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THE JOURNAL OF THE INSTITUTE OF BANGLADESH STUDIES

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Akanda	The National Language Issue
Molla	The Port of Chittagong
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The National Language Issue

Potent Force for transforming East Pakistani Regionalism into Bengali Nationalism

S. A. Akanda

One of the major factors that usually cause bitterness and ill-feeling among various linguistic national groups within a state is language.¹ If a national group in a multilingual and multicultural society has a distinctive language which is different from others, then that group is expected to make efforts for the development of a unique culture based upon its language and literature. A culture, whether rich or poor, is very much dear to its own people, and it becomes one of the proudest possessions of the people who are identified with it. The desire of a cultural or a sub-national group to retain and express its identity takes the shape of greater attachment to its own region. The call of cultural identity may become much more powerful than the sense of religious unity or territorial integrity.

The authorities on the study of nationalism² have emphasized that linguistic unity is a prerequisite for the development of national consciousness and national identity. But Pakistan came into being as a multilingual state. The breakdown of total population in various linguistic groups in percentage terms, as presented in the first Census in Pakistan in 1951, is given in the following table.³

¹ Reference may be made of the Research Report by R.L. Watts, **Multi-Cultural Societies and Federalism** submitted to B and B Commission (Canada), Book I, Appendix V, p. 211

² Carlton J. A. Hayes, **Nationalism: A Religion** (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960) ; Hans Kohn, **Nationalism : Its Meaning and History** (Princeton : Van Nostrand, 1955) ; Louis Snyder, **The Meaning of Nationalism** (New Brunswick, N. J. ; Rutgers University Press, 1954) ; Louis L. Snyder, **The New Nationalism** (Ithaca ; N. Y. : Cornell University Press, 1968)

³ Compiled from the **Census of Pakistan Population, 1961** Vol. I (Karachi: Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Home and Kashmir Affairs, 1961), pp. IV, 33-35

TABLE
**PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION SPEAKING DIFFERENT
 LANGUAGES IN 1951**

	Mother Tongue as % of Total Population			% of Literacy in Main Languages		
	Pakistan	E. Pak	W. Pak	Pakistan	E. Pak	W. Pak
Bengali ...	56.40	98.42	0.02	9.50	16.60	0.01
Punjabi ...	28.55	0.02	67.08	0.09	0.01	0.19
Pushto ...	3.48	—	8.16	0.03	—	0.07
Sindhi ...	5.47	0.01	12.85	0.51	—	1.18
Urdu ...	3.27	0.64	7.05	3.76	0.86	7.63
Baluchi ...	1.29	—	3.04	—	—	0.01
English ...	0.02	0.01	0.03	3.12	3.69	2.35

The statehood of Pakistan was based on the premise of a common religion. About 97 percent of the population in West Pakistan and about 80 percent of the population in East Pakistan⁴ were muslims. It was hoped that Islam would act not only as a cementing force among distant cultural groups, but also as the most vital factor in the process of developing a unified national character for the whole state. But this hope has been belied by the force of events.

The course of events since Independence began to pull apart the various cultural units, particularly the Bengalees and the non-Bengalees. The disenchantment of the Bengalees developed into a predominant concern with regionalism⁵ which ultimately shaped into Bengali Nationalism and a successful movement for secession.

⁴Until 1955, the province of East Pakistan was known as East Bengal. After the dissolution of the first Constituent Assembly (1947-54) by the Punjabi Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad by an extraordinary decree on October 24, 1954 which empowered the Governor-General, *pari passu*, to make provision (i) for framing the constitution of Pakistan; (ii) to constitute the province of West Pakistan; and (iii) name East Bengal as East Pakistan. *Morning News* (March 29, 1955). The West Pakistan Establishment Bill, passed in September 1955, changed the name of 'East Bengal' as 'East Pakistan': *CAP Debates*, Vol. 1 (September 20, 1955), p. 955

⁵Regionalism has been defined as "a consciousness of, and loyalty to, a distinct subnational or supra-national area usually characterized by a common culture, background and interests." *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1966), p. 1912

Regionalism is basically a cultural phenomenon. According to Prakasa Rao, an Indian geographer, the cycle of regionalism begins with the cultural medium of language and literature,

Although only about 3.3 per cent of the total population of Pakistan had Urdu as their mother tongue, yet the central government, in February, 1948, decided to adopt Urdu as the national language of Pakistan⁶. This led to serious controversy on the national level, particularly in East Pakistan as to the propriety of the decision. To the East Pakistanis, Urdu is almost a foreign language. So this decision seemed to them to be an unnecessary and undesirable imposition. They expressed their resentment which gradually developed into a political movement culminating into province-wide agitations in 1952.

The language controversy, in fact, started during the debates of the Constituent Assembly as early as February, 1948, in connection with the adoption of the Draft Rules of Procedure. Under the Rules, the members of the Assembly were allowed to address either in English or in Urdu. Bengali was altogether excluded as one of the official languages. It was on this occasion that Dhrendranath Dutt, a Congress member from East Bengal raised a note of protest and moved an amendment to the Assembly Rules pleading inclusion of Bengali along with English and Urdu. He pleaded :

*I can assure the House that I do so not in a spirit of narrow provincialismI know Sir, that Bengali is a provincial language, but so far our state is concerned, it is the language of the majority of the state and it stands on a different footing, therefore,.....the state language of the state should be the language which is used by the majority of the people of the state and for that, Sir, I consider that Bengali Language is a **lingua franca** of our state.⁷*

As this suggestion was coming from a Hindu member, the Muslim League leaders doubted his sincerity and suspected that the suggestion was thrown in order to create interprovincial tensions. Opposing the motion, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan retorted :

I had thought that the object of the amendment was an innocent one, in that it was intended to include Bengali among the media of expression of the Assembly, but now the object seems to be to create a rift between the peoples of Pakistan and to take away from the Muslims that unifying link which can be achieved by a common language.⁸

and culminates in plans for economic and industrial development of a particular region and demands for more autonomy in the political sphere. Bernard S. Cohn, "Regions Subjective and Objective : Their Relation to the Study of Modern Indian History and Society," in Robert I. Crane (ed.), **Regions and Regionalism in South Asian Studies**, Mono, No. 5 (Duke University, Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, 1967), p. 21

Regionalism or "subnationalism," being contrary to the spirit of nationalism, leads to disintegration and baffles nation-building efforts

⁶The term 'national language' has been used interchangeably with 'state language' or 'official language' of Pakistan

⁷CAP Debates, Vol. II (February 25, 1948), p. 15

⁸CAP Debates, op. cit. p. 17

In concluding his speech, Liaquat Ali Khan declared in unequivocal terms the resolve of the central government to adopt Urdu as the **lingua franca** of Pakistan. **PDF Compressor Free Version**

Pakistan is a Muslim State and it must have as its lingua franca the language of the Muslim nation⁹ the mover should realize that Pakistan has been created because of the demand of a hundred million Muslims in this subcontinent and language of the hundred million Muslims is Urdu. It is necessary for a nation to have one language and that language can only be Urdu and no other language.¹⁰

This debate in the Constituent Assembly was the starting point of the language movement.¹¹ The students and teachers, newspapers and journals and the secular intelligentsia in East Bengal took the cue from the episode in the Constituent Assembly and organised a mass movement against the categorical announcement of the Prime Minister and other central leaders. On February 26 the students of Dacca University and other institutions called for a hartal

Besides the Prime Minister, Tamizuddin Khan, Khwaza Nazimuddin and Gaznafar Ali Khan opposed the motion. Gaznafar Ali Khan gave a communal twist of the motion tabled by the Congress leaders and asserted that "there would be only one general language in Pakistan, Urdu. Urdu is not a provincial language but the language of Muslim Culture, and in fact, Urdu is Muslim Culture." Khwaja Nazimuddin opposing the motion argued "it is the feeling of most of the people of East Pakistan that only Urdu can be accepted as the national language." Ibid, pp. 17-46

⁹Urdu was generally regarded by the linguists as a **lingua franca**, so indeed the problem did not really lie in adopting it as a **lingua franca**, but as the sole national language of Pakistan. When Liaquat Ali Khan and others referred to the adoption of Urdu as a **lingua franca**, they really meant to make it the sole national or official language of Pakistan

¹⁰CAP Debates, p. 17

¹¹The precursor of this movement was the attempt by a group of progressive student leaders and workers within the Muslim League in Calcutta and Dacca to organise a secular political movement between 3 June and 14 August, 1947. They discussed among themselves the possibilities of giving a new orientation to politics in Pakistan which was to come into existence on 14 August, 1947. The Dacca Group came to be known as the Gana Azadi League with Kamaruddin Ahmed, a veteran Muslim League worker as the Convenor. This was the beginning of the joint progressive and non-communal youth movement in Pakistan. In its manifesto, the Gana Azadi League declared: "The true meaning of Pakistan is economic freedom for the people. It is our duty, therefore, to build this new state of East Pakistan accordingly and to create a revolutionary outlook among the people." The manifesto contained specific demands regarding language and education, i. e., "Bengali must be the medium of instruction" and "Bengali must be the state language of East Pakistan."

A similar attempt was made by a section of students including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Tajuddin Ahmed, Shamsul Huq, Mohammad Toaha and others to organise a secular and progressive student movement in East Bengal which came to be known as the Muslim Chatra League (Muslim Students' League), the word 'Muslim' was retained for the time being as a concession to the unpreparedness of the bulk of the muslim students who had till then been thinking along Muslim League lines. Another conference of political and youth workers held in September, 1947, established the Democratic Youth League on secular lines with the object of building Pakistan a democratic and progressive state. Like the Gana Azadi League, this conference also voiced its demand to make Bengali the state language of East Pakistan. But it was Tamaddun Majlis, a cultural organisation of students and teachers of the Dacca University (established in September, 1947) with Professor Abul Quasem as the Convenor, which first specifically demanded to make Bengali the state language of Pakistan along with Urdu. By far the best account regarding the early phase of the language movement is given in Badruddin Umar, *Purba Banglar Bhasa Andolan O Tatkalin Rajniti* (The Language Movement of East Bengal and the then Politics) Vol. I (Dacca; Mawla Brothers, 1970), pp. 1-59

(strike) and organised a protest demonstration against the decision of the government to impose Urdu as the only national language of Pakistan. They made PDF Compressor Free Version their protest motion tabled by Dutt had represented not only the view of the minority community alone but of all Bengalees. The processionists demanded that Bengali should be declared as a national language along with Urdu. The students argued that Urdu was adopted as a national language although only seven percent of the total population of Pakistan could read and write it. In their view, if Bengali were not adopted as a national language, it would constitute a great injustice to the people of East Bengal who formed fifty-six percent of Pakistan's total population. They also exposed the machinations of the central leadership by pointing out that only Urdu inscriptions were made in coins, stamps, currency notes and money order forms and there were no Bengali inscriptions at all. These arguments greatly appealed to the politically articulate segments of East Pakistan society. Ziring truly reflects the then prevailing mood of the people :

The Bengali claim was in fact so valid that the only conclusion which could be drawn from the policy of the central government was that it hoped to maintain Bengal in a subordinate position.¹²

On 2 March a meeting of a number of cultural and political workers was held at the Fazlul Huq Hall and a State Language Committee of Action was constituted with two representatives from each of the following organisations and bodies : Tamaddun Majlis, Salimullah Muslim Hall, Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall and other Halls, and East Pakistan Muslim Students' League.¹³

The language movement developed violent forms on 11 March, 1948—the day of the first all-East Pakistan general strike—when some fifty students were injured as a result of lathi charges by the police outside East Pakistan Secretariate where students gathered to press their demand that Bengali be given the national status. It was the intention of the students to picket at the gates of the Secretariate, High Court and other offices. They showed displeasure to Khwaja Nazimuddin and his ministry and insisted that the East Bengal members should resign from the Constituent Assembly unless they were all prepared to support the Bengali language movement.

The government circular termed the demonstrations nothing but a plot of the Hindus and enemy agents out to destroy Pakistan by fomenting discontent. In their view the national language movement was inspired by these anti-state elements. However, as a result of continuing agitations Khwaja

¹²Lawrence Ziring, "The Failure of Democracy in Pakistan : East Pakistan and the Central Government, 1947—58" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation Columbia University, 1962), pp. 120—21

¹³Badruddin Umar, *op. cit.*, 60—61

Nazimuddin reluctantly agreed on 15 March to negotiate with the State Language Committee of Action. At the conclusion of their meeting the government announced a seven-point agreement. It reads as follows :

- (1) Persons arrested in connection with the agitation (since 29 February, 1948) were to be released immediately ;
- (2) An enquiry by the Chief Minister into the alleged police excesses and a statement to be issued within a month ;
- (3) In the first week of April, on a day reserved for unofficial business, a special resolution was to be moved recommending that Bengali should be one of the state languages of Pakistan and be given the same status as Urdu in the Pakistan Assembly and in the central government examinations ;
- (4) Unofficial resolutions were to be moved in the East Bengal Assembly in April proposing that English will be replaced by Bengali as the official language and that the medium of instruction will be Bengali in Schools and in the Colleges, the mother tongue of the majority of students will have preference ;
- (5) There was to be no victimization of those who have taken part in the language controversy movement ;
- (6) There was to be withdrawal of the ban on newspapers cited as having taken part in the controversy ;
- (7) Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code was to be withdrawn and public assembly was to be permitted.¹⁴

Khwaja Nazimuddin also stated that he was now content that the demands made in favour of the Bengali language were just and he himself wrote on the agreement that "he was satisfied that the movement was not inspired by enemies of the state."¹⁵

The East Bengal Assembly met soon, but it ignored the language issue completely. Only two days after accepting the seven-point agreement, Nazimuddin made a volte-face. When the students came to know about this they took to the streets to renew demonstrations. Police resorted to lathi charges and opened fire into the air.¹⁶

Nazimuddin, unnerved and fumbling at the renewal of agitation by the students, invited the Governor-General Quaid-e-Azam M. A. Jinnah to visit

¹⁴The Statesman (March 6, 1948)

¹⁵Ibid

¹⁶Nazimuddin even commented that "the continuing disturbances undoubtedly proved that the language controversy is only a smoke screen," The Statesman (March 18, 1948)

East Bengal immediately.¹⁷ When he came to East Pakistan, he tried to clarify the government position, but was not prepared to amend or modify the previous decision. His approach to the state language issue was autocratic. At a large public meeting at Dacca on 21 March, 1948, he started by saying that he would not tolerate the enemies of Pakistan even if they were Muslims, and stated in unequivocal terms : "..... let me make it very clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language."¹⁸ The audience shouted their disapproval with no's more than once. Three days later at the Dacca University convocation he accused the language agitators as "fifth columnists" injecting the "poison of provincialism" with the object of destroying the state. He pointed out that the Bengalees could choose any language they wished for official use in the province, but he reiterated the need to make Urdu the language of communication between the provinces and restated :

*Make no mistake about it. There can be only one state language, if the component parts of the state are to march forward in unison, and that language, in my opinion, can only be Urdu.*¹⁹

The graduates listened to him but interrupted his speech several times with shouts of no's.

The statements of central leaders along with this categorical announcement by the Quaid-e-Azam caused much shock and disappointment in East Pakistan. The Bengali intelligentsia considered these statements to be a direct affront to the Bengali sentiment and their language. Since language is the means of expression of ideas and aspirations of a people, this attitude on the part of the government seemed to be aimed at endangering the very existence of the Bengali culture group within the state. Suspicion and distrust of the people of East Pakistan took the shape of a political movement on the issue of language so early in the wake of independence, and this mainly gave birth to regionalism in East Pakistan.

The working of Muslim mind in Bengal in relation to language and culture has to be understood in its proper perspective. During the earlier phase of the British rule, the Muslim elite of this region showed total apathy, in some cases even antipathy, to English learning and the new system of education.²⁰ The

¹⁷The letter was addressed in such a language that Jinnah could not refuse. Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah : Creator of Pakistan* (London, 1954), pp. 210—11

¹⁸Quaid-i-Azam M. A. Jinnah, *Speeches* (as Governor General of Pakistan, 1947-48) (Karachi : Ferozsons Ltd., 1963), p. 86

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 91

²⁰By far the best analysis is available in A. R. Mallick. *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal, 1757—1856* (Dacca : Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1961) ; and Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi. *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610—1947) : A Brief Historical Analysis* (The Hague : Mouton & Co, Publishers, 1962), pp. 212—33

Hindus, on the other hand, felt no constraint to acquire new knowledge from the West. The more enterprising among them grabbed the opportunity that came their way. Some of them moved closer to the ruling authority and managed to get into most of those professions that could be found open for the "natives" of the region. This in part led to the emergence of the Hindu **bhadrak** class in Bengal.²¹ Mastery of English and a snobbish pride in their new learning made them a class apart. Proximity to British rulers and or the bureaucratic and professional functions they were entrusted with for the smooth running of the new administration gave them more social prestige and power than what their real service could warrant. Within a short time they were able to monopolise almost all the important social positions that were made available to the people of Bengal.²²

In the second half of the nineteenth century, it began to dawn slowly on the Muslim elites of the subcontinent that they had erred in not accepting the new education that paved the way for power and glory in the society. To make amends for their past mistakes they began to make arrangements for English education for the Muslims of British India. Pioneer among them was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who established the Anglo Oriental School for the Muslims at Aligarh. This was later transformed into the famous Aligarh Muslim University.²³ Associated with this effort was the object of rejuvenating the Muslims of the subcontinent. In the context of the whole of India, they were to be made conscious of their separate identity, imparted education and training of a very high order and made aware of the need for going into official and administrative services under the British for acquiring greater social power within the framework of new colonial norms. Sir Syed Ahmad's institute was built up to achieve these ends. Since it became the most important seat of Muslim higher learning, it attracted students from all over India. Aligarh, being in the

²¹'Bhadrak' literally means the 'respectable people,' the 'gentlemen.' The basic and most rigidly maintained distinction between 'bhadrak' and 'abhadra,' between high and low, the respectable and others, was the bhadrak's absention from manual labour and their belief in the inferiority of manual occupations. In the late nineteenth century the term bhadrak was frequently used as a synonym for high caste. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Hindu bhadrak class was a socially privileged and consciously superior group, economically dependent upon landed interests and professional and clerical employment, and keeping its distance from the masses by its acceptance of high caste proscription and its command of education. For a picture of the bhadrak society, see H. Broomfield, **Elite Conflict in a Plural Society : Twentieth Century Bengal** (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1968), pp. 5—41 ; N. S. Bose, **The Indian Awakening and Bengal** (Calcutta, 1960) ; R. C. Majumdar, **Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century** (Calcutta, 1960) ; B. B. Misra, **The Indian Middle class : Their Growth in Modern Times** (London, 1961)

²²Ibid

²³Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817—98) realised the necessity of having a centre of Muslim higher education on the pattern of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. With this object in view, he established a school at Aligarh in 1875. In 1877 Lord Lytton laid the foundation stone of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, which ultimately developed into Aligarh Muslim University in 1921—a residential and teaching University—the centre of Muslim education for the subcontinent. For Sir Syed's life, career and activities, see Shan Muhammad, **Sir Syed Ahmed Khan : A Political Biography** (Meerut : Meenakshi Prakasani, 1969)

heartland of Muslim culture of the subcontinent with Urdu as the dominant language began to shape the setup and outlook of the students in its own image. The new Muslim elites of India found Aligarh their rallying point and also a source of their identity.²⁴ This made them inclined to the Aligarh language, Urdu, which could be viewed as a common language of those elites of the subcontinent. This is true of the late nineteenth century new Muslim elites of Bengal as well. Nawab Abdul Latif, Sir Syed Ameer Ali are eminent examples in this regard. These new Muslim elites had their roots in landed property or were busy in making landed property with aspirations for superior official and administrative jobs and greater social power. In a sense, it was the Muslim counterpart of the endeavour to acquire **bhodialokhood** via the respectability earned in their landed interests and official positions. The Muslim League later came to be dominated by the group of men immersed in Aligarh ideology with a weakness for Urdu as the most acceptable and respectable language for communication. It is not for nothing that many of the prominent Muslim houses of Bengal used to practice Urdu as their mother tongue.²⁵ Some of them were even reluctant to declare themselves as Bengalees. There are pointed references to the 'Muslim' identification of the urban Muslims of Bengal in the Bengali literature of the early twentieth century.²⁶

But there was simultaneously a parallel flow of rural folk culture originating from and encompassing the activities of the larger section of the people living in the vast countryside. The approach of this culture was more towards a synthesis of the world view of the people, no matter whatever be the differences in their communal identities. The **vaisnava** and the **baul** cults, various transformations of the shrines and the dieties are the products of the synthesis emerging from an encounter and admixture of Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist views, all adjusted to the traditional mode of production in a predominantly agrarian rural society. The medium of communication of this folk culture was Bengali, the only language, spoken and understood by the overwhelming majority of the rural population. The Muslims of rural Bengal were not only no exception to it, but also as much responsive, perhaps more, to the appeal of folk culture as anyone else. Their religious identity was to a large extent

²⁴About the important role Aligarh Muslim University played in the development of the Muslim community I. H. Qureshi writes, "It gave it a new hope, a new sense of mission. From the deepest despair it pulled the Muslims out into a new field of fruitful activity. It brought up generation of Muslims who were aware of the new developments in the world and its thought without undermining their fundamental loyalty to Islam. Indeed Aligarh was the cradle of the feeling of nationalism among the Muslims...." I. H. Qureshi, *op. cit.*, p. 242

²⁵Mention may be made of the Nawab family of Dacca, and the Suhrawardy family of Midnapur/Culcutta.

²⁶Anisuzzaman, *Muslim Manas O Bangla Sahitya* (Dacca : Lekhak Sanga Prakashani, 1964) ; *Muslim Banglar Samayikpatra* (Dacca : Bangla Academy, 1969) ; Qazi Abdul Mannan, *Adhunik Bangla Sahitye Muslim Sadhana* (Dacca : Student Ways, 1969) ; Mustafa Nurul Islam, *Muslim Bangla Sahitya* (Dacca, 1969)

transfused by this cultural identity. The vast wealth of folk literature, particularly the **dobhashi punthis**, **Mymensingha geetika**, **murshidi**, **marfati** and **badai songs** were closely related to this.²⁷

During the late nineteenth early twentieth centuries, when a section of Muslim elites of Bengal, settled in urban areas, were painfully busy in working out an all India identity through a linkage of Urdu, most of the Muslims in the countryside could conveniently bypass that issue by way of using their mother tongue as the most trusted vehicle for communication. It was instinctive on their part to feel deeply attached to it, proud of it, as one feels proud of one's motherland and to defend it against an onslaught of vilification from the protagonists of Urdu oriented all India Islamic brotherhood. Since their culture was true to their basis, they did not feel any inferiority complex in declaring their unqualified loyalty to the language of that culture. The vernacular periodicals and journals, published by the Muslims during this period are full of glowing adoration of their mother tongue ; this was not by any means conflicting with the awareness of their Muslim identity, nor with the expression of their demands for rights and privileges as Muslim citizens of the land they lived in.²⁸

A third category among the Bengali Muslims was emerging at and around the time of partition, 1947. They were the liberal and progressive elements, trained in western education and developing a secular outlook. The secular culture of modern Bengal, enriched by the contributions of outstanding men like Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Michael Mahdusudan, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Nazrul Islam, Jasimuddin, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah and others, was to them a part of their glorious heritage, which they thought could not be dispensed with. Bengali language, literature and culture were to them indivisible and their identity, more a product of them than anything else. They were, no doubt, a small percentage of the total population. But when the language issue came to a head, it is these people who came forward to give the leadership for the cause of Bengali, and their call got an immediate response from the vast mass of population immersed in the folk

²⁷Qazi Abdul Mannan, *The Emergence and Development of Dobhasi Literature in Bengal*, 2nd Edition (Dacca, Bangla Academy, 1974) ;

Muhammad Abdul Hai and Syed Ali Ahsan, *Bangla Shahityer Itihas* ; (Chittagong ; Boighor, 1974), pp. 23—39 ; Din Muhammad, *Bangla Shahityer Itihas*, Vol. IV. (Dacca : Student Ways, 1969), pp. 231—536 ; Dinesh Chandra Sen (ed.) *Moimanshingh Geetika*, (Calcutta : Calcutta University, 1923) ; and Badiuz-Zaman (ed.) *Momenshahi Geetika* (Dacca : Bangla Academy 1968)

²⁸For the assertions of the Bengali Muslims that "What else but the Bengali Language could be the mother tongue of the Bengali Muslims?" see the Journals (edited by Bengali Muslims) : the *Naba Nur* (1903) ; *Nur-al Iman* (1900) ; *Islam Pracharak* ; *Basana* (1909) ; *Kohinur* (1916) ; *El-Islam* (1917) ; *Bangiya-Musalman-Sahitya-Patrika* (1918), cited in Mustafa Nurul Islam, *Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as Reflected in the Bengali Press, 1901—1930* (Dacca : Bangla Academy, 1973), pp. 226—29

culture of the region.²⁹ Only the urban elite of the Muslim League type were opposed to the cause.

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There is no doubt that the adoption of a single national language greatly helps the development of a sense of national unity between the peoples of different regions. Particularly in the case of Pakistan, in the absence of a common national language, communication between East and West Pakistan would have become difficult. But the question that may reasonably be asked is, why of all languages, Urdu was given preference over others by the then central leaders. The importance of that language in the context of the socio-political set up of the country should, therefore, be closely examined.

Urdu is a Tartar word which literally means "royal encampment."³⁰ It is so called because it had grown as the *lingua franca* of the soldiers of different ethnic groups during the Muslim Rule in India (1526—1857). The origin of Urdu is traced to the "will of the Muslims of the subcontinent to create a language which conveyed in the native idiom the tradition of their common Persian culture and their Arabic heritage."³¹ Hence Urdu developed out of an intermingling of the words from such languages as Persian, Arabic and Hindi. The accident and syntax of Urdu originated from Hindi, but the vocabulary is generally derived from Persian and Arabic. Urdu is written in Persian script. As the emergence of Urdu had been associated with the Muslim rulers and the upper section of Muslim society, it came to be regarded as the *lingua franca* of the Muslims in the subcontinent. Again, during the era of Muslim Renaissance, the national awakening of the Muslims was closely associated with the protection of Urdu in the course of Hindi-Urdu controversy between the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League.³² Although Urdu was spoken by approximately 3.3 per cent of the total population of Pakistan as the mother tongue, its importance lay far beyond that number. Urdu, more than any other language was popular either as the medium of instruction, or as the second language of the Muslims in West Pakistan and the Muslim minority provinces of undivided India, and therefore, it was generally regarded as the *lingua franca* particularly among the educated classes. Moreover, during

²⁹For details Badruddin Umar, *Purba Banglar Bhasa Andolon O Tatkalin Rajniti* (Language Movement and contemporary politics in East Bengal) (Dacca : Mawla Brothers, Vol. I, 1970, Vol. II 1975)

³⁰S. M. Ikram and P. Spear (eds.), *The Cultural Heritage of Pakistan* (Karachi : Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 119. Also see H. M. Matin, *National Languages of Pakistan* (Karachi : Marsh Publishing House, 1954)

³¹Ikram and Spear, *loc. cit.*

³²The Pakistan movement was closely associated with the Hindi-Urdu controversy. The Bengalees then in identifying themselves with the Pakistan movement advocated the cause of Urdu as the language of the Muslim vis-a-vis Hindi as the language of the Hindus (Even after the creation of Pakistan, the Bengalees were not opposed to Urdu. They simply wanted Bengali, as the language of the majority of the population, to be one of the national languages).

the British period, with the decline of Persian in India, Urdu was regarded as the sole repository of Muslim culture and tradition.

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Economic factors were no less important in contributing to the acceptance of Urdu by the West Pakistanis as the national language of Pakistan. The main centres of economic decision making were located in a few cities like Karachi and Lahore in West Pakistan. These were also the administrative and banking headquarters of the country. A large section of bureaucrats and entrepreneurs of Pakistan had been immigrants from India. Their mother tongue was Urdu. The other big entrepreneurial houses that grew up in these centres were owned and managed by a few families,³³ who were at home in the use of Urdu as a language of communication. These entrepreneurs and bureaucrats, in the absence of a socially significant and politically conscious middle class, could emerge as the principal decision-makers in the country. It was just natural that they would like to keep their control undisturbed over the whole economic and political system. The choice of Urdu did fit in perfectly with this intention on their part. Within the set of Urdu-speaking people they could successfully establish their position of power and supremacy. They would have been doubly sure of their position if Urdu were equally accepted by others in the country, for in that case they could have imposed the burden of a difficult language on the rest of the people who, with this extra burden, would have found it more difficult to get into the magic circle of power. To break their hold on bureaucracy in such a situation would have been extremely difficult. Their economic hold, as a result, would have remained undisturbed. The concentration of administrative and economic headquarters in West Pakistan already helped create the process of economic discrimination and social inequalities and the people there were in favour of maintaining *status quo*. There was thus very little resistance in West Pakistan to the adoption of Urdu as the national language of Pakistan. The people whose mother tongue was not Urdu did not find it so difficult to communicate through this language. Moreover, the people who were economically and socially important had Urdu as their mother tongue, or had been brought up in the tradition of the Urdu language and culture. In West Pakistan the acceptance of Urdu as the national language was, therefore, almost complete.

The situation in the eastern region was, however, fundamentally different. Unlike that in West Pakistan, the people of this region, from the linguistic point of view, were more or less homogeneous.³⁴ We have already noted that

³³The economic wealth was concentrated in the hands of some twenty-two families (of West Pakistan). Sayeed, *op. cit.*, p. 116

³⁴According to the 1961 Census, out of 50,840,235 total population of East Pakistan, there were 373,876 Buddhists (0.7) per cent, 148,903 Christians and 47,415 other people. The mother tongue of majority of them is Bengali. *Population Census of Pakistan, 1961*

except for a small group of urban elites or the aspirants for such social positions as held by them, the rest of the people in the society were bound together by a common love for Bengali language and culture. They were proud of Bengali, which is considered to be one of the richest of the subcontinental languages and literatures³⁵ and were deeply conscious of belonging to a distinct cultural group. As Von Vorys puts it, they were attached to their language and culture "vigorously and aggressively."³⁶ However, the Bengalis were not opposed to Urdu being accepted as one of the national languages. What they wanted was that Bengali and Urdu should be the national languages of Pakistan.

Those who favoured the adoption of both Bengali and Urdu supported their argument by citing examples of multi-lingual states, such as Canada, Switzerland and Belgium. It was further argued by them that their demand in favour of Bengali was legitimate and democratic as it was the language of the majority of Pakistan's population, and that acceptance of Bengali as a national language would also greatly strengthen the bonds of unity between the two regions of Pakistan.

In analyzing the language controversy, the deeper economic aspects should not be overlooked. The adoption of Urdu as the only national language would have imposed additional burden on the Bengalee youth. They were to learn Urdu as well in addition to Bengali, English and Arabic.³⁷ Without thorough grounding in all these languages it would have been very difficult for the Bengalee youth to play an effective role in the public affairs of the nation. The imposition of Urdu alone would have also affected badly the career of the average Bengalee. The people of East Pakistan were under-represented in public services, and with the introduction of Urdu as the only official language, their chances of getting into the central services would have been greatly reduced. Therefore, it would have been contrary to the economic interests of the East Pakistanis to agree to such a policy. Thus the sensitivity of the intelligentsia of East Pakistan to the language issue had not only political but also economic foundations. Hence it was difficult, if not impossible, for the people of East Pakistan to accept Urdu as the sole national language. Thus the language issue assumed the nature of a democratic movement—for cultural identity, secularism and freedom from political domination and economic exploitation.

³⁵Writing about Tagore, Thompson observed: "Tagore.....wrote in a tongue which is among the half-dozen most expressive and beautiful languages in the world." Edward Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. ix

³⁶Karl Von Vorys, *Political Development in Pakistan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 28

³⁷Arabic is the language of the Quran, the Holy Book of Islam. English continued to be the official language and it also had been the medium of instruction in the colleges and universities until recently

The Muslim League leaders, however, were not only opposed to Bengali but were psychologically prepared to adopt Urdu as the sole national language. This was in complete contrast with the wishes of the people. Even though most of the people of East Pakistan were for Bengali, the League leaders from Bengal were not prepared to give it equal status with Urdu. In addition to their own cultural predilections, there were also some shrewd political calculations behind their attitude to Bengali in relation to Urdu.

Unlike Urdu, the development of Bengali language and literature during the past 190 years of British rule (1757—1947) had been closely associated with the Hindus who still constituted almost one-fourth (23.2 per cent according to the 1951 Census) of the population of East Pakistan. Another reason for their opposition was perhaps the awareness that Bengali is the language of neighbouring Indian West Bengal. The presence of Hindu minorities in East Pakistan and the common use of the Bengali language formed important links between East Pakistan and West Bengal. The old guard of the Muslim League had been anxious to sever these links as early as possible in order to prevent the Hindus from making encroachments upon their newly gained independence. The fear of the infiltration of Hindu influence in the Muslim majority East Pakistan had persisted in the League Circles since the days of the first partition of Bengal in 1905 which held the prospect of liberation for Muslim East Bengal from the domination of the Hindus.³⁸ But this partition was short-lived because it was annulled in 1911 under the pressure of Bengali nationalistic agitations, mostly engineered by the Hindu leaders. Thirdly, the Muslim League leaders were reluctant to adopt Bengali as one of the national languages as they apprehended that it might serve to strengthen the ties of Muslim East Bengal with Hindu West Bengal, and might undermine the brotherly relations of the East Pakistanis with the people of West Pakistan. Finally, although Bengali was developed as a language in its present form during the centuries of Muslim rule in Bengal (1204—1757),³⁹ yet its script is derived from Deva Nagri.⁴⁰ It was for its Sanskrit origin that the advocates of Urdu maintained that the adoption of Bengali would not only undermine national unity, but would also be un-Islamic. Hence the attitude of central leaders had mostly been hostile towards Bengali tradition and culture. In their anxiety to maintain the solidarity of the Muslim nation, the League leaders from East Pakistan were even willing to give up

³⁸For details M. K. U. Molla, "The New Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-1911" (unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, London University, 1966)

³⁹Sir Jadunath Sarkar (ed.), *History of Bengal, Vol. II* (Dacca : Dacca University 1950)

During the course of the development of the Bengali language, it had absorbed not less than 3000 Persian and Arabic words. Muhammad Husain, *East Pakistan : A Cultural Survey* (Karachi : P. E. N. Centre, 1955), p. 21

⁴⁰Deva Nagri is the script of Sanskrit, the classical language of Hindu Scriptures. See. R. D. Banerjee, *The Origin of the Bengali Script* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta. 1919)

their own language in order to adopt Urdu as the only national language of Pakistan to unite themselves with the people of West Pakistan.⁴¹ Perhaps it was in view of this that they considered initiating a policy of language reform, according to which, Bengali was to be written either in Arabic or Roman script.⁴² This policy of achieving linguistic unity in Pakistan could also be regarded as a necessary concomitant of the idea of Pakistan as an Islamic state. For these reasons, the central leaders condemned the advocates of the Bengali language as anti-state and anti-Islam and let loose repression on the liberal and democratic elements.

In the flush of enthusiasm immediately after the achievement of Pakistan, no one could visualize that the policy of imposing Urdu as the national language would evoke such widespread frustration and resentment among the Bengalees. In pursuing the strategy of achieving national homogeneity, the League leaders might have been sincere but they were wrong in so far as they did not take into account the wishes of the people. They neither visualized the tragic repercussions of such a policy, nor did they realize the extent to which this policy would ultimately undermine national unity. The government leadership both at the centre and in the province utterly failed in measuring the depth of the feelings among the people of East Pakistan concerning the issue of the national language. They naively tried to propagate through the communications media that the Hindus and the enemy agents were out to destroy Pakistan by fomenting discontent. In their view the language movement was inspired by those who had once been opposed to the idea of the State of Pakistan. The government's opposition to the acceptance of Bengali as a national language was regarded by the people as mistaken, and as tantamount to questioning the patriotism of the champions of the Bengali language. As a result, the sense of frustration deepened among the students, intelligentsia and the politically articulate section of the people of East Pakistan. Consequently, they became more determined to continue the struggle until Bengali secured its rightful place as a national language of Pakistan.

⁴¹One possible reason for this attitude may be that the language of some of the prominent leaders of Bengal, namely, Khwaja Nazimuddin, Khwaja Shahabuddin was Urdu, and they knew little Bengali. Even Bengalees like Fazlur Rahman, a leader of the Bengali group in the First constituent Assembly, used to speak Urdu.

⁴²The intention of the central government was not only confined to impose Urdu as the state language of Pakistan. It was afoot from the very beginning to resist the natural growth of Bengali language and culture. In 1948 came the declaration of Jinnah and other central leaders advocating Urdu as the only national language on grounds of Islam and national unity. As a means to suppress Bengali language and literature the central government made serious efforts to introduce Arabic script for Bengali in 1949, and the pioneer of this move was Central Education Minister Fazlur Rahman, a representative of East Bengal.

In 1949 the Government constituted an East Pakistan Language Reconstruction Committee for devising ways and means for the reformation of the Bengali language and script. There was serious opposition to this scheme. After Bengali was recognized as one of the state languages the scheme for the introduction of the Arabic script was abandoned at least in public. The Report of the Committee was not published until 1960. For detailed account of the attempt of the Government to introduce Arabic script for Bengali, reference may be made to Badruddin Umar, *op. cit* Vol. I. pp. 256-86

The national leaders, on the other hand, were tenacious in ignoring the claim of Bengali and persisted in the policy of maintaining Urdu as the only official language. The object behind this imposition of Urdu was interpreted in East Pakistan as an attempt by the Central Government and West Pakistan to ensure political domination over the Bengalees whose culture and language not only made them distinct from others but were also treated potentially dangerous to the perpetuation of the communal character of Pakistan. This was also regarded as an attempt by the government to undermine and eventually to destroy the Bengali language and culture, and dilute the cultural distinctiveness of the Bengalees who were a nation by themselves. The attempts of the government to 'Islamise' Bengali and to introduce Arabic or Latin script were also possibly motivated by the same objective⁴³. Hence, as Sexton observes; "more than cultural pride was involved in the language dilemma⁴⁴. To the East Pakistanis according to Maron, "it meant that a decision of vital national interest was to be imposed on the majority of the people against their will, at the behest of a minority in West Pakistan."⁴⁵ The Bengalees, proud of their language and cultural heritage, reacted sharply in defending their rights of language. The language movement was, thus, a struggle against political domination, cultural aggression and communal approach to politics. The resulting agitation culminated in the police firing on the students at Dacca on 21 February, 1952.

The tragic incident of 21 February was occasioned by Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin's statement in a public meeting in Dacca in the last week of January that Urdu must become the *lingua franca* of the nation. Though after the departure of Jinnah the language agitation gradually subsided, the issue was too sensitive to go unnoticed and by 3 February the student community and intelligentsia exploded in anger. The All-Party State Language Committee of Action formed on 31 January had ordered for a general hartal or strike throughout East Bengal and notified that it would organise a mammoth demonstration for adoption of Bengali as a national language on 21 February from the Dacca University campus. It was thought opportune to stage demonstration on that date as it coincided with the meeting of East Bengal Legislative Assembly.

The Muslim League government, faced with a serious challenge, responded to it in a negative way. First, it banned *The Pakistan Observer*—one of the

⁴³The Bureau of National Reconstruction, the Pakistan Council, the Iqbal Academy, the Writers' Guild and similar organisations were created for the encouragement of obscuration of values and corruption of intellectuals

⁴⁴Roy Keith Sexton, "Pakistan : the Divided States : A study in National Unity" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1956), p. 61. The assumption of Sexton is indirectly endorsed by Ziring who writes, "... the only conclusion which could be drawn from the policy of the central government was that it hoped to maintain Bengal in a subordinate position." Lawrence Ziring, *op. cit.*, pp. 120—21

⁴⁵Stanley Maron, "The Problem of East Pakistan," *Pacific Affairs* (June 1955), p. 133

two English dailies—and a supporter of Bengali, for its criticism of the government leaders in an editorial entitled “Crypto-Fascism”. Secondly, the government promulgated section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code on the night of 20 February for one month which meant prohibition of processions, demonstrations, meetings and assembly of more than four persons in any public place within the Dacca municipal area. The strategy of the government hardened the attitude of the students who were now reinforced in their decision to go ahead with their programme and violate Section 144.

The day 21 February, 1952 will be remembered as a sacred day in Bangladesh for a long time to come. One who has not seen the morning of 21 February can not possibly imagine how the day began. It gave the impression of a deserted city. There was no movement of any traffic or people going to work. The students of different institutions in Dacca began to assemble at the Dacca University campus after 8 a.m. When the campus was about to over-flow, it was decided to send students out in groups of ten. The Police arrested each group coming out of the University campus and at a point the rush was such that police were unable to cope with the situation. It is at that point that the police tried to disperse the students by throwing tear gas shells. The students ran helter-skelter towards the Medical College Hospital where police faced with a similar situation opened fire at the students. Several lives were sacrificed on that day as a result of police fire.

Thus the language movement, bathed in the blood of the martyrs, came of age and became a full-blown issue. The event generated intense emotion and when the news of the killing of students and others spread throughout the country the whole of East Bengal exploded in anger. This aroused Bengali nationalistic sentiments on the basis of the demands for adoption of Bengali as a national language and for regional autonomy. Thus the 21 February can be regarded as the beginning of a total revolution in Pakistani politics. Even after the acceptance of Bangali as a national language, the memories of February tragedy continued to provide a residuum of resentment which ultimately turned the language movement into a cultural revolution shaping Bengali nationalism.

The tragedy of twenty-first February is a landmark in the history of Bangladesh.⁴⁶ Since then it has been observed in East Pakistan and subsequently

⁴⁶To commemorate the language martyrs, the students erected overnight with spade, brick and mud a monument in the Dacca Medical College compound where the firing took place. Known as the ‘Shahid Memorial’ it was inaugurated on February 23 by the parents of one of the martyrs. Subsequently, Shahid Memorials of this type had been built all over East Pakistan. All these Memorials were destroyed by the Pakistani Army following the night of 25 March, 1971 during the liberation struggle. After the liberation all these Shahid Memorials have been reconstructed and students and people of every locality of Bangladesh observe the day with due solemnity.

in Bangladesh as a day of mourning, dedication and determination. The observance of the Twenty-first February as a **Shahid** (martyr) day reminds the Bengalees every year afresh of those "who gave 'their todays' for 'our tomorrows'."⁴⁷ Every year hundreds and thousands of people walk bare-footed in silent procession from the **Shahid** Memorial to the burial ground for offering prayers. Memorial meetings and symposia are held regularly. Newspapers and magazines bring out special issues. Hundreds of commemorative volumes are published.

Within twenty-four hours of the firing, Chief Minister Nurul Amin moved a special motion in the Provincial Assembly recommending Bengali as one of the National languages⁴⁸. The motion was unanimously adopted. But it was too late. Had it been accepted in 1948, the tragedy could have been averted. Had the East Pakistani leaders in the province and the central government taken an unanimous stand in favour of Bengali, the Muslim league regime would have been much more reluctant to impose Urdu on the East Pakistanis and a compromise solution could have been found at the first sign of a popular movement for Bengali language.

After the February tragedy, the movement sharply gained momentum and became a dominant issue. All political parties, cultural organisations⁴⁹ and almost all newspapers⁵⁰ came out strongly in support of the movement. At this stage, the language controversy was entwined with other constitutional issues, such as the quantum of representation in the Federal Assembly, and provincial autonomy, as well as in the issues of inadequate representation of the Bengalees in the central superior services, and the unequal economic development of the two regions of Pakistan. Thus, as Anisuzzaman observes, "a conflict on the cultural plane assumed the nature of a democratic movement or struggle for a secular order⁵¹". The occasion offered the Bengalees the first

47A. Abdullah, "The Twenty-First February," **The Dacca Times** (February 21, 1966)

48The motion reads as follows : "This Assembly recommends to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan that Bengali be one of the State Languages of Pakistan." East Bengal Legislative Assembly, **Official Report**, Vol. VII (February 22, 1952), p. 89

49The political organs in East Pakistan, such as the Provincial Muslim League Council, the Muslim League Parliamentary Party, the East Pakistan Legislature, the Pakistan National Congress, East Pakistan Jama'at-i-Islam ; and associations, such as the Executive Council of the Dacca University, the Dacca High Court Bar Association and the Press of East Pakistan supported the claim of Bengali as a state language of Pakistan. Azad (February 22, April 3, 1952)

50**Morning News** was the only Newspaper which supported the government on the language issue. In an editorial of December 17, 1947, the paper commented that Bengali could never be accepted as a state language as it was identified with Hindu culture and as such it could not be the vehicle of cultural aspiration of the Muslims. It was the same newspaper (founded by people connected with the Khwaja family of Dacca) which still withheld the support to the cause of Bengali language in 1952 when it had to face an attack by the students on its premises. The printing press and the office were burnt down. They were again burnt down in February, 1969

51Anisuzzaman, "Conflicts on the cultural plan," in Saral K. Chatterji (ed.), **Profile of Bangladesh : Depth Study of a Social Revolution** (Madras : Christian Literature Society, 1972), p. 13

opportunity of throwing themselves into a massive political agitation. In describing the stakes of the Bengalees in the language controversy, Ziring observes :

“The language movement affected the Bengalis as a people ; a latent cultural nationalism was fused to a political cause⁵².”

However, the language controversy remained unresolved for another two years ; during this period inter-regional feelings were greatly embittered. The situation became worse when, two months after the tragic events, Nur Ahmed, a Muslim League member from East Pakistan moved a resolution in the Constituent Assembly demanding that both Bengali and Urdu be recognized as the national languages of Pakistan⁵³. Thereupon, Pirzada Abdus Sattar, the Law Minister, immediately moved an amendment motion shelving the issue as there was “no immediate necessity of taking a decision thereon⁵⁴.”

In the course of the debate, Nur Ahmed’s motion was supported only by Dhirendranath Dutta and Professor Raj Kumar Chakraverty from East Pakistan. No other member from East Pakistan raised his voice.⁵⁵ Taking note of the deliberate silence maintained by the Bengalees, Dutt openly accused the government of sealing their mouths. In championing the cause of Bengali language, Dutt strongly appealed to the House:

*The demand that Bengali should be one of the state languages of Pakistan, is in the interest of Pakistan. For the interest of Pakistan, and for the integrity of Pakistan, the Eastern Wing and the Western Wing should be connected and they can be connected if my friends from Western Pakistan start to learn Bengali and we learn Urdu.*⁵⁶

Dutt further observed that postponing a decision at this stage was only motivated by a desire to shelve the issue forever. Professor Chakraverty making a fervant appeal observed :

*If the House adopts this motion, it will lead to a better understanding among all sections of the people of Pakistan, especially its two wings. The stage has now come, Sir, when the matter brooks no delay and we should come to a decision.*⁵⁷

The motion was, however, supported by some West Pakistani members—Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan (Punjab), Sardar Asadullah Jan Khan (NWFP),

⁵²Ziring, *op. cit.*, p. 139

⁵³CAP Debates, Vol. XI (April 10, 1952), p. 22

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 23

⁵⁵All the members of the Muslim League Parliamentary Party from East Pakistan who were already committed to support the demand for Bengali (vide resolutions of the East Pakistan Assembly and the Provincial Muslim League) failed to respond favourably to Nur Ahmed’s resolution.

⁵⁶CAP Debates, Vol. XI (April 10, 1952), p. 38

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 23

and Seth Sukhdev (Sind). Shaukat Hayat Khan in course of pleading for Bengali a national status, struck a note of warning, and observed :

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*If we from Pakistan are going to oppose that urge of the people of East Pakistan, we will be responsible for starting trouble in East Pakistan, which may damage the very fabric of my country and my nation.*⁵⁸

The motion moved by Nur Ahmed was turned down.

The Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin presented the 'Final' Report of the Basic Principles Committee (BPC)⁵⁹ before the Constituent Assembly in December, 1952. The Report did not contain any reference to the question of the state language.⁶⁰ This only heightened the sense of frustration of the East Pakistanis who had been agitating all the time for a categorical decision in favour of the Bengali language. Thus the wishes of the people were flouted again. The resultant policy of procrastination tended to generate feelings of ill-will between the people of the two regions. These events were ultimately to shape the course of Pakistani politics.

The provincial elections in East Pakistan, held in March, 1954, provided an opportunity to the people to express themselves on the fundamental national issues including that of the language. Here was a clear chance for the people to test once and for all by ballot the representative character of the Muslim League in East Pakistan. All the forces of opposition joined hands to form a grand alliance known as the United Front on the basis of a Twenty-one Point election manifesto to "turn the rascals out"⁶¹. The manifesto committed the Front among other things, to—

- (a) *make Bengali one of the State Languages of Pakistan (point 1) ;*
- (b) *erect a monument to commemorate the memory of those martyrs who gave their lives for the Bengali language on February 21, 1952, and to compensate the bereaved families (point 17) ;*
- (c) *declare Twenty-first of February as 'Shahid Day' and as a public holiday (point 18) ;*
- (d) *.....secure full and complete autonomy and bring all subjects under the jurisdiction of East Bengal, leaving only Defence, Foreign Affairs and Currency under the jurisdiction of the Centre. Even in the matter of defence, arrangements shall be such as to have the Headquarters of the Army in West Pakis-*

⁵⁸CAP Debates, Vol. XI (April 10, 1952), p. 25

⁵⁹The BPC was appointed by the Constituent Assembly in March, 1949 to recommend a framework of the future constitution of Pakistan.

⁶⁰The Interim Report of the BPC presented by Liaquat Ali Khan in 1950 flatly recommended Urdu as the only state or national language of Pakistan. It raised a storm of protest in East Pakistan and finally the report was shelved

⁶¹R. L. Park and R. S. Wheeler, "East Bengal Under Governor's Rule," *Far Eastern Survey* (September, 1954), p. 129

tan and to establish Ordnance Factories in East Bengal with a view to make East Bengal self-sufficient in the matter of defence,⁶²

in accordance with the Historic Lahore Resolution.⁶³

In the election, the United Front won a landslide victory. The ruling Muslim League party was completely routed ; it was able to secure only nine seats out of 309.⁶⁴

After the election, the Constituent Assembly was reconvened in April, 1954. This time the Muslim League members from East Pakistan were awakened to realize the gravity of the situation. It was no longer possible for them to defer a positive action concerning the language issue. This was achieved in two stages. First, the members of the Muslim League decided at a Parliamentary Party meeting that both Urdu and Bengali should be the national languages of Pakistan, and English should continue as the official language for another twenty years⁶⁵. Then, on the basis of the above decision, the Constituent Assembly adopted on 9 May, 1954, the following formula on the language question which was incorporated in the BPC Report :

The official languages of Pakistan Republic should be Urdu and Bengali and such other languages as might be declared to be such by the Head of the State on the recommendation of the Provincial Legislatures concerned.

Members of the Parliament should have the right to speak in Urdu and Bengali in addition to English.⁶⁶

It may not be out of place to point out here that the language formula accepted by the Constituent Assembly was directed not only to satisfy Bengali re-

⁶²Ibid. For the full text of the 'Twenty-one Point' programme also see **Dawn** (April 4, 1954)

⁶³The Historic Lahore Resolution, adopted in 1940, declared :

".... that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'Independent States' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign."

Liaquat Ali Khan, **Resolutions of the All-India Muslims League** (from December, 1938 to March, 1940) (Delhi, n. d.), pp. 47—49. Also quoted in Choudhury Khaliquzzaman, **Pathway to Pakistan** (Lahore : Longmans, 1961) p. 236

⁶⁴Immediately after the provincial election of 1954 in East Pakistan, Fazlul Huq, the leader of the United Front and the new Chief Minister in a bid to achieve for East Pakistan freedom from domination and exploitation by Karachi, demanded complete regional autonomy. This led **The New York Times** correspondent in Karachi to write in a despatch : "East Pakistan wished to become an independent state." Dismissing this despatch as untrue, Fazlul Huq reiterated his position and said : "East Pakistan should be an autonomous unit of Pakistan. This is our ideal, and we will fight for it." The Pakistan Government regarded it as a 'treason', dismissed the popular ministry and imposed central rule with Major-General Iskander Mirza as the Governor of East Pakistan. **The New York Times** (May 23, 1954) ; **Morning News** (May 26, 27, 31 and June 1, 1954) ; Park & Wheeler, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵**Morning News** (April 21, 1954)

⁶⁶**CAP Debates**, Vol. XVI (May 7, 1954), p. 72

gionalism, but was also aimed at pacifying the Sindhis and the Pathans.⁶⁷ Khan Abdyl Qayyum Khan, a Muslim League stalwart of the North-West Frontier Province, in expressing the satisfaction of the Pushto-speaking people, said that this resolution "fulfils the dream of the eight million Pushto-speaking people in Pakistan."⁶⁸

The Constituent Assembly finally adopted the draft bill of the constitution on 21 September, and adjourned till 27 October, 1954. It was announced by the Prime Minister that the new constitution would become effective from January 1, 1955 and Pakistan would be declared a Republic.⁶⁹ However, the Constituent Assembly was itself dissolved by the Governor-General on 24 October, 1954 by a "Proclamation of Emergency"⁷⁰. A new Constituent Assembly was set up in June, 1955. Thirty-nine out of forty newly elected members from East Pakistan were committed to support the 'Twenty-one Point' programme. With the reopening of the language question along with other constitutional issues, the East Pakistani members had their opportunity to press the demand for adopting Bengali as a national language. Maulana

⁶⁷The language movement in East Pakistan had provided an impetus to the forces of regionalism among the Pathans and the Sindhis. Following the example of the Bengalees, the Pathans and Sindhis demanded that Pushto and Sindhi, their respective mother tongues, should also be recognized as the national languages. They also started focusing attention on demands for the adequate representation in the civil services and urge for economic development of their neglected regions.

⁶⁸CAP Debates, Vol. XVI (May 7, 1954), p. 91

⁶⁹Report of the BPC (as adopted by the CAP on the 21st September, 1954) (Karachi Government of Pakistan, 1954).

⁷⁰It is significant that the Constituent Assembly was dissolved barely seventy-two hours before it was to reconvene to approve the final draft of the constitution bill. During twenty-four years of united Pakistan, the power groups that dominated the social, economic and political scene consisted of the Army, bureaucracy, industrial magnates and semi-feudal landlords. Most of these people again came from more or less the same social background. The very nature of their social and economic behaviour made them anti-democratic. Their strength and authority were likely to be very much reduced in a system of true democracy where people's representatives elected on the basis of adult franchise were expected to wield real power. It was, therefore, very likely that the power groups having greater chance to thrive in a non-democratic system would try to thwart any move towards the establishment of a representative government. It is considered by many that the (i) dismissal of Khawaja Nazimuddin as the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1953 when he commanded absolute confidence of the Muslim League Parliamentary Party; (ii) the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in 1954 when it was ready with the draft bill of a constitution; and later (iii) the imposition of Martial law in 1958 when the country was on the threshold of a general election under the 1956 constitution; and finally (iv) Pakistan Army's brutal assault on the unarmed civilian population of East Pakistan on the night of 25 March, 1971 without allowing the National Assembly, elected in the first ever general election held in Pakistan in twenty-four years, to frame a constitution for the country, were engineered by these power groups who were not prepared to see their grip on the economic and political structure of the country loosened by the 'irresponsible' behaviour of the people in a system of free choice and democracy. That the Pakistan Army had been involved in the internal politics of the country since 1953, if not earlier, was evident from General Ayub Khan's own admission that it was he who as early as 1954 conceived of the one-unit scheme for West Pakistan and a strong centre. For details, see (1) Safar A. Akanda, "East Pakistan and Politics of Regionalism." (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Denver, Graduate School of International Studies, 1970), pp. 236—282; (2) Mohammad Ayub Khan, **Friends Not Masters : A political Autobiography** (New York : Oxford University Press, 1967); (3) Mohammed Ahmed, **My Chief** (Lahore : Longmans, Green & Co., 1960); Major-General Fazal Maqeen Khan, **Pakistan's Crisis in Leadership** (Karachi : National Book Foundation, 1973).

Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish delivered the first speech in Bengali in the Constituent Assembly. Later on, it was confirmed by the ruling given by the Speaker to the effect that Urdu, Bengali and English are the official languages of Pakistan.

The Constitution was inaugurated in March, 1956. The language formula referred to above adopted by the First Constituent Assembly (1947-54) in May, 1954 was substantially incorporated into the constitution. This represented the final victory of the movement for the Bengali language. Article 214 of the constitution stipulated: "The State Languages of Pakistan shall be Urdu and Bengali ... and ... English shall continue to be used for official purposes for the period of twenty years....."⁷¹.

On October 7, 1958, the 1956 constitution was abrogated (the elections after being shifted from 1957 to 1958 were finally scheduled for February, 1959) and Martial Law was promulgated. General Mohammad Ayub Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the Chief Martial Law Administrator, later assumed the Presidency by forcing President Iskandar Mirza to go into exile. At this stage some people in West Pakistan started talking about revising the language formula in order to adopt Urdu as the only state language. However, President Ayub Khan made it quite clear by declaring that the issue over the national language was settled once and for all and it would not be reopened⁷². Article 215 of the Constitution promulgated by President Ayub Khan in 1962 provided that "the national languages of Pakistan are Bengali and Urdu".⁷³

With this the controversy over the national language was finally resolved. Bengali and Urdu were recognized as the national languages of Pakistan. However, in examining the course of events retrospectively, it becomes quite evident that the demand for Bengali language was not conceded with goodwill and grace. By the time the government conceded, much inter-regional tensions were already generated which only tended to undermine the sense of national unity.

Many people think that intelligent handling of the situation and rational course of policy from the very beginning could have very well averted the tragedy of February, 1952, and the chain of events that followed. As far as the question of responsibility for the events is concerned, it becomes quite clear from the above discussion that the blame cannot squarely be placed either on the shoulders of the central leadership or on the people of West Pakistan. In fact, the East Pakistani members in the Constituent Assembly and the Central

⁷¹The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1956 (Karachi: Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Law, 1965), p. 82

⁷²The Pakistan Observer (October 24, 1958)

⁷³The Constitution of the Republic of Pakistan 1962 (Washington D. C.: Embassy of Pakistan, n. d.), p. 101

Government together with the members of the East Pakistan Legislature were responsible for having failed to take a correct position right from the outset. They **PDF Compressor The Korbion** completely misrepresented the genuine wishes and aspirations of the people they were supposed to represent at the Centre as well as in West Pakistan. At first, they took little notice of the political agitations in connections with the language movement brushing aside the leaders of the agitation as a bunch of mischief mongers. They naively persisted in refusing to recommend the adoption of Bengali as one of the national languages. By the time they recommended its adoption, regionalism or Bengali 'sub-nationalism' in East Pakistan had already taken its root. This analysis of the political dynamics amply brings out the widening gap between the leaders and the people.

