

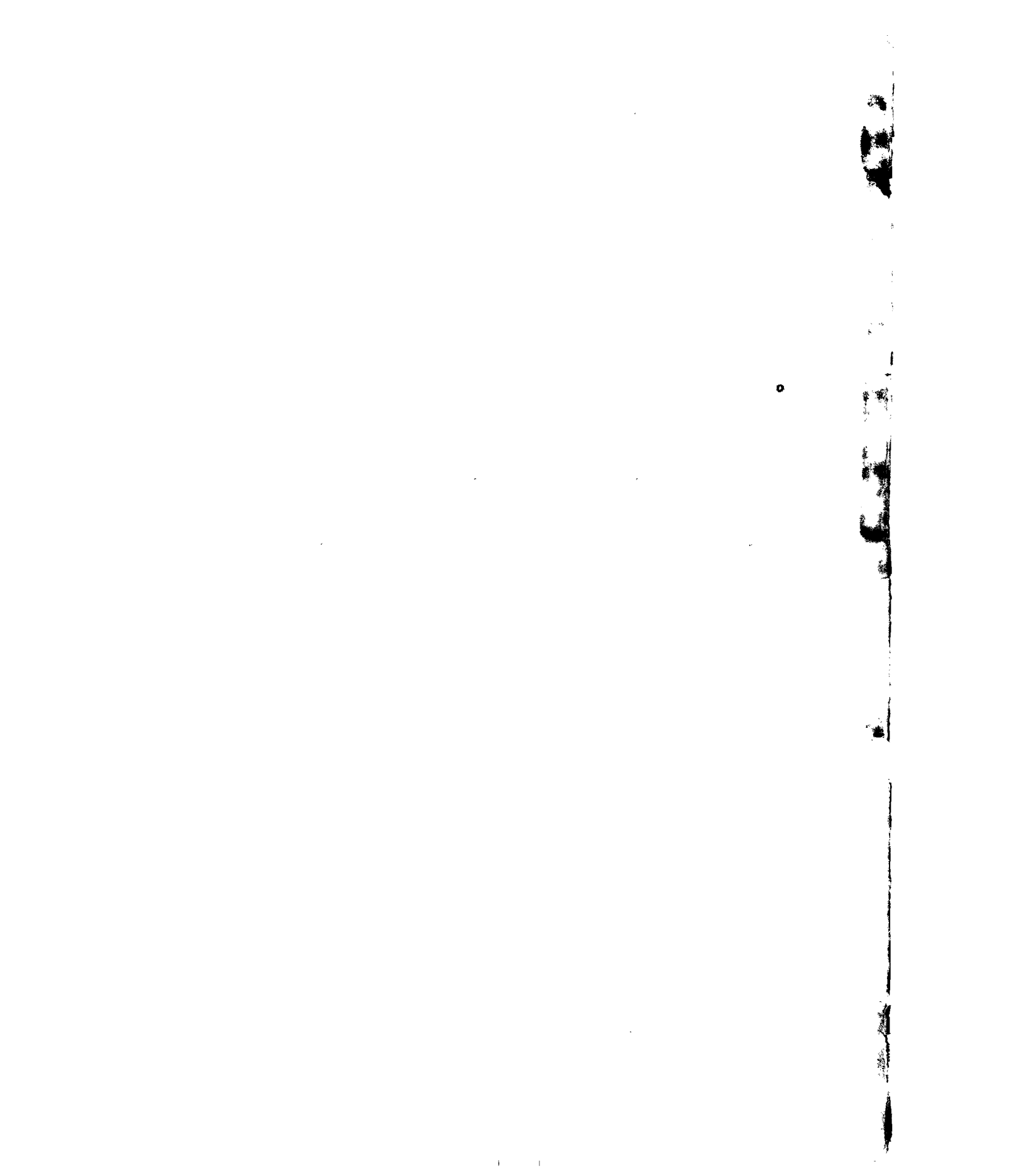
**VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY**  
**Journal of Social Sciences**

**INAUGURAL NUMBER**  
**1991-1992**

***MIDNAPORE : SOCIETY, ECONOMY AND POLITICS***



**Vidyasagar University**  
***MIDNAPORE : 721102***



In memory of

**Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar**



**Vidyasagar University**  
**Journal of Social Sciences**

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Inaugural Number

1991-1992

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**PRANAB GANGULY**

**SUVAS BOSE**

**Population Trends in Midnapore District  
West Bengal, 1872-1981**

Midnapore is a large, populous, and predominantly agricultural district situated in the south-western part of the state of West Bengal. The name of the district has been derived from the ancient town of Midnapore. The present district was formed by an official notification in the year 1872. Since then its boundaries have undergone some minor modifications and its area has increased from 13,162 sq km to 14,081 sq km. Although attempts were made to estimate the population of the region in 1837, 1852 and 1866, these estimates are not very reliable. The first census of the district was organized in 1872 and the second census in 1881. From 1881 onwards censuses have been taken at an interval of every 10 years. Data were obtained from census materials for 1872-1981 for the purpose of the present study.

A glance at Table 1 will show that the population of the district was 2.54 million only in the year 1872 and the density of population was 193 persons per sq km in that year. There was a 1.1 per cent decline in the population during the nine-year period from 1872 to 1881. This was followed by modest increases up to 1911, but a sharp decline to the extent of 5.5 per cent occurred in the decade 1911-21

bringing down the population almost to the 1891 level. The period 1921-51 is marked by modest increases, but the real increase took place only in the last three decades, i. e., 1951-81, in which the population of

TABLE I  
Growth and density of population in Midnapore district.  
West Bengal, 1872-1981

Year	Total population	Growth rate (%)	Area (sq km)	Population density per sq km
1872	2,542,920	—	13,162	193
1881	2,515,565	(-) 1.1	13,162	191
1891	2,631,466	4.6	13,326	197
1901	2,789,114	6.0	13,432	208
1911	2,821,201	1.2	13,432	210
1921	2,666,660	(-) 5.5	13,092	204
1931	2,799,093	5.0	13,585	206
1941	3,190,647	14.0	13,660	233
1951	3,359,022	5.3	13,605	247
1961	4,341,855	29.3	13,618	318
1971	5,509,247	26.9	13,724	401
1981	6,742,796	22.4	14,081	479

the district nearly doubled and the density of population per sq km showed a corresponding increase. The general pattern of the growth of population of Midnapore district agrees well with that of India as a whole. It is interesting to observe that the growth rate in India was rather erratic up to about 1911, negative in the decade 1911-21, moderate during 1921-51, and rapid thereafter. This pattern has been found in some other countries of southern and south-eastern Asia as well. (Saha and De : 1970).

The slow growth and periodical decline of Midnapore population in the 19th century and in the early part of the 20th century were no doubt partly due to the poor public health measures and high mortality prevailing at that time. On the other hand, the decennial growth of 29.3 per cent in 1951-61 was phenomenal ! We are not sure if this was entirely due to the natural increase (the difference between births and deaths) or if the migration of displaced persons from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after partitioning of India had any significant effect on the growth curve of Midnapore population.



The sex ratio of any population is generally defined as the number of males per 100 females ; it is said to be high when the males outnumber the females. Although this is the usual practice in different countries, we have followed the convention of the Indian Census and have expressed sex ratio as the number of females per 1000 males (Table 2). A careful examination of the sex ratios of Midnapore population through successive years shows that the proportion female diminished continuously from 1881 to 1971. The females actually outnumbered the males during 1872-1901 ; in 1911 the population

TABLE 2  
The distribution of population by sex and the rural-urban differences in sex ratio

Year	Population		Sex ratio (Females per 1000 males)		
	Male	Female	Overall	Rural	Urban
1872	1,258,169	1,284,751	1021	—	—
1881	1,243,195	1,272,370	1023	—	—
1891	1,308,074	1,323,392	1012	—	—
1901	1,390,233	1,398,881	1006	1009	935
1911	1,410,714	1,410,487	1000	1006	847
1921	1,339,652	1,327,008	991	997	829
1931	1,417,025	1,382,068	975	985	803
1941	—	—	955	966	798
1951	1,718,459	2,117,563	955	961	885
1961	2,224,073	2,117,782	952	968	830
1971	2,831,863	2,677,384	945	952	865
1981	3,455,375	3,287,421	951	956	902

became more or less balanced with regard to its sex composition, and from 1921 up to 1971 the males became more and more numerous. The proportion male reached the highest level in 1971, and it showed a slight downward trend in the following decade (1971-81). A similar trend in the sex ratios of the population of India as a whole through several decades has been discerned. The female component of the Indian population reached the bottom in 1971 (930 females per 1000 males) and then in 1981 a reversed trend was noticed (935 females per 1000 males). This pattern of change in sex ratios has been found in the State of West Bengal as well.

There is some evidence indicating that many more males than females are conceived and that the proportion male is also higher among foetal deaths. At birth there still are more males than females (Petersen 1975). The higher mortality of the males continues in later life and, consequently, the over-all sex ratio of a population tends to be balanced. The ratio may, however, be distorted in different circumstances. In a society where the females suffer greater deprivations in comparison with the males, the latter tend to outlive the former and the proportion male is thereby increased in the population. In India the women in general have a lower status and the female children are often neglected. This may be a reason for the continual decline of the female component in the Indian population. The recent increase in the number of females per 1000 males is of course a healthy sign. The sex ratio of Midnapore population is lower, i. e., more balanced, than that of the general Indian population. The trends of change over the years are, however, quite similar in both of the cases.

More males are generally found in cities and towns where they go in search of employment, education, etc. As a result, the urban sex ratio is invariably higher than the rural sex ratio. Midnapore district is no exception in this regard. Data on rural-urban differences in sex ratio are available from 1901 onward. It is seen that the difference was most marked in 1931 and least marked in 1981.

