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Message

The undersigned is glad to learn that Department of History of Raiganj University is going to bring out "Raiganj University Journal of History" (Peer Reviewed, Vol.1) very soon, under supervision of an Editorial Board. The Journal contains nine articles from scholars of great repute with the chief objective of continuing with the progress for cause of History as a discipline. I wish a very successful launching of this Journal.

Date- 02.09.2019

Anil Bhumali
Prof. A. Bhumali
(Prof. A. Bhumali)
Vice-Chancellor
Raiganj University
Uttar Dinajpur

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EDITORIAL

‘Raiganj University Journal of History’ is hereby launched with the chief objective of continuing with the progress for the cause of History as a discipline. The scholars attached not only to this Department, but also those who are making original contributions in the specific research areas can vent their ideas through this journal. Raiganj University was established in 2015, by converting the Raiganj University College into the University. The Department of History was also established at the same time. The endeavour to publish a Departmental Journal thus is very much aligned with the goal of the establishment of this University in the northern part of Bengal i.e. the furtherance of the cause of higher education and research.

As regard to the process of the publication of the Journal the Editor and the Member of the Editorial Board expect that the submitted articles will be original contribution of the authors. Blind peer review process will be followed before publication of the articles. Frequency of the publication of the Journal will be yearly.

The present issue of the Journal cover wide range of topics. Our Hon’ble Vice Chancellor Professor Anil Bhumali has made important contributions in the field of researches on Cooperative Movement and Sustainable Development and received various prestigious awards. This Department therefore, feels honoured by publishing his interview which has been taken by our two of the faculty members Dr. Kasturi Ghose and Ms. Tahiti Sarkar (presently on lien). This Department can boast of organising the Raiganj University Department of History Lecture Series. The first lecture of the Series was delivered by Professor Ranjan Chakrabarti, the Hon’ble Vice-Chancellor, Vidyasagar University. This Journal is featured with the written version of the same.

Aniruddha Das in his article ‘ Remembering J D Hooker (1817-1911) on Bicentenary of His Birth’ has analyzed the contributions of the Botanist J D Hooker. Babulal Bala has written on *Abul Kashem Fazlul Huq and the Political Consciousness of the Bengal Peasantry*, emphasising the role of the different organisations in this regard. Barendra Nath Giri has written on *M K Gandhi and Ahimsa - Its Relevance*. Gaur Chandra Ghosh and Abhijit Datta has analysed the much debated topic i.e the relationship between Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose in their article titled ‘*Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose: A comparative study of ideology and its application in the perspective of Freedom Movement*’. Prosenjit Roy in his article ‘*Agrarian Life in Cooch Behar State (1773-1897): A Perspective of Technology, Agriculture and Calamities*’ has focused on the agrarian technology, extension of agriculture and effects of calamities on life of the people. Satyabrata Bhattacharyya has written on *Saumyendranath Tagore as a Revolutionary. Tebhaga Movement in Dinajpur and the Reaction of the Santal Peasants* has been analysed by Swapan Kumar Pain in his article, so entitled. The material transformation of Darjeeling Hills has been analysed by Tahiti Sarkar in her article ‘*Linking Environmental History of South Asia with Colonial Darjeeling Hills: A Unique Historical Palimpsest*’.

The Department extends thanks and remains grateful to the Hon’ble Vice-Chancellor of Raiganj University for being the Chief Patron of the Journal. The Department also extends thanks to the Registrar, the Finance Officer and all others who helped in different ways to make this Journal see light of the day.

August, 2019

Interview with Professor Anil Bhuimali, the
Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Raiganj University,
Dated: 29th November, 2017

Interviewed by:

Ms. Tahiti Sarkar & Dr. Kasturi Ghose

Assistant Professors, Department of History, Raiganj University

- Dr. Ghose : Sir, a very Good Morning!
- Prof. Bhuimali : Good Morning!
- Ms. Sarkar : Good Morning, Sir. Firstly, on behalf of the Department of History, Raiganj University, we thank you for giving us your valuable time. Now, if you can kindly tell us your views on our endeavours to initiate the first volume of Raiganj University Journal of History.
- Prof. Bhuimali : It is a good initiative from the point of view of the Department of History and, also perhaps, this is the first of its kind that the Department of History has taken such an initiative to publish its first volume of the Raiganj University Journal of History. I think this will actually benefit the teachers and also the researchers.
- Dr. Ghose : Sir, as you were talking about the research perspective and the teachers, what are your views about the present state of higher education and whether it can cater to the need of the youth?
- Prof. Bhuimali : Universities are autonomous and are located in a particular place and especially in regard to Raiganj University, I think that it has a rural base and it does cater to the needs of thousands of village students. We decided the curriculum based on the aspirations of the students of the locality. And if you do so, it caters to the needs of higher education and also that of the youth.

- Dr. Ghose : Sir, how can the faculty members help in imparting better quality of higher education in this institution?
- Prof. Bhuimali : In this context, I think, students can be indicated with the curriculum. Apart from theoretical aspects, every subject can be indicated with a practical base. So if we are successful in implementing a syllabus that will also incorporate the local area of the region then that will benefit the subjects as well as the students associated with the subjects. And Raiganj is a part of North Bengal which is historically very enrich. We have a lot of archives as well as a lot of areas of research to be explored. So, if we frame the syllabus covering such parts of Raiganj and North Bengal as a whole then I think the student will be more conversant and more knowledgeable in the subjects, particularly in the discipline of history.
- Ms.Sarkar : Sir, recently you have been awarded with Banga Ratna and Paul Samuelson's Royal Economist Award and many more at national and international levels. Do you think that it makes you more accountable to the society?
- Prof. Bhuimali : Yes, of course. Actually any type of reward gives the recipient a boost. And in regard to whatever I received, I pay my tribute to my teachers as well as to my well-wishers. It was because of their wishes and help that I have been able to contribute in my discipline and have been awarded these kinds of prestigious awards and recognitions. And these types of recognitions boost my energy and capacity to work. I am, really, delighted.
- Ms. Sarkar : Sir, you have worked as a renowned Professor of Economics in University of North Bengal and now you are working here as the apex administrator. Do you miss teaching?
- Prof. Bhuimali : Actually I miss teaching. But, you know, here we have a curriculum in Economics; a paper on International Economics which I teach here. I cover half of the paper as well as I am involved with the research activity of the Department. I also cover the research methodology

part. I also take some classes in other universities, apart from my administration and other activities, I love teaching and I am highly involved with my research activities. So I am not missing it, I am compromising both at the same time.

Dr. Ghose : Sir, our university being located in a socio-economic 'backward' region, have you faced any external challenge in the initial days or recently, as the Vice Chancellor of Raiganj University?

Prof. Bhuimali : Yes. As you know that this was earlier a college. When I took charge here, people had a mind-set, accordingly. So it took some time for me to upgrade that concept to that of a university. Even so, things are positive. Though this has a rural base and students who come here are mostly from poverty stricken families; and also as you know that this is a place of no industry; almost zero industry, only a few small scale industries and no such large scale industry exists here in North Bengal. People are from agricultural background, or such allied activities. They have a very passionate mind and have taken education as a challenge in view of their poverty. They come here regularly, attend classes and have a dream to attain higher education and be placed in a respectable job. They have a great mind. And not only for me but also for the teachers, we all have a great chance to motivate them and from these, the teachers can be motivated and more enthusiastic in imparting them knowledge as well.

Dr.Ghose : Sir, Raiganj University is currently the apex body of higher education in this entire region. So how can it help in the development of the people? This is also an extremely culturally enriched area, especially, as far as the local culture is concerned. Sir, how can the University promote that indigenous culture?

Prof. Bhuimali : University is a place where not only education is to be imparted to the students but apart from that, we also have a duty to integrate with the people. So we have taken a decision to set up at least three centres in this regard. As you know the Department of Chemistry

and other departments of the Faculty of Science have decided to start a 'Rice Programme'. They have named it the '*Folk Rice Programme*'. Folk Rice means the great tradition of traditional rice grown exclusively in the two districts of North and South Dinajpur. These two districts are very rich in rice cultivation. To name a few such varieties exclusive to these parts are *Tulaipanji*, *Nagrakolam*, *Kalonuniya*, *Sadanuniya* etc. *Tulaipanji* has attained a repute of its own. *Nagrakolam* which is a typicality of South Dinajpur product is high quality rice unique for its taste and flavour. Also *Kalonuniya*, *Sadanuniya* grown in the southern parts of West Dinajpur are unique in their own ways. The 'Rice Programme' aims to promote these indigenous varieties. The Department of History has also decided to initiate a research programme and a Museum to preserve such other local heritage. It can help to culture and nurture the historical aspects of the indigenous traditions. These parts have a great history and many facets of that history are still unknown to us. The Department of History can help to shape up those unknown histories of the region. And not just cultural history, there are other burning issues such as the history of the refugees, the history of migration. These topics in context of this region can also be brought to light by the Department of History. Also the tribal history can be taken up by the department. As you know, there is a huge population of *adivasis* in this region. So the Department can historically locate as to how they came here, whether they are the aboriginals or if they have been shifted from other regions. These aspects can be taken into account which will help to promote the indigenous aspects of this region. And not just that, as I was saying that the Department of History can historically nurture the traditions, it can locate the 3000 year old rice tradition that prevails here. Even before Kolkata, rather when there was no Kolkata, this place existed. From the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Palas and the Senas, we can find evidences that this place existed. So those aspects can be discovered, can be

studied and the history can be re-written, accordingly, in right proportions. And with the help of the Department of History, these indigenous aspects can be brought to the forefront.

Ms. Sarkar : Sir, how can the University expand its international collaborations, especially in regard to interdisciplinary studies?

Prof. Bhuimali : We are from the 'backward' district. There are many institutions which are the Centre for Excellence. For example, the University of Calcutta, Jadavpur University. There are many teachers whom we all know. We can seek collaborations with them and also, if possible I request you to collaborate with Jawaharlal Nehru University. And not only within India but also abroad, with the USA, the UK. But these depend on your persuasion, the initiative of the teachers. We have to provide logistic support and other infrastructural support as well. Based on your initiative, we can do that, together.

Ms. Sarkar : Sir, you are known as an administrator with unlimited dreams in your eyes. Where do you see our University 10 years from now?

Prof. Bhuimali : We have limited time and access everywhere and within these restraints we have to fulfil our dreams. Everyone has a dream. My dream at this moment is to establish the University although in a small form but we should have clean system in all aspects. We should have transparency, in external as well as internal matters. In terms of academic persuasion we need some sort of diffusion among the teachers and the students. And cleanliness in all aspects; from the character to the academic perspective of the University. So, we should promote our University which is lagging behind at the moment but our pace is like that of a tortoise – slow but steady. We can be slow but we are progressing steadily and as long I am here, I can ensure that the progress will continue. My dreams and your dreams, all our dreams collectively will be fulfilled.

Ms. Sarkar : And Sir, lastly, any message you want to give out to

the Department of History in particular and to all the teaching fraternity of the University?

Prof. Bhuimali : We need unity to work together as a family. As family members we need to face all challenges. We need to stand together, if someone is in problem we need to offer our wholehearted support. All the teachers, students and the staff need to work hand in hand, support each other to fulfil our dream to make this University excel.

The interview concludes with both the interviewers thanking the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Raiganj University.

Maiden Lecture of the Raiganj University Department of History
Lecture Series, delivered in the University on 2.1.2018

Reading William Dalrymple and the Historiography of the Revolt of 1857

Professor Ranjan Chakrabarti

Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor

Vidyasagar University

There seems to be a kind of polarisation in the perception that circulates among the common people and there is a misunderstanding regarding the Revolt of 1857. Some scholars think that it was a Sepoy Mutiny, while others argue that it was not a Sepoy Mutiny, but it was the 'First War of Independence'. These are two extreme views relating to this great event and somewhere between the lines there is a hidden text about the Revolt of 1857. I would clear follow a specific method to explain the nature of the Revolt of 1857. I prefer to call it the Revolt of 1857, because specifically it is very difficult to ascertain the character of the revolt. We cannot say that it was a revolt of the sepoy or we cannot say that it was a case of First war of Independence. It was indeed not so simple. So, we shall be very careful as historians. As a sincere learner of history and also a responsible contributor of the same, we must be cautious in our understanding as well as the representation of the same. We simply cannot say whatever comes to our mind in a disorderly manner.

There is a multiplicity of voices in the revolt. Indian nationalism has many pasts and the Revolt of 1857 has also many pasts. There are three very important reviews on which I have based today's discussion. One is the review by Basudeb Chattapadhyay, a small review in *Desh*— a periodical. Secondly, Gautam Bhadra published a long review, one full page in *Anandabazar Patrika* and the third is the most scholarly review written by Farhat Hassan and it was published in a journal called *Economic & Political Weekly* and all the reviews are worthy of noting. At the very outset,

it is necessary to mention that these three works were essentially critical of William Dalrymple. Let us first take a closer look at the historiography of the Revolt of 1857. History may also have a history and the history of the writing of history is called historiography. How history is being written and re-written? We try to re-discover the past. That's precisely why history is defined as a continuous dialogue between the past and the present – a never ending dialogue.

Let us turn to the historiography of the Revolt of 1857. The Revolt, in scope and in nature was indeed quite massive in a sense that, British had never encountered anything of this magnitude before. Though the Bengal presidency barring its northern part did not witness its ravages, but the cities of the United Provinces viz. Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad – and many other areas were badly affected. Initially it took off as a serious discontent among the Indian sepoys of the Cantonment areas. So it had its beginning among the British Indian army and the stimulus of this movement probably lies in the grievances of the common people which had reached near to its saturation point. Although it started in the army cantonments, eventually, it did not remain as a cantonment-revolt or purely military in character. As the revolt progressed, it changed its colour. Once the revolt started, popular discontents were coming up hither and thither.

The revolt started at Barrackpore, near Calcutta in March 1857 and Mangal Pandey was executed on 29th March and then there was a serious outbreak of a rebellion in the army cantonment of Meerut. On 24th April, ninety men of the third native cavalry refused to touch the greased cartridges. There was a rumour that the bullet used in the Enfield rifle was greased by the fat of cow and pig and has to be cut with the teeth and opened by the user. So, it will hurt the personal religion practiced by both the Muslims and the Hindus. This is the much talked about story of Enfield rifle. The sepoys – the ninety men who revolted against the British authority, were punished. They refused to touch the greased cartridges and they were court marshalled, they were tied-up, put in shackles and confined to jail. The following day, the 10th of May, 1857 their comrades and friends rose in open rebellion and they raised the slogan '*Delhi Chalo*'. Now the question remains why they aspired to march into Delhi and not into the Fort William – the then headquarters of the British East India Company's Government. They resolved to go to Delhi because it was the official residence of the Mughal Emperor. This is the real tricky issue of the Revolt of 1857. As historians, it is our responsibility to raise pertinent and relevant questions and issues thereby making History lively, more useful and more rational.

Why did they appeal to Bahadur Shah Zafar and proclaimed him as the Emperor of India? Why he became a unifying factor of this revolt which had a mixture of many voices– this is a very relevant question. It was a popular revolt and in a sense, it was a revolt of the cantonment, it was a revolt of the sepoys and it was also a revolt of the dying feudal forces – the traditional chiefs, the rajas and the rulers – Nana Sahib, Tantiya Tope and so on and so forth.

Interestingly, the contemporary official thinking was affected by the idea of this rebellion as being an outcome of the Muslim conspiracy. In the British colonial archives, one can find the words like *jihad*, ‘terrorism’ in regard to this revolt and the latter was looked upon as an international conspiracy. In many of the administrative documents and British newspapers, which were published from London, one can smell a kind of a smack of global conspiracy against the British Empire. The events and implications of the 1857 were actually far above of what being termed as the military revolt. However, it was certainly not a *jihad*, because, *jihad*, the exact term, as we use today, was not there. In this context, it is necessary to mention that, this rebellion certainly received some moral support from a group of Marxists in Great Britain. By the end of the nineteenth century the rebellion attracted and inspired the first generation of Indian nationalists. So, the revolt, after it petered out, became a significant part of the history of Indian freedom struggle and during the nineteenth century, when the spirit of Indian nationalism was sprouting up, the message of the revolt was somewhat appropriated by the aspirants of the Nationalist school. They were trying to portray the events and implications of the revolt as an integral part of Indian nationalism. In fact, they made an attempt to trace the whole typology of Indian nationalism in this revolt. In this context, one must refer to the work of V.D. Savarkar, the first Indian to designate the revolt of 1857 as ‘*The Indian War of Independence*’. The work was published in 1909. Savarkar negated the British assertion of attributing the compelled use of greased cartridges being the chief cause of the revolt and raised a contention that, if this had been the issue, then how it could attract Nana Saheb and others to unite. Savarkar further harped upon the fact that the 1857 movement didn’t fade out even after the issuance of a proclamation by the concerned authority to withdraw the offending greased cartridges. Thus, the latter might have ignited the revolt but cannot be highlighted as the major cause of the revolt.

Karl Marx, interestingly, in his pamphlet – *The First War of Indian Independence* sought to represent it as a kind of revolution to overthrow

the British rule. At the same time, with the development of the working class movement in India, the colour of Marxist ideology has also been rendered to identify the nature of this revolt. Both R.P. Dutt and M.N. Roy by following the main strands of this ideology rejected the rebellion theory as well as the assertion of considering it as the first war of independence. According to them, it was nothing but the last flicker of dying feudal forces. The medieval *rajās* and rulers were desperate to grab the opportunity to regain power by pressuring the Mughal Emperor.

Subsequently, the post colonial era witnessed the coming of more sophisticated nationalist historiography which preferred to emphasize the intricacies of the 1857 movement, rather than generalizing it. This new era of nationalist historians like Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, S.N. Sen, S.B. Chaudhuri and others were indeed not uniformly comfortable with the idea that 1857 was the first Indian war of independence. By and large refuting the views expressed by V.D. Savarkar, they wanted to visualize different layers of this revolt. Thus, at this juncture, it is another pertinent question that why they have certain reservations to consider it as the first war of independence. Here, one may refer to the work of Eric Stokes which explains the elitist nature of the revolt since it had been led by prominent castes and communities, particularly the elites – the *rajās* and the rulers. The latter, according to him, had masterminded the revolt. Therefore, the exact nature of the revolt must be viewed in terms of patron-client relationship. The *rajās* like Nana Saheb, Tantiya Tope being the patrons called to the peasants of the countryside as the clients to join the rebellion. So naturally one can see the three sides of the rebellion thereby forming a kind of triangle. At one point, there is the beginning of rebellion in the cantonment, at the second point, crucial roles played by the elites – the zamindars, the feudal elements in broadening its scope and at the third point, there arose a popular discontent, mostly by the peasants.

Rudrangshu Mukherjee and Tapati Roy had further contributed to this animated debate by emphasizing the roles of *talukdar* thereby indicating the participation of the feudal class. Both the scholars by taking up different study areas brought to light fascinating intricacies of popular militancy, remained ignored so far. Rudrangshu Mukherjee's work *Awadh in Revolt*, published in 1984, was centred around Awadh, in north India and it was indeed a pioneering attempt to uncover the dimensions of popular peasant movement. The title of Tapati Roy's work is *Politics of a Popular Uprising* which was published in 1994. Both, actually, subscribed to the idea of peasant protests, Tapati Roy has studied a different area – the

Bundelakhand.

Now let us look at another significant contribution, made in this regard, by Rajat Kanta Ray. In his book entitled *The Felt Community*, published in 2005, he explored the popular mentality of 1857 rebellion. The rebellion, according to him offers us with fascinating clues to grasp the spirits and its collective cosmology, of the sepoys, the so-called unruly mob and how they provided the crucial link between town and country from where they were recruited. Unfortunately, in areas like Bengal and Punjab they failed to ignite the mass and the rebellion did not go beyond the cantonments. As argued by Rajat Kanta Ray, the 1857 movement was a kind of representation of the release of unexpressed sentiments initially of the sepoys and subsequently by the civilians which were accumulating over many years. Thus, it can be visualized as a patriotic war of the people who conveyed their sense of national identity through the brotherhood of two principal religions of a common land. Rajat Ray connected these to the people selecting and setting up their kings in some of the storm centres of the rebellion. This assumed significance in a context wherein the restored chief had to accept the position of the sepoy councils. Ray categorically refers to the fact that sepoys took all important decisions after sitting in a council meeting. Therefore, he was able to trace a democratic contention the movement. As Ray emphasized, it was more a case of community consciousness than that of a vast consciousness. He further underlined the peculiarity of 1857 war which, as he opined, was a war of races without being a race war. If one conceives the theme race in terms of religion in the said context, it will also be difficult to consider it as a religious war. This is due to the fact that the rebellion was not against the religion of the master, but essentially against his political domination. The rebellion, therefore, must be located in terms of the sentiments of Hindus and Muslims, jointly defending their respective religious constructs and normative realms and not in terms of the rise of the consciousness of a nation asserting its independence from colonial rule. He says that religious sentiments were important to both the Hindus and the Muslims and it was collectively also a war against the British domination. They were challenging the point of power. This was based on patriotism which was rooted in a spontaneous desire for independence from alien rule.

Now, this is the turn to explore Dalrymple. However, we are yet to contextualize the subject on which William Dalrymple essentially wrote. It is quite unfortunate that his pioneering work/s were severely criticized by many following him, especially in the Marxist historiography. One of the

chief reasons behind it might be his unique style of representation of facts. If we read Dalrymple, it sounds more like a fiction. This was in fact, one of the serious reservations, raised by his critics. However, it is of no doubt that, Dalrymple's writing had a much wider reach than that by the traditional historians. My fundamental argument as a historian is to conceive an open mind. One of the major aims of a historian is to reach out to the maximum people and to have a wider audience. Therefore we, as historians, should cultivate a mind and achieve the ability to write in this fashion for grasping more people to read and understand. This will certainly carry the research forward to the new and younger generations for the further development of the subject. The other criticism lies in the disappointment arose regarding Dalrymple's claim that no one before him has utilized the 'Mutiny papers' as an essential source for interpreting the then historical reality. 'Mutiny papers' is a forty trunk material which was transported from Calcutta Archives, now known as West Bengal State Archives, to Delhi in 1922. All these materials belong to the period between the months of May and September, 1857. During these months, Delhi was seized and his work was essentially based on the city of Delhi. Ironically, Dalrymple's claim is not false. No historian before him had actually utilized this source for looking into the 1857 reality. Only the scholars researching on Urdu language or the ones, who had their specialization in Delhi architecture, explored the same.

