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CONTENTS

*Living a Meaningful Life**

Swami Suparnananda

I am grateful to the authorities of the Asiatic Society for choosing me as the speaker of the prestigious Mrs Indira Gandhi Memorial lecture instituted by the Asiatic Society. It is a great honour for me, no doubt. But you are yet to see whether it is going to be a necklace or a noose around my neck. I pray to the divine within to be worthy of your expectation. I have chosen a simple and yet an interesting topic namely, 'Living a Meaningful Life'. We sincerely want to live this life and become peaceful and happy. However, we have seen peace and happiness usually elude us and for that, we are miserable and sometime hold others responsible for our misfortune. All this follows from the law of action. In fact, we cannot blame others for anything that happens to us. We shall come to that concept soon. Before that, I will cite one small advice of a grandfather to his little granddaughter, which she received from the peaceful palace at Allahabad. The grandfather once called upon his little granddaughter and said, "My dear child, you see, there are always two classes of people in the world: those who work and those who take the credit. I advise you to belong to the first category of people since there is less competition there". The granddaughter remembered this advice from this old man all her life and became, in course of her life's journey, the very one known as Mrs Indira Gandhi. This small advice speaks volumes of our life's dos and don'ts for living a meaningful life. It is easy to hear but difficult to follow. Mrs Indira Gandhi did follow and led our country to glory and honour. I recount this incidence of her life as an impelling sequence before I start to speak about how to live a meaningful life. The key to our entire success lies in this episode.

* *Indira Gandhi Memorial Lecture* for the year 2022 delivered at the Humayun Kabir Hall on 22nd June 2023.

However, we shall delve deep into the more serious issues involved. I pay my heartfelt tribute to her who like the Mahatma Gandhi did and died by way of honouring his slogan: 'Do or die'.

Work and its Effect on Us

The idea is that to start a good living we have to make our occupation sacred. Buddha, the illumined, preached the necessity of 'Samyak Ajiv' or fair livelihood. We acquire many things to satisfy our sensate desire but if we do not adopt the right type of means to get them we will jeopardise our individual and social life. Swamiji says, if your goal is sublime and great then you must follow a fair means to reach that goal. More clearly, 'You must pay as much attention to the goals as to the ends'. Where there is wide divergence between the goal and means, we are there under the spell of death trap.

We can think of a profound rule of life to guide us by keeping the balance sheet of incomes and expenditures of our conduct and activities. Then we shall discover that whatever problems facing us have been our own creation and there is no way to blame others for our misfortune. We do work only to reap its results. There is no question of avoiding the results. We take the exams and get the results, good or bad, does not matter. If we do not take the exam, we bother the least for the results. Therefore, Krita Karma (work done) is sure to produce fruits and on the other hand 'Akritasya Abhyāgama Nāsti' (work not done produces no results for us). The balance sheet of our activities and conducts will produce either positive or negative balance. The resultant will show how far we are proceeding towards becoming better humans, at least, in terms of fair dealings with others. The negative balance relates to some of our heinous acts not supported by any code of conduct. It reflects on human failings in respect of moral and ethical lapses. We cannot build up the necessary character efficiency at all if we are not mindful to it in spite of our formidable productive efficiency. I can cite one universal Truth observed by Vyasadev here: He says পুণ্যস্য ফলমিচ্ছন্তি পুণ্যং নেচ্ছন্তি মানবাঃ। ন পাপফলমিচ্ছন্তি পাপং কুর্বন্তি যত্নতঃ (*Puṇyasya phalamichhanti puṇyam nechhanti mānabāḥ.*

Na pāpaphalamichhanti pāpam kurbanti yatnataḥ). It means, we are so much prone to enjoyment that we want to enjoy the fruits of our good *Karma* only (Punyaphala) though we avoid undertaking any good act or *puṇyakarma*. On the other hand, we want to avoid *pāpaphala* (fruits of evil acts) but perform *pāpakarma* (evil deeds) with exemplary precision, care and enthusiasm. This is the human tragedy. However, the fact is that we have to suffer out our sufferings absolutely being unable to pass it on to others, however dear they are to our heart. A simple example of how to prepare a balance sheet of our conduct we see as under. We shall consider three such examples, each being distinct and yet convergent.

Balance Sheet of our conduct : First Example Love-Hate Matrix

Income	Expenditure	Comments	Identity of the Doer
To love	To hate	High Principle	Good man
To be loved	To love	Higher Principle	Best man
To be hated	To be loved	Highest Principle	Buddha man

Explanation :

1. It is our common sense understanding that we want to love and grow in it avoiding hatred. This life we appreciate very much. However, we do, instead, hate others and love a few only. This follows from our human weakness. Let us initiate a change in our life style by loving others and hating none. A good man does this. It is good to love all, which adds incomes to our balance sheet against hate, which we avoid. We can start with this high principle no doubt, and in doing so we have to fight with our own self every moment. Why? Majority tries to hate others and reap good results. That has been their way of life. We alone have to walk upstream, braving so many hazards.
2. The second entry refers definitely to a higher principle for us. Why? To be loved is income compared to love. To love others always, irrespective of their behaviour poses a great problem. Can you gladly love all even being torn asunder by untold atrocities inflicted upon you by those very people you help? That

we have to love others whatever they do is verily awesome. Many of us cannot rationalize it; more so, it tells on our body and mind. We cannot love any man who speaks ill of me behind. We usually analyse the situations and then act. It becomes drudgery then to love all indiscriminately. At that moment we feel disgusted by seeking people to love. Rather, we would do well if all love us. O God! if I had not to love others at all and only I could be an object of love of all! To the worldly standard, it is a great aspiration but how far it is tenable!

3. Then comes the Highest Principle: 'To be hated' becomes income when compared against 'to be loved'. It is easy to explain this phenomenon as it enables us to understand the state of *Sthitaprajña*—a man of steady knowledge. In the beginning, we entered hate at the expenditure side! Now that very idea appears in a different setting. What, if others hate us? In fact, that is only natural, rational and even beneficial for humanity. I feel fed up with the idea that I have been seeking people to love me always. I cannot live in that way now; I have to live my own way, not dictated by others. I cannot shape up my life, as others want me to. I intensely feel, I must count upon love and hate as one and the same. Alternatively, even I am equipoised with both love and hate, but more comfortable with hate than love. A divine man reposes always in rest in the face of dualities like love-hate, heat-cold, praise-blame. Remember Tagore's words: অনায়াসে যে পেরেছে ছলনা সহিতে (*anāyāsé, yé péreché, chalanā sahité* — A man of peace can withstand easily even blatant deception). He is verily a Buddha, the illumined.

This highest principle needs a great deal of mental power to accept criticism with humility. I do not want to live a cosy life. I am miserable now because I was seeking pleasure from every act. Now I feel I have none to love, none to appease. I am a truth seeker only. I am not a pleasure-seeker anytime. Let everybody hate me because that way only I would be able to crush my ego into dust. My inflated ego has become pretty big. I must get rid of that situation that makes me different from others, superior to others. In fact, I have to see no

difference between loss and profit, bad and good. Humanity is one which I am. Good, bad, everything I am. I have nothing to lose but my Vision of Duality, of otherness. I made a mistake that I am a seeker of love only. The simple man is now transformed into a Buddha man who sees no difference between man and man, between hate and love.

In fact, we need gradual development through proper guidance from a teacher who can initiate into us the higher mode of life by bringing about transformation in our mind. With proper initiation to the highest knowledge comes the conviction that there is a meaning to our life. But I must warn you that for most of us initiation may not work in a dramatic way. But it is sure to shift the axis of our thought. One thing we notice that we are the victim of passing fancy and do not know why. It is sure to break the compulsive chain of mindless thought. The greatest proof that initiation works is that the very evil acts we could do easily previously cannot be done now without remorse. That means ice has melted and love for truth even in its rudimentary form announces its arrival in your life. This is a great advancement. We have to recognise first that very emergence of trust when our intellect is able to single out the better of the lot. Our intellect, the policeman within, becomes, more proactive to retain or reject an idea from among alternatives. It chooses the good, abhors the bad. We are on the way towards a stable and illumined intellect. It is the area of *Para-vidya*, the knowledge of the Self. We need a teacher here absolutely as we do need teachers for acquiring *Apara* or secular knowledge. The spiritual teachers are difficult to find out since they are available free of cost only and cannot be bought. Choice is theirs. Through their choice and acceptance only students can accept them.

The Second Example (Work-wage Matrix)

Sl. No.	Work	Wages	Other results	Identity of the Doer
1.	Work	Full wages	Access to credit	Worldly man; selfish man
2.	Work	No wages	Access to credit	Reasonable man initiated to service
3.	Work	No wages	Access to criticism only —no credit	Inspired man engaged in *Niskam Karma*

Our life hangs on the balance of love and hate; the way they create various situations we have noted. Similarly, a work-wages matrix could also be construed to comprehend the same impact on our living. We perform work for wages and maintain ourselves. This is the normal rule. All the three agents like worker, work and remuneration are present. Suppose, next, you are told that you will work only but be given no wages anymore but be allowed to receive the credit or certificate only. That means you remain satisfied with credit only and you thank God that you are allowed to work. Your wages are dropped. This is a Higher Principle — since you have begun doing unselfish work. You are moving towards Buddha's approach. Now, you are asked neither to receive wages nor appreciation nor even credit and unfortunately you are entitled to criticism instead, from the superiors. What kind of duty do you perform then? Would you plan to work still or give up? The most people would give up. The *Gita* extols this principle as the best. Why? You work for the sake of work only. This is the *Sevāyoga*, the basics to *Niṣkāma Karma*. You work for others and do not claim on the fruits thereof in any form. You fly higher up with pure joy like Buddha. Who are ready to try this? Only those who had the strong *Lokakalyāṇam Cikīrṣā* (strong desire to do good to the world). This third group of people, curiously enough, rejoice when they are admonished because they work, out of love, only. People could not understand the motive behind their approach. Scolding even does not concern them. Or, they apologetically accept when people criticise. Their wrongs are righted that way. This is the journey that ultimately awaits us. It is a journey from a good man to the best man and then from the best man to the divine man. Karma here is a means to attaining divinity and purity. Doing Karma unselfishly leads to the Supreme joy, ego being abnegated altogether. We, the Sadhus, for example, accept criticism as a corrective, as blessings.

Third example: Income-Expenditure Matrix

Sl. No.	Agent	Income	Spending Mode	Principle
1.	Working	Earning	Enjoying	Natural (Prakriti) (প্রকৃতি)
2.	No working	No earning	Enjoying lavishly	Unnatural (Vikriti) (বিকৃতি)
3.	Working	Earning	Sharing with all	Supranatural (Samskriti) (সংস্কৃতি)

1. Man earns and spends on food and necessities. There is nothing great or unusual in the approach. It is a normal state of all of us. He lives for himself. There is no question of sacrifice or helping others. Man in his natural state of living behaves this way. He is a selfish man. This phenomenon is called Prakriti (প্রকৃতি).
2. Man does not earn but lives on by grabbing. He degrades himself to the state of a criminal. There are various forms of grabbing others' property. He maintains his livelihood through illegal means. We see a majority of people belong to this stage. Verily they are beasts in the guise of human form. This phenomenon we call Vikriti [opposite of Prakriti (প্রকৃতি)].
3. It is the stage of Sanskriti based on sharing, mutual help and cooperation. Mind is strung in higher moral, ethical and spiritual values. These people are absolutely unselfish by nature and their life is one of constant prayer for the welfare of the world. Sanskriti or Culture is the growth of mind. It is mind which when purified will help us in the vision of the Self.

Total Human Development in Brief

Now we move on to the deeper philosophical aspect of the issue—the Concept of Total Human Development. It has two sections: (a) one based on Yoga; (b) the other on Pure Vedanta:

(a) Six Centres of Consciousness : The Yoga Way

All such transformations take place unawares constantly within. The meaningful life could be best lived if the necessary transformation we can bring about within ourselves through conscious efforts. Man is potentially divine but most of the time he feels he is weak and

indulges in the pursuit of personal enjoyment. It is because his mind remains at the sensate level, at the base of excretion (*Mūlādhār*) and procreation (*Swadhisthan*) and thereafter at Naval (*Manipur*) respectively. When mind remains between *Muladhar, Swadhisthan* and *Manipur* centres of consciousness, it loves gross enjoyment from food, sleep and begetting children. That mind is *Tamasik* and *Rajasik* when it reaches Anṁhata at the heart; it then develops dispassion towards worldly enjoyment. His *Bhogajivan*, the life of enjoyment, gradually yields to *Yogajivan*, the life of meditation. Then the coiled up power which is likened to a snake moves up to *Viśuddha Cakra* (throat); he has the conviction of the presence of the divine. There is no *Rajasik* element in him. He does not crave for work and wordly gain and when Mind reaches the *Ajna Chakra* (eyebrows) it becomes illumined. Beyond 'Ājnṁ' is the Sahasrara- at the head and God is one for all and below 'Ajnṁ' centre, God is different for different persons. Hence, we have also the existence of multiplicity of truths. So, Truth is one and truths at the lower levels are many. This is the Yoga way of explaining the truth in us. Sri Ramakrishna declares that Shuddha Mind and Shuddha Atman are one and the same. So, beyond Ajna chakra mind is even beyond *Sattwa.* Human life is an interplay of *Sattwa, Rajas* and *Tamas* qualities. If someone works to live a life of nobility, he has to pass through either Bhakti path or Jnana path or Yoga path. Yoga path is basically the path of Raja Yoga which we discussed at some length above. But it has to be remembered that central issue is the purification of our occupation. There is no Yoga of any type like, *Bhakti, Jnana* or *Karma* for a man who plays foul in the discharge of his duty and deeply immersed in *Tamas* or *Rajas*. A foul player will always be punished. Nobody can avoid the work and its effect, too.

(b) Three States of Living: Waking, Dream and Deep Sleep : Vedantic Way:

Another great idea that we keep aside wrongly at the backyard is the existence of the total man. We see a small part of man in the waking state; the vast part that remains unexplored is the dream state and still vaster part is the deep sleep state. We are conscious of our physical body and feed it; we make use of it for fulfilling our purpose.

Good. But what about our dream body (the subtle body)? Is it all baseless? No, we get out of our body in dream, taking mind along. Our body is lying on the bedstead, eyes closed, but we create a new world out of our mind in dream, enjoy it, suffer it. We fulfil all the unfulfilled desires in dream. We can well recognize in dream the peoples, situation we saw when we wake up. Who did it? Our mind. We separated our mind from the body. Sometime we will see our own body lying on the bed. At least then we see in dream our own body by coming out of our body as mind. This is the greatest of all dreams. Why? Because, in dream even we can see we are not body only, we have a body. When a person dies, we say, he has left his body. He is not there, his body only remains. So, I have a body and I am not a body. We need to give food to our mind also. Food for the mind is love for aesthetics, music, literature etc. Our mind and intellect also shall grow proportionately.

But the story of a man does not end here. He is ultimately lost in deep sleep. There is no mind even in deep sleep. In what we exist during the deep sleep? Obviously in spirit. In what we exist during dream? Obviously in mind and in what we exist during the waking state? Obviously, in physical body. We therefore, have to take the full care of our body, mind and spirit to have a total view of life. We have developed our body with much care; we take moderate care for mind to feel but we do care nothing of the greatest and the only real part of our life, which is spirit or *Atman* or *Chaitanya*. In deep sleep, we are one with it. In sleep, we forget our identity as Mr and Mrs so and so. Mind being absent, we feel nothing. We are all pervading consciousness. In deep sleep, there is no difference between men and women, between poor and rich, ignorant or learned, sinner or saint. Hence, we are all divine and that is our real nature. We must serve all, we must establish cordial relation with all; we must respect all since we are not different. Swamiji's Sevayoga for all gives us this true spiritual force to emulate. He understands only *Seva* in the spirit of sacrifice for all. They alone live a life of happiness and peace, feeling oneness with all. That is true transformation of human beings. We discover unity in Humanity. The real we are beyond skin, blood, bones and muscle. Man is divine only. That phenomenon of divinity we have to feel in the

waking state through *Yoga* practised inwardly and through *Seva* done outwardly in a spirit of sacrifice.

In conclusion, we hold once again that there is a need for a deep faith for living our life. We have to have a strong body, a stable mind and a subtle intellect but our final goal will be to develop a genuine love for a truly spiritual life through unselfish deed on the outside world thereby leading to develop the life of meditation for an inner poise, joy and fulfilment. Therefore, we need a new Age of Man in the midst of the existing Age of Technology. (i) We have to prepare the necessary groundwork in all fields of our engagement consciously. (ii) Personal evils we are to remove from our life; claims of sense organs for inordinate desire of sense objects we have to eschew. (iii) We have to avoid competition in every field of our existence and accept an unconditional cooperation and mutual help as the only safeguard of our survival. If we are sluggish in our response to change the present state of living or fail to solve the problem of control needed to streamline the random guesses or untutored prejudices, we would forfeit everything noble and consequentially a danger on a cosmic scale will befall us. In fact, we have to look within and walk around ourselves and watch our steps. This way we can maintain vigilance 'to the industry of life than the life of industry'. We need to develop a capacity for embracing others by widening the circle of interests. We should be ready to give our life and see receiving it back, too. Our attitude would be like sending love to sea, forest, rivers, soil, hill and all, giving out a call : O, Ye all, come, live with me and be my love.' To live happily, we covertly or overtly are to accept John Ruskin's assertion: 'There is no wealth but life'. That means we shall change from money making and pleasure seeking to life making based on truth seeking. We shall learn simultaneously (i) 'To have and to hold and (ii) to quit and to avoid'. Our inner urge has always been to have the things we do not have and to try hard to preserve that which we have thus collected. In addition, we do not want to give away. Our acquisitions and distributions shall go equally well together if we want to live a meaningful life. Moreover, for this life to develop we need to open ourselves to inner transformation. [Edited version of the speech at the Asiatic Society on June 22, 2023]

*A Critical Analysis of Strategies Adopted and Approaches Followed in Tribal Development: How is Anthropology Significant Here?**

Rajat Kanti Das

Abstracts

Tribal development holds a special place of importance in India's development scenario, which reflects government's concern for those communities who have been subjected to a process of systematic loss of control over natural resources like forest and land, reducing them to a position of economic deprivation and various social disadvantages. As a matter of fact, the whole process signifies state's planned encroachment on tribe's customary rights over their territory in return to special development benefits worked out for them. 'Scheduling' them is generally considered to be the first step in that direction. But can it ensure restoration of community values and corporate spirit as important development inputs? It's not that poor tribals do not like to come out of their poor status, though their poor habits and aspiration level prove to be a deterrent. Apart from state initiatives, N.G.Os and some other private agencies have been making stray attempts to ameliorate their conditions of living. What is required is to meaningfully combine all these efforts including those of the state with people's own estimation and desire to uphold their community-centric traditional values. Here anthropologists, more specifically, development anthropologists can play an effective role. Various approaches to community development devised so far, of which mention may be made of 'Social exclusion', 'Community Enterprise development', 'Capacity-building exercise', along with application of models of 'Social development', 'Solidarity economy' have the moot point of restoring community-nurtured values backed by culture to

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* *Dr. Panchanan Mitra Memorial Lecture* for the year 2021, delivered on February 2, 2022, at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata

greater advantage to the concerned people. State's mode of political control and its systematic encroachment into individual space may, however, undermine the need of it.

Key words: Tribal development, State, Community, Culture, Social exclusion, Enterprise development, Social development, Populism, Solidarity economy.

I

Tribal development, which occupies a separate place in the overall national development of India, involves strategies and specific approaches, not all of which could prove the test of time. The academics, administrators and social scientists on their part try to follow a liberal democratic approach to account for 'development' of all sections of population without any discrimination or favor. My emphasis here is not particularly on seeing 'development as discourse' (Escobar 1991) but getting into the reality confronting tribal communities of India as they have been increasingly brought under state-initiated 'development agendas'. The common understanding of development links it with improved standard of living and quality of life and consequently, approaches to human development is shaped by a materialist ideology leading to consumption spree of unchecked dimension. At the basic level, an approach like this relies heavily on governmental intervention by way of providing education, employment and health services to all citizens as a mark of capacity building in terms of acquisition of monetary power and ability to mobilize resources. Obviously, these are benefits of development which can bring material prosperity in the life of an individual, though the process does not mark the end of competition-abated inequality lying deeply ingrained in the system. When it comes to specific groups of people who have so far been denied of the fruits of development or their development needs have not been adequately met with, special development packages are taken up for their up-lifting. Some such groups of people have been identified as 'Scheduled Tribes' and in our understanding they belong to the broader category of 'Tribe' or 'Adivasi', although the two do not always carry the same meaning.

The latest categorization is PVTG, the vulnerable one, who have started receiving increasing attention from the government. Survival is the major concern of many of them who remain bogged down with the problems of procuring food, avoiding physical ailments and satisfying their basic requirements. Following Chambers (1990) it may be said, 'they have neither independence nor room for maneuvers', as they have limited power and practically no economic self-sufficiency. Efforts of development agencies are supposed to bring them to the path of economic self-sufficiency. Incidentally, tribes as ideal categories and traditionally bound units were thought to have enjoyed a level of economic self-sufficiency of their own when territorial integrity, exclusive right over forests and forest- based products used to delineate a tribal system. Even in the contemporary situation, tribe as a community representing a local system tends to display a certain degree of 'endogenous dynamic', which is supposed to remain inherent in the system. The development practices initiated from outside sources and controlling agencies functioning at the behest of the government seem to break this dynamism much to their advantage. One may argue that this is the price they have to pay to get the fruits of development. But if we consider development as a pursuit of freedom, there may be another dimension of the whole issue. Here freedom may refer to local resource-based economic opportunities and social opportunities created in terms of their specific needs, political freedom as a capacity- building exercise to take decisions about their own welfare and identify their needs, ability to restore transparency in action, renew trust in the community they belong to and ensure its security. In simple terms, lack of freedom speaks of lack of opportunities in the form of economic opportunities and greater social opportunities that could ultimately cause ill being. Again, ill being may have an inbuilt time dimension, as the people who were born poor and who had grown up amidst poverty would find it difficult to come out of their mental frame of mind suited to sustain an environment made poorer day by day with the depletion of resources or resources over which they have now very little control, forcing them to take to the path of mindless illegal

extraction of those for sustenance. Not only that, they even get themselves involved in large-scale extraction of natural resources in what was once their territory and now undertaken by the multinationals for commercial purpose, which creates a social void laden with destabilizing effects. It also sets in a process of differentiation from within as those who are close to the power lobby-cum-resource extractor and are in its good book consolidate their enhanced economic position to an extent that they could buy loyalty and support from the fellow community members for their own purpose of finding a place in the power lobby. Development takes its course in the way power politics operate today and this almost equally applies to tribe and the process of change it has been subjected to.

II

Admittedly, today tribals like many others do not like to remain poor, though habits and life ways of some of them seem to reflect a poor aspiration level. It is not easy for them to dispense with their poor habits and low-key performance level, which suggest that they are 'chronically poor'. A condition of 'multidimensional ill-being' (de Haan 1997) is probably more appropriate in their case, which is reflected in a process of self- degradation, but there are other reasons, more imposed than spontaneous, to explain it. Even then, a recent trend is being increasingly displayed by some such communities to take the road to development, the members of which have now been trying to make rapid strides towards prosperity or in simple terms, economic betterment. North East India could provide the best example. They are, however, not prepared to give up their special status accorded to them by the government lest they are deprived of the benefits and privileges associated with it. In North East India, however, the issue of tribal autonomy, conferred, implied or perceived by the people, continues to remain as a vexed problem. This has given rise to controversies, inter-community clashes and, above all, political interferences and pressure tactics applied from different quarters. Tribal reactions in such cases remain varied, either following an extremist path of insurgency or resorting to revitalization movements or making

efforts to indigenize or internalize the objects and materials borrowed from outside to give the products a local color and meaning or succumbing to the exogenous process of change as a mark of full scale assimilation. A common criticism labeled against the government is that a clear-cut policy is yet to be devised by it to treat such cases on their own merit. It only uses the development card to selective advantage in terms of extending its acceptability or range of influence. Now-a-days, it has become more fashionable to speak of 'social development', which has several key components. Social development relates to social care, community development, social control or protection and poverty reduction impact measures. The key organizing concepts for social development are coordination, competition, cooperation and culture. The last-named one applies more appropriately to tribe like formations where it is closely interwoven with everyday life. Conceptually, social development covers social capital, social networks, social exclusion, social security and protection, institutional therapy and poverty assessment as well as its reduction strategies devised for their subsequent adoption at the community level. A very tall order indeed! In a micro-level situation defined by communities of various size and dimension, the state policy of development is nothing more than a direct intervention, picking up certain areas and individuals under distress and doling out cash benefit and material benefit in various forms thereby making them ever dependent on the state. This is one way of buying loyalty, whereby the local people are almost forced to toe the official line of approach. In the process, people's own perception and representation developed as a result of community living for a long period of time and which constitute the local knowledge system are either ignored or lost sight of. As a matter of fact, the utility of such a knowledge system has now been questioned and as a fall out, confidence of the people in having faith in their own tradition and their capacity to think independently have received a jolt. This has turned into an area of much confusion and doubt, as a result of which the people have actually lost their community-focus based on their own experience

and sense of understanding. Amidst all these complexities and uncertainties, government has pushed forward its programme based on its own assessment. The traditional system of control has been reduced to a state of little consequence. In the process the original contextual significance of it has been considerably weekend. This may be taken as natural outcome of the transformation process initiated by governmental action in operation.

Again, the growing dependence on the state allows the state to *suo moto* infringe on individual's life by way of political control, exposing the redundancy of community life. It treats the communities located at micro-level situation as if they are indistinguishable from each other, thereby ignoring the prospect of micro-variability. The N.G.Os working in the micro situation, are almost forced to follow state line of approach because they can hardly function on their own without the support and patronage of the state. Apparently, state-sponsored development knows only one language, i.e., what is economically tenable or viable and what is not. Economics knows only the language of clarity and measurability: everything has to be spelt out in clear, measurable terms and where there is no scope for liminality. But then the poor, who are almost invariably the product of a micro situation, display liminality to a considerable extent. Living poor makes one think poor, but it is not that the eradication of the first would automatically lead to the end of the second. So income alone cannot be the sole determinant of poverty in the broader sense of the term. Income-based poverty has traditionally focused on household as a unit in isolation from one another and also on distributional issues giving stress primarily on the lack of resources at the disposal of individual or household. Probably this is time to look at the vulnerability of individual or household from different angles. The community-centric 'Social exclusion' concept may be one of them. Even in industrially developed countries the focus has now shifted to social relationships and accordingly the vulnerability is seen to depend not just on misuse of their own self-created resources but also on the loss of local community-based resources that the individuals can draw

on for their survival. Among other things, the local community resources include ties with family members, local traditions of mutual aid, self-help organizations (de Haan 1999). The notion of 'social exclusion' sees individuals bound tighter by sets of mutual rights and obligations, which are rooted to a moral order. Actually, social exclusion policy aims at reintegrating people into their society, which could be the basis of community enterprise creation. Attention has also been given to the 'capabilities approach'- an individualistic approach which offers a way of assessing capacity formation at the level of individual rather than the household. Such an approach helps in identifying and investigating intra-household discrimination in terms of age, seniority, sex and gender. This has paved the way for a rise in participatory approaches to poverty assessment in developing countries. Like social exclusion, the participatory approach stresses the importance of relationship between individuals and the communities they represent. However, unlike social exclusion, the thrust of the new approach has been towards fulfilling 'minimal absolute levels of poverty' starting with 'basic needs'. The approach gives credence to the fact that the institutions associated with poverty and their mode of functioning in developed and developing countries are different. In developing countries there has been a shift in emphasis from the static to the dynamic aspect of poverty taking into consideration the level of insecurity, defenselessness as well as exposure to the risks and shocks for which a specific group of people were not quite prepared. Concepts related to 'basic capabilities', risk aversion, vulnerability and sustainable livelihood have been devised and developed accordingly. Social exclusion, however, may identify the various kinds of exclusion from productive sources on the basis of the results achieved. These include, (i) exclusion from enjoying the benefit of normal crop caused by natural or human-made disasters, (ii) exclusion from gainful employment, (iii) exclusion from the food market because of low purchasing power and finally, (iv) exclusion from the traditional resource base like land or forest. Removing the effects of exclusion in one does not mean that it is capable of nullifying the effects of others.

The nature and process of exclusion determine the level of exclusion, the persistence of which causes weakening or loss of social values. Establishing a link between social exclusion and capability deprivation speaks of failure to have *basic* capabilities. There may be an ethic bias working against the community as sometimes a stigma is attached to the low status assigned to them. The stigma of criminality was once attached to the so-called 'criminal tribes' by the colonial administration. After independence it has been removed, but could it really stop the process of impoverishment from making further headway? Attempts have now been made to treat social exclusion within the context of a rights-based approach. Implementation of the Human Rights for the poor has engaged the attention of those who are working with programmes aimed at realizing the rights of the poor to participate in local government, to ensure access to social services, to establish their due rights and responsibilities as citizens. This is also a test for citizenship to accommodate all sections of population without any differentiation and provide them with equal opportunities. There is, however, a question mark about how far it is achievable when conflict and clashes of interest get the better of social equity and equality. May be we better accept that this is only a passing phase or a prelude to reaching a stage when the gap will be considerably narrowed down. But by then our present understanding of tribe and what it stands for will change completely.

III

Establishment of rights and responsibilities is closely interlinked with promoting social and environmental commitments and here anthropology can perform a significant role. It can effectively perform the role of a mediator between the community, private enterprises and the state. Anthropologists hold some advantage in this respect as they do not automatically become a part of the development universe dominated by populist measures. Anthropology of development, as we understand it, demands a change in its methodological orientation. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2005) has pleaded for a change in

approach in the light of considerable inroads made by the processes of change and development. As he writes, "Anthropology of development is ... obliged to take interest not only in 'local communities' and 'target populations', but also in frameworks of intervention, mediators and brokers, as well as external agents." One of the challenges is how to meaningfully combine the two. Can the framework of change and intervention be accommodated within the framework of local community without any ripple or rupture? While we try to account for them, we find that contradictory and divergent elements have already found their entry and become firmly entrenched into the domains of the local community itself. It invariably raises the question as to what extent the local community remains local today as the bigger issues of power, deprivation and underdevelopment take them to a plural situation marked by competition and domination of a global scale. Herzfeld (1997) is of the opinion that the Third World is still not free from the Eurocentric framework of development, which has taken the form of 'cultural politics of domination'. There has also been a tendency these days to explain development from a populist framework where the central focus is on state and its performance. But 'Developmental populism', as it is often called, no longer remains the exclusive domain of the state: the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also follow the same path, sometimes with much more seriousness. They work in collusion with development agents, such as, extension workers, agricultural scientists, B.D.Os, government-sponsored literary agents and experts, health workers and social workers. The latest inclusion in the list of participants is the media or communication agency, which have their own agenda. Again, there are intellectuals or 'elites', whose intention it is to help and stand by the side of those people who fall in the category of deprived and poor. If they strive for the welfare of such people, it is not always that they do it without any motive or purpose. Sometimes they become victims of 'intellectual populism', considered to be an easy way of self-projection or self-advertisement, which may be aided and abetted by the media and communication agencies

including publishing houses. The very nature of the discipline of anthropology disfavors taking up a position of blatant self-advertisement at the cost of the people. The issue, however, remains an important consideration in any debate on 'self' vs. 'other'. When anthropologists side with the people, they are branded as 'activists' - a term applicable to others with a similar ideology. In that case, they can be blamed to have followed the path 'moral populism'. It has been stressed time and again that anthropologists, particularly development anthropologists, favor the 'bottom up' approach instead of the 'top down' approach, which in other words mean they prefer to start with the 'people' and not with institutions, bureaucracies, agencies preaching science and modern living. In their understanding, the people should first be brought to the level from where they could develop a positive attitude towards modern living in a spirit of deriving social utility. The anthropological approach to development helps the observer to draw up a clear picture of what is happening in the real life situation of a people who are almost forced to follow the path of 'developers' in the form of state or state controlled agencies. In actual terms, it unfolds a situation where the state service agents come in contact with their clients, especially the people representing a community. From development point of view, the interface between a social milieu and external intervention by the state, NGOs and development agents needs to be known fully well because it would help in deciphering the concrete social situation marked by actor's choices, strategies, compulsions, capabilities and constraints. Even otherwise, not all individuals can exercise their unbiased, untutored choice, unless, of course, they are morally committed to the community, ensuring collective representation as a symbol of collective wisdom. This calls for ethnographic examination of the process itself. Community is, in one sense, the provider of a value-based tradition built upon culture and 'social capital'. Culture either becomes a key component of the core of community existence, or it functions as the social support system in building up a 'social capital'. What is needed today is a purposeful orientation of the social economy towards the

creation of 'irreducible modes of action' in the form of community enterprises. This may ultimately pave the way for developing community-based social enterprises capable of offering a new strategy for people-centered, locally grounded economic development in the developing world. Experts are of the opinion that as an approach it can attain the level of national significance. Many customary, indigenous, traditional and local practices of mutual assistance can form a 'social economy' on the ground that it will provide well-being and an informal social safety net for a large number of rural people including tribals. The importance of such micro-enterprise developments in the mainstream economy has now been realized by a number of developing countries. Tribe like formations in India may also be benefited from such exercises and some experiments have already been conducted in that direction. The strategy like this is suitable for local people-centric development where development anthropologists can be of much help because of their orientation and belief in a culture of compassion, mutual aid and respect for others. Anthropologists of development may question that such an approach lacks focus on the 'institutional apparatus' and its links to centers of power and decision making, which are of vital components of a 'modernist construct' of development. It needs to be admitted that development anthropologists are humanistic anthropologists as well, who lay stress on the relationship and proper blending between individuals and the community of their origin, which in the context of tribal development carry special significance. Development is not simply a calculative strategy worked out at the behest of the government. When it is reduced to such a level, it creates more differences from within.

We have been constrained to think that the structures and institutions set in the traditional mould, which characterize a tribe but have considerably been weakened in recent times, can no longer guarantee fulfillment of specific group's needs and protection of their rights. Their token presence only defeats the purpose of human development laden with progressive ideas and as such, a need for change in the institutional set up and structural reorganization is

increasingly felt. This is not something which can be planned and put into effect immediately, unless the people are forced to follow the path as they are left with no other choice. If the initiative is to come from the concerned group of people, they should be in a position to exercise their free choice without any intervention by power blocks operating from outside. From developer's point of view, one may argue that the benefits dished out cannot wait for the people to give their nod, suggesting that they are mentally prepared for it. As a matter of fact, the people are in no position to exercise their choice and our development masters take advantage of the helplessness of the people facing a situation of scarcity and lack of opportunities. Development changes have also shaken the community structure of tribal existence when the interests of the community are almost exclusively projected by the favored and knowledgeable few, who are educationally accomplished, affluent and politically powerful. They are the people who are not automatically drawn into culture simply because it is emotionally and socially satisfying. Culture displaying an inherent moral integrity and righteousness behind customary practices comes for their renewed assessment whereby they could shift their emphasis on the utilitarian side of it. It is more a calculated strategy on their part when culture is used as a political tool to keep the group's interests alive by overstressing the point that tribal alignment with community life cannot be accomplished without having a cultural content in it. Obviously, there is difference between culture as a symbol system and using culture as a symbol with an imposed meaning to serve a definite purpose. The latter may increase the bargaining capacity of the group to secure greater development benefits. 'Culture-specific development' has already found a place in our vocabulary. Serageldin (1994), Ex Secretary-General, Organization of African Unity, held the view that "the whole paradigm of development needs to be refocused on two intertwined sectors of change — promotion of culture identity and empowerment of the people. Tribal development, as such, does not simply mean giving benefits to some who are in need of those. Enterprise creation, its

development and management occupy much of the attention of development specialists today. Admittedly, tribes in the form of local communities are now in a better position to spearhead enterprise development and enterprise development when combined with social ownership finds greater meaning in a basically tribal society because of its cohesive structure. It also means that for development to be really meaningful to the tribal groups of people, they need to be empowered to come to terms with the changing patterns of life. State, in its eagerness to empower them in its own terms, considerably undermines the community solidarity structure characterizing a tribal society. It may be mentioned here that at the conceptual level more and more importance is now given on 'solidarity economy'. 'Solidarity economy' is regarded as a very effective way of knitting together community enterprises, which is also considered to be one way of maintaining 'social sustainability'. Practicing solidarity economy may arouse consciousness among the members of a community for pursuing a common goal and through it local community needs and aspirations for a better life may find proper fulfillment in a manner suggestive of adhering to a community line of approach. A community with a binding social contract guiding the socio-economic behaviors of its members towards cooperation and solidarity particularly comes within the purview of such an enterprise. Strong adherence to the principles of social contract has been instrumental in promoting and maintaining the community structure in terms of mutual respect, solidarity, fellow feeling and inter-dependence — the human values of utmost importance. Development, however, has imposed certain conditions as determined by the state and the way it governs, which has considerably undermined the moral content of the traditional authority system. A system of exclusion and inclusion, promotion and negligence, consideration and subversion associated with development cuts across community form of existence, much to the discomfiture and dismay of the people of such a category. Beneath all these lies the tendency to depict 'community' as a 'passive' unitary entity in need of an expert intervention in the form of state, corporate

house or any other powerful organization having resources at its command. Obviously, it has development implications also, more so in the case of tribes or tribe like formations. For example, the intervention in the rural tribal living pattern by the state in the form of self-help groups, cooperatives, rural training programmes and workshops, project based works, non-government organizational action programmes aim at village development taking a form of 'community development'. But such a projection is far from a reality because the social milieu has changed and the institutions, actors and control mechanism in the form of power-blocs responsible for transforming a social milieu operate almost totally from outside claiming centrality with a new set of institutional guidelines, reducing the indigenous institutions in the process to a position of relative unimportance. Most of the rural areas representing a social milieu now present an institutionally plural landscape where a variety of actors, both tribal and non-tribal, compete or cooperate with one another over local power or power based resources. Communities in such a multi-ethnic forum, which particularly applies to tribal groups, no longer function as bounded groups but provide the background for the actors to come on stage and share the platform. Development in that case changes in meaning and the direction it takes in while preserving or safeguarding the interests of a special group of people, which does not always remain in its priority list. On the other hand, in today's power landscape the community-specific values of mutual respect, solidarity, warmth and inter-dependence hardly find a place of importance. It would be a sad commentary if they are lost forever in the quagmire of development activities. Here the role of community leadership cannot just be overlooked or side-tracked to suit the design of power game players. Development anthropologists have viewed community leaders as 'cultural intermediaries' between the world of development and community as representative of 'local knowledge and point of view' and as those striving to find a place for local communities in the larger context of political economy. In today's context, it is for anybody to see in clear terms that they are not quite in a position to perform such a role or remain true to it since they

themselves have become a part of the larger power structure and fallen victims to individual power play. Moreover, the domain of the legal is no longer confined to the limits of a community as a functional system. The relation between state and its citizens has overshadowed the traditionally defined relationships between family members or kin members within the framework of a community structure. For a tribal group to relate itself with the state politically for the sake of economic development, it is necessary to invoke the principle of citizenship as a mark of acceptance of the sovereignty of the state. In case of tribal development the important question therefore is who decides and who acts or accepts. More important perhaps is to know under what compulsion or core of responsibilities, derived or imposed, one acts and for what benefit. Tribe as a corporate unit is no longer in a position to control its own affairs or decide its course of action, which in other words means in the development sphere such a group can hardly project itself as an effective control mechanism, for which the constituent people cannot always be held responsible. Probably, they will have to remain satisfied with the hope that one day they will be able to raise themselves to the status of small partners in the development programmes initiated by us and will no longer remain as mere recipients of some development benefits decided in our terms. A reawakening of collective consciousness is, however, discernible as some of the major tribal communities have been making efforts to increase their organizational strength by creating a regional solidarity structure on the basis of cultural exchange, reinforcing social ties and sharing a common political platform. Undoubtedly, this will have development implications as well.

Ultimately what matters most in the context of society's survival and the tribal question related with it, is the quality of governance. Society's cohesion and development, its institutional arrangements, the kinds of political control it has been subjected to, reform strategies to be chalked out in conversation with its adaptive capacities and its scale from local to global and many more depend upon governance. Pierre Calame (2012) is all praise for legal anthropologies stand in this regard when he says, "My position on governance is ... a little like

that anthropologists of law like Elinne Le Ray (whose approach admire), who seek law's unvarying functions beneath the infinite variety of its concrete forms in different societies." In the Indian context, though tribal development signifies a planned intervention and an extension approach for community development, the role of culture has not come under any special treatment or its modalities have not been clearly worked out. It is left to some development anthropologists to work on the importance of culture in development and not always their voice could get the attention it deserves from the planners and policy executives. In a recent blog posted by the United Indian Anthropological Forum, R.K.Mutatkar, the direct student of Professor S. C. Dube, states,

"I regard Dube as the pioneer in what came to be known as Development Anthropology in India ... He had no allurement about the theory, except the basic concepts linked with the culture."

As a consultant on "Socio Cultural Development Alternatives in a changing World" (SCA), affiliated with the Asia-Pacific Development of Malaysia (1978-1982), he made a strong case for culture in development.

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The Dynamics of the Early Naga Economic Ideas: A Diachronic Analysis on Social Formation and Development of Local Culture

Chubala Sanglir

Abstract

The article aims to give a diachronic analysis to show how the movement of time and space in relation to its geography have shaped the economic practices of the early Nagas (early is used in the sense of pre-colonial period) and explains the history of its socio-cultural formation. It aims to project the concrete basis of the traditional economic practices in relation to the structural and organisational aspect of society as well as in the development of many distinct local cultural identities. Kinship relation and age-group organisation of the labour process of the *morung* system is emphasised to show the dynamics of the economic relations in mobilizing the productive forces. While attempting to show the traditional economic practices as a promoter to many individual cultural traditions, it also traces a commonality among the Nagas emerging from this and how many of the fundamentals of the Naga identity finds its basis in the traditional economic practices.

Key Words: Agriculture, *morung*, Communal labour, Kinship, Feasts of merit, Identity.

Introduction

In the study of Naga society and economy, the primacy of the economic relationship has been emphasised behind social development while considering the geographical factors and the specific natural conditions in shaping the socio-economic relationship. The concept of the mode of production has been adopted not in its typical Marxist

sense but to study the system of economic relationships and how the nature of its relationship determines the socio-cultural formation. As found in Gupta, production, simple or complex, primitive or sophisticated, is considered to be the essence of human survival and growth.[1] In all these development, it involves social relationship, observance of certain norms, rites and rituals, the nature of which depends upon the type of economic practices. Further, in the Marxist World View, Gupta mentions that the social institutions, religious beliefs and political structures are the product of and are determined by the way society organises its resources for production process. This paper attempts to show how Nagas mobilised their labour forces making it into a mode of production manifesting in the age group organisation of labour. Among the Nagas, productive forces come in the form of land and human labour. The relation of production is expressed in the form of communal labour system, where labour activities are based on simple reciprocal co-operative effort. During agricultural operations, households could mobilise the labour of the neighbours on the basis of reciprocity. To work on the hilly terrain, society has been organised in such a way that we find the development of several forms of reciprocal labour forces. Thus socio-economic relationship develops along co-operation, mutual assistance between people and free from exploitation of man by man.