The language movement was responsible for bringing about a qualitative change in the relationship between the two regions. This led to

- (a) increased tension between the two regions, fanning the fires of regionalism ;
- (b) the generation of more or less a permanent reservoir of mistrust in the minds of the people—making them susceptible to the appeals of Bengali nationalism.

In spite of the constitutional guarantees, the people of East Pakistan remained suspicious about the intentions of the central government towards their language and culture. It may be pointed out that there was a growing concern during the later stage of the Ayub regime (1958-69) over the speeches of some East Pakistani members of the Presidential Cabinet in relation to Bengali language, literature and culture. Some people feared that a group of men from East Pakistan were chosen by the central government to promote a policy of expurgating the Bengali language and literature of its alien content which was supposed to lie in what was inherited from the fusion of Hindu and Muslim Cultures. A conscious policy of "Islamization of Bengali" was pursued. Ayub Khan called upon the people and intelligentsia to develop a common language by drawing from the vocabulary of all the languages of Pakistan and reinforcing the same with Arabic and Persian words. The people opposed it and the idea was dropped. However, the net result was his contribution to the Urdu Language of Radio Pakistan of two Bengali words : Purba (East) and Paschim (West). Ayub also proposed for the adoption of Roman script for both Urdu and Bengali as in his opinion, this was scientific and conducive to national unity. But the move was opposed in both East and West Pakistan by the students as well as intellectuals.⁷⁴ In general, the Ayub regime

⁷⁴Another example of Bengali sensitivity on the language issue was the occasion when Justice Hamoodur Rahman, an East Pakistani member of the Supreme Court of Pakistan (now Chief Justice) suggested that Bengali should be written in Arabic script. Fifty-four advocates of the Dacca Bar quickly reacted against this tendentious suggestion and issued a joint

had been authoritarian, and the regimentation of culture on the lines of 'kultur Kampf' and totalitarian regime was afoot.

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The war between India and Pakistan in 1965 offered the military regime with an opportunity of going ahead with their mission of regimentation of culture. Khwaja Shahabuddin, the Central Minister of Information and Broadcasting, who considered Tagore songs "against Pakistan's cultural values", announced in the National Assembly on 22 June, 1967, that Radio Pakistan would henceforth cease broadcasting Tagore songs⁷⁵. Similarly, another Bengali Minister, Khan Abdus Sabur Khan, the leader of the Government party in the National Assembly (1964-69), in the course of a statement vehemently objected to the observance of **Pahela Baishakh** (Bengali New Year's Day) by the Bengali Muslims and asserted that **Pahela Baishakh** was a festival of the minorities⁷⁶. The celebrations of the Bengali new year's day and the spring festival were not important in themselves, but these were significant since they stressed the secular view of culture. Hence the attitude of the government was considered to be a new assault on Bengali language and culture and to be motivated by the intention to preserve the Islamic values and directed to immunize Bengali language and culture from every trait of Hinduism.

However, such a policy evoked a sense of consternation and indignation among the intellectual circles in East Pakistan during 1967-69. Even some of the prominent Urdu writers and poets of East Pakistan criticised the government action with regard to Tagore songs. They emphatically pointed out that "without Tagore the continuance of the Bengali culture and literary heritage is reduced to a hazy shadow⁷⁷. The members of the Sangskriti Sangsad, a leading cultural organization of Dacca University organized a mass demonstration protesting against the government decision to ban Tagore songs on Radio and Television, and called upon the people to resist the 'conspiracy' against Bengali literature and culture⁷⁸. The opposition members of the East Pakistan Legislature also criticised the Central Ministers' statements on the observance of the Bengali new years' day by the Bengali Muslims and the decision of the government banning broadcast of Tagore songs⁷⁹. At a meeting of the Bangla

statement in the press warning that the issue of language had created the 1952 movement, and any more controversy over a sensitive issue like this would only "prove to be more divisive than unifying." **The Pakistan Observer** (August 25, 1967)

⁷⁵**The Pakistan Observer** (June 23, 1967)

⁷⁶*Ibid* (June 30, 1967)

⁷⁷*Ibid*.

⁷⁸*Ibid*. (June 20, 1967)

⁷⁹*Ibid*. (July 1, 1967)

In the 1965 elections, out of 155 seats in the East Pakistan Legislature, all but sixty-six seats were captured by the opposition and independent candidates

Academy, the educationists including Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah and students resented the government's decision, and demanded immediate withdrawal of the order. They accused the government of unnecessarily giving way to religious fanaticism in banning Tagore songs and considered it an insult to East Pakistan⁸⁰. It was alleged in a meeting of the cross-section of the citizens of Dacca jointly convened by Dr. Muhammad Qadrat-e-Khuda, Dr. Qazi Motahar Hussain, Poet Jasimuddin and Begum Sufia Kamal that the assault on the culture of the province "is in the ultimate analysis an attack on the economic and political rights of the people." They were unanimous in their opinion that the attack on Bengali literature and culture in the name of religion and national integration had ulterior motives, and they warned that such a move would only create a rift between the peoples of the two regions and greatly damage national solidarity⁸¹.

In conclusion, the language movement had an important bearing on the subsequent political developments of United Pakistan. It paved the way to raising the constitutional demand for provincial autonomy which ultimately led to the war of liberation. It was on the language issue and the demand for provincial autonomy that immediately after the birth of Pakistan the Muslim League faced the first serious challenge to its leadership. As a result the Muslim League was split up, and the new secular parties, such as the Awami League, the Ganatantri Dal and the Youth League were organised in East Pakistan. These two issues had mainly fashioned the thinking of all opposition political elements in East Pakistan. Again, it was through the language controversy and the demand for complete regional autonomy that there had developed a kind of patriotism that was regional or provincial in substance. It may be added that although Bengali had been accorded the status of a national language, the continued policy of disparaging the Bengali heritage and culture on the part of the people at the helm of affairs in Pakistan provided a permanent reservoir of mistrust and gave impetus to the regional movement in East Pakistan during 1969-1971⁸². In the end this took the shape of Bengali nationalism which inspired the Bengalees to fight against heavy odds the grim battle of survival and liberation.

The unique experiment of building up a state on the basis of religion with two regions, more than thousand miles apart, each having its own distinct national culture, proved futile. A sense of new nationalism on the basis of multiple local feelings could not be evolved. The social engineers of Pakistan failed

⁸⁰There was not a day without a meeting of some literary or cultural organizations in which resolutions were not passed condemning the government action. For instance, see *Ibid* (June 29 to July 13, 1967)

⁸¹*Ibid* (July 13, 1967)

to the same set of institutions, to the same history of the past, and also a sense of commitment to the goals and aspirations common to all in both the regions of Pakistan. Mill suggested that :

A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a nationality, if they are united and have common sympathies, which do not exist between them and any others.....which make them cooperate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government and desire that it should be government by themselves, or a portion of themselves, exclusively,.....⁸³

None of these conditions was fulfilled in the peculiar experiment called Pakistan between 1947 and 1971. It is true that a nation need not have an **a priori** existence. It may be built up by sincere, "conscious and deliberate efforts"⁸⁴ A feeling of oneness may be woven by conscious and careful work of social decision makers. But in case of Pakistan, the efforts were insincere, the sentiments whipped up were false and the real intentions were of domination by the power group of one region over the entire territory including the region other than their own. The language issue was the first pointer to expose the hypocrisy and colonial orientation of the power group in Pakistan.

The people of the eastern region were not slow to suspect the real intentions of the ruling elite based in West Pakistan. From 1948 till 1971 they had to remain on guard and fight for every bit of their rights and existence. While political debates were going on in the constituent/National Assemblies and in the countryside regarding the nature of the constitution to be framed, the ruling elite was busy tightening its hold on the political and administrative machinery and the entire economy of Pakistan. The disparity in every sphere of social and economic life had already become glaring. The administration was controlled by the West Pakistani civil servants. The military establishment was not national but regional in its roots.⁸⁵ The 1956 and 1962 cons-

⁸²The regional movement in East Pakistan generated so much heat that the common theme of the writings in the walls and slogans were "Choi Dofa Egara Dafa Maante Hobe, Naile Bangla Shadhin Hobe" (Six-point programme of the Awami League and the Eleven point programme of the students will have to be accepted, otherwise Bengal/Bangladesh will be independent).

⁸³John Stuart Mill, **Considerations on Representative Government** (London : Parker, Son, and Bown, 1961), p. 287.

⁸⁴Dentsch has distinguished the types as 'national growth,' 'nation-building' and 'national development.' For a clear exposition of these terms, see Karl W. Dentsch, "Some Problems in Nation-Building," in Karl W. Dentsch and William J. Falg (eds.), **Nation-Building** (New York : Atherton Press, 1966), pp. 2-4

History has witnessed all the three processes in the making of nations. While the British and the French nationalities are examples of 'national growth,' Germany and Italy, may be considered to be evidence of 'nation-building. Japan may be regarded as an example of 'national development.'

⁸⁵For a complete picture of the ratio of the East and West Pakistan in the Civil services and the defence forces and its impact on the political dynamics of Pakistan, see Safar A. Akanda, *op. cit.* pp. 103-235

regions of Pakistan must be removed, yet in 1959-60 the per capita income in the West was 32 percent higher than in the East. By 1969-70, the per capita income in West Pakistan was 61 percent higher than in East Pakistan⁸⁶. Thus in ten years of President Ayub Khan's "decade of progress" the income gap had doubled in percentage terms, but it had widened even more in absolute terms. The struggle of East Pakistan, therefore, was in essence a struggle to escape the status of colonialism. It was in such a situation that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman enunciated his 'Six-Point' charter of Survival Programme' for East Pakistan and proposed a federal parliamentary form of government in which all subjects (with control over taxation and foreign exchange earnings) except defence, foreign affairs and currency "shall vest in the federating states".⁸⁷ Sheikh Mujib and the Awami Leaguers termed the Six-Point Programme as "the only programme" which would "be able to maintain the oneness and solidarity of the country", and the last possible solution to preserve the integrity of Pakistan,⁸⁸ but the military junta, the West Pakistani press, political leaders and a few political scientists regarded it as "a veiled scheme of secession" in the garb of regional autonomy for East Pakistan.⁸⁹ Finally, after the first ever general election in Pakistan in 1970 which the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman fought on the issue of six-point constitutional formula, and won 167 out of 169 National Assembly seats in East Pakistan in the House of 313—an absolute majority in the Assembly—the crisis reached the boiling point. However, the army dominated power group of West Pakistan, instead of allowing the National Assembly, scheduled to meet on 3 March, 1971 and complete the sacred duty of constitution-making within 120 days, unleashed a reign of terror and genocide campaign against the Bengali population on the night of 25-26 March, 1971 in the name of suppressing demands of secession.⁹⁰ It is with the beginning of the 'pogrom' and 'genocide' by the Pakistani rulers in East Pakistan that the formation of present day Bengali nationalism was complete. The people of East Pakistan had already reached a point of no return. They had now only two options: either to take up arms and fight for their survival as a nation or to be liquidated and subjugated and revert to a situation worst than that existed prior to 26

⁸⁶Reports of the Advisory Panels for the Fourth Five Year Plan (1970—75) Vol. I (Islamabad ; Government of Pakistan Planning Commission, July 1970), p. 22

⁸⁷Morning News (February 12, 1966)

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, **Six-Point Formula : Our Right to Live** (Dacca, March 23, 1966), pp. 2—13

⁸⁸Ibid. (February 18, 1966) ; **The Dacca Times** (March 25, 1966)

⁸⁹See President Ayub's speeches, **The Pakistan Observer** (March 16—21, 1966), **The Pakistan Times**, Editorial (August 14, 1966) ; G. W. Choudhury, **The Last Days of United Pakistan** (London : C. Hurst & Company, 1974), pp. 4 and 136

⁹⁰**The Sunday Times** (June 13, 20, 1971). Anthony Mascarenhas, **The Rape of Bangladesh**. (Delhi : Vikas Publications, 1971)

March, 1971.⁹¹ They, therefore, decided to take up arms under the leadership of the Awami League and declared independence. Thus begun the national resistance movement for the liberation of Bangladesh. The liberation of the People's Republic of Bangladesh became complete on 16 December, 1971.⁹²

⁹¹See the Plan of the Military Junta in G. W. Choudhury, op. cit. pp. 191—196

⁹²Rehman Sobhan, "Bangladesh's Liberation War: An Analysis," *Morning News* (9-10 January, 1972). For the cost of independence, see Vladimir Simonov, "Bangladesh: From Ashes to Republic," *Morning News*, (5 March, 1972)

The Port of Chittagong

A study of its growth and expansion at the beginning of the twentieth century

M. K. U. Molla

Chittagong is the largest port of Bangladesh¹. The port began to grow and expand rapidly at the start of the twentieth century following the first partition of Bengal in 1905 and the resultant changes : the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was formed with Dacca as its capital ; Chittagong became the province's only port for sea-borne trade and was favourably placed for the export trade, being nearer to the areas producing the bulk of export commodities—jute and tea—of the whole of Bengal. The government made strenuous efforts to improve conditions of the port: its trade potentialities and resources were explored and encouraged, bringing its economic viability into play. With its progress tremendously stimulated in the new environment, the port of Chittagong seemed to challenge the agelong hegemony of the port of Calcutta, shaking the vested interests of the Calcutta commercial oligarchs—mostly the *marwaris*. How did these developments take place? What were the difficulties that Chittagong had to confront with? The present article seeks to provide answer to these and such other questions. The study covers the years 1905-1912.

Chittagong had been known for centuries as a trading place.² Though it could not be ascertained when the contact between Chittagong and foreign traders began, the Venetian merchant Caesar Frederick visited the place in the sixteenth century.³ The Portuguese sailors described Chittagong as the Porto

¹The second important port of Bangladesh is at Chalna. It was put into operation on 11 December 1950. It is situated on the Passur river, about 60 miles from the sea and 32 miles south of Khulna in the southern region of Bangladesh

²The early reference to Chittagong was found in the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*. W. H. Schoff (ed.), *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (London : Longmanns, 1912) pp. 47—48. The travellers, who visited South Asia between the eighth and seventeenth centuries, spoke of Chittagong as a trading place. S.H.H. Naqavi and M. Rafiqul Islam, "Historical Background of the Port of Chittagong" : *Pakistan Geographical Review*, Lahore, Volume 22, No. 2, July 1967, pp. 86—94

³Nafis Ahmed, *An Economic Geography of East Pakistan* (London : Oxford University Press, 1968), P. 75 Referring to Chittagong a sixteenth century Venetian traveller observed that Chittagong exported to Europe every year two hundred "ship loads of salt."

Grande in the seventeenth century.⁴ Under British rule Chittagong's trade increased significantly, specially after the opening of rail lines, toward the end of the nineteenth century by the Assam Bengal Railway, connecting Chittagong with its neighbouring areas.⁵ In 1899, with the approval of the government of India, the Assam Bengal Railway constructed the first jetty at the port, thus providing Chittagong, for the first time, with meaningful facilities for the sea-going vessels. It was argued that the attempts of the railway authority at building the jetty earlier were "vehemently opposed by the vested interests in the port of Calcutta and the Joint Steamer Companies operating in the area."⁶ It was not however until the beginning of the present century that the port began to engage serious attention of the government and soon become one of the foci of inter-national commercial activities.

Chittagong, on the bank of the Karnafuli river, was the natural sea outlet of Eastern Bengal, The Karnafuli rose near Lungleh in the Lushai Hills, and following a most round-about course past demagire, Thegakhal, Harinkhal, Barkhal and Rangamati, emerged into the plains of Chittagong at Chandraghona. Its total length was 170 miles. About eleven miles below Chittagong it joined the Bay of Bengal. Thus Chittagong was very near to the sea and well situated for ocean-going trade. It had difficulty, nevertheless, in developing its trade. First, the insufficient depth of water, about two feet, on the two bars of Karnafuli, had deterred many steam ship companies from using the port.⁷ The river at the mouth of Chaktai had been studded with many chars (heaps of sand).⁸ This made navigation for ships with deep draught very unsafe. Second, the rapid erosion, 55 feet a year on the average,⁹ on the right bank, had been

He added that the shipbuilding material, such as timber, was so abundantly available in Chittagong that the rulers of Turkey "used to get their ships built at Chittagong at a cheaper cost." Nur Ahmed, "Some Glimpses About the Origin and Location of Chittagong Port and Chittagong Town" : *Port of Chittagong Quarterly*, Vol. I. No. 1, October 1962, p. 10

⁴M. Afzal, "Porte-Grande" : *Port of Chittagong Quarterly* Vol. I, No. 1, October, 1962, p. 1

Also Nafis Ahmad, *op. cit.* P. 75

⁵Calcutta had already been connected with the northern region of Bengal which soon turned into a supplying zone of Calcutta. The Calcutta Khushtia line was opened in 1862 and extended to Goalandu in 1871. By the 1880s the North Bengal line via Poradah, Natore, Parbatipur and Saidpur was completed, thus rendering easy the transport of jute and other agricultural products to Calcutta. Jute was then much in demand in England : the Crimean War, by "cutting off hemp supplies to Dandee," created a great demand for raw jute there. Because of the authority's preference for Calcutta and Hooghlyside, Calcutta had been developed as a port. Nafis Ahmad, *op. cit.*, pp. 112—113. O. H. Spate & A. T. A. Learmonth, *India And Pakistan : A General and Regional Geography* (Suffolk : Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1960) p. 309. Also M. B. K. Malik, *Hundred Years of Pakistan Railways* (Karachi : Government of Pakistan, 1962)

⁶Nafis Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 113

⁷J. Stuart, Acting Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, to Secretary, Govt. EBA, PWD, No. 18—2K, Rev.—4496, Chittagong, File 4/D 9, 9, June 1906 : *EBAPWD* (Marine) Pgs. 1906

⁸Joint Secretary, Chittagong Association, to Secretary, Govt. EBA, PWD, Chittagong, File 6R/7 4, 5 June 1906 : *EBAPWD* (Marine) P & S. 1906

⁹Proceedings of 24 Special Meetings of Port Commissioners, 24 June 1904 : *Ibid*

keeping the Karnafuli river unreliable below the jetties. This caused immense trouble to incoming ships at the harbour. As far back as 1893, J. H. Apjohn recommended that the right bank of the river from Double Morrings to Gupt Point should be effectively revetted.¹⁰ Otherwise, he argued, the river might cut through into the Sandip channel of the Bay of Bengal causing the shifting of the navigable channel to the other bank of the river from that on which Chittagong was situated.¹¹ But no effective measures were taken and erosion continued unchecked. Third, inadequate docking facilities at the port discouraged steamer companies from sending their vessels to the harbour and thus failed to encourage sufficient trade. Before 1899, the port of Chittagong had no jetty ; by 1904 it had only two, which were always busy with coastal trade with Bengal and hence could not help to develop the overseas trade. Generally speaking, Chittagong's international trade was conducted through Calcutta. Goods were brought by steamer from Chittagong to Calcutta ; hence they were unloaded and re-shipped into other steamers for export abroad. In the same way the port's import trade was carried on, goods from foreign countries being brought into Calcutta and then re-shipped to Chittagong in coasting steamers.¹²

After the emergence of the new province, Chittagong, as mentioned, became the principal port of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The development of the harbour of Chittagong, particularly for foreign trade, was therefore, one of great importance to the province.

The dredging of the Karnafuli involved the purchase of a dredger from Simsons of Scotland at Rs. 600,000.¹³ Upto 31 March 1907, more than Rs. 584,000 were spent for its maintenance and operation.¹⁴ The result was quite satisfactory, as the dredger was found capable of dealing with the hard substance of the river's ring bars and dredged more than six million cubic feet in the outer and inner bars of the river in 132 days.¹⁵ This had considerably improved the approaches to the port. The lieutenant-governor sanctioned in 1907 an annual grant of Rs. 54,000 for five years¹⁶ which the following

¹⁰Ibid

¹¹Ibid

¹²Executive Engineer, Chittagong Division, to Superintending Engineer, Eastern Bengal Circle, No. 1851, Chittagong, 18 April 1907 : **Ibid**

¹³Govt. of India to Govt. EBA, Telegram, No. 1538 W, 29 November 1905 : **Ibid**.

¹⁴Administration Report of Chittagong Port, 1906—07, Enclosure in H. Luson, Chairman, Port Commissioners, to Secretary Govt. EBA, PWD, No. 814, Chittagong, 9 July 1907 : **EBAPWD (Railway) Pgs. 1907**

¹⁵To be specific, it had dredged 65, 2800 cubic feet. Report on Dredging 1907—08, Enclosure in H. Luson, Chairman, Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Govt. EBA, PWD, No. 1054, Chittagong, 14 August 1908 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1909**

¹⁶Administration Report of Chittagong Port 1906—07, Enclosure in H. Luson, Chairman, Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Govt. EBA, PWD, No. 814, Chittagong, 9 July 1907 : **EBAPWD (Railway) Pgs. 1907**

year was raised to Rs. 92,000.¹⁷ The dredger, however, needed a subsidiary sludge apparatus to pump the mud on to the shore to reclaim low lands. "There can be no question of raising the land in rear of revetments in that way will prove extremely beneficial and remunerative."¹⁸ In the mid-1906, the government, therefore, approved the purchase of this implement at Rs. 47,000.¹⁹

No doubt, the dredger was making the river navigable by removing the eroded mud from its bars. But the strong revetment of the bank was necessary to keep the river stable below the terminal jetties which were situated about one and a half miles away from where the river flowed at the time of the first British occupation of Chittagong.²⁰

As already pointed out, the revetment of the Karnafuli's bank was a long felt need of the port of Chittagong. There had been regular erosion of the river and by 1905, they had threatened the port with serious damage. It was pointed out that the revetment of the river down to the "oil installation" some two thousand feet above the Gupt Point was "practically imperative."²¹ It was arranged to construct a railway from Double Mornings to Kumarkhal to start revetting the bank. In 1906, a bridge was built over the Maheskhal and rails were laid along the sloped bank to Kunalkhal.²² The Assam Bengal Railway helped considerably with the construction of this siding, remitting a 24½ per cent charge on cash expenditure. As regards the maintenance of the siding, they charged only "actual expenses."²³ the motive behind such concessions for a side railway, which was away from the main line, was probably the realisation that to help developing the port of Chittagong meant helping the expansion of the port's trade. If the port developed, goods from different parts of the

¹⁷Resolution on the Administration Report of the Commissioners of the Port of Chittagong, 1907—08, No. 1690, Marine, File 5R/15 3, 3 December 1908 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1909**

¹⁸Note by J. R. Bell, Enclosure in H. Luson, Chairman, Chittagong Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Govt. EBA PWD, No. 1429, Chittagong, 29 December 1905 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1906**

¹⁹Secretary, Govt. EBA, to Chairman, Port Commissioners, Chittagong, No. 766 Mne. File 9P/1 14, Shillong, 5 July 1906 : **Ibid**

²⁰H. Luson, Chairman, Chittagong Port, to Secretary, Govt. EBA, Finance Department, No. 2082, Chittagong, 28 November 1907 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1908**. The Company took over the occupation of Chittagong in 1760. B. B. Misra, **The Central Administration of the East India Company 1773—1834** (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1958), p. 17

²¹Inspection Note by J. R. Bell on the Revetment Work, 17 November and 29 December 1905, Enclosures B and C in H. Luson, Chairman, Port Commissioners to Secretary, Govt. EBA, PWD, No. 1469, Chittagong 9/15 January 1906 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1906**

²²Chairman, Port Commissioners, Chittagong, to Secretary, Govt. EBA, PWD, Telegram, 5 February 1906 : **Ibid**

²³Directors, Assam Bengal Railway, to Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, No. 9B, 30 March 1906 : **Ibid**

province could be sent to Chittagong for direct export to foreign countries. And overseas goods could be directly imported into Chittagong. From Chittagong they could easily be sent to the interior of the new province. The port of Chittagong being near to Eastern Bengal and Assam, the journey involved less expense and little trouble. This meant heavier traffic on the railways, the other means of transport being less advanced, and thus increased profit for the railway.

Up to 31 March 1906, however, over Rs. 264,000 were spent for the revetment.²⁴ Another amount of over Rs. 200,000 was spent for the same purpose in 1906—07.²⁵ The work continued and in 1909 the government granted Rs. 125,000 for expenditure on the revetment during the year 1909—10.²⁶ The stones required for revetting the bank were brought from Rajmahal and Jettinga Valley. By 1906, a little over three lakh cubic feet of stone had been placed on the bank.²⁷ The result of the revetment, however, was quite promising. During 1906-07 a length of about 5,700 feet of the right bank of the Karnafuli below the terminal jetties was revetted. This was reported to have successfully resisted the erosion of the river.²⁸

At the same time that the Karnafuli was being dredged and revetted, the construction of a new jetty was being completed. And the commissioners of the port considered that more quays were needed. They framed a scheme which made provision for the eventual erection of seven jetties.²⁹ The three completed piers were to be mainly engaged in foreign trade. The building of the fourth jetty was, therefore, needed immediately for the accommodation of the coastal trade. A suitable site was selected for it, at the up-stream end of the three-jetty strip, that is, at a distance of some 390 feet from the block of existing jetties.³⁰ The agent of the Assam Bengal Railway, J. Stuart, explaining the reasons for choosing this site, noted that this place was nearer to both the railways and the block of three jetties, providing convenient communications.³¹ The length of the jetty would be 600 feet so that it could accommodate two

²⁴H. Luson, Chairman, Port Commissioners, Chittagong, to Secretary, Govt. EBA, PWD, No. 79, Chittagong, File 9P/2 18, 11 April, 1906 : *Ibid*

²⁵Administration Report of Chittagong Port 1906-07 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1907**

²⁶Assistant Secretary, Govt., EBA, FD, to Accountant General, EBA, No. 2377, F. Shillong, 2 April 1909 : **EBAF Pgs. 1910**

²⁷Port Engineer's Note on Collection for Revetment, 13 December 1905 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1906**

²⁸Administration Report of Chittagong Port 1906—07 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1907**

²⁹Secretary, Govt., EBA, to Commissioners, Chittagong Division, No. 292 T. 4 March 1906, cited in H. Luson, Commissioner, Chittagong Division, to Secretary, Govt., EBA, PWD, No. 601C, File J1/1 1, 10 August 1906 : **EBAPWD (Railway) Pgs. 1907**

³⁰Govt. EBA, PWD, to Agent, ABR, File 1J/1 9, 4 March 1906 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs., 1906**

³¹J. Stuart, Acting Agent, ABR, to Secretary, Govt., EBA, No. 274-3 B-2087, Chittagong, File 1J/1 11, 15 March 1906 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1906**

coasting steamers, and to carry out the work the government sanctioned nearly two million rupees in the early March 1907.³²

While arrangements were being made for the construction of a new jetty, measures were being taken to protect the existing jetties from the danger of fire. Two fires—on 12 October and 24 December 1907—had revealed how insufficient were the protective measures. There were no modern sprinkler plants ; the transit sheds had no fireproof doors and partitions ; and the entrances to the jetty yard were not adequately guarded. This was perhaps because Chittagong had never been designed as an international port and hence there was little chance of its jetties being used for goods in bulk. The fire of 12 October had destroyed jute worth over ten lakhs of rupees while damage to the sheds and jetties was estimated at one and a half lakhs of rupees.³³ The fire of 24 December had completely ruined about 21,000 bales of jute, 451 chests of tea, together with some hundreds of wooden sleepers used as flooring. The jetty itself sustained damage to the dock and deckbeams.³⁴

This disastrous fire was reportedly deliberate.³⁵ Among possible motives for this incendiarism were, first, concealment of a deficit in stock, arising from thefts of goods from the transit sheds of the jetty yard on behalf of the jetty guards, and, second, damage to the port's reputation by firms or persons interested in the maintenance of Calcutta as a port of export for jute and tea.

Whatever the motives were, sufficient measures were taken to ensure the future safety of the port. First, entrances were to be guarded by police in order to prevent unauthorised persons from entering the dock yards. Arrangements were made for a special corps of **darwans** (guards) at the jetties and the recruiting of **darwan** through the **jamadar** (guard's captain) was stopped. A high wall was also built around the jetty yard to check thefts.³⁶ Second, no jute was to be received in a transit shed except for named steamers, and then only seven days ahead of the vessel's expected arrival ; all jute for which ocean freights were not fixed, or for late steamers, should go to the storage sheds at the back of the jetty.³⁷ This was done to ease the congestion of goods in the

³²Officiating Secretary, Govt., EBA, PWD, to Agent, ABR, No. 214, Shillong, File 1J/1 18, 13 March 1907 : **EBA (Marine) Pgs., 1907**

³³H. Luson, Chairman, Chittagong Port Commissioners, to Secretary, Govt. EBA, PWD, Chittagong, No. 1998, File 1J/10 4, 18 November 1907 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs., 1909**

³⁴Proceedings of a Joint Enquiry held at Chittagong on 28 and 30 December 1907 to enquire into the fire of 24 : **Ibid**

³⁵Memorandum by Commissioner, Chittagong Division, on the Chittagong Jetty Fire of 24 December 1907, 20 January 1908 : **Ibid**

³⁶Secretary, Govt., EBA, PWD, to Chairman, Chittagong Port Commissioners, No. 493 Mne. File 1J/10 15, 12 March 1908, And Proceedings of the Port Commissioners' Meeting, 25 January 1908 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1909**

³⁷**Ibid**

jetties. Third, the transit sheds were to be separated by fireproof doors and partitions so that if fire occurred, it could be isolated.³⁸ Fourth, the jetties were provided with water sprinklers. An extensive hydrant service was set up around the sheds for immediate action.

In addition to these measures to improve the port's security, the port commissioners attempted to foster direct overseas trade. In doing so, they had to contend with the discontent of the mercantile community of Calcutta, which objected to the development of Chittagong into a sea port with direct trade abroad. The Bengal Chamber of Commerce advised the Calcutta Port Trust to use all "legitimate means" in its power to capture the ocean trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam, so as not to allow Chittagong to rise in status above that of a coasting port.³⁹ They particularly emphasized that everything should be done to attract tea, brought by rail to Chittagong, to the sales in Calcutta instead of being shipped direct from Chittagong to London. They further pointed out : "there is no saying what the position will be in 20 years if Calcutta does not take steps to intercept the growth of the direct trade from Chittagong to the United Kingdom."⁴⁰ The Bengal Chamber of Commerce suggested that "an endeavour be made to organise in concert with the Liner's Conference, the Hansa line, and other responsible steamship owners for a through trade between the United Kingdom and Chittagong via Calcutta."⁴¹ It was desired that in such arrangements, freights to and from Europe should be fixed so that it would be as cheap to trade with Chittagong via Calcutta, as direct. In this way, the merchants of Calcutta hoped to monopolise the trade between the new province and Europe, and exerted their influence upon the port commissioners of Calcutta. The port commissioners accordingly proposed to reduce the river dues at Calcutta from four annas to one anna a ton on all goods to and from Chittagong ; and to reduce all the round rate from four to three annas a bale for unloading and reshipment of jute brought by steamers from Chittagong to the Kidderpore docks, and reshipped into other steamers.⁴²

These proposals demanded serious consideration. They meant, to all intents and purposes, encouraging the development of the coasting trade of Calcutta to the detriment of the direct trade of the port of Chittagong with Europe and America. In the opinion of the Chittagong port commissioners "the proposed reduction or concession at Calcutta would tend eventually to act deleteriously upon the trade of this port and proposals are designed to secure the objects

³⁸Ibid

³⁹Proceedings of 214 Ordinary Meeting of Port Commissioners, 4 May 1906: **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1906**

⁴⁰Ibid

⁴¹Ibid

⁴²W. A. Inglis, Secretary, Govt., of Bengal, Marine Department, to Secretary, Govt., EBA No. 632 Mnc. Calcutta File 4D/2 1, 6 April 1906 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs., 1906**

of the Calcutta chamber of commerce.”⁴³ Also such reductions in the port charges at Calcutta meant the concentration of the export trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam at Calcutta. The port of Chittagong would be merely a supplier to Calcutta, and this would inevitably retard the growth and expansion of Chittagong by jeopardising its international trade. The government of the new province, therefore, did not approve of these proposals.⁴⁴

There were other considerations. The prevailing feeling was that the freight charges from England to Chittagong direct were greater than those from England to Chittagong via Calcutta. But this was not true. The Chairman of the Chittagong port commissioners wrote, on 7 May 1906, to the secretary to the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, that much had been made of the fact that the costs from England to Chittagong Via Calcutta were less than those to Chittagong direct. But “when I was in England last year I was informed that the freight from the United Kingdom (a) to Chittagong direct, (b) to Chittagong via Calcutta was then the same, viz., 25 shillings a ton. In fact, I had my own goods brought out at that rate via Calcutta, as I could not obtain direct shipment to Chittagong. I am informed that some line’s freight from this port to the United Kingdom is 2s 6d a ton more via Calcutta than from this direct.”⁴⁵ While thus sea-freights to the ports of Calcutta and Chittagong were equal, the charges for land-carriage to Assam were lower from Chittagong than from Calcutta. This was obviously so because compared with Calcutta, Chittagong is nearer to Assam.⁴⁶

In addition to the question of charges, there was the disadvantage of indirect shipment. As already mentioned, the imports for Chittagong were brought from overseas via Calcutta ; from there, all goods were transhipped at Hooghly into coasting steamers. The process involved sometimes higher freight rates⁴⁷ whilst delays and damage were considerable. To illustrate the duration of delays, the executive engineer of the Chittagong division wrote to the superintending engineer of Eastern Bengal Circle on 18 April 1907 that the stores shipped from London in SS Dilwara, a vessel of the British India Company, on 9 November 1906, had not yet reached Chittagong.⁴⁸ Then he detailed what could happen to these stores after arrival at Calcutta. The stores would be transhipped into one of the weekly mail steamers of the same company calling

⁴³Proceedings of 314 Ordinary Meeting of Port Commissioners, 4 May 1906 : **Ibid**

⁴⁴Secretary, Govt., EBA, PWD, to Secretary, Govt. of Bengal, Marine Department, No. 541 Mne. File 4D/2 6, 22 May 1906 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1906**

⁴⁵No. 240 File 4D/2 5, Chittagong, **Ibid**

⁴⁶Also Dacca was nearer to Chittagong but 380 miles distant, by rail, from Calcutta. O. H. K. Spate & A. T. A. Learmonth, **India And Pakistan : A General and Regional Geography**, P. 585

⁴⁷J. Stuart, Acting Agent, ABR, to Secretary, Govt., EBA, PWD, No. 18-2K, Rev-4496, File No. 4D/2 9, 9, June 1906 : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs., 1906**

⁴⁸No. 1851, Chittagong : **EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs. 1908**

at coast ports on its way to Rangoon in Burma. To quote the engineer, "the result will possibly be that the stores may not all be recieved from Calcutta in the same vessel, and that if the vessel, which carries the mails, is pressed for line on arrival in Chittagong, the stores may be over carried and delivered on the way back from Rangoon or may even be wrongly unloaded in Rangoon....."⁴⁹

As a result of the public attention given to such incidents, the director general of stores, India Office, London, informed the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam that whenever practicable he would dispatch stores for Chittagong direct to that port.⁵⁰ The steamers of the Clan line sailed for Chittagong at intervals of about two months from Glasgow and Birkenhead, and occasionally extra sailings were arranged. These steamers were available for the stores. The Assam Bengal Railway undertook all the agency work free of charge in connection with the forwarding of stores from Chittagong to various ports of the province. The railway had requested the home authority even to hold back stores at home for direct sailings to Chittagong. This would save the railway from the extra expenses incurred in carrying materials from Calcutta for use in Eastern Bengal and Assam.

All these measures had some impact upon the trade of the port of Chittagong. Its exports and imports had increased. The principal exports of the port were jute and tea. Whereas in 1905-06 Chittagong exported 68,919 tons of jute in foreign countries in 1911-12 it sent 70,272½ tons overseas. The increase in the export of jute abroad though not very great was nevertheless said to have contributed towards the rise in the price of jute at home. The average price of jute per hundred weight went up from over fourteen rupees in 1907-08⁵¹ to eighteen rupees in 1911-12.⁵² In the Pabna market, the cost of a maund of jute was five rupees on 15 February 1909.⁵³ while in the same market, on the same date of 1911, the value of a maund of jute was estimated to be seven rupees.⁵⁴ The main countries which imported jute from East Bengal and Assam were Britain, the United States, France and Germany.⁵⁵ In 1909-10, so far as it can be ascertained, Chittagong, for the first time since the opening of the jetties there, exported to Russia 223 tons of jute worth Rs. 78,750.⁵⁶

⁴⁹Executive Engineer, Chittagong Division, to Superintending Engineer, Eastern Bengal Circle, No. 1851, Chittagong, 18 April 1907 : *Ibid*

⁵⁰No. 11074 S, Chittagong, 27 June 1907 : *Ibid*

⁵¹RMTEBA 1908-1909, p. 10

⁵²RMTEBA 1909-1910, p. 10

⁵³RSCEBA 1909, Statement No. VI, p. 27

⁵⁴RSCEBA 1910-1911, Statement No. VI, P. 28

⁵⁵ASSTN 1910-1911, Part I, No. 18-3, P. 80

⁵⁶RMTEBA 1910-1911, P. 93

The export of tea from the port of Chittagong grew rapidly during the period under study. While in 1905—06 Chittagong exported only 35,774,580 pounds of tea, in 1911—12 it sent a total of 55,555,705 pounds to foreign countries.⁵⁷ The production of tea in the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam went up from 210,907,000 pounds in 1907⁵⁸ to 223,836,000 in 1910.⁵⁹ In 1910, the aggregate output of tea in India was 261,927,000 pounds ; it shows that Eastern Bengal and Assam produced more than 85 percent of India's total crop.⁶⁰ The rest—less than fifteen percent—was grown in Bengal, Madras, the United Provinces, the Punjab, Tra Van Core and Cochin including Burma.⁶¹ The rise in the export of tea from Chittagong, however, was due, to a great extent, to the additional transport facilities. This might have provided an important stimulus for the extension of tea cultivation. The area under tea increased in the new province from 428,000 acres in 1907⁶² to 443,000 in 1910.⁶³ It may be noted that the expansion of tea cultivation in the new province had not been paralleled by similar expansion in its neighbouring provinces. In Bengal, for example, the area under tea declined from 54,000 acres in 1907⁶⁴ to 53,000 in 1910⁶⁵ In the United Provinces, the area remained the same as it was, that is, 8,000 acres, throughout the period, but the produce declined from 2,295,000 pounds in 1907⁶⁶ to 2,045,000 in 1910.⁶⁷

Chittagong's primary imports were railway materials and iron. The quantity of railway materials arriving at the port rose from over eleven lakhs of rupees in 1906—07⁶⁸ to nineteen lakhs in 1908—09.⁶⁹ This was caused by the extension of railway works in the new province. In 1910—11, this fell by over five lakhs of rupees, probably because the Assam Bengal Railway curtailed its purchases on financial grounds.⁷⁰ In 1911—12, when the railway company recommended

⁵⁷RMTEBA 1911—1912, P. 6

⁵⁸Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909—1910 : PP. 1911 Vol. 55, Paper No. 179

⁵⁹Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1910—1911 : PP. 1912—13, Vol. 61, Paper No. 147

⁶⁰Ibid

⁶¹Ibid

⁶²Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909—1910 : PP 1911, Vol. 55, Paper No. 179

⁶³Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1910—1911 : PP. 1912—13, Vol. 61, Paper No. 147

⁶⁴Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909—10 : PP. 1911, Vol. 55, Paper No. 179

⁶⁵Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1910—1911 : PP. 1912—13, Vol. 61, Paper No. 147

⁶⁶Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1909—1910 : PP. 1911, Vol. 55, Paper No. 179

⁶⁷Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1910—1911 : PP. 1912—13, Vol. 61, Paper No. 147

⁶⁸RMTEBA 1906—1907, P. 2

⁶⁹RMTEBA 1908—1909, P. 4

⁷⁰RMTEBA 1909—10, P. 10 Also RMTEBA 1910—1911, P. 5

buying materials for construction, the import shot up by nearly four lakhs of rupees.⁷¹ These commodities were brought mainly from England and New South Wales : in 1907—08 England sent railway goods worth Rs. 910,656⁷² and in 1908—09, New South Wales sent materials to the value of Rs. 11,891.⁷³

The import of iron rose continuously during this period ; it was 9426 $\frac{1}{2}$ tons in 1911—12 compared with 8814 $\frac{7}{20}$ in 1910—11, with 5986 $\frac{19}{20}$ in 1909—10 with 4552 $\frac{9}{10}$ in 1908—09 and with 3849 $\frac{7}{20}$ in 1907—08.⁷⁴ This metal was brought in bulk principally because of the low price of corrugated iron sheets, which tempted the builders to purchase large quantities.⁷⁵ There was considerable progress in building ; a number of houses were built at the headquarter station in Dacca. In his financial report for the year 1910—11, W. Banks Gwyther stated that in Dacca seventeen official residences were built, leaving an equal number or more to be yet constructed. The erection of a government house was expected to be completed the following year. The new secretariat had made rapid progress and would be brought into use in the next cold season. The building of the new government press had begun and was to be completed within a year. All this, he observed, “presents the outlines of a city that will eventually rank in interests and character with any other in India and perhaps in some respects take a foremost place.”⁷⁶

Thus the foreign sea-borne trade of Chittagong hugely increased during the period. This increase in the trade of the port of Chittagong was not paralleled by similar increase in Calcutta. On the contrary, it was reported that Calcutta's trade decreased.⁷⁷ Chittagong's development seemed to have greatly contributed to this decrease. This was perhaps anticipated by Sita Nath Roy, Honorary Secretary of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, who rightly observed ; “Chittagong as a port has some undoubted natural advantages over Calcutta ; but if over and above these natural advantages Government creates advantages and facilities for and forces them upon the former.....Calcutta will suffer.”⁷⁸

However, with the annulment of the partition in 1912, the enthusiasm for development generated in the post-partition environment subsided. The area which fed Chittagong was now included in the hinterland of the port of Cal-

71 RMTEBA 1911—1912, P. 4

72 ASSTBA 1910—1911, P. 92

73 Ibid. P. 74

74 RMTEBA 1911—1912, P. 4 ; Also RMTEBA 1908—1909 P. 4

75 RMTEBA 1909—1910, P. 5

76 Proceedings of the Council of the Lieutenant Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 14 March 1910, P. 410

77 Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India 1911—1912 : PP. 1913, Vol. 46, Paper No. 220, P. 294

78 Sita Nath Roy to Chief Secretary, Govt. of Bengal, Calcutta, 3 February 1904 : Public Letters, 1905, Vol. 33

cutta. Chittagong was once again thrown into the background, its resources being geared to those of Calcutta, which reasserted its dominance. These enforcement changes which began to affect Chittagong : Calcutta took over the bulk of Chittagong's trade. About ninety per cent of jute exports, for example, passed through Calcutta while Chittagong handled only ten per cent.⁷⁹

The condition hardly improved until the partition of India in 1947. With the partition Chittagong emerged as the only port of East Bengal which formed one of the two sections of Pakistan. An international boundary with new customs controls cut across Bengal⁸⁰ and Calcutta became a foreign port. Protected by a sovereign political entity from the pull of the port of Calcutta, which was called "the hub of the international waterways,"⁸¹ the port of Chittagong began to develop fairly fast. Within eight years (1947—55) twelve jetties and three morrings were built. The total value of exports and imports leaped from 184.3 million rupees in 1947 to 12,30.5 in 1963.⁸²

With the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign and independent state, the port of Chittagong might thrive to greater prosperity, receiving more and better attention of the government.

ABBREVIATIONS

Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam	Govt. EBA
Eastern Bengal and Assam Financial Proceedings	EBAF Pgs.
Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Marine) Proceedings	EBAPWD (Marine) Pgs.
Eastern Bengal and Assam Public Works Department (Railway) Proceedings	EBAPWD (Railway) Pgs
Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam	RMTEBA
Report on the Season Crops of Eastern Bengal and Assam	RSCEBA

⁷⁹Nafis Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 278

⁸⁰Sir Cyril Radcliffe was the Chairman of the Commission which gave shape within six months to the boundary line in Bengal and the Punjab

⁸¹O. H. Spate & A. T. A. Learmonth, *India And Pakistan : A General and Regional Geography*, P. 317

⁸²Nafis Ahmad, *Op. Cit.*, P. 279

Annual Statement of the Seaborne Trade and
Navigation of the Province of Eastern Bengal
and Assam

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...	...	ASSTNEBA
Assam Bengal Railway	...	ABR
Public Works Department	..	PWD
Finance Department	...	FD
Parliamentary Papers	...	PP
Government	...	Govt.

Portrait of a Community : A Little Under-Drawn?

A Review Article*

Safiuddin Joardar

The too-well-known conflict between the old school of history-writing devoted to a minute detail of the events that supposedly took place at a particular period in a particular country and the new school that is imbued with a missionary zeal to write the history of the common people—the ideas that moved them, their hopes and aspirations, problems and sufferings—is possibly nowhere more evident than among the historians of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh most of whom were trained in the type of history-writing one finds in the **Cambridge History of India**. They felt the need for writing 'people's history' or 'Socio-Economic history' much later than their counterparts in the Western countries. When they did feel the necessity, most of them did not know how to go about it : the old system was too deeply rooted in their minds. They did not know, moreover, the techniques of social research and are at a loss when for example, they have to compare the price-levels at two different periods, prepare the cost of living indices or determine the degree of stress and tension due to migration, urbanization etc. What was done in most cases was to add a little bit of social history and a thin slice of economic history to the main body of narrative which retained its 'old form.' The result has not always been very happy. It is no use criticising the historians of this genre ; it is necessary to take a serious look at the way history is being taught and to introduce the 'inter-disciplinary' approach acquainting the students with the techniques of social research.

Dr. Sufia Ahmed's book **Muslim Community in Bengal, 1884—1912** is an instance in point. It is the dissertation which the author had submitted for (and received) the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy in the University of London in 1960.

The first thing that strikes a reader of this well-produced book is the choice of the period. What is the justification for making 1884 the point of departure?

*Sufia Ahmed, **Muslim Community in Bengal, 1884—1912**, Dacca, 1974

And why take the narrative down to 1912 instead of 1911 when a very significant historical event took place—the annulment of the partition of Bengal? The author has put forward two arguments to justify her periodization. First, an earlier book on the Muslims of Bengal carried the story down to 1884. In her own words : “The choice of the starting period was indicated by the existence of a study of the Muslims in Bengal from 1854 to 1884” (p. 2). And second, according to the author, the British at this time began to think their policy towards the Muslims. In the author’s words again : “..... the 1880’s.....see the beginning, on the part of Government, of new awareness of a Muslim problem in Bengal” (p. 2). Neither of the justifications seems to be historically correct. The mere fact that a book dealing with the history of a people stopped at a particular point of time does not mean that another book should begin from there no matter whether that point of time was a landmark or watershed in the history of that people or country. The author’s argument that the awareness of the existence of a Muslim problem began in the 1880’s is still more debatable. It is not difficult to notice this awareness long before 1884 ; it was noticeable a few years after the great upheaval of 1857. The author herself quotes Lord Mayo regretting in 1871 that “so large and important a class possessing a classical literature replete with works of profound learning and great value should stand aloof from active co-operation with our educational system and should lose the advantages both material and social which others enjoy” (p.10).

The book is divided into five chapters of which four deal with the different aspects of the Muslim community—educational (divided in two parts into the primary-secondary and higher education), economic, socio-political and literary-cultural—and one (Chapter IV) deals with that significant event in the history of modern Bengal i. e. the partition of 1905. Each aspect is discussed within the time-span chosen by the author.

The author discusses the educational backwardness of the Muslims, their refusal to take to English education imparted through the newly-established educational institutions, the indifference of a good many of them to the cultivation of Bengali language, their attachment to a system of education based on religious values, the confusion of the Muslim leaders about the system of education best suited to the interests of the community and the groping of the Government for an educational policy for the Muslims. The Government, while encouraging the spread of English education by making employment in the different departments of the government contingent on the acquisition of a certain amount of proficiency in English language, tried, with regard to the Muslims, to strike a mean by retaining the religion-oriented educational institutions but introducing a number of modern subjects and by extending the grants-in-aid to the **madrassas** introducing a certain amount of vernacular

language in their study programmes. The author maintains, on the basis of Government reports, that the Muslims turned away from the Bengali language because of the **PDF Compressor Free Version** and there is something to it can not be gainsaid; but is this the whole story? Was not the idea that only Arabic, Persian and Urdu were Islamic languages and others un-Islamic (possibly anti-Islamic) drummed into the ears of the common Muslims by the religious teachers and preachers? And yet do we not find Muslim writers like Alaol not only using sanskritized Bengali but praising Hindu gods and goddesses? As a matter of fact, the apathy of a good number of Bengali Muslims towards the Bengali language may be explained in terms of the 'cultural dichotomy' of the Muslims in the countries where Islam had spread—some favouring the adoption of the local cultural traditions, others opposing it. This trend is noticeable even in **punthi** literature where some writers though writing in Bengali felt that they were doing something wrong (see, for example, the extract from Shaikh Mutalib's **Kefayatul Musallin** in Ahmad Sharif (ed.) **Punthi Parichiti**, entry no. 69, p. 61) and others who stoutly defended the cultivation of the Bengali language and attacked those opposed to the use of the mother tongue.

The chapter on the economic condition is devoted mostly to delineating the condition of the peasantry the majority of whom were Muslims and who received less than just treatment from the landlords the majority of whom were Hindus. The **gomasthas** of the landlords—many of whom were absentees—and the exaction of **abwabs** made the condition of the tillers of the soil miserable. Occasional droughts and floods made the situation worse; the author notes such calamities in 1885—86, 1896—97 and in 1905. Some information provided by the author appear a little startling. She mentions in one place that in the Dacca Division "the average holding of a ryot during the period under review was found to be about 9 acres which gave him in normal years 9400 lbs of cleared rice annually" (p. 114). What is the source of this information? And what does a **ryot** mean in the context of the numerous sub-infeudation of land in Bengal? Was he a non-**mokarrari** tenure holder? Settled ryot? Under-ryot on cash rent? Under-ryot on produce rent? Or tenure holder under the proprietor?

The author discusses the cottage industries in some detail, especially the weaving industry. The weaving industry, and the cottage industries in general, suffered greatly. The author refers to the introduction of the cheap machine-made goods as being the cause of the decline of this industry, (p. 128). What, one may ask, was the role of the Government? Was not its tariff policy greatly responsible for pushing the textile industry out of the market? The author also points out that because of the backwardness of the Muslims in education, they were seriously under-represented in the various departments of the Government causing acute economic difficulties for the middle class Muslims who had started receiving modern education. Later on, the Government tried to rectify

the situation by giving "head start" to the Muslim in the various services. Even for higher positions side by side with the Covenanted Civil Service, which was based on open competition and very difficult for the Muslims to get into, was introduced the Statutory Civil Service in which appointment was based generally on nomination.

The socio-political activities of the Muslim community have been discussed with particular reference to the activities of some city-based organizations. The Mohammedan Literary Society founded in 1863 was mainly upper class in nature both with regard to its membership as well as its programme and attitude on various issues. With the death of its guiding spirit, Nawab Abdul Latif, in 1893, it gradually fell into oblivion. On the other hand, the National Mohammedan Association represented the views of the middle class and the upper class Muslims, both an infinitesimal minority of the Muslim community. That these organizations were based on 'personalities' is evident from the fact that the acceptance of an office under the Government by the guiding spirit of the National Mohammedan Association, Syed Amir Ali, marked the decline of that organization. Equally ineffective was the Indian Muslim Association founded by some Muslim supporters of the Indian National Congress. The author has also discussed the various factors—economic and cultural—which gradually created distrust and animosity between the two important religious communities. That this distrust and lack of understanding were fully revealed during the anti-partition agitation, 1905—1911, has also been discussed.

The chapter on Muslim writings in Bengali, though packed with materials, leaves something to be desired. For one thing, to fit the literary development of a people within a politically-important period seems a little artificial. Secondly, the ideas and attitudes of a people are moulded not only by the contemporary writings but by the writings of the past as well. Thirdly, the literary works examined by the author have been divided under different headings such as "Religious Works," "Fiction," "Social works," "Historical Works," "Political Works" etc., While facilitating discussion, this has also given rise to repetitions, for, the works by the same writer have been discussed in different places depending on whether they fall in one or the other of the above categories. In some cases, this has resulted in the same author being introduced to the readers more than once. The fact that Ismail Husain Shirazi was at first a believer in the unity of the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal and supported the *swadeshi* movement but later changed his opinion and became an ardent pan-Islamist has been told twice—on page 316 and on page 359. Almost the same sort of information about Munshi Meherullah have been given on pages 310—312 and on pages 331—332. There are other instances of repetition. After introducing S. N. Banerjee in a foot-note on page 145, there was hardly any need to describe him again as "a well-known politician and a representative of

the Hindu educated middle class" (p. 245). Abdul Wahed, the author of **Muslim Pratibha** and **Ahmad Charit** has been introduced as the "Assistant Headmaster of the Noakhali School" twice on page 356 and on page 360. Sir Bampfylde Fuller has been described as "the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam" in various places, though after introducing him to the readers for the first time, only "Fuller" or "Sir Bampfylde" would have been sufficient in subsequent references.

When a Ph. D. dissertation is published, it should be up-dated incorporating ideas and facts that might have been brought to light by the more recent publications on the subject. This does not seem to be the case here : books on related topics published between 1960 and 1974 do not seem to have been consulted—at least there are glaring omissions. In a foot-note introducing Raja Ram Mohan Roy (p. 163), reference is made only to some old books like Bradley-Birt's **Twelve Men of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century**. Recent works such as A. F. S. Ahmed's **Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal, 1818—1835** (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1965), Syed Razi Wasti's **Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement, 1905—1910** (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1964) and Davod Kopf's pioneering work **British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance : the Dynamism of Indian Modernization, 1773—1835** (Calcutta : Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1969) do not seem to have been consulted.

One of the noticeable aspects of the Muslim community in Bengal is the existence of the system known as **Pirism**. These religious guides and preceptors (**Pirs**) exercised very great influence on their disciples (**murids**). Pirism was often hereditary, and this system produced what came very near to a priestly class, though Islam does not recognise one. The author should have given some attention to this aspect of the Bengali Muslim life.

Theoretically, Islam does not recognise any difference between persons based on caste. Rather, it denounced caste system and declared that the best man was he who was best in character, righteousness and attainments. In spite of this, caste system developed in Bengal among the Muslims. Generally, the land-owning group and the religious dignitaries came to be regarded (or projected themselves) as the upper class Muslims (**Ashraf**) and those in business or production (like the weavers and the fish dealers) were given a very low position (**Atraf** or **Ajlaf**). This aspect of the Bengali Muslim community has not been discussed by the writer.

Again, very little attention has been given to the condition of the Muslim women and the attitude of the malefolk towards them. Victims of age-old superstitions and prejudices, all avenues for the development of their abilities were blocked in the name of religion. It is a pity that very few male writers took up

the cause of this down-trodden section of the society as did Qasim Amin in the Arab world as early as 1908 in his famous book **al-Mar'at al-jadidah** (The New Woman). Dr. Ahmed could have given some attention to this problem. It is true that materials for the reconstruction of the condition of the Muslim women during this period are not easy to find. But a careful study of the Muslim periodicals of the time coupled with an analysis of the writings of that great lady writer Begum Rokeya Shakawat Hossain would certainly have yielded a much better picture than the one we find in this book.

The Appendices are well-chosen : Appendix A gives the names of persons who attended the Muhammadan Educational Conference held in Calcutta in 1907 : Appendix B gives the breakdown of the employees of various categories of the Government of Bengal religion-wise; Appendix C gives the names and occupations of the Muslim delegates from Bengal to the various sessions of the Indian National Congress ; Appendix D is the reproduction of a short report for the year 1905—06 on the education of Muslim women in Bengal by Miss Brock, an Inspectress of Schools.

As regards the bibliography, the quantum of primary materials used by the author is quite impressive. The secondary materials, however, leave something to be desired ; a number of significant writers have not been mentioned at all, and in some cases though a writer has been mentioned, some of this or her significant works are missing. In the first category may be mentioned the names of Riazuddin Ahmed al-Mashhadi (1859—1918) the writer of **Agni Kukkut** (The Rooster of Fire), **Samaj o Sanskarak** (The Society and the Reformer) and **Prabandha Kaumudi** (Collection of Essays) and Riazuddin Ahmad (1862—1933) the author of **Tohfatul Muslimin** (Gift for the Muslims), **Greece Turashka Judhdha** (Greco-Turkish War) and **Hajrat Muhammad Mustafar Jibani** (Life of the Prophet Muhammad) and in the latter category the omission of Ismail Hussain Shirazi's **Anal Prabaha** (The Stream of Fire) and Rokeya Shakawat Hussain's **Abarodh Bashini** (Those Behind the Curtain) are worth mentioning. In the case of books with Arabic or Persian titles, the translation is not very satisfactory. K.A.A. Koreshi's **Massaye-e Islam** (actually **Masa'il-i-Islam**) which has been translated as **Muhammadan Religion and Morality** should actually be **Questions (and answers) of Islam**. The book entitled **Tuhfat al-Salikin** by M. Ali Harez has been translated as **Advice of God** whereas it should really be **The Gift for the God-fearing**.

These lapses notwithstanding, it is a well-written book, and the author is to be complimented for the judicious use of a vast amount of primary materials.

Jute Cultivation in Bengal (1870-1914)

A Study of its Growth

Md. Wazed Ali

Jute¹ became the most important cash crop of Bengal from the mid-nineteenth century. It had been an important cash crop of Bengal from the mid-nineteenth century. It had been a cash crop for export from known in India for a very long time. But it became cultivated for domestic use from the 1830s. Before its commercialization jute was *Dundee had long been* ¹use.² Dundee was responsible for commercialising jute. materials and its raw material was flax. But the high price of flax³ led Dundee to search for a cheaper material as a substitute. The Dundee manufacturers looked on Jute as a possible substitute for flax. Hence from the last decade of the eighteenth century trial shipments of Jute fibre to Great Britain were made.⁴ The early shipments were, however, insignificant. The exports began to rise steadily from 1828 when a separate head of account was assigned to Jute in the Customs Returns.⁵ The real beginning of its commercialisation should, however, be dated from the year 1835, which was a landmark in the history of the crop. Dundee was the first where the mechanical spinning of Jute was successfully accomplished in Jute industry which became the cradle of modern Jute industry. Thereafter the Dundee Jute industry grew rapidly. It was followed by the establishment of Jute industries in the U. S. A., Bengal, Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, Italy, Holland, Spain and Brazil. The founding of Jute industries in various countries of the world led to a great demand for raw Jute. The Bengali peasants responded quickly to meet the world demand by increasing the area under Jute cultivation. The present article deals with the growth of Jute cultivation and the sources of land available for it in the period between 1870 and 1914.