It was once believed by an array of scholars that there was a dearth of vernacular sources for interpreting the said historical facts. Dalrymple's book has proved beyond doubt that how erroneous this view was. It is in fact, very interesting that, several scholars of India and Pakistan who wrote in Urdu language, had enormously used the Persian sources but they had hardly utilized the Urdu sources. In that sense, Dalrymple's work has certainly unveiled the insularity of both the historiographies in Urdu and English languages. I believe, *The Last Mughal* is also an answer to the post-modernist historiography. His work may also help us to track down the evolution of the concept of *jihad*, as we perceive it today. The word *jihad* was in fact, used during the revolt of 1857 by *wahabis* and *qazis* who came from places like Allahabad, Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh. However, the term *jihad* had a different implication during those days and it must not have acquired the meaning what we know it today. Interestingly, throughout the work of Dalrymple what we find is the repeated examples of communal harmony mostly encouraged and supervised by the political leadership (of the revolt of 1857) in Delhi. All the *qazis* and *jihadis* in the rebellion were

essentially the followers of the Wahabi movement but Dalrymple never says that all *qazis* were Wahabis. Some were *jihadis*, but the meaning of *jihad*, as mentioned above, should be taken in a different sense. Therefore, this should be considered as an incredible case where the Hindus and the Muslims fought against another race collectively. In this way, the rebellion represented the exposition of great unity, and the root cause of this unity was definitely patriotism rather than nationalism. It is the connecting line which can substantially explain the discomfort felt by the historians like Ramesh Chandra Majumdar to acknowledge V.D. Savarkar's assertion of considering it as the first war of independence. It has to be kept in mind that Dalrymple's work was not at all a biography of Bahadur Shah Zafar. It is more a history of the Mughal capital and the narratives of the last days of Mughal Delhi and its final destruction during the catastrophe of 1857. It gives a graphic account of the four months between May and September, 1857. While reading the story of the falling empire, my eyes misted over. It is indeed a tale of the fall of a city – the great city. The British were determined to avenge the killings of the Europeans, both women and children. They sought to demolish Delhi though eventually, it was partially saved. An array of buildings including the Red Fort was partly destroyed. The British converted the Jama masjid into a stable and it has not been returned back to the Muslims until 1862. The former considered Muslims as chiefly responsible for the revolt of 1857. It's a plight that the legitimate ruler of the country was put on trial by an alien power and the incident was so sensibly and graphically narrated by Dalrymple. Mirza Mughal, Khizr Sultan, and Abu Bakr, the sons of Zafar were put to death and their naked bodies were left under the sky for three long days near what later came to be known as *Khuni Darwaza*. All the twenty-nine sons of Bahadur Shah Zafar were either shot or hanged. No one bothered to record this history. In Dalrymple, there is a vivid account of Zafar's trial that was held inside the Red Fort and also brings out the disdainful nature of the trial. In fact, the charges brought against Zafar were far from convincing. Zafar was blamed for hatching an international global conspiracy to dislodge the British Empire. It is indeed a ludicrous allegation. Dalrymple also gave enough floor to the question, whether the East India Company, which was still a subject of the Mughals, had the authority or the legitimacy to put them under trial.

1857 continues to have a remarkable hold over popular imagination. Politically, socially and culturally it remains an iconic event. It is indeed that most debated subject in Indian historiography. Viewed through multiple

prisms, the interpretative device can explain this historical reality in terms of its diverse nature. It can be termed as sepoy mutiny, civil rebellion, rural insurgency, or could be viewed as bearing elitist character, or represented as feudal reaction, national war, and so on. Perhaps what captures popular imagination mostly today, is an integral link between 1857 and the rise of nationalism. It has been regarded as a unique moment in Indian history when the nation finally awoke from slumber. However, there were voices of dissent in the event. The disharmony within the event dispensed the dream of annexing the events of 1857 to the meta-narrative of Indian nationalism. The story of the revolt was of many pasts. In these pasts, ideological strands, signifying diverse notions of identity and nationhood remained embedded. I strongly argue that the significance of Dalrymple's work rests in the importance he has given to religion, particularly in the context of Delhi which stood as the centre of the events. No other historian before Dalrymple has ever harped upon this point. It is difficult to deny in the aftermath of 9/11, 26/11, that *jihad* is a word we are familiar with all too well and words like *jihad*, the author writes, stream out of the dusty pages of sources and manuscripts relating to the rebellion demanding attention.

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Remembering J D Hooker (1817-1911) on Bicentenary of His Birth

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Joseph Dalton Hooker was born on June 30, 1817 at Halesworth, Suffolk, England and died on December 10, 1911, at his home near London.¹ One of the great botanist's of his time Hooker maintained long association with India and contributed significantly towards botanical study and activities of India. It can be said that Hooker's long life spanned the revolution in biology or more specifically botany. His intimate relation with 'Darwin and his work make many of his letters a description of the theory of natural selection in the making.'²

Joseph (henceforth Hooker) was educated primarily for medical profession but the son of William Jackson Hooker, a Professor of Botany at Glasgow University; was destined to become a botanist. Hooker's botanical work began in his father's herbarium. In 1839 he was commissioned botanist to the Antarctic Expedition under the command of Sir James Clark Ross. This gave him an extensive knowledge of the floras of the south temperate and sub-Antarctic regions and publication of his work '*The botany of the Antarctic voyage of H M discovery ships Erebus and Terror in the years 1839-1843 under the command of Captain Sir James Clark Ross*'. He was appointed as botanist to the Geological Survey of Great Britain for his interest in fossil botany. However it was his desire for more extended knowledge of the flora of the 'Old World tropics' that led him to organize a botanical expedition to India. This expedition was resulted in his magnum opus '*The Himalayan Journals*' and in a single volume '*Flora Indica*'. In 1855 Hooker was appointed assistant director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. This position he held for ten years. During these years in 1862 appeared in collaboration with Mr. George Bentham, the first volume of the monumental work '*Genera Platarum*' on genera of plants. Upon the death of his father, the director of the Kew gardens he succeeded to that post, which he occupied for about twenty years. In 1877 he made botanical exploration in United States. After his retirement from the directorship at

Kew in 1885 he continued actively in independent taxonomic research. On the death of Hooker Professor J M Greenman opined that 'his (Hooker's) papers on the geographical distribution of plants are full of originality, the facts are marshalled in a logical and convincing order and the subject-matter is written in an attractive style, so that his published papers are among our most suggestive and reliable sources of information in this department of botanical science'.³ An all round botanist Hooker had two main interests systematic botany and plant geography. Later publications of Hooker proves that he accepted Darwinism. Even Darwin once wrote of Hooker as 'believing more fully in Natural Selection than I think I even do myself'.⁴ Hooker was associated as President with British Association for the Advancement of Science (1868) and the Royal Society (1873-1878). He exercised influence through his relationships with Robert Brown, Charles Darwin, George Bentham and many other preeminent scientists of his age.

Hooker's visit to India needs some elaboration at this juncture. Hooker left Britain in 1847 and spent over three years in Bengal, Sikkim, eastern Nepal and Assam. Thus a great area of the country was explored botanically for the first time and large collections were sent to Kew. Therefore it is said that Hooker was sent to India in the interests of British science, particularly of the Kew Gardens. He spent in India three years under the auspices of the British Woods and Forests Department. With the aid of the British officials he made extensive collections of plants, seeds, fruits and vegetable products and prepared maps. These together with his topographical records bore fruit to the British in their subsequent occupation of the territories thus surveyed. He was also joined by Dr. Thomas Thomson during exploration in Khasia Hills. He returned to England in 1851. His illustrated folio on the 'Rhododendrons of Sikkim-Himalaya', written while he was in India, had already appeared under the editorship of his father. On his return to England his publications communicated his ideas and labours to the public. The Royal Society rewarded his accomplishments in 1854 with the Royal Medal.⁵ Hooker was also helped much in Darjeeling Himalayas by another naturalist and ethnologist Brian H Hodgson.⁶ In 1855 Hooker produced two excellent works: *Flora Indica* and *The Himalayan Journal*. In 1895 Hooker published in the Annals of the Botanical Garden of Calcutta 'A Century of Indian Orchids' with 101 elaborate plates. Hooker's influence on the applied sciences was very conspicuous. His expert advice and encouragement was of much importance for economic enterprises, such as the cultivation of tea, quinine and rubber in India. According to Deepak Kumar, Hooker was the first to explore the passes into Tibet and his

work was found indispensable when Colonel Younghusband entered the Forbidden City in 1903. ‘Botanical investigations were thus of commercial, military as well as scientific importance.’⁷

Present day researchers think that Hooker helped strengthen British botany’s tie to the Empire. His pursuit of science was for ‘neither wealth, power, nor pleasure’. He worked tirelessly as director to insure that Kew fulfilled its obligation to “carry on all the Economic and Scientific work of the Empire under the direction of various departments of state”.⁸ It is also said that Hooker’s gentlemanly code of scientific practice insisted that the public had an obligation to the man of science, whose sacrifices promoted the common good.⁹ Hooker provided the government with information; the government provided Hooker the means to practice the science he loved. Hooker himself wrote that he was influenced by Dr. Falconer, the Superintendent of the Botanic Garden at Calcutta. Falconer informed that ‘we were ignorant even of the geography of the central and eastern parts of these mountains, while all to the north was involved in a mystery...’¹⁰ He considered himself as offender once he and Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling were detained by a faction of the Sikkim court, for the purpose of obtaining from the Indian government a more favourable treaty than that then existing; for ‘assumed to have thrust ourselves into the country, without authority from our own government’

At a time when the English East India Company in India concentrated on the survey works for ‘better governance’ Hooker’s surveys no doubt was used by the Company Raj. However the lasting contribution made by Hooker in the field of taxonomy of various types of floras available in different parts of the world including India along with his other researches rendered his works to be considered as a ‘curatorial’ approach towards India.

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Abul Kashem Fazlul Huq and the Political Consciousness of the Bengal Peasantry

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In spite of a common language, of which every Bengalee is proud, a shared culture and lifestyle and a common history since at least a thousand years, no Bengalee wanted the partition of Bengal from the core of their heart, yet the partition happened due to the gradual deterioration of communal harmony and thereupon undivided Bengal disappeared from the atlas on 15th August, 1947. In fact, the deterioration of communal harmony began with the unexpected and untimely demise of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das (henceforth C.R. Das) on 16th June, 1925, who was no doubt a pioneer of the emergence of joint Hindu-Muslim front in Bengal politics on the basis of the historic Bengal Pact¹ of 1923 - a shining example of an ambitious instrument that could bring the Muslims and Hindus of Bengal together. Chittaranjan Das was the only national leader whom both the Hindus and Muslims relied, that is why with his death the very emotional comments was made by a Muslim daily paper, named '*MUHAMADI*' (in Bengali) as - 'God's extreme punishment to our countrymen'.² Not only that the Daily News of London commented on the death of Chittaranjan Das as "For there is apparently no one to replace Das, who stood in an absolutely unique position."³ In that context, Aparna Devi, daughter of Chittaranjan Das wrote in his (C. R. Das's) biography "If the country would advance along with the path indicated by my father at Faridpur (1st May, 1925) with the leaders giving up the illusion of their leadership and egoism, we would have obtained complete independence long ago and India would not be partitioned for gaining independence."⁴

During the lifetime of Chittaranjan Das, though the Bengal Pact (1923) was rejected by the Congress Session at Kakinada (1923) which was presided over by Mohammad Ali, but it was endorsed by the Bengal

Provincial Congress Committee (henceforth BPCC) of Sirajganj (1924), presided by M.M. Akram Khan ⁵. Thereafter majority of the Congress leaders defied their own central leadership and decided to go along with C. R. Das in which they gave utmost priority to Bengal's larger and long term interests. But, after C. R. Das's untimely and unexpected demise the Krishnagar Session of the BPCC, held in 1926 under the presidentship of Birendra Nath Sasmal,⁶ rejected the Bengal Pact and there upon most of the Muslim leaders bonhomie with the Congress party ended and in the election of the Calcutta Corporation of 1927, the Muslims fought separately which was a clear signal of the return of separatism and the end of the nascent Bengalee nationalism.⁷

In that situation, the Arya Samajists during their procession played music near mosques that was objected by the Muslims for their disturbances at the time of prayers, and during the time of Bakr-Id, some of the people of the Muslim community would slaughter cows in open places that would hurt the religious sentiments of the orthodox Hindus. This made the situation worse and aggravated the process of communal polarization in Bengal. It was rebel poet Kaji Nazrul Islam who at that time of budding communalism wrote his most inspiring song named 'Kandari Hushiar' (1926),⁸ in which Hindus and Muslims were asked to unite. But by and large his dictum as well as appeal was unheeded. The widely circulated and much talked composite culture of Bengal and societal tradition gave way to the political stance of 'Islam in Danger', which was primarily the slogan of non-Bengalee Muslims and later on accepted by the large section of Bengalee Muslims, to consolidate the Muslim community. In that context, the absence of C. R. Das created a void in Bengal politics which was not filled up by anybody. Incidentally, after C.R. Das there was only one politician i.e. Subhas Chandra Bose who had the enormous abilities to keep the Hindus and Muslims together, but unfortunately, he remained far away from the ongoing political scenario of the country particularly Bengal due to his long period of detention at home or at Mandalay.⁸

The promise for a united movement against the British rule was seen during the period from 1914 to 1925. But the move for joint action was belied from 1926 to 1935 and it deteriorated more thereafter, especially on the eve of the independence as well as the partition of the country along with Bengal. Actually, after C. R. Das there was none in Bengal politics who could retain the general loyalty of both the communities. A Special Correspondent, under the caption of 'MASTER ORATOR: "LLOYD GEORGE" OF INDIAN POLITICS' wrote "Das revealed all

through his life an intensely anti- British trait, and although suspected by the Mohammedans, who always referred to Das as being “far too good a ‘Hindoo’ for them,” he was a remarkable personality; a man of great culture and deep learning.”¹⁰ Naturally, after the death of C.R. Das and rejection of the Bengal Pact (1923) in the Krishnagar Session of BPC, held in the year of 1926 under the Presidentship of Birendra Nath Sasmal, the Muslim separatists started asserting themselves at the aim of claiming to political power of the Bengal province. They adopted various policies and programmes to counteract Hindu *bhadraloks*’ control over different institutions in the soil of demographic preponderance of the Muslims community in Bengal. In that juncture, the process of communal polarization was accentuated by the attitude of the Hindus particularly the leaders of the Congress party along with the Swarajyists regarding the opposition to the passing of the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill in 1928 in the Bengal Legislative Council. It may be mentioned that during the time of the passing of the proposed Bill, the Hindu members of the Legislative Council those who mainly belonged to the Congress party showed their support in favour of the interest of the Zaminders and neglected the interests of the Prajas, because most of the leaders of the Congress party were Zaminder in class. In that context, Abul Mansur Ahmed remarked, “Neither in terms of the Muslim interest, nor on the Proja interest, was it possible for any longer to rely on the Congress.”¹¹ Centering the passing of the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill in 1928 in the Bengal Legislative Council, many Congress minded leaders among the Muslim communities were disillusioned about Congress party and subsequently they automatically joined anti Congress parties.¹²

The Bengalee Muslims who were initially loyal to the Congress Party started getting disillusioned at due to opposing the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1928. This processes of disillusionment continued with the dominance of Hindu *bhadralok* and wealthy non-Bengalee Muslims. At the same time a powerful proja movement spawned among the Bengalee Muslims for attaining freedom from economic bondage. In the question of forming organization among the Muslims of Bengal- Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy (henceforth H.S. Suhrawardy) and Khaja Nazimuddin i.e. non Bengalee Muslims completely favoured a pure Muslim organization, but Abul Kashem Fazlul Huq popularly known as A. K. Fazlul Huq (henceforth Huq), Tamijuddin Khan and some other Bengalee Muslims favoured a concrete non-communal organization.¹³

From his very boyhood days, Huq was acquainted regarding the

miseries of the Prajas and the atrocities of the Zamindars. He had deeply felt that the poor peasants would not be relieved until and unless the Zamindari system would abolish. So, within two years of his entering into politics, Huq engaged himself with the main problem of the villagers' i.e. prajas of rural Bengal. He started organizing the praja movement in the different districts of Bengal and in that case he initiated his activities from his own district of Barishal. In the year of 1915, Huq tried his best to organize the Muslims and Namasudra Prajas (these two communities were chiefly the cultivating class and backbone of the rural economy of undivided Bengal) in Barishal.¹⁴ In that way praja movement had spread into the various districts of East Bengal. In the midst of the expansion of the praja movement, in the year of 1926 the rivalry started between the Zamindar and the peasants-prajas at the Manikganj Sub-Division. Almost all the cultivable land of the peasants was ceased by the Zamindar and money-lenders. In order to protect the interests of the peasants-prajas a large Praja Conference was convened at Ghior Hat under this Sub-Division.¹⁵ The prajas from Dhaka Sadar, Pabna, Tangail and some other places attended that Conference to hear the statement of Huq. In that Conference, Huq categorically instructed the peasants of the Manikganj Sub-Division not to cultivate the lands of the Zamindars and money-lenders. He also gave direction that as the Zaminders and money-lenders took lands from the tenants, so 'now let them cultivate their own land by their own hands'. As a result of the influence of the superb oratory and dynamic leadership of Huq, the peasants as well as prajas took firm decision not to work in the lands of the Zamindar-money-lenders under any circumstances. That Praja movement of Manikganj Sub-Division was continued almost a year and thereby the Zamindar-money-lender classes were forced to come into a compromise with the peasants after the hand over of the cultivable land to the hands of the tenants.¹⁶ After the successful praja movement in Manikganj Sud-Division, then according to the instruction of Huq another important Praja Conference was held at in Barguna District, which was presided over by Hashem Ali Khan. Incidentally, that place i.e. Gourichanna was under the zamindari area of the Nawab of Dhaka. In that Conference, it was decided that the struggle of the peasants-prajas would be continued against the atrocities of the Zamindars of Dhaka.¹⁷

As Fazlul Huq wanted to protect the interests of the prajas from the exploitation of the Zamindars and money-lenders and for that reason he (Huq) opened the door of the praja movement to all irrespective of caste and creed.¹⁸ Being influenced by the sentiment and fire brand oratory of

Huq, the supporters of the non communal organization among the Muslims formed the Council Praja Party (later known as Bengal Praja Party) to work for 'safeguarding the interests of tenants and labouring classes of the province' against the economic oppression. Huq was elected leader of the newly formed Council Proja Party. Soon the Council Proja Party was expanded and it was renamed as the Nikhil Banga Praja Samity towards the end of 1929. Thereafter with the broadening of the support base of the Nikhil Banga Praja Samity, subsequently it turned into the historic Krishak Praja Party (henceforth KPP) in 1936. In the question of the interest of the prajas, Huq remarked "Hindus are not the enemy of the Muslims. Due to lack of proper education fanaticism has grown up into the minds of both communities and as a result of that they sometimes engaged themselves in communal violence". In case of the exploitation of the Hindu Zamindars, money lenders and lawyers, Huq categorically told that "practice was not confined only within a particular community, at the same way the Muslim Zamindars, money lenders and lawyers also exploited the poor peasants as well as prajas irrespective of caste and communities"¹⁹ It is mention worthy that parallel to the praja movement, there was all along another movement among Muslims in Bengal, primarily of non- Bengalee Muslims who were harping on the slogan of 'Islam in Danger' and who aimed consolidating only the Muslims, but at the beginning that slogan was not greeted by the Bengal Muslims.²⁰

After establishing the KPP, Huq categorically stated that his fight was with landlords, capitalists and holders of vested interests. Huq further said, "I am fighting for a satisfactory solution of the bread problem or in our words, of the '*Dal-Bhat*' problem of Bengal and also for the thorough overhauling of the Tenancy Laws in Bengal so as to give some relief to agriculturists. This cannot be effected by the Muslim League Parliamentary Board because in that Board out of 28 members, as many as 11 are non-Bengalees who hail from Ispahan, Teharan, Badakshan and Samarkand and other places of outside Bengal and 89 per cent are landlords and capitalists. These landlords and capitalists cannot certainly join us in this fight, because they are the very people with whom we will have to carry on a life and death struggle."²¹

It is important to note that with the creation of strong support base among the peasants as well as prajas of the Bengal, the KPP became cynosure of unscrupulous elements of Bengal politics. As per the version of Huq, "Attempts were made to misrepresent our real aims and aspirations and to delude the public about our programme and ultimate goal. Among

the Mussalman masses, interested parties carried on a propaganda against us, and accused us of dividing the Mussalmans among themselves, and thus impairing Muslim solidarity. Among the Hindu masses, propaganda was carried on against us that we were in fact a communal party, masquerading under the cloak of the economic interest of the masses. These two criticisms quite obviously cancel one another, and hardly demand any reply from me. But I should like to take this opportunity of stating once again in unambiguous terms what the aims are of our party and what we ultimately seek to achieve. All talks of Muslim unity and solidarity for merely political ends are worse than useless when it is remembered that the Mussalman cultivating classes constitute more than 90 per cent of the total Muslim population of Bengal, and it is therefore their interest which must be fundamental and any scheme we may lay down for ourselves, or for the sake of any ideal which we may seek to achieve. On the fundamental question of the interest of the Prajas and Krishaks, the tillers of the soil who sweat so that others might enjoy the fruits of their labour, there is no difference whatever between the Hindus and the Mussalmans, for their interests are welded into one another, together they stand and we are confident, they shall triumph.”²²

In the meantime, Ramsay Mac Donald, the then Prime Minister of England had declared his much-talked ‘Communal Award’ on 10th August 1932. Keeping in mind the ‘Communal Award’ under the Government of India Act of 1935, out of 250 seats of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, Muslims of Bengal were provided 119 seats i.e. 47.6 % of the total seats, against their 54.8 % of total population. The Hindus were given altogether 80 seats i.e. 32% of the total seats while they constituted 44% of the total population in Bengal. On the other hand as many as 25 seats i.e.10% of the total seats were fixed for the Europeans living in Bengal who were a little more than fourteen thousand in number and constituting merely 0.25% of the total population. The Anglo-Indians were also given more seats compared to their position in the population ratio of Bengal. The main objective of the British Rulers behind the arrangement of the disproportionate representations in the Bengal Legislative Assembly was to regulate the politics of Bengal by broadening the gap between the Hindus and the Muslims.²³ This ratio of the division of seats in between Hindus and Muslims was opposed by the newly formed Hindu Mahasabha by all means. They accused the Congress party for betraying the interests of the Hindus of Bengal.²⁴