Naga society is organised into tribes and clans with strong kinship ties. Social organisation has been taken to mean the 'significant grouping of individuals'[2] in the social formation. Among the Nagas this association is well exhibited in the clan and village formation. Social structure, on the other hand, refers to the social alignment that acts as a guide line for the behaviour of members of a society. Redfield[3] considers social structure to be a system whose elements do not exist independently of one another. In the light of this concept, the Naga *morung*[4] institution is emphasised as one of the core element on which the Naga social structure has been erected. The knowledge imparted and the activities in the *morung* are considered as the pillars in the development of many of the core cultural tradition. In the traditional

economic practice, the significance of kinship relations and the age group work force of the *morung* system have been highlighted as the mobilising element behind the formation of a typical Naga way of life.

Culture is a great pointer to locate people's identity. Among the Nagas, there is a clear indication which shows how agricultural practices are intimately associated in the development of many major socio-cultural traditions. Many communal as well as individual socio-religious rites are associated with agricultural operation. The rites and ceremonies are functional in character and are the essence of socio-religious and socio-cultural life of the people. Right from the selection of a jhum plot up to harvesting, people perform some rites and rituals and on certain occasion observe taboos. Many of the rites and ceremonies assume the nature of major festivals which keep binding the entire community. The paper attempts to show how the traditional economic practices acted as a promoter to many local cultural traditions giving the people a distinct identity.

Traditional Naga Economic Practices and Social Organisation

In relation to the topographic and climatic features, both *jhum* and wet rice/terraced cultivation were practiced. Jhumming was carried on a more massive scale, perhaps owing to sparse population and abundance of land. However, the mode of production follows a similar pattern in both forms of agricultural practices. The present work will highlight as to how the Nagas organised and mobilised their labour forces making it into a mode of production and how many of the Naga cultural traditions found its basis in the economic activities.

Land was considered as not only a source of livelihood but also the basis of people's identity. Traditional land holding system is such that it qualifies the people to cultivate a part of their parental land or that of the village community. Individual in so far as he is a member of a community, he has right of usage and occupation. This is the reason why we do not come across any landless Naga labourer working on other land. The land belongs to the people and the people are the owners of the land and not the state as in most other countries.

Therefore, land and manual labour have been the infrastructure of the socio-economic structure.

Generally, the relation of production is understood in the sense of owner-labour relationship, of those who own and who are deprived of, or of the situation where some collect taxes from the other or live on gifts. However, in the Naga context, this was an elusive concept. Traditional land ownership system and its distribution were such that no particular individual could command control over the land. In the absence of proper technology to aid the farming operation and considering the topographic factors, a family has to depend on the other. In the hilly terrain, the Nagas have survived practicing agriculture following a mode of production in the form of reciprocal cooperative effort. Nienu opines, a higher level of dependency exists in Naga society than in others, but unlike the subservient dependency on his landlord (a common practice among the plains people, with a rigid caste system as the basis of their social structure), the Naga individual's contribution to and participation in achieving group solidarity operates at a higher level[5]. Therefore, society has been organised in such a way that different systems of reciprocal labour supply developed among the Nagas. Thus socio-economic relationship develops along co-operation, mutual assistance between people and free from exploitation of man by man.

Social ideology, institution, tradition and culture do not exist in vacuum. It develops in response to the condition and situation of the age. In case of people living under the pressure of constant warfare and having no developed ideas of technological innovations to improve their economy as well as the military institution, traditional laws and customs becomes vital to keep the society going. Nagas had experienced this type of situation in their earlier days which led to the development of a typical Naga way of life, distinct to every tribe. In the evolution of any civilisation, social institution based on certain laws develops as a necessity. The terrain being hilly and harsh, society was organised in such a way to cope with the ecological situation.

The socio-economic formations in the Naga Hills reflect a process of adaptation to the environment. Different Naga tribes have developed their unique life styles, mode of production, belief systems and various other cultural practices making themselves as homogenous units. The cultural traditions thus developed in the process of people's interaction with nature gives out distinct local identities.

Development of Communal Feeling and Social Solidarity in Relation to Labour mobilisation

The relation of production is expressed in the form of communal labour system, where labour activities are based on simple reciprocal co-operative effort. During agricultural operations, households could mobilise the labour of the neighbours on the basis of reciprocity. Exchange of labour in the form of communal labour system has been the driving force and become the concrete basis of Naga economy. Talking about the collective effort of the Naga villagers in agricultural operation, Sanyu observed that labour is a part of social relations and it is the communal labour that is the bottleneck of production.[6] Economic infrastructure is understood as the totality of the productive forces and the social relation of human beings with each other and nature. Reciprocal cooperation among all individuals forms the economic infrastructure of the Naga economy. With no advanced technique for agricultural operation in the hilly terrain, it calls for human labour where the communal system of labour organisation becomes the greatest mechanism for production.

The Naga social life involves methods of grouping people in order to carry out various social activities for common existence. In fact the hallmark of the Naga social structure was the age-group organisation of the people that keeps the society intact and carries out the day to day activities. This organisation, in general, consists of interrelated roles that are governed by certain structural principle that revolves around the *morung* system which is crystallised in the age-group (*zungaren*, in Ao dialect) division of the society. The central piece in

Plate - 1 Traditional Ao Arju at Mopungchuket Villege

a village used to be the *morung*, *arju* in Ao dialect. (Plate-1). It is here that a person learns the skills and responsibilities of adults, and there will be some form of initiation into the *morung*, or into the category of 'adult man or woman'. It is the wisdom imparted in the *morung* that let a person to realise the importance of societal living. They also learn the importance of belonging to a clan and how to maintain its sanctity. It will influence how they speak to people, what food they are forbidden to eat, who they can and cannot marry. If we look into the workings of the *morung* system, we find that it is arranged in such a way that every member of the household is efficient for the welfare of the family in particular and towards society in general. The villagers thus grouped were allotted definite functions and responsibilities.

Once a person enters the *morung* generally by the age of twelve to thirteen years, he become aware of the social responsibilities and is ready to shoulder all social obligations. Interesting aspect of the Naga economic practices lies in the mobilisation of productive forces on the basis of age-group division of labour under the *morung* institution. Naga way of age grouping involves the arrangement of persons born

within three years. Members belonging to different age-groups and generations are assigned some definite roles to perform in the affairs of the village. They have different status and are responsible to keep a constant watch over the village against sudden raids, and also the transmission of traditions from one generation to another rests on the sincerity of the members. In the pre-colonial days, life of man revolves around the *morung* and every person was identified by his or her age-group. In fact, the social structure, dynamism of the village socio-economic life, lies in the age-group system under the *morung* institution.

The *morung* however is not common to all the Naga tribes. Singh[7] writes that morung is 'just not seen in the Angami area'. Ghosh[8] also mentions that 'the *morung* system was there among the Konyak, Ao, Lotha, Chang, Sangtam, etc. tribes, but not among all and not particularly among all the Angami, Rengma, Chakhesang, Zeliangrong, etc. villages'.

However, Ketholesie informed that, 'the *morung* institution was a central feature in the Angami villages. It was called *tehou* which means meeting and sleeping place for boys. The counterpart of *tehou* was the *kichuki* which was a sleeping place for girls in the olden days. However,

Plate - 2 *Tehouba* : Mezoma Villege

Plate - 3 Angami *Morung* : Khonoma Villege

Plate - 4 *Tehouba* : Outer place in the *Morung*, Khonoma

the *kichuki* was generally a temporary sleeping place. The Chakhesang people too maintained the Bachelor's dormitory which they call as *Chethicie. The* organisation and functions of the *tehou* and the *cethicie is* almost the same as with the other tribes where society is organised on the basis of age-grouping (*thesü*) to carry out the day to day activities'.[9]

Plate - 5 *Kichuki* : Second part of the *morung*, the sleeping chamber for boys, Khonoma

Siemvū of Mezoma village said, 'a very important feature in Angami villages is the *tehouba* (Plate-2) which is an open space where people sit together to conduct meetings pertaining to clan or *khel*. It also serves as a court to deliberate issues relating to the village or with neighboring villages'[10]. He further informed that *kichuki* is the *morung* or the men's dormitory of the Angamis. Punyü of Khonoma village informed that outer part of the Angami *morung* is called the *tehouba* (Plate - 3 and 4) where men folks gather to discuss issues pertaining to the village, clan or of important events. It is considered as the first educational institution for the youngsters. The second chamber is the *kichuki* (Plate-5) which was a sleeping dormitory for the boys.[11]

Age-Group Exchange of Labour under the *Morung* Institution

Among the Ao people, the exchange of labour system is called *yangtep*. This system is perpetuated by the age-group organisation or *zunga* of the *morung* system, where anybody born within a particular period of three years are counted as the same age group and this applied to both male and female. Jamir and Lanunungsang write that

under the *zunga yangtep* system, two to ten or even more form a labour force including both boys and girls. They work in the respective fields taking turns.[12] This system continues till today though the *morung* institution has become extinct. Among the Angamis the communal labour system was well developed. Communal efforts was utilised in both hunting and in cultivation which according to Sanyu;

> It was a practice among the Angamis both in hunting and in terrace cultivation that communal efforts was utilised in order to affect the maximum benefit and efficiency in the practice of these tasks. The system of communal labour was on an organised level, called *peli* where a group of young people would work in each other's field in rotation. Sometimes the whole village would also join together in certain prescribed tasks known as *Mechutho.*[13]

The Lotha system is far simpler. Working companies (*yengaten*) are composed of the children of neighbors. Boys and girls work together and help in the fields of the parents of the various members of the company when there is a pressure of work. Anyone who is short of labour may hire a company for the day, giving them their mid day meal and a small wage.[14] The Konyak *morung* system is called *paan* or *pan*[15] and it is the social institution of the Konyaks. This institution is no less different in the basic functions of the *morung* system of other tribes. The *paan* counterpart is called the *yow*, which is the dormitory of unmarried girls. They have *aitup* which can be known as gang or club in which they work together and help their families in turn basis. The importance of *aitup* is highlighted in Wangsa[16] where we find that through the activities of this *aitup* or *ai*, the young people are trained up which moulds an individual's social life effectively. The Semas work force is organised in the form of gangs. Hutton writes;

> The "gangs," *aluzhi* (probably < *alu*, field, *azhu*, laborer) are composed of both sexes in the case of the unmarried and are pretty well self-component. They nominate their own commander (*athöu*), who decides what fields are to be cultivated each day by his gang… they consist, generally speaking, of persons of about

> the same age… They are also democratic, and the chief's son, like everyone else, must do his work and obey the leader of his gang. Every member of the village is entitled to have his fields cultivated by them… when a gang goes to work in the field the owner is expected to give them liquor and rice. In fact, the whole cultivation of the village depends upon these gangs.[17]

The Linkage of Kinship Relation and Economic Functions

In most tribal societies land was held by the tribe or the clan in common, and the feature is considered to be the basis of tribal/kinship formation[18]. Godlier, talks about how kinship relation functions simultaneously as the infrastructure as well as the superstructure. He further explains how this relation in effect control the groups and individuals to the condition of production and to the resources, 'they regulate marriages, they provide the social framework of politico-ritual activity but they also function as an ideology, as a symbolic code for expressing relations between men, and between men and nature'[19]. Here, kinship is understood as one's relative or family within a given society. So by examining the social condition of production, the material means of social existence, it throws light on how kinship functions as a part of the organisation of production or of consumption. In Naga society it projects how kinship relation and economic functions are entwined.

The linkage of kinship relation and economic functions become clearer when we consider the practice of free or voluntary labour. This is a form of labor mobilisation, generally associated with kinship relation**.** Among the Nagas in general, production process is marked by a mutual aid among the cultivators and this system continues till today. It may be termed as 'voluntary aid' which automatically become a reciprocal co-operative effort among the cultivators. Among the Ao Nagas, giving free labour is very common. It is called *'roker/nüja.* In the event of any misfortunes like sickness, death in a family, the villagers will give one day free labour to the family. There are also other forms of labor mobilisation on the basis of reciprocity. One

form is known as *kirep-zunga* where two or more families mobilise their labour on the basis of reciprocity. Another common labour system comes from *elangtsur* where women folks generally from among the same clan help each other. This form of labor mobilisation has become a guaranteed labour force and thus a family always finds security from the clan members. The activities of this work force is well highlighted in Jamir and Lanunungsang;

> …the group is led by the eldest woman of the same clan and they do marvelous jobs not only in farming activities but also in socio-cultural activities. When one of members fell sick during the peak season of the cultivation period and left unable to do anything, the *elangtsur* mobilise themselves and go to the field of the distress person's field to work in the field. Many of the husbands of *elangtsur* also follow their wives to help them on such occasion. However this group will do no other activity except either weeding or transportation of paddy from the farm to the village.[20]

In this way, the productive forces were extended to all families and thereby develop the sense of belongingness, and social relationship become closer and stronger. Therefore, we may safely say that the communal nature of Naga society lies in this very economic organisation.

Other form of labour like slavery was commonly practiced in almost all parts of the Naga country till it was abolished with the coming of the Christian missionaries and the British in the 19th century. Throughout the North-Eastern states, slavery was commonly practised with variations in the nature of their exploitation. In communities of the Arunachal, Mizos, and the Ahoms, we find the dependence of their political economy upon slave labour. The agro-based economy with simple technology in these societies demanded a great deal of human labour. Therefore, slavery was recognised as an established institution. However, slavery in the Naga Hills did not take the shape of the classical form of slave system nor was it an established institution as in the Arunachal community. In fact, Nagas never depended entirely upon slaves because there have been no drastic changes in the economy

that demanded a great amount of human labour, nor was it a slave owning society in the real sense. Therefore, the features of slavery in general context is not very relevant while attempting to study slavery in Naga society though almost all the Naga tribes used to keep slaves. The overall picture presented a sort of paternal slavery as far as the slave-owner relationship is concerned among the Nagas. Therefore, the master-slave relations prevalent among the Nagas presented a different situation and cannot be compared with the slave owning societies in other parts of the world.

Among the Aos, keeping of slaves was very common. The Ao people called a slave as *alar*, which is derogatory and punishable with heavy fine if addressed to any free citizen. While speaking of slavery among the Aos, A. W. Davishas observed that slaves were;

> …on the whole, very well treated, being considered as members of the family. Cases of harsh treatment of course, must have occurred occasionally, but this must now be very rare, and the slaves who have remained with the owners know very well that, if ill treated, all they have to do is run away. In old days slaves, unless they could get down to the plains, could not run away, it being etiquette for them to be caught and returned by the inhabitants of any village in which they took refuge.[21]

The paternal nature of the slave-owner relationship is also evident from the writings of Mills where he writes;

> Until the country was taken over the Aos owned large number of slaves. When orders were issued stopping slavery there was a wild rush to sell, Chuchuyimlang, for instance, disposing of most of theirs to independent neighbours across the Dikhu. Of the slaves who were freed, many elected to stay with their masters rather than go home, which shows that their treatment was on the whole good.[22]

Like the other Nagas, the Lothas too, used to keep slaves. The Lotha term for slave is '*ndri*'. Almost similar condition prevailed in

regard to treatment accorded to slaves in the Lotha area. Mills writes that a thief could be sold by the man whose property he had stolen if he could not return it, or a debtor could be sold by his creditors… Masters had the power of life and death, but slaves seems generally to have been treated more or less as members of the family, and for the purposes of marriage were regarded as members of their master's clan.[23] The Angami used the term *'kedie'*, the lateral translation of which is not exactly a slave but dependents. Tsielie informed that among the Angamis, *kedies* were kept by those who could afford. Usually, slaves were bought from outside the tribe. Unlike other tribes who used to enslave those captives in war, it is said that enslavement of war captives was not a common feature, whereas, they usually used to take their head.[24] Hutton had also observed that prisoners taken in war were usually killed. It was however, *genna* to kill any prisoner who had succeeded in touching with his lips the arm of anyone of his enemies. Such a prisoner would be held to ransom, kept as a servant, or simply released.[25] He further says that, prisoners seem to have been frequently kept as servants, particularly women, but slavery as an institution and involving a trade in slaves, though existent, seems to have affected only a very small proportion of the population.

The use of expressions like 'slave holder'[26] or 'serf'[27] cannot be construed in the sense that Naga society was dependent upon slave labour. Though the slaves worked with a condition of labour belonging to his owner and had no rights and legal status, the socio-economic condition was such that there was little scope to exploit his labour and reduce him to the status of speaking tool. 'The input of the slaves was in a very modest scale, and their labour was never considered as the dominant mode for production. There developed no forceful mechanism to mobilise labour forces and production as in the case of Arunachal and Mizo people where they have made slavery as an institution for surplus extraction. In other words, Nagas never depended upon other forms of labour whereas the communal system of labour was the basis of Naga agricultural operation'[28].

Surplus Utilisation: Feasts of Merit as Promoter of Cultural Traditions

The concept of surplus prevalent among the Naga villagers was not for accumulation of wealth but for distribution to earn a prestige, a status and recognition in society. This distribution of wealth is represented by giving a community feast which is manifested in holding the Feasts of Merit. Generally, surplus production is associated with bringing about changes in society. Social structure is largely determined by how surplus is distributed or accumulated. For the emergence of a complex political structure or a dominant class of people in a society, it is determined by the control over surplus production. However, among the Nagas, there is a departure from the general trend where the idea appears to be more communal and non-accumulative and hence there followed no changes in the social structure by way of dividing the society into separate compartments.

The early Naga society was organised and structured in such a way that all members were counted and respected. Society could be seen as stratified on the basis of heroism and earned prestige. Here we may stress the importance of rice. Rice was not only an article of consumption. It was also considered as the most important possession to gain recognition in the society. A person's status in society was determined by the amount of rice he stored. It has been the determining factor to consider whether one is rich or poor. It is rice which could obtain *jabile*[29], slaves, which are other aspects of status symbol and also to gain recognition among fellow beings. The general conception was that, for rich people, status among fellow villagers increases only when they share their wealth. The idea of accumulation of wealth and monopoly over one's fellow men was not in the mind of the rich, but distribution and sharing by feeding the whole village community was every rich man's dream or desire. Sharing of wealth was observed by giving feasts through various stages of rituals and celebration in which the slaughter of a mithun (Bosfrontalis) was the ultimate symbol of riches and honour. By giving feasts to the villagers, it raised the man's position. These feasts of merit may be taken as a means of social mobility towards a dignified status.

Looking into the ideas behind the feasts of merit, Friedman projects the involvement of dual functions in which there is the distribution of surplus in order to accumulate prestige and to propitiate the higher spirits in order to increase the wealth and prosperity of the entire group. He writes, 'surplus is represented not as the product of surplus labour, but as the work of gods. Feast becomes a redistributive system and also treated as part of the cycle of conversion of surplus into prestige.'[30] In the same line, Herskovits says, 'the prestige economy is a system in which gain comes through expenditure rather than through saving, and the higher position is reserved for those who most conspicuously spend…'[31] For the Nagas, the material riches and surplus, were conceived of in connection with the fertility principle and by sharing the fruits of their material production, brings fertility to the community and at the same time, a person gained both prestige and honour. This conversion of surplus into prestige lies in giving the Feast of Merit. There are a series of feasts, each one costlier than the preceding one. Every feast entitles the host to social distinction and increases progressively his standing and position in the community. It also entitles him to wear special dress and ornaments and decorate his house in a particular manner, like erection of Y–shaped posts or addition of house horns which gives an outstanding position from others in the village. But this status did not affect the relations of production. They did not constitute a class in itself, nor enjoy political power because of the prestige and status acquired or earned by giving the feasts. Status and recognition was not reserved for any particular clan or family. Anybody who has the capacity to perform the feasts may do so in order to get social recognition. Therefore, we find that the nature of surplus distribution was such that it allowed egalitarianism prevails over a class-based society. The recognition earned by the feasts givers are represented in attires, songs and in different motifs in their house design.

Many of the identity markers find its basis in the surplus distribution associated with the feasts of merit. Megalithic culture is a very striking tradition of the Nagas associated with surplus

Plate - 6 Plate - 7 Plate - 8

Plates - 6, 7, 8 : Monoliths erected commemorating the Feasts of Merit, Mezoma villege

distribution. A feasts giver performs series of feasts, culminating in the mithun sacrifice among community like the Ao, stone pulling among the Angami and the Chakhesang Nagas. For every feast given, a monolith (Plate - 6, 7, 8) or some wooden structure (Y-shaped or forked shaped) is erected to commemorate the event. As informed by Punyü and Khate, among the Angami people, if a person could give the feasts to the whole *khel* as many as seven times or more, he is entitled to construct a large stone circle the *khwihou* (Plate - 9), a symbol of richness and generosity[32]. These are the markers which gives a distinguished status to the feasts givers. In fact, the megalithic culture and the rituals involved are richest among the Angamis and the Chakhesang Nagas which testifies the nature of surplus distribution.

Social Status, Distinctive Dresses and Ornaments

Dress and ornaments represent the aesthetic aspects and identity of Naga culture**.** Feasts givers were not only given distinction in society but also entitle them to wear special distinctive dress and ornaments to

Plate - 9 Stone circle *Kwihou*, Khonoma, 2022

adorn their body. Also, they become entitled to decorate their houses with motifs and designs signifying their wealth. Most prominent item of Naga dress is the shawl. Every community has its distinctive shawl where the patterns and symbols of the shawl indicate the wearer's status. Women wear a type of sarong or simply wrap-around skirts. In Ao dialect it is called *sübeti*. However, the *sübeti* varies from region to region and from one clan to another. There are exclusive elaborate designs for the wife or daughter of a rich man who had done mithun sacrifice. Though the *Sübeti* of any designs are commonly worn by anyone today, traditionally, those patterns indicative of certain status or achievements were worn only by those entitled persons.

The shawl of a man who had performed the feasts of merit is different from that of an ordinary villager. Likewise, a warrior's shawl is different from which is commonly worn. For the Nagas, dress and ornaments are the things that represent the identity of individual, his or her clan, social status and the tribe to which he or she belongs.

Also, every pattern and ornament speaks about certain achievements. Successes in warfare or feasting exploits are displayed in ornaments and dress patterns. For instance, the neck ornaments of the Konyak Naga indicate the number of heads taken in warfare, thereby, his social status too. Among the Ao people, usually a man who had sacrificed mithun wears two strings of necklace made of long conch shell beads (*lakup molung*) while ordinary men wear only one string. During festive occasions, every Naga man or woman becomes impatient to put on the ornaments which brings out the beauty of the wearer, shows his or her status and made the occasion more colourful.

Honour Songs Associated with the Feasts of Merit

Feast of Merit is an occasion of great festivity. This is an occasion where both young and old, rich or poor could partake in the feast. Singing and dancing blended with eating and drinking mark the occasion. In such occasion, the feast giver gets the privilege to have songs composed in his honour. Meaningful songs signifying his wealth and generosity are composed and those songs are preserved as a reminder of his richness and his status for generations to come. In fact, the younger generation takes immense pride in reminiscence of the achievements of their forefathers.

Agriculture related Cultural Traditions : Rites and Rituals, Major Festivals

Among the Nagas, there is a clear indication which shows how agricultural practices are intimately associated in the development of many major socio-cultural traditions. Development of rites and rituals finds its basis in the agricultural activities of the people, many of which assumes the form of major festivals. It was functional in character because right from the selection of the plot for cultivation up to harvesting, the activities revolve around observance and performance of different ceremonies with extreme precision.

The early Nagas believed in both benevolent and malevolent spirits and therefore, needs to be appeased in order to gain their favour. All rites and rituals were performed meticulously with utmost reverence according to the nature of people's needs. The Ao Nagas believed in

Lijaba, the supreme as possessing both benevolent and malevolent attributes. The supreme should be appeased for fear of retributions as well as to seek blessings and protection. As such, many rituals and ceremonies followed to gain his favour. Jamir and Lanunungsang say, 'Every ceremony is followed by *genna*, called *Anempong. Anempong* is observed just before and after every ceremony, it is a period of purification during which, the entire normal activities should be ceased… failure to observe or misconduct of such *Anempong* leads tragedy and misfortune.'[33] Jamir Sosang writes, 'one will not prosper if he omits the sacrifices due to the deities around him, who unappeased, are ever ready to blight his crops and bring illness and death upon him and to his family'[34]. Here, we can trace a clear linkage between a successful rite and prosperity of the community.

'The Aos observe *Moatsü Mong* after sowing is done. The festival provides them a period of recreation and entertainment after the stressful work of clearing fields, burning jungles…'[35] People believed in *Lijaba's* bounties for good harvests. Therefore, different ritual ceremonies were performed and *genna* observed by the community which culminates in *Moatsū* celebration in the form of pre-harvest festival. *Tsüngremmong* is another major festival of the Ao Nagas celebrated to seek blessings for good harvest. In all these, observance of the ceremonies involves the whole village, and thus, brings out a communal feeling and further cements social relationship. Dressed in the best attire, both young and old and even from neighbouring villages are invited to partake in the community feast. The festivals thus developed gives solidarity and identity of the community. Traditionally, the essence of socio-cultural life of the Nagas lies in the observance of rites and rituals.

Likewise, The Lotha Nagas celebrates *Tohku Emong*, the post-harvest festival in the month of November as a time to rejoice the fruit of hard work in the field. *Aoling Monyu* or spring festival is celebrated by the Konyaks in the month of April to welcome the spring season and pray for prosperity of their field. 'This is done to seek the blessings of *Yongwan*, the supreme God in order to have a bountiful harvest…

The *Aoling* festival is an opportunity for the young and old, male and female to dress and decorate themselves in brightly coloured traditional embroidery and bead jewellery… dressed in traditional attires they dance, sing folk songs and beat log drums'[36]. It is also a time of peace and reconciliation.

The festivals thus developed continue till today with more elaboration in the nature of its celebration. In celebrating the festivals by different Naga tribes, it clearly exhibits how festivals associated with agriculture promoted a sense of communal feeling and strengthens the bond as belonging to a tribe or a community. Through the initiative of the Government of Nagaland, Hornbill Festival also known as the 'Festival of Festivals' is held annually since December 2000 with the aim to revive, preserve and promote the richness of Naga cultural traditions. In observing the festival, it binds the entire community and gives them a distinct socio-cultural identity. Singing and dancing is very important feature of the festivals and has become a crucial element of the Naga cultural tradition. Every tribe has developed their own particular tune and dance steps which gives them their own identity. Every Naga tribe celebrates their festivals to this day with much fun and vigour. All these show that the activities related to economic practices are highly entwined with the socio-religious and cultural life of the people. It also indicates how many of the Naga identity find its basis in the traditional economic practices.

Conclusion

The terrain being hilly and harsh, society was organised in such a way to cope with the ecological situation. The socio-economic formations in the Naga Hills reflect a process of adaptation to the environment. Different Naga tribes have developed their unique life styles, belief systems, rites and rituals and various other cultural practices making themselves as homogenous units. However, the development of the mode of production having its basis on reciprocal cooperation among the community is a feature common to all the Nagas. Here, one could locate a commonality among all Nagas which

finds expression in the nature of social organisation — clan system, family and kinship relation. The formation of a close knitted society, the loyalty and cooperation among the villagers and kinsmen are some common features among all the Nagas. The loyalty and cooperation among the people essentially developed in relation to the isolated nature and the hostile terrain of their habitation where people depended on and helped each other. Existence of community living based on common shared values, respect in particular for the elderly both man and woman, and looking after the welfare of the village and its members are considered to be of paramount importance by every Naga. Allegiance and loyalty to one's kin, clan and village was therefore, considered to be a sacred duty. The characteristics thus developed become a way of life and a fundamental feature of the Naga culture.

Though undergoing many waves of change, yet, we could locate the all-pervading binding force, the basis of the Naga cultural identity in this communal spirit which stems out of the communal mode of production. Economic practices are highly entwined with socio-religious aspects and that it becomes a cementing force of the people. The communal nature of societal living of the Nagas is clearly the outcome of the nature of economic relationship rooted in traditional practices. The cooperative efforts, the collective responsibility and obligations which we find in the traditional economic practices had been crucial in the development of communal feeling and attachment to their respective clans. Thus, in economic terms, this social corporation is converted into communal co-operative effort as a mode of production. Traditional labour system had instilled a sense of belongingness, a crucial component in promoting community's identity. It is this consciousness which develops into ethnic consciousness that binds the people as the Nagas.

Notes

[1] D. N. Gupta, ed. *Changing Modes of Production,* 1995, p. 1.

[2] R. H. Lowe, p. 3, cited in R. K. Kar, 'Tribal Social Organisation' in T. B. Subba and G. C. Ghosh, ed. *The Anthropology of North-East India*, 2003, pp. 219-241.

[3] R. Redfield, p. 35, cited in Kar, 'Tribal Social Organisation' in Subba & Ghosh, ed., *The Anthropology of North-East India*, 2003, p. 219.
[4] Morung refers to the bachelors' dormitory, the most important traditional institution considered as the repository of discipline, family values, customs and tradition.
[5] V. Nienu, *Naga Cultural Milieu,* 2015, p. 129.
[6] V. Sanyu, *A History of Nagas and Nagaland*, 1995, p. 54.
[7] P. Singh, *Nagaland*, 1972, p. 31.
[8] B. B. Ghosh, *History of Nagaland*, 1982, p. 197
[9] K. Zutsuvi, Professor, Nagaland University, information provided on 2nd November 2010, Kohima.
[10] According to Khrisangulie Siemvū, at present, there are three *khels* and ten *thehou* at Mezoma village. Information provided on 15th April 2022, Mezoma Village.
[11] Information provided by Mhiesirieto Punyū on 7th May 2022, Khonoma village.
[12] Talitemjen, N. Jamir, and A. Lanunungsang, *Naga Society and Culture*, 2005, p. 90. *Zungayangtep* is understood as exchange of labour among the age group.
[13] V. Sanyu, idem., p. 54.
[14] J. P. Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, 1922, pp. 96-97.
[15] Christoph Von Fürer Haimendirf, *The Konyak Nagas,* 1969, used the word *'Ban'* for the Konyak morung. Rev. Y. Chingang Konyak, *The Konyak Naga: Yesterday and Today*, 2008, refers to the Konyak Morung as *Baan*, pp. 32-34. However, as informed by Thanglong Konyak of Tanhai village on the 12th April 2022, the actual word for the Konyakmorung is *Pan* or *Paan*.
[16] P. A. Wangsa, *Christianity and Social Change*, 2000, p. 21.
[17] J. H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, 1921, pp. 153-154.
[18] R. S. Sharma, *Material Culture,* 1983, p. XX.
[19] M.Godlier, 'The Notion of 'Asiatic Mode of Production' in Marx and Engels', p. 10, *Enquiry*, New Series Vol. II, No. 2, Old Series, No. 11, Monsoon 1965, pp. 29-48.
[20] Talitemjen, N. Jamir, and A. Lanunungsang, idem., pp. 170-171.
[21] A. W. Davis, 1891 cited in Elwin Verrier (ed.), *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, 1969, p. 326.
[22] J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, 1926, pp. 210-211.
[23] J. P. Mills, 1922, idem., p. 111.
[24] Tsielie of Khonoma village, information provided on 5th November, 2004, Khonoma.
[25] J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, 1969, p. 154.
[26] J. P. Mills, 1922, idem., p. 111.
[27] B. B. Ghosh, 1982, idem., p. 220.
[28] C. Sanglir, 'Nature of Slavery among the Nagas' in *NURJ*, 2014, pp. 277-278.
[29] *Jabile or Jabilee* was a form of currency which was used by the Nagas, particularly the Ao Nagas during the pre-Colonial period.
[30] J. Friedman, 'Tribes, States and Transformation', *ASA Studies*, 1965, p. 172.
[31] M. Herskovits, *Cultural Anthropology,* 1955, p. 164.

[32] Information provided by Mhiesirieto Punyū and Zakie Khateon 7th May 2022, Khonoma village.
[33] Talitemjen, N. Jamir and A. Lanunungsang, 2005, idem., p. 125.
[34] Sosang, Jamir, *Ao Naga Customary Laws and Practices*, 2012, p. 79.
[35] https://mokokchung.nic.in/culture-heritage/
[36] https://konyaktearetreat.com/event/along-festival/

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Flows and Overflows: The Scientific Imperative of River Materiality

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Abstract

In dense deltascapes of South Asia, mega-hydraulic interventions like dams and embankments have disrupted ecologies, impacting upon coastal riverine livelihoods. This is an outcome of the legacy of 'colonial hydrology' that had crafted Cartesian binaries between "land" versus "water", "flows" versus "overflows", erasing non-modern river epistemologies and ontologies – buried under strata and stories of a sedimentary antiquity. Using the hydrosocial framework on the fluid tapestry of Bengal in general and the Farakka Barrage Project in particular, this article places the rationale behind reontologising rivers by reimagining river materiality as the scientific imperative of the contemporary times. The case study validates how (tropical) rivers co-constitute flowing and overflowing dynamics that reciprocally determine political processes and cultural milieu over space and time – that can only be comprehensively understood and captured through interdisciplinary water science viz. pluralistic floods research.

Key Words: Colonial hydrology, Farakka Barrage, Char, Erosion, Malda, Ganga.

Introduction

"We are standing on water all the time. We have nowhere to go, we are under knee-deep water in every sense of the term!"

This statement by an island villager during a particular recent natural calamity – super Cyclone YAAS[1] is not shrouded in "situatedness" – rather it epitomises the larger realities of (more) dynamic fluidscapes of South Asia where coupled socio-ecological challenges emanate from age-old "wicked problems" – rooted in the

political economic rubric, shaping and in turn, getting shaped by scientific discourses and technologies. In dense "deltascapes" (Mukherjee et al. 2021), mega-hydraulic interventions like dams and embankments have disrupted ecologies, impacting upon coastal-riverine livelihoods – the reciprocal feedback loops generating poverty cycles for communities inhabiting the volatile islands yet entirely deriving their (ecosystem-dependent) livelihoods from these ephemeral geographies. Calamities from cyclones and climate change become more severe and multi-pronged as part of socio-technological interventions upsetting river rhythms since the era of big/western hydraulic interventions. Every cyclone in these volatile scapes renew discussions and validate the menace associated with permanently embanking ecosystems and geographies in flux. The scientific sanctions and "modern" technological choices have crafted "path-dependent" (Schott 2004) trajectories intensifying socio-ecological vulnerabilities of marginalised islanders. Yet, the debate 'to dam or not to dam' (Meredith 2021) seems perennial – legitimised by the "modern" "scientific" rationale of economic "progress", "development" and "improvement", ruthlessly constructing sacrosanct Cartesian binaries such as "land" versus "water", "flows" versus "overflows" and also simultaneously erasing non-modern river epistemologies and ontologies – buried under strata and stories of a sedimentary antiquity.

Inspired by Linton's (2010) conceptualisation of "modern waters" followed by Linton and Budds' (2013) formulation of the "hydrosocial cycle", a group of interdisciplinary water/river scholars had clearly demonstrated through their theoretical-empirical research that the unnaturalness of natural calamities like floods has largely originated from the western hegemonic hydraulic discourse and deployment of "land" and "water" as separate entities catering to the capitalist "calculus of rule" (D'Souza 2002; Mukherjee and Lahiri-Dutt 2021), consciously confronting fluid materialities, imbibing solid-liquid assemblage. Using project Farakka Barrage as the "disruptive moment" that radically altered socio-geomorphology of the Lower Ganga Basin, this chapter places the rationale behind reontologising rivers by

reimagining river materiality as the scientific imperative for the desired (non)Anthropocene. While the chapter is methodologically restricted to the spatial scale of Lower Bengal, unveiled through her rich archival and living archival traditions accessed over historical and ethnographic approaches, it has the macro-scalar agenda to explicate entangled renderings of "Anthropocene Islands" (Pugh and Chandler 2021).[2]

"Colonial hydrology": Unpacking the "wicked problem" by addressing the root

> In the first stage [pre-deltaic] it [the river] runs on a lower level than the surrounding country, winding through mountain valleys and skirting the base of the hills. During this long part of its career, it receives innumerable streams and tributaries from the higher country on both banks. So far it answers to our common English idea of a river. But no sooner does it reach the delta than its whole life changes. Instead of running along the lowest ground, it gradually finds itself hoisted up until banks form ridges which rise high above the adjacent country. Instead of receiving confluents it shoots forth a hundred distributaries. In short, it enters upon its career as a deltaic river and presents a completely different set of phenomenon from those we are accustomed to in European streams. (Hunter 1875:176).

South Asian sedimentary realities are robust than any other parts of the world. The Himalayan Rivers carry larger sediment loads due to greater erosion in their basins as compared to rivers in other regions (Abbas and Subramanian 1984; Narayana and Babu 1983; Vaithiyanathan et al. 1988; Baghel 2017). Moreover, South Asian rivers are the largest deliverers of suspended sediments to the sea; they account for around half the total sediment reaching the world's coastlines (Milliman and Meade 1983). The Ganga–Brahmaputra system is the largest depositor of sediments to the sea. Rising from the tectonically active Himalayan belt, the Ganga and Brahmaputra Rivers contribute about a billion tonnes (~10^9 t a^{-1}) of sediment annually to the Bengal Basin (Nishat 2019; Bandyopadhyay 2007). Since Holocene,

the sediments have configured the colossal Ganga-Brahmaputra Delta (GBD), shared between India and Bangladesh.

The huge and dense fluvial tapestry of Indian delta systems infiltrated contradictory colonial moments of awe, amazement, anxiety and apprehension continued against constant cycles of alluviation and dilluviation of land. The colonial administrator Major Henry Thomas Colebrooke, while providing a vivid description *On the Course of the Ganges, through Bengal*, accounted for large-scale devastations caused by the River in the Murshidabad District. That land loss was compensated with newly formed fertile lands in the midst of meandering river channels was appreciated by him. 'The quantity of land, which has been destroyed by the river in course of a few years, will amount, upon most moderate calculation, to 40 square miles, or 25,600 acres: but this is counter-balanced, in a great measure, by alluviation which has taken place on the opposite shore' (Colebrook 1799: 14). W.W. Hunter (1876) also observed and made an elaborate depiction of how an acre of land was engulfed by the gnawing Padma within half an hour. European astonishment with the South Asian deltascape finds detailed projection in the colonial archive.

As the British colonisers were desperate to forge a "permanent" economic regime based on pecuniary principles of steady and increased flow of revenues, unpredictable flows in the river and unmanageable overflows appeared to be adversaries awaiting interventions. The colonial "fixed rent" regime was a significant departure from the precolonial period—'from the levying of tax on the gross produce to rent on the land under colonialism' (Mukherjee and Ghosh 2020: 53). Thus, "treacherous" and hybrid landscapes—nebulous, transient and ephemeral environments in flux inversely impacted upon the colonial "calculus of rule", provoking them to fix South Asian fluidscapes, largely dictated by techno-chauvinist aspirations. "Modern" hydraulics were implemented in the tropical-estuarine-deltaic scape with little reverence to varied geographical and geomorphological settings promulgating cyclical confrontation

between human and riverine agencies and crafting an era of everlasting disharmony and discordance – obliterating the age-old tradition of living with nature. "Modern hydrology" evolved in capitalist Europe provided the larger context and deeper training to deploy similar principles and interventions. The European Renaissance led to the great divide between natural sciences and religious perspectives, and separated nature from society, land from water (Lafaye de Micheaux and Kull 2020). Modern technologies such as pumps, dredging devices, locks and sluices drained, reclaimed and embanked rivers and low-lying lands. To make way to the European imagination, hydraulic engineering initiatives were carried out in the Fenlands of Italy, East Anglia and the Netherlands between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The distinction between 'water and land, between fresh and salt waters, between clear and turbid flows, between individual channels, between lagoon water and river water and between city and terraferma' (D'Souza 2009: 3) was affected as surmised by Venetian hydrologists Nicolo Zen and Cristoforo Sabbadino whose hydrological principles were applied at multiple scales (Cosgrove and Petts 1990). Several European rivers were straightened, dredged, embanked, channelised and shortened, and meanders, swamps, marshes, loops and various other forms of soil–liquid hybrids were dismantled.

Through the transplantation of "modern hydrology" in colonial South Asia, 'Rivers were robbed of their rich cultural contexts, individual histories and unique geographical attributes' (Mukherjee and Lahiri-Dutt 2021). The transplantation exercise was routed through the mode of imitation with difference as there was no delay in the British realisation that the nature of tropical rivers is different from the temperate ones. Yet, with the colonial (mis)rationale of 'all rivers are same' and arrogance to validate the proposition, more aggressive interventions were implemented to tame the "unruly" tropical rivers and their wild marshes, swamps and wetlands as part of the integrated deltaic systems.

The South Asian water history scholarship had manifested how hydraulics along with socio-political structures of spheres of annexation and control were manipulated, re-ordered, and realigned to suit colonial

capitalist motives and interests of making penultimate profits from revenue collection (Mukherjee 2018). Historians had demonstrated how floods were seen as obstacles, restraining routine and regular revenue collection especially after the Permanent Settlement in eastern India (Bengal, Bihar and Orissa) (D'Souza 2006; Klingensmith 2007; Mishra 2008; Singh 2011). '…floods came to be perceived no more as blessings positively impacting soil fertility and protecting inhabitants from mosquito-borne diseases like malaria, but as a curse' (Mukherjee and Ghosh 2020: 53). The unpredictability of deltaic stretch of tropical rivers such as the Mahanadi, the Damodar had to be controlled as their economic agenda was critically dependent on their ability to subdue and train the volatility of the delta's hydrology (D'Souza 2002: 1264).

South Asia encountered three major stages of modern hydraulic interventions under the British rule: the embankment era with concrete structures constructed to insulate lands from floodwaters; the perennial irrigation epoch with the aim of ensuring a continued supply of river water in the excavated canals for steadily accomplishing agricultural and navigation purposes; and MPRVD, or the building of big dams and barrages on rivers to generate hydropower and control massive floods. Each stage was more technologically aggressive and socially disruptive than the preceding one, and successfully led to the physical and intellectual separation of land and water (Mukherjee and Lahiri-Dutt 2021). The deltascapes were re-casted as flood vulnerable landscapes provoking 'an upward spiral in technological choices over the span of a century and a half' (D'Souza 2002: 1270).

The ugly doctrine of "colonial hydrology" is the template on which coupled socio-ecological challenges of the Anthropocene is rooted. "Colonial hydrology" conceptualised by Rohan D'Souza (2006) is the all-pervasive theoretical traction to explore the relationship between colonialism and water, covering a wide range of subjects including floods, drainage, wetlands, lakes, inland river navigation, traditional fisheries, urban water supply, water legislation, cultures of water use, ideologies of "river improvement," and multipurpose river valley development. It is the broad rubric to characterise the British experience as comprising an altogether distinct paradigm for hydraulic

interventions in South Asia, which involved "fundamentally realigning land and water in new sets of social, political and ecological relationships" (D'Souza 2006: 625). The South Asian story of the "Anthropocene Islands" has to be recontextualised and repoliticised within this larger historical context. The case of the Farakka Barrage Project is an elucidation of this bigger message that needs to be conveyed hard in reontologising river epistemologies to reinforce (non)modern anti-hegemonic hydrosocialities.