¹Jute is the anglicised word of jhut or jhout by which jute was known in Orissa

²See Kerr, H. C., **Report on the Cultivation of, and Trade in, Jute in Bengal**, Calcutta, 1877 (hereafter **Kerr's Report**), Paras 61, 112, 115 and 118

³In Dundee between 1834 and 1864 the price of flax per ton was nearly three times higher than that of jute per ton. See Warden, A. J., **The Linon Trade**, London, 1864, pp. 646—653

⁴**Kerr's Report** (1867), Para 156

⁵**Sea-Borne Trade of Bengal**, Revenue Department Statistics, Calcutta 1875, Annual Customs Report of the Board of Revenue, 1874—75

Physical features of Bengal influencing jute cultivation

Physical features of Bengal imposed considerable restrictions on the extent of Jute cultivation in Bengal. Firstly, Jute cannot be grown on every kind of soil. It thrives on **doashla** land,⁶ i. e., a mixture of clay and sand, although it can be grown on clayey soil.⁷ Laterite and sandy soil are unsuitable for Jute growing ; so is low loamy land which is subject to early and deep inundation.

The soil of Bengal is not uniform. The condition of soil varies from district to district and from one part of a district to another. Bengal has four main types of soil—laterite, clayey, sandy and loamy. Consequently, many areas of Bengal were totally unsuited to the cultivation of Jute.

The soil of Rangpur and Pabna is all alluvial. There are large areas of **pali** (loamy) soil along the banks of the Jamuna, Teesta and Brahmaputra which is suitable for Jute growing. Some parts of Bogra, Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Malda are **barind** or old alluvium where only winter rice can be grown ; other parts are fertile.⁸ The whole area of Bogra east of the Koroibhanga is loamy. Darjeeling is a hilly district,¹⁰ having little loamy land. A part of Jalpaiguri is submontane and a large area is under forest.¹¹

The soil of Dacca, Mymensingh and Tippera is all alluvial with the exception of some areas of stiff clay in Dacca and Mymensingh.¹² Their **pali** lands are most suitable for Jute cultivation. Faridpur, Noakhali, Backarganj and Khulna form parts of the alluvial formations, but their southern parts and islands are low and subject to early and deep inundation and winter rice can be grown. Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts having had laterite soil¹³ are unsuitable for jute cultivation.

Only the eastern portion of Murshidabad is alluvial, the rest having laterite soil.¹⁴ The greater portion of Nadia is sandy.¹⁵ The land of Jessore is fertile but the whole fertile area is not loamy. The coastal area of 24 Parganas, known

⁶Statement of Baboo Nunda Coomer Sha, a Calcutta business man, submitted to the Jute Commission of 1873, see **Kerr's Report** (1877), Appendix B, p. 1

⁷**Kerr's Report** (1877), Para 80

⁸Census of India (Bengal), 1901, Vol. VI, Part 1, pp. 65, 66

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 57, 58, 67

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 62

¹¹Census of India (Bengal), 1911, Vol. V, Part 1, pp. 11, 13

¹²Census of India (Bengal), 1901, Vol. VI, Part 1, pp. 71, 78

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 79, 81

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 54

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 55

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 56

as the Sundarbans, are covered with jungles and its southern portion is subject to early and deep inundation.

The whole of Bankura and Birbhum and the Midnapore are extensions of laterite and the eastern parts of Burdwan and Midnapore are fertile, but the whole area is not loamy. C loamy land.¹⁷

Jute requires an annual precipitation of about sixty inches.¹⁸ Appendix 1 shows the normal rainfall (annual average) in the district of Bengal. In North Bengal all but two districts have the required amount of rainfall. As well as the East Bengal districts enjoy sufficient rain for jute cultivation. However, Only a small portion of Howrah has less than the requirement.

Jute also needs a temperature not exceeding 100° F. and not falling below 60° F.¹⁹ The greater portion of Bengal experiences the required temperature, although the districts of Bardwan and Midnapore may at times prove too hot.

Jute requires a humidity rating from 70 to 90 percent.²⁰ In eastern and southern Bengal the atmosphere is extra-ordinarily humid.²¹ In some western and northern districts humidity may be less than the requirement.

Discussion of the physical features of Bengal, therefore, reveals that the hilly districts could produce little or no jute; the case would be the same with the districts bordering Bihar and Chota-Nagpur. The districts close to the Bay of Bengal also could not put large areas under jute. Jute cultivation would thus be concentrated in the northern and eastern districts of Bengal.

Agriculture

In Bengal the peasants in 1911 of the from the all districts by local practices in 1870

Bengal agriculture was almost exclusively conducted by small-holding peasants. The net average size of a peasant's farm was 3.3 acres in 1901 and 3.1 (see Table 1). Each farm consisted of a number of small plots. Some plots were close to the peasants' houses, but others were at some distance from the homestead. Almost always not contiguous, these were scattered in sections from the homestead. They were not fenced, but were demarcated by low mud embankments, six to eighteen inches high, called *ails*, which also

17R. P. C. S. Bahadur, & R. S. S. C., Chatterji, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Howrah, 1934-39*, Alipore, 1940, p. 37

18R. H. Kirby, *Vegetable Fibres*, London, 1963, p. 63

19Ibid Op. 64

20Ibid

21Census of India (Bengal), 1901, Vol. VI Part 1, p. 7.

served as passes through the fields. The ails were necessary to conserve rain water in the fields.

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also very small. It grew smaller, too, with the passage of time. The Muslim law of inheritance providing for the division of land among sons and daughters, and that among the Hindus regarding division of land among sons, were the main cause of the subdivision and fragmentation of holdings. Since all the land cultivated by a peasant was not of the same quality, the heirs sometimes divided each plot among them. The second cause was the sale of holdings. A peasant selling land almost universally disposed of a part of his holding rather than the whole.

BENGAL

(3)

Size of a peasant's farm
in acres

TABLE I
SIZE OF FARMS IN BENGAL

(1) Net cropped area in acres	(2) No. of peasant families* (taking a house as the unit of a family)
25,010,761 (average of 1901/02—1904/05)	7,610,514 (in 1901)
24,599,033 (average of 1911/12—1913/14)	8,058,272 (in 1911)

3.1

Bengal & Assam
(Bengal), 1901, Vol.

Source : for col. 1, *Agricultural Statistics of Bengal & Eastern Bengal*, 1901, Vol. VI A, Part 11, p. 2 and 1911, Vol. V, Part 11, p. 2
* Excluding Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Cultivation was done by single-hooked wooden ploughs. The early ploughs, when the soil was hard, were done by smaller ploughs and as the soil gradually pulverised by repeated ploughings and reploughings, bigger ploughs replaced smaller ones. The latter could scarcely pierce deeper than two or three inches.²² But the bigger ploughs could reach a depth of six or seven inches. The field was smoothed and levelled and clods broken by ladders made of bamboo or bamboo. The early weeding and thinning (when the crop was young) were done by multi-hooked wooden harrows. These implements were drawn almost universally by bullocks, but occasionally buffaloes were also used.²⁴

²²Report of the Indian Famine Commission (hereafter *Famine Commission Report*), 1880, Part 11, Parliamentary Papers (hereafter P. P.), 1880, Cd. 2735, p. 79

²³Ibid

²⁴Ibid

Since the implements were light, the peasants carried them to the fields usually on their shoulders. But peasants who owned carts sometimes used them for the purpose, if suitable roads existed in their area.

Bengal agriculture lacked the specialist seedsmen who were to be found in Japanese agriculture. The Bangali peasants used their own seed. The local variety was general so that improvement by the use of new strains was not possible. No crop was cultivated specifically for seed. After harvest, part of the general crop was kept separate for seed.

The cultivators used locally available manure, mostly cow-dung. The refuse of the house was also used. "Every cultivator has his manure heap on which the sweepings of the house and of the cattle shed are thrown ; but the cattle-dung is almost universally collected and dried for use as fuel, except during the rainy months, and the droppings of the cattle that are not stall-fed, but turned out to graze on waste lands, are lost. It is roughly reckoned that each cultivating family with its cattle produces enough manure for an acre of land yearly."²⁵ Black clay soil from the bottom of tanks was also used. Only, high land and low land not subject to inundation were manured. Low land which was inundated periodically required no manure, because it was enriched by the annual deposit of silt. Artificial manures were unknown and as a rule only farm-yard manure was used.²⁶

Inter-changeability of the factors of production between rice and jute

Rice was the main crop of Bengal, but the whole land area where rice was grown could not be given over to the cultivation of jute. It has been said that jute thrived well on loamy soil, but the whole land area of Bengal was not loamy. The inter-changeability of land between rice and jute was thus limited.

The agricultural implements used for cultivation in general could be employed for the cultivation of jute. The same manure used for general crops could be applied for jute growing.

Labour was not easily inter-changeable. Although weeding could be done by general labourers, stripping required special labourers with physical strength. If stripping was done by single plant on dry ground it did not require any special labourers. But if stripping was done in bundles in water, which was the most common method of extraction of the fibre, physical strength was required of the strippers to release the fibre from the stem. In the areas where stripping was done in bundles there was a class of labourers, expert in stripping. Their wages were higher than those of general labourers. In jute

²⁵Famine Commission Report, 1880, Part 11, p. 79

²⁶Ibid

seasons they were strippers ; in other seasons they engaged themselves as general labourers.

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Source of land for jute cultivation

Four sources of land for the cultivation of jute might be available—waste land, rice land, indigo land and land double-cropped. However, the process by which patterns of cultivation of different crops change is liable to be extremely complex. It is unlikely, for example, that all waste land reclaimed or all the land made available from the decline of indigo cultivation would be immediately switched entirely to jute cultivation in any organized logical manner. Kerr found that during the great jute expansion on the early 1870s “there was not sufficient time allowed for reclamation of wastes, and the ryot had to take up whatever land was ready at hand.” Hence “the fields which yielded food-grains were the first to yield a portion of their area to jute.”²⁷ Later, perhaps, new land might be switched to rice to compensate. In the discussion which follows we shall be concerned with the long-term change from waste or other crops to jute.

Agricultural Statistics before 1891 are not available. From 1891 the basic sources of land for jute growing can be definitely determined. The extension of jute cultivation did not come from waste land which was very little reclaimed.²⁸ The net cropped area did not increase ; indeed it registered a small decrease (see Table 2).²⁹ Generally, jute did not devour rice land, although in some districts at some periods its extension was at the expense of rice land. The net area under rice was not drastically reduced (see Table 2). The long-term extension of the cultivation of jute occurred mainly on the area double-cropped.³⁰

²⁷Kerr's Report (1877), para 158

²⁸After 1890 waste land was not brought under cultivation, because by 1880 all the good lands had been reclaimed. See Lidman, R. & Demrese, R. I; “India”, W. A. Lewis ed. **Tropical Development**, 1880—1913, London, 1970, p. 316. The costs of bringing inferior lands under the plough would be high and the yield of such land would be low. Hence reclamation of inferior waste land would not be profitable

²⁹The reason for the contraction of the area under cultivation is not definitely known. According to Blyn, certain lands became submarginal and were no longer worth the effort or expense of working them, either because of adverse prices or falling productivity. Returns on better lands worked more intensively might have been more favourable. Another possibility, according to him, was that the eastward shift in the main course of the Ganges left several districts—Murshidabad, Nadia and Jessore—with poorly drained channels and were deprived of the annual flood distributed silts which tended to maintain soil fertility. This might have so reduced the fertility of some lands as to make cultivation no longer worthwhile. See G. Blyn **Agricultural Trends in India, 1891-1947 : Output, Availability & Productivity**, Philadelphia, 1966, pp. 138-139

Between 1891/95 and 1911/13 the net cropped area of Bengal shrank by more than a million acres. The net cropped area of Jessore did not contract. But the cropped areas of Murshidabad and Nadia contracted by about 0.40 million acres between 1891/95 and 1911/13. See **Agricultural Statistics of Bengal & Eastern Bengal & Assam**. The contraction of large areas in two districts seems to lend support to the second possibility of Blyn.

³⁰In the 1890s normally the double-cropped land was not used for two crops of rice in a year. Probably low land growing either **aus** (autumn) or **aman** (winter) rice before the peasants undertook intensive cultivation growing two crops in a year had in the 1890s been culti-

This increased (see Table 2). A portion of the jute land came from indigo land, for indigo cultivation progressively declined and almost disappeared at the end of the period (see Table 2).

The sources of the jute land before 1891 cannot be definitely determined. But some ideas can be formed. Expansion of jute growing might have partially taken place on waste lands. It is possible that land reclamation might have occurred before 1891. The population was increasing and agricultural technology remained stagnant³¹ so that increased production to feed the increasing population could not be obtained from just the land already under cultivation. Moreover, it was during the period between 1872 and 1891/95 that the greatest expansion of jute cultivation had taken place (see Table 3). It was probably impossible to have increased food production from, and extend the cultivation of jute on, the land already under cultivation. Consequently, the reclamation of waste land had to be made.

It cannot be said definitely whether rice land was, in the long term, used for jute cultivation. It is probable that the rice land having opportunities for double-cropping was given over to jute growing before 1891/95. In 1891/95 a large area was found to be double-cropped (See Table 2).

TABLE 2

Net cropped area, rice area, double-cropped area & indigo area in 000's acres (Five Year and three average)

1 Years	2 Net cropped area	3 rice area	4 Double cropped area	5 Indigo area
1891/92—95/96	25,683	19,880	4,566	222
1896/97—1900/01	25,406	20,520	5,085	139
1901/02—1905/06	25,010	20,398	5,650	19
1906/1907—1910/11	24,490	20,730	6,043	2
1911/12—1913/14	24,599	20,534	4,966	1

Source : Agricultural Statistics of Bengal & Eastern Bengal & Assam.

*Excluding Chittagong Hill Tracts.

vated for one crop of jute followed by one crop of rice. This explains why jute, in the long term, could increase its acreage without 'robbing' rice area

³¹The attempt of the government to improve agriculture through technological change between 1870 and 1890 was not successful. See *Famine Commission Report, 1880*, Vol. III, P. P; Cd. 3086, pp. 189-191. See also *Report on the Land Revenue Administration of the lower provinces, 1889-90*, Para 89

The major portion of the jute land, however, came probably from the indigo land. In almost all the districts of Bengal indigo had been grown.³² From the 1850's indigo cultivation became unprofitable to the peasants.³³ Therefore in 1859 they refused to sow indigo. The attempt of the planters to force them to do so resulted in riots in the districts of Nadia and Jessore. The government adopted measures to maintain law and order. It recognized the peasants as free agents, forbidding the planters to force them to sow indigo and instructing the magistrates to protect the farmers from force, unlawful coercion or violence.³⁴ The government, however, allowed free contracts between the manufacturers and peasants and asked the latter to respect the existing contracts.³⁵ As a consequence, the cultivation of indigo declined. But its cultivation did not disappear altogether immediately after the publication of government's regulation, probably because of the existence of some contracts for longer periods. With the gradual ending of contracts, the cultivation gradually declined. Indigo growing, however, disappeared in Bengal after the invention of German synthetic dye in 1897. The decline and disappearance of indigo coincided with the growth of jute cultivation. Since most of the indigo land was suitable for jute—in Hooghly in the 1870's "indigo in some places rotated with jute"³⁶—possibly the area where indigo cultivation was abandoned was put under jute.

Thus there were three main sources of land for jute cultivation the double-cropped land, land formerly under indigo or other crops and new land. Early in our period indigo and new lands were important but later the double-cropped land provided the greater new potential.

Growth of the jute cultivation in the districts of Bengal

In our treatment of the growth of jute cultivation two sets of data have been used—one prepared by the Jute Commissioner of 1873 (Kerr's Report) and the other by the Agricultural Department. The estimate of the Jute Commission was based upon the reports of the district officers, private individuals and their own tour impressions. The Agricultural Department

³²The districts which cultivated indigo in 1860 were Burdwan, Bankura, Birbhum, Midnapore, Malda, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Pabna, Murshidabad, Nadia, Jessore, 24 Paraganas, Mymensingh, Dacca, Faridpur, and Backarganj. See *Report of the Indigo Commission, 1860*, Appendices 1 & III

³³See *Report of the Indigo Commission, 1860*, pp. 17-18. The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal estimated in 1860 that in Bengal there was a loss of some twenty rupees on every acre of land planted to indigo because the productive resources could have been more profitably devoted to other crops. See D. H., Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India*. New York, 1966 (Reprint), p. 39

³⁴*Papers Relating to the cultivation of Indigo in the Presidency of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1860, p. 2

³⁵*Papers Relating to the cultivation of Indigo in the Presidency of Bengal*. Calcutta, 1860, p. 13.

³⁶Kerr's Report (1877), para 157

prepared the statistics on the basis of the reports supplied by the village **chawkidars** (watchman). Thus the Commission's data were probably less reliable than those of the Agricultural Department, though both are subject to the usual reservations about the agricultural statistics.

The growth of jute cultivation may be divided into three time phases—up to 1872, between 1872 and 1891/95 and between 1891/95 and 1910/14. A discussion of each period will enable us to determine the relative changes in the acreage in different districts. The reasons for such changes will be considered.

Growth up to 1872

We have no statistics of acreage before 1872. Hence it is not possible to examine the changes that took place from the time of initial commercialisation to 1872. In 1872 the districts which cultivated two per cent and above of the total arable land for jute were Pabna, Bogra, Darjeeling, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Backarganj, Hooghly, Jalpaiguri, Tippera and Dacca. The minor growers cultivating less than two per cent of the arable land were Faridpur, 24 Parganas, Howrah, Rajshahi, Noakhali, Malda, Midnapore, Jessore, Murshidabad and Burdwan (see Appendix 2).

Growth between 1872 and 1891/95.

In considering the growth of jute cultivation between 1872 and 1891/95 the districts may be divided into four groups—the districts having substantial growth by 1872, but then experiencing a fall in acreage by 1891/95, those having substantial growth by 1872 and which maintained it to 1891/95, the minor growers of 1872 whose acreage increased substantially by 1891/95 and those which increased their acreage marginally.

Four districts—Darjeeling, Dinajpur, Backarganj and Hooghly—experienced substantial growth up to 1872 but suffered decline by 1891/95 (see Appendix 3). There were three possible factors at work causing this trend: ecological change, transport difficulties and over-estimate of the acreage in 1872. Ecological reverses seem to be a remote possibility, for such reverses did not take place suddenly. Moreover, these would have affected the areas contiguous to these districts, a phenomenon of which there is no sign. There is no reference to any such changes in the district gazetteers and settlement reports.

Neither do transport difficulties seem to have been responsible. The provision of facilities making possible the marketing of products normally precede the expansion of cultivation. If we assume that transport difficulties caused the trend, we must also assume that transport facilities were better before 1872 and that the system had broken down after that year. There is no reference to adverse changes in the transport system in the district gazetteers and settle-

ment reports. As a matter of fact, no substantial improvement in the transportation and communication system took place in Darjeeling and Dinajpur until the 1870s and 1880s respectively and in Hooghly in the 1850s when railways were constructed. The internal transport and communication system remained rudimentary throughout our period. All weather roads were few and far between. The internal means of communication were the **Kuchha** (unmetalled) roads and rivers. River transport was the main means for transporting jute to Calcutta before the construction of railways. In Backarganj river communication remained prominent throughout our period.

The change, therefore, does not seem to have been caused either by ecological reverses or by transport difficulties. It was probably an illusion due to over-estimate of the acreage in 1872. Except Hooghly, all the districts were far from the capital. Because of distance the Jute Commission might not visit them or if it did, might not have studied the condition of cultivation properly. Information contained in the settlement reports and district gazetteers seems to strengthen the view that overestimation occurred. Jack wrote that in Backarganj jute was sown in small areas.³⁷ When smaller areas were under jute in the early 20th century, it is doubtful that it would occupy greater areas in 1872. O'Malley, while discussing the condition of jute cultivation in Darjeeling, stated that it was insignificant (in the early 20th century) but that it was increasing due to the facilities for marketing provided by the railways.³⁸ It can hardly be expected that jute cultivation was significant in 1872 when there were no railways. Strong wrote that in Dinajpur "until recently it (Jute) was grown primarily for local consumption."³⁹ If this view is correct, such large areas could not have been cultivated to meet a limited local demand.

The district which had substantial growth by 1872 and which increased their acreage significantly by 1891/95 were Pabna, Bogra, Rangpur, Mymensing, Tippera and Dacca, although the rate of increase in Jalpaiguri was low (see Appendix 3). Of these districts Pabna, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Dacca and possibly Bogra were growing indigo in 1860. It may be that indigo cultivation ended in these districts earlier than in others, probably because of the existence of contracts for shorter periods. The early disappearance of indigo was probably the main reason for the substantial increase in jute by 1872. Jalpaiguri and Tippera might have extended the cultivation of jute on previously unused land. The substantial increase by 1891/95 was probably due mainly to the intensive cultivation of land in the form of growing two crops in a year. All these districts had a good amount of double-cropped land in 1891/95 (see Appendix 5). The peasants had incentives to grow jute, because

³⁷ J. C. Jack *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the Backarganj District, 1900-1968*, Calcutta, 1915, p. 22

³⁸ L. S. S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling*, Calcutta, 1907, p. 64

of its high price relative to that of rice.⁴⁰ The cultivation was facilitated by the railways which were established in all the districts (except Tippera) by 1895.⁴¹

The minor growers of 1872 which had experienced substantial increase by 1891/95 were Faridpur, Rajshahi, Malda, Jessore, Murshidabad and 24 Parganas (see Appendix 3). Probably in these districts the peasants even in 1872 were in the grip of the planters. Even in the 1890s all these districts (except 24 Parganas) were growing indigo, although its cultivation was declining fast (see Appendix 5). Since the peasants were cultivating indigo even in 1872, they could not increase their jute acreage substantially in the period before that year. The gradual disappearance of indigo and the opening of opportunities for double-cropping resulted in the increase in the jute acreage by 1891/95. Malda, Murshidabad and Rajshahi were important centres of the silk industry, but in the late 19th century mulberry cultivation declined,⁴² because of Bengal silk's inability to compete with better quality silk of other countries specially those of Japan in the international market. Since jute and mulberry could be grown on the same kind of land, probably mulberry land was also used for jute cultivation in these districts. It may also be that the railways brought traders to the interior of these districts. This might have stimulated the cultivation of jute in them.

The minor growers of 1872 which increased their acreage marginally were Burdwan, Midnapore and Noakhali. As has been said, these districts could not put large areas under jute, because of the lack of necessary physical features.

Growth between 1891/95 and 1910/14

In considering the growth between 1891/95 and 1910/14 the districts may be divided into five groups—the major growing areas of 1891/95 which increased their acreage substantially by 1910/14, those whose increase was marginal, the minor growers of 1891/95 having a high rate of growth up to 1910/14, those having a low rate of growth, and those whose acreage declined.

The major jute growing districts of 1891/95 cultivating eight per cent and above of the net cropped area were Tippera, Mymensingh, Bogra, Pabna, Rangpur, Dacca and Rajshahi. Of these Tippera, Mymensingh and Bogra

³⁹F. W., Strong, *Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers*, Dinajpur, Allahabad, 1912, p. 58

⁴⁰Between 1889 and 1914 at Calcutta the price of jute fluctuated between Rs. 5 and Rs. 16 per maund while that of rice between Rs. 5 and Rs. 16 per maund. See *The Index Numbers of Indian Prices*

⁴¹By 1895 Bengal had 1,172 miles of railroad. This figure has been compiled from the *Administration Report on the Indian Railways* for 1913-1914, Vol. II

⁴²R. B. B. M. Bahadur, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Murshidabad, 1924-1932*, Alipore, 1938, pp. 1-2; *Census of India (Bengal)*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part 1, p. 55; W. H. Nelson, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Rajshahi, 1912-1922*, Calcutta, 1923, p. 18

increased their jute acreage substantially by 1910/14. The districts of Pabna, Rangpur, Dacca and Rajshahi attained marginal increase (see Appendix 4).

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At the beginning of the 20th century it became apparent that in almost all the districts there were certain difficulties which stood in the way of the expansion of jute cultivation. The district officers' reports asked for by the Bengal government in December 1913 identified them under four heads—the spatial limits, the desire of the cultivators to grow sufficient rice for consumption, non-availability and high wages of labour and a paucity of steeping water.⁴³ Of these the most common reasons were the spatial limits and the desire of the cultivators to grow sufficient rice. In spite of these difficulties, a few districts increased jute acreage substantially by 1910/14. This was due, in most cases, to an increase in double-cropped areas. It has been said that the greater portion of the jute land in the latter part of our period came from double-cropped land. In the districts of Bogra and Mymensingh there took place increases in the area cropped more than once (see Appendix 5). The rice area did not increase substantially (see Appendix 5), the double-cropped areas being used mainly for jute growing. Probably some of the areas which were under **aus** rice were cultivated for jute, followed by **aman** rice. Tippera did not increase its double-cropped area; neither was there any expansion of the net cropped area; the extension occurred at the expense of the rice area which slightly contracted in the period up to 1910/14 (see Appendix 5).

It has been said that double cropping was the main source of the extension of jute cultivation in the latter part of our period. But some districts could not increase their double-cropped areas after the 1891/92—1895/96 period. Double-cropping depended upon rainfall early in the sowing season of **aus** rice and jute, i. e., in February so that early sowing could be done, and also in December and January to allow **aman** rice to mature. The rainfall varied from district to district and hence so did the double-cropped areas. The reduction of opportunities for double-cropping due to insufficient rainfall might affect the rice area, if jute cultivation continued to increase. Moreover, since low land growing **aus** rice and jute was followed by **aman** rice, double-cropping also depended upon the availability of low land. Some districts had larger low land areas than others. Hence in many districts double-cropped areas did not increase; rice areas contracted while jute acreage continued to increase. In the districts whose double-cropped areas did not increase, the extension of the jute acreage took place at the expense of the rice area,⁴⁴ Tippera being one of them. The high

⁴³Bengal Revenue Proceedings, Branch Agriculture, August, 1914, Progs. Nos. 4-25 letters of collectors, magistrates and settlement officers to the secy., govt. of Bengal, Revenue Department.

⁴⁴In these districts **aus** rice grown on high land was probably sacrificed for jute. On such land jute could not be followed by a second crop of rice, although it could be followed by **rabi** (summer) crops such as potato, mustard and pulses.

price of jute at the beginning of the 20th century was probably the reason for this partial shift from rice to jute.

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The rate of growth in the districts of Pabna, Rangpur, Dacca and Rajshahi was low (see Appendix 4). This was due to the fact that in all these districts except Rajshahi double-cropped areas, the main source of the expansion of jute cultivation, did not increase (see Appendix 5). In Rangpur and Pabna the marginal increase was at the expense of rice and indigo. The area under rice contracted and indigo disappeared by 1909/10—1913/14 (see Appendix 5). In Rajshahi the expansion was on the double-cropped and indigo area, the former having increased and the latter disappeared (see Appendix 5). In Dacca the expansion was at the expense of crops other than rice, since the rice area was not reduced (see Appendix 5).

The minor growers of 1891/95 which subsequently had a high rate of growth up to 1910/14 were the districts of Faridpur, Nadia, 24 Parganas, Jessore, Murshidabad, Hooghly, Noakhali, Burdwan and Backarganj (see Appendix 4). The expansion of double-cropped areas in 24 Parganas, Noakhali, Burdwan and Backarganj allowed them to increase jute acreage substantially (see Appendix 5). In Faridpur, Jessore and Murshidabad extension took place on the indigo land and rice area. Indigo cultivation disappeared from the three districts and the rice area decreased in Faridpur and Murshidabad (see Appendix 5). In Nadia the extension was made possible by the substantial contraction of the indigo area (see Appendix 5). In Hooghly the substantial expansion was due to the increase in the net cropped area.⁴⁵ The partial shift from rice to jute was also responsible for the expansion (see Appendix 5).

The minor growers of 1891/95 which continued a low rate of growth up to 1910/14 were the districts of Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Khulna. The districts which sustained a decline were Darjeeling, Malda and Midnapore (see Appendix 4). It has been seen that all these districts had limited land for jute.

Between 1870 and 1914 Bengal thus increased the area under jute. In 1872 Bengal (including Bihar, Orissa and Assam) cultivated less than a million acres of jute. The acreage thereafter increased to more than two million in 1891-95 and to more than three million by 1910-14 (see Table 3).

This increase in the acreage under jute did not generally take place at the expense of food crop land. Land for jute came fundamentally from double-cropped lands and former indigo lands. Table 4 shows that jute acreage increased from 2.2 million in 1891-95 to 3.2 million in 1906—10, and double-cropped areas from 4.6 million acres to 6 million acres whilst indigo acreage decreased

⁴⁵See Agricultural Statistics of Bengal

TABLE 3

GROWTH OF JUTE ACREAGE

Year	Acreage	% of change	Annual average rate of growth
1872	925,899	—	—
1891/92—95/96	2,207,175	+138.38	6.01
1910/11—14/15	3,137,550	+42.15	2.21

Source:—for 1872 Kerr's Report, p. 65 ; for 1891/92-95/96 and 1910/11-14/15 Statistical Abstract for British India.

from nearly a quarter million to two thousand. Thus, for accommodating a million acres of jute, up to 2 million acres of land were available. From 1891—95 to 1906—10 there was no diminution of rice area. From 1906—10 to 1911—13 jute acreage increased very little and the double cropped area shrank, probably because lands under jute and **aus** rice could not be planted with **aman** rice and **rabi** (summer) crops in the weather conditions of these years. For mainly the same reason the rice area slightly contracted. In the last period in some districts rice land might have been sacrificed for jute. But generally jute did not 'rob' rice land. Our finding thus disproves the view of B.M. Bhatia that the expansion of cash crop cultivation in India in the latter part of the nineteenth century took place at the expense of food crops.⁴⁶

TABLE 4

THE JUTE, DOUBLE-CROPPED, INDIGO AND RICE ACREAGE

(1) Years	(2) jute area in 000's acres	(3) double-cropped area in 000's acres	(4) indigo area in 000's acres	(5) rice area in in 000's acres
1891—95	2,207	4,566	222	19,880
1896—1900	2,046	5,086	139	20,520
1901—05	2,601	5,650	19	20,395
1906—10	3,177	6,040	2	20,730
1911—13	3,135	4,960	1	20,534

Source : For col. 2 Statistical Abstract for British India : for cols. 3, 4, and 5 Agricultural Statistics of Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam.
All-India acreage. *Excluding Chittagong Hill Tracts.

⁴⁶ See B. M; Bhatia, "Agriculture and Co-operation", V. B. Singh ed. **Economic History of India, 1857-1956**, Bombay, 1965, p. 124.

There remains, however, the possibility that there was a shift in land use so that a higher proportion of better land was placed under jute cultivation, leaving relatively inferior land for rice. To the extent that this was true a constant acreage under rice would, of course, produce a lesser yield. It would appear, however, that the extent to which this happened was not great.⁴⁷ Against the 'loss' of rice potential must be placed the effects of spending the revenues from jute exports,⁴⁸ some of which took the form of imported foods.⁴⁹ It would seem reasonable to conclude that food imports would at least compensate for the assumed loss of rice yield.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Normal Rainfall (annual average) in the districts of Bengal in inches

Districts					Rainfall
West Bengal :—					
Burdwan	...	...	...	...	53.95
Bankura	...	...	...	...	55.85
Birbhum	...	...	...	...	56.63
Midnapore	...	...	...	...	58.91
Hooghly	...	...	...	...	57.22
Howrah	...	...	...	...	56.51
North Bengal :—					
Dinajpur	...	...	...	...	62.92
Malda	...	...	...	...	56.94
Rajshahi	...	...	...	...	56.66
Rangpur	...	...	...	...	81.92
Bogra	...	...	...	...	64.69
Pabna	...	...	...	...	61.09
Darjeeling	...	...	...	...	126.26
Jalpaiguri	...	...	...	...	128.97

⁴⁷According to Blyn, the decline of rice yield per acre in Bengal was slight. See Blyn (1966), p. 174.

⁴⁸At the end of our period Bengal's annual earnings from jute export alone amounted to merely 15 million pounds. See *Statistical Abstract for British India*. In the same period more than 13½ million pounds were annually earned from jute sales to Calcutta Mills.

⁴⁹At the end of our period the annual import of rice (husked and unhusked) from Burma to Bengal averaged more than 4½ million cwt. See *Annual Statement of the Sea-Borne Trade and Navigation of Burma with Foreign Countries and Indian Ports*.

APPENDIX 1

(continued from previous page)

Districts					Rainfall
Central Bengal :—					
Murshidabad	...	...	...	...	53.44
Nadia	...	...	...	...	57.03
Jessore	...	...	...	...	59.53
24 Paraganas	...	...	...	...	61.95
East Bengal :—					
Dacca	...	...	...	...	71.71
Faridpur	...	...	...	...	65.63
Backarganj	...	...	...	...	82.87
Mymensingh	...	...	...	...	85.67
Tippera	...	...	...	...	75.41
Noakhali	...	...	...	...	113.6
Khulna	...	...	...	...	64.49
Chittagong	...	...	...	...	111.43
Chittagong Hill Tracts	...	...	...	...	94.27

Source :—District Gazetteers (Statistics) of the respective districts.

APPENDIX 2

Jute growing in 1872

(Jute acreage as percentage of total arable land)

Districts	% of total arable land			
Major jute growing districts cultivating 2 per cent and above of arable land.				
Pabna	14.00
Bogra	11.30
Darjeeling	9.10
Dinajpur	7.10
Rangpur	6.30
Mymensingh	6.30
Backarganj	5.80
Hooghly	5.00
Jalpaiguri	4.40
Tippera	3.90
Dacca	2.40

APPENDIX 2

Minor jute growing districts cultivating less than 2 percent of the total arable land.

Faridpur ...	...	...	1.90
24 Paraganas	...	...	1.60
Howrah ...	...	...	1.20
Rajshahi ...	...	...	1.10
Noakhali ...	...	...	0.60
Malda ...	...	...	0.50
Midnapore ...	...	...	0.30
Jessore ...	...	...	0.30
Murshidabad	...	...	0.30
Burdwan ...	...	...	0.20
Nadia ...	...	...	Not available

Source : Compiled from Kerr's Report (1877), p. 65.

APPENDIX 3

Growth of Jute Cultivation between 1872 and 1891-95

Districts	% of total arable land in 1872	% of total cultivated land in 1891-95
Districts having substantial growth in 1872 but fall in the acreage in 1891-95		
Darjeeling ...	9.10	6.78
Dinajpur ...	7.10	6.08
Backarganj ...	5.80	0.48
Hooghly ...	5.00	2.60
Districts having substantial growth in 1872 as well as in 1891-95		
Pabna ...	14.00	20.82
Bogra ...	11.30	14.54
Rangpur ...	6.30	16.26
Mymensingh ...	6.30	17.80
Jalpaiguri ...	4.40	7.56
Tippera ...	3.90	19.50
Dacca ...	2.40	18.00

APPENDIX 3

Minor growers of 1872 having substantial growth in 1891-95

Faridpur	...	1.90	...	7.38
24 Paraganas	...	1.20	...	3.86
Rajshahi	...	1.10	...	9.78
Malda	...	0.50	...	4.74
Jessore	...	0.30	...	3.64
Murshidabad	...	0.30	...	2.66

Minor growers of 1872 having marginal growth in 1891-95

Noakhali	...	0.60	...	1.12
Midnapore	...	0.30	...	0.68
Burdwan	...	0.20	...	0.88

Source : For col. 2, **Kerr's Report** (1877), p. 65 ; for col. 3, compiled from **Agricultural Statistics of Bengal, 1891-92—1895-96.**

APPENDIX 4

Growth of Jute Cultivation between 1891-95 and 1910-14

(1) Districts	(2) % of the total cultivated land in 1891-95	(3) % of total cultivated land in 1910-14
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Major jute growing districts of 1891-95 (cultivating 8 percent and above of the total cultivated land) having substantial increase in 1910-14

Tippera	...	19.50	...	24.01
Mymensingh	...	17.80	...	27.68
Bogra	...	14.54	...	25.00

Major jute growing districts of 1891-95 (cultivating 8 per cent and above of the total cultivated land) having low growth rate in 1910-14

Pabna	...	20.82	...	21.16
Rangpur	...	16.26	...	17.72
Dacca	...	18.00	...	18.16
Rajshahi	...	9.78	...	10.92

APPENDIX 4

(continued from previous page)

(1)	PDF Compressor Free Version	(2)	(3)
Districts	% of the total cultivated land in 1891-95	% of total cultivated land in 1910-14	

Minor growers of 1891-95
(cultivating less than 8 per cent
of the total cultivated land)
having high rate of growth in
1910-14

Faridour	..	7.38	16.00
Nadia	...	6.32	9.84
24 Paraganas	...	3.86	8.74
Jessore	...	3.64	10.24
Murshidabad	...	2.66	5.90
Hooghly	...	2.60	13.22
Noakhali	...	1.12	4.18
Burdwan	...	0.88	1.66
Backarganj	...	0.48	2.36

Minor growers of 1891-95
(cultivating less than 8 per
cent of the total cultivated
land) having low rate of growth.

Jalpaiguri	...	7.56	8.06
Dinajpur	..	6.08	7.74
Khulna	...	2.54	3.24

Minor growers of 1891-95
(cultivating less than 8 per cent
of the total cultivated land)
suffering from decline in 1910-14

Darjeeling	...	6.78	2.34
Malda	...	4.74	4.18
Midnapore	...	0.68	0.66

Source : Compiled from the Agricultural Statistics of Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam.

APPENDIX 5

Double-Cropped, rice and indigo areas of the Districts of Bengal in 600's acres (Five Year Average)

Districts		Double-cropped areas		Rice areas		Indigo areas	
		1891-2 to 1895-96	1909-10 to 1913-14	1891-92 to 1895-96	1909-10 to 1913-14	1891-92 to 1895-96	1909-10 to 1913-14
Burdwan	...	160	220	976	892	7	—
Midnapore	...	148	45	1,564	1,444	40	—
Hooghly	...	72	72	432	417	—	—
24 Paraganas	...	37	47	920	894	—	—
Khulna	...	57	60	716	787	—	—
Nadia	...	274	247	364	627	51	1
Jessore	...	268	124	840	878	16	—
Murshidabad	...	227	210	530	515	66	—
Dinajpur	...	58	10	1,402	1,100	0.10	—
Rajshahi	...	286	321	780	843	8	—
Rangpur	...	469	368	1,205	1,157	7	—
Bogra	...	129	261	432	454	—	—
Pabna	...	649	457	710	608	0.18	—
Darjeeling	...	32	11	100	41	—	—
Jalpaiguri	...	104	164	671	717	—	—
Dacca	...	321	318	765	980	—	—
Faridpur	...	189	124	970	675	1	—
Backarganj	...	94	244	1,152	1,531	—	—
Mymensingh	...	180	890	1,484	1,603	—	—
Tippera	...	451	356	1,065	1,062	—	—
Noakhali	...	72	364	754	1,016	—	—
Malda	...	72	126	325	600	21	—

Source : Compiled from the Agricultural Statistics of Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam for the respective years.

Identity Crisis and the Modernizing Consciousness of the Bengali Intelligentsia—1835-1877

David Kopf

In my research of 1969-1971 on the socio-religious reform movement known as the Brahmo Samaj, I came across a number of case studies on what conveniently may be called "identity crisis" a psychological condition occasioned by stresses between the processes of traditional socialization and modernizing consciousness. Throughout the 19th century, during the much-debated Bengal renaissance, a number of Hindu adolescents experienced grave doubts about the truthfulness and utility of their own cultural heritage and traditional values. Their dissatisfaction with existing indigenous practices and their need for a new identity compounded by personal problems led to states of psychological anguish. All of them found peace first by placing themselves under the care of a charismatic leader and secondly by participating in the Brahmo Samaj which represented a community of like-minded individuals, a movement with a positive ideology, and a new, satisfying collective identity.

The following case studies are selective portraits of Brahmo leaders throughout the 19th century. All of them with the exception of Bijoy Krishna Goswami left elaborate autobiographies in Bengali or English which offer clear and conclusive evidence about the inner anguish and turmoil experienced as adolescents undergoing identity crisis. Since the Brahmo Samaj was essentially religious in its orientation, it should come as no surprise that each of the cases demonstrates the importance of rational and liberal theism in the formation of modernizing consciousness among the progressive Hindu intelligentsia of Bengal.

Rammohun Roy, father of the Brahmo movement and community, has not been selected in this study simply because no data is available on his psychological reaction to tradition and modernity before he settled in Calcutta in 1815. Debendranath Tagore who actually founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1843 and was its most important leader until 1859, is the first subject of my analy-

sis. Rajnarayan Bose, hailed by many as the "Grandfather of Bengali Nationalism", has been chosen as the second case study. Keshub Chandra Sen, who dominated Brahmo reform efforts from 1859 to 1878, has been selected as well as has his disciple, Protap Chandra Mazumdar, favorite of the American Unitarians. Bijoy Krishna Goswami who is significant for having achieved his modernism without the benefit of English education is also treated in the study but largely through biographical material provided by his disciple, Bipin Chandra Pal. Sivanath Sastri, best loved leader of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj from 1878 to 1912, is also analyzed as is Sivanath Tattvabhusan, brilliant theologian and philosopher known to his critics as the "Brahmo scholastic".

The man who would carry on Rammohun Roy's work as reformer after his death in 1833 was born as Dwarkanath Tagore's son in 1817, although there is little to suggest his future role from his early life. He was brought up precisely as one might expect by a father who was a zemindari Brahman with Western contacts and eclectic taste. He was pampered in luxury¹, tutored at home in both English and Bengali², introduced to Kali worship by his mother³, and to Vaishnavism through family association with the Goswamis of Khardah⁴. Indeed one is hard put to discover just what effect Unitarianism had on the private affairs of Dwarkanath through his son's upbringing except that the boy was sent to Rammohun Roy's Vedantic Academy⁵.

Also as was customary, he was married early, at twelve years of age, to a girl of six⁶ rather much as his father before him married a girl of six while he himself was fifteen years old⁷. In 1830 Debendranath was sent to Hindu College, the only Western-style institution of higher learning in Calcutta at the time, but during his five years there it can hardly be said that he distinguished himself in any way as a student. He was neither a rebel against Hindu society as were the famed followers of the Eurasian Professor Derozio, nor was he an ardent defender of Hinduism in any way whatever⁸. All this time Debendranath ate meat with his father prepared by a Muslim cook outside the house and he drank wine with his father, a habit evidently introduced by Rammohun⁹.

¹Debendranath Thakur, *Atta-Jibani*, ed. Satis Chandro Chakrabarti (fourth edition; Kalikata : Bisso-Bharati Granthalay, 1962), p. 248

²*Ibid.*, p. 262

³S. Sastri, *History of the Brahmo Samaj* (Calcutta : R. Chatterjee, 1911), I, p. 83.

⁴Rabindra Bharati University, Museum, Calcutta. "Manuscript Biography of Devendra Nath Tagore" in Khitindra Nath Thakur Collection.

⁵D. Thakur, p. 262

⁶Manuscript Biography of Tagore," p. 10

⁷K. N. Thakur, *Darakanath Thakurer Jibani* (Kalikata: Rabindra Bharati Bisso bidyalay, 1969), p. 71

⁸D. Thakur, p. 262

⁹K. N. Thakur, p. 74

In 1835 Debendranath's grandmother died and the event affected him deeply. While his father went off on a pilgrimage to Vasisht centres in northern India, the eighteen year old Debendranath underwent a transformation of character and mental outlook. According to Debendranath himself, two changes occurred immediately : he sought the truth about the enigma of human existence and he sought to free himself of his addiction to material wants and comforts¹⁰.

Subsequently, he developed a God-intoxication which made some of his relations believe he had gone mad.¹¹ Meanwhile he gave up meat, wine, and most of the luxuries he had acquired from his father.¹² Indeed, he seems to have undergone a rebellious hatred of his father at this time which was manifested in three ways. First, by studying the ancient Hindu Scriptures under Vidyabagish he rediscovered Rammohun's reform ideology which exposed to him his father's inconsistencies of behaviour.¹³ Debendranath was now shocked by the hypocrisy between the ideal of the Brahmo faith and the fact that idols were still being worshipped in the Tagore household, that Durga Puja was celebrated yearly, and that after dining with European members of the household purified themselves by bathing in the Ganges.¹⁴

Secondly, Debendranath repudiated his father's worldliness with all his pompous display, status in the eyes of the foreigner, and lavish expenditure of wealth.¹⁵ Thirdly, Debendranath became increasingly apathetic about administering the family landholding and business properties with the inevitable result that his father was infuriated and the gulf between them widened.¹⁶

Debendranath's crisis of identity, as it were, precipitated by his grandmother's death, certainly predisposed this to a career of religious reformer but it does not explain why he chose a particular path to follow. He did not turn to Rammohun's Hindu reform overnight for he did not officially embrace Brahmoism until eight years after the dramatic turning point in his life. It was the challenge of orthodox Christian missionaries in Bengal bent on conquering the minds of young Bengali intellectuals for Jesus that provides the answer to why Debendranath ultimately reawakened Rammohun's Brahmo ideal and developed it ideologically and institutionally.

Rajnarian Bose was born in a village of the Twenty-Four Pargannas on September 7, 1826. Among the first generation of Brahmo disciples he was

¹⁰D. Thakur, p. 269

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 270

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 269

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 295

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 249, 259, 276, 277

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 249—50

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 269

the only important leader who was not a Brahman but a Kayastha. Rammohun Roy was Kulin Brahman whereas Debendranath Tagore was a Perali Brahman. More significant is the fact that his father, Nanda Kishore Bose, who did clerical jobs of various sorts was among the earliest followers of Rammohun Roy.¹⁷ This evidently applied to his father's brother as well¹⁸, indicating that not all of Rammohun's backers were powerful zemindars. Equally important is the fact that his father knew English well and placed great stress on gaining proficiency in it.¹⁹ One might add the facts that Nanda Kishore was among the first students of Rammohun's Vedantic Academy, that he accepted Vedantism as his religious orientation and that he served for some time as Rammohun's secretary.²⁰

Rajnarian was brought to Calcutta in 1833 for education and was fortunate enough to gain admission into David Hare's School. This institution was considered as the best primary and secondary school in the metropolis and as a preparatory school for Hindu College, India's premier institution of higher learning.²¹ Contrary to the idealized reports on the school for late nineteenth-century renaissance literature, Rajnarian's own candid accounts of the institution were brutally realistic about David Hare's training method. Boys were beaten if their hands or fingernails were dirty or if they violated any rule in the slightest degree or even if in learning English penmanship, the letters were not written in the same size and style.²² Rajnarian tried desperately to keep one step ahead of Hare in order not to be beaten. Though he succeeded in doing so, he lived in constant fear and at eleven years of age wrote an essay designed to persuade Hare to give up his sadistic activity.²³ Apparently, one of Bose's friends committed suicide as a result of harsh treatment.²⁴

In 1840 at fourteen years of age, he left Hare's School and recalled later that he learned best of all while there was the ability to express himself well in English. He was also quite good in debating²⁵ and cultivated a deep love for English literature. Like many Bengali boys since his time, Rajnarian developed a fascination for the school hand-driven printing press which he and others operated to bring out the school newspaper every Monday.²⁶ It should be

17 Yoges Candra Bagal, **Rajnarayan Basu** (Kalikata: Baniy Sahitto-Parisad, 1955) p. 6 ; R. Basu, **Atto-Charit** (Kalikata : Kuntalin Press, 1909), p. 8.

18 Basu, p. 6

19 *Ibid.*, p. 7

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*, p. 12

22 *Ibid.*, p. 13

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*

25 Bagal, p. 8

26 Basu, p. 15

added that since David Hare was an outspoken atheist, religion was totally ignored in the school curriculum.

As with Debendranath and other members of the Calcutta elite, Rajnarian went on to Hindu College.²⁷ But unlike Debendranath, Rajnarian distinguished himself as a student. He read avariciously in the Western classics and showed fondness for English historians like Gibbon and Macaulay²⁸. He won prizes annually²⁹ and was one of Principal Richardson's best students of Shakespeare.³⁰ Indeed, it would be interesting to contrast Rajnarian the later nationalist with Rajnarian the college student acquiring remarkable proficiency in a language, literature, and history entirely alien to his own.

Moreover, as a member of Young Bengal, being nurtured totally on things foreign and without any religious or moral training, he began to drift, like most of his peers, into a life pattern based largely on observation of the English in India. He started drinking and joined steamer parties "to hunt birds and eat their flesh."³¹

By 1844 Rajnarian had become so addicted to wine and was drunk so often—because "drink was a sign of civilization" to Young Bengal³²—that he was compelled to leave college³³. Then, on December 7, 1845, his father died and like Debendranath ten years earlier, Rajnarian underwent an extreme crisis of identity. His reading habits changed radically in the direction of religious literature. For the first time he read Rammohun Roy's **Precepts of Jesus** and the available works of the American W. E. Channing.³⁴ Then the "most important event of his life took place" when "at the age of nineteen I came in contact with Debendranath Tagore and became a Brahmo."³⁶

There can be little doubt that the turning point in his life was in 1846 when he converted to Brahmoism by signing the community oath or covenant.³⁷ He had found meaning in life and his keen intellect was now utilized for a constructive purpose. Even more significant in view of his subsequent contribution to Indian nationalism, he turned to the Bengali language and indigenous tradition for inspiration. Rajnarian has written that though Debendranath

²⁷Ibid., pp. 27—28

²⁸Ibid

²⁹Bagal, p. 12

³⁰Ibid., p. 14

³¹Basu, p. 33

³²Ibid., p. 42

³³Ibid., p. 41

³⁴Ibid., p. 39

³⁵Ibid

³⁶Ibid

³⁷Ibid., p. 46

appreciated his knowledge of English and prevailed upon him to make use of it for the Samaj, he also felt that "I didn't know good Bengali."³⁸ This was true, for Rajnarayan, and "I was ashamed in learning good Bengali."³⁹

Though there was nothing in the Brahmo oath compelling members to abstain from drinking and other vices, it seems likely that by the time Rajnarayan signed the covenant, he had already given up drinking, smoking ganja and all the other "Young Bengal habits" acquired as a student.⁴⁰

The family which Keshub Chandra Sen was born into on November 19, 1838, was both distinguished and wealthy among the colonialist-inspired Calcutta elite. His grandfather was Ram Comul Sen, member of the earliest modernized intelligentsia which originated in the British Orientalist period (1770-1830).⁴¹ In fact, Ram Comul Sen owed his rise to fame and fortune as professional intellectual to H.H. Wilson, his lifelong friend and 'window to the West'.⁴² Ram Comul joined the Radhakant Deb faction of the **Dharma Sabha** in opposition to Bentinck's decree abolishing *sati* (1830).⁴³ Sen's last and most lucrative position was chief native manager of the Government Mint of Calcutta, an appointment which he owed to Wilson's influence and which he successfully handed on to his son, Peary Mohun Sen, Keshub's father.⁴⁴

Sociologically, in view of Keshub's lineage, two significant things happened when he decided in favour of Debendranath Tagore's **Brahmo Dharma**. First, his was the earliest example of a Calcutta elitist family which had originally opposed the families of Rammohun Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore but shifted their ground as proponents of Brahmoism. Secondly, with the newly-formed allegiance to the Brahmo Samaj, Keshub's family and lineal descendants constituted the first important Bengali Vaidya converts to the reformed faith and community. Through Keshub, and in light of the fact that Vaidyas were not so much landowners as they were professionals, there took place an infusion of middle class types into Brahmo ranks which tended to change the character of the association.

In terms of educational background, there was a similarity between Keshub and Debendranath. Both went to Hindu College and both were mediocre students at best. The contrast seems perhaps more significant. Keshub was

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 52

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 53

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 46

⁴¹D. Kopf, **British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance** (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1969). pp. 108-126

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 116-117

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 266

⁴⁴G. S. Leonard, **A History of the Brahmo Samaj** (Calcutta: Haripada Mukherji, 1879), p. 196

very restless intellectual as a youth continually itching with an uncontrollable impulse to embrace new ideas, to form new organizations. In Darjeeling two years before his death while already suffering from diabetes, he reminisced about his youth to his disciple Protap Chandra Mazumdar :

*To me, the state of being on fire is the state of salvationIt was death to me to awake from my slumber without the consciousness of being baptised anew in fireFrom when I was young, I have always kept burning the fire of enthusiasm... and to keep up the condition of heat I have always run after what is new, always wished for new acquirements, new ideas. what is new is warm, what is old is cold.*⁴⁵

According to Protap Mazumdar who knew the reformer more intimately than any other person, the year 1856 was probably the most critical one in Keshub's youth and adolescence. First, Keshub's family arranged a marriage between himself, a student of eighteen to a girl nine years old,⁴⁶ Secondly, he was caught cheating in a mathematics examination, an experience about which he "felt very sensitive" and which "made him so chronically depressed" that "his whole mental development was affected by it."⁴⁷ Thirdly, Keshub turned to acting, which he was rather good at, especially when performing Hamlet. Wrote Mazumdar, "he had the constitution of the Danish prince by nature."⁴⁸

At this juncture of Keshub's life, Protap Chandra had depicted him as "morose, and, and stern" with the result that "few followed and fewer loved him."⁴⁹ Keshub tolerated no "gossiping or laughing" but had become "rigorous and truthful in speech". Keshub was then a "youth of so few words" that his neighbours believed him to be "proud, contemptuous and unsociable." The real young man Keshub, concluded Mazumdar :

.....read austere books of philosophy and sermons bating poetry...took long, solitary walks....in the darkness of night...and wrote secret prayers which he read by himself
...⁵⁰

In 1857, Keshub was a student of philosophy and psychology and was depicted as a "hard reader" of Unitarian theology from eleven o'clock in the morning to six in the evening."⁵¹ It was at this time that he started the

⁴⁵K. C. Sen, *Jeeban-Veda*, tr. B. Mazoomdar (Calcutta : Keshub Mission Society, 1915), pp. 17, 18

⁴⁶P. C. Mazoomdar, *The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chandra Sen* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1887), p. 95

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 92—93

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 101

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 97

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 105

Goodwill Fraternity.⁵² The group represented Keshub's first attempt to organize a religious society and it is meaningful that he chose as his source of inspiration for sermons the essays of Theodore Parker.⁵³

During one of Keshub's sermons there appeared "a tall, princely man in the full glory of his health and manhood."⁵⁴ He came "attended by liveried servants" and, as Mazumdar was quick to note, he was surrounded by a "massive stalwart of Brahmos" who "wore long gold chains and impenetrable countenances."⁵⁵ Thus Keshub met Debendranath Tagore for the first time.

Debendranath had recently returned from a long trip to the Himalayas, an excursion which has been interpreted generally as an escape from both property management and the particular turn of Brahmo affairs. In 1854 with the death of his brother Girendranath, who had been managing the Tagore estates, Debendranath underwent certain financial difficulties which actually led to his arrest at the instance of a money lender.⁵⁶ Also, Brahmo affairs were gradually being dominated by rationalists and agnostics in the **Tattvabodhini Sabha**. Debendranath had left for the Himalayas in 1855 just at the time of Akhoy Kumar Dutt's mental collapse and Vidyasagar's rise as a popular hero.

The attraction between Keshub and Debendranath, which appears to have been instantaneous, was in part that of a son in search of a father substitute. Keshub was twenty at the time while Debendranath was forty. Keshub had lost his real father when he was ten.⁵⁷ But there was also Debendranath's attraction for the young man who had a brilliant oratorical gift, was an effective organizer, had Unitarian theological convictions, and perhaps most important, was a confirmed theist like himself.

Another relationship made at this time and no less important was the one between Keshub and Debendranath's son, Satyendranath. Born in 1842, he was six years Keshub's junior and in 1858 at the time of their meeting, Satyendranath was a brilliant student at Calcutta University. Of all Debendranath's sons, he was by far the most Westernized and ultimately the most successful in carving out for himself a distinguished career in the upper echelons of the Indian covenanted service. And of all the sons, Satyendranath was the most directly influenced by Keshub, whom he revered in the early years as the true leader of his generation of young Brahmos.

⁵²Ibid., p. 102

⁵³Ibid

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 103

⁵⁵Ibid

⁵⁶D. Thakur, *Atto-Jibani*, p. 400

⁵⁷Mazumdar, p. 73

Later in life, in an autobiographical sketch, Satyendranath admitted that in the mid-fifties "the progress of the Brahmo Samaj was slow."⁵⁸ Then when his father died in an epoch making event" took place and a "new chapter in the history of the Brahmo Samaj was opened."⁵⁹ It was Keshub's coming into the Samaj which "created a new life" by giving the society a "new image." He recalled how "I also was swept by the tide of the new enthusiasm."⁶⁰

In September, 1859, Keshub did a daring thing on the invitation of Debendranath and Satyendranath. He left his wife and family and secretly joined the Tagores on a forty day cruise to Ceylon.⁶¹ Keshub's diary of the trip reads too much like the Puritan seeking to purge himself of his guilt of "idleness" which daily increased its burden on his conscience and from which he sought release back to active life.⁶² The experience appears to have drawn him closer to the Tagore and to have convinced him that he had to make the break with his family to become a Brahmo.

Though for the next two years he laboured for the Brahmo Samaj, the actual family rupture did not come until April 13, 1862, when irate relatives led by his uncle tried to bar Keshub and his wife from going to Debendranath's home for dinner. Quite possibly, the objection by Keshub's elders may be explained by the fact that the Tagores, though Brahmans, were Peralis. This designation meant, in the Bengali Hindu society of the time, that they were doomed as impure for all time because one of their ancestors had the misfortune of inhaling the fumes of a dish of *pilau* (rice) prepared by a Muslim.