It is noteworthy that the Muslim League was then almost insignificant in the politics of Bengal, but the most influential party among the Muslims communities particularly the East Bengalee Muslims was the KPP of Huq. It is a fact that the KPP was nominally a secular political party but it had strong Muslim orientation and dedicated mainly for protecting the interests of farmers and ryots from any kind of exploitation and ameliorating their conditions.²⁵

Meanwhile, to meet the challenge of the KPP, some of the Muslim leaders, notably Nawab Khwaja Habibullah, H. S. Suharawardy and M. A. H. Ispahani founded the United Muslim Party (henceforth UMP) on 25th May, 1936.²⁶ In that context, criticizing the UMP, Huq described it as a 'Ministerial party, a Zaminder party, formed to mislead the Bengal Muslim community'. Nawab Khwaja Nazimuddin, leader of the UMP accusing the KPP retorted that the Praja Party was not a purely Muslim organization. By this time, the All India Muslim League (henceforth AIML) led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah (henceforth M. A. Jinnah) made their sincere attempts to win over the support of the Bengal Muslims by ignoring the Bengal Provincial Muslim League (henceforth BPML) and invited directly some non-Bengalee Muslim leaders like A. R. Siddiqui, M. A. H. Ispahani and K. Nooruddin. Thereafter Jinnah came to Calcutta to discuss with KPP leaders for further coordination. In course of discussion with M A Jinnah, the KPP leaders categorically demanded, i) abolition of Zamindari system without compensation, ii) the right to maintain KPP's separate identity and iii) that there will be no nomination from Jinnah. Though BPML expressed its full accord with the demands of the KPP leaders but the UMP led by non- Bengalee Muslims vehemently opposed the abolition of Zamindari system. Naturally it was impossible to reach any fruitful solution regarding the unity between the AIML and KPP. During this time the leaders of the KPP and the AIML would represent two contrasting ideologies for obtaining the support of the Bengalee Muslim. The KPP particularly fought for the interest of the tenants and peasant class while the AIML represented the interests of the Zaminders and business communities. So, Huq emphatically declared, "From this day onwards begins a grim fight between Zaminders and capitalists on the one hand, and the poor people on the other. It is not at all a civil war in the Muslim Community but it is a fight in which the people of Bengal are divided on a purely economic issue."²⁷

It is noteworthy that from the days of the formation of the Muslim League in 1906 to the publication of the activities of the League

Parliamentary Board in 1936, Muslim League never took any resolution regarding the abolition of the Permanent Settlement.²⁸ Though there was a long history of peasants' movement in Bengal and from 1920 to 1934, the peasants also participated in the movements of some regions under the banner of the Congress Party, but the Congress leadership also did not take any initiative to form any separate organization for the peasants.²⁹ But peasant conference was convened in Kolkata in the month of August in 1936, by the then illegal Communist Party. After that in March, 1937, the first 'Bengal Provincial Peasants Conference' was held at Patrasayar in Bankura District.³⁰ Though, at that time the influence of Krishak Sabha under the Communists was very limited, so in the election of 1937 the Krishak Sabha extended its support to KPP of Huq and Congress Party.³¹ At that time the KPP of Huq was the most influential party in the rural Bengal. That time Huq organized the Krishak-Prajas with the aim of the abolition of the Permanent Settlement as well as to protect them from the atrocities of the Zamindars-money-lenders. Actually, no political leader in contemporary Bengal like Huq demanded the abolition of the Permanent Settlement in a loud voice.³² As a result of Huq's acceptance among the Krishak-Prajas, in the election of 1937, Huq was able to defeat Muslim League. The personal prestige and influence of Huq increased greatly when he emerged victorious by defeating Sir Khwaja Nazimuddin in that election in his Zamindary at Patuakhali. It is important to note that during that time of election Khwaza Nazimuddin was a member of the Governor's Executive Council and was an important member of the Muslim League. Huq's KPP returned with considerable number of Muslim members to the Bengal Provincial Legislative Assembly and as a result of that he occupied a dominant position in the legislature.³³ The Congress Party also became successful in that election. Actually in that election the reactionary forces were defeated and progressive forces came out as victorious.³⁴

It is a fact that as a result of the formation of the two successive Provincial Ministry of Bengal headed by Huq i.e. one in an alliance with the Muslim League (1st April, 1937 to 10th December, 1941) and another in an alliance with the Hindu Mahasabha (11th December, 1941 to 28th March, 1943), Huq arguably emerged as 'one of the most enigmatic figures of colonial Bengal'.³⁵ In spite of that as a forerunner of the Hindu-Muslim unity of India, A. K. Fazlul Huq devoted himself to establish the Krishak-Prajas as a strong political force in order to relieve them from the inhuman exploitation of the Zamindars and money-lenders. His political slogan was '*Langal Jar, Jami Tar; Gham Jar-Dam Tar*'³⁶ (*Land to the tiller; product*

to the toiler). Fazlul Huq felt the minimum necessity of the tenants by his personal experience and as a result of that he introduced the politics of 'Dal-Bhat'. The Krishak-Prajas who have been exploited for long time automatically responded to the call of Huq and that neglected class of people gradually emerged as a powerful socio-political force. In that context the greatest achievement of Huq was that as the first political personality he was able to inculcate the political consciousness among the Krishak-Prajas in rural Bengal.

Notes and References:

1. In order to forge unity among the Hindus and the Muslims, C.R. Das drafted the historic Bengal Pact of 1923. The main provisions of the Pact were as follows: " i) The number of members of the two communities will be decided by their respective strength in Bengal's population, and the two communities will vote separately to elect their members. ii) The Muslims will have 60% and the Hindus 40% of the seats in local self-government institutions. iii) Fifty-five percent of the government appointees will be Muslims, but 80% of the vacancies will be filled up by them until the overall percentage of 55 was reached. iv) Music before mosques, usually a standard excuse for Hindu-Muslim riots, was to be banned. v) Killing of cows for religious purposes on the Bakr-Id day, a standard pretext for starting communal violence, was to be permitted and nobody will be allowed to object to it. vi) A committee with equal members of Muslims and Hindus will be appointed in every subdivision to supervise the implementation of the above terms." See, Nitish Sengupta, *Land of Two Rivers - A History of Bengal from the Mahabharata to Mujib*, New Delhi : Penguin Books, 2011, pp. 338-339.
2. Saroj Chakrabarty who acted long days with the Chief Ministers of West Bengal as their personal assistant, used to attend Legislative Council of Bengal from the year of 1933 as a part-time reporter of two daily papers, namely 'The Mussalman' and 'Muhammadi' owned by Maulana Akram Khan and would get an allowance of Rs. 25/- per month. See, Saroj Chakrabarty, *With West Bengal Chief Ministers : Memoirs 1962 to 1977*, New Delhi : Orient Longman, 1978, p. 324.
3. *Daily News*, London, 17. 6. 1925
4. Aparna Devi, *Manush Chittaranjan* (in Bengali), Kolkata : Paschim Banga Bangla Academy, 2010, p. 223
5. See the name list of the Presidents of Bengal Provincial Conference from 1888-1940, ascribed on the wall of Bidhan Bhavan, State Head Quarter of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, Philipse More, Entally, Kolkata
6. See the name list of the Presidents of Bengal Provincial Conference from 1888-1940, ascribed on the wall of Bidhan Bhavan, State Head Quarter of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, Philipse More, Entally, Kolkata
7. Nitish Sengupta, *op.cit*, pp. 339, 347.
8. In the Krishnanagar Session of Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, the common platform of anti-colonial struggle, held in 1926, where the rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam (who later on earned the epithet of the national poet of Bangladesh), sang one of the most famous songs he ever composed 'Kandari Hushiar' ('Helmsman Beware'). He gave the warning to the leaders of the country with the words: "In this dark night, O sentries of Motherland, be alert", 'this helpless nation is drowning-it does not know how to swim', helmsman, tell those who are drowning that they are no Hindus or Muslims, for they are drowning as human beings. See 'Kandari Hushiar', *Sanchita*, Kolkata : D. N. Library, P. 60

9. Nitish Sengupta, *op.cit.*, pp.347-348.
10. Aparna Devi, *op. cit.* p. 272.
11. Sachchidananda Banerjee, *Fazlul Huq Jibon O Rajniti* (in Bengali), Calcutta Progressive Publishers, 2001, p.12.
12. Partha Chatterjee, *Bengal 1920 -1947, The Land Question*, vol. 1, Calcutta, 1984, p.94.
13. Nitish Sengupta, *op.cit.*, p.367.
14. B.D. Habibullah, *Sher-I-Bangla* (in Bengali), 3rd edition, Barishal, 1374 (B.S.), pp. 30-31.
15. Abdul Khalek Khondakar, *Ek Shatabdi* (in Bengali), 3rd edition, Dacca, 1373 (B.S.), p. 117.
16. Abdul Khalek Khondakar, *op.cit.*, pp. 118-119.
17. Shirajuddin, Ahamed, *Sher-I-Bangala A.K.Fazlul Huq*, Dhaka, Islamic Foundation, 2007, p.66.
18. Amalendu Dey, *Pakistan Prostab o Fazlil Huq* (in Bengali), Kolkata, Parul, 2015, p.28.
19. Presidential Address delivered by A.K. Fazlul Huq on 30th December 1918, at the All India Muslim League, 1918 Session, Delhi. See in the Home Department Political, March, 1919, A., NOS. 251-259, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
20. Kalipada Biswas, *Jukta Banglar Sesh Adhyay* (in Bengali), Kolkata, Naya Uddyay, 2012, p.18.
21. A. K. Fazlul Huq's reply to critics, see Amrita Bazar Patrika, 24th September, 1936.
22. Statement issued by A.K. Fazlul Huq, see Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1st September, 1936.
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25. Nitish Sengupta *op.cit.*, p.370.
26. Amalendu Dey, *op.cit.*, p. 29.
27. Fortnightly Report on the political situation in Bengal, 1st half of September 1936, Government of Bengal (Home Political).
28. Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings. Thirteenth Session, 1942, vol. LXII, No. 2, pp. 34, 36.
29. *Amalendu Dey,op.cit.*, p.39.
30. *Krishak Andolaner Itihasa O Samasya* (in Bengali), Calcutta : West Bengal Unit, C.P.I, August, 1959, pp.13-23.
31. Abdullah Muhammad Rasul, *Krishak Sabhar Itihasa* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1969, pp. 59-61.
32. Amalendu Dey, *op.cit.*, p.39.
33. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*, p. 70.
34. Humayun Kabir, *Muslim Politics 1906-1947 and Other Essays*, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 25-26.
35. Semanti Ghosh, *Different Nationalisms-Bengal 1905-1947*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2017, p.394.
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M. K. Gandhi and *Ahimsa* - Its Relevance

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“There is no God higher than truth” – Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi is dead but his thought is still alive. We know very well that the *ahimsa* is such a thought or belief that has a glorious past. Since the time of c. sixth century BCE when politically India was going to unite under the leadership of the several dynasties through the centuries, *ahimsa* no doubt played a great role for the consolidation of the empire. Before going to the core of the theme of my paper, it will be better to understand certain essentials I am trying, in brief to look at first as to (i) what *ahimsa* means (ii) how far this vow is associated with M. K. Gandhi, (iii) whether or not this ideology tied with Gandhi within the religious thought, if so, then how far it was and what is the pattern, and (iv) finally if *ahimsa* is relevant in contemporary socio-politico-religious concerns in India, or all concerns of the globe, for that matter.

On the context of the downfall of Napoleon, famous historian Foch has remarked that “*a man cannot be god, war is not the highest aim, peace is above war.*” From this point of view, it is true and everybody believes from their core of the heart that the most powerful weapon is *ahimsa* or non-violence only which can bring peace for mankind. Historically it is proved that the 'sixth century BCE was one of the cardinal epochs in the history of India'. It was an age of extraordinary mental and spiritual unrest in several regions widely apart. Zoroaster in Persia and Confucius in China were promulgating their teachings about this time. In India, too, ardent spirits were unusually active in quest for truth, and the centre of this ferment was Magadha, where the Brahmanic influence was not yet so deep or potent. In ancient period of India, when imperialism is realised by the emergence of the divergent races and clans fought against each other for their supremacy, victory came particularly to regions where *ahimsa*

prevailed. Here we must remember context of Magadhan imperialism. In the sixth century BCE, Magadha was the land of harmony where in developed the idea of synthesis culture and that was possible due to the origin and development next of a new type of thought and belief, apart from the other reasons and it spread rapidly against the then privileged classes who controlled the politics as well as social and religious law and order. This burgeoning idea was *ahimsa* or non-violence. Mahavira and Goutama Buddha believed that the vow of *ahimsa* alone, can do good for living beings.

There is a strong and definite relation between the *Jaina* teaching of the vow of *ahimsa* or non-violence with the thought of M. K. Gandhi, though Gandhi was not *Jaina* by birth. According to pluralistic realism² of the *Jaina* theory, the highest kind of knowledge which combines all the characters manifested in experience is possessed by the *Kevalin* or the liberated. It is a full or perfect knowledge which is the soul's characteristic in its pure and undefiled condition. This perfect knowledge which is the essence of the soul, manifests itself in different degrees in different kinds of beings because the influence of the external force of matter whose association or union has the effect of suppressing the clear knowledge of the soul. This unconscious matter, when it joins the soul substance, cripples its powers according to the type of bondage or fusion of soul and matter. Everything lies latent in the self and only wants removal of the causes which prevent the manifestation of knowledge. When the impediments are removed, the soul becomes all comprehensive knowledge, unlimited time and space. There are no emotions to disturb or interests to obscure the full splendour of that soul whose essence is consciousness. The object of knowledge is the whole of reality, and the subject has become pure intelligence, wherein no limits or distinctions are possible. The unreal distinctions of the empirical world are no longer present in it. *Jaina* philosophy of thought does not see that the distinction of self and not-self is the outcome of the essential character of mine. Vardhamana or Mahavira was connected with the royal family of Vaishali and his father was the head of a Kshatriya tribe. Mahavira left his family at the age of thirty and become a monk. After twelve years, Mahavira achieved enlightenment under a 'sal' tree and he had conquered human passion, and he was called '*Jina*' - a conqueror – conqueror not of kingdoms but a conqueror of human hearts. The main teaching of Jainism is a fivefold doctrine viz. i) do not commit violence (*Ahimsa* or non-violence) ii) do not tell a lie (*Satya* or Truth), iii) do not steal (*Aparigraha* or non-possession of property), iv) do not hoard. (*Astyea* or not to receive anything

which is not freely given) and v) observe continence (*Brahmacharya* or celibacy).³ On the basis of the Jaina philosophy for attaining *Nirvana* or salvation it is true that M. K. Gandhiji was very much associated with this and he vehemently applied the thought against an alien rule. The greatest commandment of Jainism is *Ahimsa* or non-violence and this vow was also adopted by Gandhi. According to Jainism all living beings are equal and killing or harming any living creature is a sin. There are so many sins that pollute the lives, those are '*himsa*' or violence, telling a lie, stealing, musturbation, use of intoxicants, anger, covetousness, pride, rage, jealousy, quarrel, levying false charges, speaking ill of others etc. Positive outlook and attitude to life, understanding the knowledge of the soul change man's outlook and attitudes and help one act correctly while facing different situations in life.⁴ No doubt these values were the base of Gandhiji's political thought that we see at the time of the freedom struggle of India against the British rule. By opposing animal sacrifices, Jainism helped the growth of agriculture and by promoting an environment of peace and non-violence Jainism contributed to the progress of trade and commerce. Though there is another view in this regards which opines that India's defence spirit was weakened and several times the land became a prey to foreign powers but the indigenous and foreign rulers of India in the course of history surrendered to *Ahimsa* or non-violence and M. K. Gandhi is the last prophet for making India free from the foreign yoke. He advocated the freedom of the whole world-freedom from violence, freedom from cupidity and aggressiveness, freedom from passions and ambitions that have destroyed nations.⁵ Extension of trade and commerce, enrichment of art and architecture, providing a sort of moral code which every household can follow, doing away with complicated and costly rituals and freedom of the common people from the supremacy of the social hierarchy, western coast of India was associated with the thought of non-violence through the centuries and the colonial India was again faced against the *ahimsa* value under the leadership of M. K. Gandhi.

The objectives of the Congress were the attainment of '*Swaraj*' by all legitimate means within the Empire if possible and without it, if necessary. On 31st December 1929, came the unequivocal declaration that *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence which was the goal of the Congress. In this juncture, by the personality, apart from other qualities, M. K. Gandhi introduced new ideas into Indian politics. He deprecated the policy of '*himsa*' or violence and underground plots but preached open and active resistance to injustice. He wanted to obtain *swaraj* through *ahimsa* or non-

violence and non-cooperation. He advocated the adoption of the policy of *Satyagraha* or persistence of truth that was non-violent non-cooperative towards a government which did not look to the interests of the governed and was high handed and oppressive. In the course of history, the Congress organisation was considerably strengthened and its constitution was made more democratic and the goal of the Congress was the all-round improvement of Indian society. In this regard, M. K. Gandhi used to explain his programme for strengthening India by pointing to the five fingers of his hand, exhorting the people to practice five virtues, those were very much integrated to the five-main teaching of the Jainism – spinning, removal of untouchability, non-consumption of alcohol or opium, amity of all the races and community and equality for women. These five virtues were to be achieved through *ahimsa* or non-violent methods.

The the first World War, the passing of the Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the Khilafat gave a new turn to M. K. Gandhi in Indian politics and non-cooperation was adopted for the self-government within the empire if possible and outside if necessary. ⁶ By the influence of M. K. Gandhi, the All India Congress Committee, the central decision making assembly of the Indian National Congress, constituted and adopted modern lines within the ancient heritage and really marked the beginning of Gandhian era in Indian politics for free India. He did not believe violence and he utter mostly in favour of *Ahimsa* and that was why, after 1921, about 30,000 persons courted arrest. Much against the wishes and instructions of Gandhi, the movement led to a serious mob violence at Chauri Chaura and he suspended the movement and declared that without adequate discipline and restraint on the part of the people the movement had proved to be a ‘Himalayan Blunder’. C. R. Das, Motilal Neheru and others advocated the programme of ‘Council Entry’ and in the election of 1923, the Swarajists secured an absolute majority in Bengal and the central provinces.

But again M. K. Gandhi, who re-entered in the active politics in 1928 to prove the power of the *ahimsa* or non-violence against the violence of the foreign rule called by the civil disobedience movement by breaking the obnoxious Salt laws on March 12, 1930 led himself and only by 78 followers started from Sabarmati Ashram on the famous Salt March to Dandi Beach to manufacture illegal salt. This march described and propagated in the print media as “*the kindergarten stage of revolution*” and ridiculed the notion that “*the King Emperor can be unseated but boiling sea water in a kettle*”. But the British rulers and persons who misunderstood Gandhi, however, miscalculated the moral effects and the

power of *ahimsa* or non-violence of the Civil Disobedience Movement as the number of the followers increased and reached 60,000 or even more.⁷ The political contributions of the Sabarmati Ashram are highly significant. Many ashramites were actively involved in campaigns of Champaran and Bardoli Satyagraha. Indeed, the Ashramites were introduced “homeopathic doses of *Ahimsa* or non-violence” throughout India. Many scholars have argued and questioned the Ashramic life but M. K. Gandhi had higher aims in view. In 1917 he pronounced clearly the aims and objectives of the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati. Truth is not fulfilled by mere abstinence from telling or practising an untruth in ordinary relations with fellowmen. Truth is God, the one and only reality. All other observances take their rise from the quest for and worship of Truth. Worshipers of Truth must not resort to Untruth, even for what they may believe to be the good of the country, and may be required like Prahlad civility to disobey the orders of parents and elders in virtue of their loyalty of Truth. Within 1934, that’s why greatly changed the Congress movement by giving it greater unity, self-confidence, pride and determination above all Congress became a movement of the masses and all these are possible by Gandhian thoughts of non-violence or *ahimsa*.

As a saint politician, Gandhi employed moral means for the attainment of political ends. He used soul force against brute force. He adopted legal and extra-legal methods but never immoral or dishonest means to achieve his objectives. He fearlessly launched the policy of genuine non-cooperation with the imperial British power. His Quit India resolution and love for freedom firmly planted in the Indian minds and believed that the British rule in India was wrong and unjust. Very soon Winston Churchill and George VI felt that time was coming shortly to quit India. Thus, Gandhian methods convinced the rulers that transfer of power into Indians hands was inevitable and it could no longer be delayed.

As a unique national figure Gandhiji combined in himself the role of a 'prophet', a religious reformer, a social reformer and a nationalist fighting the struggle for Indian independence. For the humanity, in general, he had the message of non-violence and *ahimsa*, he wanted to expiate Hindu religion of its dogmas and superstitions, he worked for a new social order of social equality barefoot of the evils of casteism and untouchability and poverty.

Gandhi cannot die. Gandhism has not failed, it cannot fail, it is the most powerful force, a life giving and soul nourishing power and energy, it is a spirit of restlessness which leaves nothing unsearched, nothing untried

to find its destined aims and goal, it's an evolution in one, it is politics, economics, sociology, ethics in one - it is materialism and spiritualism in one and the same thing at the same time⁸. Gandhism is relevant for emancipation of the country from the bondages of the political, social, and economic restraints. Gandhian thoughts have influenced and still is influencing in every sphere of the people of India. Present and future generation in India and abroad should be followed from their core of the heart and soul by Gandhi much more. In the long period of the history of Indian freedom struggle, the next generations will learn with pride that, here in India, was invented a true method of regaining the lost liberty of country- a surer, a nobler and purer than any that was invented in anywhere in the globe. If there were any arms and ammunitions of warfare these were on the otherside that was out to crush the new method that Gandhism came to preach. When prayer and petition politics could not melt the heart of the British rulers, political leaders of the pre- Gandhian period did not know, or could not conceive of any other method to regain from the authorities even some vestige of substantial power for the country. When the political atmosphere of the country was gloomy and morbid and the people of the country were forced into a state of drowsiness and cowardice, when life became almost dead and soulless, in this juncture Gandhiji has brought upon India a consciousness of its national greatness and awoke the minds of individual Indians a feeling of their own power, as such they began to feel their own importance and the greatness of their mission for which no sacrifice is beneath their dignity. The principle of "do good to others" and "do not submit to evil, resist it with all your might." Both these ideals which make up a perfect and complete code of moral law, have found their full realisation in non-cooperation method this is the fundamental principle of Gandhism and whoever will accept this method as ideals of his life, will command esteem and respect of the world and he is bound to achieve success in everything which he attempts. If we deeply think and observed in regards to non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement we will realise that these movement did not total failure, it has far reaching results on the life of the people of India. This tremendous uprising of the benumbed people of India which Gandhism has brought forth in India is a thing unforeseen and unprecedented in the history of India. Gandhism alone can boast, that spiritualising influence which has been able to infuse in the minds of the people. Ahimsa has differentiated from any other political movement. Gandhism is a peaceful revolution, non-violence, bloodless and more effective in contemporary. Repression cannot kill Gandhism.