The Farakka Barrage Project: Historical and political narratives

In her book *Blue Infrastructures: Natural History, Political Ecology and Urban Development in Kolkata* and while discussing colonial imperative to design and develop port cities in India, Mukherjee (2020) has applied D'Souza's "colonial hydrology" framework and expanded it into what she calls "colonial urban hydrology". It places it as an analytic to explore the economic rationale behind urban hydraulic infrastructural projects making way to efflorescence of port cities as viable commercial centres, connected to hinterlands. Shedding light on the colonial history of the excavation of canals and more specifically the emergence of the Eastern Canal System of Kolkata, Mukherjee's "colonial urban hydrology" approach has unpacked how networked infrastructures were executed as important arteries of trade and urban utilities (water in, water out), catering to the expanding needs of the planned metropolises (port cities) in the most cost-effective mode. Just as floods were perceived as a curse because they affected colonial capitalist calculations of extractions from agrarian produce, rivers connecting cities with hinterlands served as commercial arteries, guaranteeing "the steady, uninterrupted, and year-around flow of increased navigation" (Knoll et al. 2017 : 9).

The river Hooghly was the gateway to the trade of the Ganges valley. Several river "improvement" schemes including aggressive dredging operations were conducted by the Port Commission to keep the river free from siltation. Administrative reports of the Port Commissioners encapsulate the crucial importance of the British battle against silt to ensure huge returns on expenditures.

Comparative assessments of maps designed by the Dutch cartographer Matheus Van den Brouche and the British map maker Major James Rennell depict that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were periods of great geomorphological alterations marked by the decline in the volume of water in the Bhagirathi-Hooghly River and increase in the united mass of waters in the Padma River, the left bank distributary of the Ganga flowing through erstwhile East Bengal or present Bangladesh. The complex and combined realities surrounding the River – her commercial significance, colonial anxieties about her deteriorating flows, the need for constant and systematic surveys and dredging operations to guarantee colonial capitalist economic needs by augmenting the tonnage capacity of vessels through the River is manifested in the remark of Frederick Dumaye, vice-chairman, Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta:

> The cry that the Hooghly is deteriorating is raised every now and then. Sixty years ago it was stated that the river threatened at no distant date to render access to Calcutta altogether impracticable for any but vessels of the smallest tonnage; that several vessels had no prospects of getting to sea for over a month, and that the serious impediments in the river were progressive and inevitable and beyond the reach of removal by any engineering skill. Ten years later there was a scare that the trade of Europe with Calcutta was in danger of immediate and prolonged suspension. The calamity which had overhung the city for years, … and the fear of which had at intervals strained and baffled the ingenuity of half the engineers of Bengal, was officially stated to be already at hand. … In 1830 pilots were prohibited from moving vessels of greater draft than 20 feet in any part of the river, even with the aid of tugs. In 1857 the permissible draft was only 22 feet. The average size of the largest vessels in the world was then about 2500 tons burden, with a length of about 300 feet. The draft allowed has since been steadily increasing, until at the present time the river 3.3 "Calculus of Rule" 75 is navigated by vessels drawing up to 29 feet, of a length exceeding 500 feet, and carrying as much as 12,500 tons of cargo. The advent of steam, the great skill of the members of the Bengal Pilot Service, the elaboration of the system of surveying the river, were all factors

> in obtaining these results. Satisfactory as they were, further effort was demanded. Nature required assistance. The dredging of the river was undertaken in 1907. … The dredging operations are now about to be extended, and contacts have been placed, in shipyards on the Cycle, for additional dredging plant that will cost £220,000, which include two very powerful dredgers, one of which will be employed on the improvement of the river within the port, and the other in dredging the bars in the lower reaches. The Commissioners confidently expect to obtain by dredging as good results in the lower as in the upper reaches, and ultimately to maintain throughout the year a clear channel from Calcutta to the sea for any vessel that can pass through the Suez Canal. The tonnage of vessels entering the port 50 years ago was 668,000 tons. Last year the tonnage was 6¼ million tons, or ten times as much. The growth has been most rapid in the last 15 years, when the increase was 3 million tons, or a yearly expansion of 200,000 tons. The value of the trade of the port of Calcutta from imports by all routes has reached 104½ millions sterling, and from exports 107½ millions, altogether 212 millions, an increase of 77½ millions in the last eight years. (Quoted in O'Malley 1914 : 8-9).

The Stevenson-Moore Committee (1916–19) reported changes in the navigable channels and feeders for the lower stretch of the Bhagirathi-Hooghly. For ascertaining the condition of the River from Kolkata to the sea, periodic surveys were conducted, prominent among which were surveys carried under Major Hirst, Director of Surveys, Bengal and Assam, and the river surveyor H.G. Reaks who was a specialist on the Hooghly river regime. When dredging mechanisms offered limited stories of success, the need to artificially regulate the riverine flow by creating a barrage and a feeder canal seemed to be the pertinent alternative. Though this discussion on mega-intervention surfaced in several reports between the 1850s and 1940s, the post-independent period laid out the appropriate context for the construction of the barrage – very much in tune to the political economy of "development" in a decolonised nation.

The FBP was initiated in 1962 and completed in 1971, costing a staggering USD 208 million! The excavation of the 38 km long feeder canal took about four years and the project was completed on May 21, 1975 (Map 1; Table 1).

Map 1: The Lower Ganga Basin
Source: produced by Raktima Ghosh

Table 1: Salient Features of the Farakka Barrage Project

A. Farakka Barrage	
Length :	2.62 Km
Number of Bays :	109
Span of Each Bay :	18.30 m
Lowest Bed Level :	10.30 m above m.s.l.
Pond Level :	21.90 m above m.s.l.
Crest Level of Spillway :	15.80 m above m.s.l.
Crest Level of Under Sluices and River Sluices :	14.30 m above m.s.l.
B. Head Regulator	
Pond Level :	21.90 m above m.s.l.
Full Supply Level at Land :	1133 cumec
Clear Water Way :	11 bays of 12.20 m each
Crest Level :	18.10 m above m.s.l.
C. Feeder Canal :	
Length :	38.30 km
Design Discharge :	1133 cumec
Bed Width :	150.80 m
Full Supply Depth :	6.10 m
D. Jangipur Barrage :	
Length :	212.70 m
Number of Bays :	15
Span of Each Bay :	12.2 m
Crest Level :	14.30 m above m.s.l.

Source: Basu 1983 : 2-3

The implementation phase went through a series of memorandum of understandings (MOUs), agreements and treaties between the two countries. A critical review of the treaty regimes sheds light on the history of water sharing of the Ganges River between India and Bangladesh that underwent severe fluctuations from the "phase of excessively overt friendship to a phase of extreme tension to the current phase of anxiety and apprehension" (Salman and Uprety 2002: 33). In the 1970s, the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) was established to work on flood control, irrigation projects, etc. and the Partial Accord (1975) was signed (Table 2). The continuous tussle that continued for the next two decades was regarding India's plan of augmenting the flow of the Ganges through diversions from the Brahmaputra river by constructing a link canal and Bangladesh's proposal of building storage reservoirs in the upper reaches of the Ganges in Nepal and India. MoUs were signed in the 1980s. The 1988 flood devastated Bangladesh when the Ganges flow reached 2.5 million cusecs in the month of August followed by only 9, 761 cusecs in March 1993 which has been the lowest record since the implementation of the project. The last meeting of the JRC was held in June 1993 in Dhaka. On December 12, 1996, a formal treaty was signed for 30 years. However, it "turned out to be merely an arithmetical exercise not based on a broader and interdisciplinary ecological perspective on river flows" (Bandopadhyay and Ghosh 2016: 13). The devastating floods of 1998 proved its clauses to be non-comprehensive.

Table 2: Sharing of lean season flow (in cusecs) at Farakka as per India-Bangladesh water sharing agreement 1975

10 day period	Dependable supplies at Farakka	Amount agreed upon for Hooghly	Remaining flows for Bangladesh
21 April-30 April 1975	55,000	11,000	44,000
1 May-10 May 1975	56,500	12,000	44,500
11 May-20 May 1975	59,250	15,000	44,250
21 May-31 May 1975	65,500	16,000	49,500

Source: Gulati 1985

The volatile geopolitical situation – the Indian government extending its economic assistance to East Pakistan in the War of Liberation and lending its political support to the newly formed country of Bangladesh – were determinants in India's upper-hand in decision making and implementation of the Farakka Barrage Project, chiefly designed to accomplish Indian economic and political motives, largely rooted in her "dam building spree" between 1950s and 1970s (D'Souza 2003). It is also interesting to note how development interests facilitated political bargains, evident in the Boundary Commission's deviation from the partition principle that contiguous Hindu majority areas should form India – Murshidabad (with a Muslim majority), where Farakka is situated, remained in India and in exchange the non-Muslim majority district of Khulna went to former East Pakistan (present Bangladesh).

Beyond the solid-liquid binary: Fluid materialities of South Asia[3]

Flows-overflows conundrum!

The implementation of the Farakka Barrage has been disruptive for the entire hydro-geo-ecological regime of the Lower Ganga Basin. The regime shift is evident in its acute form in downstream Bangladesh suffering from lack of surface water, reduced ground water, riverbed aggradations, sediment influx and ingression of salinity in the coastal delta (Figure 1). Agriculture, navigation, irrigation, fisheries and forestry have remained badly affected with lean flows and overflows during respective winters and monsoons with severe implications on livelihoods. The delta receives less sediment and inadequate water flow for navigation and irrigation during the summer months. The summer of 1993 was characterised by almost completely dry riverbeds and groundwater significantly dropped below the level of existing pumping capacity due to lack of recharge from surface water and over extraction by farmers for irrigation against non-availability of adequate surface water (Khalequzzaman 1993). Due to lack of adequate

freshwater inflow, coastal rivers experience saltwater intrusion 100 miles farther inland than normal level during summer months, affecting drinking water in these areas. Islam and Gnauck (2008) attribute the salinity ingression in the Bangladesh Sundarbans Delta to the construction of the Farakka Barrage in 1975. The reduction in sediment supply has led to increased and constant coastal erosion. The reduced summer flows allow sediment to be deposited on the riverbeds downstream of the Barrage, resulting in decreased water carrying capacity during the rainy seasons (Alexander 1989). This reduction in carrying capacity due to riverbed aggradations has intensified flood frequencies. In 'Conflicts over International waters', Tiwari (2006) has captured the catastrophic implications and its combined effects on Bangladesh, since the implementation of the Project and till the recent times.

> Some examples of the "claimed negative impacts" on various aspects were as follows: (1) impact on hydrology — owing to the Ganga diversion the minimum discharge of the river at Hardinge Bridge fell below the minimum ever recorded. The minimum discharge of the Ganga reached a record low of 23,000 cusecs as compared to the historical average of 64,430 cusecs. (2) impact on groundwater — In a white paper, the Bangladesh government claimed that the groundwater level in the highly affected area went down by five feet on average with a range of three to eight feet below normal in the 1976. The fall of groundwater level was highest in the districts of Rajshahi, Kustia, Khulna and Jessore - (3) increase in salinity — Bangladesh claimed that since the late 1970s, the south-west region had been facing the critical problem of salinity intrusion from the Bay of Bengal as a result of the drastic reduction of fresh water flows in the Gorai river, the major distributary of the Ganga (4) impact on irrigation — Bangladesh also claimed that the reduced water flow and penetration of salinity in the fresh water was damaging in agriculture, the most important sector of the economy (1689).

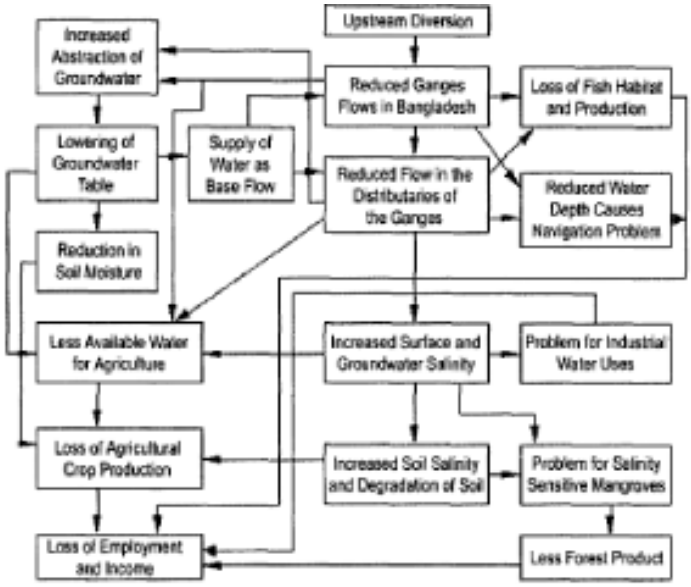

Figure 1: Hydro-geo-ecological regime shift for Bangladesh
Source: Mirza 2004:7

The element of the Indian national pride and glory associated with large-scale hydraulic interventions through the implementation of multi-purpose river valley development schemes (dams and barrages) was short-lived against exposition of grounded local and micro-local social materialities. The Farakka Barrage Project is not an exception. When Kapil Bhattacharya, the then superintending engineer, the Irrigation and Waterways Directorate, Government of West Bengal forewarned against the FBP in the early 1960s, he was vilified as a Pakistani spy and was compelled to resign from office. Being clairvoyantly critical of dam constructions on the River Ganga, he beseeched consideration of flood-tides and tide-borne silts in the lower riverine stretch (Bhattacharya 1973). After five decades of its functioning, it is now entirely evident that the Farakka Barrage Project is not only an "evil" emblem of hydraulic modernity impacting Bangladesh but also severely disruptive for India's eastern states – West Bengal and Bihar. The induced water through Ganges-Bhagirathi feeder canal was supposed to flush the sediment load from the estuary

and keep the navigation channel free from siltation. But sedimentation in the estuary continues unabated which is formally attested by the Kolkata Port Trust (Rudra 2003). The annual quantum of dredging has increased from 6.40m.m^3 during pre-Farakka days to 13.24m.m^3 during post-Farakka days, which has further been increased to 21.18m.m^3 per annum during 1999-2003 (Sanyal and Chakraborty 1995) (Figure 2).

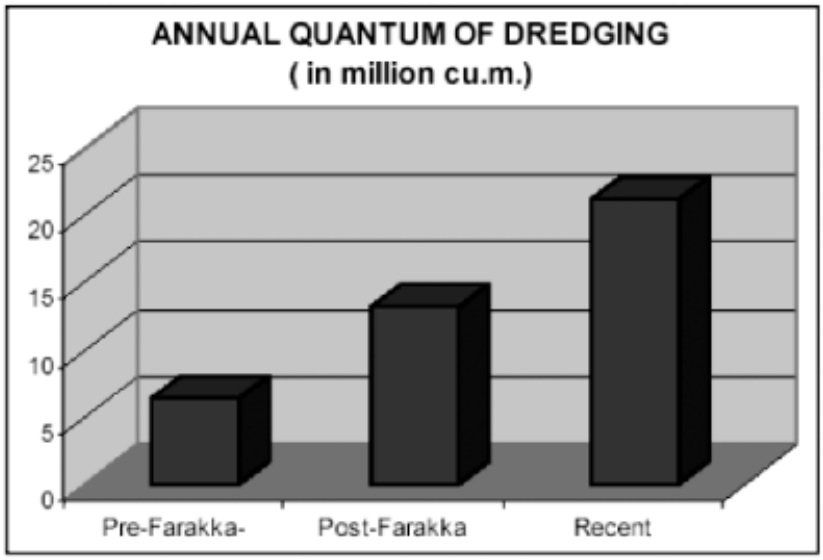

Figure 2: Annual Quantum of Dredging Before and After Farakka
[Note: Pre-Farakka implies the period till 1975, post-Farakka 1976-1994 and recent 1999-2003]
Source: Rudra 2003: 8

Against severe losses due to flooding in Bihar, the Bihar government is now advocating for the decommissioning and dismantling of the Project (*The Hindu Business Line* 2018; *Business Standard* 2019). The drying up of the Indian Sundarbans Delta (ISD) and the consequent saline water ingression in the delta region have been attributed to the streamflow depletion due to sedimentation in the Farakka, as also the rise in sea levels (Ghosh et al. 2016). However, the vicissitudes of the crises are worst felt in the upstream (Malda) and downstream (Murshidabad) districts of the Barrage in West Bengal. The Project

has triggered huge sedimentation, increasing flood intensity and aggravating tendency of bank failures in the two districts.

(De)stabilised dynamics

The dramatic and most radical impact of the Project is the emergence of new or running *char*s (riverine islands), mainly due to the general rise in river bed level and the formation of a deep narrow thalweg on the left side. Though *char* formation is a natural occurrence in the Lower Ganga Basin, yet, the implementation of the Farakka Barrage Project has impacted patterns of riverine erosion and sedimentation with repercussions on the formation, consolidation and dissolution of *char*s. The upstream and downstream districts are dotted with temporary *char*s—the constant emergence and submergence phenomena has forged repetitive cycles of the settlement-displacement-re-settlement-re-displacement (SDRR) syndrome among the *char* dwellers (Mukherjee 2011). Numerous challenges in these *char*s, including aversion of the statecraft to recognise these areas as governable, emanate from the SDRR (Figure 3).

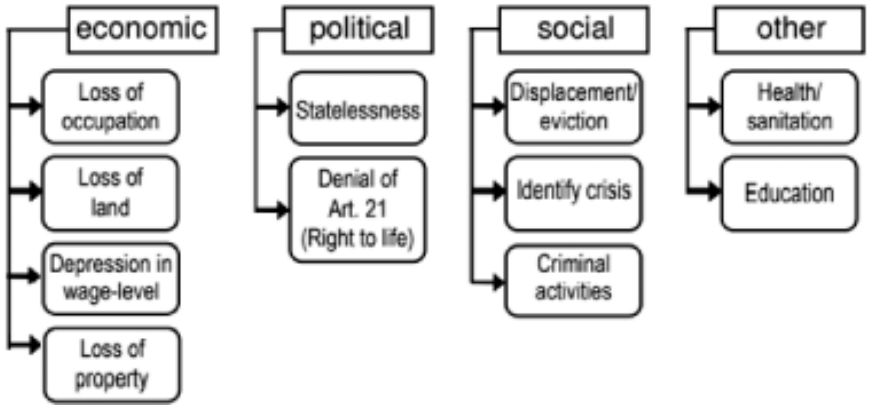

Figure 3: The SDRR Syndrome

Source: Mukherjee 2011 : 17

The people who migrate and settle in the newly emerged *char* lands lead a life under the shadow of poverty and insecurity. The erosion and resultant homelessness cause an oversupply of agricultural

labour in the fertile *char*s engaging the labourers at a wage lower than the minimum fixed by the government. There are no hospitals and children suffer from malnutrition. The fluidities and impermanence associated with the *char*s determine statist legitimisation of infrastructural interventions. People barely get access to government welfare schemes and disaster response mechanisms, and suffer from multiple health and livelihoods crises along protracted cycles of floods and erosion.

The problem of porous border is another reality in these districts unpacking both intra and inter-state complexities. Migrating along repetitive cycles of displacements, some *chorua*s (people inhabiting *char*s) settled in newly emerged *char*s appearing on the other bank of the River, in the neighbouring state of Jharkhand. Though the administration there is of Jharkhand, yet, for land registration people are compelled to seek support from West Bengal Government as the land officially belong to the later. The confusion finds strong manifestation in the strange reality of *chorua*s possessing ration cards by West Bengal and (newly) issued voters' cards from Jharkhand, the later trying to give acquire land and revenue using contingent administrative measures. Again, some *char* lands keep emerging in the Murshidabad district in close proximity to Rajshahi, Bangladesh. As per official estimate, till 1992-94 more than 10,000 hectares of *char*s have come up at places which are inaccessible from the Indian side but can be reached easily from Bangladesh. Akheriganj, which literally means the last settlement, virtually disappeared from the map during the erosion of 1989-1900 which swallowed 2,766 houses and left 23,394 persons homeless (Rudra 2003). Many erosion-victims migrated to the 'Nirmal Char' that emerged along the opposite bank. In these *char*s – dismantling concepts of stable geo-political boundaries, instances of fights during harvests among Indian and Bangladeshi cultivators are common. The 'Jalangi Char', downstream of the Farakka Barrage is another example where Bangladeshi farmers regularly arrive in spite of strong protests by the Indian Government.

However, fluid materialities in the sediments do not comprise of the linear saga of declensionist teleologies – rather they provide the edge to explore *char*s as zones of interactions, transformations, transgressions and possibilities (Howitt 2001: 240). A very recent line of research (Mukherjee and Ghosh 2020), narrating the social saga of sediments in Bengal capture plural realities, shaping and in turn, getting shaped by *char*s. *Char*s are bestowed with rich ecosystem services and the collective resilience of *chorua*s (Table 3). They imbibe fluid tales of everydayness and situated adaptive practices along the wide spectrum of (overlapping) perils and possibilities in *char*s – destabilising declensionist accounts dotting these volatile capes.

Table 3: Ecosystem Services in *Char*s of Malda and Murshidabad

Types	Services	Benefits
Provisioning	Food crops: rice (varieties: ayush and boro), wheat, pulses (kalai); vegetables (gourd, eggplant, cauliflower, etc.), Cash crops: jute, corn, chillies, turmeric; Fruit: watermelon, banana, cucumber, etc.	Subsistence; surplus sold in mainland markets
	Livestock: cow, buffalo, goat, sheep, poultry	Subsistence; transportation; agriculture; assets during times of crises (floods and erosion)
	Fish: rui, tangra, boal, katla, chingri, ritha, chital (indigenous names)	Subsistence; surplus sold in the market against cash income
	Medicines (herbs) : keshra (a *grass* variety)	Locally used by *ojha*s (traditional healers) or non-certified rural healthcare providers
	Fuel wood: cow dung (*ghunte*), dried jute sticks and cow dung (lodha)	Natural energy resource for cooking, lighting, etc.

	Water: groundwater (accessed through tube wells), the river (and its sediment)	Drinking; cultivation; transportation
	Housing: mud (floor), straw (roofs), bundles of jute sticks (walls), *jiyal* trees (pillars), etc.	Flood resistant makeshift houses
Regulating	Water regulation: recharged floodplains after every flood;	Fertile soil for agriculture. Recharged groundwater
	Pollution control: flushing of waste and pollutants after heavy floods	Regenerated soil
Supporting	Navigation	Transportation
	Natural resource for livestock feed: *kaisha*s (a local variety of grass)	Livestock nutrition
Cultural	Water festivals and rituals; folk songs; lores by the *Chai*s (a local ethnic community)	Cultural bonding, collective living, resilience

Conclusion

The perils of floods and related natural disasters will continue unabated until these are perceived as technical processes – 'phenomena of an atmospheric, hydrological or oceanographic nature' (UNISDR, 2009). It is imperative for river research and the scientific hydrological discourse to cognise that floods are strongly dependent on territorial as well as historicised dynamics and negotiations (Mukherjee et al. 2021). The major contribution of social sciences in water (river) scholarship such as history and political ecology can be explained in terms of what is known as "materiality of water" – the assumption that water is both political and bio-political, apart from and along with physical (Bakker 2012).

Flowing through the hydrological cycle, water links individual bodies to one another through the cycling of waters and water-borne effluents between water bodies and organisms — both human and

non-human. As it flows, water transgresses geopolitical boundaries, defies jurisdictions, pits upstream against downstream users, and creates competition between economic sectors, both for its use and for its disposal (invoking intertwined issues of water quantity and quality). Water is thus intensely political in a conventional sense: implicated in contested relationships of power and authority (Bakker 2012: 616).

However, political ecology of water and more specifically hydrosocial studies restricted considerations of the materiality of rivers to water flows for long. Lack of data on rivers' ecosystems comprising sediments and biodiversity mainly due to the hydrological perspective of universalising river waters as "liquid" remained a constraint for political ecologists. Critically interrogating the solid-liquid binary in river studies and building on the conceptual traction of "muddyscapes", hydrosocial researchers have now enriched the hydrosocial cycle and transformed it into the hydro(sediment)social cycle by incorporating sediments in documenting water–society dialectics (Lafaye de Micheaux, Mukherjee and Kull 2018; Mukherjee and Ghosh 2020).

Socio-ecological and geo-political narratives of the Farakka Barrage Project can be considered an apt representation of shocks to and of the Anthropocene – an outcome of reductionist river research built upon universalised principles of western hydrological science, awaiting critical interrogation and replacement with "plural floods research" (PFR) (Viglione and Mukherjee 2021). PFR envisions to be robust, comprehensive and inclusive – drawing from interdisciplinary innovative domains like socio-hydrology and hydrosocial and addressing their intersections. The epistemological departure reshaping river ontologies – where the river is not imagined and projected as '…just a line on the map' (Lahiri-Dutt 2015) but co-constitutes flowing and overflowing dynamics that reciprocally determine political processes and cultural milieu over space and time – is imperative to concoct just and resilient axiologies of the desirable (non) Anthropocene.

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Notes

[1] Severe Cyclonic Storm YAAS made landfall on May 26, 2021 and ravaged several blocks of the Sundarbans, West Bengal.

[2] Pugh and Chandler (2021) argue that their book *Anthropocene Islands: Entangled Worlds* is not merely about 'islands in the Anthropocene' but 'draws out heuristically and examines thinking with islands' (5). Through their staunch critique of nature-culture separation, they argue that 'If we accept that developments in broader social and human thought, and the material world are not separate but profoundly interconnected (i.e. that there really is no human/nature divide), then islands can be understood as important seeds for the conceptualisation of the Anthropocene; a liminal entry point for wider contemporary forms of thought. This is the generative power and lure of working with islands for Anthropocene thinking' (6).

[3] 'Beyond the solid-liquid binary' is an adaptation from Lahiri-Dutt's 2014 theorisation 'Beyond the water–land binary in geography' followed by Mukherjee and Lahiri-Dutt's (2021) further elaboration of 'beyond hard lines' in discussing the destabilising abilities of riverine islands and their symbolic and material essence.

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Role of Rice Cultivation and Trade in the Economic Prosperity of Seventeenth Century Bengal

Kainat Siddiqui

Abstract

Sonargaon, Chittagong, Sondwip and Orissa were the major rice producing areas in the province. The surpluses were sent to Goa, Malabar, Ceylon, Malacca, Sumatra and Pegu. This paper delineates the impact of rivers changing courses on the agriculture productivity of rice and its trade in the seventeenth century Bengal. It also seeks to study the intermediary role played by the Coromandel in the flourishing rice trade of Bengal. It revisits the Persian sources, *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, and *Haft Iqlīm*, and the accounts of foreign travellers including Pelsaert, Fray Sebastien Manrique and François Bernier, besides using existing modern works to augment and further substantiate the argument.

Key Words: Mughal, Bengal, Rice trade, Coromandel, Dutch.

Introduction

Bengal is relatively a well-studied region of India and to make it a subject of a fresh study one is bound to stand on the shoulders of our precursors. Among the modern authors, Tapan Raychaudhuri's *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir* (1953) holds a pioneering place in the historiography of medieval Bengal. He has used variety of sources including the Persian chronicles, European Travellers' accounts and the Bengali literature for his re-construction of the history of medieval Bengal. His work has extensively sketched the picture of medieval Bengal from the initial conquest by the Mughal Emperor Ākbar (1575) till the reign of Jahāngér and, has also shed light on the various aspects of Bengal under the Mughals.[1] Next, in the series is the work

of Anjali Chatterjee, *Bengal in the Reign of Aurangzib 1658-1707* (1967) which contributes much on the trade of the European Companies in Bengal and the social consequences.[2] Sushil Chaudhuri studied the history of trade of the English East India Company and the commercialisation of Bengal within a broad frame of rural agricultural economy.[3] Om Prakash's work *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal 1630-1720* extensively analyses the trading operations and the implications of the Dutch East India Company in Mughal Bengal.[4] *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204-1760* examines the long historical moving frontiers and the composite cultures.[5] These authors have immensely contributed to the maritime Bengal for the period under review. But, there are some interpretational gaps which this paper seeks to fulfil and attempts to add to the growing body of the material. This paper is divided into two broad sections: first, the topographic history and the changes witnessed, and secondly, the intra-trade, inter-regional trade and the Asian trade.

Geographical background

Bengal shared a different topographic history in the map of the country.[6] The 'Bhati' of East Bengal held a greater agricultural productivity and demographic growth than the contemporary West Bengal.[7] In Pre-historic time, the entire delta was under the ocean, and the river Ganges met the sea in Murshidabad and the river Brahmaputra did the same in the extreme north, the present Rangpur district.[8] With the deposition of sediments and debris at the confluence of the rivers and ocean, the delta formation began through which the bulk of the Ganges flowed into the Bay of Bengal.[9] The continuous building of sediments from both the Ganges and the Brahmaputra pushed the delta further southwards into the Bay of Bengal.[10] But, these rivers could not move fast enough to flush out the sediments to the sea and kept on pilling up thus, intensively increased the deposition level which caused the riverbeds to attain levels higher than the surrounding countryside. Waters spilled out of their former beds and moved into the adjoining channels.[11] In this way, the main course of

the river Ganges was replaced in turn by the Bhairab, the Mathabhanga, the Garai-Madhumati, the Arial-khan, and finally the present – day Padma – Meghna system.[12] The Ganges divided itself into two branches i.e., one flowed towards east known as Paddhāvaté and the other flowed southwards.[13] The River Ganges joined the Brahmaputra River and further broke up into numerous streams and formed the Ganga delta at the Bay of Bengal.[14] Excess Ganges silt was carried and deposited in the eastern delta during the annual flooding.[15] It intensified rice cultivation to those parts that were not yet under the plow.[16]

"Man has carried on the work of reclamation here, fighting with the jungle, the tiger, the wild buffalo, the pig, and the crocodile, until at the present day nearly half of what was formerly an impenetrable forest has been converted into gardens of graceful palm and fields of waving rice".[17] Those changes were due to shifts in river courses; the western part became 'moribund' and made the eastern half 'active'.[18] The eastward movement of major rivers of Bengal facilitated in the cultivation of rice because of the excess silt deposition.[19] River Ganges flowed into the Padma channel thus, the combined Ganges-Padma system linked the eastern Bengal with the northern boundaries of the country.[20]

We see a combination of agricultural productivity and settlements expansion in the East Bengal, whereas the growth had stopped by the mid-nineteenth century in the west.[21] In the wake of geographical and political integration came the economic integration.[22] An agricultural based economy infused a major population in agricultural activities.[23] "Both geography and history were remade in Bengal as the eighteenth century drew to a close, and … not less than six new rivers appeared on the scene, moulding Bengal's economic history".[24]

The changes in the course of the rivers also led in the transfer of capitals in the *ṣūba*, i.e., from Gaur (1575) to Tanda to Rajmahal (1595) to Dacca (1612 &1660).[25] "Gaur was first abandoned around 1565 during the reign of Sulaiman Karrani, when the capital was shifted to Tanda further west on the opposite bank of the Ganges. Ralph Fitch, who

had visited Tanda after 1583, found the river washing the wall of the city of Tanda only during the rains, which was finally engulfed by the river around 1832".[26] "The raging plague in the deserted city took its heavy toll of the Mughal army, including the general and the capital was hurriedly brought back to Tanda, from where it shifted to the opposite bank to Rajmahal.[27] Further, the repeated plundering of the city also, hastened in the transfer of the capitals".[28] The shifts in the river courses which occurred naturally witnessed major changes which were: the transfers of capitals in the *ṣūba*, an enormous growth of agricultural production in rice, along with maritime routes connecting Northern India with the *ṣūba* facilitated in the transportation of products and reduced the transportation cost which helped in the growth of the developed the economy of Bengal.

The seventeenth century no doubt was agrarian in character.[29] "In the production of food grains, Mughal India exhibited the same broad division into rice and wheat and millet zones, which we find today, with the 40 and 50 inch annual isohyets setting the dividing line".[30] One of the features of Indian agriculture was the harvesting of two or three crops annually.[31] In the eighteenth century the *danka-tanka* land of Bengal cultivated rice-tobacco-cotton in rotation cycle.[32] This century witnessed not just an increase in the agricultural produces but also a gradual development in the activities of the European Companies.[33]

All the authorities have already attested this agricultural prosperity and the consequent trade from the sixteenth century.[34]

> Baranj wa nishakar wa ab resham
> wa phuphal wa dar filfil ast
> Waz mewah anba wa kela
> wa anahnas khoob meshawad.[35]

The province produced abundant of rice, silk, sugar, and fruits like mangoes, pineapples and bananas[36] and this has been attested by Amīn Aḥmad Rāzī.[37] Bengal's area was the nature's storehouse because of her agricultural productivity and therefore, many foodstuffs were available at cheap prices.[38]

The Dutch factor, Pelsaert (c.1626) mentioned that Allahabad, Awadh, Lakhawar, Jagannath, Patna, and Sonargaon were very fertile.[39] He stated that rice, sugar and butter were grown in quantities which were transported by the River Jamuna which fed the people and the army of the Mughal Emperor.[40] The rice according to Manrique (c.1628-41) "is a far superior to that of Europe, particularly the scented variety, which is not only of extraordinary fineness and delicacy of flavour, but even retains its fragrance after it has been cooked, owing to its containing a large quantity of odoriferous constituents. This profusion of food stuffs is, moreover, obtainable at very low price, as a candil of rice, which is equivalent to fourteen paras, or about fourteen of our salemines, costs only three, or at most four rupees, one rupee being equal to half a peso or four Spanish reals".[41] Bernier (c.1656-58) too noted the grandeur of Bengal. The abundant production of rice, wheat sugar, fruits that it surpassed the country of Egypt.[42] "In a word, Bengal abounds with every necessity of life…".[43] Even down in 1763, it was produced in plenty that it was sold at two pounds for a farthing.[44] All the above observations attested the province's enormous fertility.[45] Also, there is a consensus among the scholars on the question of fertility of Bengal.

Bengal was blessed with many rivers, and seasonal rainfall which facilitated natural irrigation and made the plains the most fertile offering obvious attractions to the merchants.[46] Manrique stated: "the climate of this part is on the whole healthy, the water, both the Ganges and of other local streams, being excellent. Abundant crops of food stuffs are met with especially wheat, rice, vegetables, sugar cane, ghee, and numerous oils, excepting that of the olive, and the flesh of various animals both domestic and wild is plentiful".[47] The delta of the province is made up of old and new mud and marshes.[48] Streynsham Master also attested the fertility of the province as "being a kind of a loose fat earth, and in some places a fatt sand".[49]

Its agriculture was dominated by the growth of rice and the abundant supply of water which facilitated in the production of rice

of good quality.[50] On the eastern side, Bengal, Orissa and in the Assam valley, rice was cultivated to such an extent of virtual exclusion of millets and wheat.[51] Excess rainfall helped in the growth and cultivation of rice but, uncontrolled rain destroyed the same.[52]

There were so many varieties according to 'Abul Fazl.[53] It was cultivated in the lands thrice a year and ample amount of water meant proper growth of rice.[54] It was produced in large quantities as well as it was cheap enough and therefore was transported within the country.[55] It was also sent to Ceylon, Malacca, Sumatra and Pegu.[56]

Two major ports, Chittagong in the east and Sonargaon in the west produced surplus rice which was exported unabated.[57] In 1567, Sondwip seemed to "the fertilest land in all the world".[58] The evidence of export comes from François Pyrard as he wrote: "…there is such a quantity of rice, that, besides supplying the whole country, it is exported to all parts of India, as well to Goa and Malabar, as to Sumatra, the Moluccas, and all the islands of Sunda, to all of which lands Bengal is a very nursing mother, who supplies them with their entire subsistence and food. Thus, one sees arrive there every day an infinite number of vessels from all parts of India for these provisions…"[59] The English factor, John Marshall too, reported that the rice from Dacca was famous.[60] It was sown in June or in the beginning of July and was reaped by September or October.[61]

Rice was the main source of wealth in the province and an improved form of rice cultivation was discovered.[62] Its cultivation not just depended on the rainfall, but through artificial irrigation it was reaped in quantities.[63] The Mainamati-Lalmai areas showed that there were reservoirs and further findings suggested *boraka*, an improved quality of rice was cultivated abundantly.[64]

The attainment of the agricultural growth in rice can be witnessed in the *khalisa* of the land revenue demand for the Mughal government (see Table 1).[65]

Table 1: The difference in revenue demand in Bengal from 1595-1659

	Revenue Demand (in rupees)		
Quadrant	1595	1659	Percentage change
Northwest	13,74,859	1,19,0064	-13%
Southwest	22,58,138	34,82,127	+54%
Northeast	13,79,529	27,20,115	+97%
Southeast	13,46,730	29,21,314	+117%
Total	63,59,256	1,03,13,620	+62%

(Source: Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire*, pp. 26-27. Richard M. Eaton, pp. 198-199)

This rice growth led to an increase in the population of the province (see Table 2).

Table 2 : Increase in population density in Bengal, 1872-1981:

	Population per sq. mi		
Quadrant	1872	1981	Percentage Increase
Northwest (Rangpur Bogra, Pabna, Dinajpur, Malda, Rajshahi and Murshidabad	503	1,544	207%
Southwest (Burdwan, Bankura, Birbhum, Midnapur, Hooghly, 24 Parganas, Nadia, Howrah)	598	1,701	184%
Northeast (Mymensingh, Sylhet and Dhaka)	406	1,933	376%
Southeast (Jessore, Tippera, Faridpur, Bakarganj, Noakhali and Chittagong)	526	1,941	269%

(Source : Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontlier 1204-1760*, p. 200)

"Thus, both seventeenth-century revenue data and nineteenth-and twentieth-century demographic data to a moving demographic frontier, the product of a long term process whereby land fertility, rice cultivation, and population density all grew at a faster rate in the east than in the west".[66]

Rice Trade

Bengal shared the coastal trade with the south eastern India; Malabar, Gujarat; Persian Gulf and Red Sea; Malacca, and Maldives.[67] According to Meilink-Roelofsz, annually five to six ships sailed from Bengal to Malacca carrying worth as much as 80,000-90,000 cruzados.[68] The export items included rice, textiles, sugar while imports included Moluccan spices, Borneo camphor, Chinese porcelain and silk, pepper, sandalwood and precious metals such as silver and other base metals such as mercury, tin and lead.[69] Bengal ships visited Cosmin four or five times annually and carried textiles which were exchanged in lieu of silver rings or hoops.[70] Maldives, Sri Lanka and Malabar received rice, foodstuffs and textiles.[71] Cinnamon, areca, *cauris* and pepper were all imported into the province from Sri Lanka, Maldives and Malabar.[72]

Products like silks, textiles, and edible commodities like rice, wheat, and sugar all acquired an important place in the list of exports, amongst which the rice trade held a dominant position.

