching a crusade against the increasing menace of crime against women was emphasized at the largely attended public meeting at the Albert Hall. The meeting was organized by the Hindu Mission and presided over by Sarala Devi Chaudhurani.[47] The main crimes against women were kidnapping and abduction. The punishment sanctioned for them was imprisonment for ten years. Rape had already been punishable under the Whipping Act of 1909.[48] Many occurrences of abduction were unheard of partly because of the social stigma which was attached to the family of the abducted women; because of the fear of the kidnappers, and partly due to the financial inability to pursue the criminal cases. Krishnakumar Mitra, the venerable editor of the *Sanjivni* had compiled a list of the total

number of captured women. He considered that a community that failed to protect its women folk must not have any right to political freedom.[49] Sarala Devi Chaudhurani in her speech in the Albert Hall in 1935, regarded it as a shame for Bengal that the honour of womanhood of Bengal could not be defended. Instead it was argued that, the women could have saved themselves if they had been trained in the art of self-defence. In this context she emphasized the need of physical culture for both men and women.[50]

A large number of articles were featured in the print media with an emphasis on the use of physical exercise for self-defence. Nilmani Das, in one of his articles, advised Bengali women to focus more on inner strengths than external beauty. He emphasized *byam* (exercise) for its ability to help women in attaining strength to combat male atrocities and to guard their chastity. Certain lines of the article are significant:

> Had they been strong and courageous, could the miscreants have perpetrated such beastly oppression on them? Bengali women please get apprised of it. How long would you remain dependent on your male counterpart and endure oppression? So, rise and fight for your own safety. Acquire strength and take to regular exercise.[51]

He further writes that:

> The Bengali women were considered as banknotes or material possessions that were eyed by anti-socials unless their fellow males had been there for their protection. Some initiatives have been taken for women's education but no steps were taken for their physical improvement. He laments over their deterioration of health due to academic pressure.[52]

Suparna Bhattacharya from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, who has worked on women's sporting endeavours, argued that the author here was influenced by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and his fictional character *Rani Maa* (the queen mother), in the novel entitled *Devi Chaudhurani*, where the Rani was advised by her preceptor Bhabani Thakur to engage in wrestling as a device of self-defence.[53]

Leela Roy, the founder of Deepali Sangha expressed concern about the liberation of women, although she was also not sure as to whether women's emancipation would be possible without political freedom of the country. She dedicated herself to activities related to women emancipation as well as the political freedom of the country throughout her student life. The Deepali Sangha was founded in December 1923 to expand the scope of education among the Bengali women whose life was almost cursed due to ignorance and lack of education. It intended not only to create an ideal mother but also to make her an individual possessing all human rights. During the troubled years of 1927-28, when women were physically attacked, she founded a self-defence martial arts group in the region. In fact, the activities of Deepali Sangha almost brought a revival in Dhaka of women emancipation with their initiation of various types of activities like establishment of educational institutions, institutions for training in small-scale production, women's libraries, hostels, gymnasia, sporting activities, generation of funds for women's security, music, acting etc.[54] The Sangha also used to serve society in various ways.[55] They also set up gymnasia because they believed that all problems could not be sorted out by mental strength only but required physical strength as well. In the revolutionary struggle, self-defence and development of body were ineludible necessities; for even if women were surrounded by most faithful and reliable people, they were not completely secure. In view of these factors, the gymnasium of Deepali Sangha emerged to ensure the practice of physical strength. Along with it, *lathi* and swordplay were also included. To ensure security of the deprived, oppressed and often homeless women, particularly widows, aged spinsters, raped and socially ostracized women living a deplorable life, the Mahila Atmaraksha fund came into existence under Leela Nag. Its objective was to financially help these women in deplorable conditions. An able trainer was recruited for self-defence to train 25 girls in the lessons in *lathikhela* (stick-wielding) with an

expectation of increasing the number soon.[56] The overwhelming response to Deepali Sangha had inspired Leela Roy to spread the activities of Deepali Sangha. This made her travel to Calcutta. Roy had earned huge fame because of her policy of amalgamation of both political and social activism. Prithi Bandopadhyay had set up Calcutta Deepali Sangha with the help of Renuka Sen. Within few days, many girls began to join these organizations. Education and cultural matters, social services, physical exercises had also been introduced among their activities. Two schools were established at Bowbazar for imparting training in various matters. Pulin Bihari Das used to train girls in *lathi* (stick) and sword-fighting. By 1926, Deepali Sangha was transformed from a women's organization into a revolutionary organization. Preetilata Waddedar, a revolutionary nationalist from Bengal was involved in revolutionary activities.[57] Thus, it can be argued that physical education began to get importance as a defence mechanism for women in Bengal.

VI
Gendering the Sporting Field

As has been mentioned in the earlier sections, Colonial Bengal was a highly-gendered society. Several aspects of everyday life, individual and public activities like, dance and performance, which were supposed to be the domain of women, had gender specifications. Even Tagore, followed this gender-stereotyping while teaching dance to his students of Santiniketan by selecting Manipuri Tandava and Cholam for boys, Lasya for girls, Kathakali for boys, Cymbal dance for girls etc.[58] Quite naturally, gender-specifications always remained an issue of importance in sporting culture. Biologically, the assumptions indicate that the blood of a woman is thinner, the specific gravity of the blood is lower, the average amount of hemoglobin in blood is three percent less, total weight and mass of woman's muscles are less, etc. The circulation of blood and the nature and function of ductless glands are different in women; there are other physiological

processes exclusively in women. The conditions of growth for boys and girls are widely different.[59] Though women need to be educated, they must bear all their feminine virtues. Sports were considered to be a domain of masculinity. As per the words of Suparna Bhattacharya:

> Sports did not fall within the purview of defined womanly virtues; rather it was equated with the prevailing model of masculinity, which emphasizes aggressiveness, striving for dominance, competition, size, physical strength and phallocentrism.[60]

So, physical education and sports had immense importance in the curriculum of the boys' school, whereas these were a later addition to the curriculum of the women's schools and colleges.

In the introductory period of engaging women in athletics i.e. in the nineteenth century, it was a common belief that this would make girls bold, masculine and assertive. One of the pioneers of the introduction and promotion of physical education for girls, D. Sargaent believed that

> the women who are able to excel in the rougher and more masculine sports have either inherited or acquired masculine characteristics.

So, he suggested women to indulge in only those activities which improve feminine characteristics. Sports like bowling, tennis and swimming which broaden the hips, considered.[61] In the name of femininity, women were urged to participate only in those sports that involved graceful movement because women were the representative of frailty and therefore unable to tolerate the kind of physical contact that one would expect in manly sports. In the previously mentioned letter from Mr. G.W. Kuchler, the Director of Public Instructor of Bengal to the Secretary of the Government of Bengal, it was realized that an army man who was trained in drill was not suitable for girls' schools as girls physique required something different from drill, which was accepted to be suitable for boys. Demand was there for only men of refinement to supervise the physical exercises of girls and those who did not meet those standards were not allowed to

assist grown-up girls.[62] Games like hockey, tennis, cricket etc. were regarded as strenuous. Football was not considered appropriate for Indian girls. But, every girl was advised to spend at least 20 minutes on physical exercise and games to maintain fitness. But undue fatigue of body and mind was deemed to be avoided. Advice for adolescent girls was to play for shorter periods to avoid excessive strain. A greater degree of smoothness and expressiveness in their movements and poise were to be the aims in the case of body-development of girls. Considering the advice of many doctors that the 'postural' defects and, more especially, the tendency to spinal curvature were more common among girls than boys, remedial gymnastics were advised.[63]

Prabartak[64] strongly recommended slow-cycling for women as fast cycling might harm their physique. Cricket and soccer both remained monopolized by men[65] and in the field of cricket and football women were never accepted. Brajaranjan Ray took the initiative to start an annual soccer tournament for women under the aegis of the Women's Sports Association established in 1929. He was opposed severely by the educated stratum of society. The decision to start an annual soccer tournament for the girls' college of the city was objected to by the gentlemen of Bengal as an attempt to promote vulgarities. Consequently, only Victoria College and Ashutosh College[66] gave consent for their women students to participate in the tournament. Due to parental objection, Bethune College did not decide to field a team with male referees, linesmen and spectators. Purna Ghosh became the subject of ridicule for her attempt at playing soccer. Despite considerable opposition Women's Sports Federation was formed in 1938.[67] Sushoma Devi advised women not to take part in vigorous manly "exercises as polo, football, cricket or hunting." Rather she encouraged women to practise long-breathing exercises and open-air exercises like walking and swimming, 'moderate riding' and other light games.[68]

Conclusion

Girls' schools and colleges contributed to the popularization of sports among Bengali girls, at par with what boys' schools achieved

among Bengali boys. While the Bethune School for Girls was established in 1849, the Bethune College was inaugurated in 1879. It was open to applicants of varying ages, offering training up to B.A. standard of University of Calcutta.[69] Here, students practised cycling before college hours, as a recreational activity. During this time, cycling assumed relevance as a medium of women's emancipation in public. In colonial Malaya for instance, cycling paved the way for women's participation in the public arena. Gertrude Owen, Y.W.C.A General Secretary for Malaya, championed the use of a bicycle as an instrument of achieving women's emancipation in 1930s. She also encouraged Asian women to use the bicycle to mark their presence in the public arena.[70]

Badminton was another popular sporting activity among students of Bethune College. According to September 1910 issue of the college magazine, the Badminton Club consisted of 26 members. The racquet sport was regularly played in the afternoons. The pro-activeness of the students inspired the teaching staff to engage in the sport as well. The college magazines always publicized such activities with great zeal:

> The enthusiastic Badmintonites of the Lady Jane Dundas Hostel finished their yearly competitions sometime ago, and on December 23rd, the prize was presented to the stalwart conquerors at the annual social function of the club. Several of the Professors have been trying their skill with the Shuttlecocks lately, and the students were afforded rich amusement one afternoon on witnessing the enthusiastic efforts of four of our young Professors in a hotly contested match. The L.J.D. Hostel students display a vigour of body and mind which goes to prove that true sport is one of the world's greatest physicians.[71]

The long journey from the *zenana* (the part of a house for the seclusion of women) to the sporting field is a narrative that is inextricably linked to larger discourses of women's education, emancipation and motherhood. Although inspired partly by the frivolous imagination of facilitating the birth of healthy male children, the begrudging and guarded acceptance of women's sporting activities did open up an

entirely new space for modelling the identity of the early modern colonial women. The early twentieth century also saw the gradual and cautious inclusion of physical education within curriculums of women's educational institutions in Bengal. However, this seeming indicator of women's emancipation was explicitly geared to feed into and strengthen the perception of women as natural caregivers. Women's physical education was often extolled for its benefits in facilitating more women giving birth to healthy male children, thereby, better securing the prospects of the nation. In similar veins, various honour-bound imageries of ideal femininity inspired the promotion of physical education for women in a specific view of preventing sexual harassment. But more ostensibly, these were inspired by protectionist impulses of Bengali intelligentsia whose sense of self-esteem hinged on that particular perception of honour that is predicated upon man's control of the agency and bodies of women.

Notes

[1] Cited in Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 2.

[2] The gentlefolk who hailed from a middle class background and were western educated.

[3] Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation, Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, p. 92.

[4] Tanika Sarkar, Op. cit., p. 203.

[5] Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal,* Princeton: Princeton University press, 1984, p. 6.

[6] Tanika Sarkar, Op. cit., pp. 202-203.

[7] Bharati Ray, (ed.), *From the Seams of History: Essays on Indian Women,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 178-179.

[8] Suparna Bhattacharya, 'Women of Bengal in Sports: 1905-1985', Ph.D. Dissertation, Jadavpur University, 2007, p. 30.

[9] Suparna Bhattacharya, Op. cit., p. 30.

[10] Mahua Sarkar, 'Cultural Construction of Gender in Colonial Bengal: The "Saree" and Bengali "Nari": A Dress Code' in Amitava Chaterjee (ed.), *Gender & Modernity,* Kolkata: Setu Prakashani, 2015, p. 278.

[11] Cited in Ghulam Murshid, *Reluctant Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849-1905,* Rajshahi: Sahitya Samsad, 1983, pp. 245-247.

[12] Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nation and Its Fragments' in *Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 137.

[13] Ibid., p. 137.

[14] Ghulam Murshid, Op. cit., p. 30

[15] Ghulam Murshid, Op. cit., p. 32

[16] An eminent social reformer in 19th century Bengali.

[17] Ghulam Murshid, Op. cit., p. 38.

[18] Ghulam Murshid, Op. cit., p. 10.

[19] Basudhita Basu, 'Gendering Sports in Colonial Bengal', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 52, No. 35, (September-2. 2017), 2017, 32-36.

[20] Bishnupriya Dutt and Urmimala Munsi Sarkar, *Engendering Performance: Indian Women Performers in Search of an Identity,* New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2010, p. 214.

[21] A Bengali feminist thinker.

[22] Another feminist thinker of Bengal.