If there has been any decline in moral corruption in the public life or individuals, it is very much relevant to remember M. K. Gandhi because the Gandhian values appear to be an effective alternative to the present crisis in the globe. In the modern era, Gandhi provided not only the political leadership to achieve freedom but also moral leadership which is of greater need today. Inhuman form of destruction and tit for tat that looks hard to get out of this vicious circle. According to Martin Luther King Jr. “*darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that*”. Gandhiji was well aware of the bad effects of the act of ‘*himsa*’ or violence. South African experiences evolved Gandhi carefully and presented to the globe the idea of *ahimsa* or non-violence, the most pragmatic and potent method and technique of conflict resolution for a civilised society as an alternative to war and violence. His *ahimsa* method is not static, it adapts to changing situations. From continent to continent, he faced so many hindrances but finally violence surrendered to his non-violence vow. ‘*Ahimsa*’ of Gandhi is the power of love and above it there is nothing. It alone penetrates into the hearts of even the cruellest of people.

According to Gandhi “*there is no god higher than truth*”.⁹ Differences are a reality and that is the beauty – difference is beauty. As India is a diversified county, Gandhi’s spiritual journey from “God is Truth” to “Truth is God” is the result of the acceptance and recognition of multi-cultural society. There shall be nothing and ‘low’ class of people in India, all the communities shall live in perfect harmony, there shall be no space in India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs, women will enjoy the rights as men. On 13/03/1927, Gandhi wrote that “*God is truth. The way to truth lies through Ahimsa (non-violence)*”. He said that India is a country of religious harmony. Each and every religious person should be Indians first and Indians last. Religion is the personal matter of each individual. It must not be mixed up with politics and national affairs.

According to Gandhi “*Poverty is the worst form of violence*”¹⁰. Economic development includes remission of poverty and hunger, adequacy of the supply of basic needs, reduction of inequality in the distribution of income and wealth, reduction of regional disparities in the rates and patterns of growth and development and finally preservation of acceptable environmental quality and an enhancement of the quality of life. In regards to economy, Gandhi emphasised the need of production by masses instead of mass production. Mass production is only concerned

with the product, whereas production by masses is concerned with the product as well as the producers, and the process involved in it. He was not against the technology. He insisted on those types of technology that were appropriate to our economic and social atmosphere. It should not control the humanity and should not replace our huge labour force. Rural economy and agro-based industries should be developed and strengthened and it should be eco-friendly. He believed that from this way it would bring the changes in the standard of living. Indeed, his economic philosophy of thought is vibrant and widening. It is people-centred. So Gandhi is not a spent bullet, he is the creative alternative. And lastly, according to Martin Luther King, “*Gandhiji was inevitable. If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore Gandhi at our own risk*”¹¹.

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.” – Mahatma Gandhi.

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Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose: A comparative study of ideology and its application in the perspective of Freedom Movement

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At a time when Gandhi was at the helm of affair in the struggle for the independence of the country the two leaders apart from him, who could lay deep seated impact upon the youth, students, radicals, leftists and modernised people of the country were Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru. The mutual relationship between Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose is an interesting episode in the struggle for the independence of India. They, other than Gandhi, only could lay special impact upon the people during the days of the struggle for the independence of India. They started their political career at the initial stage of the 1920s under the direction of Mahatma Gandhi in the Non-Cooperation Movement and during the closing years of the 1920s they played an important part in laying the foundation stone of an alternative to Gandhian way. In spite of tremendous possibility, they could not proceed long further to the direction of an alternative way leading to the movement for the independence of the country. At times, they went to the opposite side of Gandhian ideology completely. Ultimately Subhas Chandra Bose took to the alternative way of Gandhism and Jawaharlal fell back upon the course of Gandhi. Why did it happen?

Though Subhas Chandra Bose started his political career by joining the Non-Cooperation movement organised by Mahatma Gandhi, he was never illusory about the political leadership of Gandhi. He could not

take the matter for granted that the movement of non-violence was an indispensable part of the freedom struggle as understood by Gandhi. The political strategy adopted by Gandhi was never doubtlessly accepted by Subhas Chandra Bose. He could easily sacrifice the alluring prospect of Indian Civil Service and on reaching Bombay on 16th July, 1921 Subhas met Gandhi. In his first meeting with Gandhi, he could easily understand that there was lack of clarity and pragmatism in his planning and he did not have the precise idea about the step by step proceedings of the movement¹. In spite of that Subhas got into the Non-Cooperation movement as he thought that it to be expedient, to some extent, at that time. The constitutional process in the past was not fruitful and armed terrorism of the extremists proved also to be infructuous. Naturally there was a political vacuum in the political firmament, but the people were ready for organised movement against the British. Gandhi undoubtedly acted according to the political demand of the people. So, Subhas took up the non-cooperation movement to be a progressive step². He made up his mind to take part in the Non-Cooperation movement sometime before he met Gandhi. He wrote to his favourite elder brother Sarat Bose from Cambridge on 23rd April, 1921 that the best way to bring about the downfall of a government was to dissociate oneself from that. He told this as he had firm belief over the matter and overwhelming influence of Gandhi or Tolstoy over him was nothing to do with the formation of his mind³.

The idea dawned upon Subhas Chandra Bose after the withdrawal of the movement by Gandhi that it was a national catastrophe to retreat from the movement at a time when the expectation and enthusiasm of the people was rising high⁴. A rift in the lute was seen after that. Subhas Chandra Bose joined the movement of the pro-changers organised by Motilal Nehru and Deshbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das to oppose the British Indian Government from within the legislature. He became one of the outstanding members of Swarajya Party. At that time he told that it would be illusory to expect freedom from foreign rule unless the British Indian Government was brought to bear upon the political trouble created by the organisers of the freedom struggle. He dreamt of an alternative to Satyagraha of Gandhi by means of creating disorder in the legislature and thereby gaining political fruit out of the troubles of government⁵.

At that period of the national movement the activity of Subhas Chandra Bose was not confined to the implementation of programmes of non-cooperation of the Indian National Congress and those of the Swarajya Party. From the initial period he was the pioneering force of the national

papers like 'Banglar Katha' and 'the Forward' and after the imprisonment of Upendranath Bandyopadhyay he took over the responsibility of giving proper direction to the contemporary radical paper like 'Atmasakti'. To 'Atmasakti' the meaning of independence was the complete relief from foreign rule and Subhas Chandra also meant that by the term 'independence'. To him 'independence' meant complete dismantling of foreign rule⁶. At that moment he kept contact with the revolutionary nationalists of Bengal. He kept up that relationship till to the end of his career. Bengal revolutionaries took part in the non-cooperation movement of Gandhi at the mediation of Chittaranjan Das and hereafter they acted in cooperation with congress organisation without discarding their revolutionary organisation and programmes. The revolutionaries took Subhas Chandra Bose to be the closer to them than any other Congress leaders. He did not support the policy of assassination of the revolutionaries. To him, it was more important to raise national consciousness among the people for the first time than to perpetrate violence. In the future revolutionary terrorism might be an important part of the national struggle. In the meantime, he came in contact with Abani Mukherjee and Nalini Gupta of the Communist International and he made arrangement for their security and all types of help⁷. It was because of his association with the revolutionaries that Subhas Chandra Bose was arrested along with other revolutionaries in 1924 and remained imprisoned for more than two and a half years. The contemporary documents say about the charges levelled against him; he was the bedrock of the organisation of the revolutionaries of Bengal and he kept contact with the campaigners of Bolsevism. He was involved in the conspiracy of bringing weapons from foreign countries. He was held to be the revolutionary communist⁸. But in the real sense of the term he, though was in favour bringing in a combination between the mass movement of Gandhian type and revolutionary terrorism for the successful conduct of the freedom movement, was never involved in the terrorist activity of the revolutionaries. His modus operandi was to extend, sharpen and smoothen the movement for the independence of the country⁹.

The confrontation between Subhas Chandra Bose and Gandhi arose at that time over the question of the starting of movement against the British. Gandhi did not want to initiate a movement at that time. He and his close associates were engaged at that time in consultation with the British Indian Govt. over the acceptance of the proposal for federation at least partially as proposed by the Govt. of India Act 1935. When it was published in a British newspaper Subhas was annoyed and objected to the proposal tooth and nail⁹.

The vision of Jawaharlal Nehru was different from that of Subhas Chandra from the very beginning of his coming in contact with Gandhi. He was not at all doubtful about Gandhian leadership. In the very beginning he was subdued by the leadership of Gandhi in the political arena. To him, Gandhi was like bright light that could pierce through the darkness that covered us so strongly. He came like tempest that blew away the traditional process¹⁰. He came into contact with Gandhi at the Lucknow Congress in 1916. Jawaharlal Nehru was respectful of Gandhi at that time because of his movement in South Africa. He was attracted to Gandhi after his successful agitation for the cause of the peasants of Champaran in Bihar and Kaira in Gujrat and also after the initiation 'Satyagraha' as a mark of protest against the Rowlatt Act. Thereafter, Jawaharlal made up his mind to take part in the Non-Cooperation movement likely to be launched soon. He left his legal profession and simplified his life to such an extent that he became purely vegetarian and started reading the Gita regularly because of the influence of Gandhi. Jawaharlal was purely unaware of the condition of the farmers and labours before he came in contact with the farmers of Pratapgarh in 1920. Gradually his mental outlook changed when he got himself involved in the peasant movement of Pratapgarh, Faizabad and Raiberelli. The movement gradually assumed extremity and Jawaharlal being influenced by the Satyagraha of Gandhi and pressurised by the Government and landlord was to retreat soon. He held that all those *movements failed to bring about any improvement of the position of the peasantry*¹¹.

Jawaharlal took an active part in support of the Non-Cooperation programme of Gandhi in the Calcutta Congress of September, 1920. He practically sank into the movement completely. He wrote in his 'Autobiography' that he liked the moral injunctions of the Satyagraha and though he was not extremely loyal to the non-violence of Gandhi he gradually was attracted to the non-violent movement. He began to conceive of the fact that the policy of non-violence adopted by Gandhi was probably right way in the given circumstances of impregnability of the British power. He was specially satisfied by the moral injunctions of the movement and his satisfaction went to that extent that he even failed to think of the limitation of the movement. He was too astonished to think of questioning the aim of the movement. Everyone thought of 'Swaraj' in his own way. Gandhiji himself kept up ambiguity about the goal of the movement and he never gave indulgence to the emergence of the distinct conception about the movement. But the reason of their satisfaction was that Gandhi always looked for the betterment of the weaker section of the society without carefully disturbing the rich.

The instant reaction of Nehru after the collapse of the non-cooperation movement was serious but later on he came down to reality thinking that violence of the Swadeshis would have invited stern reaction. The result would have been the collapse of the morale of the people. The most important thing was that violence and non-violence could not go on simultaneously. After the breakdown of the movement he became the supporter of the no-changer movement discarding the way of the pro-changers inaugurated by his father and ChittaRanjan Das. Acting as the congress General Secretary from 1923-25 and till his departure for Europe for the treatment of his wife he was a loyal Gandhian.

Subhas Chandra and Jawaharlal came close to one another in the national politics towards the end of the 1920s. They met before in different congress sessions. They decided to work together during the close of 1920s. Subhas was released from long imprisonment in the month of May, 1927. A sort of vacuum was felt by Subhas in the national politics. After the death of C. R. Das a sort of disorder was seen in the activity of the Swarjya Party. The indistinct phenomenon was seen in the programme of Gandhi. Gandhi was at that time, busy in the constructive activity and the spreading of Khadi culture. Subhas felt the necessity of organising the labours and the peasants in order to bring them to the mainstream of national struggle. A sort of change was seen in the activity of Jawaharlal. He represented in the conference at Brussels in 1927 organised in connection with the colonial outrage and anti imperialist movement. He came in contact with the representatives of Europe, Asia, Africa Latin America and the radical ideas of different parts of Europe including European Marxism. A sort of revulsion was felt in the mind of Jawaharlal. It was felt that there was the necessity of sending foreign forces to relieve the country like India from colonial exploitation. In that year Jawaharlal went also to Russia to attend the 10th Annual Conference of Soviet Revolution. All these enriched his revolutionary ideal. He became a different person in respect of ideology after that. His biographer S. Gopal remarked about the change of his characteristics in the following words. A person who left India as a disciple of Gandhi came back as an ardent radical. He could never be incarcerated in the ambit of extreme Gandhism¹². But the interpretation of S. Gopal does not explain the role of Nehru properly. Thinking of the wide distinction between the thought of him and that of Gandhi, Jawaharlal, at times decided to take on his own his course and did so. At times he could have made contact with Subhas setting aside the contact with Gandhi. But ultimately he failed to take to his own course independently and in reality came within the grip of Gandhi shortly.

The demand of the Indian National Congress, hitherto, was the achieving of the dominion status or colonial self government. The pressure of demand was mounting for the achievement of full independence among the young members of the Congress. Imbued by the impulses for complete independence Jawaharlal raised the proposal in Madras Congress held in December, 1927. Bengal revolutionaries, Communists and other left members firmly stood by him. The proposal was passed, but it could not be included in the congress constitution. The proposal of full independence was subdued by the movement against the Simon Commission and by the proposal for the formation of the constitution of colonial self government. Gandhi could have kept up his control over the Congress, but he could not push to the background the pressure of the leftists. They were given places in the working committee. Gandhi was disturbed by the pressure of the left in the Congress. The proposal for complete independence was severely criticised by Gandhi. Condemning the proposal for complete independence Gandhi told in 'Young India' that the proposal for complete independence was taken up hurriedly and without any proper consideration¹³. Gandhi was very much angry at the change of attitude of Jawaharlal. He was ready to get rid of his favourite disciple even, but he was not ready to forsake his ideology. Jawaharlal retreated at the firmness of Gandhi. Jawaharlal compromised his revolutionary and leftist ideology, but he could not rise to the occasion to challenge Gandhi. Submitting to Gandhi he told that he was not more inspired by anybody other than him. Gandhi's unfathomable love for Jawaharlal could never be forgotten. Jawaharlal also meekly submitted by saying that he was not at all obdurate regarding his sticking to ideology. He held that his criticism was not at all firm. It was purely instant reaction. As a result of the apologetic attitude of Jawaharlal the rift between the two far from being widened, was lessened.

In the meantime the environment was fully clement for final showdown against the British. The years 1928 and 1929 were the convenient periods for the outbreak of the revolutionary moment. The students, the peasants, the labours, common people and the middle classes people were ready, for blast. Industrial strikes were rampant at that time. All demanded full independence. But Gandhi did not consider the moment convenient for showdown as it would have challenged his leadership. Though the iron was red for making strike at it, Gandhi lost the chance in order to strengthen his position within the congress. Gandhi was apprehensive of the left influence in the congress. At that time his only hope for success was Jawaharlal. Gandhi pleaded to make Jawaharlal the president of the congress in 1929 conference. Gandhi knew very well that his interest would be best served

and the movement of the left would lose ground if Jawahar was made the president. Subhas Chandra wrote that the decision was favourable for Gandhi, but was unfortunate for the left. A rift in the combination of the left and right wing of the congress was strengthened. Gandhi was successful in weakening the revolutionary trend of the left. Jawaharlal ultimately put his assent to the decision of Gandhi for the demand of colonial self govt.

The attitude of Nehru was astounding. Though he fought tooth and nail against the demand for colonial self-government, he ultimately, at the pressure of Gandhi, restrained and confined to colonial self-government Instead of complete independence. The action of Jawaharlal was, to Subhas Chandra, similar to the giving up of the party. Jawaharlal himself was repentant for that. It is irony that Jawaharlal always sailed in two boats at a time though he knew very well that it was always impossible and impractical. He expressed his intension to resign from the post of congress general secretary. He also expressed his unwillingness to keep himself off from the post of President of the party. Gandhi also knew that he would never do that. Jawaharlal wrote in his 'Autobiography' that the letter of Gandhi was able to help him to come down the mental disturbance. Later on he finally approved the Delhi manifesto.

Ultimately Gandhi was forced to raise the proposal of complete independence in the Lahore Congress of December, 1929 because of the failure of all efforts to achieve colonial self government. The proposal was passed. It was proclaimed that the goal of the Congress was complete independence, but nothing was said about the precise programme .Everything was done in accordance with the wishes of Gandhi. The door of compromise was kept open. Subhas Chandra told of the setting up of a parallel govt. Along with the programme of strike, boycott of the British administration and the consolidation of the youth and under developed communities, those demands were not only short shifted, but he was also not given berth in the working Committee. Instead of making effective the proposal of independence, Gandhi proposed for appeasement of the British Indian Govt. He also tried to impress the Indian capitalists who apprehended at the proposal of independence. He also tried to convince the govt. of the fact that he wanted a sort of rapprochement with the British.

Subhas Chandra Bose laid emphasis on three ways to overthrow the British rule and achieve independence:

- i) Payment of tax should be stopped.
- ii) Workers' and peasants' organisation should be strengthened to put pressure upon the govt.

- iii) The strongholds of the govt. such as the soldiers, police force and govt employers should be supported to ensure their sympathy to the cause of independence and put pressure upon the government.

The Congress failed because it could not effectively use the above ways. The civil Disobedience movement did not reach the height where from it could create trouble to the British Indian govt. The govt would remain in power effectively unless it was pressurised by the force of weapon or that of economic blockade. He told precisely that a competent leader was needed for strengthening movement of national struggle and centrally well directed All India party was to be formed. The movement for independence should be divided in two parts. In the first stage, the movement should be launched against Great Britain and it would be 'national struggle'. The leadership should be assumed by 'the political party of the people' and the party would be represented by the working and different classes of the society. In the second stage, all kind of special privileges, differences and vested interest should be brought to an end. This would ultimately lead to social, economic and political equality. Subhas Chandra Bose held that Gandhi had done unprecedented work for country, but the freedom of the country would not come under his leadership¹⁴.

In the book 'Indian Struggle' he held that his socialism was a combination of communism and fascism. Jawaharlal wanted to select one from communism and fascism and he was supporter of communism though he did not agree upon all the points of communism. The ideologists would be applied in different ways in different countries and there might be some modifications. Subhas differed from Jawaharlal on the point that there must be a combination of the two ideologies in the following period of world history and there was no wonder if it took place in India. He wanted to convince the people that the combination should be of the ideology of justice, equality and love of socialism with that of efficiency and discipline of fascism.

After the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience movement, it was due to the effectiveness of the leftists in the congress, the opposition to the strategy of Gandhi began assuming momentum. The foundation of the socialist party within the Congress in 1934 by Narendra Deb, Jayprakash Narayan Achyut Pattabardhan, Asoka Mehta was an indication of the alarm of the Congress Subhas Chandra appreciated the move and they were told to get ready to take over the responsibility for the future strengthening of the movement¹⁵. A sort of awakening took place at that time among the peasants, labours, students, intellectuals at that time and it assumed

consolidated character in 1936. So before the Lucknow Congress of 1936, it was evident that Gandhi wanted to direct the movement through constitutional way and the leftists wanted to take up revolutionary strategy. Gandhi could not think it of little importance. He understood that he would have to face more opposition in that situation than what he faced owing to the period of the Lahore Congress of 1929. So, he once again, after the Lahore Congress wanted Jawaharlal to take over presidential chair. Jawaharlal agreed to the proposal and with his consent of taking over chair Gandhi could have brought down his own tension.

In the presidential address in the Lucknow Congress Jawaharlal expressed in unequivocal terms the quality of Socialism. He analysed the international situation dexterously, opposed the government of India Act 1935, emphasised the importance of harnessing the peasant and workers' Association with the Congress to tone up the anti-imperialist struggle. In a word his speech reflected the sentiment of the left. But in reality he retreated at the pressure of the rightist members like Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari etc. All these were done at the wishes of Gandhi. The Congress working Committee was set up in the manner that about 10 members were fully against his sentiment only 4 members were socialists. The socialist sentiment was not at all reflected at the Lucknow Congress proposal. Being dejected by the fact that all his proposals having socialist tinge were made null and void, Jawaharlal expressed his desire to resign, but he finally refrained from taking that course because he did not like to endanger the position of the Congress which was certain to shatter to pieces. He had the opportunity to harness the forces of leftism and radicalism to strengthen the nationalist movement. But he did not do so in order to avoid fraction with the rightists. The Lucknow Congress though could have been the platform to ensure the victory of the leftists, heralded the success of the rightists.

Expressing applause for socialism and his intension to establish socialism in the country after independence Jawaharlal expressed his sentiment in the month of May 1936 in Bombay. At that the industrialists were extremely annoyed. Some industrialists expressed in a manifesto that the speech was perilous and destructive. Jawaharlal held that these industrialists rallied with the British with a view to suppress the Satyagraha and Boycott Movements and they were directing the country towards Fascism. The supporters of the industrialists within the Congress appealed to Gandhi for the retrieval of the situation ruffled by the speech of Nehru. Gandhi resolved the matter by once again forcing Nehru to dissuade from

the course he was following.