It appears also that Keshub was excommunicated and physically stopped from re-entering the family estate. Thus the year 1862 was another critical one for Keshub who, according to Mazumdar, lay bedridden with illness much of the time as a house guest of the Tagores.⁶³ Satyendranath has recalled the year with considerable nostalgia. "At last Keshub came to live in our house with his wife", he wrote, "and my father accepted him as a son."⁶⁴

Keshub's arrival into the Tagore household had enormous religious significance as well. A special Brahmo ceremony was conducted sometime in 1862 in which two key prayers were offered : one by Debendranath and one by Keshub. They suggest common bonds of filial affection and theism. Deben-

⁵⁸S. Thakur, *Amar Ballo Katha O Amar Bombai Prabas* (Kalikata : Indian Publishing House, 1915), p. 57

⁵⁹*Ibid*

⁶⁰*Ibid*

⁶¹Mazumdar, pp. 127, 127

⁶²K. C. Sen, *Diary in Ceylon* (Calcutta : Brahmo Tract Society, 1888), p. 52

⁶³Mazumdar, p. 115

⁶⁴S. Thakur, p. 57

dranath called Keshub a "saintly youth" who "is to me dearer than my son" and who is "religiously of undivided heart with me."⁶⁵ At the termination of the prayer, Debendranath's praise of Keshub was uncharacteristically excessive :

*Of all who have been associated with me, I declare I have not met with a holier, none more inflexible in purpose, more enlightened, more endowed with spiritual powers as this holy one.*⁶⁶

Protap Chandra Mazumdar was a relative of Keshub Chandra Sen. His grandfather, Tara Chandra Mazumdar had married a niece of Ram Camul Sen, Keshub's grandfather. Protap Chandra was born on October 20, 1840 in Bashberia, a Hoogly village twenty miles from Calcutta.⁶⁷ Interestingly enough he spent his youth at his paternal village of Garifa which was also Keshub's paternal village.⁶⁸

Mazumdar's father, a senior bank clerk, died when the boy was only nine years old. That experience plus the treatment of his mother as a widow in the paternal household deeply affected the sensitive boy. He himself recorded much later how his mother was considered "excess baggage" and when in 1858 she was seriously ill from cholera, the family did nothing for her but let her die alone and unattended.⁶⁹

Everything about Mazumdar's upbringing he later recalled as being brutal and lacking conscience or consciousness. To get ahead, for example, required a good knowledge of English. Thus at six years of age the boy was compelled to start learning the alien language whether he wished to or not. Because he was beaten for resisting the learning experience, Protap Chandra applied himself to the mastery of English and succeeded admirably at a tender age.

As a member of the Westernized elite, the family was able to get Protap Chandra admitted into Hare School, followed in 1857 by his admission into Hindu College—then already called Presidency College.⁷⁰ Also as was the practice, Protap was compelled to marry while in college,⁷¹ a custom that often had disastrous results for the student.

The most critical year for the adolescent Mazumdar was 1859. His mother having died in July of the preceeding year, he found himself "adrift" in the streets

⁶⁵Two Documents Reprinted : Mahrshi Devendra Nath Tagore and Keshub Chunder, ed., J. K. Koar (Calcutta : Peace Cortage, 1935)

⁶⁶Ibid

⁶⁷Niranyan Niyogi, Risi Pratap Chandra (Kalikata : Art Press, 1936), p. 2

⁶⁸Ibid

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 3

⁷⁰P. C. Mazumdar, **Heart Beats** (Calcutta: Naba-bidhan Publication Committee, 1935), p. xii

⁷¹Niyogi, p. 3

of Calcutta without character, purpose, or direction.⁷² He described himself then as a spirited young man with much "intelligence, sentiment and power of language" but without much "force of character."⁷³

The nineteen year old young man in search of an identity took himself and his child bride to Keshub who convinced him to become a Brahmo. Like Keshub who had lost his own father early, Protap Chandra viewed Debendranath as a father substitute, guide, and preceptor. Thus without much hesitation Mazumdar signed the Brahmo covenant even though, in his own words ;

*It meant personal sacrifice, alienation from friends, bitter sorrows as well as grand aspirations, uplifting experiences and glorious truths.*⁷⁴

Like Keshub, Protap's family turned against him when they learned that he and his wife had dined at the house of Debendranath Tagore.⁷⁵ Mazumdar's family cut off contact with them and took steps that led ultimately to excommunication.⁷⁶ To Protap and his wife it meant that :

*No cook would prepare their meals. No servant would touch their clothes. Even the people of the neighbourhood would not talk to them ... The experience was powerful and humiliating.*⁷⁷

Protap Chandra's agonizing youthful experiences with Hindu society and his subsequent excommunication seems to have had a profound impact on his ideological commitment to Brahmoism. He became a foe of the injustices attributed by many Brahmos to decadent popular Hinduism. Until 1872 when he moved into the Bharat Ashram, he lived with his wife as a nuclear family in the office of the Indian Mirror, the Brahmo Newspaper which he himself edited.⁷⁸

Not until 1862 when his family and friends drove him out of society did his full commitment to Brahmoism begin.⁷⁹ He recalled later how for the first time "I was given a purpose in life, a definite direction"⁸⁰ Through the Brahmo Samaj and responding to the "impulse of a high, loving merciful spirit,"⁸¹ he could rise above his deplorable situation. The high moral aspect of Brahmo religion gave him at last his life long identity :

*The Brahmo Samaj gave me that. Brahmo Religion furnished the key to all that I am, to all that I know.....*⁸²

⁷²Mazumdar, *Heart Beats*, p. xix.

⁷³Ibid

⁷⁴Ibid., p. xxiv

⁷⁵Niyogi, p. 6

⁷⁶Ibid

⁷⁷*Heart Beats*, p. xxviii

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. xxx—xxxii

⁷⁹S. C. Bose, *Life of Protap Chunder Mozoomder* (Calcutta : Nava-bidhan Trust, 1940), I. p. 17

⁸⁰Ibid

⁸¹Ibid

⁸²Ibid

According to Mazumdar, he was possessed and read "everything that I could lay my hands on."⁸³ During the very years that Keshub struggled with the old guard around Debendranath, young Protap read the modern theologians in general, the Unitarians in particular, and a variety of other books in his endless "path of knowledge."⁸⁴ Said he in his autobiographical notes :

My thirst for knowledge was insatiable. I cannot say I understood all I read but it did me one good : it concentrated my powers, and gave compactness to my character, and continuity to my faith and devotion.

An important consequence of his wide reading habits was his growing eclecticism as an intellectual and his growing partiality to Western Unitarianism as a Brahmo. He became the most outgoing universalist in the Keshubite camp and certainly the most sophisticated. Others were surely more westernized than Mazumdar but few others were as knowledgeable and as openminded as he.

The circumstances of his birth and early development, his education both on lower and higher levels, certainly indicates that Bijoy Krishna Goswami was, among all the Brahmos discussed so far, the least Westernized intellectual of all. Even Vidyasagar though a product of Calcutta Sanskrit College, has left sufficient evidence in the files of the institution to prove a very deep understanding of the English language, European Philosophy, and modern science.

But Bijoy Krishna, born in 1841 in Santipur, Nadia, in the vicinity of the sixteenth century Vaishnava reformation, was himself descended from an **Advaita** preceptor in Chaitanaya's Vaishnava movement.⁸⁶ Bijoy Krishna's father was a devout Vaishnava Goswami while his uncle was a Bhagavat scholar who went about North Bengal offering Vaishnava **mantras** and collecting donations for the local Goswami temple dedicated to Lord Krishna.⁸⁷

As we have seen, Bijoy Krishna was by no means the only high caste Vaishnava encountered among the Brahmos. Debendranath and Keshub were both born into families with that particular religious persuasion. Perhaps Vaishnavism did influence Debendranath but in his **Brahmo Dharma** he used not a single source from the rich medieval heritage of Bengali vaishnavism. Neither was Keshub in his early years especially inspired by Vaishnavism.

The most interesting question is how Bijoy Krishna, brought up strictly within a specialized tradition, and having no Hare School or Duff's School or

⁸³Ibid., p. 18

⁸⁴Ibid

⁸⁵Ibid

⁸⁶"Life of Bijoy Krishna Goswami, "Tattva-Kaumudi, n. vol. (July, 1899), p. 76

⁸⁷B. C. Pal, **Saint Bijoykrishna Goswami** (Calcutta : Bipin Chandra Pal Institute, 1964), p. 15

Hindu College in his background, came to accept the Brahmo faith. Here any comparison between himself with Debendranath and Keshub breaks down. All that is retained about Bijoy Krishna are the half true legends that invariably accompany the biodata of emerging saints and mystics. As for example, this account of an incident that supposedly prepared him for the truth of Brahmo :

One day he fell into a trance and a voice came to him asking what he thinks of after-life. Later he asked himself fearfully where this voice could possibly come from. So deeply did the experience move him, that he became bed ridden with fever. When Vaishnava devotees came to worship at his feet he turned them away for he suddenly realized that he could not help them since he himself required help. How he could help others salvage themselves when he himself did not know the correct path to salvation.

Shortly after, precisely when is not known, the young Vaishnava in search of spiritual truth, chanced to be in Bogra, now in Bangladesh. There he heard three Brahmos preach and was so taken by their "regard for truth" that he made his way to Calcutta to meet their leader Debendranath Tagore.⁸⁹ When he did arrive in Calcutta shortly after, from his own account, he was robbed by a gambler and dispossessed of the little he owned.⁹⁰

When he finally did meet Debendranath, Bijoy Krishna was a poverty-stricken youth who slept nights on the Sanskrit College veranda. With unusual honesty, Bijoy wrote in 1882 that he first came to the Brahmo leader as much for economic assistance as for spiritual guidance.⁹¹ Moreover, the poor rustic boy was not originally impressed with the Brahmos of Calcutta. They "only filled their bellies with wine and tried to get him drunk too."⁹²

When Debendranath honoured his application for monetary assistance, the young man attended the Maharshi's sermons which were so pure and so filled with the love of God, that Bijoy would "shed tears throughout."⁹³ Thus did Bijoy Krishna, a Goswami, come to sit at the feet of Debendranath who, sometime in the late 1850's most likely, "became his preceptor."⁹⁴

In the modern idiom, Bijoy was put on Debendranath's payroll. The Brahmo leader even paid his way through a few courses at the Calcutta Medical College.⁹⁵

⁸⁸"Life of Bijoy Krishna Goswami," p. 76

⁸⁹B. C. Pal, pp. 21—22

⁹⁰"Life of Bijoy Krishna Goswami," p. 76

⁹¹Bijoy Krisno Gossami, **Brahmo Samajer Bartaman Abastha Eban Amar Jibane Brahmo Samajer Parikkhito Bisay** (Kalikata : Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1882), p. 4

⁹²Ibid., p. 5

⁹³Ibid., p. 6

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 7

⁹⁵Ibid

The training Bijoy received there proved invaluable later on when on mission tours or when on assignment by Keshub to help victims afflicted by some epidemic. Quite possibly at this time, Bijoy may have developed some chronic stomach or heart trouble which after 1871 he treated with morphine and not inconceivably became addicted to the drug.⁹⁶

The earliest recorded social impact of Brahmoism on Bijoy Krishna is related to his questioning on the sacred thread. He went to his preceptor and told him repeatedly how the sacred thread was causing him "mental agony." The problem was that he no longer believed in caste distinction. Debendranath's answer was neither radical nor reassuring :

The sacred thread is essential. It will harm society if you give it up. Have I not kept my sacred thread?⁹⁷

Bijoy was also disturbed about eating meat and fish. Debendranath told him that if you "kill bedbugs and mosquitoes, why not eat meat and fish?" The young man was hardly satisfied with these "conservative replies" to questions that were "burning him up internally." He would discuss these matters with his closest friends at Medical College who interestingly enough were mostly East Bengalis.⁹⁸ Like them he was a rustic Vaishnava youth much out of place in the large heartless metropolis.

The sacred thread plagued Bijoy so that he decided to leave the city and return to his family at Santipur. What followed was most probably the most serious crisis of his youth. Perhaps seventeen years of age at the time he returned home, Bijoy Krishna sought to win family approval for removing the sacred thread. He tried to explain to them that Vaishnavism did not favour a "separation between Brahmin and Sudra" but in fact the contrary was true when Chaitanya aimed at removing caste barriers to make all men brothers.⁹⁹

As we might expect, Bijoy's reasoning fell upon the deaf ears of the Goswamis who simply performed their religious functions mechanically without the slightest urge to question underlying presuppositions or make critical historical evaluations on Chaitanya's real intent as against present practices. As for the sacred thread, there was no question but that it was a sacred duty to be performed.

But Bijoy took off the thread which he knew meant certain excommunication. In a single act which took a fraction of a moment, deposed himself socially

⁹⁶"Life of Bijoy Krishna Goswami," p. 76

⁹⁷B. K. Gossami, p. 10

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 11

⁹⁹B. C. Pal, p. 24

into the ranks of the sudras.¹⁰⁰ He realised "that from then on neither Kayasthas nor vidyas could touch him or take water from his hands."¹⁰¹

His mother was overwhelmed by fear and "literally fell at his feet and threatened to kill herself unless he put on the sacred thread."¹⁰² This he did for her sake. But no sooner had he done so than his conscience drove him to despair. He simply had no peace. "The sacred thread literally stung him like a scorpion," he wailed to his mother explaining to her that "unless he could pull off the cursed thing forever, he would himself die."¹⁰³

She gave in finally and Bijoy was outcasted which in his community meant that no barber would cut his hair, no cook would prepare his food, no washerman would clean his clothes. Bijoy left for Calcutta soon after, signed the Brahmo covenant and was ordained minister of the church by Debendranath.

The question might be asked at this point why Bijoy Krishna made the break he did and why as a profoundly-feeling Vaishnava he should choose the highly rational and Westernized Brahmo Samaj as his new religious identity. Indeed the rupture between himself and his people at Santipur was hardly peaceful. He relates how "rocks were thrown at him by some irate Vaishnava neighbours" while most were satisfied with "jeering and ridiculing him,"¹⁰⁴ Only his sister and brother-in-law sided with him and when Bijoy did go to Calcutta, they accompanied him and even became Brahmos.¹⁰⁵

The fact is that Bijoy developed a style of Brahmoism which made him quite appealing to many people whom the Brahmos of the time could not possibly hope to reach. But that he was a sincere Brahmo at the time there seems little doubt. Two observations may help to assess his style of Brahmoism. First, though not Westernized he was still a rational theist, reformist, universalist and puritan. His monotheism was unquestionable until the 1880's when he began to soften his harsh Brahmo attitude to icons. He had a clear, analytical mind which however clothed in the traditional garb of Vaishnavism, was still as emancipated as the most thoroughly rational Brahmo. This attitude was clearly present in 1868, when Bijoy attacked Keshub for "avatarism" or for having been seduced by followers to believe himself a "savior" directly partaking in God's divinity.

The image of Sivanath Sastri as the eternally young Brahmo progressive is interesting in light of his sociological background. Born in 1847 in a village

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 25

¹⁰¹Ibid

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 26

¹⁰³Ibid

¹⁰⁴B. K. Gossami, p. 13

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 14

of the 24 Pargannahs, Sastri was the son of a Brahman pundit and nephew of Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, one of Vidyasagar's closest friends of the Sanskrit reformer type.¹⁰⁶ The special family orientation was unlike that of any other Brahmo thus far discussed. Religiously, the family was not **Vaishnava** but **Shakto**, it was sophisticated about the new style of life in Calcutta, and quite receptive to certain liberal reforms—largely through Vidyasagar's direct influence.¹⁰⁷

In fact, Sivanath Sastri's liberalism did not start with the Brahmo Samaj but with Vidyasagar's influence through Vidyabhusan. Sivanath's earliest social reformist attitudes, in which female emancipation was of primary consideration, were derived from the circle of liberal Hindu pundits generally associated with the Sanskrit College in Calcutta. Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan was himself a professor of literature at the College and its assistant secretary.¹⁰⁸ This circle of little known pundit reformer types also included Taranath Tarkabachaspati,¹⁰⁹ Mohun Tarkalankar,¹¹⁰ as well as Vidyasagar.

It should come as no surprise, then, that when Sastri reached nine years of age, he should be placed in Sanskrit College as a student through the influence of the pundits.¹¹¹ At the same time, because his father valued English and the English style of education, he got his son admitted to Hare's School.¹¹² Thus, in 1856, young Sastri came to live in Calcutta, an event which he recalled much later in life with considerable dismay. Like Akhoy Kumar Dutta and Ramtanu Lahiri, Sivanath Sastri saw the great metropolis not as a super bazaar where enormous fortunes could be made but as a bottomless pit of misfortune and suffering, poverty and degradation.¹¹³ It is interesting to speculate whether these accounts of poverty, prostitution, drunkenness and dope addiction suggest a growing sense of humanitarian conscience and consciousness among sensitive young Bengalis preparing them emotionally for conversion to the Brahmo faith.

Another event which Sastri later recalled with horror took place in 1859 when the 12-year old boy was compelled to marry against his will. Evidently,

¹⁰⁶S. Sastri, *Men I have Seen, Reminiscences of Seven Great Bengalis* (Calcutta : Modern Review Office, 1919), p. 33

¹⁰⁷S. Sastri, *Atto-Charit* (Kalikata : Singnet Press, n. d.), pp. 20, 27

¹⁰⁸S. Sastri, *Men I Have Seen*, p. 34

¹⁰⁹*Freedom Movement in Bengal*, ed. N. Sinha (Calcutta : Government of West Bengal, 1968), p. 84

¹¹⁰B. B. Majumdar, *History of Political Thought From Rammohan to Dayanada* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1934), I, pp. 21—25

¹¹¹S. Sastri, *Atto-Charit*, p. 41

¹¹²H. C. Sarkar, *Sivanath Sastri* (Calcutta : Ram Mohan Ray Publication Society, 1929), pp. 4—5

¹¹³*Ibid.*, p. 5 ; Sastri, *Atto-Charit*, p. 42

his otherwise liberal father found nothing immoral, indecent, or inhuman about the act. Nevertheless, in the midst of the family circle a new sense of awareness about man's inhumanity to women was being actively propagated. From 1855 on, Sivanath's uncle, Vidyabhusan, was actively assisting Vidyasagar's female reform campaign—especially in the area of widow remarriage.¹¹⁴ Another interesting fact about this formative period in Sivanath's life and career was that his father had met Debendranath Tagore, the leading Brahmo of the day, and was favorably impressed with him.¹¹⁵ There was nothing surprising about this in light of the fact that Vidyasagar was then secretary of the Tattvabodhini Sabha and one of the charismatic leaders for young Brahmos.

Sivanath's earliest institutional exposure to the Brahmo Samaj was probably in 1862 when he attended meetings and services with his friends.¹¹⁶ At this point, other facts about Brahmo history of this decade should be recalled. A new charismatic hero had emerged in the presence of Keshub Sen whose theistic liberatism strongly appealed to Debendranath but alienated the agnostic rationalist Vidyasagar who resigned from the Tattvabodhini Sabha in 1859. From that year, younger Brahmos turned increasingly from Vidyasagar to Keshub.

It is probably not insignificant that in 1866 when Keshub led the younger Brahmos out of the parent body in direct opposition to Debendranath's policies, the 19-year old Sivanath who followed Keshub, underwent his first serious "mental crisis." This was an important year he recalled in his autobiography. Besides the crisis as a result of Brahmo conflict, he experienced great agony for personal reasons. After passing his college entrance examination he learned that his father, displeased with his daughter-in-law, forced Sivanath to discard her and marry a second time.¹¹⁷

Sivanath objected violently at first out of compassion and love for his wife. In the end, however, his father's threats of physical harm to him and his wife, made him change his mind and marry a second time. The event so tortured Sastri that he thought he would lose his mind.¹¹⁸ He became engrossed with a sense of sin and started questioning everything including his very identity as a human being.¹¹⁹

To transcend this critical juncture of his life, Sivanath turned to Unitarian and Brahmo literature. Umesh Chandra Dutt, Sastri's close Brahmo friend from

¹¹⁴B. N. Bandyopadhyay, **Darakanath Biddhabhusan** (Kalikata: Baniy Sahitto-Parisat, 1959), pp. 6—9

¹¹⁵Sastri, **Men I have Seen**, p. 125

¹¹⁶Sastri, **Atto-Charit**, p. 57

¹¹⁷Suniti Debi, **Sivanath** (Kalikata : Sadharan Bramho Samaj, 1966).

¹¹⁸Sastri, **Atto-Charit**, p. 68

¹¹⁹**Ibid**

his own village, gave him a copy of Theodore Parker's sermons.¹²⁰ Sastri read the American's sermons each night before retiring and later adapted them to his own cultural and personal needs by composing prayers of his own.¹²¹ In this way he found God and through God found the courage to "choose the only right path open."

The year 1866 was painful also because by drawing close to Keshub, he necessarily offended and alienated others in the family circle whom he had loved deeply over the years. The rivalry between Keshub and Vidyasagar since 1858 had turned the family against the Brahmo Samaj. This was certainly an important factor explaining Vidyabhusan's anti-Brahmo and Anti-Keshub editorials in the **Samprokash**. As far as Sivanath's father was concerned, it was Keshub's Vaishnava leanings that greatly perturbed the old Sakhto. This was certainly an important factor also as Sivanath himself suggests :

*Born in a Shakto family accustomed to Shakti worship from childhood, I had an inborn repugnance to the Vaishnava khol and kirtan.*¹²²

The years 1868 and 1869 constitute a kind of turning point in Sastri's life. In the former year he openly identified himself with the Keshubites by joining them openly in their Vaishnava-inspired **sankirtan** procession.¹²³ Then he sang the **Sanyal songit** which proclaimed the equal rights of men and women while repudiating caste.¹²⁴ On the occasion, Bijoy Krishna Goswami "heartily welcomed him with an embrace."¹²⁵ In August, 1869, Sastri was officially initiated as a Keshubite Brahmo at an impressive ceremony at the mandir.¹²⁶ At the same time, under Brahmo influence, he decided to take back his first wife while trying to get his second wife married to someone else.¹²⁷ and in the midst of all these developments, Sastri passed his F. A. examination at Sanskrit College standing at the head of his class. As a result, he was given a scholarship worth 50 rupees a month.¹²⁸

Naturally, under the circumstances, relations between Sivanath and his father went from bad to worse. Then when the young man renounced his sacred thread to the great satisfaction of the Brahmo community, his father grew furious and vindictive.¹²⁹ One day at home, he asked Sivanath to bow before the family image, threatening to beat him if he refused. Sivanath's

¹²⁰Ibid

¹²¹Ibid

¹²²Sastri, **Men I Have Seen**, p. 127

¹²³H. Sarkar, p. 14

¹²⁴Ibid

¹²⁵Ibid

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 15

¹²⁷Ibid

¹²⁸S. Devi, Sivanath, p. 47

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 51

answer was "that he might beat me to death, but could not make me worship the idol against my conscience."¹³⁰ Finally, Sivanath broke off relations with his "tyrannical father," who drove his son out of the house and for the next 19 years refused to see "the face of his son."¹³¹

Of all the proponents of the theological position among the Sadharans after the schism of 1878, none was more effective a spokesman and prolific a writer than Sitanath Tattvabhusan. Born in Sylhet village in 1856,¹³² Sitanath later endured persecution and loss of ancestral property when he chose to become a Brahmo.¹³³ As Tattvabhusan wrote many years later :

*I had been denied the right to inherit my father's property because I had given up the ancestral religion. I had no money in Calcutta. Finally, my family arranged for my excommunication. I need hardly to say that I remained excommunicated and still remain so. Instead of feeling sorry for being excommunicated I rather felt proud of having been the first anusthanic excommunicated Brahmo in my native district.*¹³⁴

Arriving in Calcutta for the first time in 1871, he immediately joined the other young students who sat at the feet of Keshub Sen in the **Brahmo Niketan**.¹³⁵ It was in 1873 as a scholarship-holding student in Keshub's theological institute that he first developed an interest in the philosophy of religion.¹³⁶

He has recorded in his diary that despite lack of formal training in philosophy before joining the theological institute, "his mind was irresistably drawn towards philosophy having become inwardly entangled in the meshes of reasonings and argumentation."¹³⁷ It was contact with the "saintly Keshub" that stirred up this "abiding inspiration."¹³⁸ When Keshub's School failed, Sitanath went to the General Assembly's Institution in 1875.¹³⁹

But unfortunately for Sitanath, during that same year his father died occasioning a crisis of identity so familiar in the lives of young Brahmo intellectuals cut off from their family and village roots. When Sitanath performed the funeral according to Brahmo rites, he was excommunicated by his family.¹⁴⁰ There

¹³⁰H. C. Sarkar, p. 9

¹³¹Debi, p. 52

¹³²S. Tattvabhusan, **Auto-biography** (Calcutta : Brahmo Samaj Press, n. d.), p. 24

¹³³*Ibid.*, p. 21

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 48

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 23

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 37

¹³⁷**Life and Teachings of Pandit Sitanath Tattvabhusan** (Calcutta: Sitanath Tattvabhusan Birth Centenary, 1960), p. 2

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 4

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 5

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

followed a grim period of extreme poverty, intermittent physical illness, and unendurable mental agony.¹⁴¹ When in 1877, at 21 years of age, he failed a second time to pass his examinations, the tormented young Sitanath contemplated suicide.¹⁴²

According to his own account, the pure study of philosophy sustained him amid fits of "vertigo" and chronic malnutrition.¹⁴³ In his autobiography, he expressed enormous satisfaction in having read Spencer, John Stuart Mill and Berkeley during those dark years. Interestingly enough, the study of European philosophers reaffirmed his faith in faith which "when disavowed brings disaster." After reading Mill's *Three Essays in Religion*, he wrote :

*It clearly shows what an undesirable turn a man's life takes when he is given a purely intellectual education devoid of religious faith and emotional culture.....*¹⁴⁴

Sitanath repudiated agnosticism either of the Cometicist or Spencerian species which "reigned supreme among the educated classes of India in the 1870's and 1880's"¹⁴⁵

By 1879, when Ananda Mohan Bose gave him a teaching job at the City School, Tattvabhusan had already formed what he called a "philosophical position." He had transcended his intellectual struggle between theism and skepticism placing the Brahmo faith squarely in the tradition of the Upanisads and the Vedanta.¹⁴⁶ In his diary he wrote that Debendranath Tagore had made a terrible mistake in "throwing out Vedantism" "giving the supreme place to reason."¹⁴⁷ The Brahmo Samaj should now make a "systematic study of the scriptures" which are philosophically so "similar to Neo-Hegelianism."¹⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

These studies suggest that the psychological dimension of the modernizing experience (quest for a new identity in the modern world) is of vital importance in understanding the transformation of comprador intellectual elites. In 19th century Calcutta, the class of Bengali Hindu compradors was called **bhadralok**. These studies which are not atypical suggest that the **bhadralok** intelligentsia did not neatly compartmentalize their Hinduism from their westernism nor

¹⁴¹Tattvabhusan, *Auto-biography*, p. 49

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 51

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 59

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 51

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 52

¹⁴⁶*Life and Teachings of Tattavabhusan*, pp. 9—10

¹⁴⁷*Ibid*

¹⁴⁸*Ibid*

were they always primarily concerned with their caste identification and status, nor were they slyly Machiavellian in their quest for power, nor were they motivated purely by economic self-interest. To be sure, later in life, the more secular Brahmo intelligentsia did manifest a behavioral style characteristic of achievement-oriented puritanism.

From my point of view, it is important that in all the above cases, inherited wealth and privilege did not or could not prevent the severe psychological stress of identity crisis during adolescence. This is not difficult to understand since only the youths of the rich can afford the luxury of adolescence in pre-modern societies. Also important is the influx of new ideas in school and college which may have an unsettling and confusing impact on idealistic and intelligent adolescents. I would hypothesize that among the so-called third world intelligentsia, a modernizing consciousness developed precisely from such conditions. It is therefore crucial that alongside a materialist conception of modernism in colonialist history, we grasp the intricacies of alienation resulting from the psychology of cultural encounter.

Rammohan Ray

An Experimental Secularist

Priti Kumar Mitra

The much debated Rammohan Ray (1774-1833) and his ideas undoubtedly created a good deal of controversy during his life-time and after. Neither a prophet nor a seer of spiritual truth, wealthy and astute Rammohan entered the premises of religion vigorously and secularly. This was no trespass, no audacious interference. If religion seeks to control even the secular aspects of life, man must naturally re-edit the overdivine composition of religion in order to make it at least less awkward and less mischievous in the secular hemisphere of his existence. Rammohan was an extraordinary editor of religion adequately qualified for the job.

Properly educated in his early life with secular motives he, as a 'kulin' Brahman, was married three times before puberty¹. A man of extrovert nature and this-worldly attitude he was a great traveller² in early youth. Later, in his thirties he efficiently served the East India Company's Government at different stations, enriched himself amidst the turmoil of a transitional period, successfully conducted property litigation with his mother³, and victoriously withstood village intrigues and caste wrangles⁴. A tremendous reader, prolific writer, editor, philanthropist, agitaor, dignified ambassador and orator, Rammohan after 1814 was dazzling enough to be regarded as the herald of the modern age in India by generations of scholars.

This very much worldly Rammohan was religious, i. e., believing practioner of as well as intellectually proecupied with religion. This is unusual : a man of secular affairs and interests assuming a status of authority in the affairs of religion. And this he did with succe^ss. Consequently, the body of religious ideas

¹Nagendranath Chattopadhyay. Mahatma Raja Rammohan Rayer Jivancharit De's reprint, Calcutta, 1379 B. S., p. 12.

²Ibid., P. 10

³Ibid., P. 13

⁴Ibid., P. 18

developed by him was inevitably enlivened by secular blood-currents. Or, rather, his secular socio-cultural ideas were conveniently appavelled with religious garb. The religion of Rammohan was therefore a peculiar phenomenon—a secular religion.

Before I proceed to establish our proposition through a review of Rammohan's intellectual development, I have to clarify the meaning of the term secular and indicate the sense in which it is used in these pages. By the term secular I do not refer to any political principle or state ideology, but to an ethical outlook and socio-cultural philosophy. "In its most universal usage in social science the term refers to the worldly, the civil, or the non-religious, as distinguished from the spiritual and the ecclesiastical. The secular is that which is not dedicated to religious ends and uses"—thus the secular is defined by Luke Ebersole.⁵ In **Everyman's Encyclopaedia** the term 'secularism' is explained as a "materialistic and rationalistic movement started in England by George Holyoake, in 1846. Its author defines secularism as a 'system of ethical principles,' and says that it aims to substitute the piety of usefulness for the usefulness of piety..... the movement was not professedly anti-theistic..... aimed at establishing morality on a utilitarian basis....."⁶ The **Encyclopaedia Britannica** writers under the head **Secularism**: "a movement in society directed away from other worldliness. In the medieval period there was a strong tendency..... to despise human affairs and to meditate on God and afterlife. As a reaction to this medieval tendency, secularism at the time of the Renaissance, exhibited itself in the development of humanism, when man began to show more interest in human cultural achievements and the possibilities of his fulfilment in this world. The movement toward secularism has been in progress during the entire course of modern history....."⁷

From these quotations it should be clear that secularism is a renaissance product interwoven with materialism, rationalism, humanism, utilitarianism and modernism. Rammohan Ray, a 'renaissance' modernist, could not but worship these associates of secularism, though he might have modified them according to his convenience. This commitment was bound to mould his thought and activities, a large part of which concerned religion. Hence, inevitably, his so-called religion turned into an experiment of secularism.

Rammohan both warred against religion and tried to formulate one. This apparent contradiction can be clarified if we assume that his religious formula

⁵Julius Gould and William L. Kolb (eds.), **A Dictionary of Social Sciences** (London, 1964), p. 625. (Luke Ebersole's article 'Secular').

⁶**Every man's Encyclopaedia**, Vol. 11, Fifth edition (London, 1967), P. 104.

⁷**Encyclopaedia Britannica—Micropaedia**. University of Chicago, 1974. Vol. IX, P. 19.

resembled secularism as defined above. This point is clear if we remember the modern concept of sacred and secular societies. According to Howard Becker, a sacred society can be viewed as one that engenders in its members, by means ofsocialization, social control, and the like, reluctance to change customary orientation toward, and or definition of values regarded as essential in that society, More briefly, a sacred society is one bringing its members to be unwilling or unable, in whatever measure, to accept the new as the new is defined in that society”⁸ Again, a “secular society can be viewed as one that engenders in or elicits from its members, readiness to change customary orientation toward, and or definition of, values regarded as essential in that society. More Succinctly, a secular society is one bringing its members to be willing and able, in whatever measure to accept or pursue the new as the new is defined in that society.”⁹ In this context Becker defines the secular as “not synonymous with the profane, unholy, infidel, godless, irreligious, heretical, unhallowed, faithless, or any similar terms. It subsumes them, butincludes a great deal more.....”¹⁰ “In this sense secular is the opposite of the total meaning of sacred; i.e., it is the opposite of venerated and inviolable. Thus culture is secular when its acceptance is based on rational and utilitarian considerations rather than on reverence and veneration.”¹¹

Rammohan’s evirons were that of a sacred society, though elements ‘new’ to one another had already assembled within its campus. Therefore, the reformer wanted to make his society a secular one so that the aversion against the ‘new’ could be done away with by all the component elements, viz., Brahmins, Hindus, Christians, Muslims etc. Thus he had to deal with religion for the sake of secularism and yet had not to be anti-religious. Hence his ‘religion’ was to be a secularising force.

In the ensuing paragraphs I shall try to distinguish the fact of this novel experiment of secularism behind Rammohan’s religious thinkings and endeavours. It will transpire that behind his religious ideas and activities there were always some mundane designs, and again, that he maintained a balanced impartiality and detachment vis-a-vis all religions, judging every one of them with the same non-religious scale.

⁸Julius Gould and William L. Kolb (eds.) op. cit., P. 613. (Howard Becker’s article ‘Sacred Society’)

⁹Ibid., P. 626 (Howard Becker’s article on ‘Secular Society’)

¹⁰H. P. Becker, *Thought Values to Social Interpretation*, (Durham, N. C. : Duke University Press, 1950) P. 275

¹¹Julius Gould and William L. Kolb (eds.), op. cit., P. 625. (Luke Ebersole’s article ‘Secular’)

The origins of Rammohan's religious interest were very much mundane. These were not at all prophet-like. As far as is known of the relatively obscure first half of his life, it seems that his interest in religion (or rather religions) was occasioned quietly by his study of Perso-Arabic thought as well as Brahmanic theology.¹² The motive behind his learning the Persian and Arabic languages was very much secular, i. e. getting a good job under Muslim rulers of the country. It is generally claimed that Rammohan studied Aristotle and Euclid in Arabic as well as the ideas of medieval Muslim rationalists, the Mu'tazilites and the Mu'wahhiddins¹³, besides the Quran. Recently striking similarities have been shown between the contents of Rammohan Ray's **Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin** and those of the seventeenth century Persian work **Dabistan-i-Mazahib**¹⁴ authored by an Iranian fire-worshipper, Muhsin Fani, who had been compelled by circumstances to emigrate to India. It has been suggested that the influences of Muslim protestantism, non-Muslim Persian thought, orientally contacted Hellenic free-thinking and the "remarkably secular" later Mughal historical writings¹⁵ were significant in the building up of Rammohan's religious ideas. These are all secular stimulants. And the later contact with European thought is a further secular current. A Hindu Brahman, as he was, his Quranic, Hebraic and Biblical studies could not but be secularly oriented. The scion of Sakta-Vaisnavite parentage studied the Vedic literature superfluously and, therefore, perhaps with considerable secular outlook. Moreover, he "travelled in the remotest parts of the world"¹⁶ and made a comparative assessments of their religious practices and beliefs.

Such was the genesis of the religious inquisitiveness and the religious notions of Rammohan Ray. The output naturally bore the mark of the source. He started not with any ascetic austerity or truth-seeking penance but with an iconoclastic reason-sport, hurling, to begin with, his eternal and embarrassing 'kintu' (but) against the idolatrous Hinduism of his Brahman father.¹⁷ A close examination of Ray's first extant work (c. 1803—04) the famous **Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin** ('A Gift to Deists'), makes it clear that the young questioner was dissatisfied with every religion. The combing operation of reason was

12 Nagendranath Chattopadhyay, op. cit., P. 9

13 Ibid., PP. 292—295. Brajendranath Seal, 'Rammohan the Universal Man', (Calcutta, n. d.) P. 4

14 Ajit Roy, "Rammohun Ray's 'Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin' and the seventeenth century Persian tract Dabistan-i-Mazahib," paper read at the 28th International Congress of Orientalists, Canberra, 6—12, January, 1971.

15 Barun De, "A Preliminary Note on the Writing of History of Modern India," in **Quarterly Review of Historical Studies**, Vol. III, Nos. 1, 2, (Calcutta, 1963—64)

16 'Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin', translated by Moulavi Obaidulla el Obaide, reprinted in **Nineteenth Century Studies**, No. 1, 1973, Calcutta, P. 3 Introduction.

17 Nagendranath Chattopadhyay, op. cit., P. 10

ruthlessly applied with trenchant radicalism to all religions and the startling conclusion—"falsehood is common to all religions without distinction"¹⁸—arri-~~PDF C Ompressor Error~~—are discerned to be common to all religions and hence "natural"—belief in the "existence of One Being Who is the source of creation and the governor of it"¹⁹, belief in the "existence of soul" and in the "existence of the next world"²⁰. Of these the last two are deemed to be acceptable on utilitarian grounds—"for the sake of the welfare of the people (society) as they simply, for the fear of punishment in the next world..... refrain from commission of illegal deeds"²¹. Such conclusions were arrived at by the widely travelled observer through "inductive reason"²². The final verdict was given in a verse of Hafiz enjoining—"Be not after the injury of any being and to whatever you please. For in our way there is no sin except it (injuring others)"²³. In Rammohan, a certain retreat from rationalism towards nationalism and to reform-from-within tactic is discerned by some recent scholars²⁴. It has been pointed out that the militant rationalist of the *Tufhat* discovers the incompetence of reason as a sure guide to truth and emphasises the collaboration of reason and ancient tradition.²⁵ But, for our purpose, Rammohan's secular attitude was in no way affected by this intellectual shift. The mind built up with so secular and so catholic a background retained its characteristics, through all swervings, to the end. In fact it will be evident from the following paragraphs that Rammohan's departure from the *Tuhfat* stand was also necessitated by his secular goals.

Though he once declared that his religious crusade had been undertaken "with a view of making them (the Hindus) happy and comfortable both here and hereafter"²⁶, this-worldly motives of Rammohan are but too explicit in most of his writings. He "found Hindus in general more superstitious and miserable, both in performance of their religious rites, and in their domestic concerns, than the rest of the known nations on the earth"²⁷. To his opinion, "Idolatry, as now practised by our countrymen, must..... be looked

¹⁸*Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin*. op. cit., P. 3. Introduction.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, Introduction P. 3 ; and also P. 9

²⁰*Ibid.*, P. 7

²¹*Ibid.* P. 7

²²*Ibid.* P. 10

²³*Ibid.*, P. 22

²⁴Susobhan Sarkar, "Religious Thought of Rammohan Ray" in '*Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays*' (New Delhi, 1970).

Sumit Sarkar, "Rammohan Ray and the Break with the Past" in V. C. Joshi (ed.), '*Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernization in India*' (New Delhi, 1975).

²⁵Introduction to the '*Translation of the Kena Upanishad*' '*The English Work of Raja Rammohun Ray*' edited by Kalidas Nag and Debajyoti Burman, (Henceforth to be referred to as EW), Part II, (Calcutta, 1946), P. 15.

²⁶Rammohan Ray's Letter to Mr. John Digby, EW, IV (Calcutta, 1947), P. 95.

²⁷*Ibid.* P. 95

upon with great horror by common sense, as leading directly to immorality and destructive of social comforts"²⁸. Repeatedly he speaks of "the inconvenient, or rather injurious rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindoo idolatry which, more than any other pagan worship, destroys the texture of society,"²⁹ He complains of "the generality of the Hindoo community devoted to idol-worship the source of prejudice and superstition and of the total destruction of moral principle, as countenancing criminal intercourse, suicide, female murder, and human sacrifice"³⁰, who thus "continue, under the form of religious devotion, to practise a system which destroys, to the utmost degree, the natural texture of society, and prescribes crimes of the most heinous nature, which even the most savage nations would blush to commit,"³¹ He viewed, with utmost feelings of regret and compassion, "the obstinate adherence of" his "countrymen to their fatal system of idolatry, inducing, the violation of every humane and social feeling."³² So "The present Hindoo idolatry being made to consist in following certain modes and restraints of diet (which were never observed by their forefathers), has subjected its unfortunate votaries to entire separation from the rest of the world, and also from each other, and to constant inconveniences and distress"³³ —observes he.

Thus, apparently, Rammohan was not concerned with the other-worldly spiritual advancement of the Hindus but to their social and moral upliftment on this earth. This attitude of judging religions in terms of socio-moral utility is but too evident in his appreciation of Christianity : "the doctrines of Christ (are) more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use of rational beings, than any others which have come to my knowledge ;"³⁴ For him the main attraction of Christianity was that it tended "to render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to the rest of mankind".³⁵ This he elucidated in '**The precepts of Jesus**' with a more revealing subtitle '**The Guide to Peace and Happiness**'. But he was not prepared to accept the Christian dogmas of the Trinity and atonement of the 'original sin' through Christ's blood. This was due to his rational judgement of religious concepts, the very same thing for which many beliefs and practices of Hinduism were unacceptable to him. This position he vindicated in '**The common basis of**

²⁸'A Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of the Vedas,' EW, II, P. 105.

²⁹Introduction to 'An Abridgement of the Vedant,' EW, II, P. 60.

³⁰Introduction to the 'Translation of the Moonduk Upanishad,' EW, II, P. Nil.

³¹Preface to the 'Translation of the Kuth-Upanishad, EW, II, P. 23.

³²Introduction to the 'Translation of the Ishopanishad' EW, II, P. 52.

³³'A Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of the Vedas,' EW, II, PP. 112—113.

³⁴Rammohan Ray's Letter to Mr. John Digby, EW, IV, PP. 94—95

³⁵Introduction to '**The Precepts of Jesus**,' EW, V, (Calcutta, 1948), P. 3

Hindooism and Christianity' which consists of a series of letters between Rammohan and one Dr. R. Tytler.³⁶

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Rammohan made a similar appraisal of Islam, the religion in which he first received systematic instruction. He was apparently impressed by the simple mode of Islamic worship and by the religion's scientific social principles. It is reasonably held that he derived from Islam the idea of monotheism and also his iconoclastic hatred against idolatry. It is said that he commenced a life of Muhammad, the one religious leader of history most engrossingly embroiled in secular matters, but could not complete it.^{36a} But here also he was not to accept the mysterious Islamic dogmas of prophethood and divine revelation of truth by God.³⁷ He was, moreover, critical of the physical intolerance and cruelties committed by followers of Islam in the middle ages.³⁸

The same can be said about his attitude towards Vedanta. In search of an utilitarian religion ensuring highest social comfort to the greatest number, the 'religious Benthamite'³⁹ Rammohan, retreating from the quicksand of the ruthless reasoning of the **Tuhfat**, took, in the face of aggressive Christianity, his stand on the Vedanta, as a defender of 'national religion.' Though following the monistic interpretation of the authoritative Sankara for argument's sake, Rammohan always took care to guard his Islam-like monotheism from the formless monism of the Vedanta. In his letter to the Governor General, Lord Amherst, he declared : "Nor will youths be fitted to be better members of society by the Vedantic doctrines which teach them to believe that all visible things have no real existence ; that as father, brother, etc. have no actual entity they consequently deserve no real affection and therefore the sooner we escape from them and leave the world the better—".⁴⁰ Believing in a monotheistic personal God Rammohan always emphasised the utility of prayer, repentance and selfless social service, which are not enjoined in the Vedanta. That is why Kisor Chand Mitra called him a 'theo-philanthropist.'⁴¹

From the above discussion of Rammohan's ideological stand vis-a-vis popular Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Vedanta it will transpire that he derived ideas from them but always reshaped those ideas in accordance with his utilitarian purpose best fitted to his age. This purpose was in no way spiritual

³⁶EW, IV, PP. 55—74 ^{36a} Nagendranath Chattopadhy OP. Cit., P. 370.

³⁷ **Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin**, ; op. cit., P. 15

³⁸Ibid. P. 17. Also **Brahmanical Magazine**, Preface to the First Edition ; EW, II. P. 138

³⁹Kissory Chand Mitter in '**Calcutta Review**,' 1845, P. 388, reprinted in '**Nineteenth Century Studies**' No. 1, 1973, Calcutta, P. 63

⁴⁰Rammohan Ray's Letter to Governor General Lord Amherst, 11th December, 1823; EW, IV, P. 107.

⁴¹Kissory Chand Mitter, op. cit., P. 389. reprinted in op. cit. P. 65.

but evidently concerned with the secular sphere of life. For the same reason he largely refrained from weighing other religions which were not predominant in his country, taking into consideration the religion of the majority, that of the second majority and of late rulers, and that of the then rulers which was also the most aggressive one. He ultimately chose the Vedanta as his principal ideological foothold for very much mundane reasons. It, as conceived by Rammohan, was thought to be best suited to the majority's sentiment of national cultural pride, at the same time eradicating their superstitious and noxious practices, as well as to the purpose of appeasing adjustment to the other two rivals.

Now let us revert to his relations with the Hindus. This community being the majority and the most superstitious was chosen by Rammohan as the field of his operations. In the Hindus he viewed "the moral debasement of a race who are capable of better things ; whose susceptibility, patience, and mildness of character, render them worthy of a better destiny."⁴² Of all the Hindu systems of philosophy, Vedanta bearing the nearest similarity to the Islamic and the Christian spiritual notions, and held in the highest esteem by the Hindus as well, along with its being most reconcilable to reason and containing the least absurdity, was selected as the main foundation of his operations against, as well as for, the Hindus. It is very unlikely that he had any intuitive perception and conviction of the spiritual truth of the Vedanta. On the contrary, he adopted it, after necessary alterations, for the above secular considerations.

As for the Hindus, what would they gain from the Rammohan-style monotheism? It will divest the Hindus of the evils enumerated above and open the road to the 'better destiny' they deserved, which was by no means anything in the next world, but something mundane and concrete in the society of nations living on this earth. His "true system of religion" will lead "its observers to a knowledge and love of God, and to a friendly inclination towards their fellow-creatures, impressing their hearts at the same time with humility and charity, accompanied by independence of mind and pure sincerity."⁴³ His aim was to produce "on the minds of Hindus in general, a conviction of the rationality of believing in and adoring the Supreme Being only ; together with a complete perception and practice of that grand and comprehensive moral principle—"Do unto others as ye would be done by."⁴⁴ This is almost the same conclusion which was enjoined at the promontorium of the Tuhfat logic in the language of Hafiz.

⁴²Introduction to the 'Translation of the Ishopanishad', EW, II, P. 52.

⁴³Preface to the 'Translation of the Kuth-Upanishad,' EW, II, PP. 23—24

⁴⁴Introduction to the 'Translation of the Ishopanishad' EW II, P. 52

As to the origin of religion in general and idolatry in particular Rammohan's explanation was sociological and secular : "..... the leaders of different religions, for the sake of perpetuating their names and gaining honour, having invented several dogmas of faith, have declared them in the form of truth by pretending some supernatural acts or by the force of their tongue, or by some other measure suitable to the circumstances of their contemporaries, and thereby have made a multitude of people adhere to them, so that those poor people having lost sight of conscience bind themselves to submit to their leaders"⁴⁵ About idolatry in India he says, "..... allegorical language or description was very frequently employed to represent the attributes of the Creator, which were sometimes designated as independent existences ; and, however suitable this method might be to the refined understandings of men of learning, it had the most mischievous effect when literature and philosophy decayed, producing all those absurdities and idolatrous notions which have checked, or rather destroyed, every mark of reason, and darkened every beam of understanding."⁴⁶ "Many learned Brahmins are perfectly aware of the absurdity of idolatry, and are well informed of the nature of the purer mode of divine worship. But as in the rites, ceremonies, and festivals of idolatry, they find the source of their comforts and fortune, they not only never fail to protect idol-worship from all attacks, but even advance and encourage it to the utmost of their power, by keeping the knowledge of their scriptures concealed from the rest of the people. Their followers, too, confiding in these leaders, feel gratification in the idea of the Divine Nature residing in a being resembling themselves in birth, shape, and propensities ; and are naturally delighted with a mode of worship agreeable to the senses, though destructive of moral principles,"⁴⁷

So Rammohan never 'invented' any dogma ; nor did he 'pretend' anything 'supernatural.' He arrived at his religious views through 'correct reasoning' and 'the dictates of common sense.'⁴⁸ To these he added, after his alleged 'departure' from the Tuhfat stand, ancient traditions or the sacred writings. From all these three faculties he derived his one firm concept of a Supreme Being, the single and sole creator of the universe. This belief he found common to most peoples and to most high scriptures. Common sense and inductive reasoning from the fact of the design of the universe also ratified the concept. So he chose this one concept as the basis of his endeavour to form a unity of moral purpose among all humanity and to raise his own people to the same platform of unified human progress.

⁴⁵'Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin,' op. cit., P. 4

⁴⁶Introduction to the 'Translation of the Kena Upanishad,' EW, II, P. 14

⁴⁷Preface to the 'Translation of the Ishopanishad,' EW, II, P. 44

⁴⁸Introduction to 'An Abridgement of the Vedant,' EW, II, P. 60.

As to the concept of the existence of the soul and the next world where rewards and punishments would be awarded to the departed souls according to their deeds on this earth, Rammohan's sociological view-point expressed in the Tuhfat has already been cited. In his later writings the context of the next world seldom appears. In the 'Brahma Sangit' he advances up to death and its circumstances, but not beyond that. Rammohan never pretended to establish any separate communal religious order. His was an attempt of a spiritual and cultural unification of the Hindus as well as of all mankind on the basis of available similarity in spiritual thought of different peoples and different ages. This unification is often referred to, in more specific words, as a synthesis of Hindu, Islamic and Anglo-European cultural traditions. But Rammohan's synthesis was not the medieval ideal of indiscriminate combination and mutual toleration of contradictory and conflicting orthodoxies. "Synthesis" with Rammohan meant something very different ; it implied discrimination and systematic choice, directed by the two standards of "reason" and "social comfort" which recur so often in his works."⁴⁹

Discriminating with such obvious secular standards Rammohan endeavoured to dovetail the common and most reasonable contents of all the world religions without pretending to establish a new religious order. This attempt was epitomized in '**The Universal Religion : Religious Instructions Founded on Sacred Authorities,**' a work which also reveals the secular bone and secular tone of all his religious contemplations. A few quotations and references from this tract may be helpful to clear our position.

Worship is due to the "Author and Governor of the universe" whose nature neither the sacred writings or logical argument, can define." This worship can properly be performed "in whatever place, towards whatever quarter, or at what ever time the mind is best at rest."⁵⁰

"To this worship no one can be opposed on sufficient grounds ;" "it is impossible for worshippers of any denomination to be opposed to" this worship of "the Supreme Being, adoring him as the Author and Governor of the Universe,...because each person considers the object whom he worships as the Author and Governor of the universe ; And in China, in Tartary, in Europe, and in all other countries, where so many sects exist, all believe the object whom they adore to be the Author and Governor of the universe ; consequently, they must acknowledge that this our worship is their own."⁵⁰

⁴⁹Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, in V. C. Joshi (Ed.), *op. cit.*, P. 48

⁵⁰Quotations in these paragraphs are from Rammohan's '**The Universal Religion : Religious Instructions Founded on Sacred Authorities,**' EW, II, PP. 129—132

"In what manner is this worship to be performed?" "By bearing in mind that the Author and Governor of this visible universe is the Supreme Being, and comparing this idea with the sacred writings and with reason What is considered injurious to ourselves, should be avoided towards others." And finally, "it may be taught to all, but effect being produced in each person according to his state of mental preparation, it will be proportionably successful."⁵⁰ Not a single word of anything supernatural (except perhaps the Author and Governor of the universe) or of the next world and the like is to be found in this illustrious tract of Rammohan's.

The inauguration of the **Brahma Sabha** on 20 August, 1828, and the opening of the First Temple of Universal Worship on 23 January, 1830, signify the physical translation of Rammohan's religious ideas. In his famous Trust Deed of the Temple, he afforded the followers of all religions an opportunity to resolve their differences by praying under the same roof. In his personal life he was, no doubt, deeply religious, rather say believer in the Supreme Being, whose help he has often invoked in his writings for the success in his struggle. The belief was confirmed in him probably after his great departure from the Tuhfat stand of cutthroat reason to that of "proper and moderate use of reason,"⁵¹ but to no blind dogma. However, Rammohan did belong to no sect. He converted the Trinitarian Mr. Adam not to his own religion but to Unitarianism; he wanted to convert the idol-worshipping Hindus not to Unitarianism but to Vedantistic monotheism. And he did prefer the mystic monotheist Sufis to the Quran-Sunnah-bound Mohammadans. These facts unmistakably evidence the absence of sectarianism and communalism (trends so common to and inseparable from religions) in Rammohan. Then his position in respect of religious convictions was something not religious in the traditional sense. This position atop the edifice of rationalism, humanism and utilitarianism must be described as something extra-religious and hence secular.

On the one hand, he was claimed by the later Brahmos, the Unitarians, and the Tantrik Hindus as their own; was called a 'formidable maulavi' by Perso-Arabic Muslim moulavis of the day; a 'Hindu Protestant' by a recent scholar⁵² a 'theo-philanthropist' by the nineteenth century critical writer Kisor Chand Mitra; 'father of comparative religion' by Maxmuller; and 'father of modern India' by very many recent and non-recent scholars. On the other hand, he was described publicly, towards the end of his life, as neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim, nor a Christian.⁵³ In recent times he has been debunked by some scholars

⁵¹Preface to the 'Translation of the Ishopanishad,' EW, II, P. 49

⁵²Daniel E. Potts *British Baptist Missionaries in India 1793—1837* (Cambridge 1967), P. 226

⁵³This was stated in a petition to the Government by some inhabitants of Berhampore in 1831. The document is reproduced in Appendix X of 'The Life and Letters of Raja

practically to a position of non-entity. This wide variety of views again points to the same fact of non-sectarian universalism of Rammohan. Non-sectarianism and universalism are extra-religious sentiments pertinent to intellectual humanistic secularism.

Rammohan aspired "that a day will arrive when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice—perhaps acknowledged with gratitude."⁵⁴ And this was actually so when, a century later, Sivanath Sastri wrote of him, "As a herald of the New Age he held up before men a new faith, which was universal in its sympathies and whose cardinal principle was that the 'service of man is the service of God.'"⁵⁵ and S. D. Collet observed, "he was the mediator of his people, harmonizing in his own person often by means of his own solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and of inevitable enlightenments."⁵⁶

In fact, Rammohan's labours brought him deserved fame even during his life time; but his attempt to reform the Hindu religion hardly yielded any countable result. His presentation of faith was an inadequate return for a life-long labour and he could have been accused, with some justification, of "religious dilettantism." This partial 'failure' of Rammohan's was due, at least to some extent, to his secularism in religion. As we have tried to show above, Rammohan's religion contained many things not necessarily of a religious context, and did not contain many things essential for a religion. Imperfect as a religion in the traditional sense his formula presented a lot of non-traditional ideas pertinent to secularism and impertinent to religion. This ambivalent experiment was bound to fail at least as a spiritual exercise called religion. His this-worldliness and avoidance of everything supernatural marred the prospect of his religion being popular. The secular aspects of his work were appreciably successful and the Hindu society quietly accepted many of his social and cultural views. But so far as religion is concerned, his edifice was a quick-sand or rather a Tughlaq wooden pavilion for salvation-seeking unsecular souls, the raw-materials for true religion. His so-called followers had later to import many things unsecular to build a new religious order known as the Brahma Samaj. And the fallen Hindus' craving for a higher religion was later satisfied by the truly spiritual seer Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a large-hearted but not secular prophet, and his mission, through the edification of the all-embracing eternal Hinduism, rather than the discriminatory expulsion of symbolism and idol-worship.

Rammohan Ray, by S. D. Collet, edited by D. K. Biswas and P. C. Ganguli Calcutta, 1962, P. 505

⁵⁴Introduction to 'An Abridgement of the Vedant,' EW, II, P. 61

⁵⁵Sivanath Sastri, 'History of the Brahma Samaj,' Second edition, Calcutta, 1964, P. 51

⁵⁶S. D. Collet, Ibid, P. 378

Before we finish this article, it seems tempting to refer to two anecdotes further illustrating our concept of Rammohan's religious secularism. We have already said, and it is well-known, that Rammohan cherished an uncompromising hate against idol-worship and this attitude of his was almost akin to the Islamic stand on this point. But unlike the Islamic, his attitude had a secular and utilitarian chord as illustrated by the following fact. Some of contemporary European intellectuals in India emphasized that the Hindu idol-worship was not an example of out and out idolatry, but a form of symbolism, the idols being emblematical representation of the Supreme Divinity. Rammohan denounced this scholastic connoisseurship of Hinduism by pointing out that the Hindus were utterly ignorant of the nature of God and they worship the idols as living deities. After this denunciation, however, Rammohan says, "If this were indeed the case, I might perhaps be led into some examination of the subject."⁵⁷ That means, in the case of unalloyed symbolism he was ready to give a second thought to his singular opposition to idol-worship. Moreover, he, in fact, recognised the relevance of idol-worship for people of low mental stature, and thus he reconciled the idolatrous prescriptions of the sacred writings with his monotheism.⁵⁸ This ambivalence in Rammohan's religious ideas signifies his religion-neutral utilitarianism.

It is known that Rammohan had a Muslim lady-love. For this he was accused of adultery by his orthodox opponents.⁵⁹ To this charge his answer was that his affairs with the lady was legal and sacred as they were married in the Saiva style.⁶⁰ He argued that if marriage with the mantras of the god Brahma is regarded as sacred and legal, why should the marriage with the mantras of another equally important god Siva should not be regarded as so.⁶¹ This is obviously an eel-like effort to wriggle out of the real charge. The argument adduced might silence the Brahmanas worshipping both Brahma and Siva. But what about the explanation satisfying Rammohan's own conscience of a monotheist and a relentless defiler of Siva?⁶² This can only be explained if we assume that Rammohan's own considerations in the affairs were purely human and mundane and had nothing to do with religion; but he did not fail to cloak it with religious arguments unto his religion-blind opponents.

Differences in spiritual ideas and concepts and consequent oscillations often disarray the human race in its efforts to organise and edify man's life, society,

⁵⁷Introduction to 'An Abridgement of the Vedant', EW, II, P. 60

⁵⁸Sivanath Sastri, Op. cit., PP. 47—48

⁵⁹'Chari Prasna' Reprinted in "Rammohan Granthavali" edited by Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajani Kanta Das ; part VI, 3rd ed., Calcutta., 1380 B. S. PP. 3—4.

⁶⁰Saiva marriage is a left-hand Tantrik practice not approved by the Brahmanas for the Smriti-governed caste-following orthodox Hindu society.