[23] Tapan Raychowdhury, *Perceptions, Emotions, Sensibilities: Essays on India's Colonial and Post-Colonial Experience,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 83.

[24] The house of the Tagores.

[25] Mahua Sarkar, Op. cit., p. 278.

[26] 'Pratiyogitai Nari', in Ponchasoshya *Prabasi,* 25th Bhag, 1 khand, 4th Sankhya, Srabon, 1332 (B.S.), July, 1925.

[27] Besant first visited India in 1893 and later settled there, becoming involved in the Indian nationalist movement. In 1916 she established the Indian Home Rule League, of which she became the President. She was also a leading member of the Indian National Congress.

[28] Annie Beasant, 'Bharatiyo Balikader Shiksha', *Mahila*, Jaistho, 1322 (B.S), May 1915.

[29] Janice. N. Brownfoot, 'Emancipation, Exercise and Imperialism: Girls and Games Ethics in Colonial Malaya' in J. A. Mangan, (ed.), *The Cultural Bond: Sports, Empire, Society,* Great Britain, Routledge, 1992, p. 85.

[30] Suparna Bhattacharya, Op. cit., p. 245.

[31] Suparna Bhattacharya, Op. cit., p. 245.

[32] Samita Sen, 'Motherhood and Mothercraft: Gender and Nationalism in Bengal', *Gender And History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Summer 1993, 231-243, 235 https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.1993.tb00174.x

[33] A vernacular newspaper in Bengal.

[34] Srirupa Prasad, *Cultural Politics of Hygiene In India, 1890-1940: Contagions of Feeling, New York: Palgrave Macmillan,* 2015, p. 62.

[35] Samita Sen, Op. cit., p. 237.

[36] *Cooch Behar Darpan,* 1349 (B.S), 1942, Paila Kartik (October).
[37] Geraldine Forbes, Op. cit., p. 170.
[38] Basudhita Basu, Op. cit., 35.
[39] Sri Birendranath Basu, 'Narijatir Byayamcharcha', *Bharatvarsha,* Poush (December-January), 1339 (B.S), 1933.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Dr. Ramesh Chandra Roy, 'Narir Swastha', *Bangalaxmi*, 6th barsha, 10th Sankha, Sraban, 1338 (B.S), July, 1931.
[42] S. Sarojini Devi, 'Women's Part in Physical Culture', *The Modern Student*, Vol. III, July 1935, Number 7, 428, National Archive of India, New Delhi.
[43] Madhurima Mukhopadhyay, 'Constructing Self-Bengali Women's Travel Accounts: 1885-1947', Kolkata: Ph.D Dissertation, Jadavpur University, 2015, p. 217.
[44] Srirupa Prasad, *Cultural Politics of Hygiene in India,* p. 65.
[45] Anonymous Author 'Govindapure Paisachik Narinigroha' in 'Bibidho Prasanga', *Prabasi*, Ashin, 1334 (B.S), September, 1927.
[46] 'Nari-Raksha Sammelan Nibedan', *Prabasi,* 25th Bhag, 1st Khanda, 1 Sankha, Baishak, 1332 (B.S), April, 1925.
[47] 'Crime against Women', *Ananda Bazar Patrika,* Calcutta, 09.07.1935 in the file No. 7.21/3/35, Judicial, 1935, G.O.I, Home Department, Judicial Branch, National Archive of India (NAI), New Delhi.
[48] 'Question in the Council of State by the Honorable Jagadish Chandra Banerjee Regarding Crime Against Women and Measures That May Be Taken to Counteract it', Home Department, Judicial Branch File No 7.21/3/35, 1935, NAI.
[49] 'The Abduction of Hindu Women in Bengal', *Roy's Weekly*, Delhi, Monday, 02.09.1935, in the file No. 7.21/3/35 Judicial, 1935. Govt. of India. Home Department, Judicial Branch, NAI.
[50] 'Crime Against Women', *Ananda Bazar Patrika,* 09.07.1935.
[51] Nilmoni Das, 'Matrigatir Shorircharcha', *Bharatvarsha*, Ashar-Agrahayan (June-November), 1341 (B.S), 1934.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Basudhita Basu, Op. cit., p. 35.
[54] 'Revolutionary Desh-Netri Leela Roy', http://jayasreepatrika.org/articles/revolutionary-deshnetri-leela-roy/
[55] Palash Mondal, 'Biplabi Jatiyata Badtheke Ganatantrik Samajbad Uttarane Banglar Biplabi Gosthi Sri Sangha, 1922-1970', Ph.D. Thesis (In Bengali), University of Calcutta, Department of History, 2017, p. 409.
[56] Palash Mondal, Op. cit., p. 412.
[57] Palash Mondal, Op. cit., p. 14.
[58] Bishnupriya Dutt and Urmimala Munshi Sarkar, Op. cit., p. 218.

[59] 'A Constructive Scheme of Woman's Education in India', The Scientific Basis for Women Education, S.B. Hudlikar, ed., 1930, 52-55.

[60] Suparna Bhattacharya, Op. cit., p. 118.

[61] Basudhita Basu, Op. cit., p. 35.

[62] 'Appoinment of a Mistress of Physical Culture and Games for Dow Hill Girls School, Kurseong', No. 422, 7th General Department, Education Branch. No. 95-96. File 3-5/4, Jan, 1913, West Bengal State Archive.

[63] 'A Constructive Scheme of Woman's Education in India', Report of the Syndicate, Annual Report 1940, p. 93.

[64] A vernacular newspaper in Bengal.

[65] Suparna Ghosh, 'Sporting Nationalism in Twentieth Century Bengal: A Gendered Perspective' in Amitava Chatterjee (ed.), *People at Play: Sport, Culture, Nationalism,* Kolkata: Setu Prakashani, 2013, p. 113.

[66] Two colleges in Calcutta (Kolkata).

[67] Suparna Ghosh, Op. cit., p. 115.

[68] Madhurima Mukhopadhyay, Op. cit., p. 217.

[69] Suparna Bhattacharya, Op. cit., pp. 102-103.

[70] Janice. N. Brownfoot, 'Emancipation, Exercise and Imperialism: Girls and Games Ethics in Colonial Malaya' in J.A. Mangan, (ed.), *The Cultural Bond: Sports, Empire, Society,* Great Britain: Routledge, 1992, p. 98.

[71] Cited in Kaushik Bandopadhay, 'Games Ethics in Bengal: A Commentary on the Sporting Tradition of the Scottish Church College' in *175th Year Commemoration Volume,* 76.

Convergence of Fragmented Childhood and Transitional Object in Louise Erdrich's The Plague of Doves

Asmitha M. D. and Susan Roy

Abstract

The research paper entitled 'Convergence of Fragmented Childhood and Transitional Object in Louise Erdrich's *The Plague of Doves*' accounts the emotional attachment of a person to an inanimate object (violin) to escape the abrasive realities and to find solace in it. Transitional object, contrary to the popular belief, is not an indication of fragility or insecurity. Instead, the physical object is perceived as the transitional object when a person is in need of reassurance and comfort. People undoubtedly go through a number of cognitive, emotional and physical changes as they age, which could have been an impact on how attached they are to things. Multiple mechanisms may impact normative object attachment as we age, taking into account individual differences. When a person has a challenging childhood, a transitional object serves as their source of comfort. And the individual grows connected to the inanimate object and seeks for consolation in it. Emotional attachment, in its positive aspect, strives to a close and sustainable relationship with the things surrounding them. A person who is mentally bonded to something may go through a catharsis. In the process, the suppressed feelings are able to surface. The finding of my study is that paucity of bonding between parent and child deflects the customary course of the child's life which in turn prompts the child to seek the transitional object for alleviation.

Keywords: Transitional Object, Attachment, Solace, Catharsis, Trauma.

Introduction

Louise Erdrich is a native American author who has produced a number of outstanding novels about the indigenous experience. Their

struggles and their ties to one another become the focus of the novels. Her novel *The Plague of Doves* revolves around the traumatic past of the indigenous people and how the past haunts them in the present. The novel also makes mention of the eviction from the native lands. It also takes account of the taunted upbringing which creates scars in the children thereby leading them down the diverse roads.

This research study's main focus is on the derailment of the child's mental and emotional development by the substandard family-environment and the emotional attachment to an inanimate object serves as a person's therapeutic transitional object to get away from their terrible childhood and eventually finds consolation. Probing into the parent-child relationship might be hackneyed concept, but the essential causes or roots for the shift in the usual course of the child's life can be analysed with different parameters. Every aspect of a person's life is influenced by how a mother addresses his or her needs as a child. Shamengwa, one of the notable characters in the novel, has a traumatic childhood when his mother neglects her obligation of raising him and meeting his needs. He then finds solace in the musical instrument. He uses the violin as a transitional object, a bridge to meet the unmet needs. The more time he spends with it, he seems to overlook the reality and starts to live in fantastic world where he gets pleasure in the living. The transitional object makes him to be in the liminal space.

Insalubrious Ambience of Childhood Obstructs the Cognition

The immediate vicinity of the child has to be congenial for the child to feel safe and secure. If the pre-requisite needs are not slaked; some children may turn to be indiscreet and contumacious, while some remain aloof. The frameworks for analysing the repercussions of a failed relationship can be traced with the extent to which the child behaves over the course of time. A child experiences alienation when the basic essentials are not encountered. The tenets of alienation are studied by scrutinizing the hostility and indifference of others towards the affected individuals. A rejected parent-child relationship is detrimental to the development of child. Spending time with the child enhances the cognitive development. If a parent or a caretaker

or a guardian is at the child's elbow, the child knows the facets of the happy home-building which is indispensable for his/her later life. Rudimentary education can be obtained only in the household, the crust for dealing with the conceptual difficulties. So, a proper ambience is the central part for endowing the child with rationality and shaping the temperament. D. M. Winnicott says, in his work *The Child, The Family and The Outside World*,

> . . . If children can play together like this they will not need later on to be taught how to build a home. They know the essentials already (Winnicott, p. 103).

In infancy, the infant tends to experience the sense of omnipotence. Infant-parent relationship is crucial as it strengthens the childhood and adolescence.

The old Adage 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks' stresses the importance of the teaching and configuration in the early childhood itself. Childhood is the prime time for emotional maturity as it provides a helpful handbook for the child when he or she reaches the time for autonomy. The way the parents communicate with the child impacts the way they develop. Socialization is the cornerstone of the emotional and psychological maturity of a child. "Maturity of the human being is a term that implies not only personal growth but also socialization" (Winnicott, p. 83). The environment which the parents create surrounding the child makes every possible way for maturational process. Home is where the child learns the essentials before engaging in the society. The dysfunctional family aborts the stability of the growing child. The child might develop an avoidant and dismissive attitude towards attachment and intimacy as a result of adapting to an emotionally sterile home environment after witnessing the parents' behaviours and conscious actions. Childhood as a modulation phase is explained as

> The ways in which we were misunderstood and mistreated in our childhood can return as ingrained states of mind that have mental models of ruptured relationships as well as automatic reactions that defend us from our own internally generated feelings of shame (Siegel & Hartzell, p. 195).

> Homemaking—not in the sense of housekeeping, but in the broader sense of cultivating the life of a home—has to be done on purpose (Sally and Clarkson).

Home is where the daily needs of our heart and soul are cultivated and satiated. The existence of a child is initially validated at home. A sense of belonging is experienced by the child at home. The comfort, the child experiences at home, makes the entirety of childhood in a pleasant way. The early childhood is critical for the child's identity development. The child expects a closeness with the parents for an acceptance. Nurturance and love are the strides for the child's maturation and socialization. A child must enter the society without losing love and support from the parents or guardians so that a closer proximity to the people will be enhanced. Developmental theories propose that early childhood is very crucial for a transition, especially for boys. Judy Y. Chu did a study by examining the psychology of boys and opines that boys

> demonstrated a remarkable ability to be astute observers of their own and other people's emotions, sensitive to the dynamics and innuendos within their relationships, and keenly attuned to norms and patterns within their social interactions and cultural contexts (Chu p. 33).

The boys observe things very keenly and the sets of behaviour from childhood to adolescence mark the transitional phase for entering the society as a adult. Mindfulness is the centre of the healthy and nurturing relationships. An individual develops relationship with others by sharing the emotions with them. Communication entails self-awareness of emotions, the capacity to wholly deliver these emotions and an empathy for others. So, a proper ambience provides good communication for the emotional development of the child.

Nonchalance in lieu of Propinquity

Mother-infant relationship plays a decisive part in the growth of a child. The more she spends time with the child to meet his mental and physical needs, the more stable and sane the child will be. A good mothering holds the ability for the child to behave well in the society. By connecting the concept with the novel, the character

Shamengwa is studied by his childhood and how it impacts his life. Shamengwa's mother lost her boy baby to diphtheria when he was four years old. After the grievous blow, his parents' demeanour changed completely. They could not overcome the loss and neglected their obligations in taking care of him and did not give any chance of succour.