Now let us turn our attention to the age structure of the population of Midnapore district. In Table 3 the population has been divided into three main age categories, dependent children aged 0-14 years, active people between 15 and 64 years, and dependent elderly people aged 65 years and over. The data relate to the four census years, viz., 1951 through 1981. It will be seen that the proportion of dependent children varies between 33.75 and 44.29 per cent, and that of the active population between 52.46 and 62.83 per cent. The range of variation is rather wide. On the other hand, the old people aged 65 years and over constitute a little more than 3 per cent. Their proportion remains remarkably constant from 1951 to 1981. The increase in the proportion of children in 1961 and 1971 may perhaps be due to a gradual reduction of mortality in the 0-14 year age-group. The decrease in the proportion of children in the last census year, viz., 1981, may be explained by postulating a falling birth rate because of the spread of female education, adoption of family planning practices, etc. It may be noted in this connection that the family planning movement gained momentum in this country in 1960s and the

Government of India created a separate Department of Family Planning under the Ministry of Health and Family Planning in the year 1966. The effects of the programme began to be felt only some years thereafter.

The age structure of the population of Midnapore district reminds one of the situation that prevailed in the western countries about a century ago. About two-fifths of the population are children below 15 years, whereas the old people constitute less than 4 per cent of the total population.

The child-woman ratio is a simple measure of fertility that can be readily calculated from the census data. It is defined as the number of children under five years per 1000 women in the fecund period (15-44 years). From the available data we could calculate the ratio for the Midnapore population for three census years. In Midnapore district the child-woman ratio was 453 in 1951 which, compared to the corresponding figures of high fertility populations, is rather low. Two decades later in 1971, the ratio rose to 752 which is quite high. In 1981 the ratio dropped again to 568, i. e., to an intermediate level. How can one explain these fluctuations? It would be wrong to assume that the birth rate rose sharply and then fell. In 1951, in spite of a fairly high level of fertility, the proportion of children in Midnapore population remained at a fairly low level (about one-third of the total population) because of high infant and child mortality. Consequently, the child-woman ratio remained low. In the two decades that followed the death rate fell sharply, particularly in the 0-14 years age-group, and the children became more numerous. The proportion of children and the child-woman ratio reached the peak in 1971. The decade 1971-81 evinced a modest decline in these parameters which seems to be the combined effect of a falling death rate *and* a falling birth rate.

We calculated the index of ageing and dependency ratio by using the following formulae :

$$\text{Index of ageing} = \frac{\text{Aged 65 yrs \& over}}{\text{Children 0-14 yrs}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Dependency ratio} = \frac{\text{Children 0-14 yrs} + \text{Aged 65 yrs \& over}}{\text{Persons 15-64 yrs}} \times 100$$

Between the years 1951 and 1981, the index of ageing of Midnapore population varied between 7.34 and 10.13 (Table 3). This is indicative of a preponderance of children compared to the number of old people, and a limited span of life. The dependency ratio showed a broad

range of variation from 59.12 to 90.62 over the same period. This is primarily ascribable to the variation in the proportion of children. In Midnapore district the dependency burden mainly consists of children below 15 years, the elderly people aged 65 years and over being rather scarce. The age structure of the population of India in general is not very different from that of Midnapore.

**TABLE 3**  
**Percentage distribution of population among the three main age categories**

Year	Dependent children 0—14 years	Active population 15—64 years	Dependent aged 65 years and over	Index of ageing	Dependency ratio
1951	33.75	62.83	3.42	10.13	59.12
1961	41.76	55.12	3.12	7.47	81.42
1971	44.29	52.46	3.25	7.34	90.62
1981	40.68	55.61	3.71	9.12	79.82

The available data relating to the distribution of population by religion are presented in Table 4. It will be seen that Hinduism is the dominant religion in the district and Islam ranks second. For nearly a century from 1872 to 1971 the proportion of Hindus stayed around 90 per cent of the total population with some minor fluctuations. No consistent trend toward either increase or decrease is discernible among them. The Muslims registered an increase from 6.2 to 7.7 per cent over the same period. But, considering the long period of time

**TABLE 4**  
**Percentage distribution of population by religion**

Year	Hindu	Muslim	Others
1872	89.9	6.2	3.9
1901	88.5	6.6	4.9
1921	88.2	6.8	5.0
1931	89.1	7.6	3.3
1951	91.8	7.2	1.0
1961	92.8	7.6	0.1
1971	90.6	7.7	1.7

involved, this increase seems to be negligibly small. What is, however, interesting is not the quantum but the consistent trend of growth. The Muslim population increased very slowly but steadily up to 1931. A slight decrease was found to occur in the census year 1951; we are not sure if this was an aftermath of the partitioning of India in 1947. The diminution was soon made up and the upward trend restored. The figures showing the proportion of other religious communities in the total population of the district over the census years from 1872 to 1971 lack any consistency. They vary widely from 5 per cent (Census year 1921) to 0.1 per cent (Census year 1961). It seems to us that unlike sex and age which can be determined objectively, religion is largely a matter of self-identification, and a small tribal or religious community may identify itself with a larger religious group if it chooses to do so. This change of identity can perhaps explain, at least in part, the wide variation of the figures.

About 90 per cent of the population of Midnapore speak Bengali as their mother-tongue. Although many languages are spoken in the district, we have chosen six main languages the speakers of which are numerically dominant, and have given the relevant data in Table 5. The proportion of Bengali-speakers increased from 89.7 to 90.7 per cent of the total population in the course of two decades from 1951 to 1971. Their decennial growth rate was slightly higher than that of the general population for the corresponding decades (cf. Table 1). The Santali-speakers constitute about 5 per cent of the Midnapore population. Their growth rate was higher than the average in 1951-61, but lower in the following decade. The speakers of Urdu as their mother-tongue registered a moderate growth in 1951-61, but their number

TABLE 5  
Speakers of six main languages as mother-tongues

Mother tongue	No. of speakers			Growth rate (%)	
	1951	1961	1971	1951-61	1961-71
Bengali	3,014,102	3,909,967	4,996,763	29.72	27.80
Santali	170,607	230,568	285,212	35.15	23.70
Urdu	52,573	64,387	64,400	22.47	0.02
Hindi	43,289	45,278	52,871	4.60	16.77
Oriya	28,197	21,023	28,079	(-) 25.44	33.56
Telegu	24,983	32,185	43,682	28.83	35.72

remained virtually unchanged in the next decade, viz., 1961-71. Migration and change of identity are the two possible explanations. The Hindi-speakers increased in number much more rapidly in the district in 1961-71 than in the earlier decade. Is it possible that some Urdu-speakers were categorized as Hindi-speakers during the 1971 census operations? We are not sure. It is interesting to note that the Oriya-speakers of the district registered a 25 per cent decrease during 1951-61, but their numerical strength was found restored to the former level in 1971. This sudden drop and subsequent rise in the number of Oriya-speakers are difficult to understand. The Telegu-speakers were less in number than the Oriya-speakers in 1951, but the former increased much more rapidly and outnumbered the latter in the succeeding census years. It seems that migration has played an important role in inflating the number of the Telegu people. This has happened although Orissa is much nearer to Midnapore than Andhra Pradesh. Geographical propinquity is obviously not the most important determinant of migration.

The general literacy rate evinced a slight fall during 1901-1911 in Midnapore district, but from 1911 onward there was a continual rise (Table 6). The increase was particularly marked over the period from 1951 to 1981. The literacy rate of males was found to be consistently higher than that of females in every census year. Female education was virtually non-existent in the district in the early part of the present century. Education among the females spread slowly in the beginning ;

TABLE 6  
Literacy rates of population by sex

Year	Literacy rate (%)		
	Persons	Male	Female
1901	10.58	20.49	0.73
1911	9.36	18.06	0.67
1921	10.42	19.62	1.13
1931	15.17	27.10	2.94
1941	16.66	28.30	4.48
1951	19.05	26.62	10.82
1961	27.28	41.66	12.17
1971	32.87	45.59	19.42
1981	42.73	55.57	29.24

it gained momentum in course of time and the percentage of literate females trebled between the years 1951 and 1981. If this upward trend continues, the females may overtake the males in the not too distant future. There are considerable differences between the rural and urban literacy rates, the urban rate being invariably much higher than the rural rate. This holds true for both sexes. The literacy rate of West Bengal as a whole was formerly higher than that of Midnapore, but in the last census year, i. e., 1981, the literacy rate of Midnapore district surpassed the West Bengal average (42.73 per cent and 40.94 per cent respectively).

The data relating to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe populations of Midnapore district are presented in Table 7 for the period 1951-81. The proportion of Scheduled Castes in the total population is 14.6 per cent and that of Scheduled Tribes about 8 per cent as per the latest census. During 1951-61 the decennial growth of the Scheduled Castes was 16.7 per cent only, whereas that of the Scheduled Tribes for the same period was as high as 55.15 per cent.

TABLE 7  
Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population

	Year			
	1951	1961	1971	1981
<b>Scheduled Castes</b>				
Persons	482,793	563,406	747,497	984,731
Male	242,317	286,795	383,097	503,556
Female	240,476	276,611	364,400	481,175
Percentage in total population	14.37	12.98	13.57	14.60
Decennial growth rate (%)	—	16.70	32.67	31.74
Sex ratio (Females per 1000 males)	992	964	951	956
<b>Scheduled Tribes</b>				
Persons	212,525	329,736	442,963	538,872
Male	100,572	160,774	224,748	272,369
Female	111,953	168,962	218,215	266,503
Percentage in total population	6.33	7.59	8.04	7.99
Decennial growth rate (%)	—	55.15	34.34	21.65
Sex ratio (Females per 1000 males)	1113	1051	971	978

On the other hand, in the two decades that followed (1961-71 and 1971-81), the Scheduled Castes showed much improvement in their growth rate whereas the Scheduled Tribes evinced a distinct downward trend. Such differences are not likely to be solely due to the variation in their rates of natural increase. We have to bear in mind that the list of Scheduled Castes published in the Gazette of India in 1950 was amended subsequently on different occasions. The list of Scheduled Tribes was similarly modified. The possibility that the growth rate was inflated by the addition of new groups cannot be ruled out. The sex ratios of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe populations conform to the general all-India pattern, viz, a gradual decline of the proportion female over several decades followed by a slightly upward trend in the last census year. What must be noted, however, is that the sex ratio of the tribal population is always indicative of a larger proportion of females compared to the general population as well as Scheduled Caste population. This holds for all of the census years from 1951 to 1981. A more balanced sex composition seems to be a characteristic feature of the tribal population in this country.