⁶¹'Chari Prasner Uttar' ; reprinted in 'Rammohan Granthavali, VI, cited above, PP. 19—20

⁶²'A Defence of Hindoo Theism,' EW, II, P. 92

and culture, and to unfold the unfold potentialities in him. Rammohan tried to solve this problem by guaranteeing spiritual uniformity from which intellectual platform communities and nations could, after final settlement of speculations about the unknown and unknowable, embark upon exploration of worldly possibilities in man. With this motive in view he intended to secularize the ultra-sacred society of the Hindus through a movement which was religious only apparently. Hence secularism remained a monotone pervading the whole span of Rammohan's cultivation in religion. This crop was a melange and the inherent ambivalence rendered it well-nigh sterile. However, his novel project ever remains a thought-provoking piece of socio-cultural feat striking out of a lackadaisical period of the history of Bengal and of Hinduism at the juncture of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

The Agrarian Uprising of Titu Mir 1831

The Economics of a Revivalist Movement

Shamsun Nahar

Titu Mir, a west Bengali Muslim, is famous for leading a peasant uprising in his home district, the 24-Parganas, in 1831.¹ Bengali peasants lived in villages and earned their living from cultivation. Generally the peasant had five to ten bighas of land.² His source of income was his cash crops—paddy, jute and pulses. Many of the peasants had no landed property ; they worked as labourers. Some of them were part time weavers.

The early land revenue policy of the East India Company adversely affected the Bengal peasantry. The Permanent Settlement created a new class of Zamindars who, in their efforts to collect more revenue, employed oppressive measures against the peasants. Moreover, the European indigo-planters' attempt to develop indigo industry at the cost of paddy, jute, and other profitable agricultural products, began to worsen the peasants' economic condition. It was against this background that Titu Mir initiated the peasants' uprisings. How did he organize them? To win the supports of the Muslim peasantry, he began to talk about the teachings of Islam based on the Quran and the Hadith. For the non-Muslim peasants, he brought into play the oppression of the caste Hindu Zamindars.³ Thus, he succeeded in uniting a large section of peasants

¹The district of 24-Parganas consisted of the following 24 fiscal divisions :

(1) Akbarpur, (2) Amirpur, (3) Azimbad, (4) Balia, (5) Baridhati, (6) Calcutta, (7) Basandhari, (8) Dakshin Sagar, (9) Garh (10) Hathiagarh, (11) Ikhtiapur, (12) Khashpur, (13) Kharijuri, (14) Maidanmal, (15) Magura, (16) Manpur, (17) Majda, (18) Paika, (19) Munragacha, (20) Pechakuli, (21) Satal, (22) Shahnagar, (23) Shahpur, (24) Uttar Pargana.

According to the 1871 Census Report, the population of 24-Parganas was 1,581,448

L. S. S. O'Malley, **Bengal District Gazetteers, 24-Parganas, 1911**, (Calcutta : The Bengal Secretariate Book Depot, 1914), PP. 44—59. The population of Bengal was reported to be 25,000,000 in 1793 and 60,000,000 in 1884. At the time of Permanent Settelement the area under tillage in Bengal was computed by Colebrooke to be near about 30,000,000 acres.

"Reply by D. Chatterjee, Chief Manager, Tagore Raj" : **Report of the Land Revenue Commission**, Vol. IV, (Alipore : Bengal Government Press, 1940), P. 418

²Ram Shunker Sen, **Report on the Agricultural Statistics of Jessore** (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Press, 1873), P. 83

³Abdul Gafur Siddiqi, **Shahid Titu Mir** (in Bangali), (Dacca : Bangla Academy, B. S. 1368), P. 44

The Agrarian Uprising of Titu Mir 1831

under his leadership and initiated an intercommunal movement against Zamindars and indigo-planters.

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All the available writings on Titu Mir describe him as a revivalist leader who aimed at purging the unislamic practices and customs from Muslim Society. Biharilal Sarkar in his Bengali book, **Titu Mir**, depicts Titu Mir as a fanatical religious leader.⁴ In **Shahid Titu Mir**, Abdul Gafur Siddiqui deals with the life and career of Titu Mir as a religious reformer discussing his contact with Sayyid Ahmed Shahid (1787—1830), the Wahhabi leader of North India and other religious divines.⁵ A. R. Mallick's **British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal 1757—1856** devote a few pages to Titu Mir's clash with the Hindu Zamindars on religious issues.⁶ In the **History of the Faralidi Movement in Bengal (1818—1906)**, Muin-ud-Din Ahmed Khan compares Titu Mir's movement with the Fara'idi movement of Haji Shariat Allah (1781—1840) in Eastern Bengal.⁷ W. W. Hunter in his book, **The Indian Musalmans**, refers to Titu Mir as a disciple of Sayyid Ahmed Shahid, the leader of the Wahhabi Movement.⁸ All these writers have seen Titu Mir's movement from religious points of view.⁹ They have overlooked the economic aspects of the movement. In the present article, I intend to deal with the economic dimension.

As intimated, the peasants of Bengal were seriously affected by the land revenue policy of the East India Company. With the grant of Diwani in 1765, the East India Company assumed the power of collecting the land revenue of Bengal. The English, who had replaced Asians holding higher posts in the revenue department, were very much eager to collect as much revenue as they could. Even in times of draught and natural calamities they did not hesitate to realize the revenue fully. When the terrible famine of 1769—70 took a toll of ten millions of people in Bengal, land revenue increased : in 1770—71 the net collection of revenue from Bengal exceeded the collection of the previous year

⁴Calcutta, B. S. 1304

⁵Dacca : Bangla Academy, B. S. 1368

⁶Dacca : Asiatic Society of Pakistan Publication, 1961

⁷Karachi : Pakistan Historical Society, 1965

⁸London, 1871.

For details on the Wahhabi Movement see, Abdul Bari, **A Comparative Study of the Early Wahhabi Doctrines and Contemporary Reform Movements in Indian Islam** (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Queen's College, Oxford University, 1953)

⁹For example, A. R. Mallick called Titu Mir "a religious reformer", who desired re formation "in existing faith." His movement, he argued, "aimed at purging the faith of various idolatrous and superstitious practices." A. R. Mallick, **British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal 1757—1857**, P. 77.

Muin-ud-Din Ahmed Khan regarded Titu Mir's movement as "an extension of Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah," a religious movement of Upper India.

Muin-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, **History of the Fara'idi Movement in Bengal (1818—1906)**, P. Ixiv,

more than six lacs of rupees. The collection shot up next year by 14 lacs more.¹⁰ All these heavily told upon the condition of the peasants in Bengal.

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The Permanent Settlement introduced by Lord Cornwallis¹¹ in 1793 further resulted in serious injustice to the peasants¹². It was a harsh Settlement because in spite of deterioration in the economic condition of the peasants, the Company fixed the state demand at a very high level, more than three times the collection made under Mir Jafar.¹³ The demand was nine-tenths of the gross receipts of the Zamindars.¹⁴ The tenants were practically put at the mercy of "rack-renting land-lords."¹⁵ Since the Zamindars were now directly responsible for the payment of revenue to the government, and since the revenue demand was exorbitant, many of them had failed to realize the rent from the peasants.¹⁶ And, because of revenue arrears, the government confiscated their estates and put them up for auction. The years immediately following the Permanent Settlement saw the ruin of many Zamindars¹⁷. These estates were purchased mostly by Hindu merchants and bankers of Calcutta. Thus, a number of Hindu-Muslim Zamindars were replaced by a group of influential Hindus, particularly merchants and bankers, who had already made fortunes under the Company's rule helping officials and traders.¹⁸ In 1820, Charles Theophilus

¹⁰R. Dutt, *The Economic History of India* (London : Morrison and Gibb LTD, 1950), Vol. I, P. 52

Also, A. R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal 1757—1856*, P. 29.

¹¹Cornwallis, Charles Marquis (December 31, 1738—October 5, 1805) ; Son of First Earl Cornwallis ; educated at Eton and the Military Academy of Turin ; a Colonel in 1766 ; Major General of India from 1786 to 1793 and 1804 ; Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1798.

¹²Until the Rent Act was passed in 1859, "the raiyats were undoubtedly left to the mercy of the Zamindars. . . . They (raiayats) were described by the Government of India as having been rack-rented, impoverished, and oppressed."

Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal, (Alipore : Bengal Government Press, 1940), Vol. I, P. 24

¹³The collections were :

	Actual Collection in Rupees	Actual Collection in £
1762—63	6,456,198	646,000
1763—64	7,618,407	762,000
1764—65	8,175,533	818,000
1765—66	14,704,875	1,470,000

R. Dutt, *The Economic History of India*, Vol. 1, P. 85

¹⁴**A History of the Freedom Movement, 1831—1905**, (Karachi : Pakistan Historical Society, 1961), Vol. II, Pt. II, P. 348

¹⁵Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, **Plassey Thekey Pakistan** (in Bengali), (Dacca : Pakistan Publication, 1968), P. 32

¹⁶A. F. S. Ahmed, **Social Ideas and Social change in Bengal 1818—1835** (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1965), P. 6

¹⁷Zamindaris "with more than a fifth of the total revenues of Bengal were put up for sale during 1796—97, and within twenty years after the Permanent Settlement more than one-third of the landed property of Bengal was sold for arrears of rent." B. B. Misra, **The Indian Middle Classes**, (London : Oxford University Press, 1961), P. 132

¹⁸The people who benefitted from "the growing trade of Europeans in Calcutta were the Bengali Hindus. In the beginning they acted as banyans or brokers to a European firm, learned the tricks of the trade, and then established firms of their own."

The Agrarian Uprising of Titu Mir 1831

Metcalfe, then British Resident at Hyderabad, called the Settlement "the most sweeping act of oppression ever committed in any country, by which the landed property of the country had been transferred from the class of people entitled to it, to a set of Baboos, who have made their wealth by bribery and corruption."¹⁹ The method of selling Zamindaris on auction to the highest bidders had a disastrous effect upon the welfare of the peasants. The Zamindars, in order to save their Zamindaris, mercilessly exacted land taxes from the peasants. The **Gomasthas** or agents of Zamindars frequently harassed the poor peasants for goods and taxes.²⁰ These **Gomasthas** used to hoard grains to sell in times of scarcity and thus made huge profits.

The peasants had to borrow money from **mahajans** or money-lenders, who were usually Hindus, to meet the demands of Zamindars and sometimes to tide over their domestic requirements. Why did the money-lenders mostly belong to the Hindu community? Usury is prohibited in Islam.²¹ The Muslims avoided money-lending business, although sometimes a few converted Muslims were found engaged in it. How did the money-lenders conduct their business? In lending money to a peasant, the money-lenders were always anxious to hold some land, preferably the better land and cattle, in mortgage. When the peasant could not repay his debt the interests on loans were multiplied, increasing the amount. The rate of interest charged would vary from 37 per cent to 50 or 60 per cent. The peasant's debts went on increasing until he found himself bound to make a contract with **mahajans**. The contract very often resulted in selling out the whole of the peasant's property to **mahajans**.²² The peasant could not think of any legal relief because of his poverty and the complicated Western

Ibid., P. 103

The ancient aristocracy, thus, "began to be replaced by a shrewd, opportunist and self-seeking commercialised group of interests who invested their capital in the purchase of land."

B. B. Misra, *The Central Administration of the East India Company 1773—1834* (Manchester : The University Press, 1959), P. 195

Also, "Khulna Landholders' Association Reply," : *Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal*, (Alipore : Bengal Government Press, 1940), Vol. IV, P. 75

Also, Sulekh Chandra Gupta ; *Agrarian Relations and early British rule in India (1801—1833)*, (London : Asia Publishing House, 1963), P. 77

¹⁹E. Thompson, *The Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe* (London, 1937), P. 267.

²⁰A *History of the Freedom Movement, 1831—1905*, Vol. II, Pt. II, P. 351

²¹The Holy Quran says : "Those who devour usury shall not rise again, save as he riseth whom Satan (evil) hath paralysed with a touch ; and that is because they say 'selling is only like usury', but God has made selling lawful and usury unlawful ; Whosoever returns (to usury) these are the fellows of the Fire, and they shall dwell therein for aye."

E. H. Palmer, *Al-Quran* (Eng. Trans.) London : Oxford University Press, 1900) Verse 275 PP. 39—40

²²The **mahajan** "entrenched himself in rural economy which came to be dominated by him." He became "almost as important as the landlord."

N. K. Sinha (ed.), *The History of Bengal (1757—1905)*, (Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1967), P. 104

system of law. As a result, the Bengal peasantry suffered everywhere and were reduced to a helpless and frustrated condition.

The Bengali peasantry were also exploited by the indigo-planters and their agents. In the first half of the nineteenth century, indigo was exclusively cultivated in Bengal—particularly in areas of the 24-Parganas and Nadia where Titu Mir was born and brought up.²³ The indigo cultivation was highly 'distasteful' to peasants as it was unprofitable to them.²⁴ They lost seven rupees per bigha when they cultivated indigo in place of other principal crops—paddy and jute.²⁵ They had to pay a number of extra fees for factory agents. The cultivators were required to take advance from the agents to produce indigo. The process of taking advance was so complicated that it was always the cultivators who had to suffer. It was reported that "when the cultivator has once received an advance, neither he nor any of his posterity can obtain deliverance from the engagement, for the accounts are so dexterously obscure, that he always appears in arrears every man trembles at the clubs of the planters and is, therefore, deterred from complaining."²⁶ He, thus, became a "slave" to the planters.²⁷ Sometimes when the peasant refused to grow indigo by sheer reason of economic considerations, he was severely taken to task.²⁸ He was confined in factory houses and sometimes was beaten to death, his houses and belongings being set on fire.²⁹ It was hardly possible for the peasant to sue the planters in the court of law because of economic handicaps.

The peasants' movement under Titu Mir should be stated against this background. Titu Mir was born in 1782 at Chandpur, a village of the 24-Parganas.³⁰ Born and brought up in the rural society, Titu Mir had seen for himself the torture and miseries of the peasants. He was determined to defend them against their exploiters.³¹ This, he thought, required a group of well-disciplined and devoted followers. First, he decided to go to Calcutta to build himself up physically. There he received physical training at a private club.³² After passing

²³Pramod Sen Gupta, *Nil Bidroha O Bangali Samaj* (in Bengali), (Calcutta: National Book Agency Private Limited, 1960), PP. 8—10, 44, 55, 57, 82

²⁴R. S. Sen, *Report on the Agricultural Statistics of Jessore, 1872—73*, (Calcutta 1873), PP. 13—16

²⁵Blair B. King, *The Blue Mutiny : The Indigo Disturbances in Bengal 1859—1862* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), P. 36

²⁶Quoted in Pramod Sen Gupta, *Nil Bidroha O Bangali Samaj*, P. 155

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*, PP. 15—18

²⁹Mohar Ali, *Autobiography and other writing of Nawab Abdul Latif Khan Bahadur* (Chittagong : The Mehrub Publications, 1968), P. Viii

³⁰He had elementary education in arithmetic and Arabic.

³¹Muinud-Din Ahmad Khan, 'Muslim Struggle for Freedom in Bengal,' S. Sajjad Hussain (ed.), *East Pakistan* (Dacca : Orient Longmans Ltd., 1962), PP. 65—66

³²Suprakash Roy, *Bharater Krishak Bidroha O Ganatantrik Sangram* (in Bengali), (Calcutta : DNBA Brothers, 1972), P. 222

several years roaming about here and there, he settled down at Haydarpur a village near Narikelbaria in 1827 and concentrated on building a peasant front against the Zamindars and European planters. To unite the Muslim peasants, he carefully and deliberately took the help of Islam, because, he thought, nothing would appeal more effectively to the Muslim mind than Islam.³³ The Muslim peasants' visits to tombs and shrines for divine help in worldly distress, he thought, was the outcome of their economic frustrations. Also he felt that the Muslim peasants' hope for relief through the miraculous powers of the **pirs** (Muslim divines) sprang again mostly from economic insolvency. He, therefore, asked them to avoid all religious practices involving money. He told them to give up marriage ceremonies which required them to borrow from money-lenders. He also discouraged them from decorating tombs, raising a mausoleum on the graves, preparing **taziahs** (symbols related with the celebrations of **Muharram**) and offering **fatihas** for the dead.³⁴ Titu Mir wanted to distinguish his followers from the rest of the people and asked them to grow beards. While growing beards was very much liked by a section of the Muslims, it was not opposed by the non-Muslims either. Titu Mir's followers were required to wear a piece of cloth without passing one end of it between legs. Such dress was perhaps more convenient to them while engaged in encounters with the enemies. Soon he was able to gather around him about 3,000 to 4,000 followers. Peasants of the areas from 18 to 20 miles in length and 12 to 14 miles in breadth, across the rivers Jumna and Ichamati, in the district of the 24 Parganas, solidly backed him.³⁵

The growing organizational success of Titu Mir posed a threat to the vested interest of the Zamindars and their supporters. They launched a campaign against Titu Mir complaining that he was interfering with the normal religious practices of the Muslims.³⁶ In support of their complaints, they quoted Titu's directives prohibiting the Muslims to visit the tombs of saints, banning **fatihas** for the dead. Thus, Titu Mir's movement was interpreted as irreligious to discredit him in the eyes of the Muslims.

The Zamindars adopted further measures against Titu Mir and his followers. Ram Narayan, the Zamindar of Taragonia, Gaur Prasad Chowdhury, Zamindar of Nagapur, Dev Nath Roy of Gobra Gobindapur, Kali Prasanna Mukherjee of Goberdanga, Krishna Dev Roy of Purwa had long been watching Titu Mir's movement with suspicion and displeasure. They imposed humiliating

³³Majority of the population in this area were Muslims. L. S. S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers*, 24-Parganas, 1911, P. 69

³⁴Biharilal Sarkar, *Tutu Mir* (in Bengali), PP. 54—55

³⁵A. R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal 1757—1856*, PP. 77—78

³⁶Edward Thorton, *The History of the British Empire in India* (London : Wm H. Allen And Co., 1843), Vol. V. P. 180

fines on Titu Mir's followers. For example, Krishna Dev Roy of Purwa imposed a heavy tax on beards.³⁷ The fine charged per beard was two and a half rupees which was indeed very high in terms of contemporary money valuation. Sometimes many of these Zamindars reportedly occupied forcibly the property of Titu Mir's followers on the plea of non-payment of taxes.³⁸

As the Zamindars involved in the conflict with Titu Mir were Hindus, it is tempting to give the clash a communal colour. In reality it was a clash of economic interests. As mentioned, Titu Mir's movement was intercommunal, a movement of the have-nots and the oppressed against the haves and the oppressors — the Zamindars and indigo-planters. If Titu Mir's movement was fully developed it would definitely bring about a revolution in the rural Bengal society, and in the process a social system might evolve, wherein the Zamindar would no longer remain a force political and economic. This explained why the Zamindars challenged Titu Mir's movement and Titu Mir resisted them. Religion perhaps was used by both of them as a means to achieve their ends ; religion had never been the compelling factor of their action. Had Islam been a driving force behind Titu Mir's activities, he would not have been supported by the Hindus.³⁹

Titu Mir, sure of the rightness of his cause, openly protested against the punitive measures of the Zamindars. At his instance, one of his followers who had been fined Rs. 25/-for growing beard by Ram Narayan, the Zamindar of Taragoonia, filed a case against the Zamindar in the court of Joint Magistrate of Barasat on August 7, 1830.⁴⁰ Alexander, the joint Magistrate, seemed to be influenced by the Zamindars whom he did not like to displease. The Joint Magistrate considered Zamindars as the custodian of peace and tranquility in rural Bengal. This, he felt, helped the continuance of the British rule. Hence the magistrate dismissed the case on July 13, 1831, finding no merit in it.⁴¹

Whether legally sound or not the judgement of the Joint Magistrate provoked Titu Mir and his followers to resort to force. They resisted the realization of beard-tax and came in clash with the Zamindars.⁴² At Sarfarazpur, when the agents of the Zamindar Krishna Dev Roy came to collect the beard tax, Titu

³⁷Biharilal Sarkar, *Titu Mir*, PP. 14—15

Also, Abdul Gafur Siddiqui, *Shahid Titu Mir*, P. 49

³⁸Biharilal Sarkar, *Ibid.*

³⁹Monohar Roy, A Hindu Zamindar of Chutna in West Bengal, identified himself with Titu Mir's cause.

⁴⁰A. R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal, 1757—1856*, PP. 78—79

Also Abdul Bari, 'The Reform Movement in Bengal,' *A History of the Freedom Movement, 1707—1831* (Karachi 1957), Vol. I, P. 551

⁴¹A. R. Mallick, *Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*

Also, Board's Collection 54222, P. 401

Mir's followers attacked and beat them and took one of them prisoner. The Zamindar could hardly tolerate this. He entered the village with armed retainers and looted the houses of Titu Mir's followers.⁴³ Titu Mir made a complaint to Ram Ram Chatterji, Darogah (Police officer) of Bashirhat police station against the torture of Krishna Deb Roy.⁴⁴ Krishna Dev Roy made a counter complaint against Titu Mir. He reported that Titu Mir had forcibly kept one of his agents into detention. The darogah, who happened to be a relation of the Zamindar, made an inquiry into the incident and decided the case against Titu Mir.⁴⁵ It is however not on record what process of inquiry the darogah adopted and what types of witnesses the darogah interviewed and whether he visited the place of occurrence at all.

Dissatisfied with the decision of the darogah, on July 15 and 29, 1831, Titu Mir brought the case before the Magistrate of Barasat. He complained that the darogah's decision was biased because he was a relation of the Zamindar. Moreover, Titu Mir argued, the darogah did not hear properly his presentation of the case. The Magistrate took up the case for hearing. Because of conflicting evidence, it became extremely difficult for the Magistrate to take any decision. The Magistrate had in his mind the imperial consideration ; to keep peace in India and rule. He did not like to antagonize the Zamindars because, as mentioned, they were thought to be the peace-maintainer in rural Bengal. At the same time, the Magistrate did not like to give the peasants an impression that justice had been denied to them and that the British Government did not mean any good to them. Hence he brought about a compromise between the two parties. Both the parties signed an agreement on September 2, 1831, declaring that they would not cause any further disturbance.⁴⁶

The Zamindars were, however, not happy with this compromise which by implication had given Titu Mir a status of equality with them. They began to employ legal means to harass Titu Mir's party. They invoked the provision of the Regulation 7, 1799, which empowered the Zamindars to make summary arrest of peasants for arrears of rent.⁴⁷ A number of Titu Mir's supporters were arrested.

Finding no other alternative than to meet force with force Titu Mir began to prepare for the inevitable. They collected arms such as arrows, lances, spears, bamboo sticks and iron rods into the house of one Muizuddin Biswas, a wealthy

⁴³Biharilal Sarkar, *Titu Mir*, PP. 14—16

⁴⁴Abdul Gafur Siddiqi, *Shahid Titu Mir*, P. 58

⁴⁵Abdul Gafur Siddiqi, *Ibid.*, PP. 61—63

⁴⁶Board's Collection, 54222, Enclosure No. 4 to Colvin's Report.

Also, A. R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal 1757—1856*, P. 80.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, P. 81

farmer of Narikelbaria.⁴⁸ Hearing that Titu Mir had gathered huge arms in the village of Narikelbaria to fight the Zamindar, Krishna Dev Roy attacked the village on October 29, 1831. Titu Mir's party was completely overpowered. Titu Mir himself was wounded along with some of his followers—Misqin Shah, Muizuddin Biswas. Next day Titu Mir brought the incident to the notice of local police but with no results.

The police inaction had a serious impact on Titu Mir's course of future activities. The more justice was denied to him the more he was convinced of the use of force as the only means to end oppression and injustice. Following the incident at Narikelbaria, about five hundred able bodied men joined Titu Mir.⁴⁹ Many low-caste Hindu peasants thought that they would be soon freed from the torture of the high caste Hindu Zamindars by Titu Mir and rallied round him.⁴⁹ The rapid spread of this movement among the peasants irrespective of religion alarmed a few Zamindars. They found in Titu Mir's movement a threat to the Zamindar's authority in general. Thus they thought in terms of exercising moderation toward Titu Mir. Monohar Roy, a Hindu Zamindar of Chutna in West Bengal, for example, advised Krishna Dev Roy to minimize hostility with Titu Mir.⁵⁰

The incident of Narikalbaria was very fresh in the minds of Titu Mir's followers. Backed by a larger section of peasants they decided to retaliate. At Purwa Titu Mir's supporters attacked those who were connected with the raid in Narikelbaria and killed a Zamindar, Dev Nath Roy who was actively hostile to Titu Mir.⁵¹ To bring the situation under control, a European Magistrate rushed on the spot with a detachment of local police.⁵² The Magistrate was defied, his police resisted and beaten up. The situation became tense. Davis, the manager of a nearby indigo factory at Molla Hati, Nadia, was contacted by the defeated police. Davis quickly went there. He was defeated by Titu Mir and fled.⁵³

The involvement of Davis in the conflict ignited Titu Mir's wrath against the European indigo-planters. He openly aroused peasants to attack the European planters also. He was fully convinced that indigo-planters were collaborating with the Zamindars to ruin peasants. At his order, the peasants refused to

⁴⁸Abdul Gafur Siddiqi, *Shahid Titu Mir*, P. 68

⁴⁹These people came to Narikelbaria from Chandpur, Haydarpur, Kirtipur, Sayedpur, Rajapur, Nayapur, Bagjola and Atgohra.

Suprakash Roy, *Bharater Krishak Bidroha O Ganatantrik Sangram*, P. 227

⁵⁰Abdul Gafur Siddiqi, *Shahid Titu Mir*, P. 78

⁵¹Edward Thorton, *The History of the British Empire in India*, P. 182

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

cultivate indigo.⁵⁴ The indigo-planters of Nadia and the 24-Parganas were disturbed by the risings of peasants. Piron, Superintendent of Balaguri factory in Hughli wrote to the Commissioner of indigo factory in Calcutta, to take steps for the suppression of Titu Mir.⁵⁵ Stores wrote Alexander, Joint Magistrate of Barasat, to take a serious note of Titu Mir's activities. At this, the Joint Magistrate went to the locality of Titu Mir to see things for himself.⁵⁶ The Joint Magistrate was accompanied by a contingent of police and indigo-planters, Benjamin and Davis, managers of indigo factories in Sherpur and Molla Hati respectively. On their arrival at Narikelbaria, they met with resistance by Titu Mir. As the Joint Magistrate was accompanied by two indigo-planters, Titu Mir thought that it was a party of planters bent on enforcing indigo cultivation on the peasants. Therefore, a clash took place in which one Jamadar, ten Sepoys and three gun men were killed and Alexander narrowly escaped death.⁵⁷ How many supporters of Titu Mir were wounded or killed in the clash is not known.

Encouraged by this success, Titu Mir with a band of about eight thousand peasants marched to destroy Piron's indigo factory at Balaguri.⁵⁸ Piron fled to Hughli leaving the factory at the mercy of Titu Mir. His house and property were looted and destroyed. Another factory in Hughli was attacked. Its Superintendent, Blond was arrested. He was, however, released on condition that he could not enforce the cultivation of indigo henceforth.⁵⁹

All this success brought a new element in Titu Mir's movement. He thought that he could now challenge the British authority. He declared himself to be the independent ruler of his area where he intended to establish an exploitation-free peasant society.⁶⁰ He soon appointed a weaver, Mainuddin of Rudrapur village as his prime minister.⁶¹ Titu Mir's nephew, Gulam Masum was put in charge of what Titu Mir called an army.⁶² He ordered peasants not to pay taxes to the British Government.⁶³

⁵⁴Suprakash Roy, *Bharater Krishak Bidraha O Ganatantrik Sangram*, P. 227

Also, Qazi Din Muhammad, *Bangla Sahityer Itihash* (in Bengali), (Dacca : Student ways, Bangla Bazar, 1968), Vol. III, PP. 23-24.,

⁵⁵Abdul Gafur Siddiqi, *Shahid Titu Mir*, PP. 78—79

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Abdul Bari, 'The Reform Movement in Bengal,' *A History of the Freedom Movement, 1707—1831*, Vol. I., P. 553

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Biharilal Sarkar, *Titu Mir*, P. 48

⁶⁰Suprakash Roy, *Bharater Karishak Bidroha O Ganatantrik Sangram*, P. 226

⁶¹*Ibid.*, P. 229

⁶²Gulam Masum had already shown his military skill in defeating a British contingent led by Alexander against Titu Mir.

N. K. Sinha (ed.) *The History of Bengal (1757—1905)*, P. 191

⁶³Suprakash Roy, *Ibid.*, P. 227

Titu Mir now apprehended army action by the Government of Bengal and prepared himself to face it. He built a bamboo stockade at Narikalbaria known as **Basher Killa** and filled it with arrows, lances, spears, bamboo sticks, bricks. This shows that Titu Mir was utterly ignorant of modern weapons. It was obviously clear that a single regiment of British army would be able to wipe out the fortification of Titu Mir.

The situation was indeed very grave. The Joint Magistrate of Barasat had already reported to the Government of Bengal on November 6, 1831, about the speed with which Titu Mir's movement was spreading and assuming a turn dangerous to authority. The British Government decided to take military action against Titu Mir and to suppress the movement which had resulted in initiating almost a parallel government in an area of rural Bengal. This was what no government would tolerate. The Bengal Government sent a regiment of one hundred English cavalry, three hundred Indian infantry and two cannons under Lt. Col., Steward. Alexander, Joint Magistrate of Barasat joined them. On November 19, 1831, the Bengal army engaged Titu Mir in battle at Narikelbaria.⁶⁴ Titu Mir and his party unaware of the destructive power of British arms took positions and raised anti-British slogans. After a while, Titu Mir with his fifty followers were killed; their dead bodies were burnt and the bamboo stockade was looted.⁶⁵ Three hundred and fifty were arrested of which one hundred ninety-seven were committed for trial.⁶⁶ Gulam Masum, Lieutenant of Titu Mir, was sentenced to death. Thus, Titu Mir's movement was brought to an end.

Titu Mir's movement had gradually grown anti-British. It was originally an intercommunal movement aimed at freeing the peasants from oppression. It was the economic grievances that lay at the root of this movement. To popularise the movement Titu Mir brought revivalism into play. The peasants' positive response to the movement threatened to destroy the economic and social position of the landed gentry and indigo-planters who combined to oppose Titu Mir; they complained against him to the government and harassed him in many ways. The rapid spread of the movement in the locality and its possible repercussion in other areas (the government took steps, before the movement could spread beyond Nadia and the 24-Parganas) alarmed the government. The government saw in the movement a threat to law and order in rural Bengal and hence, in collaboration with the Zamindars and indigo-planters, suppressed Titu Mir and his movement.

⁶⁴Ibid., PP. 230—232

⁶⁵Muhammad Abdul Hai, Syed Ali Ahsan, *Bangla Sahityer Itibritta* (in Bengali) (Chittagong : Kabi Nazrul Islam Road, B. S. 1381), P. 10

⁶⁶Edward Thorton, *The History of the British Empire in India*, P. 183

The way Titu Mir challenged the government made him famous in subsequent times. His fight for peasants was itself an achievement which provided opportunity for the display of Bengalees' heroism. It was from his activities that many Bengali nationalist leaders drew inspiration for greater achievement in the days to come. ✓

Coexistence in a Plural Society Under Colonial Rule

Hindu-Muslim Relations in Bengal 1757-1912

Chapter XVIII

The geographical area called Bengal, which during Akbar's time became a definite political unit, was and still is, with few exceptions, inhabited by a people having the same mode of living and for the most part the same culture. In addition to this, the growth of a regional feeling, known as the Bengali nationalism, in the nineteenth century cannot be denied. Following the partition, the Bengali people's response to the partition of Bengal in 1905 was very much diverse. One segment of the people, the Hindu bhadrakols, was against the partition and had recourse to political agitation including economic boycott and violent non-cooperation against the government. Another segment supported the partition, forming a new political party with a view to upholding its communal interests. Yet another segment, by far the majority of the whole population, consisting of the low caste Hindus and Muslim masses, was not concerned by the partition at all. Nevertheless, the division between the last two segments was so sharp that serious fighting occurred among the people not only in the outlying country but also in Calcutta and other big towns, but also in the very heart of the capital city, Calcutta.

The question naturally arises why the people of Bengal having the same mother tongue and ethnic origin—in short almost a common cultural identity—did not join side by side as neighbours under the same administration for centuries. It will have to be said in this respect that a political over-cast division of Bengal into Hindu and Muslim areas, which is the present state of affairs, is a result of the British colonial administration. The British colonial administration, due to different kinds of religious, social and cultural differences among the various communities, divided the people of Bengal into Hindu and Muslim areas.

This comprehensive edition of the work published in 1911, published by the Government of India, is a reprint of the original edition of 1911. The book is a valuable source of information on the history of Bengal and the relations between the British and the people of Bengal. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of Bengal and the relations between the British and the people of Bengal.

Coexistence in a Plural Society Under Colonial Rule

Hindu-Muslim Relations In Bengal 1757-1912

Ghulam Murshid

The geographical area, called Bengal, which during Muslim rule became a definite political unit was, and still is, with few exceptions, inhabited by a people having the same mother tongue and for the most part the same ethnic origin. In addition to this, the growth of a regional feeling, named Bengali nationalism in the nineteenth century cannot be denied. Notwithstanding this unity, the Bengali people's response to the partition of Bengal in 1905 was very much diverse. One segment of the people, the Hindu *bhadraloks*,¹ was against the partition and had recourse to political agitation including economic boycott and violent terrorist activities; another segment, the upper class Muslims in opposition supported the partition forming a new political party with a view to upholding its communal interests. Yet another segment, by far the majority of the whole population, consisting of the low caste Hindus and Muslim masses, was not concerned by the partition at all. Nevertheless, the division between the first two segments was so sharp that serious rioting occurred among the people not only in the outlying countryside where law and order was weak, but also in the very heart of the capital city, Calcutta.

The question naturally arises why the people of Bengal having the same mother tongue and ethnic origin—in short almost a common cultural identity—and living side by side as neighbours under the same administration for centuries, should have reacted so divisively to a political event as drastic as the division of their motherland. In the present article I shall try to show how due to different kinds of response towards the institutions established by the British colonial administration, the economic and cultural development among

¹For a comprehensive definition of the term *bhadralok* see J.H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal*, Berkeley, 1958, pp. 5-7

Also see A. Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1971 (Paper back edition), pp. 39-43.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Rabindranath Tagore had given Bengali a richness unparalleled by any other South Asian language.

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But as a result of the role the Hindu litterateurs played, the hopes and aspirations, in short, the life that was depicted in the Bengali literature was completely Hindu. This Hindu character of the Bengali literature became clear during the last four decades of the 19th century. In fact, this was the period when nationalism found its earliest expression in Bengal. **The Jatiya Gourab Sampadani Sabha** (Association for Promotion of National Glory, 1861) of Rajnarayan Bose, the **Hindu Mela** (Hindu Fair, 1867) and the **Jatiya Sabha** (National Association, 1869) of Nabagopal Mitra, and the Indian Association (1876) of Surendranath Banerji were some of the collective efforts towards political development. But as the educated community of the soil, only the Hindus took part in these efforts. Consequently the nationalism that inspired the educated community of Bengal at that time was totally Hindu in nature.⁸⁴ It was this inspiration that bound together heterogeneous elements like the Adi Brahmo Samaj and the Sanatan Dharma Rakshini Sabha.⁸⁵ Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji has rightly pointed out that although Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Akshay Chandra Sarkar lived on the opposite banks of the Ganges and were poles apart in most things, still they were able to meet on the common ground of an anti-Islamic attitude.⁸⁶

The Bengali writers of this period would abuse the Muslims while looking back at the glorious Hindu past. Almost all the major litterateurs of that period—Peary Chand Mitra, Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Jyotirindranath Tagore—preferred to glorify the names like Porus, Prithviraj, Shivaji and Rajsingha—magnifying the image of heroism and nobility of the Hindus.⁸⁷ At the same time, these writers disparaged the Muslims or the Yabans⁸⁸ as cowards and ignoble.

⁸⁴Contemporary observers were also aware of this fact. In a letter published in the **National Paper** an anonymous writer, SB, pointed out that Bengal was inhabited by the Hindus as well as the Muslims and Christians. Therefore an association of the Hindus alone should not be called the Jatiya Sabha or national association. 'Jatiya Sabha,' **The Madyastha**, 23 Agrahayan 1279 B. S. (Dec. 1872), pp. 542—544

⁸⁵In the early 1870's Adi Brahmo Samaj and Sanatan Dharma Rakshini Sabha collaborated on the revival of Hinduism under the banner of the Jatiya Sabha. At this Sabha the conservative Brahmos and the reactionary Hindus met. It is interesting to note that at one point the same person was the president of both Sanatan and Jatiya Sabhas (Kalikrisna Deb), and or Adi Brahmo Samaj and Jatiya Sabha (Devendranath Tagore).

⁸⁶D. P. Mukerji, **Modern Indian Culture**, Bombay, 1948 (2nd edition), p. 48

⁸⁷M. Chowdhury, **Tulanamulak Samalochana**, Dacca, 1969, especially the first three articles, pp. 1—224

Also see M. Maniruzzaman, **Adhunik Bengla Kabye Hindu Muslim Samparka**, Dacca, 1970

⁸⁸The Hindus at that time used to call the Muslims, Yabans. The word is derived from Hebrew 'Ionian' and originally meant the Greeks. But during the Muslim rule this word came to mean the Muslims and was used with great hatred.

has concealed his real name under the *nom de plume* of a Musalman.”⁸⁰ While reviewing Hossain’s second work, *Gorai Bridge athaba Gouri Setu* (1873), Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay welcomed the Bengali Muslims to learn Bengali and write in that language. The fact that a Muslim was writing in Bengali seemed almost unbelievable to him, and he therefore without evaluating the literary quality of the work, praised the writer. Bankim said,

*Even many Hindus cannot write in such chaste Bengali as Mosharraff Hossain’s. His example is admirable. Bengal is the land of both the Hindus and Muslims. But they are at present separated and unfriendly. For the prosperity of Bengal, however, Hindu-Muslim unity is essential. No such unity can emerge until the aristocratic Muslims learn Bengali and write in that language. At present the Muslims have a pride that they are outsiders and Bengali is not their language. They therefore cultivate Urdu and Persian. Mir Mosharraff Hossain’s love for Bengali language is a matter of delight for all Bengalis (Bankim meant all Bengali Hindus). We hope his example will be followed by the educated Muslims.*⁸¹

By the turn of the century, some Muslim prose writers like Sheikh Abdur Rahim (1859—1913) and Mozammel Huq (1860—1933) gained a considerable fame, but as a community the Muslims were still lagging behind. Due to this backwardness they were suffering from an inferiority complex and probably to overcome this, the Muslim writers of the early decades of this century would not hesitate to identify themselves as non-Bengalis. They used to ascribe their backwardness to their foreign ethnic origin and alien culture. Apologetic writings like the following one were rather frequent to appear in the contemporary press.⁸²

*Bengali is the language of the Hindus. Therefore it is quite natural that the Hindus will maintain their lead in the cultivation of Bengali literature.*⁸³

In fact, their backwardness led the new educated Muslims to create a small world of their own and live within its horizon. This world was actually not so Arabicised nor was it full of Islamic values. But it was a dreamland where socially and economically a backward community wanted to take shelter and find psychological comfort.

On the other hand, by the end of the 19th century, Bengali language and literature, from its mediocrity came to be regarded as the most developed among the modern Indian languages and literatures. Outstanding contributions by litterateurs like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Michael Madhusudan Dutt,

⁸⁰The Calcutta Review, Vol. 50, No. 99, (1870), p. 235

⁸¹The Bangadarshan, Paus, 1280 B. S. (Dec. 1873), pp. 431—432

⁸²For details see Islam, Chapter VII ; and Anisuzzaman, *Muslim Banglar etc.*, Passim.

⁸³Musalmaner Prati Hindu Lekhaker Atyachar,’ *The Nabanur*, Bhadra, 1310 B. S. (1903), quoted in Anisuzzaman, *Muslim Banglar etc.*, p. 73

claimed that Urdu was the mothertongue of the respectable Muslims of Bengal. They therefore felt no necessity for learning Bengali.⁷⁶

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The controversy whether the mothertongue of the Bengali Muslims was Bengali or Urdu, continued even upto the first quarter of the present century. In fact, one of the most heated discussions that rocked the Bengali Muslim press, time and again, centred around the question of the position of Bengali vis-a-vis Urdu.⁷⁷ The protagonists of Urdu were not only against the cause of Bengali, but they also identified themselves very much as outsiders. Their loyalty to Pan-Islamism was greater than their love for Bengal. Actually patriotism was something almost totally absent among this section of the Muslims. This was one of the reasons why the educated Muslims of Bengal with a few exceptions did not protest against the partition of the province in 1905.

On the other hand, the Muslim masses did not devote themselves either to English or to Bengali education. The same reasons that held them back from English education, held them back from Bengali learning as well. However, some of these Muslims who had a love for Bengali and acquired some education at the *maktabs* (Muslim institution for primary education, with emphasis on religious teaching) were still in the third quarter of the 19th century, writing *dobhashi puthis* (Muslim stories in verse). Dobhashi puthis are so called because these used to be written in a language distinctively different from the standard Bengali of that time. It was actually a fusion of Bengali, Arabic, Persian and Hindi elements. Since these elements came through Urdu, it was called *dobhashi*, or the mixture of two languages i. e. Bengali and Urdu.⁷⁸

The first mentionable Bengali prose work by a Muslim was published in 1869.⁷⁹ The author was Mir Mosharrarf Hossain (1848—1911) and the work *Ratnabati*. The uniqueness of this event and also the fact that the prose style of this book was different from the one the Muslims used to follow in the *dobhashi puthis*, led the contemporary critics to make comments that may seem strange even ridiculous, today. The *Calcutta Review* said, “we take it that the author

⁷⁶Nawab Abdul Latif, in evidence before the Education Commission of 1888, claimed that Bengali was the mothertongue of the lower class Muslims only. In his proposed curriculum for the Muslims of Bengal, there was virtually no place of Bengali. For details see Education Commission, *Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee*, Calcutta, 1884. Also see E. Haque's *Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif*, Dacca, 1968, pp. 55—75

⁷⁷For details see Islam, pp. 220—234

Also see, Anisuzzaman, *Muslim Banglar Samayikpatra*, Dacca, 1969, passim.

⁷⁸M. A. Hai and S. A. Ahsan, *Bangla Sahityer Itibritta*, Dacca, 1964 (2nd edition) p. 24

Also see Anisuzzaman, *Muslim-manas O Bangla Sahitya*, Dacca, 1964, pp. 115—117

⁷⁹Before this, apparently only three other prose works were published by Muslim authors. But none of these were published earlier than 1860. See Anisuzzaman, *Muslim-manas etc.* pp. 190—200

time, in his speeches had equated the Bengali Hindus with Bengalis.⁷³ The British officials too, during those days, would by the term "Bengalis" mean the Bengali Hindus.⁷⁴ In any case, Bengali Muslims living in the towns of Bengal most probably shared a very small part of the luxury that the city-centred civilization had to offer.

BENGALI LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Although the earliest specimens of Bengali poetry date back to the 8th or 9th century, Bengali prose is a development of modern times. The College of Fort William, established in 1800 with a view to training the English Civilians actually helped the growth and development of Bengali prose as well as other modern Indian prose literature like Oriya, Marathi, Punjabi and Hindi. Prior to the establishment of this institution, many of the aforesaid languages had not even a single printed book. But the teachers and the **Munshis** (native teacher and writers) working at the College wrote and published textbooks and grammars, reformed alphabets, motivated the native scholars to work on their languages, and in the process, shaped what is called modern Indian prose. Before the College of Fort William pundits published 13 prose works in Bengali (1801—1813), prose was seldom the medium of any Bengali book.⁷⁵ It can therefore be safely said that the growth and development of Bengali prose as well as Bengali learning took place in parallel lines with the growth and development of western education in Bengal. In fact, in all the institutions, beginning with the Hindu College (1817—1853), English and Bengali education progressed side by side.

The response of the upper class Muslims, in the most part living in towns, to the learning of Bengali was negative, since they still spoke Urdu and considered themselves as outsiders. A handful of Bengali Muslims, with a rural background, like Nawab Abdul Latif (1828—1893), who came to Calcutta and, by virtue of their learning and wealth, achieved a high social status there, ignored Bengali. Almost all of them accepted Urdu as their every day language. They

⁷³Speech at Lucknow, 28 Dec. 1887, quoted in C. H. Philips (ed.), *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858—1947*, London 1962, p. 187

⁷⁴See for example correspondence made by Governor General Minto. M. N. Das, *India Under Morley and Minto*, London, 1964, Passim. For correspondence made by Hardinge, see Broomfield, p. 40

⁷⁵The first two Bengali prose works written in Roman alphabet were published from Lisbon in 1734 and 1743 respectively. But the first Bengali prose work published in Bengal was J. Duncun's *Regulations for the administration of Justice in the Courts of Dewanee Adalaut*, 2 parts (1785). This was followed by N. B. Edmonstone's *Bengal Translation of Regulations for the Guidance of the Magistrates* (1792), H. P. Foster's *Cornwallis Code* (1793), J. Mill's *The Tutor* (1797), H. P. Foster's *A Vocabulary* (1799), W. Carey's *A Letter to Lashkars* (1800) and Ramram Basu's *Jnanoday* (1800) and *Harkara* (1800)

TABLE 7

Surname	No. of posts held	Surname	No. of posts held
Sen	32	Gupta	14
Chattopadhyay	24	Bhattacharya	9
Mukhopadhyay	23	Singha	9
Das	19	Sarkar	8
Ghose	19	Chakravarti	8
Roy	18	Mitra	7
Basu	17	Chaudhuri	5
Datta	16	Majumdar	5
Bandyopadhyay	15		
		248	

Source : Quarterly Civil List for Bengal, No. CXXXIV, 1900.

In 1911, 11.9 percent of the Hindus were educated. Of these 1.8 percent were educated in English. The respective numbers for the Muslims were 4 and 0.25.⁷⁰ As a result of their backwardness in the field of education, the Muslims lagged behind, and quite naturally, not only in the Civil Service, but also in professional areas. In 1911, the proportion of the Hindus and Muslims in different professions were as follows : Civil Service 7 : 2, Lawyear 9 : 1, Doctors 5 : 1, Teachers 7 : 2 and Police Service 2 : 1⁷¹.

The delayed economic growth of the Muslims was also reflected in the ratio of urban population among the Hindus and Muslims. During the first decade of this century 3.6% of the Muslims as against 9.6% of the Hindus were living in towns and cities.⁷² The number of urban population among the Bengali Muslims was actually far less than the census figures show, because most of the urban Muslims were non-Bengalis.

But this proportion could not be estimated correctly because the findings of the Census were not tabulated in that manner. In this respect one should keep in mind that among the urban population of West Bengal, the Hindus have been referred to as "Bengalis," as the Muslims referred to as "Muslims." "Bengalis" and "Muslims" were at that time antonyms. Even as early as 1887, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817—1898), the greatest Muslim leader of India of that

⁷⁰CI, 1911, Vol. V, Pt. II, pp. 58—59

⁷¹Ibid., Pt. I, p. 551

⁷²Ibid., Vol. V Pt. II, pp. 18—19

TABLE 6

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AMONG MUSLIMS VIS-A-VIS CASTE HINDUS, 1900.

Name of caste	No. & % B.A.s	No. & % M.A.s	No. & % B.L.s	No. & % M.B.s	No. & % B.E.s	% to whole population
Muslims (including all sects)	338 4.5%	45 2.8%	116 3.1%	2 1.1%	0 0%	52%
Brahmans : two select surnames						
Bandyopadhyay	422 5.7%	104 6.6%	231 6.6%	9 4.4%	3 5.4%	less than 1%
Mukhopadhyay	518 5.7%	125 8%	283 7.6%	11 6%	6 10.7%	

Source : Calcutta University Calendar, 1901.

WESTERN EDUCATION : RESULT OF MUSLIM BACKWARDNESS

While educational backwardness crippled the economic growth of Muslims and low caste Hindus, the Bengali middle classes, formed mainly by service holders and professional elites, were on the rise. In 1900, of the 392 Bengal Civil Servants, in spite of the special favours of the British rulers,⁶⁷ only 52 were Muslims.⁶⁸ Most of these Muslims were again non-Bengalis.⁶⁹ On the contrary, high caste Hindus were holding by far the majority of the posts. The following table shows that high caste Bengali Hindus with 17 surnames held 248 of the 392 posts in Bengal Civil Service in 1900.

⁶⁷The English started showing favours towards the Muslims regarding their education and service since 1870's. See Resolution of the Government of India on Muslim Education, 13, June 1873 ; Resolution of 23rd Oct. 1884 and Resolution of 15th July 1885, etc.

⁶⁸For details see *Quarterly Civil List for Bengal*, No. CXXXIV, Calcutta, 1900

⁶⁹*Quarterly Civil List for Bengal* mentions the institution from where a particular person obtained his degree. Most of the Muslims got their degrees from institutions outside Bengal.

Because they too had a fixed income and their services were essential to the society, they did not care to have an English education. The following three tables will show the backwardness of the Hindu agriculturists and artisans, and also of the Muslim masses in the field of University education.

TABLE 4

NO. OF B. A.s AND M.A.s AMONG 1 LOWER CASTE HINDUS IN 1900

Surnames	B.A.s	M.S.As	Surnames	B.A.s	M.A.s
Barui	X	X	Pramanik	2	1
Poddar	X	X	Kumar	5	2
Kaibarta	X	X	Karmakar	8	1
Malakar	X	X	Mandal	16	X
Sarnakar	1	X	Kundu	17	1
Banik	2	X			

Source: Calcutta University Calender, 1902

TABLE 5

FIRST GRADUATE AMONG THE LOW CASTE HINDUS

Surname	Year when the first B.A. Came out
Poddar	1909
Barui	1912
Kaibarta	1914
Malakar	1914

Source : Calcutta University Calendar, 1917.

and artisans, did not feel it necessary to have an education at that time. There were also no schools in the rural areas before Cambell's reform of 1872.⁶¹ Above all, English education was very costly in those days. In the 1830's and 1840's a private tutor of English language would charge Rs. 4/00 to Rs. 16/00 per student per month⁶². In the 1870's tuition fee per month for a student reading in either class IX or X in the Government high schools was Rs. 3/00.⁶³ For the peasants and artisans this expenditure was beyond their means. (In 1870's, a maund of rice would sell at Rs. 1.37 to Rs. 1.75, and an agricultural labourer would earn only Rs. 4.50 a month.⁶⁴) The mortality rate was also very high during the last century. Therefore, there was no great pressure on land at that time. Consequently, people dependant on land—owners and cultivators considered their income as sufficient. This was one of the reasons that made English education unattractive to the villagers in general and the Muslims in particular.

In Bengal, the Muslim peasants outnumbered the Hindus of the same occupation. According to 1911 Census, 82.2% of the Muslims were dependent on agriculture.⁶⁵ In predominantly Muslim East Bengal, the percentage of Muslims dependent on agriculture was much higher. In Faridpur, for example, it was 91%.⁶⁶ These Muslim peasants as well as the Hindu peasants until about the end of the first quarter of the present century considered the income from the land as secure and sufficient to their standard of living, and as a result they did not accept English education.

But the discovery and growing use of life saving drugs, and effective control over diseases like malaria, cholera and small pox, increased the growth rate in Bengal from the third decade of the 19th century, and this resulted in the increased pressure on land. It was at this point that the low caste Hindus and Muslim masses felt the necessity of an English education. But only those who had a moderate income from land could send their wards to English schools. Those who earned little could not afford to bear the high cost of English education, and those who earned much did not, even at that stage, feel that for the new age English education was a necessity.

The response of the artisans like barbers, washerman, smiths, potters, oilmen, carpenters and small traders was more or less like that of the agriculturists

⁶¹Sir George Campbell was the Lt. Governor of Bengal from 1871 to 1874. His education reform of 1872 gave an impetus to the spread of English education, especially in the mufassil.

⁶²B. Ghose, *Banglar Samajik Itihaser Dhara*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 189

⁶³SAB, Passim.

⁶⁴Ibid Vol. IX, p. 307

⁶⁵CI, 1911, Vol. V, Pt. II, Calcutta, 1913, p. 315

⁶⁶J. C. Jack, *The Economic Life of a Bengal District*, London, 1916, p. 152

1558. Of these the Mukhopadhyays alone numbered 125, the Bandyopadhyays 104, and the Chattopadhyays 81.⁵⁸ People belonging to these three high Brahman castes constituted only a negligible portion—not even one percent—of the whole population of the eastern zone of India where Calcutta University was the only degree awarding institution. But the reason may be explained by the fact that for a couple of centuries prior to British rule their caste occupation was virtually nil. On the other hand, during the same period 64 Bhattacharyas and 48 Chakravarties passed the M. A. Examination. They too were Brahmans, but the number of M. A. s was proportionately less because most of them until then had a paying caste-occupation—namely, priesthood and teaching. The following table of Kayastha M. A.'s will also show that people having no paying and fixed caste-occupations were the first who accepted English education.

TABLE 3
NUMBER OF KAYASTHA M.A.s TILL 1900

Surnames	No. of M.A.s	Surnames	No. of. M.A.s
Basu	87	Das	53
Ghose	80	Sarkar*	38
Mitra	75	Deb	36
Ray*	74	Chaudhuri	31
Sen**	65	Majumdar*	21
Datta	60	Gupta	17
			<hr/> 637 or 40.8% <hr/>

*Some with this surname may be Bramans also.

**Some may be Vaidyas.

Source : Calcutta University Calendar, 1901.

The percentage of Kayasthas bearing about 80 surnames to the total Hindu population in 1901 was only 5.1.⁵⁹ But surprisingly Kayasthas bearing only 12 surnames constituted 40.8% of the total number of M.A.'s. The rate of literacy among different castes as given in the 1901 Census reports is favourably comparable to the above figures⁶⁰.

But when one raises the question of those who had fixed caste-occupations and also more or less fixed income, one finds a sharp contrast. The village people—Muslims and low caste Hindus—who were professionally agriculturists

⁵⁸Calcutta University Calendar, 1901. Mentioned hereinafter as CUC.

⁵⁹CI, 1901, Vol. VI, Pt. I, p. 459

⁶⁰Percentage of literacy among the Vaidyas, Brahmans and Kayasthas was as follows : Vaidyas 45.3, Brahmans 34.7 and Kayasthas 32. CI. 1901, Vol. VI, Pt. I, pp. 301-302. 309

This table is, in fact, only partial. If a longer list of the *bhadraloks* and *babus* of Calcutta of the early nineteenth century were prepared, it would be seen that they belonged to the high castes and were born within a radius of fifty to sixty miles from Calcutta (i. e. within walking distance). Even later in the century the people of this region and belonging to the three high castes maintained their lead and enjoyed the lion's share of the profits that the new civilization had offered.⁵³

Two main reasons led these high caste Hindus to welcome and accept western education. First, the *Kayasthas* strictly belonged to none of the four *varnas*⁵⁴ and had no fixed caste-occupation and consequently no fixed income. Many of the *Brahmans* also had given up their traditional occupation of teaching and priesthood. These occupations were no longer lucrative. Secondly, these were the people who profitably learnt Persian and entered the service of the *Nawabs*. This gave them both social prestige and wealth. Their response to learn a foreign language was positive. Therefore when Muslim rule came to an end and the influence of Persian started declining, these people naturally showed their eagerness to learn English.⁵⁵ They could rather easily compromise with tradition and overcome caste prejudice. It is said that they used to work with English men during the day and then return home in the evening after taking a bath in the Ganges.⁵⁶

The case of the *Vaidyas* was slightly different. Unlike the *Kayasthas* they had a fixed occupation. By virtue of their monopoly over the medical profession they earned enough to live a moderate life until after the establishment of the Calcutta Medical College in 1835. Subsequently the old Indian medical science lost its importance. But since the *Vaidyas* too had the tradition of learning, they soon prospered in English education and by the end of the nineteenth century took a lead over the *Brahmans* and *Kayasthas*.⁵⁷

Some of the records of Calcutta University disclose very interesting facts regarding the major role that caste had played in the spread of English education. The number of M. A.'s that had come out of the University up to 1900 was

⁵³By far the majority of the 186 persons whose biographies have been published in the first 11 volumes of *Sahitya Sadhak Charitmala* were born in and around Calcutta and belonged to the three high castes.

⁵⁴The *Kayasthas* are said to be the offsprings of Brahman fathers and Shudra mothers.

⁵⁵The natives of Calcutta published an advertisement in a local weekly as early as 23 April 1789 inviting someone to write a book which would help them to learn English. For the text of the advertisement see W. H. Carey, *The Good Old Days of Hon'ble John Company*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1906 (Reprint), p. 293

⁵⁶N. N. Chattopadhyay, *Mohatma Raja Rammohan Rayer Jibancharit*, 3rd edition, Calcutta, 1897, p. 32

⁵⁷According to the 1901 Census 64.8% of the *Vaidya* males, 63.9% of the *Brahman* male and 56% of the *Kayastha* males were educated. *CI*, 1901, Vol. VI, Pt. I, Calcutta, 1903, pp. 301-303, 309.

As a matter of fact, the advent of the new age gave birth to new values and also changed the social structure considerably. But such changes did not occur evenly either in all spheres of the society or even all over the country. The people who were the first to profit were the Brahmans, Kayasthas and Vaidyas. The Bengali bhadrolaks consisting of these three castes were quick to grasp the opportunities that the new age had thrown open and they settled in Calcutta,⁵² as shown in the following table.

TABLE 2

Name & Year of birth	Place of birth	Caste	Occupation and known as
Ramram Basu, 1757	24 Parganas	Kayastha	Fort William College Pundit and Author.
Mrityunjay Vidyalkar 1762	Midnapur	Brahman	FWC pundit, author, Judge-pundit.
Ganga K. Bhattacharya 1772	Serampore	Brahman	Editor, author & trader
Tarini C. Mitra, 1772	Calcutta	Kayastha	FWC pundit & author.
Rammohan Roy, 1772 or 74	Hugli	Brahman	Diwan, author & editor & social reformer.
Jaygopal Tarkalankar 1775	Nadia	Brahman	FWC pundit, professor of Sanskrit College & native editor of the Samachar Darpan.
Rasamay Datta, 1780	Calcutta	Kayastha	Judge, attached to Hindu & Sanskrit Colleges.
Ramkamal Sen, 1783	Hugli	Vaidya	Native Secretary of Asiatic Society and manager of Hindu College.
Bhabani C. Bandyopadhyay 1787	24 Parganas	Brahman	Author, editor & Secretary of Dharma Sabha.
Dwarkanath Tagore, 1794	Calcutta	Brahman	Publisher, industrialist, merchant & social reformer.
Chandi C. Munshi, Rajib L. Mukherji, Ram K., Golok N. Sarma, Kashinath Mukherji.	Except 2 in or around Calcutta	Brahman	FWC pundits, authors

Source : Sahitya Sadhak Charitmala vols. 1—XI, Calcutta, 1940—1970 ; and Kopf. PP. 210—211

⁵²Broomfield, p. 7

and the landed gentry formed one part of this aristocracy. The educated class or the *bhadralok* some of whom as employees of the East India Company became rich formed the other. This aristocracy, in fact, gave new dimension to the values associated with traditional social status. Whereas the traditional aristocracy, mainly rural, depended on land and caste, which passed from one generation to another, new aristocracy, almost exclusively urban, depended on money and education which could be earned by individuals. In short, status could now be achieved through one's own efforts.