Jawaharlal had to face a difficult situation and he was in the horns of a dilemma after the taking over of the presidential chair by Subhas Chandra Bose. He wrote to Subhas Bose that he was worried at the turn of events at that time. The emotional speech of Gandhi and the essay of Gandhi in 'the Harijan' endangered his position. The new tendency of the congress leadership to suppress the left and popular movement could not be accepted by him. He kept silence because he did not like to criticise his colleagues of the working committee and his respect for Gandhi was next to none. He also wrote to Krishna Menon, "Subhas Chandra Bose has to face an extraordinary difficult situation than anybody had to face. I should like to help him of course in every way; but how to do this effectively is the problem"¹⁶. This letter indicated his ambivalent stand. On the one hand he was worried at the suppression of the left and mass movement and on the other hand he was not ready to displease Gandhi and his followers. He was ready to help Subhas Chandra Bose but he wanted to refrain from being a member of the working Committee

Subhas expected the assistance of Jawaharlal for building up the Congress in progressive way. A sort of understanding developed between them in Europe. So it was not unnatural to expect his help. But it proved to be hollow in practice. Jawaharlal went to Europe and after his coming back he failed to get Jawaharlal's assistance. Though Subhas did not at all favour Nazism and Fascism he was not at all sentimental like Jawaharlal. He was an astute diplomat. To him, the diplomatic model was Soviet Russia and the interest of the nation should be confined to the achievement of freedom. In order to serve interest of national independence he wanted to the help of Germany and Italy. Though he sought the military assistance of Germany and Japan he was not at all the supporter of socio-political ideology of those countries. He was conscious of national interest and self respect of the country. He was always in favour of his independent stand. Bitter acrimony developed between Gandhi and Subhas over the question of acceptance of federal constitution of the country.

The confrontation between Subhas Bose and Gandhi arose at that time over the question of the starting of movement against the British. Gandhi did not want to initiate a movement at that time. He and his close associates were engaged at that time in consultation with the British Indian Govt. over the acceptance of the proposal for federation selectively as proposed by the Govt. Of India Act 1935. When it was published in a British newspaper Subhas was annoyed and objected to the proposal tooth and nail¹⁷. Europe

was advancing towards the Second World War. Munich Pact of Sept. 1938 made it clear to Subhas that war was imminent in Europe. He was in favour of starting the movement Independence afresh. He wanted to send a memorandum to the British taking advantage of the situation. He started campaigning for starting the struggle for independence throughout the country. Gandhi was annoyed at that. He expressed his anger in a letter to Subhas by saying that he did not like his constant opposition to federal programme and sending of ultimatum to the British Indian Govt. At that time role of Jawaharlal was ambiguous.

The divergence between Jawaharlal and Subhas was very much evident at the re-election of Subhas Bose as the Congress president. Jawaharlal was vehement in his support to the Govinda Ballavpant's proposal that the congress working committee should have confidence upon Gandhi and the president should nominate the members of the working committee according to the wishes of Gandhi. Jawaharlal expressed in Europe that Gandhi was more powerful than the congress. Panth proclaimed that a leader always came forward in all countries to pull up the nation. In Germany Hitler took up the leadership. He pushed ahead the country Mussolini and Lenin advanced Italy and Russia respectively. Gandhi should be held unequivocally unparalleled in leadership to pull up the Indian nation. It was astonishing that Jawaharlal though always articulate against Fascism and Nazism, was not at all found to be restless seeing that Gandhi and Hitler Mussolini were put on the same platform. But at times, Jawaharlal was seen rebuking the supporters of Subhas as hooligans and their attitude was termed as Fascist attitude¹⁸. Jawaharlal admitted that he was opposed to his becoming president of the congress for second time because he apprehended the separation of Gandhi from the national movement leading to the weakening of the movement. The leftists were not strong enough rise on their own feet. Keeping contact with the world wide crises he emphasised upon the need of self determination. At a time when Subhas was anxious of seeking help of the foreign countries to strengthen national movement. Jawaharlal was thinking of constitution drafting. Herein was the difference between the programme of Nehru and Subhas.

The approval of the Panth proposal and the setting up of the working committee by the members having complete allegiance to Gandhi heightened the crisis in the congress. Gandhi did not have any other alternative but to push forward the Panth proposal in order to remain at the helm of affairs in the congress politics. Jawaharlal as did not like to see Subhas Bose omnipotent in Congress politics. He wanted to see him

powerless at that time. The only difference was that Gandhi could not conceal his sentiment against Subhas and Jawaharlal had a disguise of impartiality. Jawaharlal could not be as firm as Subhas Bose in dealing with the rightist oppositional. Jawaharlal could not accept the rise of Subhas to an unquestionable height as leader of the leftists.

Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal could not act in conjunction because of their different visions in life and different idiosyncrasies. At times some similarities of motive drifted them closer, but the subsoiled dissimilarities led them to follow different courses of action. There was certainly a strategic role of Gandhi. But it was secondary. The excitement of Jawaharlal about Gandhian way emaciated within a very short spell, but whenever he raised the voice of protest, Gandhi was found to be ready to get rid of him. The same thing was found in his behaviour with Subhas and the gulf between the two widened. The genesis of it should he sought in the fact that Gandhi had also a definite mission as that of Subhas. With a view to the successful prosecution of that mission. Gandhi certainly had a strategy, whatever might be its limitation. But Jawaharlal did not like to undergo separation from Gandhi because he did not have any definite strategy. Gandhi wanted colonial self government. His strategy was to reach the goal by dint of mutual discussion mainly and at times he wanted to put some pressure. But the bedrock of his strategy was mutual discussion. So there was little difference between his strategy and that of the British Indian Government. Jawaharlal acceded to the strategy of Gandhi, whatever might he say about his fervour for revolutionary spirit. It was safe resort for Jawaharlal. But the destination of Subhas was complete independence. His strategy was to snatch freedom from the British Indian Govt. by any means and if necessary by virtue of violence.

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Agrarian Life in Cooch Behar State (1773-1897): A Perspective on Technology, Agriculture and Calamities

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Cooch Behar State was a tributary princely state under the British from 1773 to 1949. Jagadipendra Narayan, the last Maharaja of Cooch Behar, signed 'Instrument of Accession' on 12 September, 1949. He and V. P. Menon, Adviser to the Government of India signed a treaty namely 'Cooch Behar Merger Agreement' on August 28, 1949¹. As per treaty it was annexed to Indian Union as a 'Chief Commissioner's province' on 12 September, 1949². It was only for a period of more than three months (September-December 1949). In time Assam and West Bengal governments started tug of war for the annexation of this province to their respective state as a district. At last B.C. Roy, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal succeeded to turn the Cooch Behar province into a district of West Bengal in the first day of New Year 1950. Its geographical location is south to Jalpaiguri, West to Gowalpara district and north to Rangpur. Its extension was 1307 square miles³. However, the study has been started with the year 1773, in which year the first subsidiary⁴ Alliance was signed between Cooch Behar State and East India Company and ended with a tremendous disaster like terrible earth-quake in 1897.

Structure of the Agrarian Society:

The *jotedar-adhiari* system was a unique structure of agrarian system of Cooch Behar State. Some areas of North Bengal were under permanent settlement. Dinajpur, Rangpur and some parts of Jalpaiguri were under this settlement. The Western Duars and Cooch Behar State were under *jotedar-adhiari* system. This pyramid like social structure based on economic relation consisted of *jotedar*, *chukanidar*, *dar-chukanidar*, *tasyachukanidar*,

talichukanidar, *tasyatalichukanidar* and *adhiar*⁵ respectively from the higher to the lower strata.

A *jotedar* was an owner of land property, who directly got land from govt. and paid their rent directly to Government officers. To whom *pattas* had been issued in exchange for *kabuliyats*.⁶ He was hereditary owner of land and owner of transferred land as well. A *jotedar* could underlet their holdings to under-tenants. He had right to transfer all privileges to the under tenants. Next to the *jotedar* was *chukanidar* who paid a fixed rent to the *jotedar* and *chukanidar* could not be ousted from land if he regularly paid the fixed rate of rent. He could sublet land to *dar-chukanidar*. The *dar-chukanidar*, who also could sublet land to his under tenant, *dar-a dar-chukanidar*. All this under-tenants' occupancy right was in this state.⁷ An *adhiar* or share cropper was at lowest strata of agrarian society. *Adhiar* cultivated the lands of the upper strata with his own plough and bullocks or provided by *giris*. More commonly *adhiar* lived in the farmer's premises, and employed for plough and cattle for cultivation, and was fed by his *giri* or master till the harvest time. They took half of the produce of the field. They had no ownership on land.⁸ They were all engaged to agrarian work. Durgadas Majumdar has explained the economic relation as below:

*“The rates thus fixed were the revenue rates at which the jotedar was to pay the revenue to the state. In the first settlement, the rate of rent to be paid by the under-tenure was not fixed. All that was done was to fix the rate of the jotedars and provide that each class of superior interest was to get 25% as profit. The following scale was observed in the resettlement (RakamCharcha Settlement of 1886) and has been observed since then: (i) where dar-chukanidar was the last under tenant jotedar 35%, chukanidar 15%, dar-chukanidar 10%. (ii) where tasyachukanidar was the last under tenant jotedar 35%, chukanidar 10%, dar-chukanidar 10%, dar-a darchukanidar 5% (iii) where talichukanidar was the last under-tenant jotedar 35%, chukanidar 10%, dar- chukanidar 5%, dar-a-dar-chukanidar 5%, tasyachkanidar 5%. (iv) where tasyatalichukanidar was the last under tenant jotedar 35%, chukanidar 5%, dar-a-darchukanidar 5%, tasyachukanidar 5%, tasyatalichukanidar 5%.”*⁹

An important and basic element of agriculture is soil. Agriculture is not imagined without soil. It is said about the soil of Cooch Behar State that it *“is of alluvial formation and has a large admixture of sand. The greater portion of it is a light loam that can retain moisture and easily give it out, and does not become water-logged. When dry, it does not cake up, but*

yields to light pressure, and easily gets dissolved."¹⁰ The character of soil is not same at every place. It varies from one place to another. The Western portion of State such as Gird Teldhar, Pargana Boda, consists more clay than sand and the soil here is harder than in other parts of the State. The soil of Pargana Mathabhanga consists although sandier than Gird Teldhar but less sand than Mekhligunj, which largely resembles Pargana Lalbazar. The proportion of sand in the soil of Pargana Cooch Behar is large, larger than in Mathabhanga and the soil of Pargana Dinhatā resembles that of Gird Teldhar more than the soil of any other part of the State. Tufangang mostly resembles Cooch Behar, but its soil is less sandy.¹¹

A General Description of Agrarian Crops:

The State produces varieties of crops. Winter and hot weather along with rainy season help to grow diversity of crops and fruits yet in the area. Agriculture is the economic backbone of the state. The most of the people carry on yet their livelihood on agrarian activities except a few. The cultivators produced the cereal crops like paddy, mustered, wheat, cheena, kaon; pulses like musur, khesari, thakri, motar (peas) etc. *Cheena* and *kaon* are inferior crops as compared to wheat. Jute, tobacco, *Runi supari*(betel-nut)¹², pine apple, coconut, banana and sugar cane grew. They produced spices like *kala-zira*, *mirch*, *dhanīa*. There were produced some vegetables for food purpose. Different types of indigenous species of vegetables were such as *machalu*, *shakhalu*, *jagannatalu*. There was existence of a kind of potato, which was *bilati alu*.¹³ Three varieties of aroid plants were *mankochu*, *mukhikochu* and *panikochu*. The chief food of the people was rice. Paddy stood first place¹⁴ in this state. It was very amazing matter that 103¹⁵ varieties of paddy crops grew in this small state. It grew two times in *ravi* and *kharif* monsoon. The paddy which grew in rainy season, was called *Haimantias* it ripened in *hemanta-kal* (Bengali word for autumn). The second rank was placed for tobacco as cash crop. The third position was taken by jute.¹⁶ It is interesting to note here that there almost ten varieties¹⁷ of tobacco were cultivated here. It is still a cash crop in the district.

Land Preparation and Implements:

Technology used in Ploughing:

In the study area, a traditional component of cultivating land was *Nangal*. It was only a technical element to cultivate land in the period. It was light structure with a handle of bamboo, the lower piece being of light wooden frame to which a *phal*, the iron or ploughshare was attached. The

iron was smaller than what is in use in the southern districts of Bengal. A heavy instrument was not required for the loose soil of the country. It was drawn by a pair of bullocks. Sometimes cows also are harnessed to the yoke, jointly with bullocks. The *bida* (in some areas as *beda*, such as Sitalkuchi) was featured with a large rake with teeth of iron used for thinning out the plants same as in case of plough. It worked also to wipe out the existing weeds (such as grass) in a crop field. It was drawn by bullocks. Spade is used for cleaning the *ali* (boundary of plot made of earthen embankment) or to build embankment within a plot for keeping equal water level over all parts of a land. Normally it was done in the rainy season. Besides, in the period of ravi monsoon it was used to make water way/ thin channel in the crop areas where it was applicable. Harrow (ladder) was made of bamboo and was drawn by two pair of bullocks along with two men standing on it to make level the field as well as to break the clods and to gather the weeds. *Koorsi* was the mallet of wood, and was used for breaking the clods of earth with one hand. At present, it is not in usage. *Hatchini* was the native rake with bar and teeth or pins of wood, was used for pressing and smoothing the soil, and collecting the grass and weed thrown out by the plough and the *bida*, and heaped up by the harrow. It was worked by a single man with the hand. *Pasoon* was a small flat iron sharpened at the end with wooden handle and used for cleaning the field.¹⁸ It acted to remove the grasses from the crop field.

Process of Ploughing:

Some simple techniques were resorted to plough land for good cultivation. There were some differences in the mode of cultivation of land per crops. Plough was driven by one bullock, two bullocks or a cow at a time. To quote H. N. Chaudhuri about the technical process of ploughing: *“At first furrows are made along the field, almost touching and parallel to each other. Then the plough is worked crosswise cutting the first furrows at right angles. The furrows are not more than 4 inches deep at this stage. The field is then harrowed twice, first lengthwise and then breadth wise... harrow is drawn by two pairs of bullocks guided Harrowing, by two men who take their stand on the harrow and press the soil with their weight. The land is now left for some time to dry, and is then again ploughed and harrowed. This combined operation is technically called Ek-chash... The same restriction does not attach ploughing on every occasion means ploughing the land twice and harrowing it twice. The highest depth of a furrow does not exceed a foot.”*¹⁹

Maximum time was required for preparing a land for tobacco, but

other crops did not require the same. Tobacco requires up to 25 or 26 times, pulses require *do-chash* only, while other crops like jute, wheat, and *Bitri* paddy frequently required up to 6 to 10 times ploughing. Haimanti did not require up to 4 times.²⁰ Occasionally the peasants followed customary principles to allow lands to remain fallow for a year or two²¹ for being enhancement of land fertility.

Process of Application of Manure:

The farmers were used to apply indigenous knowledge and technology in their agrarian field for growth of the crops. They applied eco-friendly manure to crops when and where it was applicable. Actually the manure used was eco-friendly cow-dung, which was applied as both forms viz., old or raw and along with the oil-cake dust was applied. Cow-dung was piled up at the intervals of 20^{ft} on the fields and ploughed and harrowed. The oil-cake was thrown on the field and mixed up in the same way.²² The quantity of manure applied varied in accordance with nature of crop and soil. Hunter informs that almost every peasant had cattle of his own, and used the dung and litter as manure for his tobacco, sugar-cane, jute, mustard seed, betel-nut, as far as his own supply went. Manure was not generally applied in the rice field. It was never bought. Those who had many cattle, used it much, and those who had fewer cattle, used it less. From 60 to 80 *maunds per bigha*, or from 6.5 to tons an acre, of cow litter was a liberal supply for manure for an acre of tobacco land.²³

The irrigation system was very simple. Cultivators seldom used *bansher tola* in ravi monsoon in lifting water. The State was covered with a remarkable portion of forest and jungles. Naturally a lot of bamboos grew and grow yet. The plenty of rivers, tanks, ponds, *beels*, *nala*, streams and wells had been helpful in irrigation. A traditional technology was used the cultivators *for* lifting water from underground viz. *kacha* wells and other resources like ponds, rivers, tanks etc. in the study area. This water lifting process of folk technology is popularly known as *bansher tola*.²⁴ Mainly two types of water-lifting bamboos were applied to irrigate. The first type consisted of two kinds of bamboos out of five different kinds.²⁵ Both were cut per measurement, and tied together the apex of *barabansh* and the apex of *makla bash* with a strong rope before it (*bara bansh*) was put to earth. The *barabansh* was put to earth up to 1 metre so that it could stand up at (roughly less than) 80 degree. In this situation, the *maklabansh* took its position just like a hanging rod. Then a water container was tied to lower portion of the *maklabansh* with a rope. At last it was manually pulled down

into *kacha* well which had been dug within a balanced distance from the location of lower portion of *bara bansh* and the cultivators picked up water for irrigation. It acted as a third-class lever.

The second type of water-lifting bamboo acted as a first-class lever. It needed two strong bamboos (both *bara bansh*). One of them was applied as a pole and just put to the bank of pond/ tank/stream etc. The middle point of other bamboo was tied to the pole on a certain height with a strong rope so that its (lifting bamboo) apex might touch the water level and its apex was tied to a water container with a rope and thus a man pressed on the other portion of the bamboo which was always loader than the parts towards apex portion and lifted water from ponds, tanks, river etc. except '*kacha* well' through moving up and down. Before setting with the pole the light portion of the bamboo was omitted. However, other technologies were also followed to collect water.

Chhemti was a traditional element of irrigation system. It means a component, which sprinkles water. It looked just a triangle-like. The centre was lower than each side. A 3-foot-long bamboo handle²⁶ was connected to it. A rope was tied to two corners of the front of the triangle shape. It was used to sprinkle water over crops mainly on to ravi crops. A man stood on water source (which was supplied from other source) in the crop field and sprinkled water on the crop by holding the rope with one hand and handle with the other.²⁷

Hunter writes regarding artificial sources of water for irrigation:

“Wells were made either by sinking baked earthen rings; about two feet in diameter, in the earth on the top of one another, or else the walls are protected by a square frame-work of sal timber. Sometimes a well is constructed by digging a more hole in the ground, without any protection to the sides. The cost of a well of the first description is about Rs. 6 (12S.) or Rs. 7 (14S.); and of one with wooden frame-work, about Rs, 70 (£7) to Rs. 80 (£8). The cost of the third description of well is merely the labour expended in sinking the hole.”

The second category seems to have mostly used for irrigation. All of them were right, but Hunter has done a mistake, “irrigation is not common in Cooch Behar.” In a word, it was rare. It cannot be considered right. Because Cooch Behar is the land of superior tobacco and famous for its fine quality tobacco as a cash crop. Chaudhuri (1903) says that 1,05,898 *Bighas* of lands were covered with tobacco crop, which 7.5% cultivated lands and first position was taken by Lalbazar (Sitalkuchi). Other

vegetables-crops were produced in the *ravi* monsoon, such as mustard, wheat.²⁹ However, tobacco cultivating time is ravimonsoon (dry season). The up-land is ideal field for cultivating tobacco. It needs irrigation for two or three times at intervals when it grows. The irrigation depends on nature of soil. If irrigation was not common in the study period, how the cultivators produced superior tobacco. How is it possible without irrigation? Certainly, large scale tobacco cultivation would be impossible if there was not source of irrigation. So, it is called that irrigation was used widely. It was not uncommon.

The cultivators applied traditional technical knowledge to prevent the infections caused by pests, bacteria and virus for the betterment of the crops. It is discussed in brief as belows-

Jain:

It is a type of disease of tobacco. When the leaves became maturity they sometimes got wrinkled and withered. The people called it *Jain dhara*. The only remedy was to remove the leaf or leaves at the first appearance of the symptoms. A kind of insect attacked the root of the tobacco plant, generally when it was young. This was manifested by the drooping of the leaves. This insect infests potato also, which was for the most part grown in the same field simultaneously with tobacco. The cultivators, who did not much care for this damage, knew of only one way of destroying the insects. They did not know chemical insecticide. A kind of process was resorted to prevent harmful insects. Dried stalks of jute, called *sinna*³⁰ in this state, were stuck into the field here and there, and the ends, which point towards the sky, were set fire to in the night. A night-bird, invited by the light, came to the field and ate up the insects, which came out of the ground in the night.³¹ The *bhulki* flower was another pest of tobacco. It was a sort of parasite which took its growth on one of the main roots of the plant, and shot up generally in a single stalk, as an independent plant. It then flowers; both the stem and the flowers became alight purple colour. The *bhulki* sucked the sap of the tobacco plant, and made it prematurely ripe. It was only partially deteriorated, the leaves losing in weight and flavour. The growth of the pest can be checked only by weeding.³²

Crops Towards House:

The cultivators started processing to bring about at home crops when crops got maturity. *Kanchi* (scythe) is made of sharpened blade of iron with a wooden handle and used for reaping crops and to cut the weeds and in the same way other works also. *Kora* was an important element for transportation of crops to house. It is popularly known as *bakua* at

present, a piece of spilt bamboo, about 6 feet long (it may vary person to person) with two pointed ends. Its main activity was to carry on two bundles by placing it on shoulder at a time. It played important role to carry the stem based crops tied to bundles. *kora* is said to have carried paddy crop.³³ A carrier, placing it on his shoulder, walked home with a bundle of paddy hanging in front of, and another behind, him. This mode of carrying the harvest was tedious and engaged much labour. Bullock-cart was largely used (at end of nineteenth century) where practicable for bringing the harvest.³⁴ Bullock-cart was used for transportation. It, in a word, was chief vehicle. It was used to carry any burden (materials or passengers). It acted as a carrier to carry out the ripe crops to house from crop field and the cultivators carried produced crops to trade centres with help of the bullock-carts for sale. There were composed many life songs in Bhawaiya on bullock-cart when it was inter-linked with the agrarian life. A famous song, '*oki garial bhaihakaogari re tuiChilmarirbandare*' is the fine of instance of the category.

Mada and Karali:

Mada(same as *Mara*) meant thrashing. *Mara* or thrashing was applicable to paddy. The bundles of stems of paddy plants were similarly placed in a circle area on the courtyard for thrashing purpose after the cultivators brought these to house. Four pairs of cattle were tied each other and rounded within the circle until seeds completely fell off from the stalks. A full size of *mara* of 32 bundles of paddy took about 4 to 5 hours to finish in this way.³⁵ This process of seed thrashing was called *Mara*. After completing the entire thrashing, the work of *karali* started. It was made of thin bamboo consisted of a hook and was generally used to gather and scatter straw. It was worked with hand.³⁶

Extension of Agriculture:

In 1773 Anglo-Koch treaty was signed and by the end of 18th century the English proceeded to change the revenue system, but the major changes have been done in the 2nd part of the nineteenth century. After 1857 East India Company was abolished and the power of controlling India including princely states came under British crown. The experience of 1857 stirred up the political minds of imperialist British administrators. Because, a lot of cultivators was engaged to the Revolt of 1857 in different parts of India. So, they cleverly wanted to make a balanced relation with the agrarian society for their own needs (as the cultivators were prime resource of wealth to them). On the other hand, they resorted to cooperative policy

towards the native states' governments of the Indian sub-continent as the native states openly helped in suppressing the great revolt of 1857. This State was not also exception to it and it sided with the Company.