The district of Midnapore is predominantly rural and agricultural. Urbanization has taken place at a very slow pace over the decades (Table 8). In 1981, the last census year, the proportion of urban population in Midnapore was 8.5 per cent only whereas the corresponding all-India figure was 23.73 per cent. An urban area is defined by the Indian Census as :

- (a) a place with a municipality, corporation, town committee, cantonment board, or any other statutory local body of similar nature ; and
- (b) a place with a minimum population of 5000 with at least 75 per cent of the male working population engaged in non-agricultural occupations and a density of population of at least 400 persons per sq km.

The Directors of Census Operations were also empowered to classify certain areas as urban should the local circumstances warrant so. The urban growth has two distinct components, viz., the continued growth of the already existing cities and towns, and the emergence of new townships at industrial centres, railheads, seats of administration, etc. In the year 1872 there were only four towns in Midnapore district. At present there are one city (Kharagpur) and as many as 17 towns including two very small townships, Kolaghat Thermal Power Project Town and Digha Township. Apart from Kharagpur which



**TABLE 8**  
**Growth and distribution of urban population**

Sl. No.	City/Town	Year					
		1872	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
1.	Kharagpur City	—	—	—	—	18,957	25,280
2.	Midnapore	31,491	33,560	32,264	33,140	32,740	28,965
3.	Contai	—	—	—	—	—	—
4.	Ghatal	15,492	12,638	13,942	14,525	12,064	10,770
5.	Tamluk	5,849	6,044	6,612	8,085	8,048	8,348
6.	Jhargram	—	—	—	—	—	—
7.	Haldia	—	—	—	—	—	—
8.	Kolaghat	—	—	—	—	—	—
9.	Chandrakona	21,311	12,257	11,309	9,309	8,121	6,470
10.	Ramjibanpur	—	—	—	10,264	8,481	6,700
11.	Amalgora	—	—	—	—	—	—
12.	Mahishadal	—	—	—	—	—	—
13.	Garbeta	—	—	—	—	—	—
14.	Kshirpai	—	—	—	5,045	4,605	3,756
15.	Balichak	—	—	—	—	—	—
16.	Kharar	—	—	—	9,508	8,839	6,580
17.	Kolaghat Thermal Project Town	—	—	—	—	—	—
18.	Digha Township	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Urban Total	74,143	64,499	64,127	89,876	101,855	96,869
	Urban % in total population	2.9	2.6	2.4	3.2	3.6	3.6

TABLE 8 (contd.)

Sl. No.	City/Town	Year					
		1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
1.	Kharagpur City	58,134	87,135	129,636	147,253	161,257	232,575
2.	Midnapore	32,021	43,171	45,476	59,532	71,326	86,118
3.	Contai	5,259	6,746	12,738	22,094	27,355	35,780
4.	Ghatal	12,400	17,226	16,125	21,062	27,570	35,443
5.	Tamluk	9,095	12,079	13,599	17,986	22,478	29,367
6.	Jhargram	—	—	7,975	13,965	19,237	26,707
7.	Haldia	—	—	—	—	9,968	21,122
8.	Kolaghat	—	—	—	—	13,371	17,406
9.	Chandrakona	6,016	6,411	5,717	7,383	9,811	13,410
10.	Ramjibanpur	6,230	6,036	7,539	7,621	10,364	12,308
11.	Amalgora	—	—	—	7,590	8,312	12,162
12.	Mahishadal	—	—	—	5,210	9,852	11,878
13.	Garbeta	—	—	4,806	6,545	7,542	9,700
14.	Kshirpai	3,693	3,623	4,246	5,803	7,075	9,552
15.	Balichak	—	—	—	6,333	7,376	8,663
16.	Kharar	5,736	5,570	5,023	5,909	7,262	8,369
17.	Kolaghat Thermal Project Town	—	—	—	—	—	1,303
18.	Digha Township	—	—	—	—	—	894
	Urban Total	138,584	188,047	252,880	334,286	420,156	572,757
	Urban % in total population	5.0	5.9	7.5	7.7	7.6	8.5

was a late-starter but recorded a phenomenal growth, most of the towns of the district increased very slowly in size. In fact, most of the older towns declined in population number at some stage. Some of them showed signs of revival only in recent times. The towns of Midnapore may constitute the subject-matter of a very interesting study from anthropological standpoint.

*Acknowledgements*

We are indebted to Dr Tarun Kumar Banerjee and Mr Abhijit Guha of Vidyasagar University for the useful suggestions and kind co-operation.

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PREMANANDA PRADHAN

## The History of Maljhita and Its Evolution

The place-name 'Maljhita' is now non-existent. But it was once a social, political, cultural and linguistic entity. In the process of its evolution through different periods of history, it played a significantly formative role that went a long way towards giving this area a socio-cultural as well as a linguistic profile. This area covered a wide tract of land, though not initially, and brought within its jurisdiction such areas as the whole of Contai subdivision, the northern portion of the Baleswar district across the Subarnarekha, and the three thanas—Nandigram, Mahisadal and Satahata—under Tamluk subdivision. The influences—native as well as foreign—which gave this geographically located area a distinct form and stature, ultimately got themselves fully absorbed in the social texture of the region. Since the inception, Maljhita went on enlarging its dimensions till the origin of Chakla-Hijli. In course of numerous changes through many a subtle and unsuspected way, the people of the region under discussion still maintain their native traits and traditions which went deep into the alluvial infra-structure of the land itself. But how long will this process continue ?

The name *Maljhita* which remained alive in the Revenue records only, but mostly forgotten at present, even by the bulk of its own population, has the proud privilege of being recollected into memory with its glorious and recordable past. All that we are, came from what we were, as much as the future will come from what we make of ourselves in the present.

*Maljhita*—the name as a toponym has been effaced from the political or the geographical map of Bengal. Since its inception, the region under discussion had undergone numerous changes and volitions, yet it is a fact that it had been able to maintain its identity and location for centuries along the coast-line of the Bay of Bengal, covering the entire southern and south-eastern segment of the district of Midnapore. The tenure that *Maljhita* enjoyed is considered to be the most important formative period of the cultural as well as linguistic ethos of that part of the country it was named for. The Middle-Bengali traits and traditions prevailing in different culturally and linguistically stratified units of this area are characterized even today by a kind of kinship with one another, even to the extent of being projected as one culture-zone or one language-area, and these affinities as well as differences are more for the physical factors of the region than the political. Thus, *Maljhita* had an ecologically consolidated structure, influenced mostly by its rivers, the sea, terrains, wide forests, soil, climate, and above all, its human resources. Later, it was during the rule of the Hindu kings of ancient Orissa, *Maljhita* attained for the first time the status of a socio-political complex.

The political area of *Maljhita* did not initially cover a wide tract of land. According to L. S. S. O'Malley, *Maljhita* covered the entire portion ranging from the Haldi river on the north to the Subarnarekha on the south-west. In other words, *Maljhita*, at its primary stage, covered a certain portion of the Baleswar district on the northern side of the river Subarnarekha, the whole of the present Contai subdivision, consisting of areas under Contai, Ramnagar, Bhagwanpur, Egra, Pataspur and Digha thanas, and also the Nandigram thana under the present jurisdiction of the Tamluk subdivision.

But the history of *Maljhita* is the history of its occasional changes, geographical as well as political. It survived the test of time since the beginning of the Hindu rule in Orissa down to the introduction of the English rule in Bengal. It has been pointed out by Rakhaldas Bondopadhyaya that Kapilendra (1435-1470) 'succeeded in conquering the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal from Hughli in Bengal to Trichinopoly in Madras'.<sup>1</sup> In M.M. Chakravarty's account, *Maljhita* is authenticated to be a geographical unit, covering mostly the coastal areas along the Bhagirathi and the Bay of Bengal, ranging between the Rupnarayana and the Subarnarekha.<sup>2</sup> The Hindu kings of Utkal extended their kingdom northwards across the river Subarnarekha, extending even to the southern limit of the river Rupnarayana. The

great poet Kalidasa in his *Raghuvansa* has referred to the Utkal boundary just from the southern limit of the river Kapisa (mod. kansai or Kansavati).<sup>3a</sup> F.G. Pargiter has referred to the composition of the Utkal kingdom with the whole of Baleswar district and the southern part of the district of Midnapore,<sup>3b</sup> and hence Utkal Province was made of the northern portion of ancient Kalinga.<sup>4</sup> It is in this context that Sarada Charan Mitra, the famous linguist has, in his *Utkale Sri-Chaitanya* considered the term 'utkal' as a combined portomanteau form of 'ut' and 'kal', i.e., 'uttar-kalinga'. In *Chaitanya Bhagvat*, Chaitanyadev's landing in Utkal in 1507 just after crossing the Bhagirathi near Hajipur (Diamond Harbour) amply justifies this contention.

It is a fact that very little has been done to preserve the records through which we may infer something regarding this area and its surroundings. Moreover, the capillary attraction of the saline climate of the region has made it almost impossible to maintain the records of historical importance, and to help ascertain the character of the land and its people, its language and culture, as it was in the past. In this respect, *Madlapanji*, the old, worn-out manuscript, but carefully preserved, in the temple of Lord Jagannatha at Puri, deserves special mention. This manuscript on palm-leaves throws sufficient light on the nature and constitution of *Maljhita* as a 'dandapath', and plays a significantly contributory part towards the assessment of the territorial boundary of the region under discussion. This 'dandapath' (didnapita) 'covered generally a considerable tract of the country, and corresponded to the Sanskrit 'bhukti' used in Bengal and Mithila'<sup>5</sup>, and out of the thirty-one 'dandapaths', six were included within the framework of what we call Midnapore district, and *Maljhita* 'dandapath' covered a sizable portion of the present Coatai subdivision. But curiously enough, Tamralipti (modern Tamluk) was conspicuous by its absence from the pages of the *Madlapanji* perhaps because of its existence as an independent political unit outside the territory of the Utkal kingdom. But *Maljhita* 'dandapath' went on changing its geographical dimensions in direct response to the whims of Nature, sometimes by means of adding a new area to, and sometimes by taking out another from, the original one. It is due to this dimensional expansion that *Maljhita* was considered to be the most important and resourceful unit of the Utkal kingdom. During the first part of the sixteenth century, one Gopinath Pattanayak was placed in charge of administration of *Maljhita* (Maljatha) 'dandapath',<sup>6</sup> and the successors of Gopinath had perhaps been awarded with royal assignments connected

with regional administration till the introduction of the Muslim rule in Orissa. The prevalence of 'Pattanayak', a much used title in this coastal belt evinces much proof in this respect as it refers to 'the person in charge of administration, or the chief of the city-soldiers'. In Jarret's edition of the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Hijli has been considered as part of the *Maljhita* 'dandapath' under Jaleswar Sarkar, but according to Grant's *Statistical Accounts of Bengal* (1728), Majnamutha and Jalamutha parganas became reorganised, and subsequently annexed to the *Maljhita* 'dandapath'.