There was a subsequent dependence of Coromandel on the province because of the expansion of population in the port and its suburbs.[73]

The Bengal lowlands produced abundance of rice. Due to its very low price and transport costs, it came within the orbits of trade.[74] Orissa was noted for surplus produces and its low price.[75] Although Ceylon and islands in the East Indies were closer to the Coromandel Coast still, rice and other provisions were exported from Bengal preferably because of its cheapness and the consequent low transits duties involved.[76] Bengal had always gained the attention of the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (henceforth V.O.C.) or the Dutch East India Company due to its rich supplies of rice, saltpetre and

slaves, but their failed attempts to enter into the region in the first two decades of the 17th c. against the Portuguese made everything clear that no substantial trade was possible.[77] But, it becomes clear that rice in substantial amount were shipped to Pegu and Holland in 1613 from Bengal.[78] Apart from the above provisions, wheat and clarified butter also figured in the export invoices because of its consumption requirements of the Dutch establishments at Batavia and Ceylon.[79]

Rice harvest was generally good in the populous lands and the Dutch factors were hopeful that they would be able to collect their demand of 1000 'lasten' (burden) i.e., tons easily at reasonable price, and because of that the Arakanese could not supply slaves.[80] Because of the dearth of copper pans in Bengal the VOC had 1400000 lbs.[81] Of impure saltpetre left behind for which the Company required 12 to 16 kettles in great demand.[82] Information fetched from the Dutch reports, shows that the slaves and rice were found in abundance in Bengal provided the King wishes to allow exports.[83]

W. H. Moreland stressed on the fact that the Dutch were the real precursor who actually revolutionised the pattern of export of food grains, imported from India and elsewhere to be provided for its own consumption as well as for the needs of its dependencies.[84] Despite of the insufficiency of detailed records on the extent of imports uncertain units stating like a junk load of rice, and so many thousand baskets of paddy, leaves the reader to measure the extent.[85] But, S. Arasaratnam refuted Moreland and suggested that he (Moreland) has exaggerated the role of the European in Asian trade and "underestimated the volume and flow of what may be called traditional Asian transactions".[86] He concluded that seventeenth century was a period of growth, generated by factors intrinsic both to developments in the major trading states and societies of Asia as well as to the new outputs of European investment, shipping and management.[87]

In fact, it was the third decade of the seventeenth century where both the Portuguese and the Dutch were instrumental in changing the nature of the import trade in Bengal which geared up their trading activities.[88] The Portuguese undertook direct voyages from Goa and

Cochin to Bengal ports which were undertaken both by the crown and its concessionaries and by private settlers.[89] They brought pepper, Malabar spices and coconuts and in return took rice and opium (commodities highly in demand).[90] The Portuguese naveth werdooke came from Bengal to St. Thome with wheat, rice, 140 packs of sugar, 8 packets of cloth, wax and 2 bahar large pepper.[91] Dutch were finally able to make headway and Bengal acquired a special importance in their eyes because it gave a partial solution to their problem of inadequate cash capital.[92]

The Dutch exported rice to Batavia via the coast of Coromandel.[93] It appeared that some Bengal vessels covered a long distance to Maldives where they had a market for rice, but from the second half of the seventeenth century, the Dutch factors aimed at supplying rice to the Dutch establishments in Ceylon.[94] The Portuguese brought to Bengal shells from Maldives, conch shells from Tinnevelly coast, pepper from Malabar and cinnamon, pearls and elephants from Ceylon, and Pegu supplied with gold, silver and costly jewels.[95]

In 1650, it all started with 500 tons to 1500 to 1800 tons of rice per year in the succeeding decades.[96] Sushil Chaudhury has computed the amount of rice exported to Ceylon, Batavia and Malacca in 1674-75 around 1,747,991 lbs. or 27,101 maunds, however, the major amount was exported to Ceylon.[97] In 1686 rice, wheat, butter, oil was the untaxed goods in Bengal and the native rulers too encouraged the export of these provisions and till 1708-09, a considerable amount of rice was exported on a regular basis.[98] Towards the end of the seventeenth century, we see Bengali traders brought cotton balls, fabrics and opium and flooded them in the markets of Acheh.[99] A ship belonging to Bengal merchant, Khemchand in 1684 had taken 13,000 maunds of rice to the Ceylon port of Galle.[100]

Shai'sta Khān was praised by the Europeans for maintaining the price of the rice. It was sold at the rate of 640 lbs. weight for a rupee.[101] The price of 1 mann of food grain was 1 rupee in 1688.[102] The English also carried those food grains to Bombay.[103] The assertions made in the Persian sources reveal that him prohibited the export of rice.[104] It

seems that the prohibition by him might have been imposed temporarily.[105] Overall, regular exports of rice were visible even in the second decade of the 18th century.[106] But of course, in the period of "acute scarcity, the state had to step in and prohibit the movement of rice outside the province with a view to" keep a check in the rise of rice price and therefore, a considerable amount was exported in the normal years.[107]

From the eighteenth century onwards, rice started shrinking between Bengal and Ceylon. It was because of the restrictions imposed on the import of the textiles into Ceylon and the export of spices from Ceylon and the dwindling demand for Ceylon elephants in Bengal had made the sailings less profitable.[108] Also, irregularity in the arrival of Bengal rice ships made Ceylon dependant on Tanjavur for supplies.[109] Achin and St. Helena were also the customers of rice which was sent by the English Company.[110]

The prices of provisions in Bengal were the cheapest in comparison to any other part in the Indian coast. Sushil Chaudhuri refuted Moreland's hypothesis on the 'prices on the Hoogly'.[111] Moreland's thesis was based on the single report of the English Company's factors.[112] Its cheapness has been attested by most of the foreign travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century.[113] William Norris observed that if rice was not made available at the right time to the people of Masulipatam, they would die due to starvation.[114] Because of the low prices, and surplus in provisions it was always exported.[115] Even, down in the late 1706-07, provisions were available at cheap prices.[116] So, on the basis of the above evidences it is difficult to adhere to the Moreland's thesis "that in the second half of the seventeenth century prices of provisions in Bengal rose sharply so that it was brought into the same level with the rest of coastal India".[117]

On the basis of the Dutch statistical evidences, it can be concluded that the Indian merchants exported food grains to various regions.[118] Wheat and butter, and rice were occasionally sent to Surat, Bombay, Goa and Calicut.[119] These provisions were exported to Moluccas, Manila, Siam, Achin and Tenassary regularly.[120] Rice or any other

provision were easily obtained from the Coromandel Coast due to shorter distance.[121] Also, due to low cost of provisions and low charges for transit brought profits for the investors.[122] During the last years of Aurangzeb's reign, provisions were still cheap in Bengal and Bihar both.[123] "But cheapness is a relative matter: if prices rose in other parts of the country, they might also rise in Bengal though not greatly as to equalize. It is, therefore, difficult to dismiss out of hand the English factors" report from Hugli in 1658 that provisions were "now three times as dear as formerly", so as to necessitate enhancements in the allowed expenses.[124] Butter, sugar and rice were exported to the coastal areas i.e., Coromandel, Kerala and Cape Comorin.[125]

Rice was produced in abundance and not only its neighbours but also in the remote places the surplus was carried off.[126] "There was a good deal of trade along the coast a few hundred miles away to densely populated deficit areas".[127] It was always imported to the deficit areas of Masulipatam and Porto Novo.[128] The reason behind the transport was the irregularity of monsoon in this long coastline.[129] "The prosperity of Bengal before Plassey was ascribed by Verelst to the cheapness and quality and the prodigious traffic of her manufactures".[130]

Orissa annually exported by sea over 40,000 tons of grain (rice), together with butter and lac to the Coromandel ports.[131] The rice from Dacca was exported to the Coromandel Coast and clothes to Surat and chanks and tortoise-shell were taken back. Due to this, arcot rupee was introduced into the Eastern parts of Bengal.[132] Within the Coromandel Coast, Chingleput, Kanchipuram, Madurantakam divisions were good producers of rice and met the demands locally.[133] Due to the increased population registered not only in the manufacturing villages and towns but, also interiorly in administrative and pilgrimage centre, the required demands could not be meant.[134] Climatic crises led to the shortage and turned those areas into import areas.[135] Thus, before the arrival of the Europeans, established patterns of demand and supply in rice had developed along the rim of the Bay of Bengal and beyond it.[136]

The coastal trade with Bengal did not fully develop prior to the mid-seventeenth century because of the Portuguese and Magh piracy which created an obstacle to the trade. Demand for rice imported from outside the region grew only from the last quarter of the 17th century by the Europeans.[137] From 1615 onwards, the Coromandel factors ships to the Bengal to Balasore and to Pipli but, their operations and volume of trade conducted were extremely limited.[138]

There was a rapid increase of grain imports and consumption into Madras in the first half of the eighteenth century.[139] Many Telugu merchants were involved in this trade and near about hundreds of boats left for Orissa and north Coromandel ports to Madras, San Thome and Paleacat after the major harvests of rice.[140] The English Company servants and some governors sought to enter into this trade. They sometimes used their authority to engross the trade, and kept the prices high, taking advantage of the scarcities and made enormous profits. The bulk of trade was in the hands of the Telugu merchants neither the English free merchants nor the Company would make a headway into it.[141] The Pathans of San Thome imported rice from Bengal in volumes but, their activity began only from the second decade of the eighteenth century.[142]

Mr. Norris, the factor at Masulipatnam appeared before Shāh Jahān, to seek permission to open trade at the port of Pipli. He reported that white clothes and other similar provisions required for the subsistence for the factors stationed at Coromandel can be purchased at reasonable rates.[143] Sugar, rice, butter and cotton clothes were bought at cheap price and most of these found its way to England, Persia and Southwards.[144]

The prices of provisions such as rice, wheat, sugar and clarified butter can be reconstructed.[145] The two years' of famine (1630-32) witnessed a steady rise in the price of the food grains. It included rice, wheat, clarified butter and jaggery and other products in the regions of Coromandel (including Golconda), but, the worst affected was Gujarat.[146] But, the price of these remained unaffected.[147] Trade in

sugar was good for the Company (Dutch) whereas wheat, rice and clarified butter were exported from Bengal for consumption in the Dutch establishments especially, to Ceylon and Batavia.[148] So, the quality of these provisions remained unaffected and no change in prices was visible. Om Prakash supports the argument i.e., the prices of the provisions remained static.[149]

The price of rice in 1665-1666 was Rs. 27 per 100 maunds and was Rs. 160 in 1700-1701.[150] After calculating out the prices of all the four provisions, Om Prakash concluded that "the movements in the prices of these provisions do not provide evidence for the general rise in prices in the economy that one might have expected to follow the import of the precious metals by the Dutch and the European Companies".[151] Bengal and Eastern Rajasthan for the years 1665-1706, exhibit a similar stability.[152]

Mohammad Ali Baqir, a prominent merchant of Masulipatnam tried to maintain peace and create healthy conditions for the revival of the trade.[153] The food prices help us in measuring the cost of living. It was noted in 1676 that paddy which was bought in Masulipatnam by Streynsham Master for the Company's use was at 35 ser per rupee and rice was at 15 ser per rupee.[154]

Sir William Norris observed in 1699 that Masulipatnam was supplied with rice from Bengal and that the people of the locality would starve if rice was not brought on time from the latter.[155] Among them, the successive food crisis caused by the climatic factors, warfare and unpredictable tariff barriers internally gripped the region (Masulipatam) in the seventeenth century.[156] "Bengal and Orissa rice had the great advantage of its low cost and given, the low transport costs in the specially constructred paddy barges and the low Profit margins required by merchants, it undersold at the local price".[157] However, it is argued that the "cheapness was in part an extension of the cheapness prevailing in Bengal through the ages, or in other words, some of those conditions which governed the prices in Bengal were, due to proximity, operative at Patna too".[158] Patna not being the capital city so, the pressure of population was less as compared to the capital

cities of the Empire. It was noticed that on moving westwards, the prices continued to increase until the capital cities were reached.[159]

With the expansion of the Mughal rule, the region of East Bengal was brought within the orbit of Indian trade and its benefits were reaped fruitfully by Coromandel because Bengal stood out in our period not only for low prices[160] but, also developed as a hub of cheap food items.[161] Moreover, the region was no more under the threat of the Portuguese and the Magh pirates which in turn provided security and freedom to the merchants who easily carried out their trade into Bengal ports.[162]

Conclusion

The prosperity shared by the province in terms of agricultural and non-agricultural produces is a well known fact. Much before the expansion of the Mughal rule in Bengal the province was flourishing with several trading centres. The fertility and the agricultural production have been attested in many Persian sources and foreign travellers' accounts. Amīn Aḥmad Rāzī too informed the fertility of the *ṣūba*. There was an abundant growth of rice, sugar, pineapples, oranges, mangoes, and chillies. The topography played a major role in carving the prosperity of the *ṣūba* and the economic development came in disguise although; there were quick transfer of capitals and continuous plundering in the *ṣūba*. The findings of this paper broadly support the arguments advanced by Shireen Moosvi and Richard M. Eaton which is: a major contribution came from an increased agricultural production of rice. East Bengal became more active with the growth in population. Coromandel although reaped much benefits from the province but simultaneously also, if served as a mediator for Bengal and South East Asian trade in the transportation of rice.

Notes

[1] Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir: An Introductory Study in Social History*, Manohar, Delhi, 1969, [1953].

[2] Anjali Chatterjee, *Bengal in the Reign of Aurangzib 1659-1707*, Calcutta, 1967.

[3] Susil Chaudhuri [Sushil Chaudhury], *Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal 1650-1720*, Calcutta, 1975.

[4] Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal 1630-1720*, Princeton University Press, 1985, [2011].

[5] Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760,* Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, [1997].

[6] S. C. Majumdar, *Rivers of the Bengal Delta,* University of Calcutta, 1942, pp. 65-72.

[7] Richard M. Eaton, p. 194.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Radha Kamal Mukherjee, *Changing face of Bengal*, Calcutta, C.U., 1938, 2009.

[13] Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire : Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index,* Oxford University Press, First publ. 1982, reprinted and corrections, 1986,p. 46, Sheet 11:B.

[14] P. Saran, *The Provincial Government of the Mughals 1526-1658,* Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1941, p.7.

[15] Ibid.,p. 198.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Richard M. Eaton, p. 195.

[18] Ibid., p. 4; River Ganges had divided into two branches at the Afghan capital of Tanda: one branch flowing south to Satgaon and the other flowing east towards Sonargaon and Chittagong. In the seventeenth century the former branch continued to decay as progressively more of its water was captured by the channels flowing to the east, to the point where by 1666 this branch had become unnavigable; Richard M. Eaton, p. 195.

[19] Richard M. Eaton, pp. 194-95.

[20] Ibid., p. 198.

[21] P. J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead, Eastern India 1740-1828,* Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 3-4.

[22] Direct river communication between east Bengal and North India would have dramatically reduced costs for the transport of the east Bengali products, especially textiles and foodstuffs, from the frontier to the imperial metropolis; Ibid.

[23] Sushil Chaudhury, *Spinning Yarns : Bengal Textile Industry in the Backdrop of John Taylor's Report on 'Dacca Cloth Production' (1801),* New Delhi, 2020, p. 11.

[24] P. J. Marshall, p. 2.

[25] M. Abid Ali Khan, *Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua*, ed. and rev. H. E. Stapleton, Calcutta, MCMXXXI, 1931, p. 17.

[26] Aniruddha Ray, 'The City of Gaur', in *Gaur : The Medieval City of Bengal c. 1450-1565*, Pratna Samiksha, New Series , vol. i, Centre of Archaeological Studies and Training, Kolkata, 2012, p. 83. *ṣūba* was a large division or the province of the Mughal Empire; see H. Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-*

Jobson, A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindered Terms; Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive, ed. W. Crooke, Ist publ. 1886, new edn., 1903, 2nd. impression, Delhi, London 1989, p. 649.

[27] Ibid.

[28] M. Abid Ali Khan, p. 18.

[29] Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal 1630-1720*, p. 3.

[30] In the Assam valley, in Bengal, and Orissa on the eastern coast; Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707,* p. 40.

[31] The larger portion of land was single cropped (*yak-fasla*) being sown either for the *rabī* (spring) or *kharīf* (autumn) harvest, but some was double cropped (*do-fasla*) being sown with crops of both harvests in successions; Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707,* Oxford University Press, pp. 26-27.

[32] Ibid., p. 27.

[33] Tilottama Mukherjee, *Political Culture and Economy in Eighteenth-Century Bengal*, New Delhi, 2013, p. 21.

[34] Ibid; Shireen Moosvi, 'Interpreting the History of Bengal under the Mughals', in *In Quest of the Historian's Craft Essays in Honour of Professor B.B. Chaudhuri Part I : The Economy,* ed. Arun Bandhopadhyay and Sanjukta Das Gupta, Manohar, Delhi, 2018, p. 204.

[35] Amīn Aḥmad Rāzī, *Haft Iqlīm*, ed. Ross E. Denison and Abdul Muqtadir, vol. i, The Asiatic Society, *Bibliotheca Indica Series*, Calcutta, 1939, p. 94.

[36] Translation mine.

[37] Amīn Aḥmad Rāzī, vol. i, p. 94.

[38] Anjali Chatterjee, p. 79.

[39] Francisco Pelsaert, ' *Remonstrantie'*, (c.1626), trans. W. H. Moreland and P. Geyl, *Jahangir's India*, Cambridge, 1925, p. 9.

[40] Ibid.

[41] F.S. Manrique, *Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique 1629*-1643, trans. C.E. Luard, assisted by H. Hosten, vol. i, *The Hakluyt Society*, second series no. LIX, London, 1926-27, p.54; Girasall was the scented variety of rice known to the Portuguese.

[42] François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668*, transl. On the basis of Irving Brock's, version by A. Constable, with notes, 2nd edition revised by V.A. Smith, London,1916, pp. 437-38.

[43] Ibid., p. 439.

[44] Richard M. Eaton, p. 202.

[45] Ibid., p. 194.

[46] Abdul Karim, *Social History of The Muslims in Bengal Down to A.D.1538*, Dacca, 1959, 2nd.edition, Chittagong, 1985, p. 384; W.H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p. 45.

[47] Manrique, vol. i, p. 54.

[48] S. Samiuddin, "Revenue Administration of Bengal", unpublished M. Phil Dissertation submitted to C.A.S., Department of History, A.M.U., 1983 p.3; http://ir.amu.ac.in/4032/1/DS%20627.pdf

[49] Streynsham Master, *The Diary of Streynsham Master and other Contemporary papers relating thereto, 1675-1677*, ed. R. C. Temple, vol. ii, *Indian Record Series,* London, 1911, p. 28.

[50] P.J. Marshall, p. 5.

[51] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707,* p. 40.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Abūl Faẓl, *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, ed. H. Blochmann, vol. i, The Asiatic Society, *Bibliotheca Indica* series, Calcutta, 1867-77, p. 389.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Anjali Chatterjee, p. 80.

[56] *Early Travels in India 1583-1619,* pp.19, 27-28; John Huyghen van Linschoten, *The Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten to the East Indies*, ed. A.C. Burnell, vol. i, London, *The Hakluyt Society*, no. lxx, 1885, p. 94; See also, Anjali Chatterjee, p. 80.

[57] Richard M. Eaton, p. 200.

[58] Ibid., p. 201.

[59] François Pyrard, *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil*, trans. and ed. Albert Gray and H. C. P. Bell, vol. i, *The Hakluyt Society,* no. LXXVI, London, 1887, p. 327; See also, Richard M. Eaton, pp. 200-201.

[60] John Marshall, *John Marshall in India: Notes and Observations in Bengal (1668-1672)*, ed. Shafaat Ahmad Khan, OUP, 1927, p. 414.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Amita Ray, 'Urbanization in Bengal', Presidential Address, *Proceedings of the History Congress*, (henceforth, *PIHC),* 48th session, 1987, p. 30; https://www.jstor.org/stable/44141643

[63] There are evidences which show the prevalence of artificial irrigation; Ibid. Artificial irrigation was another important aspect of Indian agriculture that supplemented the natural bounty of the monsoons. The principal means employed for this purpose has been the construction of wells, tanks and canals; Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707,* p.28.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Richard M. Eaton, pp. 198-99.

[66] Ibid., p. 200.

[67] Om Prakash, in 'European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India', *The New Cambridge History of India,* vol. ii, 5, CUP, Cambridge, 1998, p. 20.

[68] This trade is of sixteenth century; Ibid., p. 21.

[69] Ibid

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.
[73] Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East-Indies being the Observations and Remarks of Capt. Alexander Hamilton From the Year 1688-1723*, 2nd ed., vol. i, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1995, p. 368; Also see, S. Arasaratnam, *Maritime Trade in the Seventeenth Century*, OUP, Delhi, 1944, pp. 157-58.
[74] S. Arasaratnam, 'The Rice Trade in Eastern India 1650-1740', *Modern Asian Studies* (henceforth *MAS*), vol. xxii, no. iii, 1988, p. 533.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Sushil Chaudhury, *Companies, Commerce and Merchants : Bengal in the Pre-Colonial Era*, Manohar, Delhi, 2015, p. 42.
[77] Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel 1605-1690: A Study in the Interrelations of European Commerce and Traditional Economies*, 'S -Gravenhage, 1962, pp. 75-76.
[78] *The Voyage of Thomas Best to the East Indies 1612-14*, ed. William Foster, 2nd series, no. lxxv, *The Hakluyt Society*, London, 1934, pp. 46, 153.
[79] Om Prakash, 'European Trade and the Economy of Bengal in the Seventeenth and the Early Eighteenth Century', in *Precious Metals and Commerce : The Dutch East India Company in the Indian Ocean Trade* , Variorum, 1994, p. 25.
[80] W. P. Coolhaas (ed.), *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindinche Compagnie*, Deel 2, 's Gravenhage, Nijhoff, 1916-1975, p. 623.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid, Deel 1, p. 156.
[84] W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p. 79
[85] Ibid., p. 80.
[86] S. Arasaratnam, 'The Rice Trade in Eastern India 1650-1740', p. 532.
[87] Ibid.
[88] S. Arasaratnam, *Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 152.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid..
[91] *Generale Missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel 1, p. 591.
[92] T. Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel 1605-1690*, p. 76.
[93] Anjali Chatterjee, p. 80.
[94] S. Arasaratnam, 'The Rice Trade in Eastern India 1650-1740', pp. 537-38.
[95] T. Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir : An Introductory Study in Social History*, Delhi, 1969. [1953], p. 180.
[96] S. Arasaratnam, 'The Rice Trade in Eastern India 1650-1740', p. 538.
[97] Sushil Chaudhury, *Companies, Commerce and Merchants : Bengal in the Pre-Colonial Era*, p. 43.
[98] This information is from the Dutch report of 1686; Ibid., p. 44.

[99] Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (ed.), *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, (1500-1800)*, ICHR, Manohar, 1999, pp. 188-89.
[100] Sushil Chaudhury, *Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal 1650-1720*, p.187.
[101] Charles Stewart, *The History of Bengal from the First Mohammedan Invasion until the Virtual Conquest of that Country by the English A.D 1757*, p. 323.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Sushil Chaudhury, *Companies, Commerce and Merchants : Bengal in the Pre-Colonial Era*, p. 44.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] S. Arasaratnam, 'The Rice Trade in Eastern India 1650-1740', pp. 541-542.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Sushil Chaudhury, *Companies, Commerce and Merchants : Bengal in the Pre-Colonial Era*, p. 43.
[111] Sushil Chaudhury, *Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal 1650-1720,* p. 241.
[112] Ibid., p. 242.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Harihar Das, *The Norris Embassy to Aurangzib 1699-1702,* ed. S.C. Sarkar, Firma K. L. M., Calcutta, 1959, p. 120.
[115] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707*, p. 78.
[116] Sushil Chaudhury, *Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal 1650-1720,* p. 243.
[117] Ibid.
[118] The merchants definitely traded on profit motive and naturally would not have dealt in provisions as one of the main commodities of their trade if these did not fetch a substantial margin for them; Ibid.
[119] Sushil Chaudhury, *Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal 1650-1720,* p. 243.
[120] Ibid., p. 244.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707*, p.99
[124] Ibid., pp. 99-100.
[125] Ibid.,p. 78.
[126] N.K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal : From Plassey to the Permanent Settlement*, vol. I, Firma K.L.M. ,Calcutta, reprint 1981, p. 109; S. Arasaratnam, 'The Rice Trade in Eastern India 1650-1740', p. 533.
[127] S. Arasaratnam, 'The Rice Trade in Eastern India 1650-1740', p. 533.
[128] The northern parts of this coast drew their supplies from north Coromandel, Orissa and Bengal and the southern parts from Thanjavur; S. Arasaratnam, 'The Rice Trade in Eastern India 1650-1740', p. 533.

[129] Ibid.
[130] N.K. Sinha, vol. i, p. 109
[131] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of the Mughal India*, p. 78.
[132] James Taylor, *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*, Calcutta, 1840, p. 139; https://archive.org/details/asketchtopograp00taylgoog/page/n188/mode/1up;
[133] Sinnappah Arasaratnam, 'The Rice Trade in Eastern India 1650-1740', p. 533
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., p. 534.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and the Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650-1740,* p. 109.
[138] Om Prakash, 'The Dutch East India Company in Bengal: Trade Privileges and Problems, 1633-1712', in *Precious Metals and Commerce : The Dutch East India Company in the Indian Ocean Trade* , Variorum, Great Britain, 1994, pp. 260-61.
[139] Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and the Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650-1740,* p.543.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Sinnappah Arasaratnam, 'The Rice Trade in Eastern India 1650-1740', p. 543.
[142] Ibid., p. 544.
[143] John Bruce, *Annals of the Honorable East India Company from their Establishment by the Charter of Queen Elizabeth,1600, to the Union of the London and the English East-India Companies 1707-8*, vol. I, London, 1810, p. 327.
[144] Powdered sugar was bought at 2 pence and half penny which was very cheap and it was informed by the two new factors then sent to Bengal namely, Mr. Bannister and Mr. Littler; C. R. Wilson , *The Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, vol. I, p. 16.
[145] Only sugar was a trade good for the Company. The other provisions figured in the export invoices because these were procured in large quantities in Bengal mainly for consumption by the Dutch establishments at places such as Batavia and Ceylon; Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal 1630-1720,* p. 251.
[146] The agriculture in the region of Gujarat was so badly affected that the revenues coming from the same was affected; Shireen Moosvi, *People, Taxation, and Trade in Mughal India*, OUP, 2008, p. 6.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal 1630-1720*, p. 251.
[149] His conclusions are derived from the export invoices from the Dutch records; Ibid., pp. 251-253.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., p. 252.
[152] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707*, p. 100.

[153] S. Arasaratnam and A. Ray, *Masulipatnam and Cambay A History of Two Port –Towns 1500-1800*, Delhi, 1994, p. 76.
[154] S. Master, *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, vol. I, p. 139.
[155] Harihar Das, p. 120.
[156] Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 158.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Hameeda K. Naqvi, *Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India 1556-1803*, Bombay, 1968, p. 96.
[159] Ibid.
[160] James Bridgman at Balasore wrote to Francis Barker in London (1650) that, at Hūglī may be procured beeswax, long pepper, civet, rice, butter, oil, and wheat : all at about half the price of other places; *The English Factories in India 1646-50*, ed. W. Foster, p. 338.
[161] Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies, and the Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650-1740*, p. 111.
[162] Ibid., p. 111.

Tracing the Tremors of 1897: A Study on the Colonial Reactions and Indigenous Impact of the Assam Earthquake in United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills Districts of British Assam

Srijani Bhattacharjee

Abstract

The paper tries to understand the colonial responses after the 1897 earthquake in United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills districts of British Assam. It includes within its fold the indigenous repercussions produced by colonial ways of dealing with the situation. United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills have allured the British government towards them since the initial years of its rule in Assam for their rich natural and mineral resources. The disaster was viewed as an opportunity by the ruling government to establish expanded control over the natural wealth of the areas which were traditionally under indigenous jurisdiction. The calamity was used as an occasion to make the locals subservient to the British government with measures like propagation of Christianity. Thus, British political, administrative and economic interests decided the measures to be taken to handle the disaster. Therefore, organised governmental efforts towards disaster management in the areas were less visible except few such as seismological explorations in the regions.

Key Words: Colonial, British, Earthquake, Reactions, Christianity, Indigenous.

Introduction

'Amid a terrible roar of indescribable element, we galloped along, missing by a hair's breadth the wooden railing on the winding drive. The road yawned open with cracks beneath our feet, the pine trees overhead shook and trembled as though under the influence of the

mighty storm, and the pinecones showered as avalanche upon our heads. ...It was a scene of deplorable desolation and distress. Only a small section of the community had sought a refuge with us in the government house grounds. Most took shelter as they could find it in the wooden cricket ground pavilion, which had not subsided, and in sheds in the bazaar: others were in their mat walled stables or coach houses. The position of all, and especially of delicate ladies and children exposed to the elements, was a most pitiable one.' (Sir Henry Cotton, *India and Home Memories*, T. F. Unwin, London, 1911, pp. 229-230).

The above is the description by Sir Henry Cotton about the 1897 earthquake that was one of the most terrible disasters that the region of Assam has ever experienced. The catastrophe that took place on 12th June 1897 was massive in its extent as tremors could be felt from Rangoon in the southeast to Kangra in the northwest converting 1,50,000 miles into ruins, disrupting communications, causing hill rents and landslips, creating fissures in the plains, and producing floods in rivers. Another 1,750,000 square miles were left with unusual shocks that travelled at the rate of 120 miles per minute with 14 inches of wave motion near the epicentre (Davis 1901: 471-472). The aftershocks could be noticed for days in eastern India and more specifically in Assam. R. D. Oldham, the Superintendent of the Geological Survey of India (1879-1903) has observed that the tremors were from the points located in the vicinity of the main seismic centre (Pascoe 1934: 586). Some studies consider the centrum of the earthquake to the west of Shillong and Sylhet while to others, the epicentre was near Garo Hills (Luttman and Day 1898:b157). The disaster produced geographical, geological, and coseismal alterations in Gauhati, Goalpara and in the Brahmaputra River. Considering the impacts produced in and the areas covered by the calamity in Assam, it was named as Assam earthquake. Though studies also suggest that since the maximum intensity of the earthquake was felt in and around the Shillong plateau, it should be named as Shillong earthquake (Rajendran et al: 2004).

Survey of Literature

Historically analysing natural disasters is a relatively new addition to the historical discipline more specifically in the sub-genre of environmental history. The area of enquiry is undertaken from various dimensions. Some studies analyse the historical roots and forces that shape disasters while others examine administrative responses towards natural hazards. Impacts produced by disasters on economies, societies, demography, geography, and culture have emerged as interesting arenas of investigation. Scholars have assessed global historical seismology by examining a syncretic collection of existing studies on historical earthquakes. (Baveletal: 2020, Mauch and Fister: 2009, Akasoy: 2007, Periera: 2009, Albinietal 2014). In India, disaster history is a recent genre of historical studies. Tirthankar Roy, by emphasising on disasters like famines, earthquakes and storms has analysed colonial responses to handle natural hazards. To him, the British government was incapable of tackling calamities which acted as ways to acquire lessons to deal with climatic risks. Roy has discussed about the factors impeding successful implementation of government policies to counter natural calamities in India (Roy: 2010). On a different note, David Hall Matthew observed that natural disasters in India like famines were often repercussions of state policies towards the peasantry. By analysing the famine of 1880 in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, Matthew has evaluated that the conflict between the state developmental agendas and food security of land holders has led to occurrence of famine in the region. Discussing on issues like rain failure, exploitation by traders and moneylenders as responsible for economic and food crisis leading to the disaster, the study highlights on the state's role in the famine process experienced by the Ahmednagar cultivators (Matthew : 2005). Tirthankar Ghosh has historically examined the evolution of cyclonology, establishment of geological and meteorological departments under colonial initiatives and observed that such colonial endeavours were not only economically designed but were also politically guided where greater British access to nature and its resources were undertaken without

any actual concern for it (Ghosh: 2019). As regards Assam, historical study on natural disasters is a fresh field of investigation. Berenice Guyot Richard in his article on the 1950 Assam earthquake has considered the disaster as accountable for the configuration of Assam's place within India's political geography and national imaginary. To him, post-earthquake relief measures in the region has led to unprecedented state expansion which on one hand has placed the territory in the Indian mental maps while on the other has framed an image that the province was incapable of taking care of itself. The author observed that such imagery of Assam did not end its marginality rather enforced it (Richard: 2015). Arupjyoti Saikia has discussed the geological and hydrological consequences produced by the 1897 and 1950 earthquakes on Assam and discussed their repercussions on the Assamese agriculturalists and fishing communities (Saikia: 2020). He has also analysed the floods caused by River Brahmaputra in Assam which despite being considered as woe for many due to regular floods inflicted by it has also been the region's lifeline, central to its economic, political, and material well being till the twentieth century (Saikia: 2019).

Objectives and Methodology

The paper is an attempt to understand the subject from sub-regional perspective. It discusses the colonial responses to the post-1897 earthquake situation in United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills districts of Assam which due to their natural and mineral resources were attractive to the British. The study discusses the governmental reactions to the situation in the districts which were largely depended on British imperial interests in those areas. It underlines the manoeuvring propensity of the ruling government in the regions that utilised the disaster to implement its colonial aims and proselytising goals. These eventually acted as push towards strengthening of British control over the areas. The study has discussed fragments of interplay between colonial reactions and indigenous responses to the situation where the former was dominant over the latter. The paper has attempted to comprehend these aspects by consulting seismological studies, official

administrative reports, geological, trigonometrical, forest department reports, census, and newspaper reports. Memoirs by British administrators, gazetteers, journal articles and secondary literature on the subject have also been utilised for the study.

Colonial Ways to Handle the Disaster

The Assam earthquake of 1897 produced colonial reactions at various levels in United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills. The destructions caused by the disaster invited British initiatives for restoration in the districts that were ravaged both geographically and materially. Shillong, the seat of political administration in Assam was wrecked to the ground. The place was without water supply, telegraph lines, and communications for days (Bannerjee 1897: 210, 480 and 487). R. D. Oldham observed that roads and hill sides were cracked, the banks, the bridge in the artificial lake were damaged and dented (Oldham 1899:4). In the words of Luttman-Johnson and Lewis F Day, '…. the pretty little station which our countrymen had devised for themselves was demolished' (Luttman and Day 1897: 478). Lamenting on the destructions caused to the place, the newspaper *Englishman* wrote, 'Now alas! The scene is changed, desolation and ruin reign instead'. (Bannerjee 1897: 480 and 487). Considering the damages caused to Shillong, speculations were rife about its continuation as the political headquarters of Assam among a section of British officials. Mr. Arbuthnot, the Deputy Commissioner of Khasi and Jaintia Hills (1896-98) suggested that the political capital of Assam should be shifted to Upper Shillong. But issues associated with water supply and greater rainfall coupled with mist went against the proposal. Shillong was also viewed as inaccessible and consequently an expensive place considering its distance from the Assam Bengal Railways. It was suggested that some site with suitable climate and lesser rainfall near the Assam Bengal Railways in the North Cachar Hills district of Assam should be chosen for the purpose. It was expected that such change would benefit the Assam Bengal Railways as increased traffic of

planters and others who previously could not access Shillong would be able to visit the new site (Bannerjee 1897: 320).

Despite the speculations, the local government in Assam was prompt in coming up with an expenditure graph to re-install Shillong to its previous position. An application for a grant from the Imperial Treasury for restitution of Assam was made with an estimation of around thirty-five lakhs of rupees (Ambraseys and Bilham 2003: 662). Funds were allocated to the Public Works Department to restore Shillong with required infrastructures. In 1898-99, the expenditure on public works in Khasi and Jaintia Hills was the highest amounting to 6,30,869.00 rupees. A grant of 88,844 rupees was made to the Shillong Municipality from provincial funds to meet the liabilities of the earthquake in the area (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: 64-110). Thus, proposals to change the political headquarters of Assam remained unimplemented. William Erskine Ward, the erstwhile Chief Commissioner of the region (1885-87, 1891-96) observed that the site of the capital should not be shifted as reconstructing the same site would be economical (Dutta Ray: 2019). Employment of manual forces, clerical staff, British bureaucratic officials and subsequent settlement of traders, graziers, and menial communities quickened its restoration and changed its demographic composition (Kennedy 1996: 94). The population of the station rose to 9,621 in 1901 which was an increase by 2,901 persons (43%) from the population census of 1891 (Goswami 1979: 10). Reconstruction of Shillong intensified under colonial initiatives after the disaster. In 1898-99, out of the eight municipalities of Assam, tax increase was more marked in Shillong with 2,859 rupees. This was a measure to balance the provincial revenue that went down to 84,632 rupees in 1897 compared to 1,58,745 rupees in the previous year due to the disaster (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: vi-viii).

The attitude of the government was not similar while dealing with the repercussions caused by the disaster. In some cases, it was speedy in its approach while in others, it adopted a sluggish stance. In the United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills, the government was quick in

dealing with price rise and instances of extortions that came up after the earthquake. There was rise in the prices of crops and food commodities in the districts along with other parts of Assam due to submergence of crops caused by floods and silting of river beds after the calamity (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99 : 76). There was crisis of rice as some lands became unfit for cultivation. Few river beds became devoid of fishes too. In United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills, there was immediate dearth of potatoes as most of the crops were buried under the debris (Bilham : 2008). The Deputy Commissioner of the Khasi Hills arranged for importation of larger quantities of rice with the dealers for the people. Some traders took advantage of the situation and formed a nexus that charged higher rates from the panic-stricken people who were ready to pay any rate for the purpose. To prevent such extortions, the Deputy Commissioner fixed the price at rupees 8 per *maund* (unit of weight considered equivalent to 37.255 kilograms) and issued an order to the traders that he would seize their rice and would sell it with police assistance if his orders were infringed (Luttman and Day 1898: 478 &481).

The British administration was enthusiastic in undertaking geological, seismological, and trigonometrical research in United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills after the earthquake. The tectonic explorations undertaken after the disaster revealed that the existing seismological instruments were inadequate in recording the intensity of the 1897 seismic shocks. It also unveiled that Mallet's (Irish geophysicist, civil engineer who researched on earthquakes and is known as the Father of Seismology) seismometers at Shillong and Silchar were ineffective in measuring the tremors of the 1897 earthquake (Luttman and Day: 1898, Cotton 1911: 231, Jain 2016: 1352). Hence there were suggestions for the establishment of a Seismological Department in the area (West 1937 : 379). Japanese seismological expert Professor Omori was deputed for the purpose who observed that Assam would be free from such calamities in recent future though later tremors of 1905, 1934 and 1950 revealed the vulnerability of the areas to seismic convulsions (Luttman and Day 1898: 486, Sukhiya et al 1999: 269 and 282). Shillong remained

the headquarters of the seismological service in India till 1957. Geological research in United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills also received boost during the period. Though prior to 1897, geologists, military men, surgeons, and other colonial staff had visited the districts for geological explorations (Oldham 1854), yet the post-1897 earthquake surveys revealed fresher information about the mineral resources available in the areas. The upheavals obstructing excavation and trade in mineral resources thereby impeding removal of limestone from quarries in Khasi Hills due to the crustal and tectonic alterations produced were brought to notice. Information about decline in export trade in lime due to damages caused to transportation systems through roads and waterways came up (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: 87 and 89). Trigonometrical surveys were also undertaken by Mr. J. Bond, the Assistant Superintendent of the Trigonometrical Survey of India in association with R. D. Oldham at Cherrapunji in the north to the Brahmaputra River and even south from Dhubri. The surveys provided information about the areas on the basis of their topography and mapping of zones affected by the earthquake. It also fixed the expanses mapped by the topography and figured out the territories for use by topographers. The surveys prepared assessments about the actual dislocations caused that served as records for consultation in posterity (Burrand 1898: 1-7).

However, when it came to providing labour for relief works in the affected areas, the approach of the colonial government was less enthusiastic. The reason cited was that as the labour population in Assam visited their homelands during rains mostly from May to October, the government at the centre found it difficult to procure them for repair works (Anderson 1900: 260). Sir Henry Cotton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam (1896-1902) expressed his dissatisfaction about this and engaged his administrative staff for relief operations. In his words, 'I venture now to say we received no assistance from the Government of India.... The finances of the province during the whole period of my charge were paralysed ....' (Cotton 1911: 232. 237-238). The Chief Commissioner took up the issue to Lord Curzon, the Governor General of India (1899-1905) who visited Assam in March

1900. The Governor General expressed no empathy for the situation and rather considered investments on the territory as economically futile. He also dismissed the charge of neglect by the government at the centre towards the region (Cotton 1911: 390). The Gurkhas and the locals provided labour during the period and could earn surplus income. The labour charges during the period included 12 *annas* (monetary unit equal to 6.25 paise) for men and 8 *annas* for women (Bannerjee 1897: 163).

Dearth of labour hindered relief measures among the disease stricken people after the disaster. Due to dislocation of Shillong and its adjoining areas caused by the calamity, water supply and drainage systems were damaged, and cholera broke out among the locals (Luttman and Day 1898: 486). There were cases of dysentery and malaria due to blockage in the drainage systems (West 1937: 379). In Shillong, whooping cough, typhoid, and influenza broke out among the residents due to poor living and drinking of impure water (Bannerjee 1897: 326-327). There was death rate recorded per mile at 50.61 in 1897-98 (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: v.-vi). B.C. Allen estimated around 887 deaths in parts of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills (Allen 1906: 36). To the Christian missionaries, there were 916 deaths in Khasi and Jaintia Hills out of 1542 deaths in entire Assam (Vaghaiwalla 1951: v). The government as a measure to determine the actual number of casualties deputed Mr. Arbuthnot to tour the district (Morris 1996: 124-136). Some amount of sanitation works were undertaken in the affected regions. Major Ross of Indian Medical Service was deputed in Assam to make research on malarial fever. Ross discovered that *Kala Azar* was also a form of malarial fever (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: 169). Despite these, scarcity of labour continued to impede the relief operations.

The government experienced severe labour scarcity during and after the calamity. There was largescale desertion of labour in tea gardens and in other government sectors as they either absconded to their homelands or engaged themselves as cultivators or were employed by the Assam Bengal Railways. The managers in a number

of tea gardens in Cachar submitted representations to the Chief Commissioner of Assam where they mentioned that the railway contractors by engaging the labour were actually depriving the tea gardens of workers. They also requested for government assistance in recovering the coolies. The labour population in Assam being procured from outside the region such as from Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas had the tendency to opt for better paying roles if opportunity provided. The vacuum created by them were in some cases filled up by the locals. Such as in the tea gardens of Darrang, the Kachari tribe worked as labour after the disaster (Report on Labour Immigration into Assam 1897: 13). Moreover, the administration also required labour for construction of roads damaged by the earthquake. In United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills, the government emphasised on repair of those roads through which trade and communication passed. 10 bridges out of 19 in Gauhati-Shillong road were restored. A cart road from Bogapani river to Sylhet plains was constructed to connect Assam with Surma valley (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: 175, 189 and 169). Under these circumstances, it was preferred to engage the labour in public works and undertakings of governmental interests rather than employing them for relief operations in the districts.

The post-1897 earthquake situation in United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills revealed the manipulative aims of the colonial government in the region. In this context, the instance of the colonial Forest Department would be relevant. Soon after the calamity, Sir Henry Cotton declared that the Colonial Forest Department in the region was in an advantageous position to profitably use the disaster and hence instructed the Department to commercially exploit the indigenous timbers for the post-calamity restoration works (Assam Forest Report 1897 : 98-6). The rebuilding of Shillong was viewed as an excellent opportunity to establish colonial control over the indigenous forests of the areas. It was held that governmental hold over local timber resources of Khasi Hills was necessary to fulfil the requirements for the station's restoration. The government also

emphasised on increased control over indigenous tree resources of the districts as it had to offer timber and fuel grants to the 42nd Gurkha regiment stationed in the areas. This was a mechanism to facilitate the Gurkhas who provided relief works to the distressed population during and after the catastrophe along with militarily securing the frontier (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: 87). The *Syiems* (Khasi chiefs) were convinced about the commercial significance of forests under them and were made to conclude agreements with the colonial administration under which they had to share the forest revenue from local forests with the government. This subsequently acted as a consistent source of financial returns from indigenous forests to the British authorities (Peree 1913: 23). Timbers from Short Round and Upper Shillong forests were used for rebuilding the station. The areas which were stripped of timber trees were brought under conservation plans (Coventry 1909: 5). In the areas under government forest reservation plans in Khasi and Jaintia Hills, some timber and fuel grants were made to the locals in return for labour works in forests. In Garo Hills, parts of reserved forests were opened for grazing on exchange of labour for forest works by the inhabitants (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: 86-87). Sir Henry Cotton insisted for optimum utilisation of available resources and opportunities by the departments under his control. Such approach was in accordance to the orders which he received from the higher authorities.

United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills being rich in natural resources had attracted the attention of the British government since the early nineteenth century even when formal colonial control over the regions was yet to be established. Hence concluding mutual contracts with the indigenous chiefs for establishing shared control over local timbers and mineral resources had started since the initial years of the nineteenth century. Such endeavours were continued after the 1897 earthquake also when there was larger demand for timbers required for restoration works. The provisions of the mutual contracts were apparently shown as appealing to both the British and the indigenous chiefs (Assam Land Revenue Manual 1917: clxi). Taking advantage of

the non-hereditary structure of Khasi syiemship, the government convinced each of the elected *Syiem* about the economic importance of lands and forests under their jurisdictions and the seeming advantages connected with concluding mutual agreements with the British administration. As election for Syiemship was not held in 1897 due to the disaster, it gave the colonial government an added advantage to persuade the existing syiem to conclude treaties with them. (Peree 1913 : 23). Conclusion of such agreements, was however, not devoid of indigenous reactions. Some sections of the Khasi population despite being aware of the developments through discussions in Khasi *Durbar* (people's assembly) accepted colonial conditions after being allured by the British with provisions apparently beneficial to them. In other instances, they were forcibly made to hand over their lands under agreements between the indigenous chiefs and the colonial government that promised to assist them militarily when required. As the chiefs were divided amongst themselves on various issues, a united approach was lacking against such measures of the colonial government. Hence, the common people in some of the Khasi states developed animosity against the indigenous chiefs and also against the British authorities (Singh 1994: 5).

The 1897 earthquake provided an occasion when some sections of the people vented out their fury against the colonial government. In Garo Hills, the residents blamed the British Queen for the disaster and the destructions caused by it. In their words, 'Her most Gracious Majesty, not content with the last earthquake, has ordered another and more vigorous one to be followed by a cyclone……that it is in the power of the Maharani to do this is never doubted'. A Garo man even asked for a *parwana* (written document) from the Queen to forbid the hills behind his house from slipping on to him. The Queen tried to convince the people by highlighting the losses inflicted on the houses of British officials at Tura and observed that had the calamity been caused by her, she would have spared them of the damages. Thereafter the Queen organised a thank giving ceremony at Shillong on 20th

June 1897 to assure the people about her equal sympathy for both the indigenous and European subjects (Luttman and Day 1898: 485-486).

Indigenous reactions after the disaster, however, could not attain coordination. Due to absence of communication, lack of organisation and the people being burdened with miseries caused by the earthquake, local responses to the situation were few and isolated in character. The press coverage on the disaster though highlighted on the destructions caused to the regions but underlined more on the damages and mortality caused to the Europeans. According to the newspaper *Englishman*, '…the natives, occupying one storied houses have almost entirely escaped, and the distress is practically confined to the middle class Eurasians, who were unable to find house room in any part of the town.' (Bannerjee 1897: 6-9, 110). It also stressed on the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of Queen Victoria (23rd June 1897) and appealed to 'save the Queen' where prayers for the wellbeing of the aggrieved locals found tiny mention (Bannerjee 1897: 162-163). Even the administrative reports on Assam perceived that the calamity affected the wealthy class of the population living in masonry buildings more than the indigenous poor who resided in thatched and mud huts (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: ii).

Socio-Religious and Cultural Impact of the Disaster

The Assam earthquake of 1897 added momentum to the evangelisation process in United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills of British Assam. Proselytization efforts in the districts under the Baptist Mission, Welsh Calvinistic Mission and Catholic Mission among others, though, appeared successful by the first half of the twentieth century, initially had to face indigenous resistances and challenges. There were public opposition and boycott of persons who were converted to Christianity. The *Syiems* who had converted had to give up their *syiemship* and private property. Women who were converted had the fear of being ousted from *Kur* (clan). There are instances when people resorted to hostile violence and burning of Mission houses until stopped by the British army. There were local reactions among the Khasis and the

Jaintias against replacement of Bengali script by English as mode of instruction. Hence William Robertson, the Inspector of Schools pleaded to the government for retention of Bengali script referring to indigenous trade relations with the plains (Syiemleh 2013: 38-39).