Analysing the relationship between a mother and a child, mothering is categorised in different variants. Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend promulgate, in the book *The Mom Factor*,

> For as long as humankind has been on the earth, we have associated mothering with trust and nurture. Yet many have not received nurture and trust from their mothers. In stead of connecting safely to their mothers, they have found an emptiness and a void (Cloud).

This sort of mothering labels the mother as 'Phantom Mom'. Shamengwa's mother, though she does not abuse him verbally and physically, does pave ways so that he is devoid of the motherly warmth. So, she can be branded as a 'Phantom Mom'. Even though there is a motherly figure; he is overconsumed by loneliness. Belongingness and love are the basics for a healthy mother-child relationship. Though Shamengwa is at home, he never felt the existence of his mother.

> As though her heart was buried underneath that stone as well, she turned cold, turned away from the rest of us, lost her feelings (Erdrich, p. 201).

Projection is a defence mechanism which supports and at the same time hinders the personal growth. Though the baby is lost fortuitously, the mother seems to blame herself and the family by her silent deportment. The newborn stimulates the parenting in the parents. The loss of the baby impacts the mother intensively. The pain she feels can be justified but the indifference towards the boys is not appropriate. So, she also lost her son though not substantially but metaphysically. He says,

> It only seemed to me that along with that baby I had lost her love. Her strong arms, her kisses, the clean-soap smell of her face, her voice calming me, all of this was gone (Erdrich, p. 201).

The silent or phantom mothering is, in the course of time, accepted by the boy. The acceptance comes in when he knows that things are not going to be the same as he says, "gradually we accepted that the lovely, loving mother we had known wasn't going to return" (Erdrich, pp. 201-02).

Every child wants to be loved and welcomed by his or her parents.

> The sense of feeling wanted and loved is not an intellectual exercise that we can do for ourselves. It comes through the experience of being invited into relationship with another person (Cloud).

But the sense of belonging and inclusion is not experienced by the little Shamengwa after his mother went silent. The mother-son relationship remains only nominal without being devoured. Though he understands the pain his mother experiences because of the grievous loss, it is something too intense for him. He says,

> Now that I am old and know the ways of grief I understand she felt too much, loved too hard, and was afraid to lose us as she had lost my brother. But to a little boy these things are hidden. It only seemed to me that along with the baby I had lost her love. Her strong arms, her kisses, the clean-soap smell of her face, her voice calming me, all of this was gone (Erdrich, p. 201).

The paradigm in the mothering leaves the child with cognitive cicatrix. Usually, the child idealises his or her mother. When the essential needs are not satiated, she remains only an illusive motherly figure. D. W. Winnicott says,

> The baby who has been fed mechanically and insensitively and with no one wanting actively to adapt to the needs of that particular infant is at a great disadvantage, and if such a baby can conceive of a devoted mother at all such a mother must remain an imaginary idealized figure (Winnicott, p. 105).

Lack of quality time and attention from the mother constitutes a fragmented childhood. Winnicott stresses the involvement of father in child's mental and emotional development by saying

> infant needs is just what he usually gets, the care and attention of someone who is going on being herself. This of course applies to fathers too (Winnicott, p. 88).

For the mental and emotional development of the child, mother plays a pivotal role, nevertheless, the role of father does not go unnoticed. The boy usually assumes and takes up the father's mantle. Hence, the part of father's involvement is equally important.

> . . . The part he plays in the experience of the relationship between him and the child and between the child and him? What does this do for the baby? For there is a difference according to whether the father is there or not, is able to make a relationship or not, is sane or insane, is free or rigid in personality (Abram, pp. 38-39).

In the novel *The Plague of Doves*, the studied character does not make a family of him after the unpropitious childhood. In the novel, after the loss of the child, the mother's silence has infected the father who has also become silent. Shamengwa feels abandoned though his parents are around him. Because of this fragmented childhood, he could not make a family of his own. Both his father and mother have stepped down from their responsibility as a parent and their silence causes a void which is filled by the music. If not for the music, he says that he would have gone insane. The boys usually observe and study the behaviours of their fathers. In the book *On Parenting*; Dr. Benjamin Spock says,

> the matter of the boy's identification with his father, because that is by far the most potent mechanism by which a boy's character is shaped (Spock, p. 34).

The boys attempt to replicate their not his father's idiosyncrasies and mannerism. He is not just imitating him but learning to be a father and a husband. Shamengwa takes up the quality of playing violin, which later becomes his transitional object, from his father.

Invigorating Quiddities of Violin as a Transitional Object

Winnicott proposed the terms 'transitional objects' and 'transitional phenomena' for identifying the intermediate space,

> between the thumb and the teddy bear, between the oral eroticism and true object- relationship, between primary creativity and projection of what has already been introjected, between primary unawareness of indebtedness and the acknowledgement of indebtedness ('say: "ta"') (Winnicott, pp. 2-3).

Transitional phenomena is necessary for the child to notice the shift from dependence to independence. During this phase, the child's inclination towards an inanimate object is identified.

The usage of objects to recall and reminisce about experience, whether happy or sad, may contribute to the rise in emotional thinking. It's possible that an adult's transitional object won't always resemble a child's in every way. Transitional objects are perceived as defence mechanisms to negotiate the detachment and independence. Generally, they are associated with babies for their cognitive and affective development. Caregiver's ability to control the emotional state of a child and the child's handling of internalised emotional state of the mother are equally responsible for the human mental development.

> The occasional absence of the mother will be increasingly tolerated as not carrying a threat of abandonment, and a virtual space for attending internal urges and impulses will take shape, with the help also of transitional objects that prefigure an intermediate realm of the imagination. . . (Allen, p. 87).

When a child is given lesser attention, it tries to manoeuver some objects as substitutes which are referred as 'transitional objects'. These transitional objects are used by the child to re-experience the embrace of the mother. Later on, it becomes aware of the reality on viewing the internal and external forms of experience.

It is possible that the act of utilising objects to job memories is a component of cycle that reinforces connection to objects and results in even higher degree of attachment. The internalisation of the transitional object is not only relevant to a child and an adolescent. It also appertains to adults

> because the transitional object is exactly that kind of ontological experience on which were dependent in order to solve the panic experience of the independence of the other (Allen, p. 41).

The ontological frameworks show the relation between the child and the transitional object. About transitional objects in the therapeutic healing, Boyle says:

> These objects seem important as much for the fact that they are real because they have come from outside as for the fact that they represent

> the analytic setting for the patient. They bridge inner and outer realities, as much conceived of as perceived, and serve to soothe the patient in times of anxiety and panic (Boyle, p. 42).

Anxiety plays a pivotal role in taking up the transitional objects. When a child is devoid of foundational solicitude and intimacy, the hope and trust in humans are enervated. Once the child gets attached to the transitional object, the connection between them keeps on amplifying to a great extent. Regarding the expansion of the bonding, it is stated,

> Going towards independence, the original transitional space, once internalised, is enriched and expanded in adolescence and adulthood, giving a sense of personal continuity, and taking account of the person's widening interests (Boyle Spelman p. 154).
> If one has not had the mother's auxiliary ego in infancy, the ensuing unheld formlessness is linked with disintegration, chaos, terror, and psychotic anxiety. In contrast to healthy failure, Failure (with a capital "F") is the trauma that cannot be borne without a break in continuity of being, chaos, and the loss to the self of all that has gone before (Boyle p. 43).

The dearth of a motherly love and care causes the normal way of inner development in disarray. Music plays a pivotal role in resurging the memories of the individuals. It heals a person by recounting the pleasant memories and also at the same time it recalls the traumatic past of an individual by haunting them. "The inside became the outside when Shamengwa played music" (Erdrich, p. 196). Violin, for Shamengwa, is the transitional object which gives him hope and comfort when he needed it the most from his parents.

Shamengwa is known to be a violin-player by his people. He is not married and has an elder brother Mooshum. They two are the last of their traditional generation and enjoy spending time together. They both grew up in the gloomy house and the past affected them in manifolds. They are discrete in taking comforts after experiencing their desolate childhood years. Shamengwa is engrossed in music while Mooshum in narrating stories. Their miserable situation is manifested as "both escaped as soon as possible but

> history followed them, of course, and now as old men they took comfort in chewing it over (Erdrich, p. 22).

Evelina, the niece of Shamengwa, is in awe of his way of playing the fiddle. She says,

> He played the fiddle. How he played the fiddle! Although his arm was so twisted and disfigured that his shirts had to be carefully altered and pinned on that side to accommodate the gnarled shape, yet he had agility in that arm, even strength (Erdrich, p. 196).

Escapism can be viewed in both negative and positive ways, but music offers more than one means of escape. Music has an enormous potency. Evelina describes the impact of his singing and states that his music brings back the terrors of the past and the past which one does not want to repeat itself; the unsolved concern, shredded imaginings, fears and pleasures is once again stirred. Though the music reminds him of the past, he even plays the fiddle in more like a concert and has won prizes. His zeal for the instrument is evident when he takes care of the violin with devotion. He anthropomorphizes the violin as

> He treated this instrument with the reverence we accord our drums, which are considered living beings and require from us food, water, shelter, and love (Erdrich, p. 197).

To trace back how Shamengwa got his violin, it is to be noted that the violin itself has a painful history. Geraldine, his niece, says about the alliance between him and the piano. She says that he had actually owned two fiddles throughout his life. There are his father's fiddle, which he used to play when he was little, as well as another instrument that he discovered through a dream. The fiddle he has now, originally belongs to the brothers Henri and Lafette Peace, famously known as 'guides'. It is indispensable to look at how life proceeds in adulthood, with the internalisation and expansion of transitional space, for the baby who has had a good start. When analysing the psyche of Shamengwa, the paper analyses the adulthood by highlighting the introspection and extension of transitional spaces where the childhood has had a wonderful start at first.

"Violin-playing provided an important transitional safety valve for the tensions stirred up . . ." (Kohut, p. 14). During the exclusion and alienation, the child adapts to the environment or adopts an

object as a transition. Unsolved trauma, if not fully healed, will be a hindrance for the child in his or her later life. By making violin as psychotropic, it is studied that Shamengwa reconciles with his past. The brain encodes the past memories to have a resolution with the leftover issues. Though a bad parenting may have affected him mentally; he overcomes his past by being a parent for Corwin though he is not his own son, he teaches him how to play the fiddle, and gives him the love and attention he does not receive from his parents. Thinking about the ways he grows up being devoid of love, security and guidance; how the present is affected by the past events, he does not want the history to repeat itself in a different way. The unmet needs and the desire to fulfil the childhood fantasy make him support and guide the young boy. The transitional object constitutes a great deal in repairing the childhood and also paves the way to prepare and teach others who also have the same painful and indifferent childhood. Because of the fragmented upbringing, the affected individuals attempt to recast the ways of parenting when they become parents or guardians.

Conclusion

A child is better equipped to fully experience themselves in the present when parents are totally alert and present with mindfulness. If the parents are engrossed with the past or the future, they become mentally absent around the children. The child does not require the full attention all the time but he or she does need the parents' presence for a connection during interaction. Parenting with mindfulness entails the action with purpose. The parents choose the behaviours around the child for their emotional well-being. In the task of parenting, the emotional baggage from the traumatic past might interfere with the relationship with the child. Parenting is frequently influenced by the unresolved concerns, which leads to needless conflict and stress between them and the children. Resolution of trauma requires identifying the low roads. In the novels, two characters encounter a staining incident. Shamengwa's mother loses her baby and neglects her duty of taking care of her other son Shamengwa. Shamengwa comes in terms with the ghosting mother who is mentally and

emotionally unavailable. Nevertheless, he takes efforts to resolve the leftover concern in taking care of the young boy Corwin, who has gone astray. A child's internal and external experiences are shaped by the parents' emotions. Positive emotions should be delivered and amplified to the child while rejecting the negative ones. Positive communication through emotions bridge the gap between the parents and the child and thereby strengthens the relationship. The transitional object serves a lane to escape from the traumatic past and to resolve it.

The finding of the paper is that it deciphers the childhood trauma moulds the individual and the purpose of the transitional object in healing the unsolved trauma to lead a quality life. The limitation of the study is that the research done has analysed the parent-child relationship with only few parameters by aiding the specimen novel. The derailment of the child's mental and emotional growth can have various reasons. The paper focuses only on parenting as the root cause.

References

Abram, J., (1996/2007). *The Language of Winnicott: A Dictionary of Winnicott's Use of Words,* London: Karnac.

Allen, A. and O' Connor, B., 2019, *Transitional Subjects: Critical Theory and Object Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Boyle Spelman, Margaret, 2013, *Winnicott' Babies and Winnicott's Patients*, Karnac.

Chu, Y. Judy and Gilligan, Carol, *When Boys Become Boys*, New York University Press, 2014.

Cloud, Henry and Townsend, John, 2006, *The Mom Factor*, Zondervan.

Erdrich, Louise, 2008, *The Plague of Doves*, New York: Harper Collins.