Though the coastal tract extending itself from the Haldi river to the Subarnarekha finds its entry in the *Ain-i-Akbari*,<sup>7</sup> yet it is a fact that *Maljhita* finally covered a wider tract even beyond the Haldi river on the north. With the succession of the Solar dynasty after the fall of the Gangas, the region under study was given a special cognizance, which continued its prestigious role in the infrastructure of the Utkal kingdom on account of its capacity to yield and pay more to the royal exchequer, till the defeat of Mukundadev (1568) at the hands of the so-called Kala Pahar, the general of Suleman Karrani.<sup>8</sup> The Hindu culture then received a tremendous shake-up, ultimately leading to the formation of a newer culture-complex, and this process of social and political transformation became more intensified by the subsequent attacks launched by Sultan Hossain Shah of Bengal and also by Pathan invaders before 1568 A.D. From *Mughal-Tamasha* a popular folk-lore in Bhadrak area in the district of Balasore,<sup>9</sup> it is evident that the Pathan invasions before 1568 failed to inflict any tangible injury to Orissa, but it can safely be argued that Orissa's suzerainty over this region that lay stretched along the coasts of the Bay of Bengal across the river Subarnarekha had considerably been loosened. It was under such a perspective that *Maljhita* gradually attained an independent culture as well as an independent language form which, as a matter of fact, are neither Oriya proper, nor standard Bengali, but sharing the features of both. This acculturation or growth of a mixed culture, a mixed language and a mixed economy was the resultant of the gradually loosening influence of Orissa on this area on the one hand and the growing sense of independence among the *Maljhitanas* on the other. Orissa's influence on this region received a setback inversely with the gradual expansion of the Mughal administration in the eastern sector of India and also by the formation of the *Suba Bangla*. The headquarter was shifted to Bengal, and Orissa came to be recognised as a constituent part of the *Suba*

of Bengal. Late Birendra Nath Sasmal, while launching his tirade against the British endeavour to partition Midnapore, opined that though the term 'Bengal' could be found in some works of history or geography to signify Orissa along with Bengal proper, yet it is a fact that no portion of Orissa could be confounded with Bengal proper because of this political annexation of Orissa into Bengal.

During the first part of the sixteenth century, Sarkar Jaleswar was divided into twenty eight mahals by Todormal, of which the *Maljhita* mahal was assessed as the 'second highest revenue of the Sarkar'.<sup>10</sup> According to the sources available, *Maljhita* mahal covered at that time almost the whole of the Contai subdivision excluding Orisa Balisai and also the eastern segment of the present Tamluk subdivision. The reclassification of the *Suba Bangla* into thirty four 'Sarkars' under the Subedarship of Prince Suja made it possible to favour the emergence of *Maljhita* Sarkar with an area covering the whole of the Contai subdivision, excepting certain portions of the Egra and Ramnagar thanas and also the fringe areas of the Nandigram thana, that extended along the coast-line up to the point where the river Haldi met with the Bay of Bengal.

During the reign of Shah Jahan, the Portuguese sea-pirates, in collaboration with the Muggs, unleashed a reign of terror along the coast-line, and *Maljhita* had been worst affected by the frequent attacks of these moorish plunderers. With a view to giving an effective check to these vagrants and the invading Muggs, Hijli Fouzdari and Baleswar Fouzdari were founded, of which the first one was taken out of *Suba Orissa* 'so as to enable imperial fleets stationed at Dacca to guard against these piratical raids.'<sup>11</sup> Thenceforward the said portion of Midnapore had been annexed to Bengal,<sup>12</sup> and each of these Fouzdaries was placed in charge of a Fouzdar under the Mughal government, a Magistrate of the Police over a large district, who used to deal with all criminal matters within his jurisdiction, and had sometimes been empowered as Receiver General of Revenue.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the six Sarkars had, again, been subdivided, and the portion which had been brought within the territory of Bengal was known as 'Kismat Sarkar.'

In 1658 Sultan Suja introduced a new revenue system which resulted directly in the exclusion of certain portions of the area under Ramnagar and Egra thanas, and annexation of Mahisadal mahal to 'Kismat Sarkar *Maljhita*.' From O'Malley's description in the *Midnapore District Gazetteer*, it may safely be assumed that the territories within the present jurisdictions of Mahisadal, Sutahata and Nandigram thanas



were in their embryonic shape, and ceased to be considered habitable before the seventeenth century. From the maps of D'Barros (1553), Vandane Brouck (1660) and Bowrey (1687), the areas mentioned above became habitable a little earlier than the commencement of habitation in the Hijli island, cut off from the mainland of Khedglee (mod. Khejuri) by the river Cawkhali.<sup>14</sup> These two islands, in course of time, became merged with each other, and extended the physical boundary of *Maljhita* to a considerable extent.

In 1722 Murshid Quli Khan, the then Subedar of Bengal, reorganised thirty four Sarkars into thirteen Chaklas and 1660 parganas. From that time onwards, 'mahals' were recognised as 'parganas', and the thirty five parganas under Kismat Jaleswar, Kismat *Maljhita* and Kismat Mujkuri, formerly annexed to Hijli Fouzdari, had been incorporated into one political unit, known as 'Chakla-Hijli'.

But this Chakla-Hijli should not be confounded with the earlier 'chakla' system, for 'chakla' was in existence in Akbar's time.<sup>15</sup> But the development of 'chakla' as an administrative unit was accounted for along with the work of Murshid Quli Khan. Chakla-Hijli was, thus, the enlarged edition of *Maljhita* Sarkar, and the formation of the former sounded the death-knell of the latter, especially from the side of political nomenclature of Bengal. According to the informations available from the data supplied by Mr Grant,<sup>16</sup> only thirty eight parganas in Chakla-Hijli were said to have existed in the year 1728, and the total area of the land was fixed to have been 1,098 square miles.

On the basis of documentary evidences, the river Subarnarekha is generally accepted as the southern and the south-eastern boundary line of *Maljhita*; it was so during the last Nawabs of Bengal. It has also been stated in the *Skanda-Purana*,<sup>17</sup> and also by Cunningham<sup>18</sup> that the Subarnarekha was the northern boundary of Orissa. But in the eighteenth century a vast stretch of land in the coastal areas extending from the Subarnarekha to its uppermost limit that touched the southern bank of the Rupnarayana was virtually in Orissa's possession,<sup>19</sup> and was subsequently incorporated into Bengal. Thus the areas so covered under the jurisdiction of *Maljhita* are :

- (i) a certain portion of the district of Baleswar on the northern side of the river Subarnarekha ;
- (ii) the whole of Contai subdivision, excluding the western fringe of the Egra (Agrapattan) thana ; and,

- (iii) the three thanas—Nandigram, Mahisadal and Suta-hata under Tamluk subdivision.

Side by side with the territorial expansion of the region under study, certain influences were actively, but silently, at work to give this geographically-located area a socio-political, a socio-cultural as well as an eco-linguistic stature. These are :

- a) the influences of the geographical conditions of the region ;
- b) the native influences ;
- c) the influences hailing directly from Orissa ;
- d) the Turko-Afghan and the Mughal influences ; and,
- e) the influences of some European countries through the English, the Portuguese etc.

But all these influences were never seen to be collectively present in the formation of the *Maljhita* complex as it is today. They worked differently at different stages of history in full agreement with the physical or political ramifications which were frequently introduced in this region. For example, *Maljhita* area is of a much later origin than Tamralipta or Tamralipti, though these two neighbouring areas can at present be put in the same ecological scale. In the *Vishnu Purana*<sup>20</sup> written in the sixth century A.D. Tamralipta is said to have been situated on the bank of the Bay of Bengal. In S. Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World*,<sup>21</sup> and also in Cunningham's *Ancient Geography of India*,<sup>22</sup> the Sea was taken to be eight miles off from Tamralipta. But the recession of the Sea at later periods of history from the vicinity of Tamluk for over thirty miles towards the east and the south east is a positive indication of the later origin and development of the *Maljhita* area. This idea has been authenticated by the absence of any reference to this region in Hu-en-Tsang's itinerary (7th century A.D.).

Similarly, from C.R. Wilson's map (1687) of the battlefield at Hijli<sup>23</sup>, and also by the direct survey of the land, it can safely be assumed that the physical factors that led to the formation of the place-name 'Kathi' (< Oriya, Kanthi = wall) has received a sea change with the passage of time. The elevated sandy wall, nearly twenty seven miles in its length, remains extended from Rasulpur to Pipleypattan, and supposed to have been caused by inundation or tidal onslaught that led to 'the formation of the Chilka lake in the third century of our era'<sup>24</sup>, does not exert so much influence as it did earlier in its task of preserving the ecological balance of this

region. Even towards the middle of the sixteenth century, the area characterized by this dune, was covered with 'bushes, thickets, and little woods, which extend some distance inland and in which there are many serpents, rhinoceros, wild buffaloes and especially tigers... Therefore on my way we only saw one little clay fort, where some negroes (?) were existing wretchedly enough.'<sup>25</sup> The name of the village 'Athilagori' situated on this dune, which provides us with an idea of the supposed existence of a surrounding wall made of hard and greasy 'athila' soil, raised mostly by its inhabitants with a view to protecting themselves from the attack of the ferocious animals and reptiles, still exists, but the unfavourable atmosphere in which they had to live is at present a non-entity. A host of similar place-names connected with trees and plants growing abundantly in coastal areas, or with the Sea, rivers, marshy areas, or with names of birds and beasts, now speak differently with regard to their ecological past. The names of some such places, if taken together, invariably go a long way towards the determination of the basic character of the land, e.g., Hijli (<haijja as in *Digvijay Prakash*), Jhaoa, Kiagara, Khagrabani, Kharki, Gamakhali > Goekhali Khirisbari, Akandabari (-da) : Lauda, Marisda, Jhaporda, Amarda, Nachinda, Kamarda, Sarda, Khakurda ; Dekhali, Tekhali, Jhinuk-khali, Caukhali, Madhakhali ; Mahisadal, Hanschara, Barachira, Dowki ; Birbandar (a big port area), Birkul (a wide stretch of sea beach), Bhanganmari (an eroding path of the river or the Sea), Ujanbari (an outlet of the sea water), Bahiri (outer area to the Sea), Dariapur (the place coming out from the Sea), Baharganj (a wine-producing area situated on the outskirts of the mainland), Samudrapur, Patna etc. In a like manner, the 'jalpai' mahals meant originally for fuels (jal = fuel or firewood, pai < Oriya pai = for) by the Nimak mahals have changed their geographical as well as ecological character as part of the Vati Pradesh. 'The low marshy lands of Hijli were anciently called Batty'<sup>26</sup> as the places used to remain mostly submerged during the full-tide, but remained visible during ebb-tide. The western part of this Vati region on the other side of the Hughli river became gradually worthy of habitation, and was later known as Hijli.