The calamity of 1897 provided an opportunity to the Christian missionaries who portrayed the catastrophe as an expression of divine wrath against those people who opposed the propagation of Christianity in the regions. The diseases from which the inhabitants suffered after the disaster were construed as the failure of the indigenous religion to protect its followers during adversities. In the words of Reverend Robert Evans of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Presbyterian Mission, 'There were many people in Khasia who had heard the Gospel and accepted it as truth, but without obeying its demands. Many of them got close in some ways but nothing they heard made them forsake their old faith and their sins and claim Christ as their Saviour. A big event was needed to force them to realise the sanctity of God. This was felt during the earthquake…' (Bhattacharjee 2004 : 611-612). The missionaries even warned the residents that the tremors would reappear by 3rd July 1897 and the earth would dissolve under water if Christ was not accepted as the saviour by the locals (Luttman and Day 1898:485-486). The attributed lesser mortality in the affected areas compared to the material destruction caused by the earthquake was propagated as God's grace and blessings towards the residents. (Bhattacharjee 2004:610).

Such propagations and natural occurrences associated with the 1897 earthquake convinced sections of the aggrieved population about the divinities associated with Christianity. Some of them were assured about the mystic powers connected with the religion when they found that the ashes of the dead, Khasi cemeteries and tombs were dislocated and destroyed by the tremors (Bilham 2008: 435). Faith on Jesus as saviour was emboldened when the locals discovered that the Khasi monoliths were dislocated from their original locations after the convulsions. Charity and medical relief provided by the missionaries to the ailing population drew a section of the residents towards Christianity. Hence, there was an increase of 2,373 Christian converts

in Khasi Hills immediately after the earthquake (Sen 2017: 158). This was a rise in comparison to the 1897 pre-earthquake phase when the number of Catholic converts in Khasi Hills was 1300 (Syiemleh 2013: 38-39). In 1901, the number rose to 17, 125 in Khasi and Jaintia Hills (Alllen 1902 : 45). By 1911, the number spiralled to 31, 257 persons. (Swiney 1911 : 24). The Ecclesiastical establishment at Shillong was assisted financially by the government for its restoration and a sum of rupees 10,000 was sanctioned to replace the church that was destroyed by the earthquake (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: 209). In order to encourage proselytization among the residents, the government recognised that the Khasi *syiems* and Garo *nokmas* even after embracing Christianity would be able to continue with the ritual responsibilities of their old religion (Choube 1971: 53). The intake of pupils in missionary aided schools in Khasi and Jaintia Hills increased from 4335 to 4591 after the disaster. The Christian converted Khasis assisted the missionaries in works connected with the press and in establishing missionary schools in Khasi Hills and in other hilly regions of British Assam (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: 205 and iii). While discussing the factors that boosted the spread of Christianity in North East India, David R. Syiemleih has attributed natural occurrences like the 1897 earthquake and the Mautam famine as responsible for this (Syiemleh 2012: 515-516).

Increased conversions to Christianity created oppositions among the traditional Khasi non-converts who believed in indigenous sovereign lord, the almighty creator and in the tenets of kinship as specified by the Khasi ancestors. They were the propagators of *Seng* Khasi movement which came up in 1899 as a protest against indigenous conversion to Christianity. Though the movement was not specifically aimed against conversions that took place after the 1897 earthquake but opposed indigenous conversions to Christianity in general, it gave a call for the organisation of the Khasi religion after the calamity. Babu Jeeban Roy, one of the proponents of the *Seng* Khasi movement encouraged education among the inhabitants, established schools and printing presses that taught and printed scholarly works other than

the Bible (Choudhury 2022). Two monthly newspapers named *U Khasi Mynta* and *Ka Pateng Khristian* were published in Khasi language under his proprietorship (Report on the Administration of Assam 1898-99: 207). The *Seng* Khasi movement, however, could not withstand Christian intrusions over Khasi Hills in the subsequent years due to factors like dearth of workers and finance, organised efforts of the Christian missionaries to spread the religion and increasing acceptance of western civilisation by the masses (Nalini Natarajan 1977: 114-115).

The Christian missionaries in United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills undermined indigenous beliefs, local living and housing patterns. They considered the houses of the Khasi Christian converts as better and well planned than those built by people adhering to the indigenous religion. The disaster of 1897 changed this perception of the missionaries. The earthquake proved that the concrete buildings at Shillong and in its adjoining areas were incapable of surviving seismic convulsions. It also confirmed that the only structures that could sustain such tremors were traditional thatch roofed, lime mortared, mud walled, and timber pillared houses equipped to endure heavy rainfall and other weather conditions. The disaster made the British administration acknowledge the robustness of the Khasi housing erection patterns where while construction, aspects associated with protection from climatic conditions and from natural disasters were taken into consideration. For instance, the Khasis never built their houses at the extreme hill summits and neither used stones nor nails for constructing the walls. The 1897 earthquake made the British administration realise the sustainability of these housing patterns for seismic prone areas like Shillong and its vicinity (Gurdon 1987: 117). By utilising natural products and similar elements as were used by the locals, the colonial administration came up with 'Assam type' pattern of housing architecture that was implemented in the areas. This form of housing pattern was suggested for the regions by Professor Omori also, the Japanese seismic expert who visited the areas after the disaster. Hence this architectural form was used for constructing the subsequent buildings in the regions such as the Chief Commissioner's Residency and All Saints Church at Shillong (Dahunsi and Mittal 2008: 1).

Conclusion

Thus, colonial reactions to the post-1897 earthquake situation in United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills were decided more by British imperial and administrative interests than by humanitarian factors. The calamity acted as a reason that boosted colonial initiatives to know the regions further. Hence, seismological, geological, and trigonometrical surveys were undertaken that provided required knowledge for administration about the areas to the British. It contributed to knowledge creation about those regions. The enthusiasm and sluggishness associated with colonial reactions to deal with the post-earthquake situation were decided by British political and economic interests in the provinces. The instances of speedy refurbishment of Shillong and less enthusiasm of the government to provide labour for relief operations after the disaster indicate towards that. The catastrophe was viewed as an opportunity by the British authorities to expand colonial control over indigenous resources and to propagate Christianity in the areas. Though providing charity, medical facilities, and education to the indigenous people by the missionaries did play an important role in offering relief to them after the earthquake, yet those were more directed towards spreading of Christianity among the locals. The attitude of 'superiority' by the missionaries against the indigenous population as was visible in their undermining of indigenous living and housing patterns was curtailed by the 1897 earthquake that proved the sustainability of indigenous housing forms for seismic prone areas. The disaster was devastating for both the locals and the British officials, yet sympathy poured in more for the latter in press coverage and official documents where the distress faced by the former was barely addressed. Indigenous reactions against governmental efforts to deal with post-earthquake situation in the districts stood feeble and unorganised where colonial interpretations to the situation were more assertive. Hence, the 1897 earthquake may be considered as a catalyst that provided momentum to expansion of British control over the areas.

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The Radical Bengali Woman: Life and Times of Sarala Devi Chaudhurani (1872-1945)

Sanchari Ray

Abstract

In this article, a comprehensive assessment of Sarala Devi Chaudhurani's contribution to the Indian National Movement as well as her role in empowering Indian women has been performed. Coming from a noble family, she was gifted with many talents, she was a great singer, excellent composer as well as a powerful writer. She had edited magazines like *Bharati*, and started the first All-Indian women's association. By creating gymnasiums, she tried to motivate the Bengali youth to be physically strong. She believed in the revolutionary path of obtaining freedom in the early part of her life. Later on, when she started working alongside Gandhi, she again made a profound impact by her adoption of *Khadi*, making political speeches, songs, writings, etc. After her husband's death, although she submitted herself to the spiritual path she continued to work throughout the rest of her life for the cause of women. She was truly a virtuous and could have claimed fame by any of her cultural/literary qualities, her contribution to the Indian National Movement, or her untiring efforts for equal rights for women. The existing literature appears to have certain limitations when it comes to conducting a thorough analysis of Sarala Devi's contributions. This serves as the principal motivation of this article.

Key Words: National, Gandhi, Movement, Khadi, Bharati

Introduction

The history of the Indian freedom struggle and women's participation in it is an interesting subject to deal with. Sarala Ghosal (1872-1945), better known as Sarala Devi Chaudhurani was actively

involved in the Swadeshi Movement which was an important phase of the Indian Freedom Struggle. The cultural ambiance of *Thakurbari* played a very important role in Sarala's upbringing. But she lived very briefly at *Thakurbari* in her infancy. The Ghosals lived separately. She showed great literary as well as musical excellence at a very early age. She graduated with English Honours and earned medals in university examinations. She earned profuse appreciation for her writing from all parts of the society. As an editor of the leading Bengali periodicals named *Bharati*, she was very successful. Her writings were filled with a strong sense of nationalism. This probably sets her completely apart from other ladies from the Tagore Family and the likes. The term "radical" is used to designate individuals, parties, and movements that wish to alter any existing social order. Hence conferring her as a truly radical leader will not be an exaggeration. While she was a great leader of women, she was a leader of men too. She was actively involved in revolutionary activities in Bengal. She initiated the practice of physical culture in Bengali youth by breaking all social norms, and took it upon herself to motivate them by setting up *Akhras*, and started showcasing the physical strength of youth by celebrating festivals like *Birastami* (Festival of Warriors), propagating Bengali icons like *Prapataditya* and *Udayaditya* through festivals in their name. Many referred to her as 'Joan of Arc', 'Debi Choudhurani' for her pioneering pursuits.[1] After her marriage in 1905, she continued to work with her husband Rambhuj Dutt Choudhury. She was also associated with Gandhi and played an important role in his *Khadi* movement and the Non-Cooperation Movement. The present article not only investigates the period between 1919 to 1920 which got undue attention to assess her relationship with Gandhi, but also her manifold activities throughout her life. From her early days, she engaged herself in improving the lives of poor and underprivileged women through the spreading of education and encouraging them to be economically independent. She founded *Bhārat Strī Mahāmandal* in 1910. It was the first Pan Indian Women's organisation which focused on the home education of women.

Assessing her contribution only from her autobiography *Jībaner Jharāpātā* will be inadequate. Thorough research is needed in this arena.

Sarala Ghoshal who came to be better known as Sarala Devi Chaudhurani after her marriage with Rambhuj Dutt Chowdhuri[A] belonged to a *Hindu Brahmo family*. Her mother Swarnakumari Devi (1855-1932)[B] was the daughter of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and was the elder sister of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Her father was Janakinath Ghosal (1840-1913) who had earlier served as the Secretary of Congress. Her mother Swarnakumari founded *Sakhī Samiti* (Women's Friendly Association) in 1886 and she trained and sent the needy widows and single women as teachers for women and girls in their homes.[2] It was the first women's organisation in Bengal to be set up by women. Swarnakumari Devi is often credited to be the first notable woman writer in Bengali.[3] Sarala probably inherited her sense of patriotism, her strong will, independent spirit, and her literary skills from both of her gifted parents. Many historians from Meredith Borthwick, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar, Geraldine Forbes to Bharati Ray tried to investigate women's involvement in the same. Most recently, Tirtha Mondal in her book *Women Revolutionaries of Bengal 1905-1939* (2002) wrote about Bengal's revolutionary activities and remarked on women's role in it to be a thought provoking subject. Professor Sumit Sarkar's book titled *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal : 1903-1908* dealt with Swadeshi, Boycott, and the ensuing political and economic upsurge (1905), however, his coverage of women's involvement in it was limited.

Sarala's upbringing in *Thakurbari* from the age of five was very different from children of her age. None of her brothers, sisters, or cousins got the direct attention of their parents, rather were mostly attended by maids and servants. However, when they moved to a nuclear household around 1877, she caught the attention of her mother because of her innate talent for music, as well as her academic excellence compared to her brothers and sisters.[4] Another interesting observation was a strong nationalistic sense from her very early days.

While studying in Bethune school, she refused to go to a circus run by Wilson who was an Englishman and said she would rather attend a circus by an Indian, even if the environment is relatively less clean.[5] Another activity she undertook at the age of eleven is worth mentioning. She and her elder sister started holding informal classes for around twenty girls from the neighbourhood at their Kasibagan home, which was an early indication of her passion to do something for women.[6] The influence of her mother and sister in doing women-centric social work cannot be denied. Still, with time her activities were probably far more compelling. She was proud to be a Bengali too. She wrote a strong letter to the famous author Rudyard Kipling when he showed Bengalis in poor light.

While the focus of the current article will be more on analysing the impact of her musical and literary creation on the national movement and large society, a short discussion is imperative to understand her musical skills. She was greatly influenced by Rabindranath and was equally appreciated by him. She composed tunes and sometimes wrote notations for many of his songs. She was introduced to European music, as well as *Baul, Majhi Gaan (Boatman's Song),* and also to the notations of European lyrics. Later on, during her stints in South India, she brought the notations of a few classical music, which influenced Rabindranath into composing his tunes for Brahmo Sangeet and other compositions as well. She gave the tune to the song *Sakatore oi kadiche,* from a European piece.[7]

The Literary prowers of Sarala

Sarala's devotion towards her motherland could be seen from the very tender age of ten. In her memoirs, she stated that even as a child she used to collect books, and journals, mainly *Bharati*, from her mother's shelves for reading and it instilled some nationalistic sense within her. Sarala also derived a great deal of inspiration for her youthful writing and social activism from here. By the middle of 1880, Sarala began to write significantly. Sarala's desire to write was inspired by what she read in *Sakhā* (The Friend), the first noteworthy

children's magazine in Bengali. Her poetry published in it also got the first prize in a competition held by the magazine '*Sakha*'[8] which had a special page for girls. She began to get involved in *Bharati*, a journal published by Jorasanko, edited by her uncle Dwijendranath and later by her mother.[9] Sarala's article on Bengali humorous songs was her first publication in *Bharati*, apart from her regular contributions to *Bālak*. In 1895, Sarala and her elder sister Hiranmoyee[C] replaced their mother as co-editors of *Bharati*[10] for which they both wrote. When she took over *Bharati* as an editor, she wrote several articles to the feeling of patriotism. In her first article *'Mrityu Charcha'*[11], she invited Bengali youth to come forward to take on all the challenges. She wanted them to come out from their sphere of docility and empower themselves for a nationalist cause. In her article, *Shakti Charcha,* asserted that the Bengali youth must come out from the prevailing notion of the ruling race of being "physically weak and effeminate" and they should become strong, and courageous enough to fight against the British.[12] Her next significant article, *Bilati ghushi bonam deshi kil (*The Conflict of Might between the East and the West) emphasised cultivation of physical strength and asked the young people to come forward and prepare themselves to fight for the country if required.[13] She invited the experiences of all to be written in *Bharati,* where they have protested against insults by the British then and there, rather than taking this up to court.

The central issue of concern to her was anti-colonialism. Her effort to fight against colonial authority was not confined to promoting physical culture but also she wrote several articles, poems, and stories to express her grudge against colonial rule. In the poem *'Pashaner ābedan'* (A Stoners' Appeal) she uttered the same tune of nationalism.[14] Sarala constantly tried to encourage the youth of Bengal. In a poem, 'Eka' (Solitary) published in *Bharati* in the year 1875,[15] Sarla welcomed the youth to cast aside their fear and take an active part in uprooting the Britishers from India. In *Bishwabijoyee*[16], she expected the arrival of a real hero who would release the mother nation from the colonial yoke.[17] In her articles, she also talked about economic freedom. Her

ideas regarding economics and finance could be traced from one of the editorial pieces *Bharatiya Krishi O Shilpa Shamosya*. (Issues with Indian Cultivation and Industrialisation).[18] In this editorial piece, Sarala brought Professor Chattorn of Madras Engineering college to her readers. It was while editing *Bharati*, that Sarala came in closer contact with Swami Vivekananda, to whom she wrote letters in 1897. Sarala was greatly influenced by Swami Vivekananda's idea.[19] Some other articles published from *Bharati* covered subjects like the absence of Swadeshi enterprise, and Hindu Muslim unity which portray her maturity and foresightedness. Earlier, she received praise and affection from another literary legend, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya who gifted her with self-autographed books.

Another remarkable thing about her editorship was that she made timely publications of the issues of *Bharati* from the usual practice of delay. This also served as an example to other contemporary journals of that time. She took a patronising role for the new writers and it is through *Bharati*, that Saratchandra Chattopadhyay was introduced to the Bengali readers. Her articles, especially the ones written and translated into English and published in 'Hindusthan Review' (Published from Allahabad) created a great deal of sensation even at the national level. Lala Lajpat Rai who was the leading politician of Punjab was so impressed by these writings, that he came to meet her at her residence in Calcutta personally.

Sarala : A Prodigy

As far as Sarala's education was concerned, that too was also far from ordinary. Though she would read various other books outside her studies, she went on to stand first among the female candidates in the Entrance tests. As mentioned earlier, she completed her B.A. with Honours in English in 1890. Sarala was interested in science education and wanted to study Physics at Bethune. But the college authorities refused to offer by stating that there was no provision for teaching Physics, as science subjects were considered neither suitable nor necessary for women. But she broke the tradition by studying a

'male' subject at St. Xaviers college. She had to sit with her elder brother and a male cousin in the Physics class. She not only passed the subject of Physics but also acquired a silver medal for her achievements.[20] There was again an early sign of becoming a 'people's person from her school days. She was a favourite among her teachers, classmates, seniors as well as juniors. She would be called by the school, even after she had passed out of college to guide the students for song and drama performances to be presented before the prize distribution ceremony.[21] Swamiji was also quite impressed with Sarala's education and he remarked that her education is perfect and that's how all women of India should be educated.[22] Another notable episode was during her stint in Mysore as a teacher in 'Maharani Girls' School'.[23] She was a keen and gifted learner, these exposures changed her understanding of the nation greatly and influenced her vision and outlook.

Sarala : The Leader of Men

Sarala's sympathy for the revolutionary philosophy was clear in her writings. She did not confine herself to only writing different articles but she was the first woman of Bengal to get actively involved with *biplabi* (revolutionary) movement. She took the initiative to prepare the stage for such movements in Bengal. She attempted to infuse the youth with courage and both physical and mental power, and started the celebration of a few iconic *utsav* (festivals). These festivals were a part of her endeavour to contribute to the freedom of the country through armed revolt. She inaugurated the *Birashtami Utsav* (Festival of Warriors) during the celebration of Durga Puja (worship of goddess Darga) in 1903. She established clubs for physical fitness in her residence at Ballygange Circular Road. Along with members of her own *Akhra (Gymnasium)*, she invited members of other clubs to observe the occasion with befitting homage to the country's past heroes. They assembled around a sword and recited a poem composed which contained the names of a number of heroic men, starting with Lord Krishna. She even appointed the famous Muslim master (*ustad*)

Professor Murtaza to teach some defensive actions with swords and dagger.[24]

Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar[D] introduced *Shivaji Utsav* in Maharashtra, which probably motivated Sarala to start *Protapaditya Utsav* in May 1903. Young men of Bhawanipore, Kalighat, Bagbazar participated in it. She read an essay titled *Bangalir Pitridhan* (The Heritage of the Bengalis),[25] she contended that while Rajputs, the Marathas, and the Sikhs were recognised as the heroic people of India, Bengalis forgot their heritage in bravery and lacked a sense of pride. She further claimed that Bengal had produced many brave heroes and particularly highlighted Pratapaditya (1561-1611). He was the last independent Zamindar from Jessore who had kept all the Muslims of Bengal loyal to him, defeated the king of Orissa, and ventured to resist the Mughal army. The Bengalis needed to evoke their national pride and confidence. On one side some of the contemporary journals like *Sanjivani, Bangabasi* praised her role as a leader of men as well as the fact that Bengali youths were gradually embracing a path of valour and bravery. On the other hand, the noted Bengali revolutionary Bipin Pal initially passed sarcastic comments about her initiatives in *Young India*[26]. Though the opinion might have been divided as per contemporary journals of that time, the ripple it created was easily observable.

Sarala Devi initiated another festival *Udayaditya Utsav*, named after Udayaditya, the heroic son of mother Bengal but was neglected in history. He was a young prince from Jessore, son of Pratapaditya who fought against the Mughal army and succumbed. In commemoration of him, Sarala Devi wrote, 'please, Mother, we beg you, give us your milk mixed with blood to feed our valour, we need to grow up as a healthy strong, well developed nation.'[27]

Sarala Devi influenced the Bengali youths profusely. She formed a gymnasium to teach them boxing, sword fighting, *lathi khela* (game of sticks) and games with daggers and swords. These activities gained huge publicity in Bengal. She also planned to organise a 'muscle' celebration. She said that if Muslims could exhibit their prowess during

Muharram or other than Bengali communities could do so during the *Dussera* then why should not be there a similar event for the entire Bengali community?[28] After the festival, each of the participants was awarded a *Birashtami* medal. This medal was inscribed with the word *Biro bhavo* (Be Brave) on one side and on the other side, it was written *Debah Durbalaghatakah* (destroy the weakness). Celebrations like *Pratapaditya Utsav* created a rift between Sarala Devi and Rabindranath Thakur. Thakur portrayed *Pratapaditya* in an uncomplimentary and villainous role in his novel *Bouthakuranir Haat*. Sarala Devi mentioned that a political leader had to be judged politically. Pratapaditya, the Jessore Zamindar had the courage to resist Mughal Empire Akbar. He was worthy of being recognised as a heroic personality.

Sarala Devi encouraged many revolutionary associations in Bengal like *Suhrid Samiti*, *Dhaka Anushilan Samiti*. Pulin Das met Sarala Devi in connection with her centre for physical culture. Pulin Das was inspired by her physical culture practice where she used to be present with a register in her hand.[29] With the guidance of Sarala Devi, he started a similar centre in Dhaka and later this centre became the *Dhaka Anushilan Samiti*.[30] Many other clubs also received financial and material assistance from her. In 1901, Sarala Devi, P. Mitter and Kakuja Okakura met in Calcutta and founded a secret society.[31] One of the principal objectives of the society was to keep a tab on people and associations involved in anti-state activities. She maintained a close association with *Suhrid Samiti*, founded in 1900 at Mymensingh, a secret revolutionary society. She became the president of that society in 1905.[32] In 1902 a conference was organised by *Suhird Samiti* where *Vande Mataram* was sung in front of them. Even after her marriage, she supported the *Samiti*.[33] Further, she got acquainted with Aurobindo Ghosh. Aurobindo wanted to form a secret society that would infuse more vigour into the revolutionary nationalism in Bengal. Sarala's *Akhras* attracted many people who believed in extremism. In 1902, Jatindranath Banerjee came from Baroda as an emissary of Aurabindo Ghose to Calcutta to establish secret societies for organising revolutionary movements in Calcutta.[34] He sought Sarala Devi's assistance in this regard. Sarala Devi readily assisted him and both of

them worked together till Jatindranath left politics in 1904.[35] There is another remarkable incident that needs mention here. To arrange for funds, dacoity or robbery was a common means amongst the revolutionaries. Jatindranath was also planning to resort to such a plan. Sarala Devi found this highly objectionable to kill or steal from her own countrymen. When she confronted Jatindranath, he said all this was happening by Tilak's instruction. The next course of action by Sarala Devi showed her exceptional determination and courage. It is to be noted that though she was involved in many activities, they were mainly conducted from home. She herself was not very comfortable with going out and meeting people. However, on this occasion, she asked Jatindranath to postpone their plan, as she undertook the journey to meet Tilak on the other side of the country. She met him and both concurred that robbery cannot be a means of getting funds. May be this justifies Sarala's somewhat distance with some Bengali revolutionary Societies thereafter.

Sarala Devi's all-around contributions and leadership were getting noticed by all sections of society. But unfortunately, still, not many women were eager to join the *Biplabi Samiti* at that time. Though few of them helped by providing food, and shelter to the absconders.[36] To Sarala Devi, the central issue of concern was anti-colonialism. She wrote- "we are not simply Indian, we are also 'natives'." Sarala Devi, also wanted to improve the condition of women. Accordingly, *Lakshmir Bhandar* was opened by her at Cornwallis Street in 1903. The aim was to help the poor and deprived women by selling goods made by them. Kedarnath Dasgupta was the manager of *Lakshmir Bhandar*. It gave an advertisement in *Bengalee* on 9th July 1904.[37] Gradually, Sarala Devi was getting followed by many middle class urban Bengali women.

Earlier, Sarala Devi made her public appearance during the 17th Congress session which took place from 26th-28th December, 1901 under the chairmanship of Dinshaw Wacha.[38] The session started with the inaugural song composed by Atul Prasad Sen *Otho go Bharata Laxmi*. This chorus was led by Sarla Devi herself. On the last day (28th December) about fifty singers from various provinces of India sang Sarala's song 'Sing Hindustan' popularly known as 'Namo

Hindustan' — under the direction of Bharat Sangit Samaj. A journal reported the next day — 'Sing Hindustan' — the patriotic song sung at the opening of the congress processing was actively rehearsed by about fifty musicians, representing all castes and creeds of the vast subcontinent and it was especially composed for the occasion by that gifted lady—Miss Sarala Ghosal.[39] She was a gifted musician and composed a number of other patriotic songs as well. Sarala Devi was 'one of the architects of a militant, mother-centric nationalism which could be regarded as revolutionary terrorism in the twentieth century."[40] Sarala Devi was overshadowed by other political leaders.[41] She had remarked in her autobiography that although there were some seats reserved much later for women candidates and men provided support to women for the same, they wanted to play the patronising role and were not ready to leave any room for women autonomy. She also wrote critically of the Congress that it came alive only for three days in a year— like our Durga Puja in Autumn.[42] In *Bharati* she also advocated provincial autonomy.

A Political Marriage

Earlier, in 1905 A.D. she got married to Rambhuj Dutt Choudhuri at the age of 33 years. It was more under family pressure specifically at the request of her bedridden mother that she agreed to get married. In fact, most of her family members were convinced that, she may remain unmarried. Earlier when she decided to leave Calcutta with a job, Maharshi Debendranath suggested that she be married to a sword as a symbol. Many historians see Sarala Devi's marriage as a political one, bringing together the highly politicised provinces of Bengal and Punjab. Some others have seen this as an effort to establish connection between the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj in promoting religious and social reforms. Rambhuj practiced in the Lahore High Court and he was already a prominent member of Arya Samaj. He was one of the first among the Panjabis to join the INC. After her marriage, Sarala moved to Lahore, but her connection to Bengal and social welfare continued. At the annual conference of INC held in Allahabad on 30th December 1910, she convened a conference on All India

Women at the same venue. Here, Sarala addressed and expressed her intention to set up Bharat Stri Mahamandal (BSM) with the objective of spreading education to women who stay at home. This was truly the first all-India women's organisation. The organisation started in Lahore and gradually spread to Amritsar, Delhi, Karachi, Hyderabad, Kanpur, Bankipur, Hazaribag, Midnapore, Calcutta, and a few other places.[43] Her continuous efforts were getting noticed and educated middle-class women too came forward. They became members of BSM. She also continued the work of editorship after coming to Punjab and helped her husband in editing *Hindustan*, a Urdu weekly newspaper.[44] This paper created quite an uproar within the British Government because of its strong revolutionary nationalistic views. When the Lahore High Court wanted to cancel the license of this newspaper Sarala came forward and changed it overnight into English version and surprised the authorities by claiming that she was the editor and proprietor of the same and thus cancelling of the license could be averted. She actively undertook the effort of spreading education to around fifty places in Lahore for women.[45] Sarala also encouraged the youth to join the First World War. In return, British Government wanted to give her a badge as a reward which she refused to accept as a mark of protest.[46]

After the massacre in Jallianwala Bagh, Sarala Devi's husband was arrested. During this time period, she became a follower of Gandhi and supported the Non-Cooperation Movement wholeheartedly. She took an active role in the spread of Gandhi's *Khadi* Movement.[47] Although, Sarala earlier had a more revolutionary outlook, but it radically got changed. Just before the Amritsar Session of the Indian National Congress, Sarala became a follower of Gandhi in 1919. She started supporting the Non-Cooperation Movement, which caused a difference of political opinion with her husband.[48] It may be noted that her association with Gandhi was not new. They both might have met in 1896 at the Calcutta Congress session when Gandhi visited her house when her father Janakinath Ghosal was the then secretary of Congress. Sarala was actively involved in spreading the *Khadi* Movement and the Non-Cooperation Movement as well.[49]

Sarala's role in the Indian freedom Struggle can neither be assessed by her autobiography *Jibaner Jharapta,* nor from her personal relationship with Gandhiji as Rajmohan Gandhi[50] discussed in his book. She was very committed and passionate about the improvement of women in India, which could be understood from her effort in setting up the Bharat Stri Mahamandal in 1910. She was not antagonistic towards men as there was a long list of Indian men who sympathised with women like Rammohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Sivnath Sastri and her own Jorasanko relatives. Sarala realised that education was the key to liberation. Once educated, women's condition, and position in society can really be improved. In 1918, at the 33rd session of INC in Delhi in a bold speech Sarala supported the voting rights of women. She advocated for women's equality with men. She argued women had as much right to chart their destinies as much as their male counterparts.

Sarala and Gandhi : Reading between the lines

The Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh Massacre brought Rambhuj Dutta and Sarala into Gandhi's movement. Gandhi came to Lahore in 1919 to investigate the Amritsar Massacre. Arriving in Lahore in October, Gandhi stayed in the Choudhury house with Sarala and her son Dipak, stepsons, mother-in-law, and brother-in-law. Rambhuj Dutta was in prison being convicted on charges of treason and conspiracy against the king emperor. By that time the Choudhury couple were very prominent in Punjab politics. There was no doubt the power couple stood out in terms of their political credentials. Gandhi utilised them to reach out to the Punjabi audience. Sarala accompanied him to attend the meetings before the Punjabi audience to promote *Khadi*. Gandhi noticed that the number of women at his meetings was gradually increasing. The Punjabi people understood the Swadeshi product could both uplift them economically and protect women's honour. In 1918, Gandhi talked about the need for women leaders, who are pure, firm, and self-controlled as *Sita*, *Damayanti,* and *Draupadi,* who could transform society's view on women and their capabilities.[51]

Gandhi's letters to Sarala Devi, his other writings about Sarala Devi in Journals like *Navjivan*, *Young India (Years 1920-21),* and to his friends,

constitute a great deal of primary sources for research on Sarala Devi. Unfortunately, in spite of her profound impact on Indian polity especially as a women leader Sarala, seems to be inadequately researched by historians with few notable exceptions like Professor Geraldine Forbes, Professor Bharati Ray, and Professor Tapati Sengupta[52] etc. The primary sources are also not too many. Mainly, researchers have tried to assess her only on the basis of her autobiography. Hence, their letters constitute an important element for a comprehensive assessment of Sarala Devi. After the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Gandhi's view of British Raj and it's sense of justice was completely shattered and he wanted to start a fresh non-cooperation movement from Punjab. Therefore, in the upcoming section, when we attempt to analyse Gandhi's letters to Sarala, his letters to others mentioning Sarala, or his articles about her on *Navjivan* and *Young India*, our objective is to understand Sarala more, rather than try to speculate on their relationship.

The first narrative of Gandhiji on Sarala is about her hospitality in Punjab in the year 1919. In the context of this incident, Gandhi wrote in his autobiography "I was put up at the late Pandit Rambhaj Dutta's Bungalows, and the burden of entertaining me fell on the shoulder of Srimati Sarala Devi."[53] He mentions about her hospitality as well as her company to Anasuyabehn in a letter dated 27th October 1919, "Saraladevi's Company is very endearing. She looks after me very well."[54] He further mentions in *Navjivan* (Originally in Gujrati) on 30th November 1919, "In Lahore, I am the guest of Smt. Sarala Devi Chaudhurari and have been bathing in her deep affection."[55] Similar to his earlier letters, he also mentioned about her sincerity and keen desire of learning. It may be noted that during that period Rambhuj was in prison.

Gandhiji took it upon himself to introduce Sarala Devi to the readers of *Navjivan* particularly pointing out her deep involvement in the Bengali magazine *Bharati* (the family journal of the Jorasanko Tagore's), her power with pen, her prowess in music, and her role in making Bengali youth ready to fight against the imperial rule when in need, establishing women organisation and taking a role for spreading *Khadi*

movement. It was a clear testimony from Gandhiji about the multifaceted personality of Sarala Devi. On another occasion, a note about *Navjivan's* future as a journal was published in March 1920 where Gandhiji was found to discuss the financial viability of the magazine. While emphasising on maintaining the quality of the issues, he mentions that the last issue was particularly of good standard because of Sarala Devi's writing named *'Bandhu'* (Friend). He urged to his readers to read the same many times to extract the underlying sweetness of the writing.

Later in another edition, Gandhiji also wrote that as Sarala was unhappy away from Rambhuj and he took it upon himself to provide her with something which would keep her occupied and persuaded her to write poems.[56] This probably reinforces the potential that Gandhi saw in Sarala.

Not only her writing, but Gandhi also praised Sarala as a speaker and once he was given the task to thank Sarala. Gandhi's speech was mixed with wit. However he mentions her as 'Dear sister' as of his own, praises her beautiful voice and sweet song and her spirit to fight like a lioness for the justice of her husband.[57] On another occasion, in *Navjivan*, Gandhi abundantly praised for Sarala's social as well as political activities. He wrote "Here I am indebted to the sister. I touch the feet of that sister who is spreading my message in the country."[58]

Sarala was assuming a remarkable role in Swadeshi. In Calcutta Basanti Devi[E] and Urmila Devi[F] sold *Khadi* products door to door. Sarala Devi wrote she could arrange forty ladies in twenty groups, under two volunteers each, to sell *Khadi* products. In Madras, they undertook similar initiatives.[59] Gandhi was quite moved by the way Sarala adopted *Khadi* first in Swadeshi Movement especially given her aristocratic background. She was one of the first ladies to wear a *Khaddar Sari* and popularised it much before Kasturba and other women associates of Gandhi would wear *Saris* made of coarse cloth. Gandhi wrote in *Wheels on Fortune*, how she promoted the use of *Khaddar* in front of more than a thousand ladies in a District Conference at Sialkot. He mentions about Sarala that she has "thrown herself,

heart and soul, in the movement' and also felt that "Swadeshi has become a passion with her."[60]

Based on the letters by Gandhiji to Sarala[61], most of them were found to be written from January 1920 till December 1920. In one of the first letters (January 1920), she was addressed as "my dear Sarala Devi" in a very formal manner. Then it has changed to 'dear Sarala' "my dearest Sarala", to an occasional "my dear sister". He also started signing off as 'your law giver'. The dictionary meaning of "law giver" is, one who draws up and enacts the law. The interpretation of the author is that Gandhi was probably here talking about laws to be followed by Sarala to become the supreme or one of the supreme women leaders of the country. She had already well-established credentials for the same. She had an extraordinary education, belonged to a very erudite family, could use her pen truly like a sword, composed world-class music, and spoke and sang in public appearances with a telling effect on the audience. Her experience in travelling, teaching, editing, writing, training the youth in martial arts, organising patriotic festivals, sale of swadeshi products, and setting up All India Women's Organisation were unparallel.

Sarala was very different from any other Indian woman Gandhi had been acquainted with. He knew a number of intelligent, thoughtful, opinionated European women in South Africa and a number of well-educated women in India, but none of them matched Sarala's versatile personality.[62] Hence, it is not surprising that in one of his letters, he equated her to be the greatest *Shakti*, a woman worthy of being addressed as 'Mataji'. He discovered a potential goddess, a co-leader to energise the Non-Cooperation Movement. He acknowledged her potential to become a Queen 'enthroned in the hearts of millions'. Gandhi developed a programme to train Sarala for national leadership and persuaded her strongly to commit to the role he had envisioned. Notably, it appears that their relationship started as a strict formal working relationship but transcended to a closer one with intimacy, mutual respect, and trust.

Gandhi had worked with many promising and talented women workers throughout his long and illustrious political career. However,

it would be wrong to equate them with Sarala. Gandhiji wrote a long letter to Kallenbach, his colleague in South Africa. In that letter, He called her his 'spiritual wife and described their relationship as 'indefinable'. He wrote, "I have come in closest touch with a lady who often travels with me. Our relationship is indefinable. I call her my spiritual wife."[63] From this, the author feels that Gandhi wanted to establish Sarala as a woman leader parallel to him. A 'mataji' beside the 'bapuji'. It seems to be the most plausible interpretation of Gandhi's minutest attention, guidance, and motivation to Sarala's development on a day-to-day basis. As earlier mentioned this period was really short-lived, and India probably lost the opportunity to have a personality like her as one of the supreme women leaders. Martin Green has commented on a similar line — "He and she together would certainly have made an extraordinary political combination."

An unexpected end came to this extraordinary relationship in December 1920. It was very apparent that Gandhi was deeply moved by Sarala's many exquisite qualities. The question of whether there was any trace of infatuation or romance, can neither be confirmed nor denied. Forbes argues that most of the writers be it Martin Green, Girija Kumar[64], Ramchandra Guha.[65] Promod Kapoor[66] and Rajmohan Gandhi[67] could not produce any clinching evidence that the relation between the two was romantic or erotic. Forbes[68] writes "It is a mistake to discuss Gandhi's fascination with Sarala Devi without reference to the political content, Gandhi's conviction that control of his body was intimately linked to the future of India, and he was inclined to see Sarala Devi as a brilliant and fiercely patriotic woman." Forbes also says — "These terms with their conventional cinematic rendering do not and cannot explain or define Gandhi in his relationship with Sarala, or in fact with Kasturba, Prema Kanthak, Mirabahn, Sushila Nayar, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, or any of the other women who were close to him."[69] However, it would be not wrong to say, not many have been subject to Gandhi's close affection as well as public praise. 'Spiritual Wife' is quite an unusual adjective to be used most certainly. His frequency of writing to Sarala was also very high and when

Sarala went to the *Ashram* to stay there, some of Gandhi's gestures were also very out of ordinary.

Her closeness to him seems to have bothered some of his followers. Once in *Ashram* Sarala had her meal with Gandhi in a separate room not following the *Ashramik* rule. Displeasure about the same among his followers is evident from Gandhi's reply to a letter written to Maganlal[70]. When Margaret Sanger interviewed Gandhi, he revealed his relationship with a special lady "could we not develop a close contact, I said to myself? This was a plausible argument and I nearly slipped. But I was saved, I awoke from my trance. I do not know how I was saved by youngsters who warned me."[71] Though he did not mention any name, most of the readers of history may conclude this to be about Sarala.

Another reason for the fallout can also be Gandhi's strict dictates to be followed by Sarala to assume the role of most prominent woman leader of the Non-Cooperation Movement. In some of the letters the mentor's disappointment to his disciple could be perceived. Gandhi suggested to her not to be lazy and asked her to do all the household chores by herself. She was uninterested in household work. (Sarala's house was full of domestic helps, they performed all the household work)[72]. Hence in December, 1920, Gandhi is found to be writing "that you do not understand my language or my thoughts". He also commented about her "complex nature". In a letter in the same month, Gandhi writes "My love for you is not a task. It is one of the keenest pleasures of my life." There seems to be some sort of disagreement between the two, though the exact nature of the same cannot be commented upon as Sarala's letters to Gandhi are not available. In the same letter Gandhi also writes "And you must bear with me if in the process of helping you sometimes I seem to be rubbing you up the wrong way." The final letter was on 17th December and it is a very complex one to interpret where Gandhi tries to explain about the spiritual relationship or marriage a man and woman can have. In the initial part of the letter, Gandhi is found to be justifying his involvement with non-cooperation, which Sarala was not really happy with. He

writes "I am unworthy to have that companionship with you. I require in me an infinitely higher purity than I possess in thought." The roles of law giver and conscience keeper coalesce in Gandhi's letter to Sarala. Gandhi had been urging her to step out of the cycle of luxury to speak and write in Hindi, do household work and to live a disciplined life. He was trying to dictate her, mould her life as his ideal colleague. Sarala had her own views; she was a feminist in her own right.

The end could be seen coming. May be Gandhi was putting an end because of the adverse reactions amongst his loyal followers. It is also possible that he was not satisfied with Sarala's progress in becoming the leader he envisioned. Finally, he may have realised his somewhat weakness towards her and opted the path of self-restraint which was essential for his image as the ultimate leader of the country. It can be a combination of them as well. Forbes pointed out Gandhi was physically weak during 1919-20. In the Punjab massacre, Sarala was significantly affected by her husband's arrest and Gandhi was an observer. He wanted a strong personality to take the movements of *Khadi* forward. Maybe, he saw in Sarala Devi the power and called her as '*Shakti*' and recognised her potential to lead the movement. But after Gandhi's health improved and Sarala failed her 'test' (Sarala was not at all interested in doing everyday household work), she became less important to Gandhi's movement. Gandhi even did not mention Sarala's name when the *Khadi* Movement further proceeded.

Sarala still carried out her work to emancipate women after she fell out with Gandhi. Sarala was disturbed but not a broken[73] woman when Gandhi suddenly discontinued his interaction with her and ignored her. She always remained passionate and committed to the development of women. Sarala attacked the so-called male gaze of Society. "We form half of the population of India. A very large portion of his majesty's subject irrespective of us being backward or advanced, progressive or lagging behind. We should be grouped with that portion of humanity that consists of the subjects of German colonies or accorded a higher place. In either case, we have as many claims to the consideration of justice and freedom and self-determination, as our brethren.[74]

After the arrest of her husband Rambhuj Dutt Choudhuri, Lahore Ladies Club removed Sarala Devi from its membership. Lady O'dwyer[75] circulated a notice and procured signatures of the Purdah Ladies Club to initiate the resignation process from Sarala Devi. Sarala devoted her life to the upliftment of women but removing her from a women club was quite disappointing. After the death of her husband in 1923, Sarala returned to her hometown in 1925 and was busy with her magazine *Bharati* and took over the editorship of the same. During this time, she was first busy with *Bharat Stri Mahamandal* and then also opened 'Bharat Stri Sadan" in 1930, which had a broader role in propagating women's education with important initiatives like baby creche and women hostels.[76]

Raising Voice for Women

In May, 1931 Sarala gave the presidential address at the All-Bengal Women's Congress where she raised her voice for Swaraj of women and even strongly recommended a separate women's Congress. Women's Congress, Bengal demanded — (a) Equal partnership in the husband's income during wifehood and equal rights of inheritance with the children in the husband's property after widowhood. b) Equal right of inheritance of the daughters and sisters along with the sons and brothers in the property of the parents, brothers or sisters. c) Right to equal guardianship of both parents over her children. d) No disability to be attached to any women by reason of sex in regard to public employment in the judicial executive, medical, legal, educational, air, navy, and other services, or to offices of power and honour such as seats in the Assembly, Legislative Municipalities and District Boards or to Ministership, Executive Councillorship or Governorship. e) Equal rights and obligations in all matters of citizenship, no bar to be imposed on account of sex. Sarala said economic distress is the root cause of a women's taking up of immoral life. The question of unemployment of women was more serious than men. A woman without economic independence often falls prey to the lustful designs of a man and prostitution is its effect and brothels are its outcome.[77]

It leaves little doubt that Sarala was a strong woman. Her relationship with Gandhi came under the scanner. In Indian politics, she had longer experience than Gandhi. When Gandhi visited Lahore after the massacre, Sarala had almost of twenty years more experience than Gandhi had in the Indian Freedom Movement. As mentioned, in Calcutta at the age of thirty[78] Sarala was the leader of men. (She introduced *lathi khela*, and established *Akhras* for the youth to prepare themselves to fight against British rules) Gandhi's letter to Sarala had survived but Sarala's letters to Gandhi are apparently destroyed.