Kohut, Heinz, 2009, *The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders,* The University of Chicago Press.

Clarkson, Sally and Clarkson, Sarh, 2016, *The Lifegiving Home: Creating a Place of Belonging and Becoming*, Tyndale House Publishers.

Siegel, J. Daniel and Hartzell, Mary, 2003, *Parenting from the Inside Out*, Penguin Putnam.

Spock, Benjamin, 2001, *Dr. Spock On Parenting: Sensible, Reassuring Advice for Today's Parent*, New York: Gallery Books.

Winnicott, W. Donald, 2005, *Playing and Reality*, New York: Routledge Classics.

Winnicott, W. Donald, 1987, *The Child, the Family and the Outside World*, Massachusetts: Perseus Publishing.

Winnicott, W. Donald, 2007, *The Maturational Process and the Facilitating Environment*, London: Karnac.

A plea for a standardized system of writing the Muṇḍa or Kolarian languages.

By P. O. Bodding, *Mohulpahari, Santal Parganas.*

The Asiatic Society of Bengal has adopted a system of transliteration for the Devanagari and related alphabets, as also for the Persian and Hindustani alphabets. India has a large number of languages for which no system of transliteration has been fixed, or properly speaking can be fixed, because the languages in question have no system of writing of their own, people trying to write in such languages following any system that recommends itself to their mind. Those who read will naturally give the written characters the value they themselves are accustomed to apply to these characters, or imagine that ought to be applied, the inevitable result being that all are more or less uncertain as to the correct pronunciation of the languages.

Among these languages are the Muṇḍa languages (or as they are otherwise called, the Kolarian or Kol or Kherwar languages, the last name being what the Santal traditions say was the common name of the ancestors of these peoples before they were divided into separate peoples).

The writing of these languages is to some extent quite arbitrary, partly because there has been no fixed standard. I believe it would be of great value, both to science and to those who daily use these languages, if the Asiatic Society of Bengal would lend its authority to fix a system for writing these and demand this to be used in its publications.

I have a proposal and shall mention this below; before doing this I crave permission to say a little concerning the necessity and value of a fixed standard of writing.

I shall not enlarge on the value of the knowledge of a language to the student of the ethnology of the people speaking this particular language. It is often impossible to be correct without such knowledge; those who furnish the materials for study must know it. It is curious to see, how linguistic mistakes breed other mistakes and are carried on by others and ultimately deemed to be facts. Instances of this may be observed also in connection with the Muṇḍa languages, due to lack of accurate knowledge.

The Muṇḍa peoples belong to the oldest inhabitants of India. They have played a rôle in India, however small and insignificant it may have been. Much found in the lowest strata

of the present day Hindu society of North India is the common property of these and the Munda peoples, a fact raising several interesting problems waiting to be solved.

During the last three decades or so the question of the relationship of the Munda peoples with a number of other races living outside India has been tackled, especially from the linguistic side ; the linguistic relationship seems undoubted, but a great many questions remain unanswered.

These facts show that from the point of view of the student of philology, ethnology and also of comparative religion these peoples are of greater interest than might at first be thought. To get the materials for study a knowledge of the language is necessary.

I shall then turn to the languages of these peoples. The Munda languages were not written, until foreigners, especially missionaries commenced to make use of them Some of them apparently have nothing written as yet.

To one who has for many years been living among one of these peoples and who has endeavoured to learn to know both the people and their language it is a great pleasure to see that younger men, more especially Indian scholars, are taking up the study of these peoples. I am glad that the Asiatic Society of Bengal has lately done so much to further these studies ; personally I have much cause for gratitude.

There is in this connection one fact that should not be lost sight of. These peoples and their languages are exposed to constant extraneous influences, and these are making themselves more and more felt. I am afraid the time is not very far distant when it will be difficult to get hold of what is pure and unalloyed. Their customs are changing and sometimes are already changed ; their languages are being mixed up It is of some importance that these subjects are studied before it is too late. I might give several examples of things lost or on the way to become lost among the Santals.

To be able to ensure as far as possible the correctness of the materials collected for study it is, as already said, necessary to be able to use the language of these peoples. If one cannot do this much information will be necessarily dressed up ; the narrator or informant may at best not be able to give the plain facts in a language not his own ; he may not fully understand what he is asked about ; he may try to explain what he feels is not properly understood, or he may not attempt to do so at all ; he may also think that it does not matter so long as he says something that he understands pleases his interrogator. Many peculiarities, perhaps really essential matter, are entirely eliminated, and much information will necessarily be second hand.

I shall not here enter on details ; anyone who has done any research work of the kind here referred to will know how difficult it is to get hold of the reality, and how much questioning

and testing and retesting is necessary to ensure correctness To be able to do such work properly not a smattering, but a full and correct knowledge of the language concerned is a *sine quâ non*. The language is the means by which the mind expresses itself; many peculiarities of the mind or mode of thought are revealed through the language itself, and often only to be observed through the language expression

Apart from the needs of the ethnologist we have in connection with the Munda languages some features of particular philological interest. The grammatical structure of these languages is peculiar The influence on these of the surrounding Aryan or Dravidian languages, both as to vocabulary and as to grammar is noticeable; the possible influence of the Munḍa languages on some of the Aryan ones is a matter of great interest but very little studied, if studied at all Further, the place of the Munḍa languages among the languages of the world, their possible relationship with other languages found in the East, the problems of the so-called Austric languages, are all matters that are being taken up by scholars in different parts of the world. To furnish the materials for a thorough study of all these subjects a full knowledge of the languages is an indespensable necessity and a faulty knowledge of the phonetics concerned may lead astray and has done so.

To acquire a thorough knowledge of any language a knowledge of its phonetics is essential The Munḍa languages show certain phonetic peculiarities that must be known, if one is not to expose oneself to mistakes and misunderstandings. With an imperfect system of writing it is not possible to solve some of the existing problems; and some of these will not present themselves for being solved at all. The results of philological investigation will of necessity be meagre and perhaps erroneous.

To write the Munḍa languages several methods have been adopted or attempted For Munḍari and Ho the Hindi characters are mostly used; Bengali characters have been attempted for Santali. The Roman alphabet has been used, sometimes without, generally with diacritical marks of sorts.

The alphabets derived from Devanagari have many advantages and are preferable to the Roman alphabet without diacritical marks They have separate characters for many sounds of the Munḍa languages not represented in the Roman alphabet. Still the use of these leaves much to be desired The Munḍa languages have a number of sounds for which the Devanagari has no signs. To show these (and to avoid confusion this is necessary) one would have either to make new characters or to use diacritical marks, but to this the Devanagari-derived alphabets do not readily lend themselves.

From a scientific point of view the use of the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association would naturally be preferable, although even for this a few new characters would

have to be designed; any one using this would be understood by scholars all over the world. I am, however, afraid that this alphabet would, at the present time, be too elaborate for anything but pure scientific purposes. What is needed is something that without being perfect will satisfy the needs of practical purposes, at the same time being accurate enough to serve also science, a system that may be used by others than phonetic experts.

Many have, as said, used the Roman alphabet. To employ this without diacritical marks leads to curious misunderstandings and errors. The Roman alphabet has altogether too few characters, and these have not all one constant value each: some characters have different values in different languages, and even inside the same language the same letter may represent two or more different sounds.

Now a person having a language for his mother tongue, or a person having acquired a full and intimate knowledge of a language, may be able to read what is written, however faulty or imperfect this writing may be, and will know what sounds are to be pronounced. But it would be most difficult, not to say impossible, for any one else to find this out Such writing is of little value to the student of languages who lives away from the places where the languages are used; it makes the comparative study of languages liable to mistakes that are entirely unnecessary; at best it takes time, that might be otherwise profitably used, to ascertain what is meant, if the whole is not given up as hopeless.

The use of diacritical marks is a nuisance; but if we want to use the Roman alphabet—and for all scientific (and practical) purposes this is, for the present anyhow, the most advisable, as the Roman alphabet is known to and used by more people than any other alphabet—it is unavoidably necessary to use diacritical marks to distinguish the different characters, besides fixing the sound value of all characters used. It might be added that it should not be necessary to show all phonetic niceties or shades of pronunciation or variations of pronunciation of the same sound, within certain obvious limits.

Among the Munḍa languages the most important is unquestionably Santali. Santali is spoken by twice as many people as the speakers of all other Munḍa languages counted together. So far as I am able to judge, it is also grammatically and phonetically better preserved than the other Munḍa languages.

Those who first attempted to reduce the Santali language to writing (the first printed work I know of was 'An Introduction' to the language by the Rev. J. Phillips, in 1852) employed the Bengali characters. These were, however, soon given up, although there are even now some who use these, the reason given being that they (i.e. missionaries) wish to enable Santals who have learnt to use the Bengali characters for Bengali, to

read their own language without having the trouble of learning the Roman alphabet. I may add in a parenthesis that Santals who have learnt to follow our system of writing scarcely ever use the Bengali characters for their own language, although they may be just as, and perhaps often are more, accustomed to use these last ones.

All missions working among the Santals very soon adopted the Roman alphabet with diacritical marks, some using more of them, others only a few, intentionally leaving it to the reader to find out what is what. There has been a deplorable long 'war' between the interested parties about some of these marks. Some 27 years ago representatives of the three principal missions working among the Santals came to an agreement, with a few modifications adopting the system of writing first introduced by the late Mr Skrefsrud. It seems, as if some of the younger people are backing out of the agreement, openly acknowledging that they do not care, so long as the Santals themselves are able to find out of it. It is an old fight in a new phase.

It does not come inside the ambition of such people to acquire a full and proper use of the language, and the results are rather curious They say or may say 'good dog' instead of 'good morning,' call a 'mosquito' a 'chain,' speak of a 'tuber' when they mean 'water' or 'rain,' and say 'machinery' when they mean 'to send,' or vice versa; instead of 'become' they say 'shave,' and so on, and so on.

The lack of correct diacritical marks is apparently responsible for several mistakes where they ought not to be found. E.g., P. W. Schmidt has in his well-known work *Die Mon-Khmer Völker* attempted some comparative studies where the Munda languages are called in. He has many mistakes, partly, although apparently not wholly, due to insufficiently accurate writing in the materials he used. Even Dr. Campbell in his Santali-English dictionary has mistakes due to lack of discrimination between vowels, written with one character, but pronounced in two ways.

In parenthesis I may mention that Dr. Campbell himself told me that he had not distinguished between the open and the closed vowel sounds in his dictionary or other writings, because his ear was not sufficiently sharp to distinguish these vowel sounds.

What has been already said will show how easily mistakes may be made, or—avoided. More examples will follow below.

As referred to above, it seems to be a fact that the study of the Munda peoples and their languages is being taken up, more especially by younger Indian scholars, but also more and more by European *savants*. To further these studies and to make the published results valuable and reliable, particularly also for comparative purposes I believe it would be most desirable and useful, if the Council of the Asiatic Society of Bengal

would recommend for use in its publications and elsewhere a system of writing that will be a guide and (within limits) leave nothing to be guessed at.

To show what is needed I give here below the characters we use in writing Santali. Our system of writing may leave something to be desired by the science of phonetics; but it serves most practical purposes admirably well.

We use the following vowels:

a, *e*, *i* *o*, *u*
ɛ, *ɔ*
ạ, *ọ*

All the vowels may be nasalized, the sign to show nasalization being the circumflex above the vowel (~), thus: *ã*, *ẽ*, *ĩ* *õ*, *ũ*, *ɛ̃*, *ɔ̃*, *ạ̃*, *ọ̃*. All vowels may form part of a diphthong.

We have the following consonants:

Glottal :	*h*					
Velars :	*k*	*kh*	*g*, *gh*,		*ṅ*,	*ŋ*
Palatals	*c*,	*ch*,	*j*, *jh*,	*y*,	*ñ*,	*ɲ*
Cerebrals :	*ṭ*,	*ṭh*,	*ḍ*, *ḍh*,	*ṛ*,	*ṇ*	
Dentals .	*t*,	*th*	*d* *dh*,		*n*	*l*
Linguals :				*r*,	*l*	
Labials :	*p*,	*ph*	*b*, *bh*,	*v*,	*w*, *m*,	*p*
Sibilant :	*s*					

With reference to these characters the following may be noted, all characters agreeing in form with those adopted by the Council of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for transliterating the Devanagari and related alphabets are for all practical purposes identical in sound with these, with the reservations made below.

The *r* stands for the cerebral sound and not for the Sanskrit vowel, as in all modern vernaculars.