Like its climatic and ecological conditions, the place-names have undergone a process of evolution in their spellings and pronunciations. The confusions arising out of different forms in connection with the foreigners' pronunciation-peculiarities a host of words for Hijli, e.g., Ingili, Angelim, Hingeli, Kedgeli, Inggilee, Ingeily, Ingelie, Hidgley,

Hidgelee etc. Mr Lindsay Emerson writes : "We shall begin by recalling that in the nineteenth century, and still more the eighteenth, many a short 'e' was pronounced as it is today in 'pretty', 'general', for instance, was clearly pronounced 'gineral', and not merely in Ireland. W. S. Gilbert, in the *Pirates of Penzance*, rhymes with 'mineral'. To take an example nearer home, 'Kedgerree' was equally plainly, and correctly, pronounced 'kijri', not in the way it is in England now."<sup>27</sup>

Anyway, Hijli area is not a region of very ancient origin ; it just raised its head from the head of the Sea after *Maljhita* paled into insignificance on account of the establishment of a political unit in the region. In the Land and Revenue system of ancient Orissa, and also in that of Todormal, Hijli has not received any mention. It was during the reign of Shah Suja, that Hijli received its due recognition as a separate district, and it was incorporated within the framework of the district of Midnapore not earlier than the year 1836. Even in 1660 Khan-i-Dauran, the ruler of Orissa, dropped his cavalry expedition against some of the hostile zeminders of this region in consideration of the traffic inaccessibility of the area.<sup>28</sup> In 1687-88 Job Charnock's expedition in the riverine tracts of the region was abandoned on similar grounds. The climatic condition of the coastal areas of the south-east Midnapore, the so-called 'Lona-Hijli' or 'Pangabhumi', as recorded in the *Tattva Bodhini Patrika* in 1862 A.D., does in no way coincide with that of the present. The total population of the area was estimated to have not been more than two lakhs only.

The physical impact of the Pathan and the Mughal rule in *Maljhita* area can be traced even today in some place-names, e.g., Ikhtiarpur, Mirzapur, Daudpur, Mahammadpur, Mobarakpur, Masandalipur, Jahanabad, Fairampur etc., whereas some other place-names of the locality bear unmistakably the mark of the Hindu rule in Orissa. e.g., Chaitanyapur, Chairadhara, Rautra (< Rajaputra), Chatia, Majnamutha, Sujamutha, Deulbarh, Raghunathbari, Basudevpur, Jagannathpur, Banamalipur, Gopinathpur, Mukundapur, Madhabpur, Brajakishorepur, Urdhabpur, Gokulnagar, Krishnanagar, Kanaidighi, Pratapdighi etc. Certain place-names represent Hindu goddesses, and hint at the growth and development of the *Sakti* cult in lower Bengal during the later part of the Middle Ages, e.g., Basulichak, Bhabanichak etc. The devastations caused by frequent inundations led to the destruction of temples, or deposition of extra layers of earth on them, and this has been evidenced by such place-names as 'Deulpota', 'Manglapota' etc. The place-names associated with Muslim Pirs or

Gazis as combined forms of Perso-Arabic and Aryan words, like Masandalipur, Alaichak, Gazipur etc. are reminiscent of the process of the social and religious acculturation that went on parallelly between the Hindus and the Muslims in this cross-culture zone. The co-existence of 'thans' of the Kaivarta goddesses like Sitala, Basuli, Manasa etc., or the 'astanas' of the Pirs or the aulias as found in places like Nij-Kasba, Dhanyakhola, Mokamgora, Gokulnagar, Kasba Amarshi etc., are indicative of the mixed culture of the region. The affixes or suffixes attached to some kherwari/Aryan/Perso-Arabic/foreign roots led to the growth of a mixed dialect. The inter-mixture between the Aryan and the non-Aryan elements in the vocables of the dialect prevailing in the region does not necessarily prove that they had their basis on Oriya proper. These sub-dialects were initially no better than regional idiolects, which, by means of mutual contacts between the earlier settlers of the land and the immigrants from outside, took a particular shape in the process of which Oriya proper might have played its intermediary role. "Probably originally owning some non-Aryan language, they arrived in Midnapore speaking a corrupt patois of Oriya, and on this as a basis, they have built the dialect of Bengali which they speak in their present home."<sup>29</sup> The homogeneity of customs and regional interests, the 'folk-ways' of their life and living which, as a matter of fact, sometimes crisscrossed and sometimes combined, found a nexus in the Shiva of Chandaneswar or the Jagannatha of Puri. Dr Sukumar Sen, the famous linguist and litterateur, has referred to the cultivation of Oriya language in the southern part of Bengal, even during the first part of the eighteenth century :

Pitri bashare palila satya kari  
Bangla Pharsi urya paraila nagri

But the social classifiers which remained alive in different culture-zones existing between two natural isoglosses like the rivers—Kansai (< Kansavati), Silai (< Silavati), Keleghai (< Kalighai) and Bagda-Rasulpur—made each geographically located area distinctly variable from the other in tone, intonation and application of their speech. Grierson's concept of 'Midnapore Oriya' was applicable only to those speakers of *Maljhita* who lived for years in the southern part of it, that lay stretched along the Bengal-Orissa borderline, but not in cases of those who lived in the northern sector of the region under consideration. The influences of the Turko-Afghan and the Mughal rule on this part of the land is highly discernible even at present.

With the rapid growth of the communication system between the people of different physically stratified areas, the people of this region are on their way to establish a standard form of their language and culture, mostly unconsciously. The alluvial character of the land and the soil was too sincere to refuse anything that came within their fold. Only the patois-speaking aboriginals who were true to their native traditions, and accepted them with a kind of patriotic fervour, left the alluvial plain for good only to settle in the laterite regions of the district outside the *Maljhita* complex. A village-name under Khejuri P. S., Saontalchak, (saontal + chak) is at present bereft of having a single Santhal to justify its existence.

Indeed, the language and culture of *Maljhita* has undergone a remarkable process of evolution concurrently with *Maljhita's* physical, geographical and political features. The speech-pattern dictated mostly by proverbs, idioms and idiomatic phrases in their local forms and colours, as used especially by women-folk who are legendarily famous for their conservatism, still maintains, and is likely to maintain for yet sometime in conformity with the nativity of the land and its people in all spheres of social life, however stratified it may be. The majority of the cultivating people, irrespective of any caste or creed, remain engaged with agriculture all the year through, heedless of the rapid changes that are taking place around them. The fishermen who live outside the 'hasia bandh', and depend entirely on the sea to wrest a mere pittance are still in the habit of talking at the pitch higher than the average so as to keep their voice at par with the roaring sea-waves. Gone are the days of the English and the Portuguese ; but their influences still persist through certain variably used words 'pansi' (< pinnace) or 'paukha' (< porka)—the two most important instruments of the sea-faring people of the region. Some villages situated in the vicinity of the Sea, like Junput, Aladarput, Bankiput etc. are still in existence, but the system of exporting 'patta-bastra' through these riverine business pots is now a thing of the past. Oriya 'Pator', a weaver class,<sup>30</sup> has been transformed into 'Patra', a commonplace title among the cultivating people of the region. Similarly, some Shen Tamils migrated from the Deccan, who were occupationally weavers, have changed their social identity ; but the weaver's sley remains, called 'sana.' Gone are those Khadems, Gurias, Gouras, Dhamsas and Gharials with their respective vocations and jobs ; but they still survive without any royal patronage from Taj Khan. The totem culture is still found to be in vogue, but only

in certain restricted areas of social and religious life. The fear from tigers, serpents, crocodiles and infectious diseases are no more, but the gods and goddesses like Dakshin Ray, Kalu Ray, Banabibi, Ola Bibi, Gazi Saheb, Baba Saheb, Barathakur etc. are still worshipped by the Hindus and the Muslims alike. The village-name, 'Baratala', signifies a place of collective worship of Bara Thakur, and the Santhali word 'barea' means 'two' or 'another'. This emotional synthesis lay embedded in the hearts of the *Maljhitans* for ages together by means of certain collective observances of rites and rituals as secular fairs (e.g., Toofan Gazir Mela), agricultural festivals, Muharam, Rath-Jatra etc. irrespective of any caste or creed, faith or religion. In the local folk-lore, 'Masandalir Geet', the marriage celebrated between Masandali and Rupavati, the daughter of one Hari Sau of Kulapara under Nandigram P.S., has become identified with the marriage of two opposite faiths. In Hijli area Baba Masandali is adored in a like manner as Dakshin Ray or his brother Kalu Ray, who had been elevated to the position of demi-gods by virtue of their chivalry or generosity :

ekhane Dakshin Ray  
 sab bhati adhikar  
 Hijlite Kalu Raykhana,  
 sarbatra saheb Pir  
 sab noahibe sir  
 keha tare na karibe mana.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, the overall geographical and ecological conditions of this region have gone a long way towards the constitution of various forms of organic societal life, especially of wealth and health, of size and energy, of population, customs and social organisations of castes, creeds and philosophies, and, above all, a mixed dialect and a mixed culture. The psychology of the forces at work were caught unawares in the social scheme of things by the inhabitants of this region, who were never subject to any organized hostility against their surroundings. The salubrious climate and sufficiency in food made them invariably lazy and complacent from long time past ; lack of communication with the neighbouring areas made them rigid and traditional in their outlook ; with a disliking for progress, and to some extent mostly orthodox and conservative in their way of life and thought. The strict adherence of its inhabitants to the rules of the environment they had been put to work parallelly with their habitual indifference to ignore what had naturally been accepted *a priori*. The geographical phenomena,

even to the extent of dictating the nature and terms of contact with the outside influences, do constitute the underlying force of the life-style of its people. The dimensional enlargement of the sphere of *Maljhita's* social life is conditioned by an identical combination of the non-human and the human element into one geographical unit. The outside influences too have, in course of time, been subjected to a new environment conditioned mostly by its physical features. Similarly, the principle of miscegenation strengthened by organic accretions from outside has provided the people of this region a special character that gives birth to a living matrix or nucleus in the process of an independent or individual involution in numerous subtle and unsuspected ways. All that the *Maljhitas* have so far attained through the corridors of time are very likely to be preserved by means of fighting from the outposts even after losing the citadel. The rapid urbanisation in this geographical unit, precipitated mostly by the establishment of a sea-resort at Digha and an industrial complex at Haldia, is really a menacing challenge to its people.