Conclusion

The present author echoes the view of Professor Geraldine Forbes. She has rightly said the relationship between the two was based on a fraction of their correspondence and may well change, if any or all of the missing letters are reviewed and we attempt to analyse the past, without having access to the full story.[79] No document has survived with details of Kasturba's assessment of Sarala Devi. There were many reasons why she would not have liked Sarala, who enjoyed special treatment in the *Ashram* and was praised for wearing *Khadi*, while Kasturba was criticised for not embracing it. In her early life, Sarala was attracted to Vivekananda's spirituality. Sarala was very different in all aspects. A journalist, a politician, a feminist, and a mother, Sarala had a fulfilling life. In Gandhi's personality, Sarala could have seen a mass leader combined with spirituality. Gandhi has noted his 'personal love' for Sarala. To him, love was to be an empowering agent. Unlike many women, Sarala did not cook, wash clothes, clean the house or perform household duties and was asked to learn 'feminine work'. Gandhi demanded that she should become proficient and enjoy household work. In the meanwhile, Gandhi's unordinary affection towards Sarala generated tensions in his inner circle. It was a conscious attempt on Gandhi's part to keep away, pushing into the margins all the fuss and hype.[80] Sarala had great political potential and was involved in many activities important for the Indian freedom struggle and later on, she was observed to take

part in various spiritual activities. At a Buddhist function, Sarala Devi gave a short speech and appealed for cooperation between Hindus and Buddhists. The event ended with the distribution of toys and balloons to all the children present.[81]

Sarala enjoyed a special position in the field of politics. She was the first woman leader in the swadeshi movement and later she became part of Gandhi's *Khadi* and Non Cooperation Movement. She was a pioneer in the struggle against both colonialism and gender oppression. Sarala was the first Indian woman to take an initiative to organise all women of India under a single umbrella. She established a women's organisation Bharat Stri Mahamandal (BSM) for Indian women of all categories. She had the courage and heroism to be sought for by women in such inspiring terms. She worked to increase the strength of women's organisations at the national level. She had heroic qualities in her. Her versatile talent, leadership capabilities made her easily acceptable to all.

Sarala Devi entered into the 'world of men' with aplomb and addressed in front of them. Sarala's love for the nation, passion for Swadeshi was unparallel. She always advocated women's liberty and justice. A woman with grit, tenacity and courage Sarala excelled in all spheres and she was truly a rebel. She emerged as a strong political leader and social worker. It was her mission to assist women to become aware of their potential and make them confident of their power. She was acknowledged as a woman of substance, a pioneer, a fascinating personality with many contributions. She remained undaunted by criticism and no matter how strong the opposition was she never withdrew from her determined mission.

Notes

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[3] M. Mandal, "Promotion of science in late 19th c. Bengal: Swarna Kumari Devi's contribution", in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 2005,* Vol. 66, pp. 1209-1213. Indian History Congress.

[4] Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, op.cit., p. 26.
5 Ibid, p. 37.
[6] Chitra Deb, *Thakurbarir Andarmahal*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata 2004, p. 94.
[7] Ibid, p. 97.
[8] Ibid, p. 98.
[9] Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1965*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, p. 112.
[10] Chitra Deb, op.cit., p. 95.
[11] "Mrityucharcha" was her first article in *Bharati,* Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, "Mirtyucharcha", Baisakh, 125th Vol. 1309 BS, AD 1902 (It was also cited in *Jibaner Jharapata* by Sarala herself).
[12] Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, "Byamcharcha", *Bharati,* 25th Vol. 1309 BS, AD 1902 (it was also cited by Mitra, Rakhi. "Women and Nationalism in Colonial India: A Case Study Of Sarala Devi." *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences* Vol 4, no. 4 (2014 : 497).
[13] Sarala Devi (ed.), 'Bilati Ghusi Banam Deshi Kil', *Bharati*, 26th Vol., 1310 BS, AD 1903, p. 688.
[14] Sarala Devi (ed), "Pashaner Abedan", *Bharati*, 25th Vol., 1309 BS, AD 1902.
[15] Hiranmayee Devi, Sarala Devi (Ed), *Bharati*, 19th Vol., 1302 BS, AD 1895, p. 88.
[16] Bharati, Ray, op.cit., p. 10.
[17] Ibid, p. 15.
[18] Ibid, p. 100.
[19] Ibid, p. 34.
[20] Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, op.cit., p. 190.
[21] Ibid, 32.
[22] Chitra Deb, op.cit, p. 100.
[23] Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, op.cit., p. 118.
[24] Rakhi Mitra, "Women and Nationalism in Colonial India: A Case Study of Sarala Devi", *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 2014, Nov 1; 4 (4) : 497.
[25] Sarala Devi (ed.), 'Bangalir Pitridhan' (The Heritage of the Bengalis), *Bharati,* Jaistha, 1310 BS, AD 1903, p. 693.
[26] Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, op.cit., p. 118.
[27] Sarala Devi (ed.), 'Bangalir Pitridhan', op.cit.,
[28] Bharati Ray, op.cit, p. 9.
[29] "Anti Partition Agitation : Swadeshi and Boycott", *Freedom Papers*, No. 47, WBSA.
[30] Bharati Ray, op.cit., p. 10.
[31] NAI File No. 33-40, year 1910. Proposals for putting an end to the revolutionary activity in Bengal, Proposed deportation made, Bengal Regulation III of 1818.
[32] Sanchari Ray, *Banglar Biplabi Meyera 1905-1934*, Reader's Service, Calcutta,

2016, p. 37.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Bharati Ray, op.cit., p. 86.

[35] Tirtha Mondal, *Women Revolutionary of Bengal 1905-1939*, Minerva, Calcutta, 1991, p. 51-52.

[36] Bharati Ray, "Swadeshi Movement and Women's awakening in Bengal, 1903-1910", *The Calcutta Historical Journal*, Vol. 9, Jan-June, 1985.

[37] Bharati Ray, op.cit., p. 15.

[38] Ibid, p. 12.

[39] Ibid, p. 9.

[40] Radha Kumar, *History of Doing : An Illustrated Account of Movement for Women's Right and Feminism in India 1800-1990,* Kali for women, New Delhi, P. 38.

[41] Bharati Ray, op.cit, p. 110.

[42] Sarala Devi, 'Congress O Sayatta shasan' (The congress and the issue of Autonomy), *Bharati*, Baisakh, 1312 BS, AD 1905.

[43] Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, op.cit, p. 76.

[44] Nazo Shinwari - Feminism in India, November 7, 2017. (https://feminisminindia.com/2017/11/07/sarala-devi-chaudhurani/)

[45] Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, op.cit., p. 211.

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[48] Indira Devi Chaudhurani, "Jibankatha" in *Ekkshan*, 1399 BS, AD 1992.

[49] Jogesh Chandra Bagal, *Jatiya Andalone Banganari*, Biswabharati Granthaloy, Kolkata, 1361 BS (entire book is relevant)

[50] Rajmohan, Gandhi, *Mohandas : A True story of a man, his people and an Empire*, Penguin, 2007, p. 348.

[51] Geraldine Forbes, op.cit, p. 145.

[52] Tapati Sengupta, "Daughter of Bengal, Bride of Punjab: Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and the Swadeshi Movement". *Contesting Colonialism: Partition and Swadeshi Revisited*, MacMillan India, 2007, p. 189.

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[54] CWMG, Vol. 19, Letter to Anasuyabehn Sarabhai, Publication Division Govt. of India, 1999, p. 84.

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A. Pandit Rambhuj Dutt Choudhury was the son of Ch. Radha Krishan Dutt. He was born in 1866 in Kanjrur (now in West Pakistan). After completing his graduation from the F.C. College Lahore, he did his Law degree and started practice in the High Court of Lahore (now in West Pakistan). He was one of the founder members of the Indian National Congress and had the privilege to attend all the sessions of the Indian National Congress till his death. In 1905 he married Sarala Devi Choudhurani, the niece of the nationalist poet, Rabindranath Tagore.

B. Swarnakumari Devi (1855-1932) born in the renowned Tagore family in the year 1855, she was the tenth child of Debendranath Tagore and sister of famous Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. She was homeschooled, and from a very early age had the knack of penning down poems and prose, something which had been a gift to the entire Tagore family. She was married at the age of 12 to Janaki Ghoshal, who was a deputy magistrate. It was her

husband who encouraged her to abandon the system of *purdah* and pursue her hobby of writing. She received a lot of appreciation and popularity after she became the editor and writer for the monthly literary journal called *Bharati*, for over 30 years. She also published a novel in the year 1870, which was called *Deepnirban.* Some of her other famous works include Snehalata ba Palita, Kahāke and Chhinna Mukul.

C. Hiranmoyee Devi (1870-1925) was another daughter of Swarnakumari Devi and Janakinath Ghosal. She was educated in Bethune school. In 1883, she married Phanibhusan Mukhopadhayay, a professor of Botany. She wrote a number of essays and poems, edited *Bharati* along with Sarala Debi and ran the *Sakhi Samiti* along with her mother and also founded the Mohila Shilpashram in 1906.

D. Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar (1869-1912) was a revolutionary writer, a historian and a journalist. He was such a thinker of Indian public awakening, whose thinking and writing was local and all-*Bangla* and the area of contemplation was history, economics, society and literature. Deuskar acted as a bridge between Maharashtra and Bengal's Renaissance.

E Basanti Devi (23 March 1880 – 7 May 1974) was an Indian independence activist during the British rule in India. She was the wife of the famous Congress leader Chittaranjan Das. After Das's arrest in 1921 and death in 1925, she took an active part in various political and social movements and continued with social work post-independence. She was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1973.

F Urmila Devi (1883-1956) was a freedom fighter. She was the sister of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. She was born at Telirbagh near Dhaka in an upper middle class Hindu Vaidya family. Her early education was at Loreto Convent in Calcutta (now Kolkata). She was married in her teens to Ananta Narayan Sen, but continued her studies after marriage. In the 1920s her brother's house was a centre of political activity, and she too was drawn into the struggle. She became a widow in 1920 and to distract herself from the bereavement, she threw herself into the Non Co-operation Movement.

Art and Architecture of the Nāmghars of Assam : An Epitome of Bhakti Culture

Sweta Mahanta

Abstract

The lamp of *Bhakti* was lighted in Assam by Sri Srimanta Sankaradeva. His simple teachings of love and devotion as the ultimate way to reach the divine earned him followers from all walks of life. Sankaradeva started propagating his teachings in the nāmghar or kīrtana ghar built for the purpose of recitation of the lord's name by his followers. The art and architecture of the Nāmghar is in itself an essence of showcasing bhakti culture and tradition. Through this paper an attempt has been made to trace this aspect of design and simplistic art form found in the construction of the *Nāmghars* and how it goes hand in hand with the *Bhakti* tradition attributing simplicity in life and worship.

Key Words: Nāmghar, Monikut, Singhāsana, Art, Architecture.

In the 15th century, the Bhakti Movement advocating love for God and absolute surrender to the Divine as a means of obtaining salvation became a popular reform movement in India. Its roots can be traced to the South Indian Nayanar and Alvar saints who advocated *bhakti* as a means of enjoying divine bliss irrespective of caste and creed between 7th to 10th centuries C.E. It spread northwards from Tamil Nadu through Karnataka and Maharashtra, and gained acceptance in fifteenth century Bengal and North India. It emerged as a localised expression and notion of divinity and embodied the conservative and the liberal, as well as the revivalist and reformist trends. It contained both conformism and dissent.[1] Ramanujan, Kabir, Chaitanya, Guru Nanak are some of the prominent *Bhakti* philosophers to name a few.

In Assam, the lamp of *Bhakti* was carried forward by Sri Sankaradeva, who was born in the Siromoni Bhuyan family at Alipukhuri (Bordowa in Nagaon) in 1449 CE. He was primarily a religious and social reformer and a speculative thinker whose aim was not to propound a new philosophy based on religion supported by discursive reasoning and abstract thinking but to propagate a simple system of faith based on devotion.[2] He journeyed throughout the length and breadth of India for twelve years and came into contact with the *Bhakti* movement that was surging in north India at that time. He was influenced by the popularity of the *dohās* of Kabir in places like Puri and Varanasi and in his *Kīrtana Ghosā* Sankaradeva mentions his contact with the religious movements that were gaining ground at that age.[3] The pillars of this *Bhakti* tradition were based on the teachings of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Gītā* enjoining worship of one God, i.e., Viṣṇu and self surrender to the Divine. Though the worship of Viṣṇu as Vāsudeva was affiliated to the Pañcarātra cult which prevailed in early Assam; the doctrines of Neo-Vaishnavism propagated by Sankaradeva did not adhere to it. In fact Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism laid stress on four fundamental principles: *Nāma* (names and glories of the deity, Viṣṇu), *Deva* (God), *Guru* (spiritual guide) and *Bhakta* (holy association) which form the four doctrinal points of *Bhakti* (*cari-vastu*). Sankaradeva considered all other gods to be the off shoots of one supreme God who is Viṣṇu and who was the *avatara* (incarnation) of Kṛṣṇa. He did not believe in idol worship as he regarded God as formless (*nirguṇā*). 'In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* God has been described as immanent and transcendental having both *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* aspects. Śankara in his doctrinal work, *Bhakti Ratnākara*, without denying the indeterminate and attribute-less aspects of God, has laid more emphasis on the *saguṇa* aspect because loving devotion demands a personal God'.[4] 'The form in which the Lord manifests himself for the good of the worshippers (*upāsakānām maṅgalāya*), is real, eternal and immeasurable, and is one with the universe. He is to be realized through *Bhakti* and not by modes of exertion or *sādhana* like jñāna, because even an iota of the Lord's grace can lead the devotee to knowledge of the glory of

God (jānāti tattvam bhagavan-mahimnah)'.[5] In *Kīrtana Ghosā* the twofold aspects of God as the indeterminate God (*Brahmaṇ*) which is not comprehensible and the *saguṇā* form of Nārāyaṇa which devotees worship is extolled by Sankaradeva.[6]

Nārāyaṇa is the supreme soul and the only Lord of the universe. Nothing exists without Him. He is the cause as well as the effect of the creation. Just as ornaments made of gold do not differ in substance from the material cause gold, similarly there is no distinction between God as the cause and God as the effect. (*Kīrtana*, viii, v. 37; *Bhāgavata*, X, VV. 13030-1)

The teachings of Sankaradeva had a wide appeal among the simple masses of Assam (mostly consisting of numerous tribes and communities) as opposed to the ritualistic religion of the Brāhmaṇas. Moreover the oneness of all beings irrespective of caste prejudice endorsed by Sankaradeva enlisted him followers from all walks of life. In the *Kīrtana* written by Sankaradeva it is stated, "He is universally called a wise man that without discriminating between a Caṇḍāla and a Brāhmaṇa or between a charitable man and a thief, treats them equally. He is called a learned man who judges an honest and a debased man impartially without prejudice."[7] It needs to be mentioned that though Sankaradeva's movement started in Bordowa and was well received by the masses, he along with his followers had to flee the place in about 1516 C.E due to the invasions of the indigenous Kachari tribe.[8] Sankaradeva and his followers then settled at a place called Gahgmukh or Ganmau, near present Visvanath but there too they could not live in peace. The inroads of Bhutanese and Koches compelled them to shift their residence. From there they migrated to Dhuahata-Belaguri which was inside the Ahom territory.[9] It was at Belaguri that Sankaradeva succeeded in bringing his most beloved disciple Mādhavadeva into his fold. Earlier Mādhavadeva was a staunch believer in *Śākta dharma*. Along with Mādhavadeva, the simplicity and purity of the new faith based on devotion also attracted the ingenuous masses into following the teachings of Sankaradeva. The Brāhmaṇas due to their superior knowledge of scriptures took

part in sacrificial offerings and *yajñas* which were expensive. Besides, the Brāhmaṇas also had to be richly rewarded for officiating in the *pujas* and *yajñas* thus necessitating huge costs for religious purpose adding to the economic woes of the common masses. Moreover, the class divisions in the society based on birth made the lower sections of the society to forego Brāhmanical prejudices and join the path of devotion initiated by Sankaradeva. After staying for a period of nearly fifteen years at Belaguri, Sankaradeva had to shift to Kāmarupa in the west as the then ruling Ahom dynasty backed by the Brāhmaṇas was hostile to Sankaradeva. Finally in 1546 Sankaradeva migrated to the Koch Kingdom which was ruled by Naranarayan at that time and established himself permanently at Patbausi near Barpeta. Regular teachings of the *Bhāgavata* and the *Gītā* and dramatic performances staged at the prayer hall (*nāmghar*) at Patbausi were successful in attracting a large number of devotees to the devotional fold. After a few years at Patbausi, Sankaradeva along with his band of followers went on a second pilgrimage to Puri.[10] As such, the *Bhakti* cult of Sankaradeva in Assam had common elements which are to be found in the *Bhakti* Movement that spread all throughout India during the medieval period. According to K. Damodaran, it were "… first, the recognition of the unity of the people – irrespective of their caste, community and other religious considerations; secondly, equality of all before God; thirdly, opposition to the caste system; fourthly, the belief that communion between God and man depended on the virtues of each individual and not on his wealth or caste; fifthly, an emphasis on devotion as the highest form of worship; and finally, denigration of ritualism, idolatry, pilgrimage and all self-mortifications."[11] However, the movement in Assam under the aegis of Sankaradeva had its own speciality. 'In practical application of the principles and tenets, and in working out the details of the faith, it evolved a cult of its own best suited to the genius of the people. The new cult thus moulded to the local circumstances, was popularly known as the *Mahāpurushya-dharma*. The real name of the cult was *Ekaśaraṇadharma* or the religion of supreme surrender to one God, viz., Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa'.[12]

Sankaradeva after having gathered a band of followers started propagating his faith in the *deva-griha, hari-griha* or *nāmghar* also called *kīrtan ghar* (prayer hall) which was built by his followers where Sankaradeva composed prayers, conducted recitations from the *Bhāgavata* and held religious discussions. It also transformed later into a stage where dramatic performances (*Bhaonas, Ankiya naats*) on the life and *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa were held regularly to amuse and enlighten the ignorant masses on aspects of monotheistic Vaisnavism. Thus, the *Nāmghars* became the centre of religious congregations and mass prayers as well as theatre of dramatic performances like *Bhāona*, *Rās Līlā* and many others[13] and it was not much later that every village came to have a *Nāmghar*. The contribution of Sankaradeva is not only restricted to the development of *Nāmghars* but development of *Sattras* (monastery where the religious preceptors stay along with their disciples)[14], development of Assamese language, art and culture, and in fact the development of Greater Assamese Society (*Bor Asomiya Jāti*) is indebted to Sankaradeva.

The design and simplistic art form found in the construction of the *Nāmghars* go hand in hand with the *Bhakti* tradition attributing simplicity in life and worship. It also adheres well to the natural environment and unsophisticated life style adopted by the people residing in Assam. It should be noted that Assam is home to numerous tribes and communities who migrated at different phases from different parts of South and South East Asia. As such the architectural style and designs of the *Nāmghars* and *Sattra* institutions of Assam do have influence of external elements as people have travelled from different parts such as Thailand, Mongolia, and other parts of East Asia and settled in Assam.[15] The process of assimilation took place under the aegis of different rulers who ruled Assam from early times down to the Ahoms, who themselves belonged to Tai-Shan race from Upper Burma and came and settled in the region. The art and architectural style found in the *Nāmghars* also include pan-Indian elements which are found in the temples of India as well as in the Buddhist art of the subcontinent.

This paper is an attempt to study the fundamental aspects behind the structure, design and art in the institution of the *Nāmghar* and relate it with the *Bhakti* tradition of the medieval period. For this purpose field study has been conducted to study the common features of the structure of the *Nāmghar* and the architectural style of the *Guru-āsana* as well as the other art and sculptures found within the *Nāmghar* premises.

Brief Historical account of the Nāmghars

Although the first *Nāmghar* was constructed at Bordowa by Sankaradeva, due to the raids of the Kacharis the Bhuyans had to leave Bordowa and flee the place. It is obvious that the early *Nāmghar* at Bordowa must also have felt the brunt of Kachari attack.[16] Moreover since the early *Nāmghar* must have been built of perishable materials like wood and bamboo, it must have been ravaged with time when the Bhuyans shifted from that place. It was during the reign of Ahom ruler, Jayadhwaj Singha (1654-63) that Bordowa Than was again discovered, which had been covered with growth of trees and forests.[17] Historically, therefore, the *Nāmghar* which stands at Barpeta is the earliest. It was constructed under the aegis of Mādhavadeva, the famous disciple of Sankaradeva. But in 1583 C.E. it was ravaged by fire. However another *Nāmghar* was built in its place during the life-time of Mādhavadeva.[18] Unfortunately it was also destroyed during the Burmese invasion of Assam in the 19th century. The Barpeta *Nāmghar* which stands now was built in the 20th century, successfully retaining most of the early architecture intact. Even then, Assam lost the earliest specimen of the building architecture of the *Nāmghars* relating to the period of the great saint, Sankaradeva. The Māyāmara *Sattra* founded by Sri Anirudhadeva also had a beautiful *Nāmghar* constructed by his son, Krisnadeva at a place called Khutiaputa *Sattra* in 1629 CE. It was also called '*Phulam Nāmghar*' since the pillars, *chati* and walls of the *Nāmghar* were beautifully carved with flowers and creepers, butterflies and images of gods and goddesses. Some of the oldest *Nāmghars* found in Assam are Baligaon *Nāmghar* at Jorhat,

Dakhinpat *Nāmghar* at Nagaon, Daisyapara *Nāmghar* at Kāmārupa which must be around 70-80 years old'.[19]

Architecture of the *Nāmghars*

Although there are no fixed prescribed rules found in any text relating to the architecture of the *Nāmghars*, in general a *Nāmghar* has two houses or sometimes three or four houses together consisting of the *Bātchora*, *Suu-Ghar* and *Manikut*.[20] Construction of *Nāmghars* usually follows the east-west alignment with a gabled roof and the western facade being apsidal. It has a main hall which is also the assembly hall where devotees do *nām-kīrtan*. It is a rectangular building consisting of two rows of wooden posts or pillars, mostly seven, (though the number of pillars may differ - three or five as the case may be) running parallel, totalling fourteen. The pillars separate the nave from the side aisles of the building. The main entrance door is at the west end and is usually carved or painted with Vaishnavite motifs. The hall also has two side doors called *pet duārs*. The eastern most part of the main hall is the place of the *Āsana*. The *Āsana* also called *Singhāsana* is a seven tiered wooden throne in the shape of a stepped pyramid and adorned with motifs carrying religious significance. The religious texts like *Guṇamālā* are kept inside the *thāponā* of the *āsana*. Near the *āsana* is placed the *thogā* (a wooden reading stand where the *Kīrtan* or similar books are kept for reciting) and the lamp stand (*gosa*) for the lighted lamp (*bonti*). The second pillar to the northeast is called the *lai-khuta* or the main pillar. It is the seat of the main *Satradhikarā* or *Gosāin* of the *sattra* and usually demarcated from the rest by wrapping a *gamosa* around the pillar. The term *Lai-khuta* is believed to have come from the Tai language of the Ahoms, the word *lai* meaning 'main' in Tai language.[21] The seats of the *Deka-Satradhikar*, the *bhakats* and *gosains*, the musicians (*bayans*) and common devotees are all pre-determined in the hall. People of all caste and creed are equal in the *Nāmghar* and sit together and participate in the *nām-kīrtans*. The devotees sit along the two sides of the hall demarcated by the pillars for offering prayers. Till the last

decade, *Nāmghars* were made of bamboo and thatch roofing and ceiling, wooden posts or pillars and mud walls and floor. The ceiling supported by pillars is usually erected with wooden beams or *chati* supporting an architrave over which rests the roof or ceiling. The *chatis* were used for hanging large bamboo masks and other accessories of the cultural performances inside *Nāmghar.*[22] The main door, posts and *chati* were all carved and painted with beautiful motifs. The main hall of the *Nāmghar* was also usually open and airy with enough scope for light to enter it. In recent times, decorated windows are placed along the walls or decorative grills are used. The thatched roof has also given way to tin roof and wood and bamboo has been replaced with concrete along with concrete and tiles flooring.

The *Monikut* of the *Nāmghar*

At the easternmost end of this hall is the *Monikut*, a small house like structure with hipped or gabled roof. The structure of the *Monikut* is similar to that of the rectangular assembly hall but is quite restricted in length. The *Monikut* also houses a separate *Āsana* along with *thogā* and *gosa-bonti*. The *Monikut* is quite dark with little or no windows or ventilation and literally translates to *jewel house* (moni=jewel, kut=hut) or *treasure house*. All the important belongings of the *Nāmghar*, like important books and documents, other relevant things or valuable items of the *Nāmghar* are kept there and its entry to laymen is restricted. Only the *Satrādhikar* and *Gosāins* can enter the *Monikut*. It was probably done to keep the belongings safe and no windows or ventilation meant no opening for thieves and robbers. But the dark *Monikut* also signified mysticism and veneration for the house of God. However, in some Nāmghars there are no additional *Monikut*.

Suu-ghar

Suu-ghar is also found in some Nāmghars. It is constructed close to the Nāmghar and is smaller in size. It is utilised for storing clothes used by *Bhaorias* (actors in plays) and also for safe keeping of masks used in *Bhaonas* locally made by artisans and used in plays.

Bātchora of the *Nāmghars*

The construction of *Nāmghar* feels incomplete without the *Bātchora*. *Bātchora* is also called *Bāt-ghar* or *khula-ghar*[23] and forms the entrance, to the *Nāmghars*. An open two roofed small house like structure which precedes the main structure like in most houses found in the region of lower Assam; the *Bātchora* literally translates to house along the pathway to the main house (*bāt* = path and *chora* = house)[24]. This explanation seems to be quite in conformity as the architectural style of the *Bātchora* is similar to the *Bātchoras* found in most houses of lower Assam till recent times. According to Bhupendra Raichaudhuri in his *Barpetar Sattrar Itibriti*, the *Bātchora* of the *Nāmghar* is for welcoming and paying respect to distinguished guests that enter the *Nāmghar.*[25] The *Bātchora* of Barpeta Sattra was first referred to by the British official, E. T Dalton in his "Descriptive Enthology of Bengal (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, XX No vi, 1851). He wrote, 'To the north of the enclosure containing these building, is the principal entrance, a covered structure of timber grotesquely carved and gaily painted'. He also stated that all the *Sattra –Nāmghars* found in Kamrup district in his time were built keeping in mind the architectural style of the Barpeta Sattra Nāmghar.[26] The same style may have been kept intact while constructing the *Nāmghars* in other places of Assam. Even to this day, the construction style of the *Nāmghar* is similar in all parts of Assam.

Toraṇas in Nāmghar

Most of the Nāmghars also have *toraṇas*. In Sanskrit, *toraṇas* stand for ceremonial gateway. The earliest *toraṇa* gateways can be seen at Sanchi adorning the *stūpa* on all four sides. 'Torana festooned with significant details is a distinct cultural marker. After several generations *torana* facade of aedicule on Hindu temples evolved from the new territorial behaviour in South and Southeast Asia'[27]. However the *toraṇas* of the *Nāmghars* found in Assam depict simplicity in its style and adornment. Usually *toraṇas* stand on two posts and can be called a gateway that shows the way to the *Bātchora* of the *Nāmghar*. Till the

earlier decade of the 20th century, *toraṇas* of the *Nāmghars* were made of timber or wood and had carvings on them. But these carvings were bereft of intricate designs as found in the *toraṇas* of the *stūpas* or temples of other parts of India. The concept of *toraṇa* may have been implemented by Sankaradeva or mostly his followers when they went for pilgrimage to different regions of India and came to see the magnificent *toraṇas* which must have inspired them in the construction of the same. The wooden *toraṇas* are no longer seen and have now been replaced by beautifully carved concrete *toraṇas*. Today the *toraṇas* display the name of the *Nāmghar* and its year of establishment along with carvings of *makara* on top or sometimes the Assamese *sarai* or lions on either side of the posts.

Interior of a *Nāmghar* with the *Monikut*
(Bordowa Than; photo credit : author)

The *Singhāsana*
(Bordowa Than; photo credit : author)

The *Bātchora* (photo credit: author)

Toraṇa (photo credit: author)

Nāmghar and its depiction of *bhakti* tradition

It has been seen that the structure of the *Nāmghars* looks robust yet simple in style and adept in functionality. The early *Nāmghars* were also built of eco-friendly materials and portrayed uniformity with the rural scenario and the natural surroundings. It was observed that the institution of the *Nāmghar* was inspired from the tribal architecture of the Youth Dormitory, the *Murang Ghar* or *Deka Chang*, which originated from the Naga Tribe.[28] However, according to S. K Borkakoti, the concept of this most important multi-dimensional institution of the *Eka Sharaṇa Nāma Dharma* was taken by Srimanta Sankaradeva from the Mishing tribal institution, the *Murang Ghar.* The length and breadth of the *Murang-Ghar* are 40-45 feet and 20 feet respectively, which are approximately the dimensions of the *Kīrtan-Ghar* or the *Nāmghar.*[29] The rectangular assembly hall of the *Nāmghar* consisting of rows of wooden posts with the nave and the side aisles of the building; a gabled roof made of thatch looks very similar to the tribal youth

dormitory. In Assam, a land inhabited by numerous tribes and communities through the ages has resulted in assimilation of culture and evolution and growth of a composite Assamese culture. A common Assamese hut made of thatch, mud and bamboo also does not betray much in likeness to the structure of the *Nāmghar* except for its division into rooms and bereft of the nave and side aisles. Architecturally, *Nāmghars* depicted traditional style of architecture with less elaborate details. It was very different from the temples of Assam or for that matter the rest of India which were made of bricks and stone and elaborately detailed with beautiful carvings on the plinth, walls, doors, pillars and roofs, and complete with religious and secular sculptures. Sankaradeva advocated that only through devotion or *bhakti* one can reach God and no sacrificial rites and rituals were necessary to achieve oneness with god. Sankaradeva said, 'Although there are nine ways of devotion to Mādhava, *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* are considered to be the best among them'[30]. His attitude towards *bhakti* can be glimpsed from the following lines of Sankaradeva (*Bhāgavata*, X, VV 10864):

Bhakti is the mother, brother, kith and kin and the highest treasure of life. It is the highest good and wealth of life and vital breath of life as it were. There is no other path of life save and except *Bhakti* in this mundane world and the next.

Thus according to Sankaradeva's principles, the reformed faith did not extol pomp and grandeur by incurring great cost in building temples of God. Surrender to God at the lotus feet of Nārāyaṇa and for extolling the name of the Lord, a simple *Nāmghar* (*Naam*=prayer and *Ghar*=house) was all that was needed. Like in other parts of India, the Neo-Vaishnava Bhakti Movement under Sankaradeva was also a reaction to social inequality and prejudices in Hinduism which reached its peak in the 15th century. In fact, according to Sankaradeva, the path of devotion was easy for the tribal people, who were already counted as the lowest class in the society. Srimanta Sankaradeva wrote (*Bhāgavata*/2/53), *Kirāta Kachāri | Khāsi Gāro Miri | Yavana Kanka Gowāla/Asama Muluka Dhobā je Turuka | Kubācha Mlechcha Caṇḍāla*.[31] The same views are echoed by Madhāvadeva in the *Nāmghoṣa* written

by him where he said: *Harināme nāhike niyama adhikāri / Rāma buli tare Miri Asama Kachāri (Nāmghoṣa/510)*.[32]

The simple teachings of Sankaradeva attracted people from all tribes and communities and all his disciples were placed on an equal footing. Thus among his disciples were Chandsai, a Muslim; Govinda, a Garo; Paramananda, a Mishing; Jayananda, a Bhutia; Narahari, an Ahom; Srirama, a Kaivarta; Madhava of Jayantia who was a potter and Damodara who was a Bania or trader. The structure of the *Nāmghar* was such that it depicted the egalitarian features so common among the tribal communities of Assam. Among the various tribal communities of Assam, there was no division on the lines of rich and poor and caste distinctions. The *Murong Ghars* or *Deka Changs* of the tribal communities were places providing inclusiveness; the same concept can be seen followed in the *Nāmghars* of Assam. Except for the *Sattrādhikar* and *Gosāins* who initiated Nām-Kīrtana and had seats earmarked for them in the *Nāmghar*, all the rest of the people were seated equally showing no signs of discrimination between rich and poor, upper caste or a lower caste person.

Bhakti* embodied through the *Guru-āsana

The *Guru-āsana* or the *Singhāsana* kept in the *manikuta* as well as in the assembly hall of the *Nāmghar* is also an excellent representation of *bhakti* culture. The *Singhāsana* which may have three, five, seven tiers or sometimes nine tiers resembling a stepped pyramid have a square basement standing on four pillars. Each of the four pillars has an elephant on the back of a tortoise at the basement which is also depicted upwards in the succeeding tiers. On the back of the elephants, lions are carved on each of the tiers. The seven lions on each elephant represent the seven *duars* to reach *Vaikunṭha*, the abode of Vishnu by destroying *pāpa*. 'In the *simhāsana*, the maneless lion always found as the killer of the elephant which symbolises the idea of sin being destroyed by nama (name of God)'.[33] 'The primeval elephant and the lion as a predator are symbols of power, however combined as a solar symbol; the *Gajasiṁha* is a fabulous vehicle of ascension. As such the

Gajasiṁha corresponds to the throne of a divinity seated in the vault of heaven, in which case the earth is conceived as the deity's footstool….The *Gajasiṁha* is the complete embodiment of an idea that is typical in its most lasting and changeless form to ensure its magic validity to people of all faiths, Buddhists, Hindu, and others, hopefully, untouched by the flux of time.'[34] The wooden boards that make the *Guru-āsana* or *Singhāsana* are painted with scenes of *Daśāvatāras* or decorative paintings of flowers and creepers in locally made natural colours of *hengool* and *haitaal*. One can also find image of a flying lion carved on the *Guru-āsana*. The flying lion is said to be of Southeast Asian origin taken from the Ahoms who were ruling Assam.[35] The *Guru-āsana* is thus an embodiment of the divine who is to be extolled by the masses gathered at the *Nāmghars* by devotion through recitation of *nām-kīrtan*. On the top most tier of the *Guru-āsana* a small room like structure called *Aamahi-ghar* is made of wood where the *Bhāgavata* religious text (*puthi*) is kept covered by a piece of cloth. The *Guru-āsana* is also draped by a richly woven piece of silk textile called *Gosāin Kapoor* where besides floral and other symmetrical motifs one can mostly see a *Sarai* (offering tray) motif with name of the Lord 'Hari', 'Krishna' 'Rama' woven in it. The *Gosain Kapoor* also has gold and silver flowers pinned to it as offering to the divine.

No idols can be found placed in the *Singhāsana* in the *Aamahi Ghar* where only the religious text is placed. 'As regards the worship of Visnu image Sankara does not seem to have put much importance on it, while initiating or ordaining neophyte he always made them prostrate before the *Bhāgavata* placed on the altar'.[36] Though Sankaradeva in his *kīrtana ghosā* enjoins the *saguṇa* aspect for his devotees who would find it hard to relate to the *nirguṇa* aspect of God; but in the *Nāmghar*, no idols of God is placed. Here Sankaradeva might have put symbolism to use. The *Bhāgavata* placed in the altar is symbolic of the literary incarnation of God and not different from the physical form. We can relate to this from the following: "This *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the literary incarnation of God, and it is compiled by Śrīla-Vyāsadeva, the incarnation of God. It is meant for the ultimate

good of all people, and it is all-successful, all-blissful and all-perfect."[37] The place in the *Nāmghar* where the *Singhāsana* is kept also houses the wooden carved idols of chiefly Gadura and Hanuman on either side. Interestingly their idols are placed to demonstrate the aspect of unconditional *bhakti* to Lord Vishnu and his Rama *avatara* and not for worshipping them as individual deities.

Another sphere of art symbolising *bhakti* tradition in the art of *Nāmghar* can be found in the main entrance door of the *Nāmghar*. On both door panels and top of the door on the wooden beam are carved motifs of lotus flower and other flowers and creepers. If the door is carved with image of lion it is called *Singha Duar*. Generally lotus has great significance in Hinduism. It is represented as pure and symbol of *nirguṇa –saguṇa Brahman*. Lotus stalk is also held in the hands of Vishnu. The other carved flowers and creepers not only enhance the beauty of the *Nāmghar* but are also reminiscent of all the beautiful objects created by the divine will of God. Similarly, the representation of lion carved on door stands for courage and power of good over evil. One can also normally see sculptures of lion before the entrance of the *Nāmghar* in the present times. It may signify their presence as guardian of the house of God. Such depiction of lions on the main entrance of temples are also found in most of the Khmer temples, at Angkor Wat and also adorn the imperial Chinese palaces, tombs and temples.

It has been seen that *Nāmghars* have greatly evolved during the period from being constructed of perishable materials to concrete structures. But the features of its art and architecture still remain the same. No changes have been allowed in it to retain its essence of unflinching devotion to the divine and to the *Guru* of the Assamese society, Sri Sankaradeva. The *bhakti* culture preached by Sankaradeva is tirelessly carried forward by the *Sattras* of Assam and in the numerous *Nāmghars* built in the villages and towns where regular *nām-kīrtans*, *bhāonas* and *rās-utsav* are held keeping the Vaisnava faith alive.

Notes

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Intersectionality and Challenges to Motherhood : A Study of 'One Part Woman' and 'Singarevva and the Palace'

Divya. R and Sharmila. N

Abstract

Indian culture reveres and deifies women as 'Mothers'. In a patriarchal context, this identity structures women's lives and psyches and also formalises the institutions like family and society. Women's ability to procreate make them distinct and prominent from the other genders. This study intends to analyse the experience of motherhood through Ponna and Singarevva, the female protagonists of *One Part Woman* and *Singarevva and the Palace*. The objective of this paper is to examine the position of motherhood in the context of intersectionality, which encompasses variables like caste, religion, community, class and gender. Motherhood as an experience will be used to understand the different shades of oppression and suppression that the two characters go through. The impact of these factors on motherhood and the challenges they pose to the female protagonists' maternal experiences, will also be analysed.

Key Words: Caste, Gender, Intersectionality, Religion, Sexuality

Introduction

Gender is shaped by factors like caste, class, community and religion. The society considers the feminine gender as the representative of these factors, with respect to specific cultural contexts. Hence, a woman does not get the free space to articulate her desires, whether it is within, or outside the marriage. Nivedita Menon, the feminist writer explains the reason for this in her work, *Seeing Like A Feminist*. She states, "Gender-appropriate behaviour is inextricably

linked to legitimate procreative sexuality"(4). In the Indian culture, the woman is the living embodiment of caste, class, community and religion. The amalgamation of these factors in a particular situation, not only suppresses and oppresses a woman, but also deprives her of all rightful pleasures. One of the integral reasons for this could be gender itself. Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* argues that gender is fluid and that it cannot just be compartmentalised into male and female (191). Feminists like Butler and Simone de Beauvoir believe that gender is a social construct, imposed by culture. Beauvoir's classic statement in *The Second Sex*, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman", succinctly sums up this thought (282). Thus, it is the society that prescribes the rules for a woman, which is evident in the case of Ponna's and Singarevva's struggle to fulfil their desires. A woman's first struggle is to perform according to the norms set by society.

The aspect of gender also makes a woman's sexuality as a discourse less significant and invisible. Under such circumstances, female sexuality gets visibility and functions only through motherhood. The domain of female sexuality is often ruled and dominated by the elements of patriarchy and the consequence of this is that women are deprived of the freedom to articulate their desires. Moreover, one also infers the meaning that female sexuality within marital relationships is meant only for motherhood and for the benefit of the children. A woman's awareness of her sexuality as a space for creativity and as a form of pleasure is never emphasised at any point in her lifetime. So, her sexuality is also suppressed and oppressed because of her gender.

Although there are various theoretical contentions put forward by theorists like Simon de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Nivedita Menon and Geetha which show multidimensional interpretations of motherhood, this paper exclusively focuses on Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of Intersectionality. Crenshaw defines Intersectionality as "the view that women experience oppression in varying configurations and varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional

systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity" (46). In the context of India, intersectionality as a theory and practice makes women's experience and their articulation not only complex, but also interconnected. Crenshaw's Intersectional experience entails the element of 'race', which cannot be applied to Indian women as their context is devoid of race. Besides this, Crenshaw's theory of Intersectionality may not be applied fully to Indian women as they have developed the notion of motherhood in the context of caste system. Intersectionality theory is the methodology used to understand and interpret the impact of these social factors on Ponna and Singarevva, in the space of motherhood.

One Part Woman by Perumal Murugan deals with the sufferings of the childless couple, Kali and Ponna. Kali, the male protagonist is reluctant to get married again, fearing that his impotency will stand exposed. He is also unwilling to send his wife Ponna to the chariot festival, which is partially meant to impregnate barren women. The man/stranger who does this is seen as God, by the community. Ponna's yearning to be a mother, pushes her to participate in the chariot festival, which eventually results in the death of Kali. Chandrashekar Kambar's novel, *Singarevva and the Palace,* captures the struggles of a married woman to attain motherhood. The female protagonist, Singarevva, is deprived of sexual pleasure and motherhood by her impotent husband, Sargam Desai. Singarevva dissuades her husband from going to Bayalata, which he optimises as a pretext to conceal his impotency. He also uses this opportunity to visit whores. Desai disobeys his wife's advice, which provokes her to enter into an extra-marital relationship, to avenge her husband. Unable to bear his wife's copulation with a servant, Desai commits suicide.

The rationale for choosing these texts is that both the female characters powerfully come out of their sacred marriage vows to fulfil their sexual desire and their urge to be mothers. These novels not only chronicle the challenges that stem from various intersectional factors for women to attain motherhood but also capture their earnest efforts in overcoming social barriers. Both the primary texts are

demonstrative of women's initiative to experience motherhood irrespective of their husbands' opinions. *One Part Woman* and *Singarevva and the Palace* as women-centric novels highlight the protagonists' rebellious spirit in overcoming the social factors that block their feminine needs and desires.

Motherhood and Caste Transgression

From a general perspective, Caste is seen as an identity that is based on the profession practised by the individual. This is considered as a rigid and hierarchical system, with an in-built power structure, which does not approve the change of one's caste and is specific to the Indian context (Rao 58). Uma Chakravarti, an Indian Historian and filmmaker, in her work *Gendering Caste,* explains the patriarchal perception which not only sees a woman as the embodiment of the caste identity, but also expects her to pass on the caste purity through her progeny. She further stresses the idea that women's biology and reproductive activity are guarded and regulated, as it becomes the means for passing on one's caste purity. In her view, in a patriarchal society like India, a woman's position as a privileged being or a discriminated being is also based on the caste she belongs to (78). Both Ponna and Singarevva belong to the upper-caste and they have a privileged position in their community. Despite this, they are subject to challenges and oppressions that are varied.