Prior to the introduction of *Izaradary* system (1790) in this state there was another type of land revenue system. The tenancy was orally distributed among the *jotedars*. Even there was not any system of *kabuliot* or *pattaat* the initial stage. Some royal servants were sent to the *jotedars* to collect rent. It was *sajoal* system. It was abolished before introduction of *Izaradary* system. However, the Lt. Governor General of Bengal, Sir George Campbell abolished the oppressive *Izaradary* system after 1857. Due to exploitation by the *Izaradars*, the cultivators suffered from economic problem in their life. The East India Company had a mission to get higher wealth. From this of view the company authority introduced *Izaradary* system. It was inaugurated in 1790 by Henry Douglas in Cooch Behar State though it was inaugurated in 1772 by Hastings in Bengal. The cultivators were tortured by the *Izaradars* for highest revenues as this system was based on auction. At last when the company officials themselves comprehended the corruption of this system on cultivators and they themselves criticised this. Ahmuty (1797-1801), the commissioner of Cooch Behar State to Governor General, raised up the dark sides of *Izaradary* system, which made the cultivators suffered from it. Captain F. Jenkins wrote down in his diary a burning event of indescribable distress of peasants' life caused by the oppressive and corrupted *Izaradars*, "This there is no certainty of the tax being on the land and plough, but the *Izaradars* take as much as they can get from the riots, either by foul or fair means. The riots have no means whatever of complaining against the queen, her children, Raja's Gooroos, *Umlahs*, &c., who hold lands as *Izaradars*... the creature who does complain is so harassed and distressed by them that his ruin is complete... he is obliged to sell his all; plough- cattle and children; and when completely ruined without food or clothes he is at last obliged to ruin away to either the company's or Bhutan's dominions ...of course the land vacated ...runs to jungle.³⁷ The topographical survey was under taken in 1858. *Taluk* and *jotes* (land holdings) were demarcated. The first land revenue settlement of Cooch Behar was concluded by 1877 AD. The British officials aimed to get appropriate information of land system of the country and wanted to increase the revenues as well. The *Izaradary* system was abolished in 1872 AD due to evil effects it and a settlement was directly made with the farmers of this state, which was *jotedary* system, varied from 8 to 13 years and ended in 1883-84. An extension of five years

of the same terms was made and from 1886-87 resettlements was started. The *jotedars* were to pay their revenue to sub-divisional *kutcharis* (same as *Katcharis*)³⁸. The total amount of revenue secured by the first settlement was Rs. 938,610 which showed an increase of Rs. 5,74471 over the old *jama* of Rs.3,64,139.³⁹ Settlement *patitcharcha* was continued between 1884- 1886. The settlement was taken in hand to assess the fallow lands, which had come under cultivation since the first settlement. Land was categorized under 16 classes per nature and mode of producing. The increased revenue by *patitcharcha* settlement was Rs. 68,824. From 1886 resettlement was taken, which was known as *Rakamcharcha* settlement and land was classified into 16 classes. Revenue rates were fixed for each class. However, the total revenue obtained by resettlement was Rs. 12,41,660 and there was an increase of Rs. 2,88,418 over first settlement and *patitcharcha* settlement revenue of Rs. 952642.⁴⁰ The cultivating area was increased 77.63% (1871-72) to 83.61% (1903-4).⁴¹ Because the forests and jungles were (in 1871-72 AD) 15.03% of the total land of the state and it was decreased to 1.15% in 1903-4. The decrease of forests and jungles unquestionably carried the sign of the extension of agrarian area.

See the table on percentage basis land area of Cooch Behar State

Name of the classes of use	Year 1871-72	Year 1903-04
Area under cultivation	77.63	83.61
Area not for cultivable	7.34	15.24
Area under forest and jungles	15.03	1.15

(P. K Bhatyacharya, *The Kingdom of Kamata-Koch Behar in Historical Perspective*, Ratna Prakashan, Calcutta, 2000, p. 196)

However, though the area of agriculture was increased the condition of lower strata of the agrarian society was not well. They had to give to upper strata half of the produced share. The *dadni* system or advance system was prevalent. They had to take loan from *giri(jotedars)*/ Marwaris to get rid of economic grievances. There were some types of loan system that existed in the *jotedary* system, such as *bhutali*, *muli* and *duna*. A debtor was to work in the field of money-lenders at free of cost until he could repay the loan. The interest was 25%. This loan system was called *bhutali*. *Duna* was a loan which grew double.⁴² “The merchants who had made the advance take hold of the crop when it was harvested and made a large profit at the local market-rate...This system is called *mooli* or *dadan*. Jute, tobacco

and mustard-seed are usually sold under this system”⁴³ The *mooli* system became curse in their *ryots*’ life and made degradation to them. This system weakened their economic life. D. R. Lyall, Superintendent of the Cooch Behar State writes about the injurious economic perspective of the *mooli* system over *ryots* “...*the ryots take advance of money agreeing to give a specific quantity of produce at low rates. These transactions often brought ruin to many people.*”⁴⁴ They had to sell the crops as early as possible to repay the loans with a huge interest. In many respects the interest exceeded 360%. In this regard H. Douglas, the commissioner of Cooch Behar wrote letter to the Governor-General in council, Calcutta on 19 May, 1790:

*“So that in common, 72% (of interest of money) has considered as very moderate interest and what almost exceeds belief, that in many instances which came to immediate knowledge 360% percent has been exacted.”*⁴⁵

The prevalent slave system also was an example of deteriorated economic life of the poor. Here human wealth was sold due to extreme poverty. Some of them mortgaged themselves or sold themselves to repay the loans. Boys and girls were sold in huts (periodical markets). Every year around 100 boys and girls were exported to Bengal from Assam and Cooch Behar.⁴⁶ Captain Turner, an eye witness, who visited Cooch Behar in 1783 (May) while going to Tibet as an ambassador, wrote in his observation regarding the deteriorated life of low earner people. Due to economic crisis, many families sold their members. Dear had sold his dearest and its visa-versa also. Mother dressed up her dear children not for any hope, but to sell at market for extreme poverty. So, he wrote this heart-rending incident like thus:

*“The country has a most wretched appearance, and its inhabitants are a miserable and puny race. The lower ranks without scruple dispose of their children for slaves, to any purchaser, and that too for a purchaser. And very trifling consideration; nor yet, though in a traffic so unnatural, is the agency of a third person ever employed. Nothing is more common than to see a mother dress up her child, bring it to market, with no other hope, no other view, than to enhance the she may procure for it. Indeed, the extreme poverty and wretchedness of this people will forcibly appear, when we recollect how little is necessary for the subsistence of a peasant in these regions. The value of this can seldom amount to more than one penny per day, even allowing him to his meal of two puond of boiled rice, with a due proportion of salt, oil, vegetables, fish and chilli.”*⁴⁷ Chyangrabandha was supposed to have been a trade centre of slave selling and purchasing.⁴⁸

Adiars did not get proper value of crops. Besides they had to give the half of share of produced crops to the *jotedars*. So, their economic situation was not well. Some proverbs⁴⁹ exist in the *Rajbansi* society of this locality, which also expresses the economic distress of the subaltern class.

Calamities and Agrarian Life:

The agrarian life was vastly affected by natural calamities as the agrarian section was greater portion of the society. There happened five floods in study period. Chaudhuri writes “The State suffered from heavy floods in 1787, 1822 and 1842, 1822 and 1842. When crops were seriously damaged, many cattle lost, and a few deaths by drowning also occurred. In 1870, there was also a slight flood. The heaviest flood remembered by... in country occurred in July 1878, the like of which had not been seen for 40 years. The people were driven to the house tops when the inundations were at their highest, and in places near the town it was necessary to send out boats with loads of *Churaor* dried rice for distribution among the sufferers to save them from starvation. The whole country from Cooch Behar to Dhubri became one vast sheet of water.”⁵⁰ Due to contradictory weather the human life became prey of disease. In some respects the some official steps also had been taken. Cholera was familiar as a life killing disease. Many times cholera assumed an epidemic form. After the census 1881, twice outbreaks of cholera were seen in this state. One was in 1883 and the another was a severe epidemic in 1887-88. Dr. Briscoe records about outbreak of cholera and its appearing time, “It generally occurs when the rain fall after the cessation of the rainy season(from November to the latter of end of March) is scanty, as, on that water supply in many parts of the state “becomes bad.” Cholera assumed an epidemic form at Tufangunj in November, and in March in Mathabhanga sub-division, besides being prevalent in all parts of the state. Since the close of the year (1878) cholera has committed a terrible ravage.”⁵¹ Due to epidemic the agricultural activities were certainly disturbed. Epidemic compelled to leave villagers from their home and place for safe place. Such type of incident happened in Mathabhanga Sub-division. In 1882-83 and 1887-88 an epidemic broke out in the northern part of Mathabhanga and residents of this area fled to other areas.⁵² Jalpaiguri district absorbed the largest number of emigrants from Cooch Behar State due to epidemic caused by cholera. Its statistics was 36288.⁵³ 32224⁵⁴ out of 36288 settled down in Duars by cleansing forest where the rates rent was very easy.⁵⁵ A vivid heart rending incident

was recorded by G. J. B. Tuite Dalton, Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar when an epidemic caused by cholera broke out in the state in 1888. He records:

“About four miles from Cooch Behar I found a man and woman engaged in burning a body. The man came up to me and said that he was the last man left in the bhari,⁵⁶ that two were dead and two down with cholera. I saw several women and children in and about the bhari. I returned to Cooch Behar and ordered out a compounder with medicines, and two men who were ill recovered. There was cholera in some other bharis in the vicinity, while some entirely escaped. When cholera attacks one of these families of cultivators, it seldom stops at one victim. Panic seizes the others, and fear, it is well known, is a most powerful agent in inducing the disease.”⁵⁷

Some earth-quakes happened in 1808-09, 1885 and 1897 CE. The most terrible earth-quake occurred at about 5 p.m. on 12 June 1897 AD in the state, which showed its devastating form. The shock lasted over 3 minutes. Though there was not much loss of human resources other than 8 persons were killed,⁵⁸ from the economic point of view of the agrarian society suffered from this earthquake. As per govt. record 17 cattle are reported to have been killed by the fall of house in the whole state.⁵⁹ An amount of Rs. 900 was lost due to damage to crops. It is supposed that damage to young crops would have been much greater. The early or *Bitri* rice was nearly ripe and the late rice and jute also suffered more. A good many tree died apparently from the effect of earth quake on their roots. The wells were adversely damaged by earthquake that might be Kucha, country-ringed, Ranigunge pipe, or masonry. Most of the wells were filled up to their brim with sand. Damage to private wells was estimated by the Faujdary Ahilkar at Rs. 16,900, while the superintendent of works estimated this at Rs. 10,000.⁶⁰

Generally, it is called that agrarian society mainly depended on the *kacha* wells⁶¹ and *patkua* for drinking and other purpose. There was general view that the rivers' beds were raised up. The river banks seem to have affected by the earth-quake.⁶² The tanks at rural areas consisted of a damage of Rs. 15,000.⁶³ The agrarian society was share of damage due to earth-quake. A huge amount of money is lost in earth-quake. Damage is done to buildings, wells and tanks. The amount was respectively of Rs. 82,290 Rs. 26,900 and Rs. 15,000. It is supposed to have lost Rs. 3,250 due to damage to crops, cattle and *Kacha* houses.

See Chart of the abstract of damage done within the State:

Damage to state buildings in Cooch Behar	Rs. 10,35, 057
Damage to roads	Rs. 3,82,500
Damage to bridge	Rs. 68,900
Damage to roads, bridges, drains, tanks and wells etc. in the town under the municipality	Rs. 1,43,200
Damage to (private) buildings other than state(govt.)	Rs. 82,290
Damage to railway	Rs. 40,000
Damage to wells exclusive of town wells	Rs. 26,900
Damage to tanks ditto tanks	Rs. 15,900
Total in Rs.	Rs. 17,93,847

(Source: *Administration Report (1897-98) of the Cooch Behar State*, No. 2755, p. vi)

Drought and famine badly affected the cultivators' life. As a result of it, price of essential commodities rose up; on the other hand, the price of cash crops came down. The administrative report (1897-98) shows, "the rain fall in 1895-96 was deficient, and the outrun of paddy fell below the average. The rain-fall in 1896-97 was still more deficient. The *Bitri* rice yielded a nine anna crop which was soon exhausted, and people had to depend on imported rice, the price of which rose abnormally high. Jute yielded a fourteen *anna* crop and its price being good helped the people to tide over the difficulty for some time. The outturn of *Haimanti* rice was poor, and ranged for 5 to 6 *annas*. This little yield did not provide food for long, the price of rice continued very high... tobacco yielded a fair outturn, but the market was dull, and people were obliged to dispose of their stocks at low price. By the middle of April 1897, the resources of the people were drained, and as the price rice continued abnormally high, considerable distress prevailed."⁶⁴ The lower strata of the society suffered the most; "the landless class, the destitute widows, and the sick and invalid farmers with their families for instances are in great distress...directly begged for relief from the authorities...large number of the people are getting enfeebled for want of sufficient and proper food, and many ultimately be reduced to quite a helpless condition."⁶⁵ In the evil days of the sufferers the govt. opened limited relief centres and formed committees in each of the sub-divisions of the state for supervise the work. They were employed to manage the relief centres. An amount of Rs. 15,000 was granted for relief. Dole of rice of one *powa* and half with a piece for salt etc. per head per *diam* were given twice a week. In this distress the kind people donated an amount of Rs. 6829-7-9.⁶⁶

Through this discussion it is evident that agrarian activities were mainly conducted on indigenous methods of technology. Generally, the agrarian society applied native knowledge in agriculture in the age of colonial period as before. Scientific method-based land settlements were taken to well organise the revenue system and to enrich indirectly the English in the study period. Well organised revenue system increased the income of the state. The British took its profitable share. They annually drained half of the total revenue⁶⁷ from this state from 1773 as a subsidy. In the study period Drain of wealth was one of the prime causes of economic distress of cultivators, which started since 1773. It pressurised over the agrarian society. So, it does not prove that the extension agrarian areas helped to develop the agrarian life, because revenue was increased with the increase of cultivating areas. The transfer of land from the indigenous people to the hands of outsiders was also another cause of economic deterioration of the sons of soil. Many of the outsiders became *jotedars* in palace of the sons of soil by depriving them. The 54% rent came from the outsiders in the state in 1872.⁶⁸ The period witnessed ups and downs of the price of crops. Calamities were interlinked with the agrarian life. They had to face much economic troubles during the natural calamities. Cholera was a familiar disease, which very easily outbursts into an epidemic form. There were not appropriate supplies of medicine by the government although modern medicinal treatment system started in the State in the latter nineteenth century. The cultivators had to left their houses and properties for new settlement due to cholera epidemic. It disturbed the agrarian activities. However, the economic situation of the *jotedars* was better than the dependent *adhiars*. *Adhiars* were the most suffer section of the agrarian society. During the reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan some modern enterprises were taken to improve the agriculture of the existing situation, but the cultivators were not mentally prepared to accept the modern technique by leaving their traditional technology. Besides, the initiations were limited. It is a very astonished matter that no agrarian revolt has been noticed in this area due to strong administration.

NOTES AND REFERENCES :

1. Durgadas Mazumdar, *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar*, Calcutta: Secretary to the Government of West Bengal, Information and Public Relations Department, 1977, pp. 40-41.
2. Durgadas Mazumdar, *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar*, Calcutta: Secretary to the Government of West Bengal, Information and Public Relations Department, 1977, p. 1; Lalit Chandra Barman, *Rajyer Dabite Uttarbange Andolan*, Siliguri: N. L. Publishers, 2008, pp. 149-50.
3. *The Imperial Gazetteers of India*, vol. x, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908, p. 379; proceedings of the Govt. of West Bengal (political) Aug. 1905, no. 6, p. 131.

4. It is an established fact that the first Subsidiary Alliance was signed between the East India Company (henceforth EIC) and Nijam Ali of Hyderabad. Many of the text books and reference books consist of this event. Is it true? Truly the answer will be 'no'. Because the EIC won the battle of Plassey in 1757 and later turned into a political establishment from a trading company. The revenue of Bengal *suba* increased the political power of the EIC. However, the Deva Raja of Bhutan captured Cooch Behar and Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan was brought to Bhutan as captive and thus Cooch Behar State was suffering from political disorder. In these evil days Najir Deu Khagendra Narayan (Commandar-in-chief of Cooch Behar) on behalf of Dharendranarayan, signed a subsidiary treaty with the EIC 5th April, 1773 to protect the state from the unwanted oppression caused by the enemy Bhutias. The treaty consisted of 9 articles. Every article proves authoritative notion of the company and tried to make Cooch Behar as subordinate one some of the articles of the Treaty are as following.

“(i) That the said Raja will immediately pay into the hands of the Collector of Rangpore Rs., 50,000 to defray the expenses of the force sent to assist him. (ii) That if more than Rs. 50,000 are expended, the Raja make it good to Honorable East India Company, but in case any part of it remains unexpended that it be delivered back. (iii) That the Raja will acknowledge subjection to the East India Company upon his country being cleared of his enemies, will allow the Cooch Behar country to be annexed to the Province of Bengal (iv) That Raja further agrees to make over to the East India Company one-half of the annual revenues of Cooch Behar forever (v) That the moiety shall remain to the Raja and his heirs forever, provided he is firm in his alliance to Honorable United East India Company (vi) That to ascertain the value of Cooch Behar country, the Raja will deliver a fair *hastabud* of his district into the hands of such person as the Honorable President and Council of Calcutta shall think proper to depute for that purpose, upon which valuation the annual *Malguzari*, which the Raja is to pay, shall be established (vii) The amount of *Malguzari* settled by such person of the Honorable the East India Company shall depute shall be perpetual (viii) That the Honorable East India Company assist the said Raja with a force when he has occasion for it for the defense of the country, the Raja bearing the expense (ix) That treaty shall remain in force for the space of two years, or till such time as advices may be received from the Court of Directors, empowering the President and the council to ratify the same forever.” (Khan Choudhuri Amanutullah Ahmed, *Koch Biharer Itihas*, vol. I, Kolkata: Modern Book Agency, 2008, pp. 374-75).

As per the Treaty, certainly independent Cooch Behar State was turned into a subordinate and it had to purchase the Alliance by paying annually permanent subsidy to the Company for helping her. So, it said based on the Articles of the Treaty that the EIC under Warren Hastings made the first Subsidiary Alliance (1773) with Cooch Behar State in Indian sub-continent, not with Nijam Ali of Hyderabad. Truly Lord Wellesley was the eligible successor of imperialistic Warren Hastings. He followed Hastings' (1772-85) subsidiary policy. So, it is clearly said that the Subsidiary Alliance signed between Nijam Ali and the Company, was not first.

5. Durgadas Mazumdar, *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar*, Calcutta: Secretary to the Government of West Bengal, Information and Public Relations Department, 1977, p. 147; Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri, *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar: Cooch Behar State Government, 1903, p. 534. W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. X, London: Trubner & Co., 1876, p. 388. But Hunter shows six classes of tenants, who were as follow, *jotrdars*, *chukanidars*, *dar-chukanidars*, *daradar-chukanidars*, *tasya-chukanidars* and *adhiras*.
6. W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. X, London: Trubner & Co., 1876, p. 390.
7. W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal, Darjeeling, Jailapiguri and Kuch Bihar*, vol.X, Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1974, p. 389. Also see Syamal Chandra Sarkar, (ed.), *Changing Society of Twentieth Century Bengal*, Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 2014, p. 246.
8. Madhab Chandra Adhikary, *Rajbanshi Samaj o Manishi Panchanan Barma*, vol. I, Kolkata: Reader Service, 2014, p. 36.

9. Durgadas Mazumdar, *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar*, Calcutta: Secretary to the Government of West Bengal, Information and Public Relations Department, 1977, p. 147.
10. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri, *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar: Cooch Behar State Government, 1903, p. 158.
11. *Ibid.* p. 158.
12. Aanandagopal Ghosh, (ed. et al), *Koch Bihar Itihas*, (1865), Uttarbanga Visvabidyalaya: Uttarbanga Itihas Parisad, 1990, p. 10. The book mentions one type of betel-nut, but Durgadas Mazumdar (*ibid.* p. 15) mentions another three types of betel-nut, viz., *deshwali* (indigenous), *bangla* and *ram-gua*.
13. *Bilatialu* is said to have originated from Britain or brought about by the British under colonial period; because the word *bilat* indicated Britain in the contemporary period. So, *bilati alu* literally means potato of England.
14. Aanandagopal Ghosh, (ed. et al), *Koch Bihar Itihas*, (1865), Uttarbanga Visvabidyalaya: Uttarbanga Itihas Parisad, 1990, p. 10.
15. Shashibhusan Haldar, (ed.), *Koch Behar Hitaishini Sabha Bakritamala*, Nripendranath Pal, (ed.), Kol : Anima Prakashani, 2004, p. 40-53.
16. Aanandagopal Ghosh, (ed. et al), *Koch Bihar Itihas*, (1865), Uttarbanga Visvabidyalaya: Uttarbanga Itihas Parisad, 1990, p. 10.
17. Shashibhusan Haldar, (ed.), *Koch Behar Hitaishini Sabha Bakritamala*, (1865), Kolkata: Anima Prakashani, 2004, P. 76. They were *chama/ kulapati, Shakunichama, Daraichmeni, Bara meni, Chotameni, Patuakhuli, Velenghi, Sindurkhatua, Dhadhdhi, and Noukhola*
18. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri, *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar: Cooch Behar State Government, 1903, p. 160; W. W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Benagal, Vol. X, London: Trubner & Co., 1876, p. 385. Hunter tarces *pasun* to be *khurpa*. It is not right. The *pasun* and *khurpa* both different from each other. However, other formations are right.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 161 Also See, Shashibhusan Haldar, (ed.). *Koch Behar Hitaishini Sabha Bakritamala*, (1865), Kolkata: Anima Prakashani, 2004, p. 55. Babu Ramchandra Ghosh gives a lecture on agriculture on Cooch Behar in 1865, He mentions *do-chashfor Hamanti*.
21. W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengali*, Vol. X, London: Trubner & Co., 1876, p. 394.
22. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri, *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar: Cooch Behar State Government, 1903, p. 162.
23. W. W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. X, London: Trubner & Co., 1876, p. 394.
24. *Bansh*, a Bengali word, means bamboo and *tola* means lifting. The both words '*bansher tola*' indicate together lifting something with bamboo. What is 'lifting'? Answer is water lifting with bamboo from the mentioned sources.
25. There are ever five kinds of bamboos in the district. They are (i). *Bara Bansh* which has thick stem in which the joints lie close. (ii) *Makla Bansh* is an indigenous species. It is straight and slender and light in weight. It can be split easily and is not affected by moth. (iii) *Nal Bansh* or reed bamboo is very slender and light. It looks like a giant reed and is very straight. (iv) *Jaota Bansh* resembles the *Makla* but, is less straight and has les uniform fibers and (v) *Beru Bansh* or prickly bamboo. This grows with thickly set branches containing sharp pricks. (Durgadas Mazumdar, *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar*, Calcutta: Secretary to the Government of West Bengal, Information and Public Relations Department, 1977, p. 15-16.).
26. The length of handle varies from one to another.
27. The *chhemti* along with the water lifting both are the primitive components in the area, which have come from one generation to another.
28. W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. X, London: Trubner & Co., 1876, p. 394.

29. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri, *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar: Cooch Behar State Government, 1903, p. 394. A famous native adage is regarding good quality tobacco cultivation in a local area of Sitai block '*Adabarir pat/ Barabanglarjat*', which means Adabari has the best leaf and Barabangla, the best quality.
30. At present, it is popularly known as *sinda* in a greater part of Cooch Behar District.
31. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri, *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar: Cooch Behar State Government, 1903, p. 183-84.
32. *Ibid*, p. 184.
33. Other crops were also carried with this. It is known from oral history that area of Sitalkuchi block was full of jungles. The population was rare. There was want of rout in the village. The people group by group went to *hat* (periodical market) on foot. They used small *kora* for caring articles as well as they used it to counter attack on the tigers which had attacked them on the way of jungle. The name Bagmara (killing of tigers) of Sitalkuchi signifies location of jungles.
34. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri, *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar: Cooch Behar State Government, 1903, p. 174.
35. *Ibid*, p. 174.
36. *Ibid*, p. 160.
37. P. K. Bhatyacharya, (ed.), *The Kingdom of Kamata-Koch Behar in Historical Perspective*, Calcutta: Ratna Prakashan, 2000, p. 177.
38. Durgadas Mazumdar, *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar*, Calcutta: Secretary to the Government of West Bengal, Information and Public Relations Department, 1977, p. 145.
39. *Ibid*, p. 145.
40. *Ibid*, pp. 145-47.
41. *Ibid*, p. 105.
42. Hussain, Amjad(ed.), *Kamrup Theke Kamatapuri*; Surad Publication, Kol, 2014, p-142
43. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri, *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar: Cooch Behar State Government, 1903, p. 139.
44. The Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar State for the year 1897-98, No. 1248, p. 66.
45. Pampa Das, *Maharaja Nripendra Narayan o Tatkalin Cooch Behar Samaj o Sahitya*, Kolkata: Renu Prakashai, 2015, p. 20.
46. *Ibid*, p. 74. However, inhuman slave system was banned by law under Maharaja Nripendra Narayan in 1884.
47. Samuel Turner, *An Account of Embassy to the Court of The Teshoo Lama, in Tibet*, London: 1800, p. 11.
48. Arbind Dakua, 'Kuch Biharers Sthan Nam', *Loka-Utsa*, Vol. 2, Issue No. 2, January, 2014, p. 198. He discusses the origin of the name 'Chyangrabanda' (now an international check post in Cooch Behar). He shows also another cause of this name that here the boys were tied (it may be with rope) or sold in cash. It indicates the slave system.
49. Dipen Roy, 'Loka Sanskritiranginay Rajbanshi Praband Prabachan', *Loka-Utsa*, Vol. 2, Issue No. 2, January, 2014, p. 288. A proverb in Rajbanshi/ Kamatapuri Language was "*Aatojagaghanabhasur; tateasilo mama swashur.*" [English translation: Little space, many members in a family, in this condition a relative also has come.]
50. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri, *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar: Cooch Behar State Government, 1903, p. 78.
51. *The Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar state for the year for 1878-79*, Cooch Behar State Press, cob., 1879, p. 52.

52. Swapan Kumar Roy, 'Prachin Mathabhanga Ruparekha', *Mansai*, 2008, p. 45; There is an oral history among the sons of soil in this state when an epidemic specially caused by cholera broke out in a certain area or village in the state, the existing people of affected area and villagers of adjoining areas fled to further areas and settled down. Even no one was available to carry corpses to chita (*funeral rite*.)
53. *The Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar State for the year 1892-93*, Report no. 1387, Cooch Behar State Press, 1893, p. 23.
54. Madhab Chandra Adhikary, *Rajbanshi Samaj o Manishi Panchanan Barma*, vol. I, Kolkata: Reader Service, 2014, p. 39.
55. The calamities like epidemic caused greater migration for safety of life. The Census of 1881 shows total population of Cooch Behar state was 6,02,624; after twenty years the census of 1901-2 shows a total population of 5,65,116 in the state. (see the chart, Durgadas Mazumdar, *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar*, Calcutta: Secretary to the Government of West Bengal, Information and Public Relations Department, 1977, p. 63). In twenty years 37508 people decreased. (It is known that a lot of people emigrated to Western Duars. As many as 32224 people migrated to Duars from Cooch Behar State as per the Census of 1891. Another cause of emigration was cheap rate of *jote* (land holding). The English maintained rule and order in Duars. *Jote* was cheap. One could get a *jote* at Rs. 20-2000 on the basis of annual rent after settlement in 1895, which attracted the outsiders to settle down at Western Duars. Many of migrants from Cooch Behar State were established themselves as *jotedars* in Western Duars. Madhab Chandra Adhikary, *Rajbanshi Samaj o Manishi Panchanan Barma*, vol. I, Kolkata: Reader Service, 2014, pp. 38- 39.
56. *Bhari* means a person who carries loads. But being an English man he could not write proper spelling of Bengali word *bari*, which means house. So, *bhari* will be considered here as *bari*.
57. *The Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar State for the year 1878-79*, p. 5.
58. *The Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar State for the year 1897-98*, appendix, No. 2755. From D. R. Lyall, Esq., Superintendent of the state, Cooch Behar; To the President, State Council, Cooch Behar, Cooch Behar, the 15th December, 1897, p. ii.
59. *Ibid*, p. ii.
60. *Ibid*, p. iii.
61. By the end of twentieth century the *kacha* wells were only medium of irrigation on the agrarian field where no other sources of water. It has been noticed only in the places where tobacco crop was cultivated. The areas of Sitalkuchi (including Lalbazar GP) and Sitai blocks are an instance. Irrigation with *kacha* well was a traditional trend. So, in the study period this type of well was most popular in high land where no other sources of water.
62. *The Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar State for the year 1897-98*, No. 2755, From- D. R. Lyall, Esq., Superintendent of the state, Cooch Behar, To the President, State Council, Cooch Behar Cooch Behar, the 15th December, 1897, p. vi.
63. *Ibid*, p. iv.
64. *Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar State for the year 1897-98*, No. 972, p. 4.
65. *The Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar State for the year 1897-98*, No. 1248P, 66. Roughly estimated 6500 distressed people required urgent relief all over the state- Sadar (1500), Toofanganj (1000), Dinjata (2000), Mathabhaga (1200) and Mekligunj (800). It is also admitted that in report that although the number was apparently large.
67. *The Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar State for the year 1897-98*, No. 972, p. 4. For further details, see, Anglo-Koch Treaty of 1773.
68. Madhab Chandra Adhikary, *Rajbanshi Samaj o Manishi Panchanan Barma*, vol. I, Kolkata: Reader Service, 2014, p. 40.

Soumyendranath Tagore: An Exceptional Socialist Revolutionary (1920-1947)

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Soumyendranath Tagore was born on 08 October 1901 to the famous Tagore family of Jorasanko. His father was Sudhindranath Tagore and mother was Charubala Debi. He was christened by ‘Maharshi’ Debendranath Tagore. Soumyendranath Tagore has said, “He named me Soumyendranath.¹ I was the last person to be named by him. It is my great fortune that I got my name from him.” Soumyendranath Tagore was a versatile genius of the Jorasanko Tagore family. Being inspired by Gandhiji early in his life, he got actively involved in politics during the Non-Cooperation Movement. He was the first member of the Tagore family to join active politics. But, he eventually fell out with Gandhian politics for he could not bring himself to agree with Gandhi’s views on the use of Charkah, the Khilafat movement and casteism in Hindu society. Soumyendranath strongly differ from Gandhi’s view on Raja Rammohun Roy. Soumyendranath had a very progressive and rational mindset when it came to the issues of race and caste discrimination and religious bigotry. However, it was from Gandhi that he adopted the path of simple-living which he never left. Under Gandhi’s influence, he started wearing a *dhoti* and wrapped a *khaddar* shawl over his body.

While he was coming into doubts about Gandhian political methods, he came in contact with Socialism. Soon enough, he found himself greatly drawn into the ideas of Communism, which in a way was the logical direction to take after his involvement with Socialism. In this time he joined the group around the magazine *Langal* which was the mouthpiece of the Workers and Peasants Party (hereafter, WPP). In March 1926 Soumyendranath joined the WPP.² Here, he came in contact with Muzaffar Ahmed, Hemanta Sarkar and Nalini Gupta and eventually became their

colleague. He joined the Communist Party of India (here after CPI) in 1926 and thereby became the first communist of his famous family. In the second annual conference of the Workers and Peasant Party (1927), Saumyendranath was elected general-secretary. By this time, he had also developed strong links with different trade unions and terrorist groups.

At this time Saumyendranath decided to develop contact with the different terrorist groups operating in Bengal and to bring them into the WPP. One of the chief aims of the WPP was to bring the middle-class, educated group out of the circuit of terrorism and the Congress and to make them part of the popular movement. Saumyendranath conferred with different groups in Chittagong, Nadia, Dacca and Calcutta. He met Anil Roy, Lila Nag and others of the Sree Sanga of Dacca. He also met Dr. Bhupal Basu who was at that time hiding in Dacca.³

The terrorist groups at this time were planning to assassinate Calcutta Police Chief Charles A. Tegart. At the request of the revolutionaries Saumyendranath gave the permission of making bombs in a ground-floor room of the Jorasanko House. Saumyendranath has written, "My father or Rabindranath could not have conceived in their wildest dream that bombs were being manufactured in their house to kill Charles Tegart. Gradually over some days the materials were collected in my room. Old Haricharan used to make brass wares according to order for us. I made him manufacture brass bomb shells for the boys."⁴

Saumyendranath Tagore, Chittagong Group and Nalini Gupta were advocated bomb making in all districts and putting into effect the assassinations schemes in order to check the activity of the police. Actually, Sukhendu Bikash Dutta of the Chittagong Group and Nalini Gupta were visiting Saumyendranath Tagore's house daily. They were manufacturing the picric acid and gun-cotton.⁵

Bombs were made during night. Two or three boys would come and make the bombs. Saumyendranath used to help them as much as he could; yellow patches formed on the floor as well as on their hands. The room was filled with the smell of gun powder. Comrade Allison was in Calcutta at this time. He would sit on an easy chair in one corner of the room and watch the boys at work.⁶ Secret intelligence branch report stated on 18 October 1926 that Nalini Gupta was teaching young men how to manufacture explosives. Tagore and Santosh Mukherjee went to Dacca to organize centres. Nalini Gupta was showing the preliminary process for manufacturing explosives in the house of Saumyendranath Tagore. Nightly, Nalini Gupta, Saumyendranath Tagore, Sanat Kumar Mukherjee

and others were discussing the methods of manufacturing explosives at the Jorasanko house.⁷

One day Saumyendranath was informed by Nalini Gupta that their Harrison Road office had been raided by the police and there was a strong possibility that the Jorasanko House would be raided too. Saumyendranath immediately called the *darowan* (guard/ gate-keeper) and had him put all the bomb-making material in a taxi. The material was then thrown into the Ganges.⁸ Jasimuddin has written that the police used to raid Saumyendranath's house at least two to three times every month.⁹ IB report stated on 24 January 1927 that at about 10pm that night Debendra Guha and another person went to the Jorasanko House to learn to manufacture bombs, and at about 10.30 pm Nalini Gupta came in a hurry and said that the *Langal* office at Harrison Road was being raided. He asked Saumyendranath and others to remove all the articles from the house at once. Saumyendranath called a taxi into the compound of the house and helped Sukhendu Bikash Dutta and Debendra Guha remove all the chemicals and apparatus for making explosives into the taxi.¹⁰

According to an IB report on 02 February 1927, Donald Campbell, who had been arrested in Calcutta, was a Bolshevik agent. His real name was George Allison. He was a paid agent of the Soviet government and came to India with a forged passport and for formulating a scheme of Bolshevik propaganda in the country. Saumyendranath was instrumental in providing Allison with legal advice and bail after the latter's arrest in Calcutta. Saumyendranath had great intimacy with Allison and Allison spent a great deal of his time in Tagore's House.¹¹ Tagore also connected with some arms smugglers of Ratu Sarkar Lane of Central Avenue. Saumyendranath Tagore, Sanat Mukherjee and others went to Dacca with explosives. They had a big leather case containing bombs and two 'dynamites'. They also discussed with Anil Roy for several hours about the terrorist movement. The main points were:

1. The present political situation of the country and how to meet it.
2. The position of different political parties in Bengal and how to inaugurate a very powerful terrorist movement against the British government by amalgamating the different revolutionary parties.
3. The import and accumulation of arms from various sources etc.

Anil Roy agreed to cooperate with them.¹²

In January 1927, Sukhendu Bikash Dutta went to Tagore's residence and had a discussion about the plan of work. Saumyendranath said that they

should build mass support through the medium of cooperative societies and 'Seva Samitis'. He also said that they should have sufficient explosives after a year to carry on guerrilla warfare. Saumyendranath said that the police were trying to begin a conspiracy case against him. Campbell and he urged that before his arrest arrangements should be made to assassinate Charles Tegart and other police officers. Saumyendranath instructed Debendra Guha and Sukhendu Bikash Dutta to purchase chemicals for the manufacture of explosives. So early in 1927, the name of Saumyendranath cropped up in connection with plans for assassination of police officers, high government officials and police informers.¹³

It was reported on 24 February 1927 that the Bengal Communist Party was working with the *Anushilan Samiti*.¹⁴ Gopen Chakraborty, Nirode Chakravarty and others were nominated to the Executive Council. A secret committee was formed for the purpose of carrying out terrorist work of every sort and for arranging connection with the communists outside Bengal and abroad. Of the members of the Executive Council, Nalini Gupta, Muzaffar Ahmad, Abdul Halim and Saumyendranath Tagore intended to support the terrorist party strongly in the Executive Council.¹⁵

The following revolutionary parties were active in the early 1927 and the members of these parties had come to Saumyendranath and Nalini Gupta to receive instructions and to learn the process of manufacturing explosives:

1. The Dacca party of Nalini Dutta
2. The party of Anil Roy.
3. The party of Gopen Chakraborty
4. The group at Shantipur (Nadia) of which Tarapada is a member.
5. The group at Krishnagar under Promode Sen (detenu) and Sanat Mukherjee.
6. The West Bengal party of which Bijon Banerjee was leader.
7. The Bhowanipore party.
8. A group at Chittagong under Sukhendu Bikash Dutta.
9. The Benares party¹⁶

IB reported on 03 April 1927 that a letter of introduction from Sukhendu Bikash Dutta to Basanta Sen showed revolutionary activities of Saumyendranath. The letter, which addressed Basanta Sen by his first name, instructed:

Please send M (2) and the Small (3) (which give five rounds) from the Cyclist (4) the rest (5) is left for you all. Rs. 100 is sent. Please take the

things (6) from the big man (7) on payment of this amount. If money is required for the machine (8) please ask Debendra (9) and we shall reply later on.

The key to the letter's code was as follows: 2: Mauser; 3: Small Automatic Pistol; 4: Lakshmi Ghosh; 5: the Colt; 6: Arms (revolver); 7: Saumyendranath Tagore; 8: Arms; 9: Debendra Guha¹⁷

Saumyendranath was doing organizational work for his party and simultaneously pursuing writing, singing and acting. At this time the people who had joined the work of organizing the party were also members of the Congress. In December 1925, three members of the Central Committee of the CPI were also members of the All India Congress Committee.¹⁸ The party was gradually taking a definite shape; however, the theoretical knowledge was quite limited. It was also being felt that the party's link with the Communist International was very slender. The little connection that was there was through M.N. Roy. As such the need to send a representative of the CPI to Moscow was strongly felt. At this time Saumyendranath's presence in India was no longer safe. Tagore's links with some revolutionaries had also come to light. These revolutionaries had sometimes got shelter at the Jorasanko House and had even manufactured bombs there. As a result of this Saumyendranath had become a police suspect.¹⁹

Right below Saumyendranath's office and also in the road on which his house was located in Jorasanko, spies of the police were active. Suspicion of the police gradually thickened about Saumyendranath. Police Commissioner Tegart was a friend of Pradyot Kumar Tagore of Pathuriaghata. Pradyot Kumar informed Saumyendranath's uncle Gaganendranath that the police would be forced to arrest Saumyendranath very soon. When Saumyendranath returned from Comilla, he came to know this from his father. Immediately he went to the party office and informed Muzaffar Ahamad and Nalini Gupta. From then on, Saumyendranath started trying to leave the country and go to Europe.²⁰

His chief motive behind going abroad, however, was to arrange the training of revolutionaries in Russia and to procure arms for them. He also intended to communicate the present state of India to the leading authorities of different countries and to the Bolsheviks in Europe for the purpose of procuring funds to carry on the revolutionary organization in India. It appears that he received financial assistance from a revolutionary party in Krishnagar, Nadia from money collected by dacoities towards his passage and other expenses abroad.²¹

In the month of January 1934, Saumyendranath Tagore returned to

Calcutta from abroad. Immediately after his return he became involved in the work and organization of the Communist Party.²² Intelligence Branch reported that Saumyendranath Tagore was persistently conspiring to bring about a violent revolution in Bengal. British government in India was planning to take action against Saumyendranath under the anti-Terrorist legislation.²³

After returning to India, Saumyendranath started his work with Abdul Halim but gradually difference of opinion between them grew sharper. There were several reasons for Saumyendranath's disillusionment with the CPI. Saumyendranath's initial differences with Abdul Halim started around Hitlerism. In his book *Hitlerism, The Aryan Rule in Germany* Saumyendranath blamed the Social Democratic Party of Germany for the rise of Nazism and the failure of communism. Halim did not support his views. Saumyendranath was also against organizing the Red Trade Union in opposition to the All India Trade Union Congress. He believed that such division would weaken, even destroy, the nascent trade union movement in India. Further, while Saumyendranath believed that the Indian Communists should remain connected to the International Communist Movement, he firmly believed that the principles of Marxist ideology be adopted and followed according to the situation and life conditions in India and not by the Stalin-dominated Comintern. This was not the stand that the CPI found acceptable. As a result, in August 1934, Saumyendranath formed a separate party, the Communist League of India (hereafter CLI). At first the CLI started to work in strict secrecy with nearly 100 members from Calcutta and Howrah. Gradually the organizational work of the party began to expand. But the police kept strict vigilance over the activities of the party. The organization was also severely cash-strapped. Saumyendranath would himself stand at the street-corner selling *Ganabani*, the mouthpiece of the CLI, and personally delivered the newspaper to the stalls. In the 1930s the organization of the CLI had spread to a number of regions of undivided Bengal.

Conclusion: It can be said that Saumyendranath took prominent part in centralising or amalgamating different revolutionary groups. He acted as a chief supplier of arms and ammunition, instigated commission of political dacoities, assassinations etc. He supported dacoities to collect money for this purpose. The members of his party were recruited from the revolutionary ranks also. He controlled or had in his possession arms and ammunitions. His sphere of activities was extensive and it spread over several districts of undivided Bengal and outside Bengal also. Such

places were Barisal, Dacca, Howrah, Hooghly, Malda, Rajshahi, Nadia, Murshidabad, Bankura, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Khulna, Jessore and other districts. I.B. Home Department, New Delhi in a letter to Deputy Inspector General of Police, Bengal described Saumyendranath as “a dangerous terrorist”.²⁴ Actually Saumyendranath was a revolutionary. He always dreamed for Socialist Revolution in India. Saumyendranath wrote, “The hour has struck for the preparation of the Socialist Revolution and for setting the stage for the final struggle for India’s independence.”²⁵ “Tagore made no bones of the fact that he became a revolutionary because at heart he was a Romantist [sic]. It should be made clear that for him a Romantist was not an escapist but a rebel against the penury of life as he found it. A Romantist has vision and daring to strive towards the creation of a social order in which men are freed from the yoke of exploitation. In this sense all true revolutionaries are Romantists.”²⁶ So Saumyendranath took a radical, revolutionary and uncompromising role in the Indian freedom movement. His aim was not only to protect the peasants and working class from tyranny and oppression but also to awaken revolutionary consciousness among them.

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Tebhaga Movement of Dinajpur and the Reaction of Santal Peasants

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Introduction

The word 'Tebhaga' means three shares of harvest related to agrarian movement of Bengal. In the last two years of the British Raj, a major agrarian movement broke out, which shocked the zamindari system of Bengal as well as India. Traditionally, the sharecroppers accustomed to hold their tenancy on fifty-fifty basis of the share of the produce popularly known as Bargadari, Adhiar, Bhagchas etc. Under this system, the peasants were not the owner of his own production and could not able to enjoy the produce freely. They would rent the land without any guarantee that they could plough the land, but could be evicted by the landlords at any moment. The bargadars or sharecroppers had no occupancy right. Therefore, the peasants were least satisfied with this system. This traditional system was challenged in 1946-47, when the sharecroppers declared that the system was unjust and claimed two-third of the share of the whole produce on the ground of their investment and labour input. The sharecroppers started to put their demand in practice¹ and since then their movement was known as Tebhaga Movement. The movement erupted mostly in the districts of Dinajpur, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Jessore, Khulna, Mymensingh and 24 Parganas² initially led by Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha, an unit of the Communist Party of India. In the district of Dinajpur the Tebhaga Movement was most intensely felt. One significant feature of the Tebhaga Movement of Dinajpur was the active participation of santal peasants. The present paper describes and analyses the role of santal peasants in the Tebhaga Movement and to throw light on the capability of the tribal peasants of the district.