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**SACHINANDAN SAU**

## **Economics of Haldia Port Complex**

Haldia oil jetty was commissioned in 1968 and Haldia Dock Complex in 1977. The facilities at Calcutta Port<sup>1</sup> (including Haldia) have improved thereby but the share of Calcutta-Haldia Port in the total volume of cargo handled by all major ports of India have declined. Moreover, the huge infrastructural facilities created in Haldia port complex have remained substantially under-utilised. What could be the best possible explanations for this fact? The question may be posed in a slightly different form. What are the major problems which are hindering the growth of Haldia Port? The present note attempts at examining the possible factors and argues that the problem of under-utilisation of Haldia Port complex can be better explained in terms of some demand factors, namely, economic factors and policy variables than the usual supply factors, namely, physical, technological and institutional limitations that are frequently talked of in the press, administrative and business circles.

The plan of this paper is as follows. Section I discusses the rationale behind the creation of Haldia Port. Section II reviews the performance of Haldia Port and Section III tries to identify the factors

causing the various bottlenecks. Section IV reviews Haldia Port planning and Section V makes concluding observations.

## I

Haldia port was conceived to supplement the facilities which were deficient in Calcutta Port in relation to the growing volume and changing pattern of sea-borne trade in India and thus to secure for Calcutta Port a proper share of the country's growing traffic. The main difficulties of Calcutta Port emanated from two conflicting developments—the deterioration of the Hooghly river and technological advances of shipping.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, owing to the increasing siltation of the Hooghly, its navigational channel had been progressively deteriorating and this has been causing sharp reduction in draft availability ; on the other, there had been developments in the shipping world in the form of an increase in the size of ships. One of the factors leading to the increase in the size of ships has been the closure of the Suez Canal in 1957 increasing the distance of the voyage between India and Europe. Now, as Bennathan and Walters<sup>8</sup> have shown, the optimum size of a vessel increases with the distance of the voyage. It was also observed that as the size of ships increases, so their cost of capital, crew, fuel, insurance, and maintenance per ton of cargo diminishes. Other costs, such as the dues levied by port authorities, either fall to a smaller extent or remain the same.<sup>4</sup> Goss argued in addition that more than 75 per cent of the total tonnage of sea-borne cargo all over the world consisted of oil or dry bulk commodities (such as grain, ore, coal, sugar and fertiliser) and these were carried in ships in which the increased size would lead to a marked economy in operating cost. Calcutta Port faced difficulties in providing requisite drafts even for medium ships, particularly vessels carrying bulk cargo. These ships could not arrive or sail off fully laden due to draft restrictions. It was observed that in 1964 ships carrying bulk cargo were laden, on an average, up to only 54 per cent of their capacities.

Also, there occurred loss of berthing capacity in the port because of restrictions necessitated by bore tides resulting in increased waiting time for berths and there was also loss of time because of ships having

to wait for suitable sailing drafts. This has increased the average turn-round time to more than 17 days.<sup>5</sup>

It was also being held that Calcutta Port was already finding it extremely difficult to cope with the existing quantum of traffic on account of limitations in dock capacity and it was bound to face inevitable difficulties in handling the total cargo tonnage expected to flow through the port in the late 1960's. Hopes were raised that Calcutta's traffic of 10 to 11 million tonnes per year would more than double itself in less than five years, provided a modern deep-water port were available with high-speed handling facilities for the giant carriers of today.<sup>6</sup>

Hence the construction of a new Dock system at Haldia, 56½ nautical miles downstream of Calcutta, was planned. It was proposed that facilities would be provided at this port for accomodating the larger ships round the year and for handling bulk cargo such as coal, oil, iron ore, fertilisers, rock phosphate, sulphur, etc. and also container and break-bulk cargo. Haldia was initially expected to accomodate 30 to 35 ft. (9.2 to 10.8 metres) draft.

Haldia was also expected to be more economical than Calcutta Port in respect of handling bulk cargo and to generate more saving in costs than Paradip in respect of handling coal, iron ore, etc. It was also expected to encourage the development of port-based industries which would feed the port complex itself. In this connection mention was made of the Rotterdam-Europort Complex<sup>7</sup> which developed out of a similar background.

## II

In order to translate these expectations into reality one oil jetty, one coal, one iron ore, two general cargo berths (one of which is a full-fledged container berth), one phosphate berth and a finger jetty have been commissioned, and other infrastructural facilities have been developed. The berths are served by modern high-speed handling equipment for the quickest turn-round of vessels.

The overall performance of Haldia Port in terms of total volume of cargo handled by it has fallen far short of what was expected of it. The following table illustrates the discrepancy between capacity installed and that utilised at Haldia Port.

Table 1

Volume of Cargo handled and rate of utilisation of installed capacity at Haldia Port, 1977-78 to 1984-85 ( in lakh tonnes )

Year\Capacity	Cargo Berth					Total
	P.O.L.	Iron Ore	Coal	General Cargo	Phosphate berth	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>1977-78</b>						
Installed capacity	35.00	40.00	35.00	1.50	—	111.50
Capacity utilised	29.72	1.33	3.50	0.12	—	34.67
Percentage utilisation	85.00	3.30	10.00	8.00	—	31.10
<b>1979-80</b>						
Capacity installed	35.00	40.00	35.00	2.40	—	112.40
Capacity utilised	41.29 <sup>(a)</sup>	0.88 <sup>(a)</sup>	3.57	3.78 <sup>(b)</sup>	—	49.52
Percentage utilisation	—	2.20	10.77	—	—	44.10
<b>1984-85</b>						
Capacity installed	35.00	40.00	30.00	5.60	18.00	128.60
Capacity utilised	44.28	0.06	15.68	2.61	2.73	65.36
Percentage utilisation	—	0.15	52.27	46.61	15.17	50.82

- Source :** (i) Planning and Research Cell, Calcutta Port Trust.  
(ii) *Annual Report 1983-84*, Ministry of Shipping and Transport, Government of India.  
(iii) "Report of the Working Group on Ports for the Seventh Five Year Plan ( 1985-1990 )", Ministry of Shipping and Transport, Government of India.

- Note :** (a) Iron ore berth is recently utilised for unloading small tankers.  
(b) General Cargo berth was used for unloading of import cargo of coal and fertiliser—the respective volumes ( in thousand tonnes ) being 212, and 71.

We notice from Table 1 that the overall utilisation of Haldia Port capacity was as low as 31.10 per cent in 1977-78. Though the capacity utilisation of the port improved to 50.82 per cent in 1984-85 it is still low. The massive under-utilisation of Haldia Port capacity emerges mainly from the non-utilisation of Haldia iron ore berth and the huge under-utilisation of phosphate berth. The rate of utilisation of coal

berth, though substantially improved in recent years, it still remains under-utilised. The utilisation of general cargo berth is on account of 0.46 lakh tonnes of coking coal import. Had this bulk commodity been handled in other bulk cargo berth, the general cargo berth would also have remained substantially under-utilised.

The problem of the large under-utilisation of Haldia Port capacity has rendered the Calcutta-Haldia Port as a whole substantially under-utilised. In 1983, 62.97 per cent of the total capacity of Calcutta-Haldia port was utilised, while the percentage of capacity utilisation at Bombay Port was 154, for Kandla Port 105, for Cochin Port 102 and for Visakhapatnam, Madras and Mormugao 90.86 and 81 respectively.<sup>8</sup> The picture is not different even in 1986-87 when the percentage of capacity utilisation of Calcutta-Haldia was 65.75 while that for Bombay and Kandla Ports 99.24 and 130.50 respectively, and for Cochin, Visakhapatnam, Madras and Mormugao and Paradip ports 96.48, 90.31, 123.21, 92.37 and 100.04 respectively.<sup>9</sup>

The large capacity of Haldia Port and Calcutta-Haldia Port remains un-utilised and the share of Calcutta-Haldia Port in the total volume of cargo handled by major ports of India declined over the last decade—from 11.5 per cent in 1977-78 to 8.45 per cent in 1986-87.

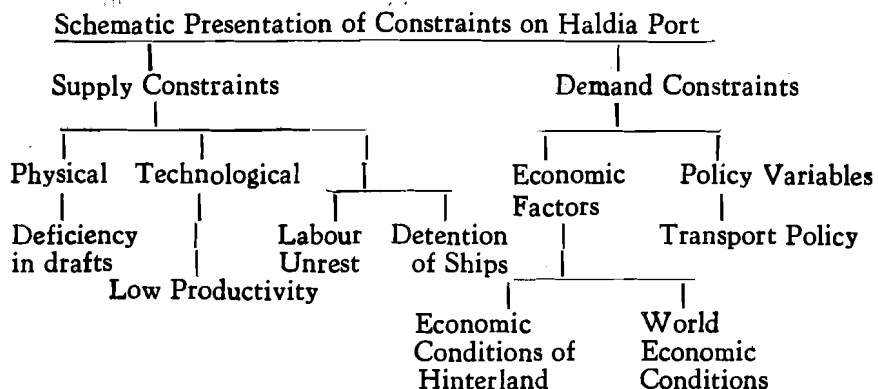
It may be argued that substantial under-utilisation in the initial years of a long-term capital project like Haldia Dock system may be unavoidable and also necessary from the point of providing a cushion against sudden and unforeseeable demand boosts for port services, but such massive non-utilisation (49.18 per cent in 1984-85 and 37.60 per cent in 1986-87) of the Haldia Dock system, specially of its iron ore and phosphate berths where the rate of utilisation is below 20 per cent is definitely a problem when the consideration of the costs as well as the benefits of such a long-term project comes up.