The differences are as follows:

The long and the short vowels are not distinguished. The vowel quantity in Santal words varies in the same word with the mental state of the speaker, often to a remarkable degree. It might naturally be possible to show the comparative length of vowels; but it would involve an immense amount of work, and it would likely in many cases be difficult, to say the least, to show what is correct, that is to say, in every day writing. If for scientific work it should be found necessary to mark quantity, there is always the possibility of using one or the other of the systems in use for this purpose, a stroke above the vowel ( ), as used in practically all systems of transliteration of the Devanagari and related alphabets, or the colon (:) after the vowel, as used by the International Phonetic Association, or one or more inverted full stops after the vowel, according to length of vowel

described (ˊ, ˊˊ, ˊˊˊ, etc.), as used by many and accurate phoneticians

Whilst the system adopted by the A.S B. for transliterating Devanagari, etc., shows long and short vowels, it does not distinguish between the open and the closed *e*- and *o*-sounds The Devanagari alphabet does not distinguish these vowels, but the sounds are found in some of the modern vernaculars We have in Santali found it necessary to distinguish these sounds Why, will be seen below. We have besides in Santali some vowel sounds called resultant, that also need separate characters. We have consequently in ordinary writing four vowels not shown separately in the transliterated Devanagari.

As to the consonants, we do not need three of those found in the Devanagari alphabet; but we need four not represented there, and Santali has the *ṛ* found in Persian, etc., but not represented in Devanagari

As all who have had to do with phonetics know, the vowels are the most difficult to tackle Most languages have a large variety of vowel sounds, very many more than the Roman or any other alphabet have characters for Dr Sweet in his Primer of Phonetics shows in a table 'seventy-two elementary vowels.' It would naturally be impossible to have separate characters for writing all these, and there are certain near related vowel sounds that conveniently may be shown by one character; but there are more classes than we have vowel characters, and experience has shown the necessity of separate signs for these The European languages have tried or found different ways out of the difficulties, none of them perfect French and English, to take two representatives of one system have attempted to supply what is wanted by a variety of vowel combinations. German and the Scandinavian languages, to mention these representatives of another system, have introduced a number of diacritical marks.

The Munḍa languages, and I believe particularly Santali, have a large variety of vowel sounds; there is no difficulty in distinguishing some twenty-five different vowel sounds Although some of these may, without causing difficulty, be rendered by one common character, it stands to reason, that the vowel characters of the Roman alphabet are not sufficient to render all these sounds.

Santali has a series of vowel sounds called resultant, because they are due to an *i* or an *u* being or having been inside the same stress-unit as the vowel affected. As to the nature and pronunciation of these peculiar Santal sounds I may refer to my work *Materials for a Santali Grammar, I*, pp. 16 ss. and pp. 161 ss. It is necessary to mark at least some of these vowels, partly because it is not always possible to decide, without hearing these sounds, the limits of the stress-unit, partly and especially because these particular sounds

are used even when the cause of them have been eliminated in present day speech, and partly also to distinguish words that without a diacritical mark would look alike. The lack of anything to distinguish these vowels means mistakes and mispronunciation.

These vowels we show by a dot below (.). Any vowel may become resultant in Santali ; but in ordinary writing only two are marked (*ạ* and *ọ*). A few examples will show the need: *dal*, to strike, *dạl*, split peas : *dan*, a gift, *dạn*, a witch, *dạṅ*, a heap, *daṅ*, a pole ; *kol*, to send, *kọl*, the Indian cuckoo, *kọl*, machinery, engine ; *ọl*, to write, *ọl*, fusty, musty, and so on.

The dot below is easy and does not clash with other vowel marks. All who mark these vowels in Santali use this dot below.

As to the vowels *ẹ* and *ọ* there does not seem to be any doubt as to the necessity of showing them in some way. They are in our writing of Santali meant to show the open vowel sounds, *ẹ* the *l/n* or the *l/w* sounds, something like the vowel sounds in 'air' or 'man', and *ọ* the *lbnr* or *lbwr* sounds, something like the vowel sounds in 'law,' and 'not.'

The omission of distinguishing marks is responsible for much wrong pronunciation and errors with those who learn the language and also with those who ought to know better.

Besides the above mentioned *kol* and *kọl*, *ọl* and *ọl* the following examples will show the need of distinguishing these vowels : *ẹr*, to sow, *er* (an interjection), *ẹrako*, they will sow, *erako*, the wives : *heṛak̄*, speckled (colour), *heṛak̄*, what is pared off ; *se*, louse, *sẹ*, foam ; *dāṛẹ̄*, sacrificial animal, *daṛe*, strength, *daṛe*, tree ; *họṛọ họṛọ*, individually, each, *hoṛo*, paddy, *horo horo*, (carry anything away carefully keeping it) up against the stomach ; *ocok̄*, be caused to, *ọcọk̄*, remove ; *hoyok̄*, become, *họyọk̄*, be shaved , *jorok̄ kanae*, he is warming himself at a fire, *jọrọk̄ kana*, it is leaking ; *lọ*, burn, *lo*, draw (water, etc.), and so forth.

The only question to be decided here seems to be how these vowel sounds might be best shown. If the diacritical marks could be substituted by something better it would be well.

When the late Mr. Skrefsrud adopted the dash below the *e* and the *o*, it was not his own invention ; he followed the recommendations of Dr. Lepsius in his Standard Alphabet. This is now an old work ; at the time it was one of the very few works attempting to tackle the problem of an orthography of foreign languages.

Acknowledging the need of separate signs the Linguistic Survey of India has for the Munḍa languages used *ä* for *ẹ*, and *â* for *ọ* ; *ä* is the German and the Swedish character for this sound ; *â* I do not remember to have seen used for this sound in any language practically. In Swedish *å* is used for the same

sound as ọ. In Norwegian and Danish æ is used for the ẹ sound, and *aa* for the ọ.

The International Phonetic Association has introduced the Greek ϵ for the same sound as the Santali ẹ, and an inverted c (ɔ) for the sound corresponding to the Santali ọ. People accustomed to Greek may possibly, to start with feel some difficulty in using ϵ for a long vowel.

I have often been tempted to use the Greek ϵ for ẹ, but have not been able to hit upon anything as a practical substitute for ọ. If the dash below (ˍ) is kept for one, it might also be kept for the other of these two sounds. The a and the â of the Linguistic Survey may possibly sometimes show the etymological origin of the sound: but with the needs of a sign for nasalization these characters have a tendency to become cumbersome and very complicated (the Linguistic Survey has or might have characters like $\tilde{\tilde{a}}$ and $\tilde{\hat{a}}$): they might also not fit the changes in sound due to the laws of harmonic sequence influencing the language.

All in all I am inclined to recommend ẹ and ọ, until some practical new characters are found.

When we get to the consonants there is, with the exceptions referred to above, no difference between the way in which Santali is written and the system adopted by the A.S.B. Santali has not, as mentioned all the sounds represented by the Devanagari characters and consequently no need for characters rendering sounds not met with in the language. As pointed out, Santali has the *w* found in Persian and Hindustani, but not represented in the Devanagari alphabet.

We write two of the nasals in a way different from that of the system of the A.S.B., our characters having been introduced some years before the Society fixed its system. When ṅ was used instead of ṇ, the reason is the liability of ŋ being confused with *y* in practical writing (the Royal Asiatic Society uses ṅ, so also does the Linguistic Survey for the same sound). And when ṅ is used instead of ñ, this had two reasons; one was that the palatal *c* was originally with us written ć, and the palatal nasal was naturally shown in the same way by (ˊ): the other and principal reason was the liability of getting the ñ in practical writing mixed up with the nasalized ũ. The ñ is possibly used in deference to the Spanish character.

The International Phonetic Association has for these two sounds adopted ɲ for ṅ and ɳ for ṇ.

Santali has further four peculiar checked consonants, one velar, one palatal, one dental and one labial, consonants without the off-glide. These sounds are fully described in *Materials for a Santali Grammar, I.*, paras 103 ss.

There has been a many years' controversy over these sounds, especially over two of them, due to the inability of some to recognize the nature of these as checked conso-

nants. Even now a few are met with who instead of the checked *k̇* write an apostrophe (’), such as *seta’* for *setak̇* (morning, *seta* means dog); and in stead of the checked *ċ* they use the colon (*:*) or (*i:*). All writing Santali now-a-days are, however, agreed that *k̇*, *ċ*. *ṫ*, *ṗ* should be used. The late Mr. Skrefsrud, who was an excellent phonetician, was the first to recognize the nature of all these checked consonants and he introduced the characters here shown.

These peculiar sounds are found in all Munda languages, in some of the smaller languages spoken in the Himalayan regions, in a number of the languages found on the Malay Peninsula, and possibly in a number of other eastern languages, so far as it is possible to judge from the not very adequate descriptions given. The late Mr. Skrefsrud found a large number of similar checked consonants in the Mech language (see his *Grammar of the Mech or Boro Language*). These sounds are sometimes described as checked vowels (so *e.g.* in Skeat and Blagden’s *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, and even in Rev. J. Hoffmann’s *Mundari Grammar*).

Some twenty years ago I had an opportunity of examining a number of the Munda languages (for the Linguistic Survey of India); I paid particular attention to their phonetics. I came to the conclusion that all the languages I investigated had these sounds, but that some of them did not pronounce them so distinctly as the Santals always do. I remember I had some difficulty once in hearing whether it was an *k̇* or an *ċ* when preceded by an *i*; but I had no difficulty in finding out the proper sound by applying certain tests. It is a mistake to call these sounds checked vowels: taking them to be checked vowels explains how the Rev. J. Hoffmann can say in his grammar: “it is, I believe, quite impossible for any foreigner to acquire a perfectly correct pronunciation of the peculiarly checked vowels which occur so frequently in Kholarian languages.” However much they may be worn down, some remnant of the old original consonant is there, and the non-recognition of this accounts for the impossibility alluded to.

In certain verbal suffixes these checked consonants are now-a-days given up for the corresponding full voiced consonant. This is especially observed with people who have been to school or are in the habit of much using a foreign language. In Santali these sounds are otherwise in full evidence. They are perhaps not quite so distinct in Mundari which, strangely enough, has been much more influenced, even grammatically, by Hindi than is the case with Santali.

These sounds must be shown; from a scientific point of view it is a pity, that these sounds that possibly may be lost in the course of time are not properly shown. In the Munda languages they are the four stops mentioned, without the off-glide. The apostrophe above or just to the right of the top

of the character that shows the first part of the sound is easily applied to all the characters in question.

To sum up the Munda languages have, except for two sibilants and the cerebral ḷ, the same consonants as the Devanagari alphabet, and in addition four checked ones peculiar to these and some other languages; further a *w* not different from the sound generally rendered by this character

As regards the vowels there is some difference, the Munḍa languages needing characters for sounds not represented in the Devanagari alphabet

My object in writing this has been, as said, to urge on the Council of the Asiatic Society of Bengal to sanction a certain way of writing the sounds of the Munda languages, *viz.*, that the system of transliteration used for the Devanagari and related alphabets should (possibly with two exceptions for the velar and palatal nasals) be employed for the corresponding sounds of the Munḍa languages, with the addition of certain characters necessary to show four peculiar checked consonants and to distinguish certain vowels.

The reasons for my suggestion have been stated above, a few more characters are needed. If a kind of standard system is adopted, this will be of great and real service and value to the students of phonetics and philology in India and elsewhere, and also to the students of ethnology. It would also be of service, directly and indirectly to those who in utter ignorance of phonetics strive as best they can to give these aboriginal peoples something in their own languages.

As it now is, every one does what is right in his own eyes often with not very satisfactory results: a practically applicable system of writing would be a splendid guide and help and would, it is to be hoped, make the many mistakes now met with not so unavoidable in the future.

I am sure it is unnecessary to say more about the need of what is here proposed. The system of writing that we have and that has stood the test of many years' use may serve as a basis, if the Council of the Society will take the matter up and submit a system to scholars for their opinion.

Before closing I have one remark to make. As said, diacritical marks are a nuisance; but until new characters are designed they seem to be unavoidable, and in time one may be so accustomed to the use that one forgets the idea of having to do with a diacritical mark, as I suppose is the case with us when dotting our i's and crossing our t's.

A Santal writing to another Santal, to give an example, might also without risking being misunderstood omit some of the diacritical marks, although I do not think it is wise from an educational point of view to have characters of an uncertain

value. However that may be, I think much might be gained, if a fairly phonetic system of spelling were insisted on in all that is printed.

My plea is that the Council of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, within the scope of which this matter surely comes, and which is the oldest authority on matters connected with the modern scientific study of philology in India, will be pleased to work out a system of writing the Munda languages, and when having done so will insist on, or, to use its own expression in connection with the system adopted for transliterating the Devanagari alphabet, will particularly request authors to adhere to the system in their contributions to the Society's publications.

If this is done I fancy others will follow suit

Paul Olaf Bodding: On the Writing System of the Santali Language

Satarupa Dattamajumdar

Early documentation of Santali, a language of the Munda group (also known as 'Kol' or 'Kolarian' languages in earlier literature) belonging to the Austroasiatic language family, is associated with the name Reverend Paul Olaf Bodding, a Norwegian Christian missionary who visited India in 1890. Bodding mainly operated in the Santali-speaking areas of India, following the footsteps of Lars Olsen Skrefsrud, the founder of the Norwegian Santal Mission (*Den norske Santalmisjon*).