Ponna hails from the western region of Tamilnadu and belongs to the 'Gounder' community. In general, Gounders own agricultural land and consider it as an integral part of their identity. These individuals belong to the agrarian community and are the proprietors as well as the labourers in their lands (Kumar). Similarly, Singarevva also belongs to the land-owning community known as 'Desais', from northern Karnataka. This feudal community owns villages and the feudal landlords collect revenues from the villagers (Desai). One of the important differences between these two landholding communities is that Gounders directly involve in agricultural activities, whereas Desai's do not. Any male who belongs to the Desai community is

equated with the position of 'Maharaja' and the woman he marries is referred to as 'Doresani' (Maharani). Singarevva is therefore referred to as Doresani in the novel. Thus, Ponna is a farmer's wife and Singarevva is a landlord's wife.

Singarevva and Ponna transcend their marital relationship and caste boundaries to attain motherhood. The former takes the decision impulsively as she decides to avenge Desai. Whereas Ponna's sexual transgression is premeditative and happens out of her love for Kali. Ponna questions herself in *One Part Woman*, (OPW): "Shouldn't she have given Kali a child at least in thanks for his love for her?" (OPW184). She optimises the moment of transgression for three different reasons. Firstly, she sees it as an opportunity to become a mother. Secondly, she sees her attainment of motherhood as space for Kali to flaunt his manhood. Thirdly, she views it as a chance for Kali to assert his identity as a father. This stands in sharp contrast with Singarevva's sexual transgression, which is to punish the impotent Desai for ruining her marital bliss. As a result, Kali and Desai commit suicide, not just because their wives commit adultery, but also because Ponna and Singarevva engage in a physical relationship with lower-caste individuals. Both the husbands are not able to accept the fact that their women were in a physical relationship with men from the lower-caste.

The purity of the caste is monitored by guarding women's sexuality, which is inclusive of their body. Also, women's sexual sphere is policed by the societal members before and after marriage, to prevent any adulteration with respect to caste purity. Geetha's *Theorizing Feminism* refers to Nur Yalman, a Turkish social anthropologist, who argues that respectability and honour of any given family and society are preserved and showcased through legitimate functioning of women's sexuality. The sexual purity maintained by women mirrors the caste purity maintained in their offspring. He also mentions that in the earlier times, pre-puberty marriages were conducted to prevent caste impurity.

Uma Chakravarti, in her article *Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State* explains that the patriarchal system views lower caste men's sexuality as a threat to their upper-

caste purity and hegemony (74). Here, Kali and Desai represent the patriarchal system which views Ponna's and Singarevva's sexual union with lower-caste individuals and their caste transgression to attain motherhood, as the reason for the loss of upper-caste purity and male hegemony. Therefore, women and their sexuality are controlled, as the identity of motherhood is responsible for either maintaining caste purity or resulting in miscegeny. When Kali and Desai realise that they could not safeguard their women from attaining motherhood (illegitimately) and caste purity, they choose death over dishonour. Ponna and Singarevva are compelled to transgress, to impregnate themselves. Singarevva feels mentally traumatised and decides on the spur of the moment. On the contrary, Ponna's transgression is premeditative and her decision is approved by her maternal family and her mother-in-law. Like Singarevva, Ponna too is traumatised when she is forced to choose a stranger/god during the night of the chariot festival (OPW208). Both become mothers under different circumstances.

Religion and Rituals

Durkheim, the French sociologist, defines religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden" (Rao 5). Religion manifests through rituals and they are predominantly performed by women. In the Indian context, women become the embodiment of religion and this representation has its own effects. Indian feminists like Menon, Chakravarti and Geetha state that religion has patriarchal leanings, which oppresses women. According to Sabala, female bodies are imprinted with religious ideologies, which become an important controlling regime to oppress women (45). Most religious practices are thrust upon women, as the onus of procreation is on them. These practices ensure that women are kept in a servile position, furthering their oppression.

Ponna and Singarevva as Hindu women, personify their culture and perform all kinds of rituals to attain motherhood. Hence, religion plays a predominant role in both these texts. These women are

obligated to pray, fast and risk their lives in the process of becoming mothers. Both the novels are suffused with examples of Ponna and Singarevva offering prayers to gods and goddesses of Hindu Pantheon, to bless them with a child. The efforts undertaken by these women oppress them in multiple ways.

Ponna's participation in the chariot festival is part of her belief in the divine and also shows her as an active participant in upholding the religious ethos. Here, the religious belief refers to the impregnation of married women by a stranger, (identified as God) during the night of the chariot festival, who 'blesses' the barren woman with a child. This sexual transgression by women, was a ritual approved by society, to expand the clan, through offsprings. This ritual is understood as a means of communication between the ordinary and the supernatural. It is carried out formally with a specific purpose, devoid of any happiness (Rao 57). One can see Ponna imbibing this spirit, when she participates in the chariot festival. The Indian sociologist, Shankar Rao's contention of religious acts being deprived of happiness, becomes clear in the context of *Niyoga* (Rao 181). It is one of the ancient religious practices for lineage perpetuation, where a woman cohabits with a designated man. This was a temporary alliance and a means to detached procreation. Therefore, the practice of the chariot festival in *One Part Woman* illustrates the practice of *Niyoga*. It is Ponna's identity as a Gounder woman that gives her the privilege of participating in the festival. In contrast, Singarevva's identity as a 'Doresani' doesn't create any conducive opportunity for her to attain motherhood. This lack of opportunity compels Singarevva to take the initiative to perform a ritual, so as to fill the palace with her children.

Ponna and Singarevva worship Hindu Gods like Kumudavva, Murugan, Pillayar and Shiva/Maadhorubaagan to help them conceive. Both these novels refer to 'Lord Shiva' (also known as 'Maadhorubaagan'), who is celebrated as the 'Fertility god' and 'Shiva Lingam' is seen as the most powerful fertility symbol in Hinduism. Maadhorubaagan is also known as 'Ardhanareeshwara' which means male and female fused into one, projecting the fertile image (OPW

30). In *One Part Woman* Lord Shiva is seen as symbol of fertility whereas, in *Singarevva and the Palace,* Goddess Kumudavva, the presiding deity of Shivapura, represents fertility. The female protagonists worship these gods for fecundity and to be blessed with children. Sheeningavva describes the statue of goddess Kumudavva as "a nude woman, sitting cross-legged, holding a water lily in each hand. The figure had no head. In its place was a full-blown water lily. Hence the name" (SATP 5). In Kannada, the word 'Kumuda' means white water lily and 'Avva' means mother. In general, the lily flower represents humility, devotion, chastity, innocence, purity and is also associated with death and rebirth. But in Greek literature, the lily is linked with motherhood (Kuberski 61).

According to Greek Mythology, the genesis of lily is in Hera's milk. Zeus, the king of Gods had an illegitimate union with a mortal woman Alceme, resulting in the birth of Hercules. Since Zeus fathered Hercules, he wanted his son to have the strength of gods and attain immortality. Hence, he takes the half-mortal Hercules to Hera, the queen of gods and places his illegitimate son at Hera's breast, who was fast asleep. When Hercules starts to suckle her breast, she wakes up and pushes him away and the drops of milk that fell on the ground grew into lilies (Kuberski 61). When this Greek legend is positioned in the context of goddess Kumudavva, she emerges as the goddess of fertility as her head and hands carry lily, which symbolises motherhood. Ponna also prays for fertility and offers pongal to 'Devatha', to assuage his anger and redeem their family from a curse. She goes around *mala dikkal*, lights seventy lamps at Murugan's feet for seventy days, so that she can conceive and she even consents to go to the Karattur chariot festival. Thus, the rituals undertaken by the female protagonists portray their travails, in their attempts to become mothers.

The institution of religion sometimes condones dangerous rituals, even if it harms women, as it is either done for their welfare or their family's. This is why feminists see religion as a hindrance to women's emancipation, as it is more of an oppressive than a liberating space.

As Chakravarti states in *Gendering Caste*: "Men *uphold* the traditions by *enforcing* them - *not* upon themselves but *upon women*" (137). Ponna and Singarevva, as married women, are expected to be 'Pativratas' and follow 'Streedharma' as mentioned in *Manusmṛti* (69). Irrespective of men's sexual duplicity, they expect their wives to uphold the traditions befitting a Hindu wife. When the female protagonists do not adhere to these principles, they are punished. In the end, Kali and Desai kill themselves, because their wives do not uphold and adhere to the Hindu principles.

Community's Honour as a Challenge to Motherhood

Elizabeth Jackson, the author of *Feminism and Contemporary Indian Women's Writing*, emphasises on: ". . . the female body's capacity for birth makes women crucial to the preservation of a particular community's integrity and purity" (Shwetha 15). Both the Desai and Gounder communities understand that the female body is necessary for the preservation of the community. This is evident in the way the Gounder community permits the barren women to participate in the chariot festival and compromises on the aspects of purity. It's clear that Ponna's community values motherhood, over chastity. The Gounder community which practices rigid caste rules permits and legitimises the inter-caste sexual union, as part of the chariot festival. This practice has mixed responses from the patriarchs. While Ponna's brother agrees, her husband Kali is not happy about her participation in the festival. The community generally does not endorse such sexual liberty for a woman and prohibits any such inter-caste unions. These restrictions are predominantly to uphold the community's honour. In contrast to this, the Desai community does not create such a conducive space for Singarevva's impregnation, as it values the community's honour, than motherhood. Singarevva's spontaneous decision to rebel against Desai, is what leads to her pregnancy and motherhood. The female protagonists' way of living, designed by their respective communities, also contribute significantly to the extent of humiliation that they undergo. Thus, an intensely private matter becomes the

topic for public discussion and the community does not hesitate in pointing fingers at the woman.

In *Theorizing Feminism*, Geetha states that "men held their honour and their community honour dear and inscribed these on the bodies of their women" (97). Hence, women's bodies which are inclusive of their sexuality, are guarded by the community they belong to. The Desai community confines its women within the palace to guard their sexuality. Elizabeth Jackson in *Feminism and Contemporary Indian Women's Writing* expresses: "Cultural control over women is fundamental to the continuity of tradition and community identity" (15). Like Desai's, the Gounder community also guards women's sexuality. But the difference is, the latter chooses to unguard the married woman's sexuality during the eve of the chariot festival. In fact, Kali walks from his farm to his home in the night, just to check for any noise from Ponna's room. Similarly, Desai barges into Singarevva's room with a gun, when he hears the noise from her room. However, in the climax, Desai and Kali feel that their wives' bodies have been appropriated by the lower-caste men. Both the Holeya and the stranger (God), invade the most intimate and powerful sphere of a man's life — his sexual life. The Holeya and the stranger also dismantle the power structure, or the dominance of these male protagonists. If a woman is equated to land, then appropriation of a woman is symbolic of appropriation of the land and property from the upper-caste patriarchs, by lower-caste individuals. The sexual union between Singarevva and Marya exemplifies this idea of appropriation. Significantly, the act of appropriating women indicates the loss of the community's honour or prestige and this acts as a deterrent to the female protagonists becoming a mother.

Motherhood and Succession of Property

Becoming a mother, within a caste boundary, helps the patriarchal system at two levels — it is necessary for the succession of property, and it also helps the patriarchs to retain their class stature and prestige. Ponna yearns to become a mother not just for progeny, but also to

prevent her societal members from broaching about the futility of their property. Various instances from the text substantiate society's concerns about the lack of inheritance. Hence, Ponna finds the need to create an heir, at least for inheriting her family's property (agricultural land and cattle). Similarly, Singarevva too desires to become a mother and create an inheritor for Desai's property. This urge intensifies when she learns about Paramashetty's (the moneylender) attempts to appropriate her husband's property. Singarevva's father, Gowda, also persuades her and Desai to adopt his newborn son to be the inheritor of their property. She is also pressurised by upper-class people like Paramashetty, mother-in-law and Gowda, to have a child. Besides this, the villagers' covetous nature towards Desai's orchard and palace makes her even more adamant about giving birth to a child.

In the Indian context, a woman is equated with land because both entities are seen as nurturers, whose ability to reproduce makes them a symbol of fertility. Moreover, like land, a woman is also seen as voiceless, submissive and as a mere recipient (Chakravarti 66). The ability of the land to yield crops or produce food for the continuity of life on earth is analogous to a woman's ability to produce offsprings (Chakravarti 66). Traditionally, land and women are expected to become fruitful and productive when a man acts on them. This is clearly demonstrated in the lives of Ponna and Singarevva, who as married women, are expected to be procreative with the sexual acts of their husbands. Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, in the context of man's proprietorship over women, refers to And re Masson's drawing: "A man, shovel in hand, tilling the garden of a feminine sex organ. A woman is her husband's prey, his property" (Beauvoir 176). Patriarchal structures make Kali and Desai the proprietors over land and women, which deprive Singarevva and Ponna of their agency, making them submissive. Kali is an industrious farmer whose dedication enhances the fertility of his land, flora and fauna. His community, which is envious of his prosperity as a farmer, also mocks at him when this prosperity is not reflected in his marital life.

The Impact of Gender

Eliza Garwood, in her article, *Regulating Motherhood: A Foucauldian Analysis of the Social Construction of the Mother,* states that motherhood is "central to feminine identity" and it is the "unquestioned norm of femininity" (46). In general, the reproductive system of a woman and the subsequent identity of motherhood, is most often valorised by society. The result of this valorisation is that the struggles associated with motherhood is deliberately hidden by the society and her identification with her biology is naturalised. In brief, a woman is essentially and fundamentally seen as a mother (Geetha 135). Everything else becomes secondary in comparison to the image of motherhood. In this context, Geetha succinctly points out that history is interpreted in the light of biology (22). The norms for women are constructed in such a manner, so as to curb their autonomy over their body and biology, as it destabilises social order. These norms are upheld and practised to safeguard the honour and reputation of her family, caste and community. Ponna and Singarevva bear ample testimony to this.

Sabala, in her article *Body, Gender and Sexuality: Politics of Being and Belonging,* explains how caste purity, family's property, community's name and sons for the nation are all attained through women's reproductive capacity (45). Therefore, motherhood becomes an obligation for married women and is not a matter of choice and this explains Ponna's and Singarevva's struggle to attain motherhood. Significantly, the child a woman conceives is also meant to perpetuate a man's lineage and not a woman's progeny. The reason for this is that a woman is always considered as the man's property and the offspring naturally comes under male proprietorship. Thus, the very institution of marriage which creates a conducive space for the birth of the offspring also becomes a claustrophobic space for these female protagonists to procreate.

In the novels, Kali and Desai are insensitive and unable to comprehend the struggles of their wives. Their presence does not help the female protagonists to attain motherhood. On the other hand,

their masculinity gives them the liberty to practice double standards as far as their sexual desires are concerned. For instance, Kali engages in pre-marital sex. Likewise, Desai, before and after marriage continues to go after whores to sexually gratify himself and experiences fainting spells. The female protagonists' momentary transgression becomes a great sin for their husbands, while their own sexual acts outside marriage, are hardly introspected. In a way, Singarevva's and Ponna's desire for motherhood becomes oppressive due to their gender and this may not be the case if Kali or Desai had desired fatherhood. This disparity is because the patriarchal society always gives the option of a second marriage to men in case they are deprived of children -an option which is always denied to women in India.

The suppressed thinking of these heroines aligns with Terrance Real's concept of "Psychological Patriarchy", which means "patriarchal thinking common to females and males" (Hooks 4). It is embedded in each one's psyche and harms all individuals (Hooks 4). This form of thinking manifests clearly in both the novels. Kali does not comprehend Ponna's desire for motherhood. During his conversation with his uncle Nallayyan and Ponna's brother Muthu, he decides to remain childless instead of sending Ponna to the chariot festival. Likewise, Desai is also insensitive to Singarevva's sexual needs and her yearning to be a mother. The male protagonists don't recognise female desires and their spouses fail miserably in asserting the same. This reveals the extent to which patriarchal conditioning is ingrained in the female protagonists as their needs and wishes remain unarticulated in the initial parts of the texts.

Bell Hooks, in her work, *Understanding Patriarchy*, interprets 'Psychological patriarchy' as a complex relationship involving 'dominance, submission, collusion and manipulation'. She adds that people are also conditioned to believe this as the natural law of society (Hooks 3). This can be seen fully operational in the male and female protagonists of the two texts. However, when Singarevva asserts her desire to become a mother, she subverts Real's concept of 'Psychological patriarchy' and acts in an anti-patriarchal manner. This

is very evident in the way Singarevva argues with Desai when she realises that she has been deprived of motherhood because of the prestige of his palace.

Intersectional factors like gender, class, caste, religion, and community have crippled these female protagonists' ability to procreate and also make their entire maternal experience a challenging one. They impact Ponna and Singarevva negatively in multiple ways, rather than holistically empowering them. Uma Chakravarti's *Gendering Caste* too echoes that women's lives today are located at the intersection of class, caste and patriarchy (137). These structures work together to wield power on women and oppress them, irrespective of their background. The economic resources and social status of the upper caste men give their women an edge over the lower caste women. But, whatever be the social status of women, it can be seen that Ponna and Singarevva are fragile and helpless, and are unable to assert their identity. Moreover, when they fail to adhere to the patriarchal codes of their families, communities and gender norms, they are denied access to social privileges. According to Chakravarti, all these are normalised in the name of upholding tradition. Thus, women in the name of tradition become victims of the oppressive structures and the embodiment of traditions (137).

Uma Chakravarti opines that social power emerges when class, patriarchy, status and caste powers converge (142). Ponna and Singarevva become victims of social power, experiencing different forms of oppression. Significantly, their sexuality is oppressed as it becomes crucial for the maintenance of male hegemony, land, property and status. Irrespective of any context that a woman emerges from, the biology and gender of women make their sexuality a suppressed realm. Hence, the feminine gender is subdued, surveilled and divested of identity. These female protagonists' attainment of motherhood outside wedlock, manifests in the disintegration of social power and the dismantling of patriarchal structures. It is this transgression that divests men of their feudal power, manliness, honour and social status. Thus, Ponna's and Singarevva's bodies possess the strength to either

enhance their men's potency or make them powerless. Their marital life bears testimony to the struggles that women need to undergo to attain motherhood and a satisfactory sexual life. The patriarchal world not only makes women accountable for the purity and honour within the family, but also makes them responsible for the legitimate inheritance of property.

The application of intersectionality as an analytical approach reveals that social categories intersect and lead to different forms of oppression and also throws light on the challenges that women go through, specifically in the Indian context. Singarevva's confinement within the palace is symbolic of her caged existence. Her marriage to Desai encloses her within the palace and his death imprisons her. Unlike Singarevva, Ponna works at home and in the agricultural fields. The former represents claustrophobic existence and the latter demonstrates liberty to venture out according to her convenience. In Singarevva's case, her status confines her, while in Ponna's case, the continuous taunts about childlessness limit her movements and interactions with the outside world. Eventually, both these female protagonists vent out their frustrations on their husbands.

Ponna also experiences oppression from Kali, especially, when she expresses her consent to participate in the chariot festival. The friction in their relationship is seen in their aggressive sexual act. The way Kali crushes her beneath him, not just shows his anger, but is also symbolic of the suppression of Ponna's maternal ability. Unlike Singarevva, Ponna's physical and emotional bonding with Kali prevents her from experiencing intense emptiness and boredom. Moreover, Ponna's barrenness is a known fact to her family members and thus receive their support, which gives her the mental strength to participate in the chariot festival. Unlike Ponna, Singarevva is devoid of emotional support and is traumatised due to her loneliness and stagnant life. Besides this, her father's suggestion to adopt her stepbrother, for the succession of Desai's property also aggravates her plight. Therefore, without much choice, she optimises Marya to impregnate her. On the contrary, Ponna's exposure to the outside

world, helps her in choosing a stranger/god during the chariot festival, to impregnate her. Singarevva's impregnation happens within the palace, whereas Ponna's happens outside in an open space. Thus, the socio-cultural factors create a closed structure to preserve women from any kind of adulteration. But the sexual transgression of these female protagonists dismantles these closed structures.

Conclusion

When viewed through the lens of intersectionality, the researchers are able to comprehend the immense challenges that Ponna and Singarevva have to overcome, in their journey to attain motherhood. All odds are stacked against them and life becomes almost a daily battle. The socio-cultural milieu in which women are positioned, plays a crucial role in their subjugation and oppression. Marriage is an extremely private affair of the couple and ideally, all decisions regarding the same, need to be taken by the two together. However, in the case of Ponna and Singarevva, their delay in procreation, as per the expected time period of the communities in which they live, becomes a matter for the public to decide and talk about. In this process, it is the women who are subject to scrutiny, as they are supposed to be the torchbearers of 'culture'. The transgressions that Kali and Desai engage in, be it pre-marital or extra-marital, demonstrate their 'manliness'. The very same act, when committed by women with a specific objective, make them 'unwomanly'. Ponna and Singarevva are forced to compromise on all their needs and desires within the marital space, at the altar of patriarchy. Their intense desire to become mothers ultimately comes at a great cost – with the loss of their husbands. The final act of suicide by Kali and Desai alarmingly demonstrates how notions of culture, caste, purity, honor and chastity are the deciding factors in marriage for a man, and not his love for a woman. The harsh reality that the two novels highlight is that, none of the decisions pertaining to a woman's life are in her hands, including her body and sexuality. Though powerless and devoid of identity in the beginning, both women are seen surmounting the innumerable

challenges and reclaiming their bodies to attain motherhood. They have taken the first step towards affirming their agency, by asserting their right over their own bodies.

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DOES MEMORY YIELD TRUE AND VALID KNOWLEDGE?[1]

By Anil Kumar Ray Chaudhuri

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It is a moot question in Indian Philosophy and opinions are divided amongst philosophers. Some hold brief for the truth and validity of memory, while others are decidedly against them. The majority, however, is against them. We first discuss the views of those who are against truth and validity.

True knowledge is that which testifies to the novelty and non-contradiction of cognition. Novelty restricts the intrusion of memory within knowledge proper, and non-contradiction is mentioned to exclude error. Memory is a later cognition of the already cognised object and as such its truth and validity have been questioned.

Though this is the ground on which the truth and validity of memory have been generally questioned, Jayanta has challenged this on a totally different ground. Let us discuss his views first. Novelty is not always recognised as one of the necessary conditions of right knowledge. As Jayanta maintains persistent cognition and recognition, though lacking in novelty, are within the limits of right knowledge.

With regard to persistent cognition the known object seems to be cognised again. So it apparently lacks truth. Those who uphold the truth of persistent cognition contend that the element of time is cognised anew in every cognition (e.g. the Mīmāṁsakas) and the former instant of time and the present one are widely different, though the object all along remains the same. The cognition of an object at the second moment is distinct from that of the same object at the first instant, since the atomic points of time are distinct from one another. And cognition, in such cases, does not lose its novelty.

Jayanta refuses to admit that there is novelty in persistent cognitions. The same object may be cognised again, but that does not point to the novelty of an object. The element of time does not bring forth any novelty in the object cognised again. For the infinitesimal time is only logically established but not perceptually determined.[2] The same hand may be perceived for some time. But the hand remains the same all the time. It does not exhibit any difference at all. So persistent cognitions cognise the already cognised and do not certify the freshness of an object.

Further, truth is not always confined to the cognition of the non-cognised. For the truth of recognition will then be called in question. Recognition always refers to the cognised and it does not lose its truth on that account.

It may be urged that recognition is also a cognition of the non-cognised. The example of recognition is of the form 'this is that Devadatta' and it has three parts. 'This' indicates present time; 'that'

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[1] I am indebted to Pandit Biraj Mohan Tarkatirtha of Calcutta Sanskrit College and Pandit Visvabandhu Tarkatirtha of Bhowanipur Ramakrishna Veda-Vidyalaya for the clarification of several books.

[2] 'Kṣaṇānām atīndriyatvāt'—*Tattva-cintāmaṇi*, p. 380.

refers to past time; and the third element is the substantive (*dharmin*) Devadatta. Of these the 'that' and Devadatta are already cognised. But the 'this' is a new element which was not cognised before. This novel element which enters into recognition turns the whole to be a cognition of the non-cognised. Therefore recognition is an instance of right knowledge.

But this view is not convincing at all. An object exists so long as its destructive conditions do not appear. 'This' has been ascertained by the perception previous to recognition. The pastness as cognised before and attaching to the pre-existing Devadatta as his attribute is the distinctive object of recognition. (Nothing uncognised before appears in recognition.) Therefore recognition being a case of cognition of the cognised should not be valid on the view mentioned above, although its validity is admitted by all serious philosophers.

We thus see that validity does not consist in cognising the non-cognised. Were it so, the validity of recognition would be a myth. Also the perception of the second and third moments in persistent perception cognises the already cognised and does not thereby become invalid. Therefore validity does not consist in the cognition of a novel object. This is the view of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa.

It may be contended against this view of Jayanta that if cognition of the cognised be also valid, then memory would also be a valid knowledge.

Jayanta replies that memory is invalid, not because it is a case of cognition of the cognised, but because the object recalled may not be existing at the time of recalling it. He maintains that the criterion of valid knowledge consists in the correspondence between cognition and the object cognised. This test of validity is lacking in memory and so it loses its validity. In other words, of the remembered objects at least some may not exist at the time of recollection, and as such there may be no corresponding objects. So memory does not pass for valid knowledge.

It might be urged against Jayanta that if validity of knowledge be due to the presence of an object, then the inference about the past rain would also be debarred from valid knowledge. The past rain is not certainly present at the time of inference.

Jayanta replies that the inference about the past rain is also caused by an existent object, for the inferred is not the *probandum* alone but the subject-of-inference (*pakṣa*) as characterised by the *probandum*. When a man infers the occurrence of rain in an upper region by seeing that a river in the lower region is inflated with a strong current, the subject-of-inference (viz. the river) is present at the time of inference and so the inference is justified by the presence of the object. Hence the inference about the past rain is not unsound.

A further objection may be raised against Jayanta, viz. that though the inference of the river characterised by the past rain may be valid as it is occasioned by the presence of an object, the knowledge arising from *pratibhā*[1] having for its matter that 'my brother will come tomorrow' lacks the presence of an object; for the object in question is not an existent fact.

Jayanta answers that the said intuition has for its object the future arrival of the brother who really exists in some other place, and so at the time of inference the brother's presence elsewhere becomes the object of inference. Therefore such intuitive knowledge is valid.

[1] *Pratibhā* is a kind of intuitive knowledge which is quickly engendered in the mind and is independent of any reason whatsoever.

Memory, on the other hand, is produced in the absence of an object. The presence or absence of an object does not affect memory in the least. Its occurrence is solely due to the impression of the past cognition. Sometimes the object of memory may occupy some other place. But the father or mother (of a person) who is no more in the land of living cannot be an object which contributes to memory. Its impression alone causes memory. Sometimes an object of perception may be absent during its perception; but one or other of the objects of perception being existent, perceptual validity owes its occurrence to the presence of objects. In the case of memory, however, its determining factor is not an existent object but the impression alone. Therefore memory is not a valid state of mind, since it is not due to the existence of an object.

The sum and substance of Jayanta's arguments is that everywhere the presence of objects causes the validity of cognition. If novelty be one of the tests of truth then perceptions at the second and the third moments in persistent cognition and recognition would be deprived of their truth, but no one denies their truth (*Nyāyamañjarī*, Chow. Ed., pp. 20-21).

Jayanta concludes that though memory is, on these grounds, not valid (*ayathārtha*), it may yet be true (*pramāṇa*). For validity and truth are not of the same extent. In other words, truth subsumes validity but is not subsumed by validity. It cannot be said that all cases of memory are true. Where the original experience is true, the consequent memory is true, but not otherwise. When a man mistakes a piece of rope as a serpent and flees away, a later memory of that serpent is not true, for the ground of this memory is false. The memory of the dead father, though invalid, is yet true, since the father was at some time in the land of living.

Udayana elaborately discusses the question and gives his verdict against it. He raises a question against those who propose the truth of memory. What is the connotation (*pravṛttinimitta* or *śakyatāvacchedaka*) of the word 'truth'? If it be held that knowledgehood (*jñānatva*) is the connotation, then the reply will be this:—although the truth (*pramātva*) of memory can thus be retained in the sense of its being just a case of knowledge, error comes under the purview of truth. For error, too, is a cognitional state.

Nor can truth be a species under the universal (*jāti*) knowledgehood. For the universal in respect of cognition is an object of internal perception. But truth is not so. Truth is a case of inference. Further, truth cannot be itself a universal. The character of a universal is that it does not exist in the locus of its absence or of its contradictory. But truth is not of this sort. Truth resides even in erroneous apprehension which is the locus of the absence of truth—even error is true so far as its ground (i.e. the substantive aspect) is concerned. Were it not so, error would have no ground to stand upon. As error is the contradictory of true knowledge, truth may also be taken as existing in that contradictory case. Therefore truth cannot be regarded as a universal.

Udayana goes on arguing that of two universals inhering in the self-same locus one must be the subsumer and the other subsumed. Knowledgehood (*jñānatva*) and truth (*pramātva*), if regarded as universals, must therefore exist in cognition in such a manner that one of them is the subsumer and the other is the subsumed. If knowledgehood be the subsumer, memory cannot be true. For knowledgehood or the subsumer of truth, being absent in memory, memory cannot contain the subsumed (*pramātva*). Again if truth be the subsumer of knowledgehood, then every case of knowledge becomes necessarily true. For knowledgehood or the subsumed universal existing in every case of knowledge, truth

or the subsumed universal must reside in all cases of knowledge. Thus error turns out to be a *non-est*.

Direct realisation (*sākṣātkāritva*) cannot also be the subsumer of truth. For inference or cognition due to authority which happens to be the negation of direct realisation would then be untrue. If, again, direct realisation be subsumed by truth, then erroneous cognition would inevitably fall outside the limit of direct realisation; since the subsumer truth being absent in error, it (error) cannot contain the subsumed, i.e. direct realisation.

Nor, again can validity (*yathārthatva*) mean truth or *vice versa*. For in some cases, though memory is valid, it is never true, because in the case of memory we do not feel that we use (*pramiṇomi*) it as true, though we do say that we remember a thing. What is the harm if we do use it in that way? The reply is that the adepts in Nyāya do not use it in that manner. They do not mention *saṁskāra* (which is the only cause of memory) under valid evidences. Truth cannot mean validity alone. For, then, like sense-object contact, the ground of perception, *saṁskāra* also, i.e. the cause of memory, would have been called a *pramāṇa*.

Having denied the truth-character of memory Udayana now proceeds to question even its validity (*yathārthatva*).

Valid cognition is that which predicates of an object a character actually possessed by it; and invalid cognition is that which predicates of an object a character that does not really belong to it. Memory cannot be valid, since it is a false representation of the object. Owing to the perception of a pot in the form 'this is a pot', memory arises out of the impression of the previous percept in the form 'that is a pot'. The object of such memory should be 'the pot qualified by its previous characters'. But at the time of memory the previous characters attached to the pot are not cognised and as such they are not presented in memory. Hence memory is not a reinstatement of the past object *in toto*.

It may be urged that when memory occurs the object appears with its previous characters. Udayana replies that in memory we do not recall an object with all its previous characters. An object is past only because it is the correlate of present destruction (*dvaṁsapratiyogin*). If the past character be also present *in toto*, the object cannot be the correlate of present destruction. Therefore the object of remembrance appears as bereft of the past character. So memory cannot but be invalid.

It may again be urged that the object divested of its previous character is the complete object of memory and as such memory cannot be invalid.

Udayana retorts that such a view is not proper. Memory cognises only the object previously apprehended. A pot divested of its past character was not an object of perception, so it ought not to have been comprehended in memory. In other words, the cessation of past character was not perceived and as such it ought not to have entered into the constitution of the object of memory. If this be not admitted then an object beyond the ken of perception could also be remembered. But this is not admitted by any philosopher. Therefore, the object with its past character should be remembered. But at the time of memory the object is not apprehended with all its past characters. So memory cannot be valid.

It may be objected that if the object of perception be the same as that of memory, how is it that the perception is valid and memory invalid? The reply is that the object of perception appears with certain characters; but some of the said characters are absent in memory. This difference makes one valid and the other invalid.

A further objection may be raised. It may be said that memory does present the past character but as past, and is therefore valid. Nothing is lost altogether. Everything is permanent. What is apparently lost in oblivion can still be said to occupy existence. Memory retains everything. On the basis of such a view, what was existent in the past can also be called as existent proper. So memory always deals with existents and should not be regarded as invalid (vide also Mallinātha on Varadarāja's *Tārkika-rakṣā*, p. 45).

Likewise Laird says, 'it is simply false to maintain that any assertion of existence is confined to the present tense'. 'It is true that the past does not exist now, just as it is true that the present did not exist formerly; but existence itself means the whole of existence, not merely present existence; and past events, like present ones, have their determinate place in the determinate series of existence' (*A Study in Realism*, p. 50).

The reply is that if such be the case then the cognition of the green (*Śyāma*) colour in a pot when turned red by fire should also be valid even after the pot is turned red. But the present cognition of a past thing is thus not necessarily valid. Udayana, therefore, dismisses the above view as a worthless conjecture (see also Mallinātha's Niṣkantaka on *Tārkika-rakṣā*, p. 45).

Hamilton also says that 'an immediate knowledge of a past thing is a contradiction. For we can only know a thing immediately, if we know it in itself, or as existing; but what is past cannot be known in itself; for it is non-existent' (Reid's works, Edited by Hamilton, p. 339). Hence memory by itself is untrue. Sometimes it may truly represent the bare object. The reason is that memory entirely depends on the impression left by perception. When perception corresponds with reality, the consequent memory is also true. When not, it is false. It is false when it occurs from the false perception of a rope as a snake. Therefore memory has no *inherent* certitude of its own. Its truth or untruth entirely hangs on the truth or untruth of the previous perception (*Tātparyya-pariśuddhi*, Asia. Soc. Ed., p. 158ff.).

In the commentary on the *Tātparyya-pariśuddhi* Vardhamāna mentions the view of his father (Gañgeśa) as of the same import. Gañgeśa says that all cognitions have the element of time as qualifying objects. And memory or anticipation is no exception to this rule. When memory arises in the mind, it does not cognise the past or the future time which really attaches to the object; but it takes the object as belonging to the present time only. In other words, it always cognises its object as present and does not represent the past or the future object as past or future. For instance, in the recognition 'this is that Devadatta' the remembered and the perceived Devadatta appears as belonging to the present time. Had it not been the case, the steady inclination of a man towards an object could not have arisen in the case of memory, and inclination is always towards an object in the form 'this is the pot in the room'. It is seen that the inclination towards a remembered pot is not attended with doubt. Had there been the least doubt about the present time attaching to the remembered object the unfailing inclination towards it would not have arisen at all. The absence of certainty in respect of the presentness of the remembered object would go with the total absence of inclination. Thus it is seen that memory cognises its object as present.

An objection: The present time cannot be remembered. For the perceived object through its impression alone becomes the object of memory. How could the present time (which was not cognised before) be also an object of memory ? The motive of the objector is this:—The past

cognition by virtue of impression is the cause of memory. Now if the present time be also remembered, then the cognition of the present time is necessary. But the knowledge of the present time cannot occur in the past, for the present time (to be an object of knowledge) was not existent then. So its knowledge is not possible. Therefore the present time, not being an object of previous cognition, cannot be remembered. For the cognised alone is remembered.

Gañgeśa replies that it is due to the glory (*mahimā*) of the conditions of knowledge that the uncognised present time is apprehended in memory. The conditions of memory need not depend upon the impression of present time. They depend only on the impressions of objects denuded of the present time. Memory, therefore, can manifest the past object as present.

Memory cognises its objects with its past characters (time, place, etc.) attached to it. Sometimes the object is non-existent and sometimes the previous characters are absent. That is, the substantive aspect or the attributive aspect is lacking. Therefore memory fails to correspond with reality.

But if memory is thus lacking in validity, why does it sometimes correspond with the real object? The reply is that memory does so, only because it represents the bare object of true cognition apprehended before. Its apparent validity is thus borrowed and not its own. And memory does not correspond with facts when it represents the object of false perception. If the cause be false, memory cannot be true (vide the commentary on *Tātparyya-pariśuddhi*, Asia. Soc. Ed., p. 164).

Śrīdhara is of opinion that memory always cognises its object accompanied by the element of 'that'. This shows that memory is always of the known object in the past. Hence it is not valid. The apprehension which invariably depends upon past cognition can never be valid. Memory, even if it cognises its object correctly, hangs upon the past cognition for the manifestation of the object.

It may be objected that inference similarly, being rooted in perception, should not be valid. Śrīdhara replies that inference depends upon perception for its origination but not for the manifestation of its object. It is independent in respect of the manifestation of an object. Like memory inference does not merely repeat the object of past cognition. Those who say that memory is false, since it is not due to an existent object, do not represent the correct view. If the invalidity of memory be due to the non-existence of objects, then inference about the past and the future should be regarded as invalid. When, for instance, a posthumous child says that his father while living took his food, because otherwise the father could not live—in such an inference the subject is the father who is no more in the land of living, and as such the inference cannot be due to existent object. Therefore invalidity of memory does not rest upon the non-existence of objects, but upon representing past cognition (*Nyāya-kandalī*, Chow. Ed., p. 257).

The Prābhākaras are also of the same opinion. Memory cannot independently yield us knowledge of facts. It entirely depends upon past cognition (*Prakaraṇapañcikā*, Chow. Ed., p. 42).

We now consider those who are in favour of the validity of memory. Valid cognition, the Jaina holds, is that which leads to successful activity towards an object. The perceptual knowledge of a pot is valid, since as a result of such knowledge a pot is attained. So also memory which results from previous knowledge of a pot existing elsewhere is valid, since it leads to successful activity.

The Buddhist puts an objection: What does memory connote? If it means cognition, then perception has practically no difference from memory. If, again, it means cognition of the past, then the perception of Yajñadatta in respect of a thing already cognised by Devadatta is also memory. Therefore memory itself is inexplicable.

Prabhāchandra replies that memory is exactly the reproduction of a thing which was cognised in the past. This is the meaning of memory. So the objection of the Buddhist does not stand.

The Buddhist further objects that memory cannot be valid, since it cognises what was already cognised in the past.

Prabhāchandra retorts that the invalidity of cognition does not result from the fact that a thing is cognised again. Knowledge is valid when it manifests an object attended with successful activity. Memory is valid since it manifests an object correctly. Though the clear manifestation of an object of perception is lacking in memory, yet the manifestation in memory is of a lesser kind. It is for this manifestation of an object that memory is valid.

Prabhāchandra notes in this connection that when memory does not lead to successful activity, it is then a semblance of memory and not memory proper. The instance is the memory of a rope-serpent (*Prameya-kamala-mārtaṇḍa*, N.S. Ed., p. 336).

The Mādhva also admits the validity of memory. Memory is internal perception by the mind with concentration of attention (*bhāvanā*) as a condition. It is a form of perception where the traces of past cognition serve as a contact of the present mind with a past cognition. Memory, therefore, is valid knowledge and is a variety of perception. The cause of memory is not a separate source of evidence, though it is a sure ground of true cognition (*Pramāṇa-candrikā*, Cal. Uni. Ed., Chap. I).

Rāmānuja is practically of the same opinion (see *Yatīndramata-dipikā*, p. 7).

Prof. Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya thus summarises the point in favour of the Jainas. 'If *Pramāṇa* be understood as *ajñāta-jñāpaka*, the Jaina may still urge against the Mīmāṁsaka that the pastness of the remembered object was never known in the perception of the object and is apprehended in memory only. But the Naiyāyika may contend that memory being an *immediate* apprehension of the pastness, the remembered object appears as the presented past, the past as present (the so-called memory-image being not a shadow of the past object but the past object itself as now indefinitely perceived, i.e. as present). The object as at once past and present is a contradiction and so the memory of it is not *pramāṇa*. The objection, however, does not affect the Jaina position, since he holds against all others that non-denial is a form of *knowledge*, the knowledge of a content that is definitely at once not being or not non-being, the content of memory being a mode of *avaktavya*.[1] The Naiyāyika would admit knowledge of the past as such though not through memory. It cannot be perception and may be through inference or *śabda*, but how is the concept of the past obtained, if not through memory? If he admits that pastness is primarily thought in memory but not known, that the *Vyavahāra* (anoetic experience) only of pastness is through memory, it

[1] Prof. Bhattacharyya means to say that the object of memory is indefinite or indescribable (*avaktavya*), since it is presented as involving an affirmative mode of thought, although, in fact, it is a thing of the past (i.e. not an existent entity). Thus in the realm of thought, the object of memory can be said to imply neither affirmation nor negation. Likewise in the region of perception the illusory content is characterised by the Advaitin as having neither being nor non-being.

may be asked if the content of mere *vyavahāra* consciousness can be turned into a known content. Is the actual equivalent to the *possible plus something*?[1]

The author of *Prakaṭārtha-vivaraṇa* expresses the view of the Bhāṭṭas who strike a different note altogether. They hold that memory is neither true nor erroneous. It is not true, since it is a cognition of the previously cognised object; it is not false, as it is not due to any defect. 'Smṛtistu pūrvadṛṣṭārtha-mātra-smaraṇam na pramāṇam, nāpi apramāṇam iti Bhaṭṭapādīyāḥ vadanti' (*Prakaṭārtha-vivaraṇa*, Mad. Uni. Ed., Vol. I, p. 530).

[1] Late Prof. K. C. Bhattacharyya wrote it in connection with the validity of memory in a letter addressed to me in 1943.

Is Smṛti Pramā or Apramā ?
An Age-old Debate in Indian Philosophy

Mainak Pal

Introduction

This paper intends to review the article "Does Memory Yield True and Valid Knowledge?" written by Anil Kumar Ray Chaudhuri, published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* in 1957, (*Volume XXIII, No. 2*), communicated by Sri Sisir K. Mitra. In this connection I shall revisit the age-old debate in Indian philosophy whether *Smṛti* (memory) is *pramā* or a*pramā*. In the said article, the author has presented authentic arguments and counterarguments for and against the motion, and he himself remained neutral. But in my review I would rather be critical about the thesis that memory is *apramā*.

Remembrance or memory is an indispensable cognitive ability of human mind. The whole cognitive structure collapses if this foundational capacity is disrupted. A patient of the Alzheimer's disease can realize the truth of this fact. Mnemic cognition or recollection, as an occurrent (and not a dispositional) mental state, has been an important topic for discussion amongst the masters of Indian philosophical schools. The epistemological discussion in Indian philosophy centers on the concept of *pramā* (true or veridical cognition) and *pramāṇa* (valid source of true or veridical cognition). Etymologically the term '*pramā*' means excellent, best or superior cognition (*prakṛṣṭa māna* or *prakṛṣṭa jñāna*). A piece of cognition is considered to be the best (*prakṛṣṭa*) only when it reveals its object as the object is (*yathā artha*). Hence, *pramā* is *yathārtha jñāna* or true cognition. And the source or instrumental cause or the most important

cause (*karaṇa* or *sādhakatama*) of such true cognition (*pramā*) is called *pramāṇa*. However, some masters (the Naiyāyikas and others) hold that not all true cognitions are to be considered as *pramā*. True cognition is of two types – apprehension (*anubhava*), and memory/ recollection (*smṛti*).[1] The cognition which is produced by only subconscious impression is called recollection. Cognition other than recollection is apprehension, which is of two types – true apprehension (*yathārtha anubhava*) and false apprehension (*ayathārtha anubhava*). Only true apprehensions are given the status of *pramā*;[2] and the sources of such true apprehensions are called *pramāṇa*. Since recollection is not an apprehension, it has not been considered to be a *pramā*; and its source has not been considered to be a *pramāṇa*.