### III

We have seen in the last section that the problem of Haldia Port is that of massive under-utilisation (save, however, the oil jetty and the general cargo berth). Already a massive handling capacity has been created in the Port Complex (which we may call supply facilities) but owing to various reasons the port-services are not being used. Different people in different capacities have tried to explain this phenomenon of the under-utilisation of Haldia Port or Calcutta-

Haldia Port. Their explanations for this phenomenon may be classified into two groups—supply constraints (i.e., the constraints which operate from the side of supply of port services) and demand constraints (i.e., the constraints which affect adversely the demand for port services). The supply factors are emphasised mainly by different port users, namely, the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation (MMTC), the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), the Shippers' Association like Eastern India Shippers' Association, the commerce and trade organisations like Indian Chamber of Commerce and Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and these factors include physical limitations (i.e., the non-availability of adequate draft), technological constraints (i.e., low port productivity) and institutional bottlenecks (i.e., labour unrest). The demand factors are emphasised mainly by academic experts, (notably Bose<sup>10</sup>) and research personnel. These factors include the economic conditions of the hinterland of the port and of the world, as well as policy variables (i.e., transport policy of the Government of India).

These various constraints on Haldia Port can be schematically represented as follows :



We shall first of all take up for our analysis the supply constraints while the demand constraints will be examined subsequently.

Draft is defined as the depth of a ship by her outer line up to which she submerges in water with safety. It varies according to the seasons and water in which she plies. Deficiency in draft naturally implies deficiency in depth of water. Originally, the Haldia Study Team<sup>11</sup> expected that ships with a draft of 35 ft. (10.8 metres) would be able to call at Haldia. Later, detailed studies of the river and extensive investigations revealed that by dredging works and training,

it would even be possible for vessels having a draft of 40 to 45 feet (12.3 to 13.8 metres) to visit Haldia. The drafts realised at Haldia have been far less than the expectations.

The frequency distribution of daily drafts over the years 1977-78 to 1986-87 reveal that for most of the days in a year drafts available at Haldia were below 10 metres and for only 32 days the drafts of 10 metres and above were available in 1977-78, which declined to 12 days during 1979-80.<sup>1,2</sup>

Table 2

Frequency distribution of drafts available for days at Haldia Port, 1977-78 to 1979-80.

Drafts (metres)	Number of days available	
	1977-78	1979-80
1	2	3
8.9 and below	154	173
9.0—9.9	179	181
10.0 and above	32	12
Total	365	365

**Source : Calcutta Port Trust**

Different port users' opinions on drafts at Haldia Port were received and discussed at the literature on seminars<sup>1,3</sup> during 1980. Their criticisms centre round the port's realised drafts being less than projected. The Background note<sup>3</sup> of Indian Chamber of Commerce in connection with Seminar on Calcutta Port observed, 'Haldia was expected to have a draft of 45 feet but in fact, the draft available has been only about 30 to 35 feet.' It is to be noted, however, that the maximum draft realised at Haldia during 1979-80 was to 10.3 metres which was even less than 10.8 metres (35 feet) mentioned in the Background Note.

The trading organisations like the MMTC, SAIL, and the shipping interests like the SCI also held that the drafts available at Haldia had been less than those at other major ports like Visakhapatnam, Madras and Paradip and hence the giant ships could not arrive at/sail off Haldia Port fully laden. The maximum drafts available at Haldia were only 10.36 metres which were less than 11.89 metres at Paradip, 15.30 metres at Visakhapatnam and 14.02 metres and 12.19 metres at



Madras and Mormugao respectively and the giant ships could not enter Haldia Port (Table 3).

Table 3

## Permissible drafts of ships entering Major Ports of India

Name of the Major Ports	Permissible Draft (deepest)	
	1978	1981
1. Calcutta-Haldia		
i) Haldia	10.36	10.36
ii) Calcutta	8.30	8.30
2. Paradip	11.89	11.89
3. Visakhapatnam		
i) Inner Harbour	10.20	10.21
ii) Outer Harbour	15.30	15.30
4. Madras	9.50 to 14.02	9.50 to 14.02
5. Tuticorin	8.40	8.85
6. Cochin	9.14	9.14
7. Kandla	10.36	10.36
8. Mormugao	12.19	12.19
9. New Mangalore	9.15	12.50
10. Bombay	10.36 to 11.60	10.67

Source : (a) *Statistical Bulletin*, Visakhapatnam Port Trust, 1979,  
 (b) *Major Ports of India*, Indian Ports Association, 1981.

The question may arise here : why has Haldia Port failed to achieve the expected amount of draft ? To understand this problem we have to note that drafts at Calcutta-Haldia port are conditioned by two factors : the headwater flow of the Ganga and the dredging works. Now, the basis of draft projections for Haldia was the expectation that the Farakka Barrage would be completed by 1971 and would then continue to discharge a flow of 40,000 cusecs of water. However, the Farakka Barrage was commissioned only in 1975. But even then the discharge of water was well below 40,000 cusecs. The maximum quantity ever received was 30,000 cusecs<sup>15</sup>. The resulting deficiency of headwater flow at the right time has only made the Ganga deteriorate even more. It has been observed that the more sand be piled in the river or at the estuary of Hugli river the less ships come in the port of Calcutta. Indian Shippers' interests are

concerned seriously with this and they feel that the question of adequate Farakka water for Calcutta Port is quickly solved<sup>16</sup>. It is held that although the Haldia Dock system was built for deep draft vessels, it would be soon facing navigational problems unless this vital issue be resolved on a pragmatic basis<sup>17</sup>. In fact, the oil jetty has recently been tilted because of heavy scouring of the river bed at the base of the jetty, caused by the growing deposit of silt on the mouth of the Hooghly.

Systematic dredging operations in the inner estuary commenced in November 1973. The initial achievement was indeed encouraging. The improvement in the outer estuary (i.e., the channel below Sagar) was particularly spectacular as the initial target of 35 ft. draft was achieved at this place by July 1975. The inner estuary (i.e., the channel between Haldia and Sagar) posed problems. Still, depth in the inner estuary continued to improve steadily and by 1975, 32 ft. draft was available at Haldia for 132 days. But thereafter, in spite of dredging operations being concentrated in the inner estuary only, depths have not shown any signs of further improvement<sup>18</sup>.

Thus we see that Haldia Port has failed to achieve even the initial target of 35 ft. (10.8 metres) throughout the year.

Now, given the fact that the drafts available at Haldia Port were less than the initial target and were less than those available at many other major ports the question which may arise is whether the drafts available posed any constraint on the growth of Haldia Port. To put it differently, the question is whether the Indian National and Overseas Ships faced any real draft problems on visiting Haldia Port. To discuss this question we need to know the draft requirements of Indian National and Overseas vessels.

To discuss the draft requirements of vessels that visited Indian Ports, we note that we have the requisite data on the distribution of these vessels as per draft. The frequency distribution of both national and foreign ships<sup>19</sup> that visited Indian major ports indicates that more than 80 per cent of the ships that entered the major ports during 1969-77 required drafts of 9.2 metres and less (Table 4).

Table 4

Distribution of both National and Foreign Ships Entering Major Ports as per draft, 1969-77

Drafts (metres)	1969		1976		1977(a)	
	No. of Ships	Percentage to total	No. of Ships	Percentage to total	No. of Ships	Percentage to total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Less than 7.7	5574	76	5172	71.8	1834	65
7.7-9.2(b)	1079	15	1179	16.4	487	17
9.3 and above	649	9	859	11.8	491	18
Total(c)	7298	100	7208	100	2821	100

Source : S. Mukherjee, 'Problems of Calcutta Port—an Assessment', paper presented at the Seminar on Problems of Calcutta Port and Suggested Remedies, Calcutta 1980.

Notes : (a) Figures for the first half of the year (i. e., up to 30. 6 77).

(b) The drafts are presented in the form in which they are available. They are not standardised figures.

(c) Figures in respect of Bombay Port relate to financial years.

This Table 4 may be compared with Table 2. The comparison holds that most of the vessels that visited Indian major ports during 1969-77 could have visited Haldia Port at its permissible drafts.

The same observation also holds good if we analyse the relevant data for more recent years. However, such data are available for only Visakhapatnam Port, one of the major deep draft ports of India in the Eastern Sea-Coast (Table 5).

Table 5

Distribution of Vessels entering Visakhapatnam Port as per draft, 1977-78 to 1978-79.

Draft (metres)	Number of vessels	
	1977-78	1978-79
1	2	3
Less than 7.6	234 (5.1)	246 (50.2)
7.6—9.0	113 (26.8)	121 (24.6)
9.1—10.5	96 (21.0)	95 (17.3)
10.6 and above	5 (1.1)	29 (5.9)
Total	458 (100)	492 (100)

Source : *Statistical Bulletin*, Vizag Port Trust, 1980.

Table 2. 4 reveals the existence of the draft problem for Haldia Port more clearly. It shows that at least 6 per cent of the vessels that visited Visakhapatnam Port during 1978-79 could not at all visit Haldia Port on account of the non-availability of suitable drafts. It also shows that 75 to 77 per cent of the vessels visiting Visakhapatnam Port during 1977-79 required less than 9. 1 metres draft.

Our analysis so far thus reveals that there are draft restrictions and problems at Haldia Port for Indian and Foreign vessels visiting Indian major ports but these are not major problems. There was no dearth of ships that could have visited Haldia Port. This conclusion is also confirmed if we analyse the composition of world fleet (Table 6).