Bodding's (1925: 9-20) article concentrates upon the development of the writing system of the Munda languages (Munda group of languages include Ho, Korku, Mundari, Santali etc.) with special reference to Santali (belonging to the Kherwarian sub-group). This reminds us of his contributions in developing the grammar and dictionary of Santali, translation of Biblical literature in Santali and documentation of Santali folklore and medicine. A delve into the history of the development of the linguistic studies of Santali seems to be a prerequisite in this context. The earliest scientific enquiry of the Santali language is evident in the contributions of Reverend J. Phillips (1845, 1850, 1852), the objective of which was pedagogical. As Santali was an unwritten language at that time and due to lack of script, Bengali script was used in Phillips (1852:1) to represent the speech sounds of the language. As there was no phonological study of Santali, the influence of Bengali, an Indo-Aryan language is found to represent the speech sounds of Santali, a language of the Austroasiatic language family. Later, Puxley (1868) studied the vocabulary of the Santali language. Roman characters were used along with additional diacritical marks which Puxley (1868: iii) mentioned it

as Roman Hindustani to represent the speech sounds of Santali. A departure from the then existing works was attested in the study of speech sounds of Santali in Skrefsrud (1873) from the point of view of articulatory phonetics. Keeping in view the speech sounds of the English and German languages, the Santali speech sounds were explained, because the work was meant for the learning of the language especially for the European students (especially British administrators). The multifunctional nature of the Santali words in terms of word classes was observed by Skrefsrud (1873) and Cole (1879). In his Preface, Cole (1896) i) mentioned that Santali is an agglutinative language "… hence nearly every syllable is a word, and every word a sentence." Both Skrefsrud (1873) and Cole (1896) used the Roman alphabets with additional diacritical marks to represent the language. As the development of scientific writing system essentially depends upon a thorough phonological study of a language, the earlier contributions dealing with the phonological enquiries is highlighted in the present discussion. Both the quantity and quality of vowels, that is, short, long and nasalized vowels in Santali were significantly studied in Grierson (1906: 36-37). The presence of neutral vowels as observed in Santali by Skrefsrud (1873), was also observed in Grierson (1906). The study also took into cognizance the nature of the vowels and their functions in different syllabic structures, along with the occurrence and the contextual restrictions of the Santali consonants and semi-consonants. Accentuation in Santali being a significant supra-segmental phonological aspect, the system of accentuation was studied in Grierson (1906: 39) where he observed that in Santali the first syllable is usually accented, but if the final syllable ends in a semi-consonant or long consonantal sound it is also accented.

As a prerequisite criterion for developing a writing system in Santali, the speech sounds of the language were studied in Bodding (1922, 2nd edition, 1930) where he used the Roman alphabets along with diacritical marks to represent the speech forms. The descriptive study of the Santali speech sounds was carried out from the point of view of articulatory phonetics. Bodding traced and exemplified the quantitative nature of the vowels and consonants, different kinds of diphthongs and

triphthongs. Bodding (1930: no page number given) in the Foreword of the work mentioned the purpose of the study by stating,

> The object has been to render assistance to those who have to learn the Santali language, and at the same time to serve science.

Comparative statements of the speech sounds of the Santali vowels and consonants were made with the speech sounds of English, Danish, French, Spanish, etc., because the aim of the work was basically pedagogical. The syllabic structures, stress and intonation patterns in Santali were also observed with importance.

Bodding (1925: 9-20) puts forth his proposal of a writing system in Santali and approached the authority of The Asiatic Society of Bengal to render academic support to fix a system of writing (standardization) for the Munda languages. He pointed out the lacunae of using Devanagari script and the Roman script in representing the speech sounds of the Santali language. His understanding of the grassroot reality of developing a writing system of the Munda group of languages, was significantly reflected in his statement,

> It is curious to see, how linguistic mistakes breed other mistakes and are carried on by others and ultimately deemed to be facts. Instances of this may be observed also in connection with the Muṇḍa languages, due to lack of accurate knowledge. (Bodding 1925: 9).

He pointed out that although Hindi writing system was adopted to write Mundari and Ho (two of the Munda group of languages), Bengali characters were used to write Santali, which was also attested in Phillips (1852: 1). Roman characters were also used by the missionaries with additional diacritical marks to represent Santali (already discussed earlier). Bodding (1925: 12) elaborated the use of diacritical marks by stating,

> The use of diacritical marks is a nuisance; but if we want to use the Roman alphabet — and for all scientific (and practical) purposes this is, for the present anyhow, the most advisable, as the Roman alphabet is known to and used by more people than any other alphabet — it is unavoidably necessary to use diacritical marks to distinguish the different characters, besides fixing the sound value of all characters used.

He opined that the use of International Phonetic Alphabet would have been more scientific to represent the Munda languages, but even

then, some new characters need to be introduced to represent the speech sounds of these languages. As already discussed earlier, he also observed that relatively the Santali language is more documented from the point of view of grammar and phonetics, than other languages of the Munda group. Due to the dominant influence of the English, Bengali, Odia and Hindi languages the scripts of these languages like Roman, Bengali, Odia and Devanagari were used for writing Santali. But Santali being a language of the Austroasiatic language family (also mentioned earlier), all its speech sounds could not be represented accurately with the scripts of different neighbouring languages belonging to the Indo-Aryan language family or in Roman alphabets. The glottal stops, long vowels, etc. can be cited as instances which were not possible to be represented by the scripts of the languages of a different language family. Practically speaking, no language can be represented by the script of another language without suitable modification, as per the need of the sound system of the concerned language.

While pointing out the limitations of the earlier linguistic enquiries, Bodding observed lack of discrimination among the vowels in Campbell's work (1899-1902, Santali-English dictionary). Regarding this, Bodding (1925: 13) shared his personal interaction with Dr. Campbell,

> In parenthesis I may mention that Dr. Campbell himself told me that he had not distinguished between the open and the closed vowel sounds in his dictionary or other writings, because his ear was not sufficiently sharp to distinguish these vowel sounds.

Bodding (1925) provided us with a list of characters for writing Santali, e.g., nine characters representing vowels which can be nasalized by using circumflex above the characters. A list of thirty-seven characters representing consonantal sounds can be found in the article. As for the limitation of Devanagari script in representing Munda speech sounds, Bodding (1925:15) pointed out,

> Whilst the system adopted by A.S.B. for transliterating Devanagari, etc. shows long and short vowels, it does not distinguish between the open and the closed *e*- and *o*- sounds. The Devanagari alphabet does not distinguish these vowels, but the sounds are found in some of the modern vernaculars. We have in Santali found it necessary to distinguish these sounds.

He also interrogated the practical aspects of the use of separate signs for representing Munda languages in *Linguistic Survey of India*, where German and Swedish characters (for example German umlaut sign) were used for representing the speech forms especially vowels in the Munda languages. He mentioned about the large variety of vocalic sounds in Santali which might be twenty-five distinct vowel sounds and his *Materials for a Santali Grammar I (Mostly Phonetic)* (Bodding 1922, 2nd edition 1930) was referred. He proposed using dot under the vowel sounds to distinguish the phonetic value from one another by citing examples (Bodding 1925:16). Not only the case of vowels, Bodding elaborated the problems in representing consonants of Santali in his grammatical work. In this connection it is worth mentioning that Skrefsrud's (1873) attempt to recognize the use of the characters of the consonants and their nature, which Bodding called 'checked consonants' (voiceless stop consonants) and the use of diacritical marks above these four consonants was acknowledged by Bodding in the article. Due to the influence of other languages in the speech network of the Santali speech community, the loss of such consonantal sounds was observed by Bodding by stating,

> In certain verbal suffixes these checked consonants are now-a-days given up for the corresponding full voiced consonant. This is especially observed with people who have been to school or are in the habit of much using a foreign language. In Santali, these sounds are otherwise in full evidence. They are perhaps not quite so distinct in Muṇḍari which, strangely enough, has been much more influenced, even grammatically, by Hindi than is the case with Santali.
> These sounds must be shown; from a scientific point of view it is a pity, that these sounds that possibly may be lost in the course of time are not properly shown. (Bodding 1925:18).

At the beginning although Bodding pointed out the limitations of using diacritical marks, while urging the Council of The Asiatic Society of Bengal for developing a standardized writing system of the Munda languages, he also agreed the use of diacritical marks by stating,

> As said diacritical marks are a nuisance; but until new characters are designed they seem to be unavoidable… (Bodding 1925:19).

Later Santali grammar for teaching the language to the new learners was carried out in Bodding (1929 a.). With an insight to deal with the speech sounds of the Santali language and an urge to develop writing system Bodding (1929-1936, *A Santal Dictionary* in 5 volumes, Oslo) (Ref: Nagaraja, 1989) described the first letter of each lexical items of the language from the point of view of articulatory phonetics. The word classes of each lexical item were functionally determined. Such a scientific enquiry of the lexical forms of Santali is seen as colossal contribution of Reverend Bodding.

In this context, the language movement of Santali is worth mentioning. Although the reason of Santal rebellion of 1855-57 was economic for sustenance and livelihood, the movement in course of time changed its objective and became socio-political, socio-cultural, etc. Introduction of the Santali language in the school curriculum as medium of instruction became one of the demands of the movement in the middle of 20th century. (Mahapatra, 1979: 112-115). The impact of the movement was found manifested in the linguistic studies of the Santali language. The missionary endeavour was evident in publishing materials on the Santali language (may be in Bengali, Devanagari or Roman scripts) which was associated with the establishment of printing presses like Benagaria Mission Press (1867) and other printing presses from the middle of the 19th century. As pointed out by Bodding, dearth of script in the language hindered the education of Santali as mother-tongue.

With such a backdrop of phonological enquiry of the Santali language and an imminent requirement for standardization of a script of the language, Pandit Raghunath Murmu, a school teacher, developed a separate set of alphabets in 1925 and created *Al Chiki* or *Ol Chiki*, consisting of a set of 30 alphabets for representing 6 vowels, 24 consonants and 5 sound symbols of the Santali language. The symbols used in *Al Chiki* or *Ol Chiki* script were the pictures replicated from nature, images of daily life and day-to-day activities, pictures of physical postures, images of animals and some secret symbols of Santali life (Mohanta 2015: 223-224). *Al Chiki* or *Ol Chiki* script is presented here.

Vowels	(Lo)	(La)	(Li)	(Lu)	(Le)	(O)
Consonanats	(Ot)	(Ok)	(On)	(Ol)	(Ak)	(Ac)
	(Am)	(Aw)	(Is)	(Ih)	(In)	(Ir)
	(Uc)	(Ut)	(Ur)	(Uy)	(Ep)	(Ed)
	(En)	(Er)	(Ot)	(Op)	(Own)	(Oh)
Sound symbols	(Ohot)	(Gahla)	(Mu)	(Rela)	(Pharka)	
Numericals	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)		

In this context, it is pertinent to have a glimpse of the later development in the study of the Santali language by different scholars, linguists and missionaries towards analysing and documenting the linguistic structures of the language. It was Reverend Macphail (1953) who took into consideration the script, pronunciation, syntactic analysis to explain the Santali language for the pedagogical purpose. Macphail (1953, Reprint 2006:14) maintained,

> …you cannot learn Santali in simple, straightforward stages. When many words contain several elements, each modifying the others, you cannot, for instance, fully master the pronoun till you have understood the various verbal forms; nor can you understand the verb apart from the pronouns.

The basic principles of Santali morphology were attested in Ghosh (1984, 1994). Two dialectal variations of Santali — northern and southern were distinguished by Ghosh (2008:17). The study of the supra-segmental structures of the Santali language was attested in Ghosh (2008: 29) where he agreed with Bodding (1929 a.) by observing the existence of different intonation patterns in the Santali sentences, that is, level, rising and falling. He also observed that tone or registers in Santali were not phonemic. The retention of the Munda linguistic identity of the Santali language at the morpho-phonological, morpho-syntactic and morpho-semantic levels was attested in Ghosh (2008:87).

The Santali speech community underwent long drawn socio-political struggle which resulted in the recognition of the Santali language in the 8th schedule of Indian Constitution in 2003. Today the language is taught up to the University level.

References

Bodding, Rev. P.O., 1922. *Materials for a Santali Grammar I (Mostly Phonetic)*. 2nd edn. 1930; 1929 *Materials for a Santali Grammar II (Mostly Morphological)*, Dumka: Santal Mission of Northern Churches.

Bodding, P. O., 1925, 'A Plea for a Standardized System of Writing the Munḍa or Kolarian Languages', *Journal and Proceedings of The Asiatic Society of Bengal,* New Series, XXI, 9-20.

Bodding, Rev. P.O., 1929 a, *Santali Grammar for Beginners*, Benagaria.

Bodding, Rev. P.O., 1929 b, *A Santal Dictionary*, Vol. I, Pt. I A. Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos Jacob Dybwad.

Bodding, Rev. P.O., 1936, *A Santal Dictionary*, 5th Volume, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

Campbell, A., 1899-1902, *A Santali-English Dictionary*, (In three parts) Part I, 1899, Part II-1900 and Part III-1902, Pokhuria, Manbhum: Santal Mission Press.