A few examples of individual cases of the new aristocracy may clarify how, in the new age, there had been considerable caste mobility among a section of the population in and around Calcutta. It is said that Radhakanta Deb's (1783—1867) father was a *Shudra*, but as the adopted son of Nabakrisna Deb, the multi-millionaire, he had no difficulty in becoming a leader of the Calcutta orthodox Hindu society. Radhakanta went further, and by dint of his education and family wealth became the most distinguished leader of the *Dharama Sabha*, the religious association of the high caste Hindus of Calcutta.⁴⁸ The ancestors of Rabindranath Tagore were not only inferior Brahmins, but also, it is said, fallen.⁴⁹ They had gone from *Khulna* to *Jorasanko* as the priests of the low caste fishermen.⁵⁰ But this did not prevent either Dwarakanath or Prasanna-kumar, as well as Devendranath and his illustrious sons, from becoming leaders of the new aristocracy.

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's (1820—1891) example is contrary to these two. Vidyasagar came of a *kulin* (superior) Brahmin family. But their position in the society was low as a result of poverty. Giving up their ancestral occupation of priesthood and teaching in *tois* (Sanskrit Schools) Vidyasagar's father came to Calcutta and became a clerk in a business firm. But it was Vidyasagar who, by virtue of his education, writings, government service and wealth, could again achieve high status for himself and his family.⁵¹ Instances like these are too many to cite.

⁴⁸Radhakanta was the President of the *Dharma Sabha*, one of the Managers of the Hindu College, the Native Secretary of the Calcutta School and Calcutta School Book Societies and a prominent member of the *Gouriya Sabha*. For details see 'Radha Kanta Deb,' the *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 45 (Aug. 1867), pp. 317-326 & J. C. Bagal, *Radhakanta Deb*, Calcutta, 1942; A. F. S. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal 1818-1835*, Leiden, 1965, pp. 28-32; and D. Kopf, *British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 194-196.

⁴⁹It is said that an ancestor of the Tagores was present while the local Muslim chief, Pir Ali, was eating beef and thus lost his *jat* or caste. Since then their descendants have been called *Pirali Brahmins*. J. Westland, pp. 144-145. Also see P.K. Mukhopadhyay, *Rabindrajibani* Vol. I Calcutta, 1970 (4th edn.), pp. 2-3.

⁵⁰P. K. Mukhopadhyay, *Rabindrajibankatha*, Calcutta, 1959, p. 451

⁵¹For a good biographical reference see B. Bandyopadhyay, *Iswarchandra Vidyasagar*, Calcutta, 1955 (5th edition). For critical assessment see B. Ghose, *Vidyasagar O Bangali Samaj*, Calcutta, 1973 (Orient Longman edition); and G. Murshid, (ed.), *Vidyasagar*, Calcutta, 1971

a landlord quarrels with his tenants, to stigmatize the latter as 'Ferazees' a sect professing reformed tenets and doctrines of equality, and to attribute to their conduct a political character.

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The great agrarian disturbances of 1873 which rocked the district of Pabna in general and the fiscal area of Yusufshahi in particular is one of the examples of zamindar-ryot clashes. The disturbances started in Sirajganj sub division where about eighty percent of the population was Muslim and about ten percent low caste Hindu. But the zamindars in question—the Tagores, the Banerjis, the Sanyals, the Pakrashis and the Bhaduris were all Brahmans. The rural service-holders and the traders of the locality, consisting about nine percent of the total population “generally belonged to the respectable castes of the Hindu community and naturally they were connected by strong social ties with the landlord”⁴⁴ Consequently the whole population was divided into two parties—on the one side were the Zamindars and the well-to-do Hindus, and on the other were the poor tenants who were generally Muslims. This struggle between the two parties had its origins mainly in economic factors, but historical circumstances gave it a communal character as well.⁴⁵ This was why “the report on Pabna Trials showed that if any complainant was a Hindu, the defendant invariably was Muslim and vice versa.”⁴⁶

The Collectors of Rajshahi, Bogra, Mymensingh, Dacca, Faridpur and Bakerganj also reported similar instances of class-consciousness among the ryots of their respective districts.⁴⁷ In the long run, this class-consciousness and communalism became inseparable.

WESTERN EDUCATION

It has been mentioned earlier that according to the rules of varna the social status of an individual depended almost entirely upon his birth, and that caste and occupation were inseparable. Muslim rule which had lasted for centuries could not change substantially this socio-economic system. On the contrary, the converted Muslims faithfully pursued the occupations of their forefathers.

The birth and growth of a new Calcutta-based aristocracy took place during the early part of the Company's rule. The *nouveau riche* or the *babus* who had acquired their fortunes by their relations with the foreign trading companies

⁴³Report on the Administration of Bengal 1871-1872, Calcutta, 1872, p. 22

⁴⁴K. K. Sen Gupta, *Pabna Disturbances and Politics of Rent 1873-1885*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 8, Sen Gupta quotes the local subdivisional officer's report, dated 23 April, 1874

⁴⁵SAB, Vol. II, pp. 318-324

⁴⁶Sen Gupta, p. 51. Sen Gupta refers to “Bengal Judicial Proceedings”, File 448, No. 77, Aug. 1873

⁴⁷SAB. Vols. II, V & VIII

these estates to be owned by Muslims. But of the sixty thousand zamindaris who paid a total rent of about 1.2 million per year, only about 8,500 were Muslims who paid a rent of less than 0.1 million (i.e. less than eight percent of the total rent) a year.³⁷ Thus unlike the Hindus, only few Muslims could become members of the new middle class by exploiting the ryots through estate ownership. But the ryots were mostly Muslims and they bore the brunt of the oppression by the zamindars. The tyranny of these nineteenth century Bangali zamindars became legendary. The contemporary press³⁸ and Bengali literature³⁹ give a vivid picture of the zamindar-ryot relations. Reports published by the then Bengal Government also contain much evidence of their tyranny.⁴⁰

The Zamindars oppressed the ryots in every conceivable manner. They demanded illegal cesses which were many times greater than the actual rent,⁴¹ and also deceived the ryots by using a much shorter yardstick than the standard one for measuring the land and fixing rent. Furthermore, subinfeudation so widely practised also caused a great increase of rent and cesses. (There was subinfeudation even up to the fiftieth stage).⁴² The major portion of this highly increased rent was paid by the Muslims, who later in the nineteenth century, formed three-fourths of the total population in most of the East Bengal districts. The illiterate and poor ryots were generally passive in accepting their position under the tyranny of the landlords. But exorbitant rent a heavy burden of illegal cesses, forceful evictions and, above all, physical torture made the otherwise meek ryots bitter from time to time. The fact that most of the zamindars were Hindus and the ryots Muslims made the zamindar-ryot relations worse.

The communal nature of the landlord-tenant relationship was noticed by the contemporary observers as well. Thus, the editor of the **Report on the Administration of Bengal 1871—1872** remarked :

In the south-eastern districts of the delta, where, as in most districts of Bengal Proper, the agricultural ryots are chiefly Mahomedans, it is the fashion, whenever

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸For example see the **Tattvabodhini Patrika**. Baishakh, Shrabon and Agrahayan issues of 1772 Shakabda (1850 A. D.)

³⁹M. S. Dutt, **Buro Saliker Ghare Ron**, Calcutta 1859; Anonymous, **Prabhate Bayu Seban**, Calcutta, 1872; M.M. Hussain, **Zamidar Darpan**, Calcutta, 1873; P. N. Mukhopadhyay, **Kusume Kit**, Calcutta, 1874; and K. Chakravarti, **Hemchandra**, Calcutta, 1876

⁴⁰See for example **Report on the Administration of Bengal 1871-72**, Calcutta, 1872. Many of the volumes of these serialised reports mention the deteriorating zamindar-ryot relations

⁴¹Besides manifold increase in rent, the zamindars used to impose illegal cesses on different accounts e. g. marriage in the zamindar family, **sharaddha**, rent collector's charge, **nazrana**, **selami**, etc.

⁴²**Report on the Land Revenue Commission**, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1940, p. 37

that the investment was safe and also would add to their social status. Thus the ownership of zamindaris went to a class of people totally different from the established aristocracy. These people, unlike the former zamindars, resided for the most part in Calcutta. They were also not directly connected with production. They therefore managed their estates through agents and earned a substantial profit from rent and illegal cesses imposed on tenants. Some of them also leased out a part or the whole of their estates to others for a fixed income. Thus besides the zamindars themselves, the agents and the leaseholders also formed a large leisured-class who lived on the income from rent and cesses alone.

The provisions of the Permanent Settlement were such as to enable the members of this class of people to increase. According to these regulations the zamindaris were recognized as transferable property and the customary law of primogeniture was abolished. This led to a rapid fragmentation of the estates through sale and partition.³² Within less than a century, the number of estates rose from a few hundred to more than one hundred fifty thousand.³³ Consequently the number of landholders, agents and leaseholders increased to a great extent. In fact, these were the people who constituted the major portion of the nineteenth century Bengali middle class. The influence of this class on the society and economy of Bengal, for the remainder of colonial rule, was very profound.³⁴

But since the upper class Muslims, as we have seen, did not emerge as a class of *nouveau riche* comparable to the Hindu banians, diwans etc. they could not avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the Permanent Settlement. Similarly, most of the rural masses consisting of the low caste Hindus and Muslims did not benefit from the new system. On the contrary, as *ryots* (tenants) they were to be exploited for the benefit of the large class of zamindars, their agents and the middlemen. This was, in fact, one of the main reasons for bitter relations between the Hindus and Muslims.

In 1870-72, there were about sixty thousand permanently settled estates in the East Bengal districts (excluding Sylhet) which later in 1947 constituted East Pakistan.³⁵ Sixty five percent of the population of these districts was Muslim.³⁶ In the Muslim predominant area one would expect the majority of

³²Ibid. pp. 130-132

³³Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1881-1882, Calcutta, 1882, p. 294. The actual number was 151, 934

³⁴For details T. Bandyopadhyay, *Rabindranath O Banglar Palli*, Calcutta, 1971, pp. 33-34

³⁵W. W; Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vols. II, IV, VII, & IX, London, 1876, Mentioned hereinafter as SAB with respective volume number,

³⁶Ibid.

go by until some development of commerce and trade took place among the Muslims. In 1911, however, despite their numerical superiority, only 0.5 million Muslims and 8 million Hindus were dependant upon commerce and trade.²⁶

The Land Revenue System

Immediately before the English victory at Plassey, the entire landed interest of Bengal was held by a few upper class Hindus and Muslims. Most of these landholders were Hindus. Of the four largest **zamindaris** (landed estates) of Burdwan, Nadia, Dinajpur and Rajshahi, which constituted about one third of the whole landed interest, not one belonged to the Muslims. Thus the allegation that the Company's rule dispossessed the Muslims of their zamindaris and their rights to revenue farming,²⁷ is only partially true. In fact, the Hindus had started controlling the bulk of landed estates from the time of Murshid Quli Khan²⁸ and that the same group continued their dominance upto the eve of the Decennial Settlement of 1790,²⁹ which was later declared permanent in 1793.

Although by the Permanent Settlement the Company retained almost the whole of the old landed aristocracy, the Settlement presented a very serious challenge to the established landed elite as well. The 'sunset law' which required the landholders to pay their revenue by a specified date and time, brought about the ruin of many of the old zamindars.³⁰ Actually by 1796-97, zamindaris with more than one fifth and by 1813 more than one third of the total revenues of Bengal was put up for sale for arrears of rent.³¹

This opened opportunities for landownership to the members of the public outside the small coterie of the landed aristocracy. But only those having ready money could grasp the opportunity. The banians, mutsuddis, diwans, gomosthas, paikars etc. who had acquired capital bought these zamindaris when they saw

²⁶CI, 1911, Vol. V, Pt. II, pp. 315, 318

²⁷W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, Dacca, 1975 (1871) pp. 143-148

²⁸Many of the large zamindaris were established even before the time of Murshid Quli Khan, Sinha, N. K; Vol. II, p. 162.

²⁹It is difficult to determine the ratio of the Hindu and Muslim revenue farmers between 1765 and 1790, but the Hindus had constituted by far the majority. On the 31st March, 1790, more than 250 persons were in the jails of the Bengal Government for demands of revenue. Of these only 30 were Muslims. See N. K; Sinha, II, Appendix B

³⁰For a detailed account of how the Narail zamindar first put up a large part of his zamindari for sale, then went to jail for arrear of rent and at last disowned his zamindari see J. Westland, *A Report on the District of Jessore*, Calcutta, 1874 (2nd edition), pp. 98-103, 157-159

For a detailed account of the changes brought about in the Dacca districts, see Islam, S; 'The Operation of the Sun-set Law and Changes in the Landed society of the Dacca District, 1793-1817', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* Vol. XIX, No. 1, (1974), pp. 49-68.

³¹Misra, *The Indian etc.* p. 132

TABLE 1

(Continued from Previous Page)

Name	Caste	Occupation and known as
Baranasi Ghose *	Kayastha	Banian
Ramprasad Mitra *	,,	Diwan to Clive and Hastings
Navakrisna Dev *	,,	Munshi, banian, trader and revenue farmer
Durgacharan Mitra *	,,	Banian
Diaram Dutt *	,,	Banian
Akrur Dutt *	,,	Banian and trader
Gangagovinda Singha *	,,	Diwan to the Committee of Revenue and banian
Krisnakanta Nandi *	,,	Banian to Hastings, revenue farmer and later landholder
Radhakishore Roy *	,,	Banian trader and landholder
Ramdulal Misir *	,,	Banian and trader
Madanmohan Dutt *	,,	Trader and shipowner
Ramlochan Ghose *	,,	Diwan and banian to Hastings and his wife
Shantiram Singha *	,,	Middleton's diwan and banian
Kebalram Ghose *	,,	Banian
Bhabani Mitra *	,,	Diwan to Graham

*Knew English.

Source : Sinha, N. K; op. cit. Sinha, P; 'Social Change', in N. K. Sinha's *The History of Bengal*, Calcutta University, 1967; and B.B; Misra, *The Indian etc.*

The lead that the Bengali Hindus (upper and trading castes)²³ had taken in the second half of the eighteenth century continued for about one hundred years to approximately 1857.²⁴ Then gradually they gave way to the more enterprising Marwari and other West Indian entrepreneurs. But by that time a commercial middle class of considerable size had developed among Bengali Hindus.

On the contrary, the Bengali Muslims by the third quarter of the nineteenth century did not even make any mentionable debut²⁵. Another half century would

²³In 1766, 95 prominent traders, banians, and diwans of Calcutta submitted a petition to the Governor of Bengal against hanging a man for forgery. Of these 95, 60 were Brahmans and Kayasthas with the following surnames: Datta (8), Mitra (6), Das (6), Ghose (5), Sharma (5) Tagore (5), Bose (4), Mallik (4), Mukherji (2), Halder (2), Roy (2), Basak (2), Chakravarti (1) Pal (1), Palit (1), Biswas (1) and Ghosal (1)

See J; Long, *Selections from unpublished Records of Government*, Calcutta, 1973 (Reprint), Item No. 840, pp. 567-571.

²⁴Misra, *The Indian etc.* pp. 103-104. Misra quotes various statistics.

²⁵Of the 103 members of the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce in 1858, none were Bengali Muslims. Misra, *The Indian etc.* p. 104

Trade and Commerce

The Muslims belonging to both the upper and lower classes were seldom engaged in trade and commerce, especially with the foreign companies. On the other hand, the Hindus, including Brahmans and Kayasthas, fully grasped the opportunities that the new era of foreign trade had offered.²¹ Thus within a short period of time a class of bankers, brokers and middlemen, called the **bannians, mutsuddis, gomosthas, diwans, paikars, dalals, munshis**, etc. emerged. These people by means fair and foul accumulated huge fortunes and some of them established families which during the next two centuries played a significant role in the economic and cultural life of Bengal.²² The following table will show the social background of the most prominent persons of this class. Some of them started with very little capital and some had nothing more than initiative and a little knowledge of English. In a society where only about one thousand persons understood the language of the rulers, and where for centuries people had strictly followed their caste-occupations, this initiative and a little knowledge of English proved to be important avenues to success. The Muslim upper class, however, took no interest in this regard and consequently lagged behind.

TABLE 1

Name	Caste	Occupation and known as
Laxmikanta Dhar *	Subarnabanik	Banian to Clive and other Governors
Ramkrisna Mallik *	„	Trader
Nimaicharan Mallik *	„	Banian and trader
Gokul Ghosal *	Brahman	Banian to Verelst and trader
Joyram Ghosal *	„	Banian and later landholder
Hridayram Banerji *	„	Banian to the Sheriff of Calcutta, and trader
Manahar Mukherji *	„	Banian to Bateman
Darpanarayan Tagore *	„	Amin to E.I. Co; Diwan to Dutch Co; Contractor, Banian and trader
	or	
Balaram Majumdar *	Kayastha	Banian and trader

²¹Before Plassey mainly Hindus belonging to the trading and banking castes were attracted by foreign Companies. But after Plassey the Brahmans and Kayasthas found the contacts with the foreign Companies and rulers very profitable and gathered around them in large numbers. During the years 1757-1785, the principal businessmen in Calcutta were mostly Caste Hindus. N. K. Sinha, **Economic History of Bengal**, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1956, p. 93, and Vol. II, 1962, p. 225

²²For example the Tagores, the Devs and the Singhas

Danish, Armenian, Portugese and American traders had given Bengal trade and commerce a boom.

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Besides, the defeat of the Nawab of Bengal at the hands of the East India Company in 1757 gave rise to a new situation. Now the Company in addition to its trade and commerce turned to political activities as well. For the time being, however, the Company while having *de facto* power preferred to conduct the administration through the Nawab (first Mir Jafar and then Mir Qasim). But when in 1765, it secured the *dewani* rights from the Mughal emperor, it became a full political power, and also became involved in revenue administration.¹⁸ In 1773, Calcutta became the capital of British India and the Governor of Bengal was redesignated Governor General. This completed the transformation of the East India Company from a trading concern into a political power.

The East India Company had only a few persons¹⁹ to run its entire commercial affairs and the administration of Bengal (including Bihar and Orissa). It was therefore necessary for the Company to rely on the natives and also to follow the indigenous institutions. For example, the judiciary was left relatively undisturbed for a long time with the same officials retained to run the department. The English, however, gradually introduced new institutions; and some of these were modelled on the institutions prevalent in England.

The response of the Hindu and Muslim aristocracy towards these institutions was widely different. While some of the Muslim high officials under the Nawab could not accept British rule, some found themselves unemployed. Many of these people left Bengal to settle in North India. Others who preferred to live in Bengal had to change their occupations. The Hindu officials, since they were very much the sons of the soil, could not leave Bengal nor did they think it necessary to do so. Besides, for them, the English take-over was just a change of master. Unlike the upper class Muslims, the defeat at Plassey had not injured their self-pride. On the contrary, some of the influential Hindus like Jagat Seth and Umichand and also the whole army of brokers, bankers and middlemen working for the Company welcomed and actually helped the new regime²⁰. Whereas the negative response of the Muslims reduced the size of their upper class, the positive response of the Hindus helped them to increase in size as an aristocracy.

¹⁸B. B. Misra, *The Central Administration of East India Company*, Bombay, 1959, pp. 108-190

¹⁹B. B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes*, London, 1961, p. 75. As late as 1828, there were only 1595 Europeans working for the East India Company in Bengal.

²⁰*Ibid.* p. 78

The Muslim mass for the most part consisted of the local converts.¹¹ But 'with conversion to Islam, the average Muslim did not change his old environment, which was caste-differentiated by caste distinction and a general social exclusiveness'.¹² As a result these converts had to fit somehow into the rigid framework of the caste-dominated social system and acquired a quasicaste status in accordance with general social, economic and political position.¹³

The Bengali Muslim masses actually maintained a hierarchical relationship on the basis of their occupations and professions, which were often hereditary. They derived class names from their occupations and professions and also practised endogamy with members of such occupations and professions.¹⁴ These people were severed by the concept of touchability from the aristocracy. Inter-marriage between the masses and the aristocracy was also considered impossible¹⁵. Some of the low caste converts failed to get full acceptance in Muslim society and were even debarred from attending mass prayers.¹⁶

Most of the converts did not either know or practise Islam in its pure form¹⁷. Professionally speaking, they were, like the low caste Hindus, poor agriculturists and artisans. Thus the Muslim masses though belonging to the same religion were poles apart from the Muslim aristocracy. Their language, culture, social status and economic position were far below those of the upper class Muslims. Whereas the members of the aristocracy were urban-based, educated, professional and non-Bengalis, the masses were rural, illiterate and deeply rooted to the soil.

The New Challenge

The fabulous manufactures of Bengal, which had great demand in European markets, attracted the British East India Company as well as other European companies. By the middle of the eighteenth century, French, Dutch,

¹¹The caste system was rigorously practised in Bengal, particularly during the Sena rulers who preceded the Muslims. This evoked dissatisfaction and discontent among the vast majority of the people belonging to low caste. These people on the totem pole of the Hindu caste system, notwithstanding their poverty and illiteracy, possessed a kind of class-consciousness G. Halder, *Sanskritir Rupantar*, Calcutta, 1965, 7th edition) which was responsible for leading them in large numbers to accept the intruding religion, Islam, since Islam at least theoretically represented social equality. Thus many low caste Hindus embraced Islam to escape the rigors of caste system and sometimes also to obtain the favours of the rulers. (CI, 1901, Vol. VI, Pt. I, p. 168, and Karim A. pp. 142-145). The percentage of Muslims of foreign origin in North India is said to be about 10. C. W. Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, Lahore, 1947, p. 189.) But in Bengal it is much less and is about three. A. Sharif, 'Itihaas Alope Atmadarshan', *Swadesh Anvesha*, Dacca, 1377 B. S.).

¹²K. M. Ashraf, 'Life and Conditions of the People of Hindusthan', *Journal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. I, 1935, p. 191

¹³S. C. Dube, *Indian Village*, London, 1965, p. 33

¹⁴A. K. N.; Karim pp. 131-132; and A. Karim, p. 157

¹⁵Islam, p. 251

¹⁶*Ibid*; pp. 251-252

¹⁷A. Hashim, *In Retrospection*, Dacca, n.d. (1974?), p. 79; Ashraf, p. 191; and Karim, A. pp. 155, 158-159, 162-175

traders. Adventurers from West Asia and North India came to Bengal in search of fortune, and received high position in civil, revenue and military departments.⁴ They patronized their relatives and attract them to Bengal.⁵ But these people who might be called mercenaries would neither identify themselves with the people they governed nor settle permanently in Bengal. Some of them, on the contrary, coming directly from Central or West Asia, maintained their alien sense of aristocratic pride and looked down on the earlier immigrants who had become naturalized.⁶ They even maintained that Bengal was a **Darul Harb** (zone of war), unfit for Muslim habitation. They, in fact, considered themselves living in this country as rulers and sojourners.⁷ The naturalized Hindusthanis considered the climate and environment of Bengal unfavourable and, after amassing huge fortunes, left Bengal at the end of their terms of service for North India to permanently settle there.⁸ Members of the aristocratic class had a definite dislike for village life and therefore were more or less urban-based.⁹ The language these people spoke was not Bengali. Even most of the permanently settled ones would not speak the local language.¹⁰ In fact, the two most distinguishing features that separated the Muslim aristocracy from the rest of the Muslim population were the difference of language and the difference of social and economic position.

⁴Mir Jumla, Shaista Khan, Ibrahim Khan, Murshid Quli Khan, Shujauddin, Alivardi Khan and Sirajud Daula who governed Bengal from 1660 to 1757, were all, except Siraj, born outside Bengal and were mostly Shiah. Instances like Alivardi Khan, Mir Jafar, and Reza Khan who came to Bengal as paupers are too many to cite. Alivardi Khan came to Bengal in 1720 in a state of extreme penury. In fact, he had to sell his wife's ornaments for Rs. 900/00 to meet the expenses of his journey to Bengal (K. Datta, *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, 1939, p. 3). But he was related to Shujauddin, the Deputy Governor of Orissa and son-in-law of Murshid Quli Khan. J. N. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Dacca, 1972, 3rd edition, p. 436). By virtue of this relation, Alivardi Khan soon rose high in the administration and ultimately became the **Nawab**. Like Alivardi, Mir Jafar also came to Bengal as a penniless adventurer. He had no formal education. (A. C. Roy, *The Career of Mir Jafar* Calcutta, 1953, pp. 1-2). But he married Alivardi's half-sister and soon earned both power and position. Reza Khan, born in Persia, also came to Bengal as a dependent child of a family in search of fortune. When he married Alivardi Khan's grand-daughter, he entered the ruling family linking his fate with their fortunes, (A. M. Khan, *The Transition of Bengal 1756-1775*, Cambridge, 1969, p. 19).

⁵Shah Shuja, for example, showed special favour to the Shiahs and the immigrants from Persia. (K. M. Karim, *The Provinces of Bihar and Bengal under Shahjahan*, Dacca, 1974, p. 209; M. A. Rahim, *Social and Cultural History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Karachi, 1967, p. 160). His son Sarfaraz Khan raised many of his favourites irrespective of their merit to high positions. (Rahim, 160). Alivardi Khan also followed the principle of elevating the members of his family. (Ibid.) Shaista Khan and Murshid Quli of the earlier period were also no exception. One of the reasons why these two could so efficiently and effectively rule Bengal was that a large number of their able relatives were in the administration.

⁶A. M. Khan, p. 19

⁷Ibid. p. 13

⁸CI, 1901, Vol. V, Pt. I, p. 168

Also see T. Raychoudhury, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir*, Calcutta, 1953, p. 163

⁹M. Yasin, *A Social History of Islamic India 1605-1748*, Lucknow, 1958, pp. 25-26

¹⁰This tradition continued among some of these families even after the British colonial rule came to an end in 1947. See below the section, 'Bengali Language and Literature'.

Also see A. Karim, *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal*, Dacca, 1959, p. 176.

the people of Bengal differed in scale and dimension and how this difference consequently made the coexistence of Bengal Hindus and Muslims more and more difficult.

The Pre-colonial Bengali Society

The pre-colonial Bengali society was highly stratified—culturally and economically. From the point of view of religion the whole population was divided into almost two equal parts—the Hindus and Muslims². But both these religious communities were again subdivided into many sects—the Hindus into **Shakta, Vaishnava, Shaiva**, etc. and the Muslims into **Sunni, Shiah**, etc. There were also innumerable subjects in both the communities.

But socially and economically the division of the Hindus into four **varnas** and countless castes, and of the Muslims into **ashraf** and **atraf**³ was much more important. The Brahmanical institution of varna had tremendous influence upon the Hindu society. One-tenth of the whole Hindu population consisting of **Brahmans, Kayasthas** and **Vaidyas** were favourably placed ahead of the **Shudras**. The members of these three privileged classes had the monopoly of all the better occupations and professions. During the Muslim rule, the members belonging to these high castes manned the state machinery at the lower level. But from the time of Murshid Quli Khan (1700-1727), first the **diwan** (chief of revenue) and then the **subahdar** (governor), the Hindus rapidly rose in both civil and military offices. They reached their pinnacle of influence during the time of Alivardi Khan (1740-1756). Trade and commerce were also in the hands of the non-Shudra Hindus. On the other hand, the Shudras were the poor agriculturists and artisans.

Both high and low caste Hindus except a handful of intruders, like the Marwaris from West India, had a common feature—all of them were deeply rooted in the soil and also spoke the language of the soil, that is Bengali.

Socio-economically, the Muslims posed a more complex picture. The aristocracy consisted of a very small segment compared to the whole Muslim population. The members of the aristocracy were mainly those connected with the administration. During the period in question Bengal actually was somewhat like a colony. The wealth of Bengal attracted the Muslims as well as foreign

²According to the first reliable census of Bengal in 1881, the Hindus and Muslims numbered 18, 069, 352 and 18, 369, 117 respectively. E. A. Gait, **Report on the Census of India, 1901**, Vol. VI, Pt. I, Calcutta, 1903, p. 205. Mentioned hereinafter as CI.

³The **ashrafs** were comparable with the Hindu **bhadraloks**. They think it beneath them to work for a living. They also claim aristocracy by birth. The **artafs** are the masses comparable with the low caste Hindus. For details see M.N. Islam, **Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as reflected in Bengali Press 1901-1930**, Dacca, 1973, pp. 248-251, and A. K. N. Karim, **Changing Society in India and Pakistan**, Dacca, 1961 (2nd edition)

These nineteenth century writings saturated with communalism might have given the Hindus a feeling of self-satisfaction, but they did not gratify the newly educated Muslims. Although Sekendar Shah (i. e. Alexander), Mohammad Ghorī, Alauddin Khilji, Aurangzeb and Sirajud Daula were not of their own community, yet the Bengali Muslims, as a reaction felt a definite sympathy for these men.⁸⁹

Actually even before they became politically oriented the Muslims had become conscious of the communalism and nationalism which was replete in contemporary Bengali literature. In those days the Muslims were very much sensitive to the treatment of the Muslim characters by Hindu writers. For example, the simple fact that in a novel by a Hindu author the hero was Hindu and the heroine Muslim, would infuriate the Muslims. In such circumstances, the Muslim writers would try to retaliate. This was how at least three Muslim authors⁹⁰ pictured affairs of love between a Muslim hero and a Hindu heroine.⁹¹

THE POLITICS OF DIVISION

In fomenting communalism and separatism among the Hindus and Muslims, the English rulers had a hand. During the first century (1757—1857), the English could not trust the Muslims, who had ruled India prior to them. Thus the Hindus were favoured. But after the Mutiny of 1857 the Englishmen adopted a new strategy. Henceforth they pursued a policy of divide and rule, and provoked the Muslims against the Hindus and vice versa, according to the need of the hour.⁹² When in the 1860's and 1870's unmistakable signs of growth of nationalism were discernible among the Hindus of Bengal, especially of Calcutta, the English rulers suddenly became very sympathetic towards the Muslims. At this stage W.W. Hunter, a Civil Servant, published his book, **The Indian Musalmans** (1871).⁹³ Neither the facts presented in the book nor the interpretations thereof were fully true, but the English rulers wanted everybody to believe that they were true. And it was at the instance of this book that it became easy for the colonial rulers to accept a new policy of favouring the Muslims. The Resolution of the Government of India on Muslim Education, dated 13 June 1873, was actually politically motivated.⁹⁴ The recommendation of the Education Commission of 1882 had the same motivation behind them.

⁸⁹For contemporary Muslim press writings see Anisuzzaman, **Muslim Banglar etc.**, passim. Also see Islam, pp. 141—148

⁹⁰Matiur Rahman Khan (1872—1937) in Jamuna, Syed Ismail Hossain Siraji (1880—1831) in **Tarabai** (1908), **Nuruddin** and **Raynandini**, and Sayed Imdad Ali (1880—1956) in **Bimala**.

⁹¹For details see Anisuzzaman, **Muslim-manas etc.**, pp. 406—409, 411—412, 424—425

⁹²A. Seal, pp. 188—189, 338

Also see Tarachand, **History of the Freedom Movement in India**, Vol. III, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 328, 373—374

⁹³The book was compiled on Governor General Mayo's orders. See seal, p. 307

⁹⁴For the text of this resolution see Philips, pp. 180—183

In 1885, the Government of India also resolved that the question of recruiting Muslims to Civil Service be considered in more generous terms.⁹⁵

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The favouritism towards the Muslims was far from dispassionate, rather the rulers wanted to form a strong anti-Hindu educated Muslim middle class. The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and its rapidly increasing popularity further motivated British rulers. The eloquent anti-Congress speeches that Sir Syed Ahmed gave in the late 1880's^{95A} testify to the fact that the Englishmen were successful in their endeavour to plant among the Muslims a consciousness which was more anti-Hindu in attitude than a nationalist movement directed against the British.⁹⁶

With the same objectives in mind, the colonial rulers decided to partition Bengal into two provinces in 1905. This move though apparently innocent, was actually a well-calculated one to make the separation of the two communities permanent. In his speech at Dacca on the 18th February 1904, Governor General Curzon said that the proposed partition 'would invest the Mohamedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Musalman Viceroys and Kings.'⁹⁷ H. H. Risley, the Secretary of the Government, in his minute, said that the partition would help grow a local centre of Muslim public opinion.⁹⁸ But Curzon administration tried to justify the partition on the ground that Bengal including Bihar and Orissa was too big an area for efficient administration.⁹⁹

The intentions of the government were, however, clear. Sir Andrew Fraser, Lt. Governor of Bengal, hoped that by the partition the political infrastructure which because of Government neglect 'the educated section of their inhabitants had succeeded in erecting would be more easily reduced to their proper level of importance.'¹⁰⁰ Risley said,

*Bengal united is a power, Bengal divided will pull in several different ways..... One of our main objects is to split up and thereby weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule.*¹⁰¹

⁹⁵Seal, pp. 311—314

^{95A} For the texts of these speeches see **Writing and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan**, (S. Mohammad ed.), Bombay, 1972, pp. 159—220

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 316—338

Also see K. B. Sayeed, **Pakistan the Formative Phase 1857—1948**, London, 1968, pp. 15—19.

⁹⁷Quoted in Tarachand, pp. 310—311 ; and Sayeed, p. 25

⁹⁸Tarachand, p. 313

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 508 ; and Sayeed, pp. 324—325

¹⁰⁰Broomfield, p. 27

¹⁰¹Quoted in Tarachand, p. 313

Lord Curzon gave full support to Fraser and Risley and, in order to 'have the fringe benefit of weakening bhadralok political intration,' divided Bengal in 1905.¹⁰² His move paid immediate dividends. The absentee landlords living in Calcutta found that their Zamindaris falling under a different administrative unit would make the management of the estates difficult for them. The commercial and manufacturing classes apprehended, and rightly so, that a new business centre around the new capital, Dacca, would interfere with their interests.¹⁰³ The Calcutta lawyers, too, were threatened by the probable establishment of a high court in Dacca. And to the bhadralok politicians it became clear that they would remain in a minority, as designed by Risley,¹⁰⁴ in both the legislative councils.¹⁰⁵

The votaries of literature and culture like Rabindranath Tagore perceived yet worse possibilities. They felt that the age long difference between the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal, which had not become so apparent due to the fact that the two communities had lived side by side as neighbours, now might, as a result of the partition, become enormous.¹⁰⁶ Fearing all these political, economic and social consequences, the landlords, the commercial and professional elites and the intelligentsia unitedly exercised the economic weapon of boycotting British goods.¹⁰⁷

The Muslims meanwhile realised that in the new province they would form a majority by 58 per cent as against a poor minority of 32 percent in the greater Bengal. They reasonably hoped that they would now get more political and economic opportunities. Actually the Muslims as a community and East Bengal as an area were to profit by the proposed partition, for they could now participate in the privileges and opportunities that western education and growing trade and commerce had offered for so long to the people in and around Calcutta. One may have some idea of the extent of economic disparity between East and West Bengal from the following statistics.

¹⁰²Broomfield, p. 28

¹⁰³S. Roy, *Bharate Baiplabik Sangramer Itihas*, Calcutta, 1970, p. 284

¹⁰⁴Tarachand, p. 313 ; and Broomfield, p. 28

¹⁰⁵Misra, *The Indian etc.*, p. 395 ; and Sayeed, p. 24

¹⁰⁶R. Tagore, 'Sadupay,' *Atmashakti O Samuha*, Rabindra-Rachanabali, Vol. XII, Calcutta, 1961 (West Bengal Govt. edition), p. 827

¹⁰⁷J. Beauchamp, quoted in Roy, p. 284

TABLE 8

INCOME TAX, BENGAL, 1891-92.

Division	Current demand & penalties (Rs. Lakhs)	No. of assessees	Demand per assessee			Proportion of assessees to population i.e. one in
			Rs.	As	Ps.	
Calcutta Presidency						
Calcutta	18.05	21,902	82	11	3	31
Presidency (excl. Calcutta)	2.56	12,902	20	4	3	675
Burdwan	1.95	8,496	21	15	0	864
Dacca	2.83	10,677	28	8	0	922
Chittagong	0.91	5,129	17	12	4	816
Rajshahi	2.90	12,472	23	5	0	645

Source : Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes*, p. 244

The number of banking establishments and their location may also give some idea about the uneven nature of economic expansion in Bengal. In 1901, there were 15 banking offices in Bengal. Of these only three were outside Calcutta.¹⁰⁸

It has already been noticed that apropos of the spread of English education caste and distance from Calcutta had played a vital role. The census reports of 1901 show clearly how an unmistakable disparity in the rate of literacy in East and West Bengal districts had become discernible. This disparity, surprisingly enough, was not only among the Muslims, but was equally apparent among the Hindus. And the rate of literacy according to religion and region was as follows :

¹⁰⁸Misra, *The Indian*, p. 245.

TABLE 9

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Districts	Hindus				Muslims			
	Literate		Literate in English		Literate		Literate in English	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Calcutta, Howrah, 24- Parganas, Midnapur, Burdwan, Murshidabad.	21.8	1.4	3.3	0.5	9.7	0.4	0.85	0.01
Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra, Rajshahi, Pabna, Mymensingh, Dacca, Faridpur, Barisal, Khulna Jessore, Noakhali, Comilla and Chittagong.	18.4	1.2	1.09	0.02	6.1	0.15	0.16	0.001

Source : CI, 1901, Vol. VIA, Pt. II, Calcutta, 1903, pp. 54—76

But the Muslims at that time of partition did not perceive the future and surely were not aware of the statistics. All they wanted was a province where the Muslims would form the majority and as a result get an upper hand in politics, which they lacked in the greater Bengal. Furthermore, the stand that Curzon and later Minto took on the issue suggests that they probably encouraged and provoked the Muslims to support the Partition. One has to remember Curzon's endeavour to mobilize Muslim public opinion in his favour and also the roles that first B. Fuller and then L. Hare, the two Lt. Governors of the new Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, played¹⁰⁹. The establishment of the Muslim League in 1906 at the initiative of the Aga Khan, Mahsinul Mulk and the Nawab of Dacca actually had the blessings of the Minto administration. Archibald and D. Smith acted as agents of the Government in this case as A.O. Hume did in the case of Indian National Congress.¹¹⁰

On the contrary, the Hindus as has been said, started a prolonged political agitation, including the boycott of British goods and violent terrorist activities. The Hindu commercial and manufacturing classes were enthusiastic supporters of boycott, not only because it was an effective political weapon, but also because it would profit them economically. The boycott gave a boom to indigenous industries like the manufacture of cloth.¹¹¹ The number of business

¹⁰⁹Das, pp. 33—34, 42—45 ; and Tarachand, p. 328

¹¹⁰Das, pp. 164—179

¹¹¹Tarachand, p. 340

representatives that attended the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1906 may partly explain how the boycott had encouraged the Hindu business elites.¹¹²

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The boycott, however, made manufactured goods, especially cloth and salt, scarce and expensive. The Hindu Zamindars tried to ban the sale of foreign cloth and salt and insisted that the ryots should buy the more expensive indigenous products.¹¹³ This was not appreciated by the Muslims and the Nama-shudras.¹¹⁴ Incidents of Hindu-Muslim conflicts and confrontations of boycott were therefore common. And this agitation further deteriorated the relations between the two communities.

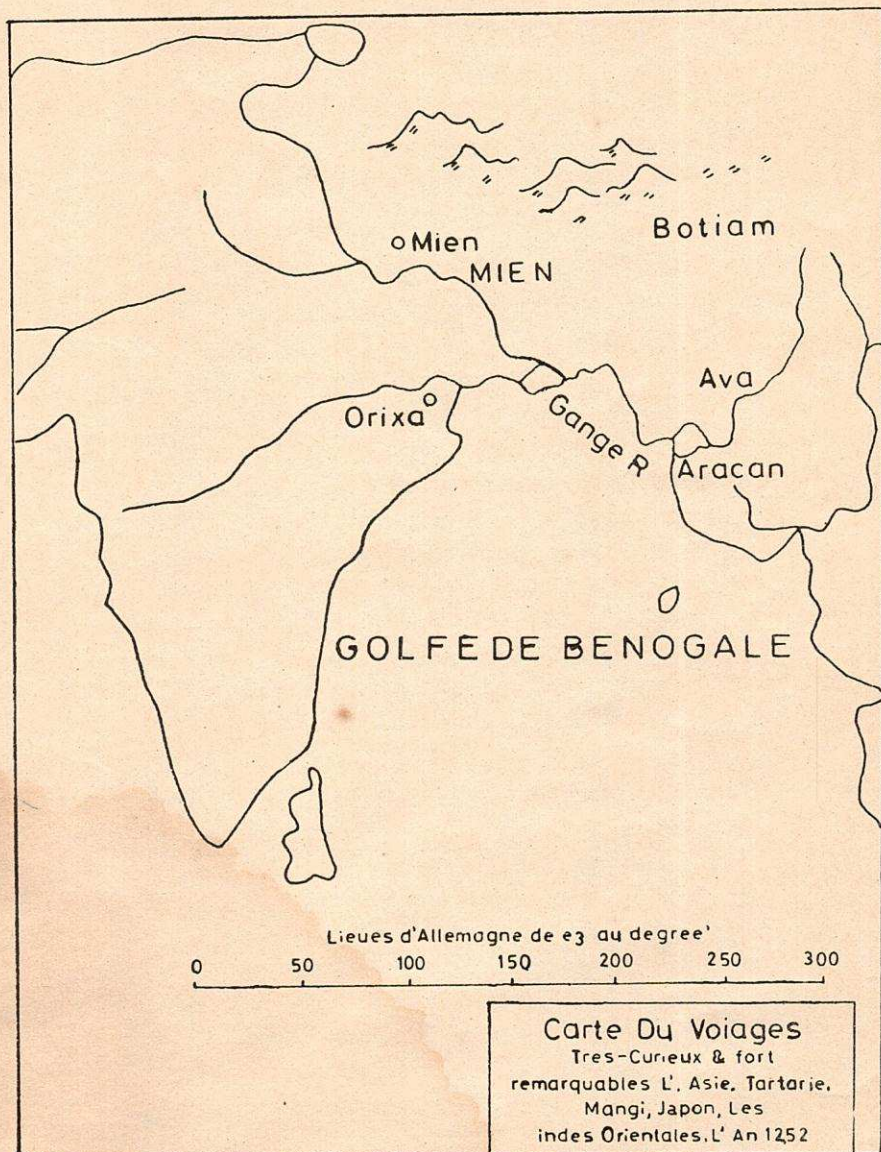
It was at this stage that communal riots broke out at different places of Bengal between the Hindu bhadraloks and the Muslims.¹¹⁵ The immediate reasons for the flare-ups at Jamalpur, Bakshiganj, Dewanganj, Chatiyara, Magra, Comilla and even Calcutta were apparently not the same. These riots were actually the consequences of social inequality, economic disparity and mutual distrust of long standing. The politics of division only added fuel to the worsening Hindu-Muslim relations. But the Bengali society which had a built-in plurality was destined to be broken up. Although the colonial rulers had to reunite the two parts of Bengal in 1912, the politics that followed converted the plural society into a dual society and ultimately led in a few decades not only to a division of Bengal but of the whole of India.

¹¹²Misra, p. 357

¹¹³Tarachand, p. 339

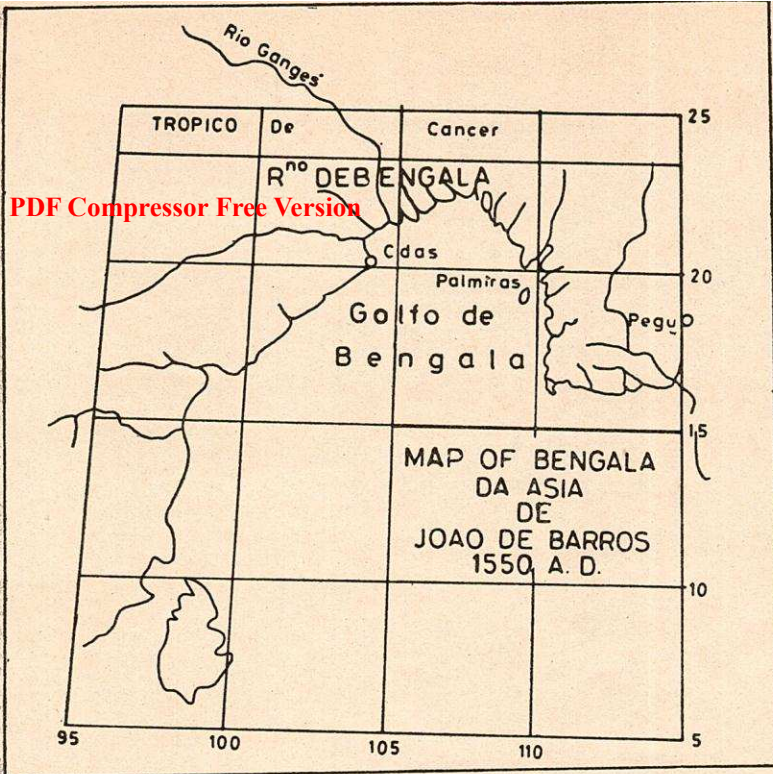
¹¹⁴Broomfield, p. 31

¹¹⁵Tarachand, pp. 345—346

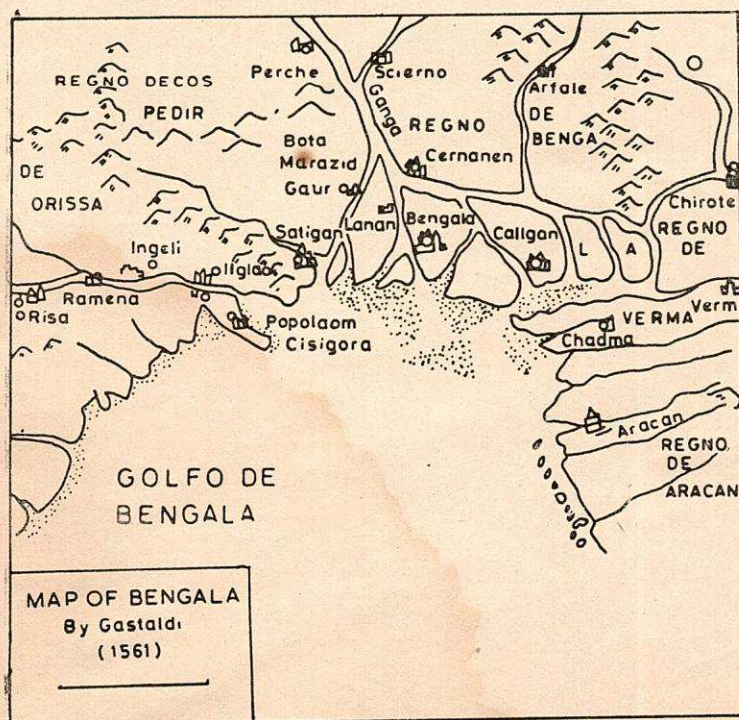


Map 1

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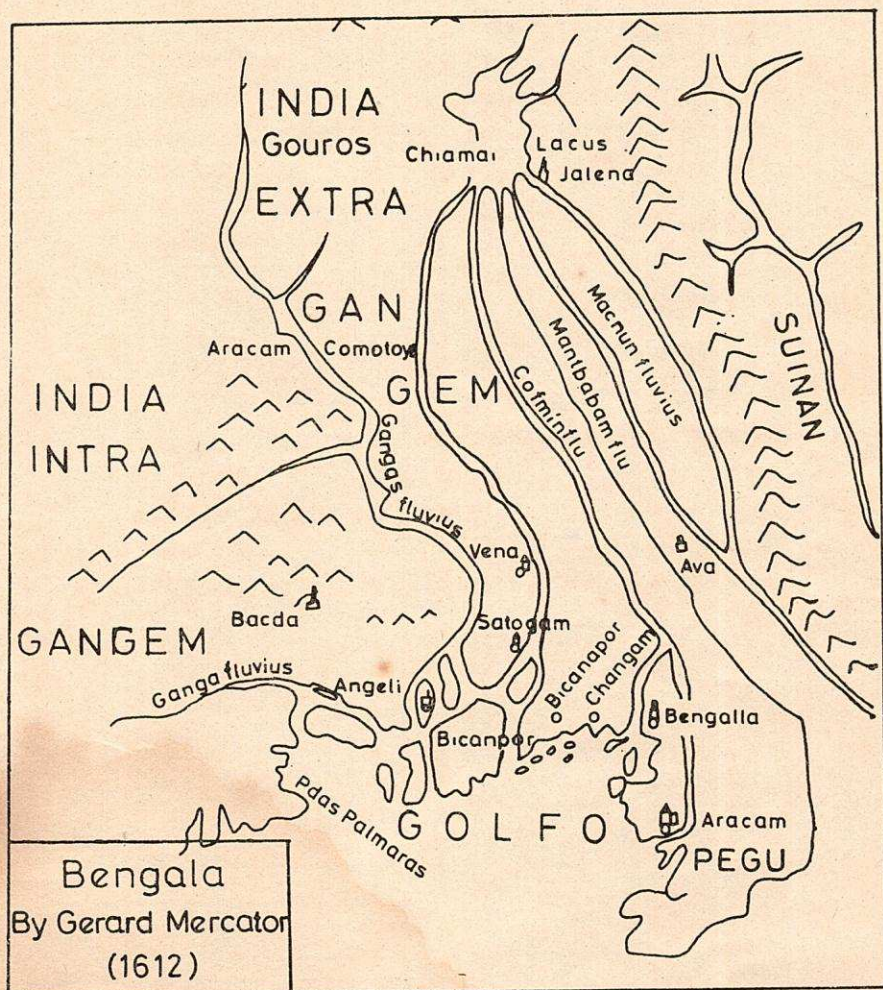


Map 2



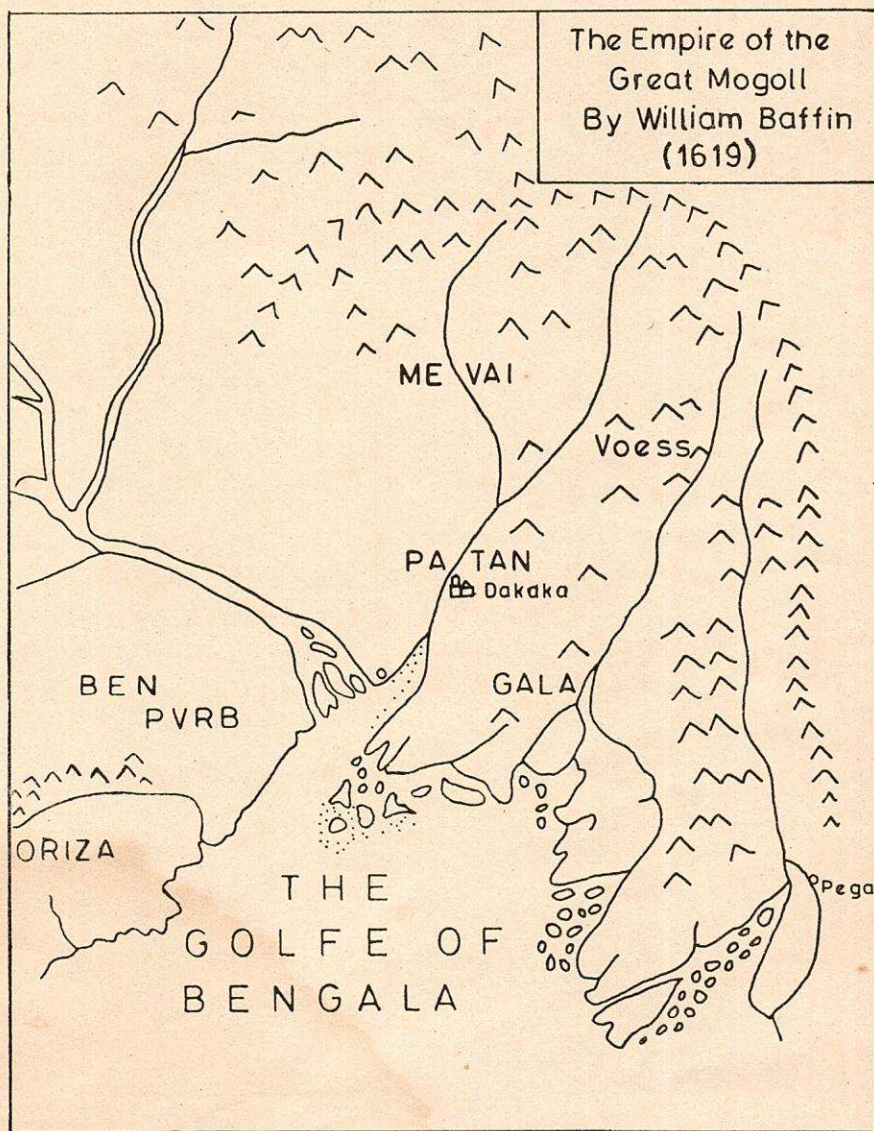
Map 3

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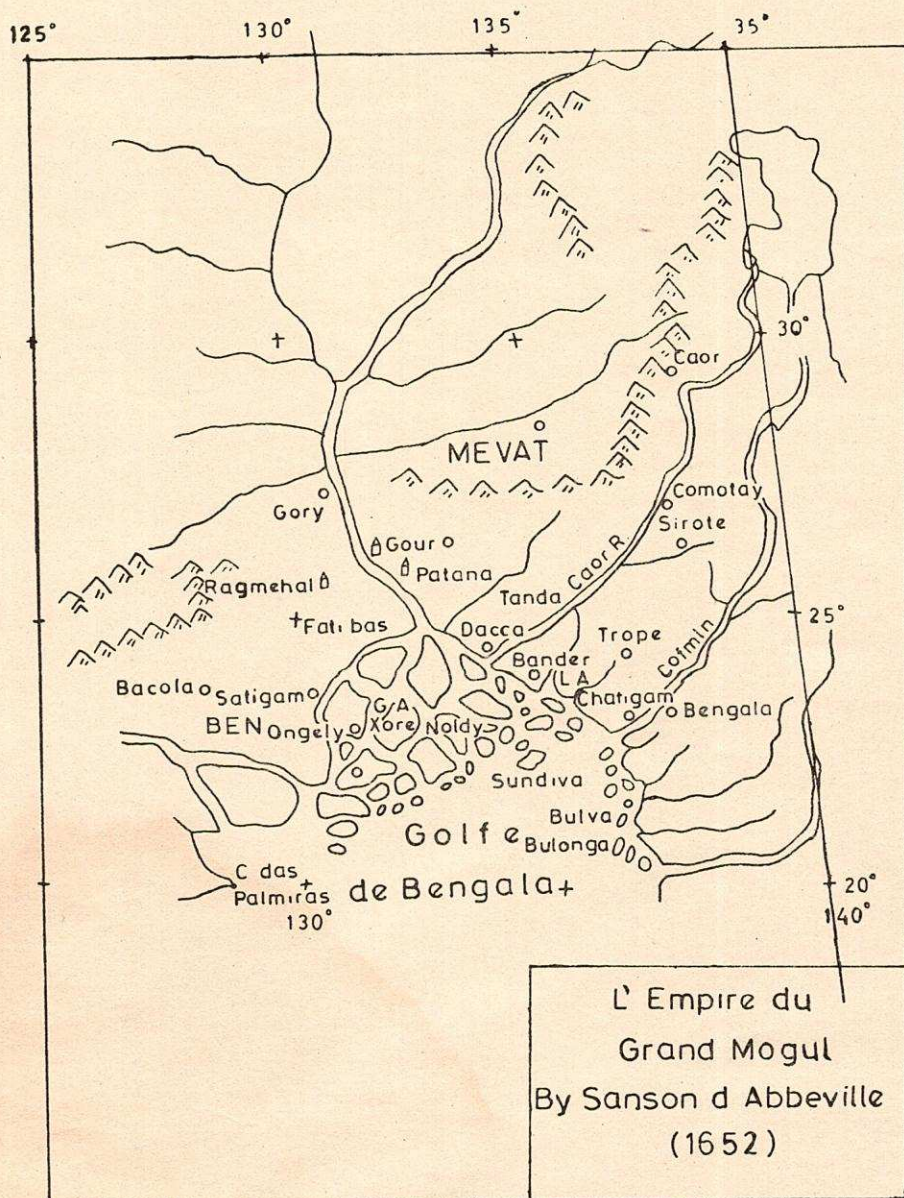
Map 4

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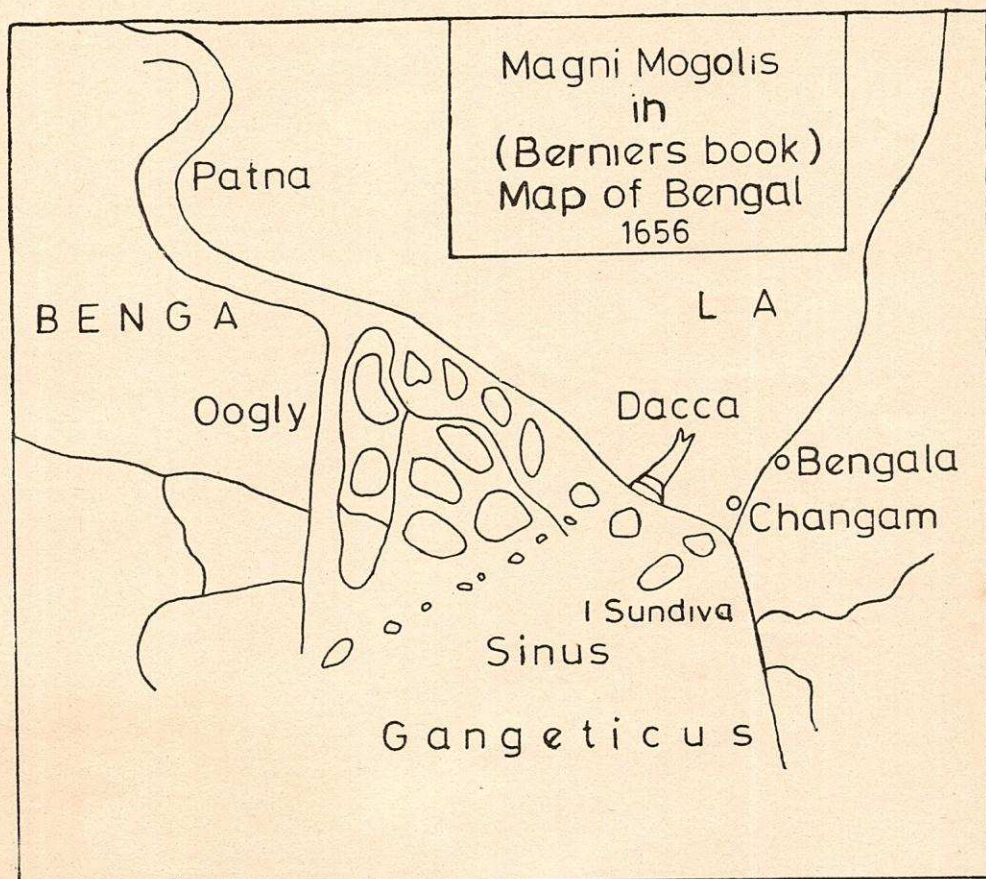
Map 5