Looking Back at Dinajpur

Among the districts of West Bengal Dinajpur was well-known for its historical importance. The district lay between 26°29'54" and 25°10'55" north latitudes, and between 89°00'30" and 87°48'37" east longitudes in the Jalpaiguri Division of West Bengal.³ The District was a triangular tract of the country, with the acute angle towards the north, lying between the Districts of Jalpaiguri and Rangpur on the east and Purnea on the west, and in the south bordering on parts of Maldah, Rajshahi and Bogra.⁴ The inhabitants of the district were mostly comprised Rajbansi, Santal, Oraon, Pahan, Munda and the Muslims. Apart from this among the zamindars and landlords mostly were Hindu businessmen coming from different districts. These people living on the low level of the society became impellent due to oppression of the colonial rulers and exploitation of the zamindars and landlords. A worth mentioning part of the population of Dinajpur District consisted of such tribals like Santal, Oraon and Munda.⁵ We know that the Damodar and Kansai River flow through Bangladesh and Bihar and to be precise these tribals come mainly from the places contiguous to these two rivers. The District is notable for the very small number of its inhabitants. In recent years, immigrants from the Santal Paragans and the Chota Nagpur plateau came to the Barind and other sparsely populated portions of the District. Besides these aboriginal tribes we find a fair number of settlers, who have come from Murshidabad, Nadia, Bihar and Central Provinces and have settled down as cultivators, but the great majority of these people are of the seasonal settlers who used to come in the cold weather in search of employment as agricultural labourers and returned to their homes in the Spring.⁶ The Santals of Dinajpur also came from the adjacent District Malda.⁷ Mr. Gait, the Census Commissioner of 1901 wrote, "About fifty years ago it occurred to the Manager of a Government estate that the wasteland might be reclaimed, if Santals were imported and settled there. The experiment was made and proved such a success that the influx has continued ever since... Their land has been followed by a few Mundas and Oraon from Ranchi".⁸ The great Bengal Famine of 70s and the tortures unleashed by Devi Singh, one third population of the District of Dinajpur died. So, for the restarting of cultivation and farming Santals were brought in and Dewan Janakiram conferred on them citizenship of this District with additional benefit of low price tax free land.⁹ Gradually they acclimatized themselves with the soil of this District and shared with others, their joy and sorrows, grew crops, and began to join in the various movements.¹⁰

Role of Communist Party and BPKS

From 1946 both Communist Party and Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha called for a struggle of Tebhaga. In the month of October 1946, the District Committee of the Communist party started agitation with three watchwords namely harvest paddy¹¹ for one's own granary, no adhis, we want tebhaga and no interest against borrowed paddy. In the planning of this movement the whole district was divided into six regions.¹² These were....1) Thakurgaon East Region under the leadership of Bibhuti Guha and Ajit Roy, 2) Thakurgaon Western Region under the leadership of Janardan Bhattacharyya, 3) Chiri Region under the leadership of Sudhir Samajpati and Sachendu Chakraborty, 4) Phulbari and Patiram Region under the leadership of Rupnarayan Roy and Kali Sarkar, 5) Chopra region under the leadership of Bhaben Singh and Adhir Biswas, 6) Balurghat Region under the leadership of Sunil Sen. The agitators had the main demand of bringing the jotedars to agree to have a share of the crop out of the three parts. The peasant did not agree to give even the half of the share to the jotedars and they claimed for collecting the whole of the crop to be preserved in the storehouse of the peasants only and if ever any share distribution was to be done in the farmhouse of the peasants only. But jotedars offered this agreement that land was theirs, seeds and fertilizers were also given by them and so they will not agree to this system of share distribution. Naturally, conflict arose between the forces of jotedars and peasants. On 4th January 1947, in the port of Chirir of Dinajpur Shibram Majhi and Samiruddin were shot by police to death. These two men became the first martyrs of the Tebhaga movement of Dinajpur as well as Bengal. Shibram was a poor sharecropper from santal community. The chirir incident had spread all over the district and obviously, the whole peasant community burst into perturbation.¹³ Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha reported that in the Tebhaga movement of Dinajpur 40 agitators were killed, 1200 arrested, 10000 wounded and 65 policemen also wounded. On 19th March, 1947, *The Statesman* wrote "she had been dumb for centuries, today that speechless being has become voluble with one shout of a slogan, he is now marching forward crossing big fields growing grass or lying follow with grass only on it. Everybody of these suddenly enlightened men had rifle perched on his shoulder while the procession was red flag held in the hands of the front liners. Simply this is inspiring an event to make a revolution successful. Really a chill of fear goes down our spines when they are seen lunging one another and addressing 'comrade' while chanting loudly inquilab"¹⁴

Role of Santal

To locate the role of Santal peasants in the Tebhaga Movement, we have to go back in pre-tebhaga uprising. Since the beginning of anti-British movement, the santals had started to involve in the movements. In 1938, we found mass scale participation of the santals in the Fourteen Point Demand. By nature, the santals were to a large extent united. They forever lived in community basis. Consequently their sense of community perception was greatly strong. Everywhere, they fought together both men and women. Even, the santal women were too valour than men. After Santal Insurrection of 1855-56, the jotedars of Dinajpur employed the santals in the field of agriculture especially to deforest the jungle lands. The jotedars also oppressed them. Actually, the santals were in triangular pressure from Jotedars or landlords, Mahajans or money-lenders and State Machinery.¹⁵ To get relief from this triangular pressure, the santals enthusiastically participated in Tebhaga Movement. In the Tebhaga Movement of Dinajpur, we found a considerable number of santals played leading role in different areas. They were Shibram Manjhi, Bhoju Tudu, Gedu Hembrom, Hapan Mardi, Majhi Soren, Narayan Murmu, Gahanua Mahato, Suchu Hembrom, Jalpa Murmu, and many others.

The Santals were generally active in Dinajpur in movements raising the demands of poor peasants. They were considered to be socially inferior for the reason that of their religions and customs. Due to economic oppression, they lost land through money owing and became agricultural labourers and sharecroppers.¹⁶ These poor sharecroppers were more desperate in the movement.

In Khanpur area under Balurghat Police Station, the Tebhaga Movement got its momentum. The village was comprised with jotedars, marginal peasants, adhiars and agricultural labourers. Here the Santals were too active. The main leaders of the movement of this area were Majhi Soren and Hopan Mardi. They were all Santal people. The focal point of their movement was Patiram area. If anywhere, the santals played tambour, it symbolised the peasants to assemble in a particular place. This tambour game produced the panic upon the jotedars and gave the sharecroppers combative inspiration.¹⁷

In the area of Kaliyaganj Police Station, the Tebhaga Movement was felt intense under the leadership of Bhaju Tudu, a popular Santal leader. In an interview, Basanta Chatterjee said the Tebhaga Movement got the largest shape in Kaliyaganj and Itahar thana areas. Here massive number of santals joined the movement and sentenced to imprisonment. They were imprisoned in Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Berhampur jails.¹⁸

Santal Women

A distinctive feature of the Tebhaga Movement of Dinajpur was the large scale participation of santal women. They played a key role in the movement which was needed in order to be successful. We may mention the name of Bimala Majhi, Bhandani Barmani, Phoko Barmoni, Sia Barmoni, Mati Barmoni, Brinda Barmoni, Jaya Barmoni and Rohini Barmani, who organised and mobilised women to demand and collect harvested crops. These Rajbansi women actually led the Santal women and worked shoulder to shoulder with them. In Rani Shankil Police Station, the Santal women led by Bhandani Barmani, a young married woman showed indomitable courage. In a confrontation between the police and the peasants, one peasant was injured by the police. Thereafter, a group of santal women under the leadership of Bhandani Barmani gheraoed the police and looted the guns from them. Even, one police officer was detained for whole night by the agitators. They also participated actively in Chirir Bandar incident where a santal was killed and about 15-20 santals were arrested. After this incident, the santal youths participated huge number in the movement.¹⁹ There were other women too, who played an important part in this incident like Rohini Barmani, Phuleswari Birgram, Rani Basanta, Rani Shankail²⁰ and many others. The santal women became aware about their social inequality, dependency and oppression by the jotedars and zamindars. There were many peasant courts in Dinajpur and the santal women lodged many cases against their tyranny for proper judgement. They were to some extent inspired by the *Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti*, Salt Satyagraha Movement and Hat Tola Movement.²¹

Significance

The Tebhaga Movement may not be considered as the popular movement of Bengal, but the participation of large scale tribal and non-tribal peasants gets the movement in pluralistic nature. It was spontaneous and marked as open challenge against the exploitation of the zamindars and jotedars. The tribal and non-tribal peasants proved to signify their importance as an essential part of the socio-economic fabric of the rural Bengal. It is well-known that every peasant movement was to some extent, an outcome of protest against exploitation and injustice of the landed class. The Tebhaga Movement of Dinajpur and the Santal participation was no exception to that. But here the santals were also the poor victims of the social evils of the time.²² It would not be an exaggeration if we say that from Tebhaga Movement the Communist Party got its footstep in the rural

areas of Dinajpur and popularity among the peasants and tribes. The Santal peasants were gradually engaged to take part in the movement for the two third shares of the crops. Their consciousness began about their rights and needs. From this time onwards the jotedars dared not to claim illegal taxes. As a result of this Tebhaga Movement Land Acquisition Act, Land Reforms Act etc. have been legislated. Beside this, this movement led the nation to freedom in the villages many step ahead. It deserves mentioning here that the impact of this movement helped a lot in bringing victory to the poor peasant Rupnarayan Roy from Dinajpur Constituency as M.L.A. in the Provincial Assembly Election in 1946. He got the tremendous support from the Santal community.

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Linking Environmental History of South Asia with Colonial Darjeeling Hills: A Unique Historical Palimpsest

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Section-I

A Brief Sketch of South Asian Environmental History

While initiating the search for a causal relation between human society and nature, scholars have been able to establish environmental history as an enticing field of academic enquiry. Within the general historiographical discourse on environmental history, two broad trends seem discernable: the American tradition and the French tradition. While the former thrusts upon the dialectics of environmental destruction/ degradation and conservation, with a focus on ‘deep’ ecology observing nature as possessing intrinsic value in itself which alone entitles it to be preserved and ‘shallow’ ecology, emphasizing preservation of nature because of its potential as a ‘resource’ for the use of humans the latter, represented by the Annales School of France, contradicts the American tradition of perennial changes occurring in the environment. The Annalists attempted to explain social and economic changes in an environmental setting that was subject to slow pace of observable change or no change.¹

Placed between these two ‘grand traditions’, the environmental historians of South Asia have benefited from both ends. For instance, Richard Grove and John MacKenzie have seen India as one of the tropical regions of the colonial world where the efforts of conservation received initial impetus.² On the other hand, the influence of the notion of *longue duree*³ can be viewed from the work of Chetan Singh, for instance, who found the fixed, almost eternal Himalayas to be informing social and economic

relations. Yet, South Asia's particular place in the field of environmental history perhaps rests on a set of unique and diverse ecological regimes with which American or French landscape may not be compared.⁴

Readings in Environmental History of South Asia is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the field of environmental history has grown enormously over the past few decades in Europe, North America, and more recently in South Asia, particularly; there has been significant contribution to this emerging field in India. Secondly, an environmental perspective on South Asia is important for asserting environmentalism in the context of its identical experience of colonial ecological regime providing a general framework for studying its history. Thirdly, contemporary debates on environmental history in South Asia dwell on broad range of issues without adequate appreciation of many contemporary problems in its historical context. An environmental-historical perspective may substantially inform many of today's efforts towards attaining sustainability and well-being.⁵

Finally, this paper, however, is not an attempt to provide a broader framework for understanding the intricate historical events for a longer period rather it provides an outline of how did colonial material transformations bring change in the landscape and how did production relations and mode of resource use in the colonial period make marks on the society, economy and politics of the region with special reference to Darjeeling hills forming part of the Eastern Himalayas, located partly in South Asia. More precisely, this article is a humble academic search for historical palimpsest of colonial Darjeeling hills.

Section II

Understanding Transformations, Landscapes, and History of Palimpsests

Few landscapes in India have attracted as much least attention by the post-colonial scholarship in terms of material transformations and environmental enquiry as Darjeeling Himalaya. Taking the idea of transformation into consideration, it may be argued that from the beginning to the end of colonial Darjeeling, the process of transformation belonged to history of the period duly cushioned by the then contemporary factors and forces. Such process of history had taken two closely related forms. In the first, the courses of mediations and military conquests had brought British East India Company to power in Darjeeling hills. In the second variant, a group of European Tea Planters, administrators, traders, and timber merchants drew riches from mercantile activities and from commercial tea cultivation. In both versions of the subordination process

of the local/settled people, critical mechanisms inhibited direct political and administrative control over the supply of resources required for the reproduction of British rule in Darjeeling.⁶

The material transformation of the landscape of colonized Darjeeling needs to be reviewed from this point of view along with two principal methodological tools of cultural biography and path-development approaches to landscape, such as (i) Landscape biographical approach and (ii) the Path-dependency approach.⁷ First, there is the physical dimension of the landscape. The immediately tangible landscape around us is called 'matterscape'. Second, there is the social dimension of landscape which may be called 'socoscape' or 'powerscape' comprising all the invisible norms, values, meanings and attitudes which surround the physical landscape or matterscape. Third is the individual dimension, the 'mindscape' in which individual perception of the landscape is the key. It is reflected through art, literatures, music and such other forms of creative expression of the human mind.⁸

While dealing with the landscape of the Darjeeling hills, one has to consider the colonial imprint in such landscape. Landscape thus consists of different time layers that are separated by time barriers. In order to understand the functioning of a particular layer one has to rely on the political situations of the time that created the very landscape. Lotman calls these borders or boundaries – a 'cultural explosion'.⁹ Another way to look to landscape change is the path-dependency approach.¹⁰ Path dependency "describes the stability of landscape in relation to changes, its development in accordance with the continuing traditions of previous generations, inherited meanings and the creations of a similar social geographical space".¹¹ Viewed in this perspective, a historical palimpsest of colonial Darjeeling has been attempted.

Darjeeling has had a primordial/feudal history of material landscape in pre-change, pre-explosion and pre-transformation period. We have lack of information what had been happening in the vast mountain ridges that surround Darjeeling during the long pre-historic period and obscured pre-colonial past. In such a landscape, the system of land use must have been involved in the agricultural politics of the tribal chieftains of the kingdoms of the Eastern Himalayas. Colonial interventions brought radical changes, with new regimes, and kinds of explosions that created new meaning system for Darjeeling Hills.

The material linkage of life with forest came under complete strain with the advent of colonialism in the landscape of Darjeeling. Agrarian changes,

concomitant state making and institution building, clearance of forests for making connecting roads and rails with the plains, commercial plantation of tea through British capitalist investments, invitation to the aristocracy of the neighboring plains for investment in making summer resorts by providing land at a concessional rate, private and state sponsored cinchona plantation, establishment of sanatoriums, resorts, military installations, introduction of scientific forestry, commercialization of natural resources etc, had been the economic and social changes that had ebbed and flowed across Darjeeling territory under colonial control.

SECTION III

Unique Material Transformations of Colonial Darjeeling

The motive of the British East India Company to occupy Darjeeling tract from the Rajah of Sikkim was not an accident of history, rather such occupation was a calculative move for strategic and political interests, as well as for resource extraction and revenue generation of the British Empire from the colonial periphery. The colonial scientific forestry in India, as a matter of coincidence, was first initiated in Darjeeling during early sixties of the nineteenth century. By then, Darjeeling forests were started depleting for extension of colonial development activities, valuable timber extractions and expansion of commercial tea plantations. As a corollary, scientific conservation of forests was meshed with imperial agenda of extraction of resources out of forest resources. However, in materializing the principal objectives of scientific forest policies, both the forest officials and revenue officials in Darjeeling worked hand in hand where the forest officials had to play a subordinate role in relation to revenue administrative officials being the Superintendent at the helm of all affairs of Darjeeling who was bestowed with huge discretionary powers.¹² In order to usher in scientific forest conservation in Darjeeling, the colonial forest policy had been pursued with the primary objective for the dispossession of land, the restriction of use and access to resources, the imposition of codified rules ignoring traditional customs, the prohibition of local trade in forest produce for the purpose of basic sustenance by indigenous populations, imposition of levies and taxes, prohibitory rules for grazing and cattle raising, and prohibition of shifting cultivation. In view of the absence of any legally documented proprietary hold of the native population over forested lands of the Darjeeling tract, the British established unquestionable proprietary hold and supremacy over such forested tract. Thus for colonialists, lands became nature's prizes.¹³

The imperatives of colonial forestry in the Darjeeling hills were essentially commercial. Broader social and environmental considerations were subjugated by the commercial and strategic utility of the colonizers. However, such a statement from the point of view of academic objectivity may be half-truth. Despite their imperial utilitarian ethos, the British Indian forest administrators had equal concern for long term environmental effects of deforestation caused by illegal and indiscriminate logging by the local contractors and mafias and shifting cultivation practiced by indigenous population. This concern of the British foresters and officials would prompt us to the other part of truth that environmentalism and British imperialism have a shared past.¹⁴

The massive expansion of commercial tea plantations and urbanization had greatly impinged on the lives of indigenous people and migrant labour force settled permanently in Darjeeling. Colonial capital investment in tea plantation had fundamentally altered the edifice of the subsistence based traditional pre-colonial economy of Darjeeling. Such interventions had certainly disturbed, destroyed and reconstructed both the natural landscape and matterscape of Darjeeling tract as existed in pre-colonial situation, but such pre-colonial situation, for Darjeeling, has not been revealed by our study as “golden age of equilibrium” which was destroyed by the colonizers. Our study runs counter to the established arguments treating the environment as either static or the existence of pre-colonial natural harmony which experienced dramatic rupture under colonial interventions. Our study establishes the fact that under the aegis of colonialism, the witnessed ecological transformations had been one of negotiated nature of colonial encounter.¹⁵

Thus, while viewing Darjeeling under colonial occupation, the present study agrees with the arguments of Richard English when he observes, “the character of British interests in the Himalaya reflects two distinct phases in the development of the colonial economy in India: the first being the period of mercantile exploitation under the Company, and the second being the expansion of commercial agricultural investment under the civil administration of the Raj”.¹⁶

The British notion of Nature as indoctrinated in the mindscape of the colonial officials, since the beginning of colonial rule in Darjeeling was fundamentally different from the notion of Nature of the indigenous people who in fact lived in and lived with Nature. Nature to them was a strong cultural space and loosely defined political territory. The ecologically distinct attitude manifested the inter-communities ties with the natural

world. The animist religious practices celebrated nature and natural objects. Unlike Europeans, forest to the indigenous people was their natural abode and means of subsistence and was certainly not a source of profit extraction. Colonial interventions brought about decisive changes in the ecology and society of the native hill population of the Darjeeling tract.¹⁷

It is therefore argued that for Darjeeling, environmentalism and colonialism have a shared past. However, the British Acts and Forest Rules were enacted and framed with the environmental concern along with the expansion of imperial powers. In this way, colonialism in the Darjeeling hills mothered environmentalism by the evolving system of governability.

From all the colonial legislations, it was clear that commercial interests were the primary consideration in declaring forests reserved and Darjeeling forests were of no exception. When the entire Darjeeling forested tract was occupied by the East India Company through a Deed of Grant from the Raja of Sikkim in 1835, there had been no personal proprietary hold over the forested land. Darjeeling tract was not either predefined as Zamindari Khas (self-cultivated holdings) or did remain under Raiyati (occupancy of the cultivating tenants). Unlike plains of South Bengal, there had been the absence of Jungle Zamindars in Darjeeling. This was the principal reason why Colonial scientific forestry under the Indian Forest Act, 1865, was first adopted in Darjeeling hills.¹⁸

The imperial objective for tea was to grow it in territories under British control rather than importing tea from China on a competitive scale. The British Scientists and Botanists under the leadership of Nathaniel Wallich had noticed that the tea plant succeeded best on the sides of mountains. During the same period, the coincidence was that including Darjeeling hill tract along with extensive tracts of the Himalayan foot-hills had been brought under Company's direct control as the end results of wars with Burma, Nepal and Sikkim.¹⁹

The colonially induced expanding tea plantation lovingly called 'imperial cash crop', owned and engineered by the British planters under the patronage of British East India Company gave rise to an insular economy hitherto unknown by the indigenous people lived in so far on tradition based subsistence economy. In this way, as a part of grand imperial political project, Darjeeling hill was drawn into the world capitalist system. The incorporation was also part of the expanded reproduction so essential to the workings of the capitalist mode of production corroborated with colonial mode of natural resource use.²⁰

Darjeeling witnessed fundamental ecological changes too due to rapid

depletion of forests, growing tea plantation, roads and railways construction, making of towns and military institutions. All these colonial capital based development induced transformations resulted to a strong colonial political regime, colonial ecological regime, colonial planters regime, installation based military regime, colonial forest regime, Christian missionary led neo-cultural regime and newly in migrated middle class regime in Darjeeling Hills. The labourers principally Nepalis, Bhutias and Sikkimese from the neighbouring areas along with wage earners forming a new working class witnessed both peasatization and proletarianization categorized as toiling hill men, could not form any meaningful voice. Due to colonial encounter, Darjeeling hills experienced rapid changes in her landscape and in social relations accompanied by equally sweeping ecological transformations.²¹

The colonial encounter in Darjeeling hills being a regional sub-space was never a part of the historical accounts of colonial India till the occupation of the Darjeeling tract by the East India Company in the mid-thirties of the nineteenth century. The colonially led politico-administrative processes had integrated Darjeeling into the larger colonial political economy of British India. Such integration had been momentous event of history for this peripherally situated border zone. Here the significance of the colonial intervention lies in the unique modes of natural resource extraction made possible by the political dominance of the Raj and such tools or technologies previously unknown to the people of this peripheral Himalayan zone.

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