Cole, Rev. F.T., 1879, 'List of Words and Phrases with their Santali Equivalents', *The Indian Antiquary*, viii, Bombay, 194-196.

Cole, Rev. F.T., 1896, *Santali Primer*, Pokhuria, Manbhum: Santal Mission Press.

Ghosh, A.K., 1984, 'A Descriptive Analysis of Santali: A Study of the Morphology', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Calcutta.

Ghosh, A.K., 1994, *Santali: A Look into Santal Morphology*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

Ghosh, A.K., 2008, Santali, in: G.D.S. Anderson (ed.), *The Munda Languages*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 11-98.

Grierson, G. A., 1906, *Linguistic Survey of India,* Vol. IV, Munda and Dravidian Languages, Calcutta, Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India.

Macphail, Rev. R.M., 1953, *An Introduction to Santali,* Parts I & II, (Introduction & Vocabulary), Reprint 2006, Kolkata: Firma KLM Private Limited.

Mahapatra, B.P., 1979, 'Santali Language Movement in the Context of Many Dominant Languages', in: E. Annamalai (ed.), *Language Movements in India*, Mysore: CIIL, pp. 107-117.

Mohanta, B.K., 2015, 'Invention of *Al Chiki* Script for Santali Language: An Attempt to Preserve an Endangered Tribal Dialect', in: G.K. Bera and K.J. SVD (eds.), *Endangered Cultures and Languages in India: Empirical Observations*, Guwahati, Delhi: Spectrum Publications, pp. 211-229.

Nagaraja, K.S. 1989, *Austroasiatic Languages A Linguistic Bibliography*, Pune: Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute.

Phillips, Rev. J., 1845, *A Santali Primer*, Calcutta: School Book Society.

Phillips, Rev. J., 1850, *Sequel to a Santali Primer*, Calcutta: School Book Society.

Phillips, Rev. J., 1852, *An Introduction to the Santali Language*; *Consisting of A Grammar, Reading Lessons and a Vocabulary*, Calcutta: School Book Society.

Puxley, Rev. E.L., 1868, *A Vocabulary of the Sántáli Language*, London: Printed by W. M. Watts.

Skrefsrud, L.O., 1873, *A Grammar of the Santhal Language*, Calcutta: Calcutta School Book and Vernacular Literature Society.

Arabinda Samanta, *Living with Epidemics in Colonial Bengal, 1818-1945*, pp. 179, New Delhi, Manohar, 2017, Rs. 850.

Disease and Epidemic always play a significant role in the course of social evolution. Therefore the historians as well as the sociologists of the West engaged themselves in analyzing the link between social change and disease and epidemic since nearly the last four decades. In India, the research on the history of public health, disease and medicine become an important branch of social history after the publication of David Arnold's book *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Diseases in Nineteenth Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). The Indian scholars started working on different aspects of the social history of medicine. Arabinda Samanta's Ph.D. dissertation on 'Social History of Malarial Epidemic in Colonial Bengal' which later on published as a book entitled *Malarial Fever in Colonial Bengal: Social History of an Epidemic* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 2002) is considered as the leading work on the social history of medicine in India. The present book is the result of his meticulous research in this field (social history of medicine) over almost the previous three decades. The present work has been restricted within four chapters and these are: i) Malaria; ii) Cholera; iii) Smallpox; & iv) Plague.

In the introduction part of this book, the author highlights the importance of medical history so far as the writing of social history of India is concerned. The First chapter entitled as 'Malaria' is one of the major important chapters of this book because it was due to malarial epidemic, most of the peoples' death took place in colonial Bengal. This chapter is basically the revised version of his inspiring work on malarial fever in colonial Bengal. The first sub-theme 'Antiquity and Incidence' shows the acquaintance of the Indians with malarial fever since the beginning of the Indian Civilization. The *Atharva Veda* provides us first reference of malarial fever with three classifications of it (malarial fever) according to the periodicity of its attack, i.e. *sadandin* or quotidian, *tritiyakam* or tertian and *vitrityan* or quatrain. Later on, according to the author, Charaka and Sushruta used the word *Jwara* for fever and it is associated with mosquitos. Yet, the author says that the malarial

fever could not take the form of an epidemic prior to the British period. The next sub-theme of this chapter deals with the causes led to the malarial epidemic in colonial Bengal. Although the pre-supposed causes of the malarial epidemic took birth from the topography of the riverine areas of Bengal and the insanitary activities of the people, the author shows how the colonial infrastructures (like roads, railways, embankments), system of labour migration, change in crop pattern, commercial crops and environmental decay performed as the direct causes of the outbreak of the malarial epidemic. Then the chapter also seeks to search the answers of some pertinent questions. How did the people react to the epidemic? Was it with an attitude of passivity and helpless resignation? Did people blame the Government or did they try to save themselves by propitiating the Gods and Goddesses? In the second sub-theme of the chapter 'popular reconstruction' the author shows that the Bengali people generally considered malarial epidemic as the result of anger of Gods and Goddesses or manifestation of sins of the people. As a result of that, the lower class people only obeyed the *Jwarasura*. But there was no practice of worship of a common deity. In this connection the author is differing from the opinion (every epidemics in India are linked up with a particular disease deity) put forward by David Arnold. The extreme extent of the malarial epidemic and perceiving its national character as well as its dangerousness compelled the people to helpless resignation to the traditional treatment procedure.

So far as the reaction of the common people of Bengal towards the British colonial policies was concerned, they protested against the colonial policies of infrastructure development; sometimes they directly revolted against the colonial state. They too refused to take cooked food from the *langarkhana*s as well as against the cutting of trees in the surrounding areas of their households. Even they refused to migrate to the so-called hygienic places leaving their village household. In spite of these, they very often protested against the opening of fever dispensaries and even the medical men or support staff.

On contrary, the response of the Bengali gentry class was varied. Some of them kept themselves aloof from the activities related to

malarial epidemic. But few people like the Maharaja of Burdwan and Joykrishna Mukherjee, the zaminder of Uttarpara adopted several significant attempts against malarial epidemic. The former provided whole monetary support to the formation of the fever hospitals in Burdwan. The author by giving examples of literary sources like *Pallisamaj* of Saratchandra Chattopadhyay highlights the keenness of the Bengali zaminders to the health and hygiene for their subjects. The Bengali intellegencia was also very much attached to the malarial fever. They reflected their reaction through their literary works. In this connection, the author mentions how the work of Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhayay and finally the print media sometimes opposed several polices of the colonial rulers and sometimes played a vital role in the introduction and growth of consciousness about malarial epidemic. The *Hindoo Patriot*, the *Calcutta Review* frequently highlighted the issues on malaria. Apart from these, several medical journals like *Swasthya* and *Swasthya Samachar* and common journals like *Krishak* discuss different issues on malarial epidemic. The print media also published the views on malaria by the personalities like Raja Digambar Mitra, Dr. R.N. Sen, Dr. K.L. Choudhury, Dr. S.L. Sarkar and several officials like C.A. Bentley towards malarial epidemic. The chapter ends with the reaction of the village medical practitioners. The Kavirajas, according to the author, planned to snatch money from the patients and their families. Sometimes they provided wrong treatment and blame the patients as well as the British Government for the death and human destruction. The author opines that the impact of quinine on the villages of Bengal was not at all successful in the initial stages of colonialism.

The second chapter titled as 'Cholera' is defined as another far-reaching epidemic disease in colonial Bengal. The author clears his intensions at the end of the first paragraph of the chapter which aims to explore how the proliferation of cholera epidemic and the consequent western medical intervention in India were constructed in popular imagination. Like the malarial fever, the Indians are well acquainted with Cholera since the ancient period. But before the nineteenth century, it never took the form of an epidemic. The author shows that the first

cholera epidemic seems to have broken out in the month of August, 1817 at *Kumbhamela* on the upper Ganga river in the town of Jessore, some 60 miles north-east of Calcutta. From there it reached to Calcutta and ravaged the so-called 'black town' and then it devastated Dinajpur, Chittagang, Rajshahi, Natore, Sylet, Bhagalpur and Munger, throughout the month of August, 1817. This event compelled the colonial Government to think for its cure. It engaged a good number of doctors to find out the causes and the way out. After painstaking research, it had been concluded that the germ prevailed in water and atmospheric problems led to the occurrence of cholera and they found too its association with floods as well as pilgrimage fairs and festivals. The colonial Government sanitary department took the measures to separate the patients from the people to evaluate the affected areas. It also continued propaganda work to make the people conscious about the different aspects of cholera. The colonial Government was really in dilemma about whether the cholera epidemic was contagious or not. However, the Government put their special attention to various pilgrim centres like Puri and Haridwar.

The Bengali people started the worship of Ola-Bibi to save themselves from cholera because the natives did not have faith on the western medical system, Homeopathic and even on Ayurveda. They only believed in supernatural power. The endemic showed the anxiety of the colonial state for its subjects. Some Bengali novelists like Saratchandra Chattopadhyay in his *Panditmashaya* and in *Arogya Niketan* Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay highlight several social changes after the breaking out of cholera epidemic in Bengal during the period under review. It finally created a demarcation line between the western doctors and the indigenous medical practitioners.

Besides malaria and cholera, smallpox also ravaged the society of Bengal. The discourse on smallpox presented by the author in the third chapter is different from the earlier researches done by David Arnold, W. Nicholas, Micheal Worboys, Mark Harrison, Sanjoy Bhattacharya, (*Fractures States: Smallpox, Public Health and Vaccination Policy in British India 1800-1947*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2005). Kabita Ray and Harish Narindas. The author adds new research i.e. patients' perception,

their collective imagination as well as their cultural tradition. Although smallpox is well known to the Indians since the ancient period, it ravaged, for the first time, a large number of people in Assam in 1574 and in Bengal in 1767 and afterwards. The author showing the reports of the Sanitary Commissioner of Bengal states that the disease took the form of an epidemic by 1832 and destroyed Calcutta and its nearby areas till 1850. To save from smallpox the only way out was vaccination which was discovered by Dr. Edward Jenner in 1798. Though in India, the inoculation system was introduced in Madras Presidency by the colonial Government, the picture was totally different in Bengal. The process of vaccination was never adequately conducted in this province. However, the inoculation system was carried out to control smallpox at administrative levels: central, provincial, district and local. The author shows that the Bengalis had doubt over the vaccination procedure and particularly the inhabitants of rural Bengal considered the process as 'destruction of religion'. Hence the initial duty of the vaccinators was to dispel the doubts of people and for that they had to take active cooperation from the village headmen, panchayet and even the representative of the zaminders and police personnel.

Initially, the numbers of tikadars or vaccinators were not sufficient. But later on the problem was overcome. They were ordered to visit minutely each and every households of Bengal. But in spite the assistance from the said authorities, the work became very difficult due to some rumors. Finally, they became successful by using the rumours. They used to go to the rural Bengal in civil dress and declared that they came to them according to the order provided by the Goddess Sitala. The people considered smallpox as the favour of the Goddess Sitala and if any patients wished to recover from it, he or she had to worship the Goddess Sitala. Yet, the vaccination system was limited within few educated families. But the rest of them totally rejected it. Not only that, the Sanskrit *pandits* and scholars also rejected the inoculation process. The response was diverse form the people of Bengal.

Last but not the least, the final chapter i.e. titled as 'Plague' is very significant. At the very outset of this chapter, the author clears his two aims: first, it will explore the different perception of the people to the

plague epidemic that ravaged eastern India in the closing years of the nineteenth century and secondly the multiple ways in which rhetoric of western medical intention was contested by a popular construction of the disease. At the same time, the author points out the dearth of research work on plague epidemic in the perspective of eastern India. A brief sketch of plague epidemic in the world perspective is highlighted in this chapter. The epidemic destroyed eastern India particularly Calcutta in 1896, 1898 and thereafter. A high mortality prevailed there for few years on the trot. The local journal of Calcutta, *Swasthya* argues that the natives were dying in more quantity in comparison to the Europeans. To curb the endemic, the colonial Government adopted several important measures. The Sanitary Commissioner of Bengal ordered to follow the measures of 1) Evacuation, 2) Inoculation, 3) Segregation, and 4) Destruction by trapping and poisoning. It provided right to the British to enter within the households to carry out examination and issued some rules about disposal of the dead body. But it was a very tough task to implement due to several reasons: some rumours were there; people became very scared and panicked; they protested the intrusion and examination by the British officials; and they did not accept the segregation process.

Although there was no particular Gods or Goddesses so far as the recovery from plague was concerned, *sankirtana* was performed both in urban as well as rural settlements. The medical journal *swastha* argues that this *sankirtana* did not have any relation with the endemic. In spite of that it (*sankirtana*) was performed to increase the confidence of the people of colonial Bengal.