If we accept its source as an independent *pramāṇa*, the Nyāya dictum that there are *four and only four independent sources of true cognition* (*catuṣpramāṇavāda*) will be violated. The Naiyāyikas hold that there are *four* such sources of true apprehensions – perception, inference, analogy and testimony.[3] If the Naiyāyikas consider it to be a valid source, they will have to admit five *pramāṇas*. So some of the Naiyāyikas resolve the issue, by saying that although recollection may be a true *cognition*, it nonetheless is not true *apprehension* – hence is not *pramā*.

Advaita Vedāntin's Definition of Pramā: An Analysis

In *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*, Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra defines *pramā* as a cognition (*jñāna*) which has such a real object (*arthaviṣayaka*) that is not contradicted by any subsequent cognition (*abādhita*), and is not acquired or apprehended (*anadhigata*) in previous occasion (that means the object of a *pramā* must be novel).[4] If an object of a cognition A is already acquainted by some previous cognition B, even though A is uncontradicted and true, A cannot be given the status of a *pramā*. According to this criterion, memory does not qualify as a *pramā*. We all know that nothing is recollected that is not cognized previously. Hence recollection is always a cognition of an already-cognized object (*gṛhītagrāhī*). Hence recollection cannot be considered as *pramā*, because its object is not a novel one. So, *anadhigatatva* is such a qualification of *pramā* that excludes memory (*smṛti*) from being a *pramā*.

A. K. Ray Chaudhuri refers to this definition of *pramā* and says that true cognition testifies to the novelty and noncontradictedness of cognition.[5] The first criterion excludes memory from *pramā*, and the second criterion excludes errors from *pramā*.

However, Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra immediately recognizes that *anadhigatatva* may not be an essential characteristic of *pramā* for all the schools. So he says that those who consider memory to be a *pramā* leave *anadhigatatva* as a defining characteristic of *pramā*. Hence, as if it appears that Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra does not have any problem in accepting recollection as a *pramā*.[6] And this is commonsensical. If I know an object correctly for ten times, ten times the cognition is true. How is the first cognition any better (*prakṛṣṭa*) than the following nine?

The Opponents' Views: Should Novelty be a Criterion of Pramātva?

Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedāntin Veṅkaṭanātha has accepted true memory as *pramā*. In *Nyāyapariśuddhi*, he defined *pramā* as a cognition that is conducive to successful behaviour.[7] Point to be noticed is that here the term '*jñānaṁ*' has been used in the definition – not '*anubhava*'. It implies that even memory, if it is compatible with the object, and conducive to correct behavior, it can be considered as a *pramā*.

Dvaita Vedāntin, Madhvācārya also defines *pramā* as true or valid cognition (*yathārtha jñāna*). It implies that true memory is *pramā*. Jayatīrtha says that if an object is cognized as it is (*yathāvasthita*), then the cognition is a *pramā*; and that which is the immediate cause of such a cognition is to be called *pramāṇa*.[8] Here, the term '*yathāvasthita*' means that which is uncontradicted or *abādhita*. So, this term excludes illusion and doubt (and does not exclude true memory) from *pramā*. Jayatīrtha says that since true memory reveals an object as it is, its instrument should be considered as *pramāṇa* like *pratyakṣa*, *anumāṇa*, and *āgama*.[9] The Jainas also accept true memory as *pramā*.[10] They think that novelty is not an essential criterion for a cognition to be a *pramā*. A *pramā* can be *gṛhītagrāhī*. Hence, true memory should not be excluded from being *pramā* just because it cognizes an already-cognized object. In the case of serial or persistent perception (*dhārāvāhika pratyakṣa*), where I stare at a pot, say, for ten minutes, a series of

perceptual cognitions is generated resorting to the same pot in front. Our common sense says that all of those perceptual cognitions are equally veridical. But if we accept novelty as an essential characteristic of a *pramā*, then only the first cognition of the series would be a *pramā*, as the pot is cognized for the first time in that cognition only. The other cognitions will not be *pramā* as they all are *gṛhītagrāhī*. But this is counterintuitive. We believe that each cognition is equally veridical in the case of serial perception.

However, there is a solution to this problem. If we suppose that at each moment pot is perceived as qualified by the existing moment, then at each moment the content of perception will be different and novel. Hence, the perceptions in *dhārāvāhika* cognition will not be *gṛhitagrāhī*.

Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's Account: A Critical Analysis

However, the Naiyāyikas realized that novelty cannot be a criterion of *pramātva*. But they held that memory should be discarded out from the domain of *pramā* on a different ground. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa has taken such a stance. Ray Chaudhuri discusses it in his article. Jayanta argues that if memory is not considered to be a *pramā* for the lack of novelty, recognition and persistent or serial perception also will not be considered as *pramā*, as they also lack novelty. Ray Chaudhuri says that Jayanta is not ready to admit that the involvement of moments as qualifier of object makes any difference (and makes the object novel at each moment); because, infinitesimal moments are only logically established – they cannot be perceived.[11] Gaṅgeśa also says so.[12] Jayanta has even proved that serial cognition is *pramā* even though it is *gṛhītagrāhī*. He opines that in order to be a *pramā* it does not matter whether the cognition is previously cognized or not. It is equally a *pramā* even though the object was previously cognized.

Had *gṛhītagrāhitva* been the criteria of being *pramā*, recognition also would be *apramā* as it cognizes what is already cognized.[13] However, there is an answer which Ray Chaudhuri presents in his article beautifully. He says that there are three elements in the recognition 'this is that Devadatta' – 'this', 'that' and 'Devadatta'.

Here one may argue that the last two elements are already cognized, and the first one is a new element, which makes the whole composite novel. Hence, (true) recognition is a *pramā*. But Ray Chaudhuri rejects this argument by saying that it is not convincing at all. Nothing, which is not cognized before, becomes an object of recognition. An object is destroyed only when its destructive conditions arise. Devadatta, who is now being perceived, is the same as the person who was perceived before. Hence, even 'this' person is already cognized. For this reason, Jayanta concludes, novelty should not be considered as a criterion for *pramātva*. If it were so, the *pramātva* of true recognition would be a myth; and the same fate would be imposed on serial perception.[14]

Now the question will arise as to why should a true memory be an instance of *apramā*? Ray Chaudhuri mentions that according to Jayanta the criterion of *pramā* is correspondence between cognition and the object cognized. Jayanta says that when memory is produced, the object of it does not remain present in front of the person who remembers. For this reason, memory is *apramā*.

There is an objection raised against Jayanta, which Ray Chaudhuri mentions.[15] If the object's 'not being present in front' be the sufficient reason for considering the cognition *apramā*, then even the inference of an absent object would be considered as *apramā*. Take for example the inferences of past, future and remote objects. Perceiving the increasing water-level of a river we infer that there must have been rainfall in the uphill (or the catchment area) of the river in the immediate past. The event of rainfall is past (absent) when we infer. Does this make the inference *apramā*? Certainly it is not. Jayanta answers that in the case of inference the subject (*pakṣa*) of the inference, river, is present. In an inference we do not infer only the *sādhya* (rain); rather we infer '*sādhya* in *pakṣa*'. Hence inference is *arthaja*. In the same way it is possible to show that analogy and testimony also are different from memory.

But this answer seems to be inappropriate. If a qualification (*viśeṣaṇa*) is past, the object qualified by that qualification (*viśiṣṭa*

vastu) must also be past. The river as qualified by past rainfall itself must be a past composite entity. However, Jayanta concludes that although memory is not a recognized valid source of veridical cognition (as it is *anarthaja*), yet it may be true. Memory of an illusion is false, as its original apprehension is erroneous; but memory of the parents who have passed away is true.[16]

A Critical Analysis of Udayana's Views on the Debate

The old Naiyāyikas like Vātsyāyana, Udayana and Uddyotakara did not admit memory as *pramā*. Udayana in *Nyāyakusumāñjaliḥ* offered many arguments for that. Udayana argues that the object as perceived does not remain in the same condition when it is remembered. The object may even be destroyed in the meantime. Hence memory is not *pramā*. Neither is it true that memory cognizes the same object as the original apprehension does. In apprehension we cognize the object as a *present* object, but in memory the object is cognized as a *past* object. While remembering the object in present time the prior conditions of the object do not remain as it was at the time of its apprehension. One may argue that memory is veridical because it cognizes the apprehended object in its prior condition even when the prior conditions are absent while remembering. But Udayana says that this argument is unacceptable; because in that case perception of black colour in red-hot pot will have to be considered as veridical. Suppose at time t_1 (that is in the *past*) there was an earthen black pot and at some later point of time t_2 (that is at *present*) it is baked in fire and the black pot turns into a red pot due to heat. Now, if I perceive the pot at t_2 time as black (which was the pot's past condition) my perception will not be true; because black colour does not exist at present time (although the token pot remains the same). In the same way, while remembering an object we always remember it as qualified by prior conditions – as it was apprehended in the past. But just like the pot's colour those conditions may change over time. If so, then we will be remembering an object having the prior conditions when actually those prior conditions have ceased to exist. Hence, our recollection is bound to be false. Udayana says that even if one holds that memory represents the content of apprehension faithfully, it borrows its truth

from the original apprehension. Memory is not true on its own right. Hence memory is not an independent *pramāṇa*.[17]

Now, let us analyze Udayana's arguments critically. Firstly, even if the prior condition of an object does not remain the same while remembering the object, the object is recollected *as a past object*. Hence the object's present condition should not at all be taken into consideration for assessing recollection. Secondly, due to the flow of time what was apprehended as *present* is recollected as *past*. The mismatch of temporal stamp on the content of apprehension and memory actually represents time faithfully. The object of memory actually *was* apprehended; hence it is recollected as *that* object. Had we recollected the object as a *present* object (as 'this pot'), the recollection would be a wrong representation of fact. It proves that the alleged deficiency (mismatch of *thisness* of apprehension and *thatness* of memory) itself is the reason for which we should consider memory as faithful representation of fact. These two pronouns actually refer to the same moment of time.

Udayana also realizes this lacuna in his argument. So, he is compelled to say that even if our mnemic capability is a valid source of cognition, its validity is only borrowed – it cannot be considered as an independent *pramāṇa*. But here we can say that other *pramā*s also are dependent on their causes. And memory is independent on the question of the *manifestation of its objects* just like other *pramā*s. Even in the court we consider the statement of a witness as evidence which he states from his memory. Hence, our mnemic capacity should also be considered as a valid source of cognition. We all have to ponder over it and give the rightful place to memory in our epistemology.

A Balancing View of the Bhaṭṭas: An Analysis and Conclusion

However, this is not the case that Indian masters have not given thought over it. There are plenty of counterarguments in the literature that try to establish validity of memory. Ray Chaudhuri presents the arguments of the Jaina master Prabhācandra, Madhva, and Rāmānuja in his article.[18] Also Ray Chaudhuri quotes Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya who takes the side of the Jainas.[19]

Ray Chaudhuri concludes his article with a balancing theory advocated by the Bhāṭṭa master as mentioned in *Prakaṭārthavivaraṇa*. There it has been said that memory is neither true (as it is a cognition of a cognized) nor erroneous (as it is not due to any defect).[20]

However, this theory cannot explain the fact that memory helps us in leading our practical life successfully. In every walk of our life memory helps us out. Moreover, it is not clear how a cognition becomes false if the object of it is already cognised. If subconscious impression encodes an event correctly and if delivers a true representation of the event in an appropriate way (with the information of the correct timing of that past event), and if that cognition helps us in our day to day life, we should confer proper epistemic status to that cognition.

Notes

[1] TS (18) : *sarvavyavahārahetuḥ guṇoḥ buddhiḥ jñānam / sā dvividā – smṛtiḥ anubhavaḥ ca / – Tarkasaṁgraha,* Annaṁbhaṭṭa.

[2] TS (18-19): *saṁskāramātrajanyaṁ jñānaṁ smṛtiḥ / tadbhinnaṁ jñānam anubhavaḥ / sa dvividhaḥ, yathārthaḥ ayathārthaḥ ca / tadvatitatprakārakaḥ anubhavaḥ yathārthaḥ / yathā – rajate 'idaṁ rajatam' iti jñānam / sa eva pramā iti ucyate / – Tarkasaṁgraha,* Annaṁbhaṭṭa.

[3] NS 1.1.3 (8, 16): *pratyakṣānumānopamānaṣabdāḥ pramāṇāni / – Nyāyasūtra,* Gautama.

[4] VPS (9-13): *tatra smṛtivyāvṛttaṁ pramātvamanadhigatābādhitārthaviṣayaka-jñānatvam / – Vedānta Paribhāṣā,* Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra.

[5] Ray Chaudhuri 1957: 27.

[6] Bhattachyarya 1949 : 6.

[7] NP (4): *yathāvasthitavyavahārānuguṇaṁ jñānaṁ pramā / – Nyāyapariśuddhi,* Veṅkaṭanātha.

[8] PC (131-132): *tatrādau pramāṇasāmānyalakṣaṇamucyate / yathārtha pramāṇam / yathāvasthitajñeyaviṣayīkāritvaṁ pramāṇatva….. / yathārthajñānam pramā / jñānamityanuktau karaṇe'tivyāptiḥ / yathārthetyanuktau saṁśayādau / – Pramāṇacandrikā* (a shorter text of *Pramāṇapaddhati*), Jayatīrtha; Bhattacharya 1949: pp. 11-12.

[9] PC (134): *nanu yathvāsthitajñeyaviṣayīkāritvaṁ pramāṇalakṣaṇamiti yaduktaṁ tadanupapannaṁ /*
smṛtāvativyāpteriticet, na / smṛtiḥ pratyakṣamaitihyamanumānacatuṣṭayam / prāmāṇamiti vijñeyaṁdharmādyarthe mumukṣubhiḥ / iti śrutyādeḥ smṛtiprāmāṇyasya siddhatvāt/ – Pramāṇacandrikā (a shorter text of *Pramāṇapaddhati*), Jayatīrtha; Bhattacharya 1949: pp. 14-15.

[10] PKM (335): *pratyakśādinimittaṁ smṛtipratyabhijñānatarkānumānāgamabhedam //2// –*
Prameyakamalamārtaṇḍa, Prabhāchandra; Bhattacharya 1949 : 15.

[11] Ray Chaudhuri 1957: 27-29.

[12] TCMK (805, 1-3): *jānāmīti vartamānatvena sthūla upādhirbhāsate na tu kṣaṇaḥ, tasyātīndriyatvāt | –*
Tattvacintāmaṇi, Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya; TCMP (603, 13-14).

[13] Bhattacharya 1949: 18.

[14] Ray Chaudhuri 1957: 27-28.

[15] Ray Chaudhuri 1957: 28.

[16] NMS (21): *nanvetasminparityakte prāmāṇyaṁ syātsmṛterapi //*
na smṛterapramāṇatvaṁ gṛhitagrāhitākṛtam |
api tvanarthajanyatvaṁ tadaprāmāṇyakāraṇam //
nanu kathamanarthajā smṛtiḥ tadārūḍhasya vastunaḥ tadānīmasattvāt, kathaṁ tarhi bhūtavṛṣṭayanumānaṁ nānarthajaṁ tatra dharmiṇo 'numeyatvāttasya ca jñānajanakasya tatra bhāvāt, nadyākhya eva dharmī vṛṣṭimaduparitanadeśasaṁsargalakṣaṇena dharmeṇa tadvānanumīyate viśiṣṭasalilapurayogitvāt, sa cānumānagrāhyo dharmī vidyate eveti nānarthajamanumānam, kathaṁ tarhi prātibhamanāgatārthagrāhi śvo me bhrātā "ganteti pratyakṣamarthajamiṣyate bhavadbhiḥ, tatra deśāntare vidyamānasya bhrātuḥ śvo bhāvyāgamanaviśeṣaḥ tasyaive tathaiva grahaṇam, tena ca rūpeṇa gṛhyamānasya satastasya jñānajanakatvamityarthajameva prātibham, smaraṇaṁ tu nirdagdhapitrādiviṣayamanapekṣitārthameva jāyamānaṁdṛṣṭamamityanyatra deśāntarasthitārthasmaraṇe tadarthasattvamakāraṇameva |
tasmādanarthajatvena smṛtiprāmāṇyavāraṇāt |
agṛhītārthagantṛtvaṁ na pramāṇaviśeṣaṇam // – Nyāyamañjarī, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa.

[17] NVTP (162-166): *nanu samānaviṣayatve 'pi smṛtyanubhavayoranubhavo yathārtho na smṛtiriti kuta etat?, anubhavakāle tasyārthasya tāvadavasthāt smṛtikāle tvatāvadavasthyāt | nanu pūrvaṁ tāvattadavastha evāsāvāsīt etāvataiva jñānamastu yathārtham | na | pākarakte 'pi śyāmapratyayasya yathārthatvaprasaṅgāt | nanvatītaḥ śyāma iti pratyayastatra yatāhrtha eva | satyam | tadviṣayasya tadānīmevaṁ tadavasthatvāt | na tu smaryamāṇārthastadānīṁ tadavasthaḥ tasmāt smṛtirayathārthaiva | yathānubhavaṁ tu bhavet | tatārnubhavasya yathārthatvāt tadekaviṣayā smṛtirapi yathārthetyucyate | ata evānubhavasyāyathārthatve smṛtiraviparītārtāh 'pyayathārthaiva, yathā rajjuṁ bhujaṅgatayā'nubhūya vidutasya tathaiva smṛtiḥ | tasmāt smṛteryāthārthyaṁ jācitakamaṇḍanaprāyaṁ nājānikam | – Nyāyavārttikatātparyapariśuddhi*, Udayanācārya; Ray Chaudhuri 1957: 31.

[18] Ray Chaudhuri 1957: 32-34.

[19] Ray Chaudhuri 1957: 33-34; see footnote 1 in page 33.

[20] Ray Chaudhuri 1957: 34.

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Book Review

City Intelligible: A Philosophical and Historical Anthropology of Global Commoditisation before Industrialisation, Frank Perlin, 2020. Leiden: Brill. pp. LVI+630.

Introduction

Frank Perlin was known to the economic historians of India as somebody who had done some interesting work on the economy and society of pre-colonial India (Perlin, 1978, 1983a and 1983b). Since then he has broadened his horizon and has written a comprehensive book on monetary, administrative and popular infrastructures in Asia and Europe (Perlin, 1993) and followed it up with a book on commodity, category, sign and identity and their production as myth and knowledge from 1500 (Perlin, 1994). This latter book shows that Perlin has moved far beyond the domain of economic history (Perlin, 1994)) and taken in all of the early modern period in his time span and to include culture in his perspective; he has explicitly written separately on it (Perlin, 1990). In contrast to Perlin (1993) where the city remained invisible, in the current book he has set out to make the city intelligible. Before I try to outline the basic argument(s) of the book, it is necessary to say something about the arrangement of the book. It starts with a list of illustrations, goes on to include two separate forewords by two distinguished historians — Ravi Ahuja and Aditya Sarkar. It then has 'Acknowledgments', then a 'Notice to the Reader', then 'More than a Preface or Introduction! The Transcendental Constitution of the Cultural, Historical and Empirical Object: The Problem and the Task of the Two Anthropologies', then follows the Table of Contents with equally striking headings. The various sections of the book have copious illustrations. There are two Appendixes: Appendix 1) Order in Artificial and Spontaneous nature.

Appendix 2) The Phenomenology Lesson : A Commentary on the Illustration.

Bibliography has three sections :

1. Introduction: Selection and Translation
2. Kant, Hegel and Husserl
3. General Bibliography

Index of Names

Thematic Subject Index

It is necessary to comment on the last two items.

In the Index of Names, not only are the page numbers in which the author is referred to is given, but the subject on which he/she is referred to is also given. To take two examples at random: F.D. Ascoli survey and settlement of Dacca district l910-18 194n30; Brecht, Bertolt dystopia or anti-city of Mahogony 254n43 distanciation, concept of (verfremdungseffekt) 227n13,519 Galileo 38-9n20, 337.

The last section of the book consists of a Thematic Subject Index (and glossary). This is amazingly detailed. Only in nineteenth-century books, I have come across such detailed list of contents. I will cite two entries at random to illustrate my point.

The commodity continuum and marketisation

Translatability of the commodity realm; translation as active intention and act of exchange: 16 : 231 (an artificial tower of nature), 246 (Babel-like), 263 ("Babel was built"), 309, 318 (a universal composed of difference), 385 (commoditisation of work), 386 (in construction), 427 (a Babel founded on universal constitutive principles); a successful Babel ever in construction (a Babel of translation) : 231, 263, 265, 309, 313, 318, 368-9, 386, 427; Kant's human tower and Leibniz' human pyramid: 368-9,460.

Kant's Tower of Babel (the three references to Babel in *The First Critique):* a central part of the argument constituting this book (See also the large entry under Kant in the Authors' index) PuCH3 Section 2; 244 ff. (his first reference to the Tower; his own Copernican Revolution as Tower; 256-8 (every person own tower); 265 ("more than a mere Babel"); 299n86 (*First Critique* references to the Tower); 380ff. (his second reference to the tower: each his/her own Tower, "with the materials at each person's disposal"); 384-5 (an individualised ground); 386 ("our Babel. .. Kant's Babel"); 395ff. (his third reference to the Tower: "freedom is the ground for the existence of reason"); 396n180 *(Einstimmung);* 397n82 (the sources for this third mention; 398 n84 (erect upon "einen festeren Boden"); 399 ("dispersed overall to build their own individual towers"); 400 (each person on an

individual path "through the forests of the real"); 464 (& Giordano Bruno).

Perlin's historical and philosophical anthropology

Perlin makes the scope of his inquiry quite clear in his 'Notice to the Reader': 'This is not a study in economic history but what we may better call an historical anthropology of what ordinarily is treated as the domain of the economic historian. But I mean anthropology simultaneously in its two very different senses: the social and cultural on the one hand and the philosophical on the other. Indeed it is that latter aspect that especially has come to concern this book: by philosophy I mean it in the phenomenological sense, thus as a phenomenological study of the culture of the commodity, one seeking to investigate the basic foundational criteria in terms of which the very fact and domain of the commodity had been constituted as a product of the collective human mind — in fact the very possibility as thought and practice.' (p. L).

The discipline of phenomenology, which studies human consciousness, intentionality and consideration of the object to be studied was established by Edmund Husserl and followed up by Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre (Smith, 2013). Perlin uses phenomenology to capture the intentionality and consciousness of traders and manufacturers of commodities in the period before the Industrial Revolution. He uses copious illustrations to show the intricacy and beauty of pre-industrial artifacts, so that we can appreciate the skill of the usually anonymous artisans which went into their making.

Another major feature of Perlin's book is its embedding global commoditisation in the framework of philosophical anthropology. The origins of philosophical anthropology can be traced to early Christian Fathers such as Augustine of Hippo.

> Augustine of Hippo's views are entirely embedded in the domains of anthropology. In relation to his personal pursuit of truth, as poignantly described in the *Confessions,* the meaning of the human existence is examined throughout his writings under a variety of perspectives. Thus, anyone willing to grasp the features of his

> anthropological thoughts needs to be prepared to track a winding path. A path that is simultaneously devious and marvelous in its manifold expressions (Introduction to Dalphra and Jacobson, 2021),

Augustine has been cited by Husserl and Heidegger as one of the early writers to inquire into time-consciousness and the role of *seeing* in the feeling of "Being- in-the-world". (Husserl, 1964, p. 21. Heidegger 1964, p. 171)

Augustine saw the human being as a perfect unity of two substances: soul and body. He was much closer in this anthropological view to Aristotle than to Plato. In his late treatise *On Care to Be Had for the Dead,* sec. 5 (420 AD) he insisted that the body is essential part of the human person (Mann, 1999).

Augustine of Hippo's views are entirely embedded in the domains of anthropology.

> In no wise are the bodies themselves to be spurned. (...) For these pertain not to ornament or aid which is applied from without, but to the very nature of man.

In Perlin's discourse, philosophical anthropology enters, rather indirectly through Kant's lectures on anthropology (Cohen, 2014) and Cassier's development of philosophical anthropology. Its modern version was first put forward in a lecture given in 1927, at Darmstadt by the German philosopher-sociologist Max Scheler. 5 In this lecture, Scheler explored the relations between man's vital energies and his spiritual components in a presentation strongly reminiscent of Freud's theory of sublimation (Bodenheimer, 1971).

Scheler died suddenly in 1928, but his torch was carried forward by Helmut Plessner and Arnold Gehlen.

Traditionally, anthropology was concerned with the study of primitive societies and their cultures as practised by Bronislaw Malinowski, Sir Raymond Firth, Lucy Mair, Margaret Mead and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. However, gradually, it expanded its domain to include advanced or complex societies also as practised by scholars such as Edward Banfield and S. N. Eisenstadt.

> ... a survey of college curricula, course textbooks, and the literature in general will disclose a certain frequency of anthropological excursions into related areas, such as genetics, evolutionary biology, and sociology. One encounters discussions of racial types and race problems among modern rather than primitive men, investigations into the general nature of culture and the psychology of cultural change, and research into the structure and development of language .... Philosophical anthropology is the endeavor to correlate and integrate the findings of the specialized sciences in an effort to gain a picture of Man as a whole. The discipline is new because of the tremendous richness of its empirical substratum-produced by modern developments in the natural and social sciences — but ancient as a basic query raised by men in all ages. Among the many questions that are of great interest to philosophical anthropology is the controversial problem of whether man occupies a special place in the cosmic order, a position which sets him apart sharply and conspicuously from other living creatures. Philosophical anthropology also directs its attention to the relations and connections which exist between the various layers of the human personality, especially the physiological, psychological, and noetic components of human nature. Furthermore, it seeks to discern the ties which link the cultural products of man, such as law, morals, religion, and art, to his biological, psychic, and mental structure (Bodenheimer, 1971).

Among the philosophers Perlin cites several times is Ernst Cassirer, and specifically his treatise on knowledge (Cassirer, 1957). There Cassirer is not content simply to analyse various kinds of knowledge from his particular philosophical point of view but also prescribes to problems thrown up in particular sectors of knowledge. For example, he points to a so-called crisis in mathematics caused by the paradox of the theory of sets, a paradox highlighted by Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*. Cassirer has a 'solution' for that (Mind you, unlike Russell, Cassirer was no mathematician) (Cassirer, 1955, p. 366). He simply does not recognise that Russell, Whitehead and David

Hilbert's project of axiomatising all of mathematics had been destroyed by Kurt Gödel's proof that even in the simplest of mathematical system, namely, the real number system, there are undecidable propositions.

Perlin's real mentor is Immanuel Kant. From Kant he derives the idea of a priori notion of time and space. He also uses Kant's idea of the anthropology of mind. Further, he uses Kantian phenomenology in which all phenomena are framed in a priori notions of time and space. Finally, Perlin uses Kant's re-interpretation of the Biblical metaphor of the Tower of Babel. The time and space determine the form of communication, the possibility of translation of the thoughts of commodity producers and traders and the languages of diverse characters entering Perlin's narrative. In the Bible God disrupted the ambition of the Babylonians to build a tower that would reach up to Heaven by making workers speak so many diverse languages that they could not understand one another and so they could not build the projected tower.

Kant reinterpreted the metaphor of the Tower of Babel so that the diversity of languages created a multitude that spoke different languages but could transitively communicate with one another. Thus, for instance, a speaker of Greek could communicate with a Spaniard who had somehow learned Greek. He in turn could communicate with an Englishman who knew Spanish but not Greek. So the Greek-speaker could communicate transitively with the Englishman who did not know Greek. Thus the Tower of Babel became a symbol of universality and the harmony of diversity within humanity. In the central theme of commoditisation, Perlin finds that the intricacies of the media of exchange and of different trading procedures can all be captured by using this universal notion of humanity. To quote Perlin at random, 'Thus for language as for cognition, the precise differentiation of spatial *situations and distances* represents a point of departure from which it proceeds to build objective reality, to define objects. The differentiation of places serves as a basis for the differentiation of content, of the I, Thou and He on the one hand and of physical objects on the other. ... [subject/object]. The general [Kantian] *critique of knowledge* that the *act of spatial position and*

differentiation is the indispensable condition for the act of objectification in general, for 'relating the representation to the object' or as Husserl would describe it, relating the 'tree' in thought to the 'tree 'in the garden. (p. 261). The idealist frame of Perlin's discourse is obvious in this and other numerous passages: the thought comes before the object, and there is a universal human nature irrespective of the place the human beings belong to or the place in the hierarchy of class and status they occupy.

Perlin, probably bewildered by the welter of empirical data relating to commodities he had to handle, sought refuge in the kind of certainty Kant provided. As Cassier (1955, as quoted by Hendel) put it: "Hume had truly seen what philosophy was coming to nothing but doubt, uncertainty and contradiction."

With youthful prescience, at the end of the first book of his *Treatise of Human Nature,* he had described himself as having ventured out to sea on a frail raft and being ever and again frightened by the unknown reefs and dangerous waters of the deep and fated to be tossed in that "suspense of judgement", the name for which is skepticism. How could a modern philosopher ever proceed with any more confidence than Hume, whether he take the way of pure reason or that of experience? Kant provided a solution by questioning pure rationalism and providing a structure in which scientific knowledge could be embedded: in Kant's view a priori notions of time and space make scientific knowledge possible and rescue it from Humean scepticism and uncertainty. This is the kind of certainty that Perlin has sought in his Kantianism.

We shall now scrutinise how tenable is Perlin's certainty or his universalism based on unchanged nature of humankind in a world riven by class, status, power and gender, and in continual flux (for an alternative view of human nature as an integrated and adaptable entity, based on the work of Marx, Sraffa and Gramsci, see La Donne, 2021).

One of the basic themes of Perlin's book is the commoditisation of things and services. Now commoditisation can have two meanings. The first meaning was provided by Adam Smith when he said that every person has a tendency to truck and barter. In this sense even hunter-gatherers can have a tendency to barter. A hunter might want

to barter a killed deer for a beehive or a clutch of fishes. When specialisation arose, a blacksmith might barter a ploughshare for a door made by a carpenter or several kilos of rice with a farmer. When markets and long-distance trade and media of exchange arise, this kind of commoditisation becomes much more extensive and complex. Karl Marx read a new meaning into a good or service which is bought and sold. Here a social relation between a buyer and seller, or between a producer and user is reified into something external, a good or service which ceases to be identified with its creator, and the good or service becomes a 'commodity' (Marx, 1886 [1883/1867, p.68]. Perlin leaves it unclear whether he means commoditisation in Smith's or Marx's sense. Since the historical period covered is also blurred, the reader remains perplexed about it. But since most of his examples are commodities also in Marx's sense (they come from eighteenth centuries) one would have expected some discussion of the distinction between workers and owners and problems raised by them, but Perlin does not discuss any of them.

There are other problems with Perlin's analysis of the commoditisation of the global economy. He often extends the time period of his discourse to 1500 CE and brings it forward to the late eighteenth century. During this period, new technologies, new modes of transportation, advent of new goods, and discovery of new trade routes had radically changed the world of commodities in the Smithian or Marxian sense. At the height of the Ming period in China before its conquest by the Qing in 1644, China led the world in technology. The three major inventions, the compass, printing and gunpowder, that, according to Francis Bacon changed the world were all Chinese inventions. Paper also was a Chinese invention. But the European countries, after emulating their mentor, were fast catching up from the fifteenth century and soon outpaced China. From the European Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, a vast number of new commodities were discovered or invented. None of these changes find a place in Perlin's basket of unchanging commodities. From the Americas came cauliflower, tomatoes and potatoes which changed the food habits of the world. In particular, the potato became the principal staple food.

Archaeologists divide history into three periods, 'savagery', 'barbarism' and 'civilisation' (these are purely descriptive categories: 'Savages' can really be noble and 'civilized' people can be utterly barbaric. 'Savages' lived by hunting and gathering. 'Barbarians on the contrary at least supplemented these natural resources by cultivating edible plants and in the — Old World north of the Tropics — also by breeding animals for food' (Childe, 1950). Cities became important at the stage of history that archaeologists call 'civilization' when mankind invented agriculture, pastoralism and crafts and began to produce a surplus. That surplus facilitated the concentration of traders and craftsmen at a location, and rulers came up to govern them and cities became seats of power.

The first person to theorise about the importance of cities and the benefits of agglomeration was the Piedmontese monk, Giovanni Botero. Schumpeter recognised him as the pioneer of Malthusianism, but he was more than that. After Machiavelli, he was the most important proponent of the Reason of State (Botero 1956 [1589]). He was also, as noted above, the first theorist of urbanisation. Botero (1588/1606) is far more interesting than just a prefiguring of Malthusian concerns. It is one of the earliest analyses of the processes of urbanisation and agglomeration. Books 1 and 2 of his treatise is concerned with (a) what a city is, why large cities are important — mainly as seats of power and consumption of the rich and powerful — and hence as sources of employment of craftsmen and tradesmen, and also as sources of demand for agricultural products of the surrounding countryside, and (b) how cities grow. More than three-quarters of the book are concerned with these issues, and only about one eighth of the book is devoted to the limits on city growth, where the alleged prefiguring of Malthusianism occurs.

Botero pays detailed attention to the factors that promote the growth of cities or rather, agglomerations driven by trade, manufacturing and catering to the consumption demands of the rich. The location of the place as a seat of government 'authority', the use of force by the rulers of the cities to destroy other cities, the use of lures by them to attract merchants and craftsmen, the custom of the rich and powerful

who come to live there and most other factors of agglomeration through the consumption route find a mention in his analysis.

He pays special attention to the 'commodity', meaning advantage or convenience in the language used by the translator of 1606: these relate to the location of the city and the transport and exchange networks that can facilitate the transport of goods and money. Location on a navigable river and/or at a good seaport are important favourable factors in his account.

There have been cities in the world from about the last 3900 years from Babylon in the Tigris and Euphrates delta to Sian in China, Ayodhya, Indraprastha, Varanasi, Pataliputra and Delhi in India, Athens in Greece, Rome in Italy. Cities fell and rose. After the fall of the Roman Empire in Europe, for several centuries, there were virtually no cities there. When civilised life began there again, many villages had an autonomous existence (Kriedte, 1981) and there was conflict between peasants and townsmen (Le Goff,1972). Such tensions have not been mentioned by Perlin. There is something else missing in Perlin's book: while he ritually salutes commodity producers, he always stresses individualism. However, commodity production, especially in the era before the Industrial Revolution, which is the focus of Perlin's book — commodity production required cooperative action and collective regulation. In Europe, there were artisans' and merchants' guilds which had the legal right to regulate the activities of their members. In India there were merchants' panchayats or Mahajans and caste panchayats that regulated the activities of their members (Lamb, 1958).

Furthermore, the state as an actor is virtually absent in Perlin's account. But the action of the state was very important in converting England from being an exporter of raw wool to Flanders and the Continent in general to becoming first a supplier of woollen fabrics to the domestic market and then graduating to become a leading exporter of woollen cloth (List, 1909 [1841]).

The world of commodities changed greatly between 1500 and 1800. I have given a rapid sketch of some outstanding inventions in manufacturing in Great Britain that led the world until 1851, when

the British organised a Great Exhibition to showcase its manufactures. I have followed largely a chronological account focusing first on woollen cloth because that was the staple industry of Britain until the inventions in spinning and weaving transformed the cotton industry and made it the lead industry of the Industrial revolution in Britain.

There were two major areas of concentration of the woolen industry in England, western England — Wiltshire, Somerset, Gloucestershire, and Yorkshire and Lancashire in the north of England. One condition was that there must be a river or stream in which the wool could be washed (Le Mann, 1971). At first England produced broadcloth which was very heavy. Then with the import of short-staple Spanish 'merino' wool, woolen fabrics became lighter (Chevis, 2017, 2018)). For combing this wool, 'scribbling' machine which was a Dutch invention and which was manually operated was used (Le Mann, 1971; Cookson, 1998). In fact, skilled Dutch immigrants were welcomed for settling in England. The manufacture of woolen fabrics was much slower to be mechanised than cotton cloth. 'The process of carding, opening and mixing fibres prior to spinning, had been carried out with hand cards until the adoption of rotary carding from 1748. The card, or card-clothing, consists of wire staples closely set in a flexible backing, and is a consumable rather than a machine component' (Cookson, 1998). Card-making by hand was a tedious and laborious process, but it was carried out by employers with small capital employing low-skilled ill-paid labour who would otherwise have been unemployed - well into the 1840s (Le Mann, 1971). A card-making machine was patented in 1797 by Amos Whittemore of Cambridge, Massachusetts in the USA and two years later in Britain. 'An improved version was exported to Lancashire around 1810, yet it was not until 1839 that Yorkshire card-makers began a widespread adoption of the technology' (Cookson, 1998). The reason again was that small capitalists found it quite profitable to use old technologies, with cheap labour operating them.

Now I turn to technological changes in Britain's cotton textile industry, which with the help of imported Indian cotton, imitating India's printing technology, and the captive markets of slave-run plantations and after 1757 that of the extensive Indian market became

the front of Britain's Industrial Revolution. The first major invention was John Kay's flying shuttle (1733) (Mokyr, 1993a). Then came James Hargreaves's spinning jenny in 1765 and Richard Arkwright's water frame in 1769. 'These two were combined in 1779 by a third inventor, Samuel Crompton, into a hybrid of the two, appropriately called the mule. For more than a century the mule remained the backbone of the British cotton industry' (Mokyr, 1993a, p. 21).

> Initially finer fabrics required hand spinning by skilled workers and was monopolised in Europe by some Swiss towns and few places in Britain. However, Crompton's mule, which was soon spinning 80s and reached 300s by the end of the century transformed the system overnight. Thomas Ainsworth at Bolton (1780) and Samuel Oldknow at Anderton and Stockport (1782-84) began making muslins, and in 1787 Britain already produced 500,000 pieces.' (Chapman, 1972).

Then in 1785 Edmund Cartwright patented his powerloom. That went through several modifications before it was really profitable and handlooms did not entirely disappear in England until the 1830s (Sugden and Cockerill, 2018). With these inventions the fates of India's spinning industry was sealed forever, and the handloom industry went into a moribund condition until it began to revive from the very end of the nineteenth century (Bagchi, 1972, pp. 219-228). Perlin does not consider such changes worth considering.

Perlin often affects a grand manner. To give one example, he notes and dismisses Sraffa's and Pasinetti's economic theory in a footnote on page 80. It happens to be the case that the doyen of neoclassical economics, Paul Samuelson (1971, p. 400) spoke about 'the age of Leontief and Sraffa, and Pasinetti (1969) won the debate about the re-switching of techniques against Samuelson.

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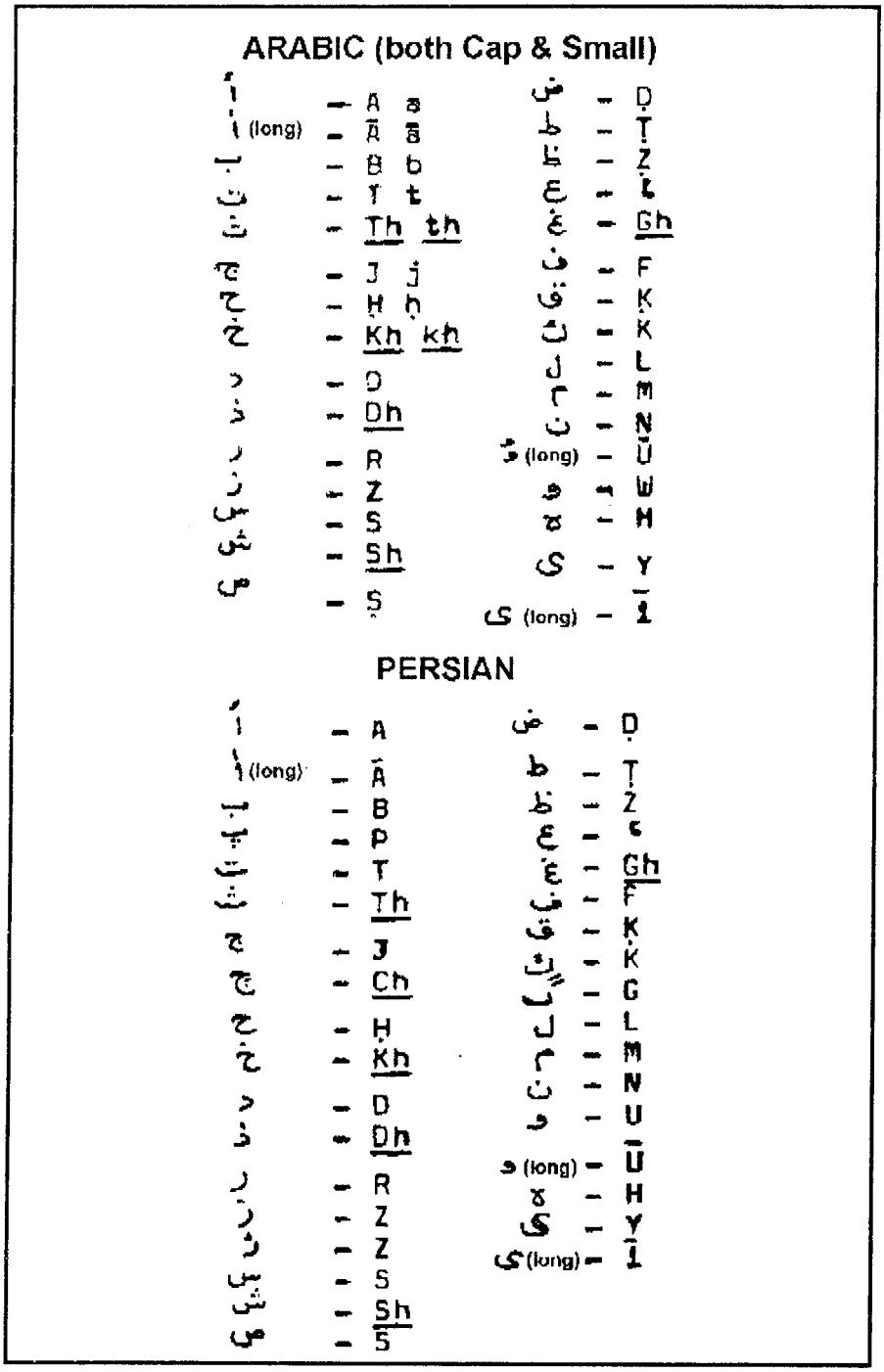
आ = ā	ई = ī
ऊ = ū	ऋ = ṛ
ङ = ṅa	च = ca
छ = cha	ञ = ña
ट = ṭa	ठ = ṭha
ड = ḍa	ढ = ḍha
ण = ṇa	श = śa
ष = ṣa	ं = ṁ

TIBETAN

ཀ = ka	ཁ = kha	ག = ga	ང = ṅa/nga
ཅ = ca	ཆ = cha	ཇ = ja	ཉ = ña/nya
ཏ = ta	ཐ = tha	ད = da	ན = na
པ = pa	ཕ = pha	བ = ba	མ = ma
ཙ = tsa	ཚ = tsha	ཛ = dza	ཝ = wa
ཞ = zha	ཟ = za	འ = 'a	ཡ = ya
ར = ra	ལ = la	ཤ = śa/sha	ས = sa
ཧ = ha	ཨ = a	6	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Sir William Jones
on the publication of the Asiatic Society

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