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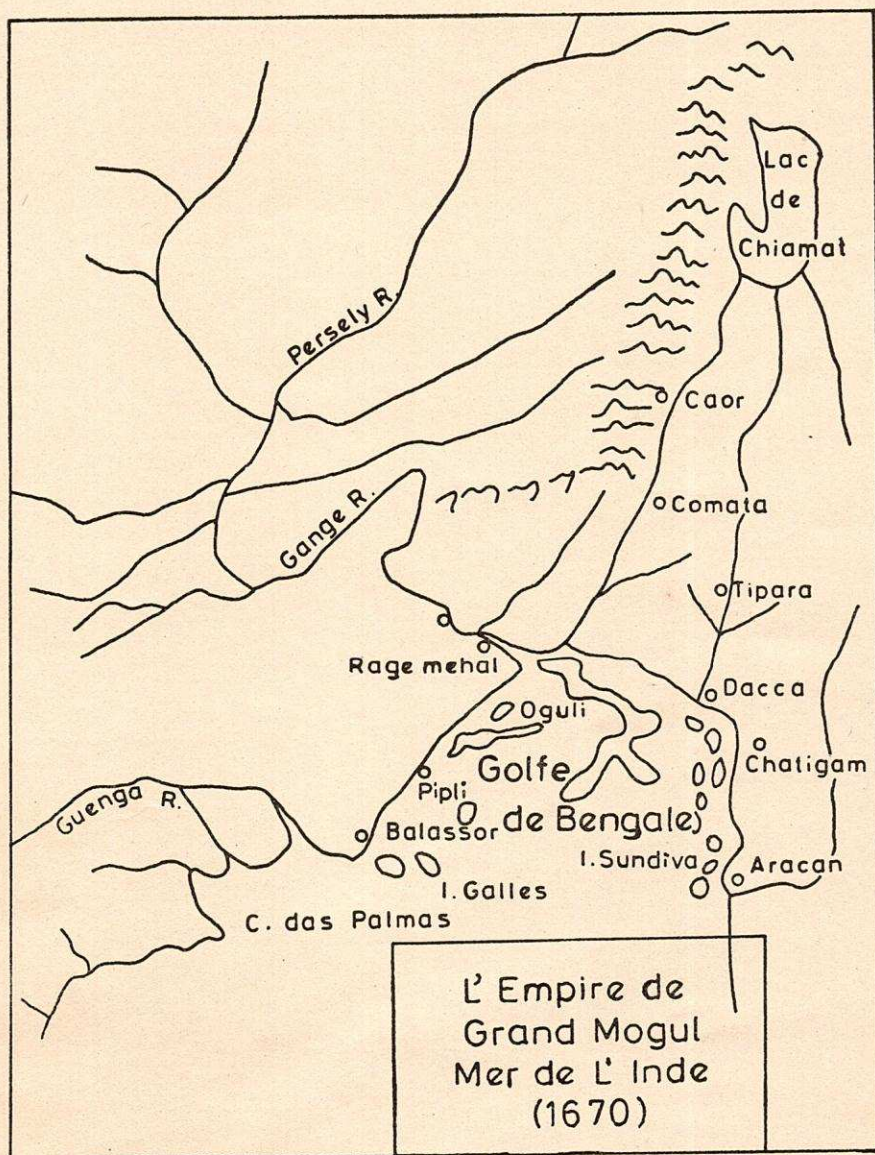
Map 6

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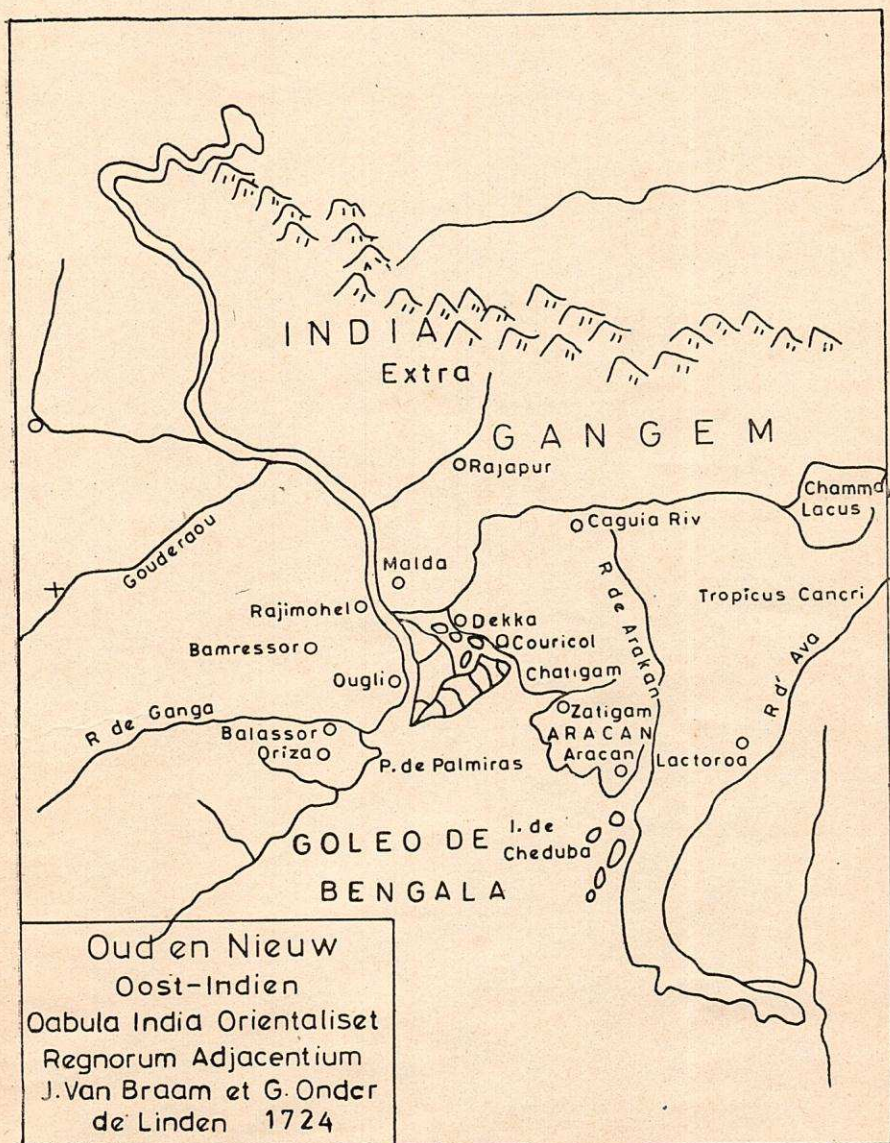
Map 7

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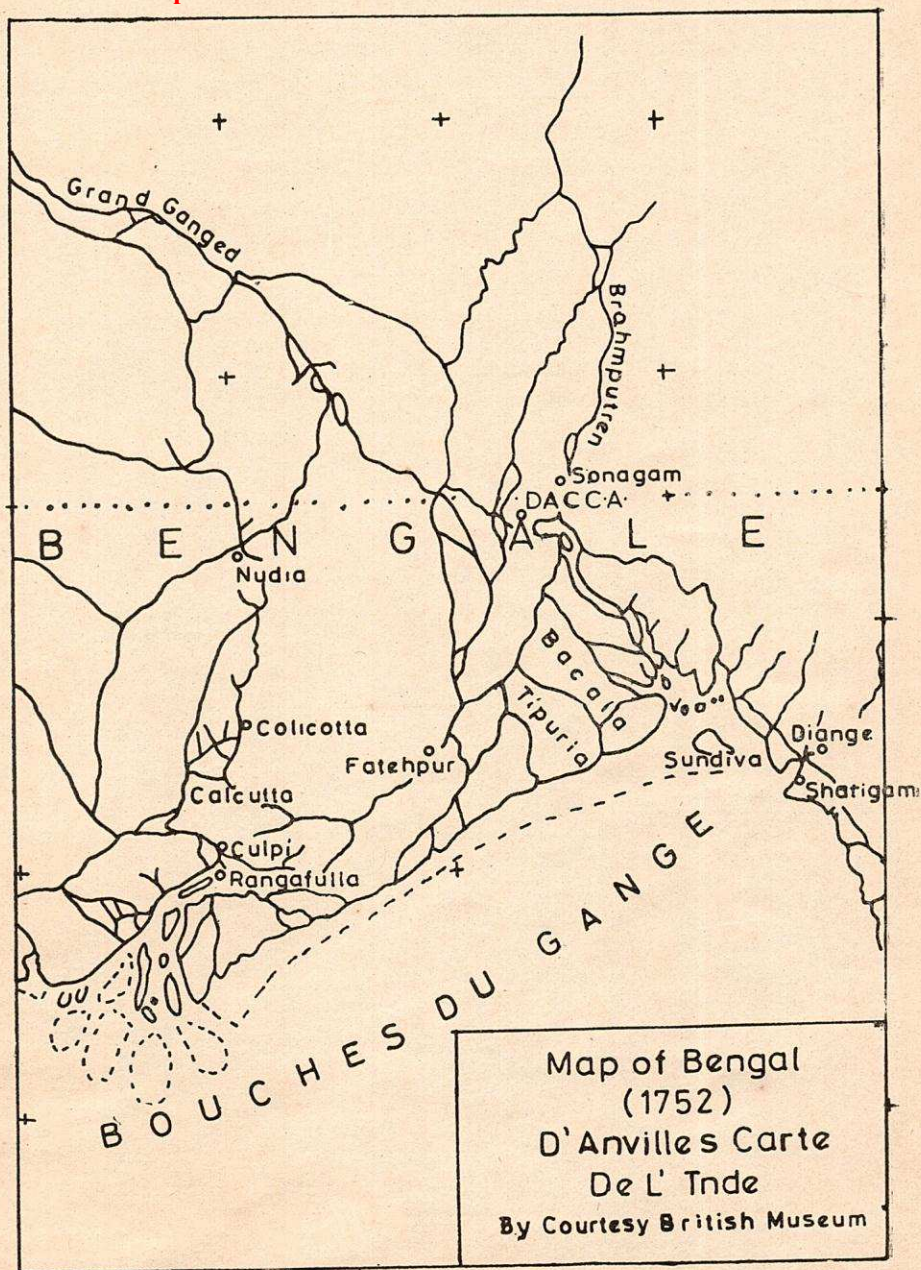
Map 8

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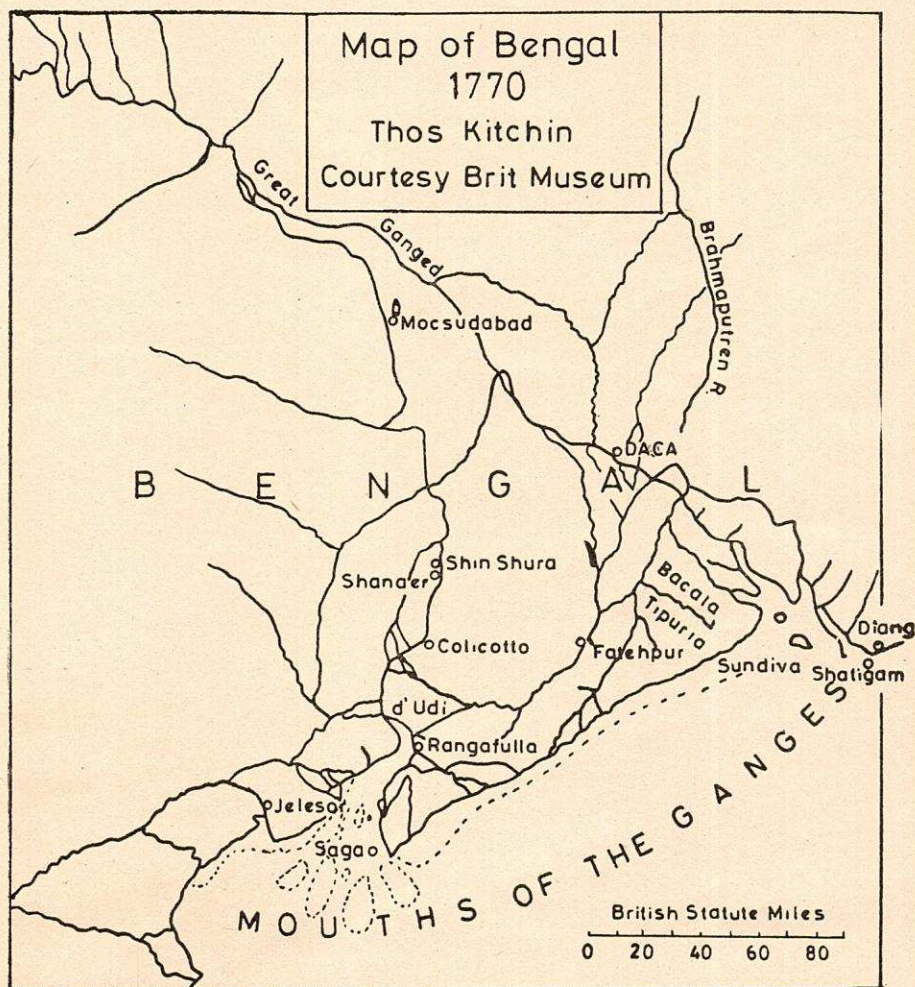
Map 9

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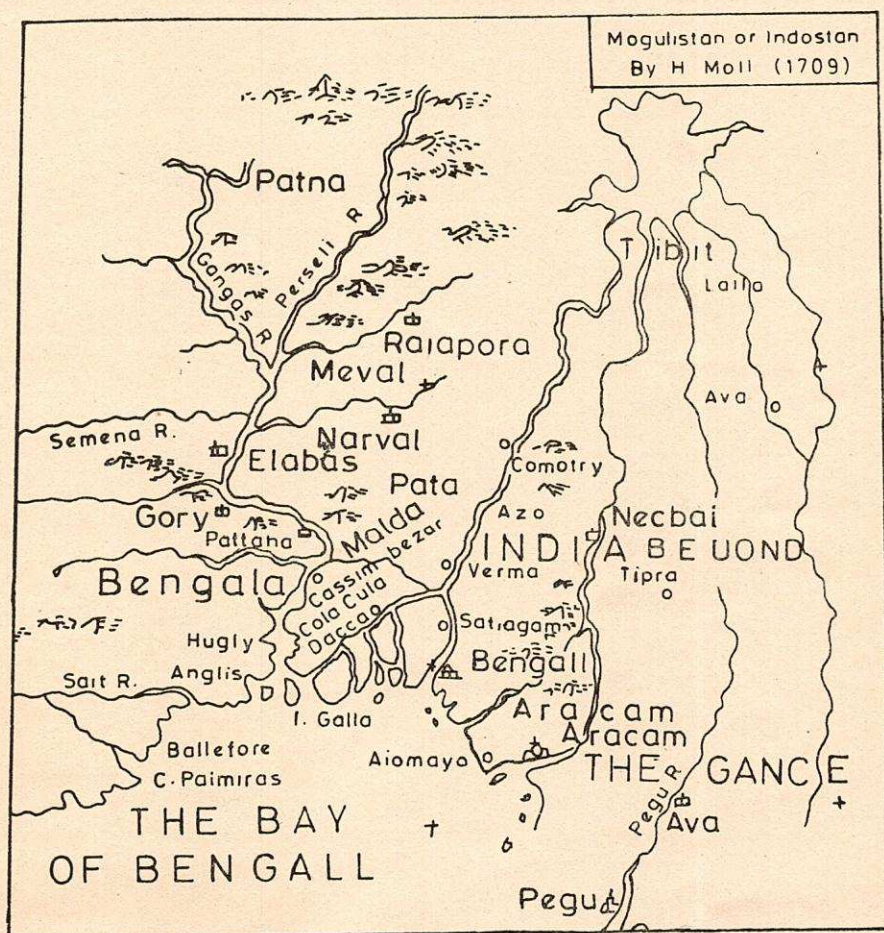
Map 10

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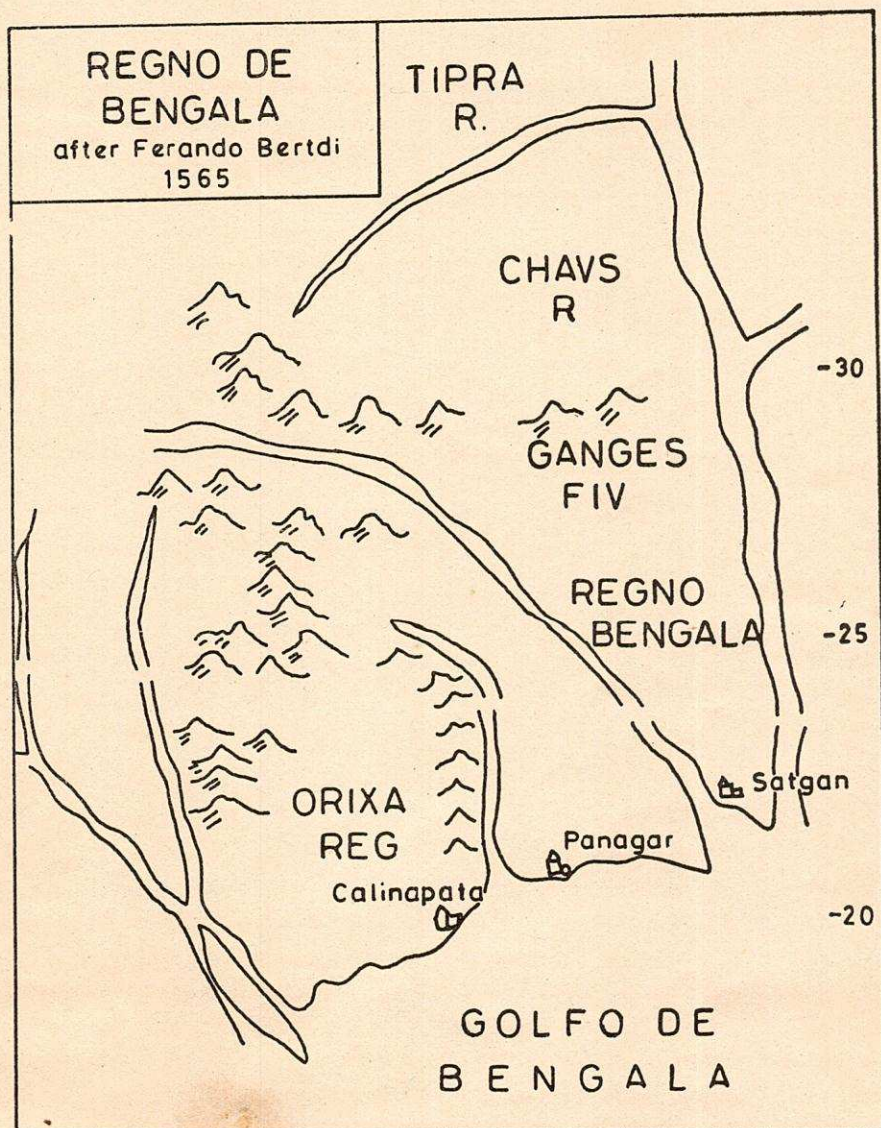
Map 11

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Map 12

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Map 13

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The Maps of Bangladesh During The Muslim Period

(1201 A. D. to 1757 A. D.)

M. I. Choudhury

Quite a sufficient physiographic history of Bangladesh during the Muslim rule is available from the accounts of the Muslim and European writers. The Muslim writers, who wrote in Arabic and Persian, have now mostly been translated into English. The Muslim period witnessed a marked interest in recording contemporary history, from which also sufficient information regarding the physiographic condition of Bangladesh during that period may be gathered.

From the lay out of the provinces in the beginning of Muslim rule, a fairly good idea can be formed about the extent of the delta in the early 13th Century. The province of Bagdi was then the delta of the Ganges and as Sagararupa used to extend further south covering the whole of the delta face, it was probably then partly inhabited.

During the early 16th century, the Europeans established contacts with India, particularly with Bengal. The Portuguese were the pioneers in this pursuit. The account of mariners and travellers also throw some light on the physiography of the region during those days. No less interesting is a series of 16th century maps in which Bengal is shown and probably, to visualise a fair idea of the terrain, the comparison of these early maps is the best course. "The earliest Portuguese map to represent Bengal is an anonymous one (the so called Centine, from the name of an Italian who smuggled it out of Portugal), made in Lisbon in 1502. It shows Satgaon (Catiguam) on a river in the western corner of the Bay of Bengal, and Chittagong (Carigam) on another river in the eastern corner. This remarkable representation shows how accurate was the information gathered in Lisbon, perhaps from some Arabian map or maps brought back by the first two expeditions of Gama and Cabral to India" (Corteseo, 1945,10). This was followed by a series of maps of Bengal and all of these maps show the head of the great bay bearing the name 'The river of Bengala',

‘Kingdom of Bengala’ or simply ‘Bengala’. These maps are of Fransisco Rodrigues of 1513 (Paris), Pedro Reinel of c.1517 (Munich), and of c.1518 (British Museum). Jorge Reinel of c. 1519 (Munich), and Diogo Ribeiro of 1519, Lopo Homem’s large world map of 1554 (Florence), Lazaro Luiz’s atlas of 1563 (Lisbon), Diego Homem’s atlas of 1558 and 1568 (Dresden) ; Vaz Dourado’s atlas of c.1568 (Lisbon), Dourado’s atlas of 1571 (Lisbon), and 1573 (British Museum), Dourado’s atlas of 1580 (Munich), Bartolomeu Lasso’s atlas of 1590 (Rotterdam) ; Father Monserrate’s Map of India, 1590. In all these maps the representation of the Ganges delta and the mentioning of the names follow more or less the same prototype. In all the maps the names ‘satgam’ (Satgaon), Chatigam (Chittagong) and cidade de bengala and talingam (a mistranscription for eatingam, i. e. (Chittagong) (the eastern region of the Ganges delta) are invariably mentioned. In Father Monserrate’s map ‘Chandecan’ a city on the southern sea coast is shown and there is also historical reference to this city. All these maps again show the Ganges delta in its various different forms, Some show it as a land contiguous with the mainland and some other show it as consisting of a group of islands.

By the 17th century, sufficient information of the region was gathered and maps compiled and published in different countries.

Accepting these earlier maps to be sufficiently correct for the day, it may be noticed that the major changes occur mainly along the delta face. In one set of maps the delta shows its growth and extension giving a horizontal look to its southern border from the Hooghly mouth to that of the Meghna, while in another set it presents an angular look to this coast.

If now the periodical subsidence or temporary submergence of land be accepted to have taken place in this part of the basin, this appearance of lands from these maps along the coast may be explained. Again in one period a number of cities are shown along the coast, in a subsequent period no trace of any of these cities can be found. This indicates that the deltaic part of the country had undergone periodical subsidence or submergence.

Accepting even slight inaccuracy in the maps, reasonably tolerable information might be gathered, and from the descriptions of these early maps the physiographic history of the basin in those days can be gathered. In the following few pages, therefore, an attempt has been made to describe and interpret these early maps. Some of these maps have been reproduced in this article.

Early Map of the 13th century.

The earliest map of Bengal after Ptolemy’s map of 160 A.D. is a French map ‘Carte du Voiages tres-curieux et fort remarquable’s A.D.1252. (Map-1). In this map the Ganges which splits up into two channels before flowing into the

sea and another river which rises in the highlands of the Deccan, flows by the left of orixa and falls into the Golfe do Bengale, are shown. This river is the Ganga or Guenga of the later maps. Considering the data of origin and comparing the positions of the places like Orixia, Aracam, Ava, Bhotiam, etc, it seems to be sufficiently accurate, but for the scale and minor details, nothing more can be visualised. The coast line of Bengal in this map from west to east is shown horizontal and not angular from the Hughly mouth to that of the Meghna, as can be seen in the later maps. From this it appears that in the middle of the 13th century the delta of the Ganges was fully developed and even the Meghna mouth was filled in, giving the coastline a look of horizontality right from the Hughly mouth to Chittagong in the east coast of the Bay of Bengal. So if there had been marine transgression of the southern part of the delta, it must have taken place subsequent to Marco Polo's visit.

The next map which is available for this area was compiled by the great Portuguese historian Jezn de Barros about the year 1550 (Map-2). In this map the delta of the Ganges is shown clearly as demarcated by the two branches of the Ganges. "It extends from Orixia on the West to Tipora on the East, on scale just over an inch to a degree; amongst places that can be recognised are Chatigam (Chittagong), Satigam (Satgaon), and Sirote (Sylhet)" (Phillimore, 1945, vol. IV221). The delta, however, does not show a continuous tract of land but is formed of a group of islands separated by channels which have formed a net work here. Towns like Bulnei, Tipuria, Dipuria, Cuipitauz, Noldy in the Western part of the delta, which in modern days is occupied by the Sundarbuns, are shown.

Gastaldi's map of Bengal (1561), "II Disegno Terza Parte Dell Asia" may be reasonably accepted to furnish some information regarding 'Regno De Bengala' (Map-3). In this map the Ganges is shown to take a straight course from the north west to south east and falls into the 'Golfo De Bengala' through six channels. In the mouths of the branches, sandbanks are shown. In this map also the Ganga rises in the Deccan plateau in 'Regno De Delli' (ignorance of the author regarding the position of Delhi in the Deccan) and falls into the 'Golfo De Bengala' but much to the south west of the easternmost channel of the Ganges. Satigaon is shown on the right bank of the river flowing from the hills of 'Regno De Cos Pedri' and joining the easternmost branch of the Ganges near its mouth. The city of Bengal is shown in an island about the middle of the delta of the Ganges.

Ferando Bertoli's map of Bengal (B.M.K. 115.7), of 1565, also provides similar information. In Bertoli's map it may be noted that the Ganga (Not the Ganges) rises in the mountains of the Deccan and falls into the 'Golfo De Bengala', near the present Hughly mouth where the Ganges (the Ganges) also falls but through a different channel a little to the east of the mouth of the

Ganga. As the river Ganga is shown in all the maps up to the mid-18th century, i.e. until Major Rennell's time, it might be possible that in those days the river Demodar used to be considered as Ganga which used to discharge its water into the sea through a different channel independent of the Ganges. And in those days the sea would also probably extend up to the mouth of the Damodar in the north. Satigaon is shown on the east bank of the mouth of the Ganga which further proves that the mistakenly supposed course of the Ganga of the former days is the present Damodar. Another important city, Panagate, is also shown on the sea coast further to the south west of Satigaon.

In Father Mosnerrate's map (1590) of Bengal, the Ganges is very clearly shown (but not named). Tanda is shown on the right bank of the Ganges which bifurcates into two branches further south near Satgam. The delta of the Ganges is distinctly shown, demarcated by the two branches of the Ganges. On the coast Chandican is shown. This was a prosperous city during the time of Pratapaditya. The site of the city is now over-shadowed by the forest of the Sundarbuns.

Coming now to the early seventeenth century, three maps of importance of this area may be found. These are of G. Mercator (1612 A.D.) (Map-4), Joao De Barros (1615 A.D.) and W. Baffin (1619 A. D.) (Map-5).

In Mercator's map (B.M.C. 18.e.15 printed Books) an important seaport Bicanapor (Bikrampur), probably Rampal of the Hindu Kings, is shown. From the position of the port it appears that in those days the sea extended up to that point in the north. Another big island Bicanapor is shown in the south west of the delta, which approximately now covers the districts of 24-parganah, Khulna and south Jessore. In this map a very important city is shown on the eastern side of the delta, Bengalla, of which Rennel says (Raine, 1872, 343), "In some ancient maps and books of travels, we meet with a city named Bengala; but no traces of such a place exist. It is described as being near the eastern branch of the Ganges; and I conceive that the side of it has been carried away by the river; as in my remembrance a vast tract of land has disappeared thereabouts. Bengala appeared to have been in existence during the early part of last century".

In a description of the Kingdom of Bengal, edited by J. Talboys Wheeler, there is the mention of the city of Bengala :

"Goure the seat Royall, and Bengala are faire cities" Not only this Purchas continues, "of this, the Gulfe, sometimes called Gangeticus now beareth name Gilfo di Bengala". The city of Bengala also appears in the chart of the Empire of the Grand Mogul, by N. Sauson, 1652 (Map-6)

However in Mercator's map, Chatigam is shown almost on the sea board lying between the sites of the ports of Bicanapor and Bengalla. The coastline is shown to be very irregular and shows the existence of two large estuaries on either side of the delta.

In Joao De Barros's map 'Quarta Da Asia' (B.M. 582.i.12 printed Books) the Ganges splits up into two branches near Fatiabaz situated on the right bank of the western branch. The delta of Bengal is very prominently shown in this map, comprising of a number of big islands in the net work of channels, enclosed between the two main branches of the Ganges. Nazirpur, Dacca, and Bander are all situated on the left bank of the left branch. Bander is situated at the conference of the Ganges and the Caor (probably Meghna). In the upper course of the Caor, a tributary flows through Reino Sirote and the town of Sirote is situated on the right bank. This tributary is then the Surma.

However, in this map the right hand branch of the Ganges splits up into two branches further south of Fatiabaz and these two branches are connected by a channel. On the left bank of it is Satigam and on the right bank is Chownia. Abegacsa, Berma, and Betor are situated on the left bank of the channel. On the left bank of the main-branch of the Ganges are shown Agarpara and Kore and further down Pacuculy on the left bank and Picacoly and Pisolta on the right bank. The Ganga is shown in this map also as flowing from the west and falling into the Bay here.

Sundiua is shown in the south of Jugudia and south east of Guacala. In the east of Raino Sirote is located Reino de Tipora separated by the eastern range of the hills or mountains. The town of Tipra is shown on the right bank of the river and on the same bank towards the mouth is the city of Chatigam. On the left bank is situated the town of Chokoria Irabo. Further to the east is shown the delta of another river where Bulua and Orieton are situated and to the south of it there is an island named Bacala. (These later positions of the cities and the island seem to be inconsistent.) E sea Da De Bengale (Bay of Bengal) is shown in the south.

The last map in this group, i.e. of the early 17th century, is of William Baffin (1619). This is a peculiar map in which the Ganges is shown to fall into the estuary of a river flowing down from the north east and on the right bank of which is shown the city of 'Dakaka'. At the head of the 'Golfe of Bengale', the cluster of islands both from the east and west tend to converge to the mid-part of the delta. Satigam is shown at the confluence of the two estuaries meeting in the western side of the delta. Satigam is shown at the confluence of the two estuaries meeting in the western side of the delta. The formation of the alluvial chars is emphasised in this map.

Three important maps are available for the mid-17th century. These are of Sauson d' Abbe (1652 A.D.), Magni Mogolis (1656) (Map-7) and in Empire du Grand Mogul (1670). (Map-8).

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Like the earlier maps in Sauson's map also, the Guenga comes from the Farecan plateau and falls into the Bay in the north of C. das Palmas. In the east is the river Cosmin (Probably Karnafully), to the north of which is shown Tipora in the east of Sirote which is on the right bank of the tributary of the Caor. In the mouth of the Cosmin, Chatigam is shown on the right bank and on the left bank is shown the ancient city of Bengalla. Dacca is situated at the confluence of the Caor with the Ganges. Bander is shown further to the south east. Sundva is shown in the south of the delta in the mouth of the Caor-Ganges. The delta is shown as if formed of a group of islands where Buram is situated in the north west, and Angara to the east. Noldi in the south west of Angara Xora in the east of Moldi and Ougely in the west of Xora and many other uninhabited islands are also shown. Pacricici is shown in the south west of Ougely.

Bulva, in this map also, is shown on the east coast and not on the north of the Bay of Bengal. Satgam is shown on the north of Ougely.

In this map, however, the main river is shown as the Gange flowing from the northern mountains. Its main tributaries are Semena from the west and Persely from the east. The Lac de Chiamay' is shown to the north east. The rivers Caor and Cosmin and another flowing through Aracan have their sources in this Lac. Fatiabas is shown at the point where the Ganges bifurcates into the two major branches. The eastern branch of the Ganges is probably the major, at any cost not inferior to the other.

In Bernier's account of the Mogul Empire, a map (1656-1668) appears, "Imper 11 Magni Mogolis Novissima Descriptio" in which Bengal delta is shown as consisting of a group of small islands enclosed between the two principal channels—the west and east—of the Ganges, Changam (Chatigam=Chittagong) is shown at the mouth of a river. Dacca is shown to the north west of it and Ougely on the right bank of the west branch of the Ganges.

This map suggests that prior to this period there had been a subsidence of the Ganges delta as a whole and the old cities Noldy, Dipuria Cuipitauz, etc. were all submerged. The sea invaded up to Rajmahal and gradually by sedimentation the lands in the south were reclaimed or the islands formed. This may be found from a comparison of Bernier's map with an eighteenth century one.

Bornier also reproduced from the original map (Paris edition, 1670) another map in which subsidence of the deltaic part is over-emphasized. This may

be gathered from his map, in which only a longitudinal island is shown to occupy the middle of the delta and a group of small islands is shown as occupied by the sea and this is written there 'Coffe de Bengale'. Sundiva is shown to occupy approximately its present position. Ougly is also shown on an island in the west coast and further to the south Piply. Dacca is shown just on the sea coast. Chatigam and Aracan keep approximately their present positions. If this map is accepted to be approximately a correct one of the time, then about a hundred years must have elapsed before this area had been filled up by sedimentation.

Lastly, six important map of the first half of the 18th century, before major Rennell had actually Surveyed the area and published his maps (1781) are available. These are Herman Moll's (1709), Van Braam's (1724) (Map-9), Valentyn's Prevoost D'XExiles (1751), D'Anville's (1752) (Map-10) Kitchin's (1760), and Bolt's (1770) (Map-11).

In Herman Moll's map (1709) which appears in his famous book "The compleat Geographer" the Ganges is shown to flow by the western channel (Map-12). These two rivers are connected by a creak that flows past by the north of Malda. Satigam is shown on the right bank of the Caor and a few miles north of Satigam, the Caor splits up into two channels. On the right bank of the right channel Dacca is situated. From this channel three distributaries flow out and fall independently into the sea. On the left bank of the main channel lies the famous ancient city of Bengal. The island Galla (Sagor in other maps) is situated in the mouth of the Ganges. Angelis and Hugli are situated on the right bank of the Ganges. The Guenga is also shown in this map. It splits up into two channels--the northern one is the said river and the southern one continues as the Guenga and falls into the Bay of Bengal near C. Palmiras. On the left bank of this branch is Ballesore. The horizontality of the delta face is shown in this map also, emphasizing that at one time the eastern part of the delta had grown from the tip of Sagor island straight along the coast to the east coast.

In 1726, a map of Bengale was published in Valentyne's Oost Indien, Vol.V. This map was probably compiled by Van der Boucke's before 1664 and published by Valentyne in 1726. Katigam on the right bank of the Xatigam river and on the left bank Dianga, probably Bengalla of the other maps, are shown. In the mouth of the river is Mogols Eyland. Sundiva is situated in the mouth of De Goote Bartempoeter Rivier and there are four islands on the north of Sun-towards the west. In the north there are two islands : Bacala is situated in one and Dapara and Tipuria in the other. Noldy is situated in the west; and Cui-pitavaz is an island further to the west. Jessore is shown in the north-east of this city, and to the north east of Jessore lies Fattepoer. The main channel of the Ganges is shown in this map flowing into the sea by a course through

the middle of the delta. Pacuculilies towards the west. Along the Hooghly branch of the Ganges can be seen Calcutta, Oegli, Ambowa, Triponi, Naddia, Plassi, Cassimabazar and Moxudabad. On the right bank of the Ganges the fort at Bilgassi is shown.

In this the depths of sea along a line from the Hooghly mouth to Mogul's island in the south east of Sundiva are also shown.

The next map (B. M. C. 100028), of Prevost D'Exiles, which is given in his book 'Historiae Generale Des Voyages' Paris 1751, of Royaume De Bengale. In this map Ee Solfe De Bengale is shown in the south as in the other maps. Like the previous one it also shows the soundings from the Hooghly mouth to the mouth of the river de Chatigam. The depths of Hooghly mouth are shown from Palmiras point to the south of Sagar. Along the south coast is written "Toute cette cote peu connueet fort dangereuse". On the north of Sundiva there are a few islands "Isles del 'Amiral". River de chatigam (Karnafulli) is shown and on the right bank of which Chatigam is also shown. On the left bank is shown Dianga, probably Bengalla of the other maps, and in the south of it is Rammoe on the right bank of river de Rammoe. Fleuve Barrempoet flows by the east of Salhet from north to south and bends near Sonergam eastward and then southward to pt. du Roi in the east of Bullua, where it falls into the Bay of Bengal.

Of the two islands on the sea board, one is Bacala and two others are Tipuria and Dapara. Noldy is situated further to the west, Cuipitavaz is on an island to the west of Nodly and Patuculi to the east of Sagor island. Fattapor is situated to the north of Cuipitavaz but further inland. From Fattapor in the north east to Fatuculi in the south west, the entire area (what is now mid-sunderbun) is shown in this map to be highly inhabited and Jessore is shown here in the middle of this tract. In the north Roy de cos Bahaar is shown. Gange flows north west to south—east from Rajeamhal to Fattapor up to the north of Nodly where it splits up into three channels. The mouths of le ganges and Barrampoet are shown wide apart.

Moxudabath, Plassi, Naddia are shown on the bank of the western-most branch of the Gange and the area between the main channels is well settled. Dacca is shown at the confluence of river Lecki and a spill channel of the Ganges. From Patuculi to Tiparia and to the north up to Fattapoer, the area is shown covered by forests. The coastline of this map is shown as more or less smooth and regular.

The last map of this group is D' Anville's map 'Carte De l'Inde' and was published in 1752. In this map also the Guenga is shown to rise in the highland of the Deccan and flowing Orissa ultimately falls into the 'Bouches De

Gange', near Pipli. The delta face of the basin is shown as angular from the Hugly mouth to the mouth of the Brahmaputra. The Ganges splits up into two branches a few miles north of Rajemohal. The northern branch is the grand Gange and the southern one is the petit Gange. The Brahmaputra takes a direct course from Azo and meets the Ganges in the east of Dacca but Lakia flows by the east of Dacca city and falls into the Ganges. Dacca is on the left bank of the Grand Gange. Jessore is almost on the sea board.

In Thomas Kitchin's map (B.M.No. 53570 (3) 'A new and accurate map of Bengal' the great Ganges and the little Ganges are shown bifurcated from near Rajmahal. However the great Ganges is the eastern channel on which bank Dacca is situated. The Brahmaputra flows by the east of Dacca and meets the Ganges a little south of Dacca. Sonergam is shown in this map on the right bank of the Brahmaputra. Bacala and Tipuria are on the sea board on the eastern part of the delta. The cities along the Bank of the Ganges are shown and from Culpee northward to Rajemohal, these are tolerably correct in their locations. But in this map also the Ganga is shown flowing from the Daccan and falling into the sea by the side of Pipli. A few sand banks are shown in the mouth of the little Ganges in the south of Sagar island. By critical examination of the two maps, viz. the maps of D'Anville and Kitchin, it may be found that one is the exact reproduction of the other except that in one the names are written in English and in the other in French.

The last map of the group is of W. Bolts published in 1772. In this map the features are shown as if the area was thoroughly surveyed, as very little differences may be found between this map and the later map of Major Rennell. This map was based largely on Rennell's surveys and was published as 'a map of Bengal and its Dependencies'. The river Ganges bifurcates at Jellinguee and flow south eastward to discharge its water into the Baye due Bengale through a different channel. The Brahmaputra flows by the eastern channel and flows into the Bay by a channel which passes by Chandpore. These two rivers are connected by a small creek between Laricole and Rajanagar. The Ganges subsequently joined the Brahmaputra by this creek. Luckia is a spill channel of the Brahmaputra which falls into the Dhalleswary in the south east of Dacca. The Sunderbun is clearly shown covering the southern portion of the delta. The sand banks in the south of Sagar island project into the sea. On the eastern side, the islands of sundeep and north Hatteea are shown as was actually found by Major Rennell at the time of his survey. This map seems to be sufficiently accurate of the time.

These early maps and travellers 'and mariners' accounts also formed the basis on which the later maps were prepared.

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The Position of Women In Pre—Muslim Society (700--1200 A. D.)

Shahanara Husain

The position of women in the society of early medieval Bengal was hardly satisfactory from the point of view of emancipated women. As she had no independent status, Bengali woman between of the period between the 7th—12 century A. D. had to depend mostly upon the natural instincts of love, affection, and the sense of duty of her male guardians under whose supervision she had to pass her life.

MARRIAGE AND CASTE

The predominant feature of the social structure was an intricate caste system¹ at the head of which stood the Brahmins and the mode of the life of an individual woman depended much upon what caste or class and she belonged to. The rules of marriage were based on the caste system. Though the general rule was to marry within one's own caste intracaste marriage was also known. But marriages were not allowed with women of higher castes and were blameable with women of lower castes. Jimutavahans² lays down that the rank of wife belongs to a woman of the highest caste and seniority is to be reckoned in the order of the castes. Though a Brahmin may have wives who belong to other castes, a woman of his own caste, though youngest in respect of the date of marriage, is deemed the oldest.³ She alone can participate with her husband in the performance of sacrifices and other sacred rites and for that reason the rank of wife (patni) belongs to her.⁴ Jimutavahana quotes Manu and Visnu.

¹For details about the caste system see N. R. Ray, *Bangalir Itihasa, Adi Parba*, Calcutta 1359 (B. S.), PP. 278ff ; *The History of Bengal, I*, (H. B. I.), Ed. by R. C. Majumdar, University of Dacca, 1943, PP. 565ff ; N. Kundu, *Caste and Class in Pre-Muslim Bengal* thesis submitted in the University of London for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 1963.

²The *Dayabhaga*, Trans. by H. T. Colebrooks in *Hindu Law of Inheritance*, Calcutta, 1810, XI, 1, p. 175

³Ibid, p. 176

⁴Ibid.

Manu says, "To all such married men, the wives of the same class only (not wives of a different class by any means) must perform the duty of personal attendance,⁵ and the daily business relating to the acts of religion. For he, who foolishly causes those duties to be performed by any other than his wife of the same class, when she is near at hand, has been immemorially considered as a mere Chandala begotten on a Brahmani."⁶ But Visnu⁷ holds that in case of distress a Brahmin may perform the business relating to acts of religion with a wife of the class immediately following. But a Sudra woman though married to him cannot perform any religious function with a regenerate person. Jimutavahana concludes⁸ that the Brahmani is lawful fewi (Patni) of a Brahmin, and on failure of such only a Ksatriya woman may be a Brahmin's Patni. A Ksatriya woman is the wife of a Ksatriya and in her default a Vaisya woman may be his wife. A Vaisya woman can be the wife only of a Vaisya and a Sudra woman of a Sudra. Discussing⁹ the views of Manu, Atri, Gautama and others which reprobate marriage of a regenerate man with a Sudra woman Jimutavahana says,¹⁰ Hence these evils do not ensure on the procreation offspring upon a Sudra woman, not married to (the Brahmana) himself : but a venial offence is committed, and a slight penance is requisite Jimutavahana¹¹ recognises the right of succession of a son born of a Sudra wife. But the shares that a son should get depended on what caste his mother belonged to, and the son of a Sudra woman, even though he is the only son, always gets less than he would have got as the son of any regenerate man. Bhavadeva¹² speaks of an accomplished Sudra wife of a Brahmin.

We have definite evidence of intercaste marriage taking place in Bengal in the Tipporah copper-plate grant of King Lokanatha,¹³ dated in the middle of the 7th century A. D. The first few ancestors of Lokanatha, both paternal and maternal, were Brahmins, but his maternal grandfather Kesava is described as a **Parasava**,¹⁴ that is the son of a Brahmin father and a Sudra mother.¹⁵ King Lokanatha is called **Karana**, probably equivalent to **Kayastha**¹⁶, in the inscrip

⁵Personal attendance is explained by Kulluka as preparing and bringing the husband's food. See Kulluka, On Manu, IX, 86. The Manu Samhita, edited with a Bengali Translation by Bharata Chandra Siromani, Calcutta Samiat, 1923, P. 442

⁶The **Dayabhaga**, op. cit., XI, I, p. 176

⁷Ibid

⁸Ibid., pp. 176—177

⁹Ibid., IX, 9—10, pp. 143—144

¹⁰Ibid., IX, 11, p. 144

¹¹Ibid., pp. 144 ff

¹²The **Prayascittaprakaranam**, Ed. by Girish Chandra Vendantatirtha, Rajshahi, 1927, p. 90

¹³E. I. XI, pp. 301 ff

¹⁴V. V. 2—6, **Ibid.**, p. 310

¹⁵See **The Laws of Manu**, Trans. by G. Bulhler, S. B. E., XXI, IX, 178, p. 164

¹⁶The Karanas were the forerunners of the Kayasthas of Bengal and they together with the Vaidyas still held the preeminent position after the Brahmins in the caste system of Bengal. For details see N. R. Ray, **Banglir Itihasa**, pp. 279 ff., N. K. Kundu, **Caste and Class in Pre-Muslim Bengal** pp. 103 ff

tion.¹⁷ That the social status of the issue of an intercaste marriage was not low in the 6th and 7th centuries in Bengal is evident from the fact that the Parasava Kesava was in charge of the army and was 'held in esteem by the good' and that his grandson Lokanatha became a king.¹⁸ Another well known instance of an orthodox Brahmin marrying a Sudra woman in the 7th century A. D. can be found in the **Harsacarita** of Bana Bhatta. In this work we find allusion to Bana Bhatta's father Chitrabhanu taking a Sudra wife by whom he had two sons Candrasena and Matsena, described as **bhratarau parasavau** though Citrabhanu was a Brahmin well versed in the Vedic lore and Keeper of the sacred fires.¹⁹ Though Bana was not strictly a Bengali his birth place was in Magadha,²⁰ and we may presume that social customs there were very similar to those of our region.

The Bangaon Chapter of Vighrahapala III refers to the **mantrin** Prahasitaraja as the son of the King.²¹ This son of Vighrahapala III is only known from this inscription and why his name ends in raja and not in Pala is difficult to determine. D. C. Sircar²² suggests that Prahasita was born of a concubine of Vighrahapala III and so the family surname was not affixed on his name in the official records. Another probability is that Prahasita was the son of a Sudra mother and so he is not given the family surname Pala in the official records. Apart from this dubious epigraphic evidence we know from the Candra records that Kalyana Candra's wife Kalyanadevi was the daughter of a merchant.²³ Though we do not know anything about the caste of the Candra as a royal dynasty they must have been taken as Ksatriyas. So the marriage of Kalyanacandra with Kalyanadevi may be taken as evidence of intercaste marriage. We have also reference to marrying a Dombi by a high caste man in the **Caryapada**.²⁴ Though this reference may have an inner meaning the simile used shows that marriage between a high caste male with a very low caste woman was not a very unfamiliar idea in early medieval Bengal. Taranatha²⁵ refers to one Abhayakara Gupta, a very learned Bengali Buddhist monk of the 11th century A. D. most highly esteemed in Tibet. He was the son of a Ksatriya father and Brahmin mother.

17 V.V. 9, E. I., XI, p. 311

18 VV. 6—7, *Ibid.*, p. 310

19 Bana Bhatta, *Harsacaritam*, ed. by S. K. Pillai, Trivandrum, 1958, I pp. 64, 62, 63

20 The *Subhasitaratnakosa*, ed., by D. D. Kesambi & V. V. Gokhale, H. O. S., 42, Introduction, P. ixxxvi.

21 Lines 47—49, E. I., xxix, p. 57

22 *Ibid.*, p. 51, f. n. 1

23 *Bangla Academy Patrika*, paus, Chitra, 1367 (B. 7), p. 33

24 The *Caryapada*, ed., by Manindra Mohana Vasu, Calcutta, 1943, Song No. 19 pp. 98, 99

25 Quoted in H. B., I, p. 335, f. n. 7, See also *ibid.* pp. 335—336, 681—682

Marrying within one's own caste, as laid down by the Dharma Sastric injunctions, was the general rule followed by the early medieval Bengali people. But we have definite evidence of a Brahmin marrying a Sudra wife in the middle of the 7th century and a few more incidents for the latter period. These marriages must have been exceptional cases but presumably to meet such cases elaborate discussion is made by Jimutavahana regarding the competence of wives of different castes to assist husband in religious rites and the rules of inheritance which made provisions for wives of all the four castes and their sons. It is very significant that marriage with a lower caste including a Sudra is not included by Bhavadeva in his list²⁶ of forbidden marriages entailing a penance.

According to Bhavadeva²⁷ a girl who is an **Asapinda** and **Asagotra** on both sides is commended for marriage to the Brahmins, Ksatriyas and Vaisyas. Also the bride should not belong to the same **pravara** as that of the bridegroom.²⁸ If the bride is related within the fifth generation on the mother's side of the bridegroom, or within the seventh generation on his father's side, or if they belong to the same **gotra** or are of the same **pravara** no marriage is permissible in the Brahma, Daiva, Arsa and Prajapatya forms,²⁹ that is the forms with religious rites which were generally respected. In the Asura, Gandharva, Raksasa and Paisaca forms of marriage a bridegroom may marry a bride who is not within the third generation of his mother's side or the fifth generation of his father's side.³⁰ But such a marriage degrades both the bride and bride groom to the position of Sudras along with their offspring.³¹ The guardians of a girl in marriage in order of preference are (1) father, (2) paternal grandfather, (3) brother, (4) other paternal relations (**Sakulya**) and (5) mother, provided they are of sound mind.³² Kulluka³³ following Manu lays down that a marriageable girl should wait three years to be given marriage by her father or other guardians. After that term she is free to choose her own husband, but she should choose a man of equal caste. According to Manu the girl who after waiting three years arranges her own marriage does not incur any sin, nor is the man who marries her a sinner.³⁴ Bhavadeva³⁵ lays down the injunction that between uterine sisters the younger one cannot be married before the elder. Kulluka³⁶ also considers a

²⁶ The *Prayascittaprakāśanam*, op. cit., p. 117

²⁷ Bhavadeva Bhatta, *The Samandha Viveka*, dited by R. C. Hazra, N. I. A., VI, 10 and 11, pp. 257 ff

²⁸ Ibid. V. 8, p. 259

²⁹ Ibid. V. 8, p. 259, For details about the sight forms of Hindu marriage see *The Laws of Manu*, op. cit., III, 21, pp. 79 ff

³⁰ The *Samandha viveka*, V. 10, p. 259

³¹ Ibid., V. 9, p. 259

³² Ibid. V. 17, p. 260

³³ Kulluka, On Manu, IX, 90, *The Manu Samhita*, op. cit., p. 443

³⁴ *The Laws of Manu*, op. cit., IX, 91, p. 343

³⁵ The *Samandha viveka*, vv. 22—24, p. 260

³⁶ Kulluka, On Manu, III, 160, *The Manu Samhita*, p. 156

man who married a girl whose elder sister is not yet married as **apankteya**. It seems that Bhavadeva and Kulluka laid down these injunctions taking consideration of the fact that if a younger sister is married before the elder one, people may start talking disparagingly about the latter, suspecting that there may be defects in her. This may result in hurting the sentiment of the elder sister and effect the prospects of her marriage in future.

About the marriageable age of a girl all the **Dharmasastra** writers of Bengal held similar views. According to Bhavadeva³⁷ the girl who reaches the age of her puberty at her father's house before her marriage will be degraded to the position of a Sudra, and the man marrying her out of greed or infatuation will be degraded and held in contempt by society. Her father also commits foeticide. Jimutavahana³⁸ also ordains that a daughter or sister should be married when "yet a girl," because "should the maiden arrive at puberty unmarried through poverty her father and the rest would fall to a region of punishment as declared by holy writ." Kulluka³⁹ thinks the age of eight as the proper one for a girl to be married. According to Jimutavahana⁴⁰ the nubile age, as ordained by Manu, is twelve years for a girl to be married to a man aged thirty, and eight years for one to be espoused by a man aged twentyfour." It is evident from the view of Bhavadeva, Jimutavahana and Kulluka that girls had to be married before they reached the age of puberty, and that they were often married several years before this time.

Of the eight forms of marriage ordained by Manu the Brahma seems to have been the most popular with the Brahmins. Jimutavahana⁴¹ calls the Brahma, Daiva, Arsa, Prajapatya and Gandharva forms of marriage unblameable. He also mentions the other forms of marriage.⁴² From the tone of his discussion it appears that like Manu⁴³ he gives preference to the Brahma form of marriage over all other forms. As we have seen Bhavadeva⁴⁴ allows marriage in the Ausura, Gandharva Raksasa, and Paisaca forms between a bridegroom and a bride who are not within the third generation of the mother's side and the fifth generation of the father's side, though this will result in the degradation of both. It seems that Bhavadeva, being an orthodox Brahmin, did not like the four lower forms of marriage.⁴⁵ Kulluka commenting on Manu holds the view

³⁷The *Samandha viveka*, op. cit., vv. 13 and 14, p. 259

³⁸The *Dayabhaga*, op. cit., XI, 11, 6 p. 186

³⁹Kulluka, On Manu, IX, 88, The *Manu Samhita*, op. cit., p. 442

⁴⁰The *Dayabhaga*, 1, 39, pp. 18

⁴¹Ibid., IV, III, 2—3, p. 88

⁴²Ibid., pp. 89 ff

⁴³R. M. Das, *Women in Manu and His Seven Commentators*, Varanasi, 1962, p. 12.

⁴⁴See *Supra*, p. 5

⁴⁵Manu condemns the Asura, Gandharva, Raksasa and Paisaca forms of marriage. See *The Laws of Manu*, op. cit., 111, 39—42, pp. 82 ff

that in the absence of the commendable forms one may have recourse to the censured ones.⁴⁶ Bhavadeva gives a description of the procedure of the Brahma form of marriage followed by the Samavedins in his *Karman usthanapoddhati*.⁴⁷

Thus it is clear that the Bengali *Dharmasastra* writers preferred the Brahma, Daiva, Arsa, Prajapatya, to which Jimutavahana added the Gandharva, forms of marriage but the censured forms were also known. It is interesting to note that Kulluka⁴⁸ advises kings to give some anxious thought as to how best to make use of the marital relations of their daughters in securing alliances or cementing friendship with other kings and we have instances of political marriages contracted by the kings of early medieval Bengal.⁴⁹

That polygamy was prevalent is evident not only from the writings of Jimutavahana but also from epigraphic records. Malayadevi was the chief queen of Samalavarman although his seraglio was full of the daughters of many kings.⁵⁰ Sangoka, the daughter of a Vandyaghatya Brahmin, was accepted by Govardhana, another Brahmin, as his second wife.⁵¹ References⁵² to jealous, between co-wives may also be noticed in the inscriptions. We also have evidence⁵³ of an ideal wife trying to win the heart of her husband through the magic power of her charms without incurring the displeasure of her co-wife. An ideal husband was that person who loved his wives equally without showing any kind of partiality.⁵⁴ Though polygamy was practised, presumably by the royal families, the well-to-do classes and the Brahmins, monogamy was most probably the ordinary custom and in the society there was the ideal of a peaceful family life with a single wife.⁵⁵

From the writings of Jimutavahana⁵⁶ it seems that the husband who desired to marry a second wife sometimes used to give the first wife valuable gifts to get her assent. Jimutavahana⁵⁷ lays down that if the husband, having taken the

⁴⁶Kulluka, On Manu, III, 24, *The Manu Samhita*, op. cit., p. 117

⁴⁷Quoted in H. B., I, pp. 603 ff

⁴⁸On Manu, VII, 152, *The Manu Samhita*, p. 384

⁴⁹See N. Kundu, op. cit., pp. 152 ff

⁵⁰Belava op. of Bhojavarman, V. 12, *Inscriptions of Bengal* (I. B.), III, ed. by N. G. Majumdar, Rajshahi, 1929

⁵¹Bhuvanesvar inscription of Bhatta Bhavadeva, V. 13, *ibid*, pp. 33, 37

⁵²Monghyr op. of Devapala, line 23, quoted in Tapo Nath Chakravarty, *Women in the Early Inscriptions of Bengal*, B. C. Law Volume, II, p. 254

⁵³Bangar op., of Mahipala I, V. 9, quoted in *ibid*, p. 254

⁵⁴Ghosrawa inscription, V. 11, quoted in *ibid*

⁵⁵Angachi ep. of Vighrahapala III, V. S. E. I., XV, p. 296, also quoted in *Women in the Early Inscriptions of Bengal*, op. cit., p. 254

⁵⁶The *Dayabhaga*, op. cit., IV, I, 14, p. 73, Jimutavahana calls it a gift on a second marriage

⁵⁷*Ibid*, 25, p. 77

property of his wife, lives with another wife and neglects her, he shall be compelled to restore the property of the first wife which he might have taken in times of distress.

Hindu **Dharmasastra** writers from time immemorial hence held the view that a nuptial tie could not be broken on any ground whatsoever. We find passages in the Vedic literature⁵⁸ and **Dharma Sutra** literature⁵⁹ which show that there can be no dissolution of the sacred bond of marriage. Kautilya⁶⁰ on the other hand allows divorce in the case of a husband and wife who hate each other and who are afraid of danger from each other, provided their marriage was celebrated according to one of the last four forms. Manu does not allow divorce at all and observes.⁶¹ neither by sale nor by repudiation is a wife released from her husband. And according to him mutual fidelity until death is the highest law for the husband and the wife.⁶² Kulluka,⁶³ commenting on Manu, holds same views. Jimutavahana does not even mention divorce in his treatise on the law of inheritance. It is evident that, in accordance with the **Dharmasastra** writers, divorce between a husband and wife was not permissible in early medieval Bengal.

WIDOWS

Widowhood was regarded as the direct calamity for a woman. A widow had to erase the mark of red from her hair,⁶⁴ could not indulge in any luxury and had to avoid exciting food such as meat, fish, honey etc.⁶⁵ Kulluka⁶⁶ further lays down that she should lead a celibate life, emaciate her body by half starvation, cherish a pious memory of her husband and perform religious ceremonies for the peace of her husband. Bhavadeva⁶⁷ mentions the practice of widow burning and makes a distinction between **Sahamarana**, the burning of the widow with her husband's corpse, and **anumarana**, the burning of the widow

⁵⁸Rg. Veda, X, 85, 2., Atharva Veda, XIV, 1, 18, & 1, 49.