Finally, the author sums up all these discussed issues in conclusion and he considers these said four epidemic took a special form in Bengal during colonial period. Page and printing quality of this book is excellent. The price of this book is also affordable. The volume is addressed to the general readers as well as the researchers who would like to read something on colonial techniques on how the British colonised not merely the health but also the mind of the Indians by using the western medical system as the 'tools of empire'.

Palash Dey

CONTRIBUTORS

Amrendra Kumar Thakur
Professor
Department of History
North-Eastern Hill University
Shillong, Meghalaya

Asish Sarma
Ph.D. Research Scholar
Department of History
North-Eastern Hill University
Shillong, Meghalaya

Asmitha M. D.
Ph. D. Research Scholar
Senior Research Fellow
Department of English and Centre for Research
Scott Christian College (Autonomous), Nagercoil
Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University
Abhishekapatti, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

Basudhita Basu
Assistant Professor
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Adamas University
Kolkata

Chanchal Chowdhury
Additional Commissioner of Revenue
Government of West Bengal
Independent Researcher of Social History

Jenia Mukherjee
Associate Professor
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur

Junmoni Basumatary
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
Bodoland University
Kokrajhar, Assam

Jwngsar Daimari
Assistant Professor
Department of History
Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya
Adarsha Mahavidyalaya
Amjonga, Assam

Maneesh Rawat
Ph.D. Research Fellow
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur

Palash Dey
Assistant Professor and Head of the Department
Department of History
Nur Mohammad Smriti Mahavidyalaya, Dhuliyan
Murshidabad, West Bengal

Satarupa Dattamajumdar
Linguist, Independent Researcher
Principal Investigator (Former)
Indian National Science Academy
New Delhi

Sudev Chandra Basumatary
Assistant Professor
Department of History
Bodoland University
Kokrajhar, Assam

Susan Roy
Associate Professor
Department of English and Centre for Research
Scott Christian College (Autonomous), Nagercoil
Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University
Abhishekapatti, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

GUIDELINES TO THE CONTRIBUTORS

1. *JOURNAL OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY* is published by the Asiatic Society in April, July, October and January. The articles in the Journal reflect the best of scholarship. **The Society welcomes such research articles based on the discovery of new facts or new interpretations of or relationships between already discovered facts.** The Society also welcomes short descriptive articles on little or unknown facts or factual accounts of them.
2. It is the policy of the *JOURNAL* that all contributions will be submitted to referees (specialists in respective fields) for expert evaluation. Any change suggested by them will then be referred to the contributor. The Society reserves the right to make final alterations in the text, on linguistic and stylistic grounds, so that the entry conforms to the uniform standard required for the Journal.
3. Manuscripts should follow the standard format of the concerned discipline. All scripts should be in **duplicate** along with soft copy and typed double-spaced, including the quotations, notes, references and all other matters. The format should have ample margins on left and right, and top and bottom. Contributors must provide their affiliations and complete mailing addresses along with their articles. Please send all correspondence to the General Secretary, The Asiatic Society, 1 Park Street, Kolkata–700016, Telephone: 033-2229 0779/ 7251, 2249-7250, 2226-8242, Fax : 033-2217 2355, e-mail: asiaticsocietypublications1788@gmail.com, gs.asiatic@gmail.com, Website: https://asiaticsocietycal.com.
4. Length of the article may be restricted between 5000 and 8000 words. Each article should be accompanied by an abstract not exceeding 100 words.
5. Concise Oxford Dictionary or Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (latest edn.) should be followed in spelling, punctuation and hyphenation. Where two spellings exist, use the British style not the American; for example, 'programme', not 'program' and 'colour', not 'color'.
6. Diacritical marks should be used wherever necessary. Where diacritical marks are not used, the word should be spelt phonetically, e.g., *bhut* and *bhoot* (unless in a quotation, where the original spelling should be used).
7. a. Quotation is expected to be identical *verbatim et litteratum* with the original; b. To indicate ellipsis three single space dots are to be used; c. Long quotations consisting of five or more lines do not need inverted commas but are to be indicated by indenting the extract three spaces from the left margin; d. Shorter quotations should be

within double inverted commas, while quotations within quotations should be within single inverted commas.

8. For all copyright materials the writer should seek and have the permission from appropriate authorities.

9. All references and notes should be numbered consecutively throughout the article and typed on a separate sheet at the end. All references are to be given generally in the following order : the name or initials of the author followed by surname, the title of the work (in italics), the publisher, the place of publication and the page no/s (vide examples below).

   Books :
   Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India,* London, 1933, 7.

   Articles in Books :
   H.V. Trivedi, "The Geography of Kautilya", *Indian Culture,* Vol. 1, 202ff.

   Edited Volumes :
   C.W. Troll, ed. *Muslim Shrines in India : Their Character, History and Significance,* Delhi, 1989.

   Articles in Journals :
   G. Hambly, "A Note on the Trade in Eunuchs in Mughal Bengal", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (hereafter *JAOS*), Vol. 94(1), 1974, 125-29.

   Articles in Edited Volumes
   P. Gaeffke, "Alexander and the Bengal Sufis", in Alan W. Entwistle and Francoise Mallison, eds, *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature, Research Papers, 1988-1991,* New Delhi/Paris, 1994, 278-84.

10. Book Reviews must contain name of the author/editor and the book reviewed, place of publication and publisher, year of publication, number of pages and price.

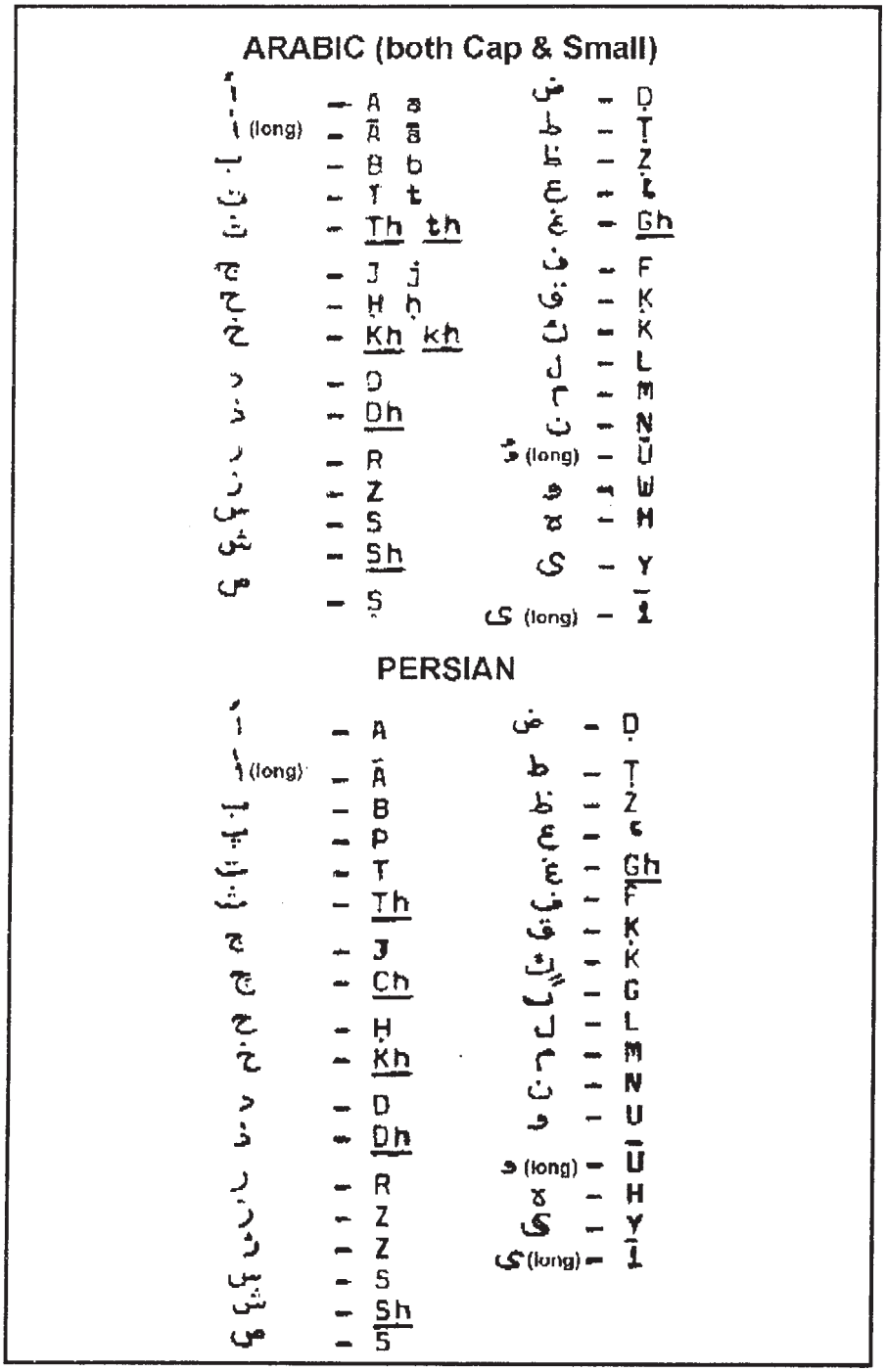
SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

SANSKRIT

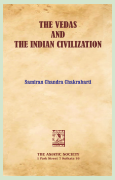
आ = ā	ई = ī
ऊ = ū	ऋ = ṛ
ङ = ṅa	च = ca
छ = cha	ञ = ña
ट = ṭa	ठ = ṭha
ड = ḍa	ढ = ḍha
ण = ṇa	श = śa
ष = ṣa	ं = ṁ

TIBETAN

ཀ = ka	ཁ = kha	ག = ga	ང = ṅa/ṅga
ཅ = ca	ཆ = cha	ཇ = ja	ཉ = ña/nya
ཏ = ta	ཐ = tha	ད = da	ན = na
པ = pa	ཕ = pha	བ = ba	མ = ma
ཙ = tsa	ཚ = tsha	ཛ = dza	ཝ = wa
ཞ = zha	ཟ = za	འ = 'a	ཡ = ya
ར = ra	ལ = la	ཤ = śa/sha	ས = sa
ཧ = ha	ཨ = a		

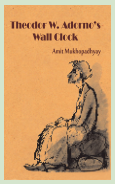

ARABIC (both Cap & Small)
PERSIAN

RECENT PUBLICATIONS



The Vedas and the Indian Civilization
by Samiran Chandra Chakrabarti
₹ 1250

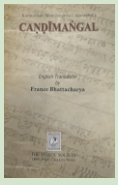
An Illustrated Catalogue of Oil Paintings in the Collection of The Asiatic Society
by Isha Mahammad and Somnath Mukherjee
₹ 2500



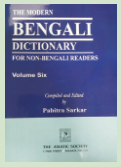
Theodor W. Adorno's Wall Clock
by Amit Mukhopadhyay
₹ 1620

রাজেন্দ্রলাল মিত্র সম্পাদিত *বিবিধার্থ-সঙ্গ্রহ*
(তিন খণ্ড একত্রে)
সংকলন ও সূচনা : স্বপন বসু
সহযোগী : সৃজন দে সরকার ₹ 8000

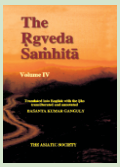
Treasures of Knowledge
The Academic Transactions in The Asiatic Society upto Pre-Independence Period, Set of 3 Volumes
compiled by Sujata Mishra under the guidance of Satyabrata Chakrabarti
₹ 10000



Kavikankan Mukundaram Chakravarti's *Chandimangal*
tr. into English by France Bhattacharya
₹ 1200

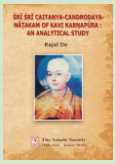


The Modern Bengali Dictionary for Non-Bengali Readers, Vol. VI
comp. and ed. by Pabitra Sarkar
₹ 3600



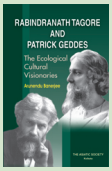
The Rigveda Samhita, Vol. IV
translated into English with the Riks transliterated and annotated by Basanta Kumar Ganguly ₹ 3600

Rahul Sankrityayan
A Myriad-minded Scholar
ed. by Chandramalli Sengupta
₹ 320



Sri Sri Chaitanya-Chandrodaya-Natakam of Kavi Karnapura : An Analytical Study
by Kajal De
₹ 1000

রাজেন্দ্রলাল মিত্র
দ্বিশতবার্ষিক স্মরণ সংকলন
সম্পাদনা : তপতী মুখোপাধ্যায় ও শ্যামল চক্রবর্তী ₹ 400



Rabindranath Tagore and Patrick Geddes
The Ecological Cultural Visionaries
by Arunendu Banerjee ₹ 720

The Kol Tribe of Central India
by Walter G. Griffiths ₹ 1500

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY e-mail : asiaticsocietypublications1788@gmail.com

It will flourish, if naturalists, chemists, antiquaries, philologers and men of science, in different parts of Asia, will commit their observations to writing, and send them to the Asiatick Society at Calcutta; it will languish, if such communications shall be long intermitted; and it will die away, if they shall entirely cease.

Sir William Jones
on the publication of The Asiatic Society