⁵⁹Apastamba Dharma Sutra, 11, 10, 27, 6 ; 1, 10, 28, 19 ; Vasistha Dharma Sutra, XXVIII, 2, 3

⁶⁰The Arthasastra, 111, 155

⁶¹The Laws of Manu, op. cit., IX, 46, p. 335

⁶²The Laws of Manu, IX, 101, p. 345

⁶³Kulluka, On Manu, IX, 45, 46, 101, The Manusamhita op. cit., pp. 431, 445. For detailed discussion on divorce in Hindu marriage, see R. M. Das, op. cit., pp. 194 ff

⁶⁴Manhali op. of Madanapala, V. 17, lines 24—25, J. A. S. B., LIX, I, p. 71.

⁶⁵The Dayabhaga, op. cit., XI, I, 61, p. 182 ; The Prayascittaprakaranam, op. cit., p. 69 ; The Brahaddharma Purana, op. cit., II. S. 11 ; Kulluka, On Manu, V, 157, 158, The Manu Samihita, p. 308.

⁶⁶Kulluka, On Manu, V. 151 156, 157, 158, 159, 160. The Manu Samhita op. cit., pp. 306, 307, 308.

⁶⁷Bhatta Bhavadeva, The Savasutakasaucaaprakaranam, ed. by R. V. Hazra, Calcutta Sanskrit College Research Series, No. 6, Calcutta, 1959, p. 38 ; Bhatta Bhavadeva, The Tautatitamatilaka, (on Purvamimamsa sutra, 1. 3. 5), quoted in ibid., Introduction, IX.

after the cremation of the husband. **Shamarana** is prescribed for the Brahmin wife. The other three castes could follow both practices. The **Brhaddharma Purana**⁶⁸ extols **sahamarana** as the bravest performance on the part of the wife and discusses the merit that the dead husband and his wife derive when the latter burns herself.

On the other hand Kulluka does not mention the practice of widow burning. It is also interesting to note that according to Jimutavahana⁶⁹ "a widow benefits her husband by the preservation of her person." The practice of burning the wife of a deceased person was widely prevalent during this period in southern India and other parts of the subcontinent. Bhavadeva⁷⁰ mentions the **anumarana** of Brahmin wives in South India, which he thinks to be against the prescription of **Smrtis**.

Many Sati inscriptions have been found in the Deccan and Rajasthan. Both no such Sati inscriptions of the early medieval period have yet been discovered in Bengal. Why is an orthodox Brahmin like Kulluka Bhatta silent about the practice of Sati? Again, if Sati was prevalent in Bengal why is Jimutavahana not only silent about it but also of the opinion that the widow benefits her husband by the preservation of her person? The reasonable explanation of this seems to be that the practice of widow burning had not met with general acceptance in Bengal but the orthodox Brahmins were trying to introduce this practice. On the other hand it may be that the practice of Sati was prevalent and that Kulluka's silence and Jimutavahana's views were due to conservatism. They may have followed the earlier texts which hardly mention the practice of Sati which was rare in early times. But the first explanation seems to be more reasonable. But that the custom of Sati was not very unfamiliar in Bengal during the early medieval period is evident from one verse of the Bengali poet Yogesvara (c. 859—900 A.D.)⁷¹ Which describes the night as offering her body in the brightening eastern pyre when fate brings an end to her husband the moon.⁷²

From the injunctions of the different writers regarding the various austerities that a widow should practise it is clear that widows, in accordance with the views of Manu⁷³ and other **Dharmasastra** writers,⁷⁴ were not allowed to

⁶⁸ **The Brhaddharma Purana**, Bibliotheca Indica, II., 8. 3—10.

⁶⁹ **The Dayabhaga**, op. cit., XI, I, 61, p. 182.

⁷⁰ Bhatta Bhavadeva, **Tautatitamatatilaka**, on *Purvamimamsa sutra* 1. 3. 5., op. cit.

⁷¹ Ingalls, **A Sanskrit Poetry of Village and Field : Yogesvara and His Fellow Poets**, J. A. O. S., 74, pp. 120—121

⁷² *Ibid.*, V. 970, p. 130

⁷³ **The Laws of Manu**, op. cit., IX, 71, p. 340 ; V. 162, p. 197; IX, 65, p. 339 ; IX, 47, p. 335 ; V, 158, p. 196 ; V. 159, 160, pp. 196—197

⁷⁴ See Kulluka's comments on the above mentioned verses in the **Manu Samhita**, ed. by Bharata Candra Siromani, op. cit., For the views of other **Dharmasastra** writers see R.M. Das, op. cit., pp. 223 ff

remarry. This is not surprising when we remember that during the early medieval period not only had the widow to practise many austerities but also the custom of widow burning was prevalent in different parts of India and orthodox Bengali Brahmins were most probably trying to introduce it in Bengal.

IDEALS OF THE MARRIED WOMAN

A note may be taken of the custom of *Niyoga*⁷⁵ i.e., appointment of a wife or a widow to procreate a son or sons from intercourse with an appointed male. Manu⁷⁶ condemns this custom for the twice born but he allows a betrothed girl to have recourse to this practice if her husband dies before cohabitation takes place.⁷⁷ All the commentators of Manu regard this custom as undesirable⁷⁸ and Kulluka⁷⁹ observes that *Niyoga* was permitted for the earlier ages but is prohibited for the present age (*Kaliyuga*) and he quotes Brhaspati in his support. Jimutavahana⁸⁰ refers to the issue of an important person raised up by his wife by means of another man. But this seems to be merely academic discussion and in all probability *Niyoga* was not practised in early medieval Bengal.

Jimutavahana⁸¹ lays down that if the husband does not give the wife her food raiment, and the like, these may be exacted from him by her. He also lays down⁸² that after the death of the father the sons cannot divide the parental property without the consent of the mother. At the partition the mother should be given an equal share along with the brothers of the whole blood, provided no separate property had been given to her. If she has a separate property she⁸³ gets half the prescribed share. Step mothers having no male issue also get an equal share. As sons are entitled to four, three, two or one share, in order of the four castes, Brahmin, Ksatriya, Vaisya and Sudra, so are also the wives. Unmarried daughter also get shares out of the parental property.⁸⁴ Jimutavahana⁸⁵ asserts the right of the *patni* to inherit the property of her husband who dies without male issue. But she should not waste the wealth inherited by her by wearing delicate

⁷⁵ For details about *Niyoga* see *The Laws of Manu*, op. cit., IX, 57—63, pp. 337—338; N. Kundu, op. cit., pp. 159 ff

⁷⁶ *The Laws of Manu*, IX, 64—68, pp. 338—339

⁷⁷ *The Laws of Manu*, IX, 69, p. 339

⁷⁸ R. M. Das, op. cit., p. 233

⁷⁹ Kulluka, On Manu, IX. 68, *The Manu Samhita*, op. cit., p. 437

⁸⁰ *The Dayabhaga*, op. cit., V. 18, 19, p. 106

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 1, 25, p. 77

⁸² *Ibid.*, III, 1, 13, p. 57

⁸³ Jimutavahana lays down that the separate property of a woman cannot be used by the husband except in times of distress. See *ibid.*, IV, 1, pp. 76—79, See also pp. 68—75

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, III, II, pp. 64 ff

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* XI, 1, pp. 158 ff. The other women of the deceased person who are not ranked as his wives should get a maintenance. See *ibid.*, p. 177

apparel and indulging in similar luxuries. She should use that property only for her preservation. At the husband's funeral rites she should give presents to his **sapindas** in proportion to the wealth inherited. Only with their consent may she bestow gifts on the kindred of her own parents. Her husband's family are her guardians and in the disposal of the property she is subject to their control. In the absence of her husband's male relatives down to a **sapinda**, the kin of her own father are her guardians.⁸⁶ If there is no widow, then a daughter belonging to the same caste as himself inherits,⁸⁷ because according to Manu⁸⁸ she is also equal to the son and Narada⁸⁹ holds that both sons and daughters are the means of prolonging the father's line. Preference should be given to an unmarried daughter, in the absence of whom a married daughter who has male issue, followed by one who is likely to have, such issue. But the daughter must be married to a man of the same caste as that of her father and must not be a widow. A daughter appointed by her father to continue the male line (**putrika**)⁹⁰ has a preferable claim. In default of a married daughter such as described above the daughter's son is the inheritor of the property left by the sonless man.⁹¹ It is interesting to note that Kulluka⁹² also lays down that only then a sonless man leaves no wife or daughter his father mad mother are entitled to get the property, and he condemns⁹³ Medhatihi because he denies the right of the widow to inherit. From the reference to the **Putrika** and **putrikaputra** in Kulluka's commentary⁹⁴ it seems that the practice of appointing a daughter to continue the male line was sometimes resorted to in early medieval Bengal. According to Jimutavahana⁹⁵ the daughters also get shares from their mother's separate property.

According to Manu⁹⁶ the wife who, "controlling her thoughts, speech, and act, violates not her duty towards her lord, dwells with him (after death) in heaven, and in this world is called by the virtuous a faithful wife, (*sadhvi*)". According to Kulluka⁹⁷ this service to her husband is a means of salvation for the wife and only through it can she go to heaven. These and similar ideals of Hindu womanhood are depicted in the inscriptions of early medieval Bengal

⁸⁶The *Dayabhaga*, op. cit., XI, 1, pp. 182—183

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, XI, II, pp. 184 ff

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 184

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 184—185

⁹⁰According to Manu "he who has no son may make his daughter in the following manner an appointed daughter (*putrika*, saying to her husband), 'The (male) child born of her shall perform my funeral rites.' See the *Laws of Manu*, op. cit., IX, 128, p. 352

⁹¹The *Dayabhaga*, XI, II, pp. 169 ff

⁹²Kulluka, On Manu, IX, 185, *The Manusamhita*, op. cit., p. 571

⁹³Kulluka, On Manu, IX, 187, *The Manusamhita*, p. 572

But in Kulluka's list of heirs of a deceased man the widow is number four. See *Ibid.*

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁵The *Dayabhaga*, IV, II, pp. 78 ff

⁹⁶The *Laws of Manu*, IX, 29, p. 332

⁹⁷Kulluka, On Manu, V. 153, *The Manusamhita*, op. cit., p. 307

and also in some verses of the period. Rannadevi, the wife of Dharmapala, is said to have been an incarnation of purity and other feminine virtues and was compared with the goddess of fortune, the crown and glory of her royal husband, and his presiding deity.⁹⁸ She rose above the other members of the royal seraglio by reason of her inherent qualities.⁹⁹ Icchadevi, the wife of Garga, the Brahmana minister of Dharmapala, had the mild qualities and soft beauty and dalliance like that of the partner of the moon-god and she was a replica of her husband's inner will.¹⁰⁰ Pai, the wife of the Brahmi scholar Yuddhistira, was a woman of boundless beauty, the repose of her husband's heart and the home of right conduct (**Sila**), nobility of heart (**audarya**) tranquility and grace (**Sri**).¹⁰¹ Similarly Pratapadevi, the wife of Ramapala's minister Bhodideva, was an incarnation of the spirit of joy and satisfaction of her husband.¹⁰² Proverbially the highest glory for a Hindu woman is her reputation of being a devoted consort. We are told that the name of Rajjeka, the mother of Viradeva, the ancestor of the Kamarupa King Vaidyadeva, became a proverb for all men and women of her age for her devotion to husband.¹⁰³ Yasodevi, wife of Hemantasena, is recorded as having acquired eternal and wide fame for her devotion to husband.¹⁰⁴

The ideals of womanhood of early medieval Bengal are also depicted in the parallels drawn from the epics and the **Puranas** to portray the character of women. Gopala's wife Deddadevi is compared with Rohini, the wife of the moon-god, Svaha, the wife of Agni, Sarvani, the wife of Siva, Bhadra, the wife of Kuvera, Paulomi, the wife of Indra, and Laksmi, the wife of Visnu Sri¹⁰⁵ Kancana, the wife of Trailokya candra is compared with Saci, Gauri and Sri.¹⁰⁶ The character and beauty of Dhavala Ghosa's wife Sadbhava is illustrated by referring to Bhavani, Sita, and Padma, the wife of Visnu.¹⁰⁷ The chief queen of Vijayasena, Vilasadevi, is likened to Laksmi and Gauri.¹⁰⁸

No woman coveted a barren life. To give birth to a worthy son was the dearest wish of a woman as the pearl is born inside the crust of an oyster.¹⁰⁹ Vavva, the wife of Kedara Mistra, is described as being unlike the childless Sati and is compared with Devaki because she gave birth to Guruva Misra.¹¹⁰ It was

⁹⁸Monghyr cp. of Devapala, v. 10, E. I., XVIII, p. 305

⁹⁹Nalanda cp. of Devapala, v. 10, E. I., XVII, pp. 319—320

¹⁰⁰Badal pillar inscription, V. 3, E. I., II, p. 161 ; Taponath Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 246.

¹⁰¹Kamauli plate of Vaidya deva, V. 24, E. I., II, pp. 352—353 ; Taponath Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 247

¹⁰²Ibid., V. 6, E. I., II, p. 351 ; Taponath Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 247

¹⁰³Goshrawa inscription, V. 4, I. A., XVII, p. 311

¹⁰⁴Deopara inscription of Vijayasena, V. 14, I. B., op. cit., pp. 47, 52

¹⁰⁵The Khalimpur cp. of Dharmapala, V. 5, E. I., IV, p. 246

¹⁰⁶The Rampal cp. of Sri Candra, V. 6, I. B., op. cit., p. 7

¹⁰⁷The Ramganj cp. of Isvaraghosa, V. 4, Ibid., p. 152

¹⁰⁸The Naihati cp. of Vallalasena, V. 10, Ibid., pp. 72, 73, 77

¹⁰⁹The Monghyr cp. of Devapala, V. 11, E. I., XVIII, p. 305

¹¹⁰Badal pillar inscription, V. 16 and 17, E. I., II, p. 166

expected that a son would imbibe the good qualities of his parents and the purity and chastity of the mother's character would be reflected in the character of her son.¹¹¹ **PDF Compressor Free Version** In the Rampal copper-plate of Sricandra we have an interesting reference to the origin of Suvarna-candra's name. "As his mother had a desire, due to the longing (natural to a pregnant woman), of seeing the disc of rising moon, on a New Moon day, and as she was satisfied by (having) 'a golden moon' (namely her son, comparable to the New Moon in beauty), people gave him the name of Suvaranachandra."¹¹² Even now it is a common belief that if an expectant mother sees the moon on New Moon days her child becomes beautiful like the moon. A worthy son was believed to ennoble the paternal and maternal lines alike by his good deeds.¹¹³

The birth of a male child was a matter of much longing for a woman because her place in her husband's family depended to a great extent on this. According to Kulluka¹¹⁴ the wife is a blessing to a man himself as well as to his ancestors because she produces the child who frees his father from the debts he owes to his forefathers and also releases the forefathers themselves. Following Manu he further lays down that a wife who has not given birth to a son is to be superseded.¹¹⁵ A woman without a son and a husband was also looked down on as impure and the food given by her was not to be taken by the Brahmins.¹¹⁶

According to the poet Umapatidhara¹¹⁷ a devoted wife cares for her husband more than her wealthy and meritorious father and even her own son. Her devoted love to her husband is estimated as the best thing in her character. A hospitable and pure minded wife was one of the main necessities for achieving the ideal of happiness¹¹⁸ and for a husband whose wife was meritorious the world itself was considered as heaven.¹¹⁹ On the other hand a quarrelsome wife might make a man leave his home.¹²⁰

It was as a mother that a woman had the greatest place of honour. All **Dharma Sastra**¹²¹ writers reserve for the mother the highest position over all

¹¹¹Monghyr ep. of Devapala, Lines 18—19, E. I., XVIII, p. 305

¹¹²V. 4, I. B., op. cit., p. 7

¹¹³Goshrawa inscription, V. 14, Taponath Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 248.

¹¹⁴Kulluka, On Manu, IX, 28, The **Manu samhita**, op. cit., p. 425.

See also R. M. Das, op. cit., p. 161.

¹¹⁵Kulluka, On Manu, IX, 81, the **Manu samhita**, p. 440. See also R. M. Das, op. cit., p. 192. Supercession (**acdhivedhana**) implies that in certain cases of wife may be deprived of her conjugal rights which are transferred to another wife taken by him later on. See *ibid.*, p. 190.

¹¹⁶Kulluka, On Manu, IV, 213, The **Manu samhita**, p. 248.

¹¹⁷The **Saduk tikarnamrta**, ed., by S. C. Banerji, Calcutta, 1965, 2. 11. 2, p. 142.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 5. 38. 2., p. 494. The **Prakrtapaingala**, ed., by Chandra Mohana Ghosha, Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1902, p. 405.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, V. 171, p. 279.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, V. 160, p. 277.

¹²¹See R. M. Das, op. cit., pp. 240 ff.

other women. According to Kulluka¹²² the son should not act against the wishes of his mother. Kulluka¹²³ further lays down that if other female relatives desire **PDF Compressor Free Version** but the mother objects to it, the mother's wish will prevail over all others. Jimutavahana¹²⁴ states that the partition of the ancestral property after the death of the father cannot be made without the consent of the mother, because the sons are not independent of their mother. If a man dies without a son, wife or daughter his mother inherits his property if his father is dead.¹²⁵ In certain cases the mother also inherits the separate property of her daughter, married or unmarried.¹²⁶ Mothers are mentioned with love and honour in the inscriptions and in most cases of gifts of land in the form of charitable endowment the object is stated to be the enhancement of the religious merit and the glorification of the donor himself and both his parents.¹²⁷

Women had a place of honour and respect as wives also. They are mentioned with love and honour in the inscriptions¹²⁸ and in some of the copper-plates recording land grants the rajni or queen is made aware of the proposed endowment of land and her formal consent is solicited.¹²⁹ We have seen that the wife was given rights to shares from the property of her husband and if her husband died without a son she was entitled to get his whole property.¹³⁰ She had a legal claim on her husband for maintenance.¹³¹ The wife could not be completely abandoned by the husband even if she was sharp-tongued or had committed grievous sins.¹³²

Sisters and daughters also were honoured and respected. It was the duty of their male guardians to look after them and to give them in marriage.¹³³ According to Kulluka¹³⁴ daughters are to be fed and given dress and ornaments even after they are given in marriage. This implies that a married daughter still has some legal claim on her father. In certain cases they had proprietary rights also.¹³⁵ Daughters were even considered as equal to sons and the

¹²²Kulluka, On Manu, II, 225, *The Manu samhita*, op. cit., p. 101.

¹²³Kulluka, On Manu, II, 133, *ibid.*, pp. 75—76.

¹²⁴The *Dayabhaga*, op. cit., III, 1, 7—13, pp. 56—57.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, XI, IV, pp. 196 ff

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, IV, III, pp. 88 ff

¹²⁷See the inscriptions of the Palas, Candras, Senas and other contemporary dynasties
¹²⁸Belava cp. of Bhojavarman, line 29 Rampal cp. of Sricandra, line 18, *I. B.*, op. cit. pp. 8 and 23. Similar mention is made of the queen or queens in the cps. of the Senas

¹²⁹See *supra*, p. 11

¹³⁰*Ibid*

¹³¹Kulluka, On Manu, IX, 95, XI, 177, 178 ; *The Manu Samhita* op. cit., pp. 444 03 ; see also R. M. Das, op. cit., pp. 178 ff

¹³²See *supra*, pp. 5, 6.

¹³³Kulluka, On Manu III, 55, *The Manu samhita*, p. 127

¹³⁴See *supra*, pp. 11—12

custom of appointing daughters for continuing the male line seems to have been prevalent.¹³⁶ Daughters were also regarded as ornament of the family (Vamsabhusha.)¹³⁷

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CONCLUSION

But in spite of all this love, honour and respect shown to woman the society, following the dictum of Menu,¹³⁸ hardly allowed her any independent status. Prior to her marriage she was under the protection and care of her father, brother any other member of his father's family. After marriage, she was under the protection and care of her husband and her only means of salvation was to serve him. After his decease, she was under the care and protection of her sons or other members of the husband's family or in absence of them, of her father's family. The property she inherited from a husband who was sonless she could not sell or dispose of without the consent of her guardians. In fact she had to pass her life under the supervision of her male guardians and had to depend mostly upon the natural instincts of love, affection, and sense of duty possessed by them. Whatever respect she got from society she got as the mother of a male child, as a wife, or as a daughter or sister. She had no independent status.

¹³⁵Bhagalpur cp. of Narayanapala, V. 9, I. A., XV. pp. 305, 308

¹³⁶The Laws of Manu, op. cit., V. 148, 149 ; IX. 3 pp. 195, 328

¹³⁷See also the comments of Kulluka on these passages in The Manu Samhita, pp. 305, 306, 419

Primary and Secondary Institutions in the Delivery of Hospital Services in South Asia

A Case Study And Model

Joanna Kirkpatrick

Accounts of hospitalization in preindustrial societies, whether they refer to European peasants or to tribal and peasant peoples on other continents, generally recognize the reluctance of families to permit a member to be separated from their control, care, observation and concern in order to receive treatment as inpatients. (See, for example, Leighton and Leighton, 1944 ; Caudill, 1951 ; Friedl, 1962 ; Blum and Blum, 1965 ; and Bell, 1969). The specific reasons for such reluctance may vary cross-culturally, but analytically the phenomenon can be stated as a case of the nonconvergence of secondary institutions (bureaucracies, like hospitals) with social systems organized on the basis of primary relations and institutions (such as kinship and other primary networks). As Gluckman (1962 : 344ff.) noted, people in primary type societies cannot easily segregate the events of daily life and the persons associated with them from each other to the extent possible in highly industrialized societies. Dangerous events like illnesses, thus, have wider consequences for a greater number of significant others and significant relationships than is the case in societies like that of the United States or industrialized Europe, where social roles are more segregated and the range of significant others tends to be narrow.

Clients of bureaucracies in preindustrial societies, therefore, do not approach dealings with bureaucratic organizations as autonomous individuals if at all possible. Instead, they prefer to face these organizations as members of a primary unit. This confrontation is mediated either through their attendance with one or more kinsmen or personal friends, or through favours (referred to in Punjab as *safaarish*, or *lihaaz*) done by their "contacts"—their acquaintance through primary affiliations with one or more persons employed in the bureaucracy. (Compare R. S. Khare, 1972 and C. Morrison, 1972 on homologous phenomena in the Indian legal setting.) Such affiliations may be based on kin-

ship, residence as co-villagers or neighbours, or patronage institutions. In a country like India, where over 80 per cent of the population still live in villages (Wyon and Gordon, 1971: 94), bureaucratic universal norms (which are non-traditional and alien) are either unknown or are mistrusted as a basis for providing services.

The client does not consider himself as one among many individually entitled to those services, but on the contrary he tends to see himself as individually helpless against the machinations of bureaucracy unless his claim be bolstered by the presence of people from within his own primary network. He expects that the claims of other clients will be similarly managed, and that the organization is realistic would not be disputed by most Indians nor by the foreigners who have lived in India.

Any account of the delivery of hospital services to patients in India¹, therefore, must consider the discrepancies or conflicts between modern cultural definitions of those services and the Indian definitions of themselves as clients of the hospital. In this report I will show how women patients in the gynecology ward and the staff members responsible for their care mutually dealt with such discrepancies. That these problems are not unique to the Indian situation is evident in other surveys of the social settings of hospital care crossculturally. (See Glaser, 1970, for extensive bibliography.) The aim of this account is to demonstrate not only that conflict in the delivery of modern health services has a cultural basis—for that has been amply elaborated by now—but to suggest a social structural model of the confrontation of clients and bureaucracies in situations where clients' social lives are still embedded in the primary institutions of kinship and the rural or "urban village" (Gans, 1962)

I propose that in such cases there will be found an inverse relation between custodialism (or authority to control) in the client group and custodialism in the bureaucracy. What this means for the inpatients of hospitals in such circumstances is that, if authority and control over persons within their families is high, the ability of the hospital to isolate these patients from kin and to control their definitions of the situation and their behavior as inpatients will be low. I suspect that this inverse relation between clients and bureaucracies could be stated for all societies, or social settings, where we find that the clients' lives are still organized wholly or mainly on the basis of primary relationships, roles and social situations. I shall return to the model in the final section of this paper, but first I should present in some detail data on conflicting definitions of the situation in the gynecology ward to show the ways in which the hos-

¹This report is based on ten months of observations and interviews in and around Christian Medical College and Hospital in Ludhiana, Punjab, in 1965-66. The research was made possible, in part, by a National Institutes of Health grant.

pital organization's staff were unable to impose their definitions on the patients. An important mechanism for such an imposition is the isolation of the patient in the sick role, in order to socialize him or her to ward norms, definitions of self and situation (compare Coser, 1962:39-41). To the extent that patients cannot be isolated from kin, to that extent the hospital staff cannot subject the patient to their uniform efficiency requirements, with all of their attendant psychosocial discomforts. (See T. Parsons and R. Fox, 1952, for the classic statement on expectations or components of the sick role in the United States ; and Glaser, 1970, for its generalized extension into the perspective of modernizing hospital services cross-culturally ; see also n.7 of this article).

The potential clients of modern health services, or of some variations of these, constitute most of the world today. They are the populations of the economically underdeveloped countries, where poverty and scarcity, as well as crucial reliance on primary membership groups, dominate their access to effective health resources.

That a female ward and its services forms the basis for this study could be considered a limitation on the generality of my conclusions. It should be noted, however, that in India as in many other preindustrial nations (c. f. Glaser 1970:90-91) women are less likely than men to be inpatients. It is reasonable to infer, therefore, that the resistance to utilizing inpatient services can be examined even better with female than with male clients. (It was also noted at the mission hospital in Ludhiana, by the way, that male patients, too, had kin or friend escorts.)

The Recruitment of Gynecology Patients to Brown Memorial Hospital

Patients came from all over northern India to this hospital, located in Ludhiana in the primarily agricultural state of Punjab. In 1965-66 the town population was approximately 400,000, and there were three other hospitals besides Brown Memorial : the government (civil) hospital, a private maternity hospital, and Dayanand Hospital (founded and operated by a neo-Hindu reform movement, the Arya Samaj). The Christian hospital and medical college, founded in 1894 by Dame Edith Brown originally for the treatment and medical education of women in Punjab (Reynolds, 1968), has for long occupied an important place in the Indian community of medical institutions. The mission operates a large, 500 bed hospital, and its plan for 1972, for example, projected the training of 300 medical students, 200 nurses, 50 paramedical students, an expected clientele of 180,000 for its outpatient clinics, and some 15,000 as inpatients (Here in Ludhiana, 1972). Organized on a non-profit basis, the hospital's main support is through medical service and medical education fees, with the deficit assumed by its union board of Protestant missions.

The staff members on the gynecology ward, besides ward ayahs, lady health visitors, and sweepers, consisted of Indian junior and senior physicians, Indian nurses, two foreign missionary women senior physicians and one foreign male physician. In short, most of the staff were Indian. About half the nurses were Christians, and the other were either Hindus or Sikhs. Since they were well trained and only the best were hired at the hospital, their point of view **vis a vis** the patients tended to reflect the modernization of their consciousness consequent to their education. (More on staff views will appear in a later section of the article.)

Patient's families characteristically dealt with female illnesses first by trying home remedies, after which the help of folk practitioners (**hakims** or **vaid**s) would be sought. Local nurses in dispensaries might also be consulted, and it was they who often referred patients to a hospital. Staff members at Brown Memorial and many patients said that families refused to treat women as early in their illness as men, partly because of their presumed indispensability for domestic duties and child care, and partly because of potential exposure to strange males. In order of importance, the reasons patients gave me for their reluctance to seek treatment in hospitals were 1) the expense ; 2) removal from home and family ; 3) fear of exposure to male doctors ; and 4) fear of painful procedures. Only one patient, a Brahmin, mentioned the ritual impurity of the ward as a motive in avoiding a hospital.

A large number of patients were interviewed within and outside the gynecology ward during the course of research, and among them data were systematically recorded for a sample of 105. Occupational data were obtained for 99 patients. Most of them were directly supported by husbands, indirectly by the families with whom they lived. Only two were self-supporting, poor widows who worked as daily wage labour. As shown in Table I, the profile of occupational categories indicates that the majority in this group constituted what might be termed the economic middle range on a scale of financial resources.²

TABLE I

Occupation of Breadwinner

Business	...	36
Family Farm	...	30
Salaried Service...	...	20
Wages	...	13
Total		99

² It was not possible to obtain precise information on family income from patients. Such data are considered secret, and some patients seemed to fear that, should they tell me anything, I would disclose it to hospital staff members. The ability of a woman's kin to pay for her treatment, therefore, had to be inferred from their occupation and verbal clues.

Since the business category included such occupations as shop owner, grain dealer, timber merchant, small factory owner, accountant—with shops predominating—it is reasonable to infer that, in this mainly agricultural state, these occupations formed part of the urban middle-class of the region. The family farm grouping was dominated by owners, with only two families cultivating land on shares. In salaried service, civil service jobs prevailed. These too are mainly middle-class socio-economically. The wage labor group, on the other hand, contained a segment of employment which partially represents the poverty classes of India : factory labor, odd jobs, piece work at home, household service.

If we remember that the joint family ideology still predominates in north India, especially among business and farming groups, then it is legitimate to assume that the majority of patients in the sample, and probably in the ward, were members of families with financial resources. Other evidence on this point is also available. Both doctors and nurses, for example, reported that most of the patients paid the fees as assessed. Shop owners usually have access to ready cash ; and land owners to credit. Patients who were willing to discuss finances said that once the family decided on hospitalization for a patient, the cash for fees would be found somehow. Finally, since the hospital charges fees as a significant measure of its budget, it would attract fewer poor people as inpatients than would the local civil hospital. (It should be noted, however, that Brown Memorial operates numerous free outpatient and traveling clinics.) The physicians were alert to the poverty of some of their patients, and would arrange in those cases for the reduction or waving of fees.³ But practically all of the patients said that medical care should be cheap, if not free.

Related to the matter of costs is another factor, residential proximity to services, which is structurally important in more than a common sense way. Convenience of physical access is, of course basic in decisions about where to go for treatment. However, because of the traditional biases in favour of home care and the protection of women from strange men, the proximity of kin to the health resource was also important. Within my sample of patients almost half lived in Ludhiana District, and of these, 70 per cent lived right in the town. The residences of the others were scattered all over the northern region of India, with the largest concentration from one town being only five. Data on the place of accommodation of their escorts support the statements of several

³Many of the poor patients whom I interviewed in the ward were receiving free meals and medications. Some patients made critical comparisons of Brown's fees to those of civil hospitals they had previously attended, but it was clear from their accounts that their stays in other hospitals had been longer than at Brown, and moreover that they had obtained no relief from their symptoms. It was at this point that some patients came to Brown Memorial. If they had gone there in the first place, of course, their total expense would have been less. But they had no way of knowing this, except to learn from experience

patients, that proximity of the hospital to nearby kinsmen was significant in their recruitment. Slightly over half of the patients came from other districts and states, and over half of these were staying with kin (two with friends) in the town. Table 2 shows the distribution :

TABLE 2
Accommodation of Escorts of Out of Town Patients

Friends in Ludhiana	...	2
Relatives in Ludhiana	...	25
Relatives in nearby villages	...	4
	Total	31
Hostel or rented room	..	25
(N—105)	Total	56

North Indian Familism and Recruitment

What the patients did not necessarily speak of because they took it for granted, but what was abundantly clear from their behaviour, was that they could not consider themselves as lone individuals confronting the necessity of hospitalization. They arrived attended by one or more relatives, some of whom remained as escorts for the duration of their stay. The reasons for this prevalence of relatives and their necessity to the security system of the patients can be found in the structure of north Indian families, both Hindu and Sikh, and, indeed, in varying degree in any primary type society which emphasizes familistic values. In such societies, the worth of the individual is more a function of familial worth and status than of his or her own individual efforts. In this respect, obviously, people and families in India are vastly different from their counterparts in industrialized societies.

Authority in the family is exercised by elders, with separate but interdependent role systems for the two sexes. Ideally, all able members work together for the economic welfare and social status of the unit, and although partition of the joint property between brothers is a common result of centrifugal stresses within the family, joint ownership and management remain the ideal. Within this unit, despite tendencies toward feminine modernity in such outward forms as clothing styles, or the discarding of purdah between a woman and her elder male in-laws, women continue to be sheltered and socialized by their kinfolk. The family unit is the reference group for female self-identity (see Mandelbaum, 1971, for the best summary description of these issues). As such, the presence of its representatives is therefore necessary to support the self image, the emotional security, and the public image of women patients in the ward.

Illness Definitions

Both staff and patients viewed by staff and patients, although they both held views on its moral etiology. Patients' beliefs included a rather diffuse variety of causes, from accidents to witchcraft, while staff notions were more specific. Some patients expressed theories about improper diet, excessive worry, familial neglect, but they all eventually resorted to the concept of fate, saying that whatever happens is "already written on one's forehead". This notion was related to the theory of **karma**, the cosmic system of reward and punishment attributed to acts in a previous life. Moral peccability could thus be construed as a cause of illness, but with reference to their past lives, not the present one.

Ward sisters and staff nurses I interviewed also attributed moral etiologies to patients' illnesses, but not in terms of **karma**. Although they were Indian, as were the patients, they would refer to the ill treatment of a patient by a husband or other relative, or their refusal to bring a woman to the hospital in time for early diagnosis and treatment. To these nurses, such behavior was morally wrong, a sign of laziness, neglect, indifference or selfishness on the part of those responsible for a woman's welfare. This response certainly appears to reflect the professional reference of the nurses' attitudes; and, moreover, nurses and other staff would often express an indignation about the condition of patients brought to them that the patients themselves appeared not to feel. Nurses also explained patients' frequent failures to follow up with post-hospital prescriptions as a result of laziness or neglect, and it was in this respect that they and the physicians justified keeping patients longer in the ward than would otherwise be necessary to make sure of their recovery before discharging them.

Although both staff and patients shared notions of the moral etiology of illness, staff views stressed personal and individual responsibility, while patients tended to emphasize cosmic justice. If considered in the light of cognitive dissonance theory, the fate explanation is readily understandable among people who do not, indeed, know much about the causes of gynecological disease, and who have little control over the decisions made about their lives.

Concepts of the Hospital

Patient and staff views of the hospital coincided in one major respect, the superiority of the mission hospital in cleanliness, service, and cures. However, the patients attributed this superiority to the mission's access to foreign funds and technicians, whereas the staff members, while granting the benefits of mission support, believed above all that Brown Memorial's superiority was based on its religious, Christian ethic.

However, the patients I observed for six months in and around the obstetrics and gynecology services did not appreciate the missionary evangelism provided during their stay there. Reactions ranged from just ignoring the Bible evangelist as she made the round, to listening silently until she went away or continuing conversations with other patients and refusing to be interrupted. Several women told me, as we sat outside the ward in the garden, that nothing would ever persuade them to change **their** religion. On the other hand, while patients did not hold the hospital's ethical philosophy to be relevant to their lives, they sometimes chose to invoke it in response to nurses' attempts at social control. One Christian nurse told me that if she, justifiably (to herself), lost her temper while admonishing a patient, the latter might retort by asking, "Is this your Christian **dharma**?", (meaning the behavior appropriate to her job and religion). The nurse complained that, "Because we are Christians, we are expected to be twice as good as anyone else!"

There was at least one instance during my stay there, however, when the religious creed of the hospital was central to a person's admission to Brown Memorial. He was a prominent politician of the district, who had been wounded in ambush in a village by his opponents. He insisted on going to the mission hospital because, as he put it, "Nobody there can be paid to poison me". He had heard of politicians dying under mysterious circumstances in other hospitals.

There was no real conflict between patients and staff over their definitions of the hospital **per se**, only a kind of disappointment on the part of evangelistic staff members, and resentment among the more militantly Sikh patients, that their religious points of view were at odds.

Diet and its Complications

Diet in the gynecology ward was occasionally a source of controversy, or at least misunderstanding between staff and patients. Since the obstetrics gynecology services were located in the old original hospital building, about half a mile from the new buildings which also housed the kitchens, the dietitian was gratified that few of the ob/gyn patients elected to take their meals from the hospital. Those who did so, complained that the food arrived cold and tasteless. Food, as well as medication, was considered to have strengthening properties, yet nutrition was complicated by religious or ritual considerations as well as medical requirements.

For example, the traditionally vegetarian diet of most of the women there, both Sikhs and Hindus, was a source of concern to the physicians. The chief physician said that total vegetarians—refusing eggs as well as meat—were poor surgical risks as their wounds did not heal rapidly. The taboo on meat

or eggs was also a problem with the high protein diets required by some diabetics, whom anxious relatives would sometimes trick into eating fish or chicken disguised as fried patties or snacks. People on low protein diets, on the other hand, could not understand why foods they considered to be eminently health giving, like milk and its products, were eliminated from their diets. These and other discrepancies between their cultural food values and the requisite diets of scientific medicine caused the patients no end of worry, and the staff members no end of questions and complaints. Other notions could also be briefly mentioned, such as their views of the hot for cold qualities of medical and food substances. For example, a patient would decide that penicillin was too "hot" for her digestion, or that orange juice was too "cold", causing cough and throat discomfort.

Ritual and Secular Status in the Ward

The Christian ethic of the mission hospital did not permit the allocation of resources according to Indian ritual criteria of caste status (compare Bell 1969:40). Beds were assigned as they became available or according to medical criteria, with the most seriously ill patients located closest to the nursing desk. Patients rarely asked to be moved to another bed from the one they occupied, unless they happened to be next to a smelly patient, a very ill or groaning person, or a noisy one. Since all patients received the same nursing care (in accord with ward routine and other instrumental requirements), any of the social liabilities mentioned above would stem from the patient's illness, not from her caste position. One ward sister said that some patients did not want to wear hospital gowns (required only for surgery) for fear they had been worn by a diseased person. When I inquired whether "diseased person" might not be a euphemism for a low caste person, she explained that on the contrary they especially feared contact with clothing worn by lepers.⁴ For these reasons, as well as for comfort of the patients in general, ward rules permitted them to wear their own clothing, if clean. It was difficult to detect to what extent rules of touchability operated in patient social interactions. The patients themselves did not like to talk about it, but also because of their roughly similar socioeconomic stratification, such issues were probably irrelevant most of the time. Three Brahmin women who were interviewed received no special treatment from anyone, nor did they ask for it. A Chamar and two other low caste women did not report ill treatment while in the ward, although one elderly Chamar complained that Jats staying in the *serai* beyond the hospital wall refused her a sleeping place because she was not of their caste. Caste position seemed to be irrelevant within the ward, although it might become salient beyond the

⁴ In India, as in other parts of the world, leprosy is still fearfully avoided as magically contagious (see, e. g., Bell ; 1969 : 247—248).

hospital's walls. Also, in taking histories upon admission, nurses do not record **PDF Copyrister Free Version** jati names and religion. Identification is requested (in keeping, perhaps, with the sectarian basis of the hospital).

That patients adopted the egalitarian ethic of the hospital was apparent in their reactions to suspected favouring of some patients over others. Hindus and Sikhs, for example, both commented resentfully on a presumed reduction in fees for Christians, a practice which had been discontinued for many years (as I was bitterly informed by one Christian elder of the town). This suspicion may well have been fostered in part by the policy of identifying patients by religion as well as name.

A common idea was that the rich were treated faster and received better care than the poor, a genuine reality in many civil hospitals, where nurses and orderlies dispense service only for gratuities (compare Bell, 1969 : 40), and whose physicians sometimes will see only the patients who have cash for high fees (as reported to me by numerous Indian patients and Indian and foreign physicians). Nursing staff in the mission hospital were strictly forbidden to accept such payments, a proscription reinforced by the hospital ethic and image.

Suspicions of favouritism in the ward were related to the relative education of the patients. Educated persons could appear to be receiving better care, since they were less confused and more articulate in their dealings with staff members. Since education in India presupposes relative wealth, the less educated people would indeed be susceptible to suspicions of better treatment for the "rich." But the really rich, belonging to the economic and social elite of the area, would not be found in a public ward. They preferred private nursing homes. From the nurses' point of view, contrary to patient suspicions, the favourite patients were the "innocent ones," the gentle submissive village women, who were less apt to complain or demand services of various sorts.

Pollution Management

Staff and patient views of things considered polluting coincided empirically but not morally. Staff views were organized on the scientific category distinction of sepsis-antisepsis, whereas some patients had to contend with ritual purity-pollution distinctions. For example, many thought of the hospital as a ritually impure place, "where sweepers come and go," as one Brahmin put it. For a Sikh woman, a medical procedure of shaving body hair required her to go to a temple after she left the hospital for purification, since Sikh rules proscribe the cutting of hair. On the other hand, patients appreciated the cleanliness of the ward and of the staff members' uniforms for the same hygienic considerations that the hospital maintained them that way, although the habit

of some patients—throwing orange peels and paper on the floor—often caused trouble with the nurses and ward ayahs.

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While patients tended to think of the hospital as ritually impure, Christian staff members viewed their service as a source of moral purification and uplift in their ministry toward Christian goals (compare Glaser, 1970: 41). That some patients were not disposed to accord ethical credit to the hospital on this score was partly a function of their differing definitions of purity, partly a reflection of the strength of their attachment to their own religions. Awareness of the implicit criticism of the evangelistic motive also, perhaps, intensified their resistance to Christian definitions of the situation.

Blood as a Limited Resource

Staff and patients often experienced considerable dissonance about the provision of whole blood for transfusions. Patients shared the belief noted elsewhere in northern India (Carstairs, 1967: 83 for Rajasthan; Wyon and Gordon, 1971: 66 for Punjab) that blood exists in limited supply in the body, so that its loss for any reason causes debility. Nurses said that patients were always asking for "strength-giving" medications or injections (*takaat ki dawaai*) as these and certain foods were thought to improve the blood. Donations of blood for the sick, however, were considered potentially damaging to one's health. Conflicts arose on this point. One patient told me that two of her brothers had once donated blood, and that although one continued in good health, the other had never fully recovered from the experience. If a woman relative were asked to donate blood, she would say that women are "too weak" to give it, but if a man were asked to donate, the response would often be the same. On one occasion, I heard a housephysician shout at the male escorts attending an emergency patient, "Are you still here? If you don't go immediately and give blood, I cannot be responsible for your patient's life" Her threat was, of course, rhetorical, and usually relatives could be persuaded to purchase blood from the blood bank if they felt unable to donate it themselves. In any case, staff members were always a reliable source for emergency blood transfusions.

The blood bank, however, was an additional source of dissonance for patients. Some knew that professional donors were paid by the hospital, yet they were expected to donate it free of charge. Why should they not be paid as well? Of course, it was the reluctance of most persons to donate blood which made the payment of professional donors necessary.⁵

⁵ The paid donors were commonly ricksha drivers. Their health was carefully checked by the blood bank staff and their need for cash encouraged them to donate regularly. Since poverty was their lot, they presumably found it possible to relinquish their adherence to traditional notions about blood. I could not ascertain whether patients had any objections to receiving blood from unknown donors, but they did indeed use the blood bank's resources.

Escorts in the Ward

Hospital rules permitted escorts to visit their patients four times per day, at the three meal times and at afternoon tea. Otherwise, they were to wait outside the wards. However, if they were on occasion permitted to linger, the nurses would rely on them for help in holding bedpans, fetching water, rolling bandages, or giving information about the patient. Escorts also comforted their patients physically by fanning or massaging them, and thus their availability for conversation or just their presence provided social and emotional satisfactions for the patients. At such times they were, virtually, nursing aides.

Most of the staff members I consulted thought that the presence of kin was necessary to keep the patients happy. Only one nurse on gynecology ward duty was of the opinion that relatives were "a terrible nuisance," that they got in the way, were always clamoring for something, made the patients feel worse instead of better. Her most telling point, however, was that she thought their presence made the nurses lazy, so that they "did not check up on the patients as often as they should." There was constant pressure on staff members, in this ward, and even in the new hospital, from relatives who would try to sneak into the wards through back doors, stairwells, and so forth, in order unobtrusively to take up their bedside posts. Occasionally, escorts would assist a patient in leaving the hospital before formal discharge and payment of the fees. When asked by the nurses how these persons had managed to escape, the other patients feigned surprise or ignorance of the episodes. The ward at times took on the appearance of a genteel combat zone in this conflict between familial claims and organizational routines.

The Patient Role

Patients are generally required, in hospitals organized on the basis of scientific medicine, to adopt a hospital definition of the situation—the sick role or the patient role—and to behave accordingly. Coser (1962) in her classic study of interpersonal relations in an American hospital ward, wrote that :

Because the patients have suffered a partial loss of ego identity, they seek reassurance and recognition through self-expressive behavior. The primary relationships established on the ward, like those that characterize family life, may come to be considered ends in themselves (1962 : 99)

Since those patients had had to be separated from their kin, as well as from their non-patient roles at home and on the job, they turned naturally to the staff members for self-validation (Coser 1962:41). Their views of the "good nurse" reflected this orientation to primary need gratification, as 39 out of 51

patients thought that the nurses' "supportive qualities" were most important, and only two thought that "professional qualities" mattered most in the nursing role (Goffman 1962 : 75). Adoption of the sick role in the ward, thus, forced most of the American patients into non-autonomous, need dependent relationships with staff members.

The Indian patients in the mission hospital ward, on the other hand, cared minimally if at all whether or not they were personally liked by staff members. They thought that nurses should be "polite," "they should talk sweetly to us," and also that they should "keep busy and not just stand about talking and gossiping." If a patient complained that she was not receiving "proper care," what she meant by this was that the nurses were not doing their job "properly" by being prompt in response to patient needs for bedpans, medications, discussion about treatment plans, discharge from the ward, and so forth. I did not record data on, or encounter, one single patient who expressed, or intimated, hurt feelings as a result of a nurse's presumed attitude toward her. Thus, with respect to a major component of the sick role, removal from ordinary role obligations and normal role situation, (see Parsons and Fox, 1952 for the original attempt to analyze the sick role), the Indian patients did not find themselves helplessly dependent on staff members, as a result of the intervening presence of their relatives as escorts.

Another component of the sick role as proposed by Parsons and Fox (1952) is the presumed obligation of the patient to strive for his or her own recovery. Since patients were usually as passive with staff members as they were with their own kin, they often frustrated the expectations of nurses and physicians in this regard. One day, for example, the ward sister (head nurse) decided that a patient ought to get up and walk a bit, in order to hasten her recovery from surgery. She helped the patient out of bed and started her off down the aisle, admonishing her not to hold on to the other bed railings. The patient reluctantly limped down the aisle, holding on all the way. On another occasion when a patient asked the ward sister for information on reducing fat, the sister tried to show her some exercises. The patient watched politely, but did not try to imitate her. In general, the patients expressed the attitude exasperating to the nurses, often with folded palms, that "It is all in your hands." Socialization of patients to the sick role in this ward took place effectively at the level of **reciprocal performance of instrumental roles**.

Expressive need satisfactions were provided by kin. Since, as Coser has pointed out (1962 : 70-74), there exists a conflict in the modern hospital's organization of the nursing role between the "loving care" component and the professional orientation, "The extent of 'loving care' that the patient will get will depend on the relative emphasis nurses place on these two role comp-

onents." (Coser, 1962 : 71) Such a conflict in the nurse's role was neither potential nor real, most of the time, for the staff members in the mission gynecology ward. The loving care was supplied by patients' escorts, and the nurses were free to concentrate on the instrumental aspects of their role, their actual nursing duties. The only time that nurses experienced stress in this regard was when a patient had no one in attendance. Such patients would withdraw into feigned sleep, would weep a good deal, moan, and in other obvious ways express their anxiety and discomfort. The nurses felt that it was virtually impossible to comfort them. Patients deserted in this fashion took much longer to recover from their illnesses ; and, indeed, it seemed that in the absence of kin escorts, hospital treatment on the whole could not have been very successful, nor would there have been many patients willing to be admitted.

The Client Institution Interaction Model

The establishment of modern scientific hospital facilities in preindustrial or developing countries and their subsequent, often dramatic success with medical and surgical treatment has resulted in increased demand for these services. (See, e. g., Takulia, et al., 1967: 7,43 for comment on excessive client demand in North India ; Bell, 1969 for hospital use in several developing nations ; Mechanic, 1973 on patient overflow in South African non-European wards.)

The cross-cultural surveys of Glaser and Bell coincide with my own research results in affirming the importance of primary group escorts to the subjective and objective well-being of inpatients and of hospital accommodation of their policies to this need. Since the typical unit of socialization and adult social interaction of clienteles in primary units such as the village, the neighbourhood, or the patronage **entourage** (as Hanks, 1968, uses the term), it is proposed that the relationship between such clienteles and the secondary institutions (or bureaucracies) they encounter can be formulated in terms of one characteristic common to them both : **custodialism**,⁶ or the authority to control life space and access to resources within the unit.

For cross-cultural comparative purposes, it seems reasonable to assert the primacy of familial custodialism **vis a vis** individual members for a majority of hospital clienteles in primary-type societies, or in societies where industrialization has transformed the social system of only a small segment of the total population (as in many Mediterranean and most African and Asian nations, for example). By contrast, in European or American industrialized societies (Japan being probably an intermediate example), custodialism in the family

⁶This term has been contrasted by Stein and Oetting (1954) with **humanism**, which refers to non-authoritarian aspects of patient management in a mental institution. I have not employed the term in this article, as its many connotations could be confusing

is comparatively less, while in the bureaucracies it is relatively high. The most general analytical statements, therefore, of the relationship between clienteles and bureaucracies—between primary and secondary groups—could be expressed in the following way :

Custodialism in the primary group is inversely related to custodialism in the secondary group.

For hospitals and their clienteles, as a particular instance, the model would state that

Custodialism in client families is inversely related to custodialism in hospital wards.

In those primary-type societies in which custodialism of family authorities is differentially exerted over men and women, with greater control over the latter, then the articulation between female clients and the secondary institution would, of course, show a stronger inverse relationship than for male clients. In practice, this would mean that women patients would have a greater need than men patients for constant escort attendance, and their families would likewise assume this greater need and behave accordingly. The case of child patients could, possibly, show the strongest inverse relationship (as it did in the mission hospital pediatrics ward, where the mothers or female escorts were permitted to stay in the ward at all times, and to sleep there at night with their charges).

Since familistic values are particular, and bureaucratic norms are supposed to be universal in their application, the statement of this inverse relation applies most aptly where the family and other primary affiliations of people are structurally and ideologically opposed to secondary affiliations and norms, as in South Asia, and in many other areas where secondary institutions have been imposed by foreign rule. It is in these nations that one discovers the extremes of nepotistic corruption characteristic of some governments, or of civil society, in South and Southeast Asia, which could well be described as the invasion or erosion of civil society by the family. In any case, Goffman (1961 : 12) has noted the basic incompatibility between primary and secondary institutions in his famous study of a mental hospital, *Asylums* (1961), and this same incompatibility is fundamental to Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy as a social form.

Although the model as I have formulated it may appear to be truistic, this appearance is more deceptive than real, as its social significance continues to be ignored in much of the literature on the delivery of modern health care to primary society type clienteles (Glaser's 1970 survey being a recent and notable example, as will be seen shortly). With this model, any observer, whether inside or outside the relevant institutional setting, could predict areas of client-

institution conflict, or could plan organizational innovations of benefit to both. In any event, the model economically expresses the fundamental socio-structural crux of a variety of problems which can appear in the conformation between familistic clienteles and bureaucratic institutions, problems which might be handled piecemeal, and therefore ineffectively.

Probably the issue most apt to create difficulties is the isolation of the patient in the sick role, i. e., his or her isolation from relatives and or friends during hospitalization. Isolation of the patient from kin is the core idea of the classic statement by Parsons and Fox (1952) on the sick role among modern urban Americans.⁷ They formulated this role concept with respect to a particular culture at a particular time in history, yet their analysis continues to appear like an old refrain in the literature on health delivery systems. The possibility that this concept is ethnocentric is not considered, for example, by Glaser (1970 : 147—148), whose chapter on economics and urbanism in the cross-cultural context of hospital services treats it as an untainted goal. He writes :

Most developing countries have lacked the mass media, the networks of grass-roots organizers, and the determination of the government necessary to educate the entire population in the proper methods of playing the role of patient. The Soviet Union may be the only developing country that has succeeded in a short time, to the great benefit of the country's hospitals. (My emphases| Glaser, 1970 : 62)

Implied here, of course, is that there is only one proper method, the patient role as understood in technologically developed (and centrally authoritarian, to judge by his example) societies. Elsewhere, Glaser acknowledges the function of kin in providing "..... the patient with his customary diet, personal services, and emotional support." (1970 : 89) But he considers the inclusion of the family in patient ward service as an inconvenient stage in the evolution of hospital services :

Family institutions are among the last to change when a social system modernizes, and therefore the inpatient's dependence on the family may continue long after other aspects of the hospital have adopted the most modern forms of organization under the authority of doctors and nurses.

* * *

Most modern countries restrict the family to the role of guests during fixed hours and all nursing and catering are performed by the hospital's own staff. But

⁷The sick role as they conceive it entails four role components, two rights and two obligations ; the rights to removal from ordinary life roles and to expect treatment ; the obligations to accept treatment and to strive for recovery. Since this statement is so inclusive, I see no utility for the purposes of this article in distinguishing between sick role and patient role. I use the terms interchangeably.

in a few countries, kinship ties remain strong and cause an "uneven" development in hospital structures. (My emphases ; 1970 : 89).

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As these citations show, Glaser's projection of the optimum modernization of hospitals follows the prevalent authoritarian and custodial model of the modern European or American urban hospital. That this conceptualization of the patient and of the organization of necessary services may not function well in societies different from his own, is not considered by Glaser. A more sophisticated approach is evident in Charles Leslie's recent article on the modernization of Asian medical system, where he suggests that :

..... we should not assume, as laymen and physicians in the United States usually do, that the ideal of a uniform medical system controlled by physicians is intrinsically superior to other forms and should be the goal of all societies. (1974 : 91)

The foregoing description of life in the Indian ward, and my proposed interaction model of relations between familistic clienteles and bureaucratic institutions, emphasizes a viewpoint that we have all but lost in American society the legitimacy of primary social relations and groups. Recent work besides my own supports this position (see especially Bell, 1969 and Roth, 1972). In Bell's final chapter on future possibilities for the family in the hospital, he notes that our culture and social system enhance the isolation of the patient from kin. He sees the future inclusion of the family in hospital care as a result of deliberate policy decisions stressing the social importance of strengthening the family (Bell, 1969 : 273—275).

More recently, Roth (1972) has argued that even in our own society the patient should be accompanied by an escort, whom Roth calls his "agent", (i. e., a person, not necessarily a family member, who is selected by the patient), in order to give the patient greater control over what happens to him in the hospital. Roth predicates his proposal on demonstrating that :

- (a) *Hospitals are dangerous places.*
- (b) *Most patients find hospitals very unpleasant, entirely aside from the effects of their illness or the diagnostic and treatment procedures.*
- (c) *Hospital treatment is an extremely costly way to treat most ailments. (1972 : 426—431).*

He suggests that giving the patient or his agent some of the control hitherto reserved for staff members should make hospitals safer, more tolerable and less costly (1972 : 444—446). Roth argues well the case for and against his proposal and concludes that :

My effort in this paper has been to conceive of the hospital, not as a physical repository of patients undergoing treatment under the control of experts who make

all the decisions, but rather to see hospitals as a cluster of services available to the public on the advice of medical authorities—services which may be drawn upon by patients when needed without relinquishing their civil liberties or relinquishing control over decisions which affect them. (1972 : 446, *my emphasis*)

I have presented two essentially opposed points of view on the conflict between clienteles and hospitals, a conflict over the custodial, or control, aspects of the inpatient role. Glaser's position is basically ethnocentric, while that of Bell and Roth should be considered humanistic in its emphasis on the legitimacy of primary affiliations.

In my own research I found that, although differing cultural definitions and structural situations might conflict, there were accommodations between staff and patients such that inpatient treatment was possible among people whose culture is certainly different from that of the hospital. Despite the extreme reluctance of North Indian families to place the medical treatment of their women in the hands of strangers, beds in the gynecology ward at the mission hospital were usually fully occupied. I have found this to be the case, also, in Bangladesh some ten years after doing the fieldwork on which this report is based. Although the patients at the Christian hospital in Punjab were Punjabis or persons from other north Indian states, and the patients in the Christian hospital in Rajshahi, Bangladesh, are Bengalis so far as my model is concerned the process is the same. Bangladesh are just as familistic as Pakistanis or Indians about protecting their women in public places or submitting them to the care of strangers (c. f., Jahan 1975, Ellickson 1975). Bengladeshi attitudes towards bureaucracy are, perhaps, more familistic and less influenced by the universal norms of so-called civil society than their counterparts in other South Asian countries, since Bangladesh is so much more undeveloped economically—there is less modernization of the infrastructure here than elsewhere. Hospitalized patients* in Bangladesh also require escorts, preferably near kin, and their families also resist isolating the patient from her or his relatives. (My own observations at the local Christian hospital, conversations with staff there, and communications from members of the local society about treatment in other hospitals all confirm for me the reality of this assertion). Thus I find further plausibility for the cross-cultural applicability of my model in the data from Bangladesh.

Hospitalization for acute illness in the United States does not need public legitimization, as our medical institutions and health culture have converged^d in the general dominance of the scientific ethos. Yet, as Roth reminds us, hospitals are both unpleasant and dangerous. Changes will come about, however, only after some necessary demystification of the transcendent authority of secondary institutions and their personnel takes place. These necessary changes will

involve greater emphasis on public participation in decisions about the delivery of health services, as well as the opening up of rigid organizational norms within the nexus of scientific medicine.

Rather than attempt a, perhaps, futile prediction of directions of change cross-culturally, one could note that Bell's impressions (1969 : 256) of modernization of hospitals in India are that they may be moving in the direction of "increased responsiveness to international knowledge, standards, communication and consultation, with reduced responsiveness to local demands" He found the Indian government committed to Euro-American standards of teaching, research and training in their more prestigious medical centres, a commitment which would tend toward the exclusion of kin and the isolation of the patient in the sick role. In view of the felt legitimacy of primary relations to clienteles all over the world, it is to be hoped that planners in South Asia, who follow so-called "Western" scientific models of health delivery, will experiment with flexible, open systems of hospital service. This is already happening in the United States in the form of alternative health delivery services, like Women's Health Centres, travelling clinics (particularly important in parts of Appalachia), street clinics among the drug addicts in ghettos, permission for mothers to stay with their children in some pediatrics wards, and so on.

If for no other reason, the increasing cost of delivering health care in hospitals may bring about a modified return to home nursing of all but the most acutely ill patients. Certainly, the shortage of trained nurses in the developing countries makes it imperative that kinsmen be accepted and trained, if possible, as part of the health care "team". But whatever the degree of familial involvement, policies which do not isolate the patient from his or her relatives or primary contacts need not result in nepotic forms of corruption, nor in bad medical care, as is amply illustrated by the example of successful recruitment and treatment of patients in the Indian mission hospital described in this report.

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