Table 6

Global draftwise distribution of vessels, 1977.

Drafts (Metres)	Number of vessels
Less than 7.8	982 (8.0)
7.8—9.0	3707 (30.1)
9.1—10.0	3882 (31.5)
10.1—10.5	1029 (8.4)
10.6 and above	2703 (22.0)
Total :	12303 (100)

Source : Statistical Tables, *Lloyd's Register of Shipping*.

Table 6 shows that 22 per cent of the vessels sailing in the world requires draft of 10. 6 metres and above which Haldia Port could not provide and hence these vessels could not be at all accommodated at this port. However, 70 per cent of these vessels required drafts of 10 metres and less which Haldia Port could offer for reasonable number of days.

Thus, though there are draft limitations at Haldia Port, there is no dearth of ships either in India or in the world that could have visited Haldia Port and hence the existence of the draft problem hardly proved to be the binding constraint on the arrival of ships and growth of traffic of the port.

### **Productivity Constraint**

Different port users, particularly Coal India Limited, Indian Railways, etc. are not satisfied with the productivity being achieved at Haldia Port. They hold that against the rated capacity of handling of 1500 tonnes per hour (TPH) Haldia Coal berth could achieve at best 1000 TPH. While there is dissatisfaction with the productivity being achieved at Haldia Coal berth, certain facts are to be borne in mind. First, the productivity achieved at Haldia Port or at Calcutta-Haldia Port with the commissioning of a modern dock complex at Haldia is favourably comparable with that of other major ports. For instance, average service time to handle 1000 tonnes of coal at Haldia Coal berth was 3.84 hours during 1985-86 while that at Visakhapatnam port was 8.99 hours (for June 1985). Second, average service time to handle 1000 tonnes of fertilisers at Calcutta-Haldia Port was more or less the same as at Visakhapatnam, Bombay and Bombay for all quarters during July 1978 to September 1979. Thirdly, port productivity (i. e., rate of loading) at Haldia iron ore berth was higher than at Paradip on account of the former being better equipped.

It then follows that productivity at Haldia or at Calcutta-Haldia is not too low to become a major constraint on the growth of traffic of Calcutta-Haldia, or Haldia Port and hence this technological factor cannot sufficiently explain the problem of excess capacity that has emerged in this port system.

### **Institutional Constraints**

The labour situation at Haldia has been generally peaceful during 1977-87. During 1985-86 only three number of vessels were detained on account of strikes for three days. In 1986-87 there was no strike at Haldia Port. Shipping details taken for colliers, iron-ore carriers, tankers, and general and container cargo carriers show that average detention of vessels is within reasonable limit. For instance, during 1985-86 average detention of colliers, oil tankers and general cargo vessels for sugar was 1.33, 0.56 and 0.26 days respectively while the corresponding figures for Visakhapatnam Port were 4.25, 1.30 and 1.08 days.

Another index of the performance of a port, namely average turn-round time of ships, which is defined as time taken, on an average, by ships calling at a port from sandhead to sandhead, shows that Haldia or Calcutta-Haldia Port has been favourably comparable with other major ports. Average turn-round time of iron ore carriers at

Haldia Port was uniformly less than that at Paradip and Madras and that of fertiliser vessels at Calcutta-Haldia was less than that of Bombay during July 1977 to September 1978. For a more recent year like 1985-86, it is observed that Haldia Port is more favourably placed than Visakhapatnam ( Table 7 ).

Table 7

Average turn-round time of vessels at Haldia and Visakhapatnam Ports, 1985 86.

Commodity Vessels	Average Turn-round time ( in days )	
	Haldia Port	Visakhapatnam Port (a)
Coal	6.44	14.45
Fertiliser	40.19	40.29
Mineral Oils	2.73	5.00
Sugar	4.29	7.13

Source : i) Calcutta Port Trust, 1987.

ii) *Port View*, Visakhapatnam Port Trust, ( 1985 ).

Note : (a) For June 1985 figures only.

The foregoing analysis helps us observe that neither draft nor productivity constraint nor labour unrest, detention time and turn-round time can very well explain the problem of excess capacity in Haldia or Calcutta-Haldia dock system. The relevant statistical exercises ( namely, multiple correlation ) also reveal that draft and productivity factors cannot significantly explain the trend of traffic of Calcutta-Haldia Port. For instance, these two factors are estimated to explain jointly the monthly trend of coal, mineral oil and general cargo to the extent of only 8 per cent, 18 per cent and 5 per cent respectively, the respective values of R<sup>2</sup> being 0.081, 0.177 and 0.081.

#### Demand Constraints-Economic Factors

The eastern region of India provides the major support to the traffic of Calcutta-Haldia Port<sup>20</sup>. The sluggish nature of the growth in the economy of this region in recent years could explain the declining trend in the share of traffic of this port. The index of economic growth taken for our case is State Domestic Product ( SDP ) and the eastern region is taken to consist of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. We may also introduce the term relative growth ( economic ) propensity to mean the ratio of SDP to Net Domestic

Product (NDP) of India. Similarly, we may introduce the term relative growth propensity of traffic to mean the ratio of total traffic of a port to that of the country. So defined we may now relate the relative economic growth propensity of the eastern region to the relative growth propensity of Calcutta-Haldia Port. Our analysis shows that the sluggish growth in the economy of the eastern region in contrast to that for the rest of the Indian economy and declining share of Calcutta-Haldia Port in total traffic handled by major ports of India went hand in hand (Table 8).

Table 8

Relative economic growth propensity of Eastern region of India and relative growth propensity of traffic of Calcutta-Haldia Port, 1968-69 to 1984-85.

Year	Net Domestic Product at factor cost (Rs. Crores) at constant prices		Relative economic growth propensity of Eastern region %	Total traffic (in million tonnes)		Relative growth propensity of traffic of Calcutta- Haldia Port %
	Eastern region	All India		Calcutta- Haldia port	All major ports	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1968-69	3241	17112	18.9	7.96	55.09	14.4
1969-70	3349	18202	18.4	6.90	54.51	12.7
1970-71	3459	19228	18.0	6.01	55.58	10.8
1971-72	3533	19498	18.1	7.30	59.01	12.4
1972-73	3524	19203	18.3	6.68	58.26	11.5
1973-74	3571	20201	17.7	6.32	63.66	09.9
1974-75	3659	20450	17.9	7.50	65.74	11.4
1975-76	3940	22471	17.5	7.70	66.20	11.6
1976-77	3969	22766	17.4	8.00	68.20	11.7
1977-78	4286	24632	17.4	7.81	66.77	11.7
1978-79	4328	26193	16.5	7.98	71.04	11.2
1979-80	4064	24761	16.4	8.80	79.90	11.0
1980-81	4600	26608	17.3	9.51	81.32	11.7
1981-82	4631	27973	16.6	9.92	87.98	11.3
1982-83	4609	28924	15.9	10.69	93.70	11.4
1983-84	4545	31200	14.6	10.47	100.60	10.4
1984-85	4615	32445	14.2	10.52	107.80	9.8

- Source :
1. *Economic Reviews*, Government of West Bengal.
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The relative economic growth propensity of the eastern region appears to be highly correlated with the relative growth propensity of traffic of Calcutta-Haldia Port and the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is estimated to be 0.756 and  $r^2 = 0.571$ .

The relatively sluggish growth of the economy of the eastern region may be the outcome of the relatively slow growth of its manufacturing sector and agricultural sector. In the manufacturing sector we have had data on contribution of the manufacturing sector to the State Domestic Product at constant price (1970-71) for the eastern region and these are shown in the table below against the volume of cargo handled by Calcutta Port over years.

Table 9

Trend of Income of Eastern region of India from manufacturing sector and that of cargo of Calcutta-Haldia Port, 1968-69 to 1984-85.

Year	Income of the eastern region from the manufacturing sector		Volume of traffic of Calcutta -Haldia Port	
	Income (Rs. Crores) / Index		Volume (in million tonnes) / Index	
1	2	3	4	5
1968-69	997.06	100	7.96	100
1970-71	860.95	86	6.01	76
1971-72	860.95	86	7.36	93
1972-73	877.34	89	6.68	84
1973-74	911.53	91	6.32	79
1974-75	903.45	91	7.53	95
1975-76	921.69	92	7.70	97
1976-77	1046.67	105	8.36	105
1977-78	1079.83	108	7.81	98
1978-79	1093.70	110	8.24	104
1979-80	1082.35	109	8.80	111
1980-81	1145.68	115	9.51	120
1981-82	1223.93	123	9.92	125
1982-83	1264.62	127	10.69	134
1983-84	1316.68	132	10.47	132
1984-85	1308.11	131	10.52	132

Source : Same as in Table 8.



Income from the manufacturing sector of the eastern region over the period 1968-69 to 1984-85 is shown to be highly correlated with the trend of traffic of Calcutta-Haldia Port over the same period. The correlation-coefficient ( $r$ ) of the indices of income from manufacturing sector of the region and of volume of traffic of Calcutta-Haldia Port is estimated to be 0.9486 and  $r^2 = 0.8998$ .

While income from manufacturing of the eastern region increased during the period 1970-85 by 51.9 per cent, that of India as a whole increased by 87.8 per cent. This led to the decline in the share of the eastern region to income from manufacturing sector of India from 18.6 per cent in 1970-71 to 15.1 per cent in 1984-85. This relative decline in the share of the eastern region may well explain the declining share of Calcutta-Haldia Port to the total traffic handled by all major ports of India from 10.8 per cent in 1970-71 to 9.8 per cent in 1984-85.

The decline in the share of the eastern region to income from manufacturing sector of India may now be analysed. We find that the Indian economy took a decisive turn around 1965-66, when the Third Plan terminated. The country entered into a phase of Annual Plans. Major decisions of expansion of capacity in the basic and heavy industrial sector were deferred on account of stringency of resources. The programme for expansion of capacity for power generation suffered seriously. Decision for investments on additional capacity for steel was stalled. Plans for increasing the capacity of transport system was shelved. The development of heavy and engineering industries which formed the hard core of the industrial structure of the eastern region suffered badly.<sup>21</sup>

As regards power, it is observed that the average annual rate of growth of installed capacity of the eastern regional during 1960-61 to 1965-66 was around 17.0 per cent. But during the period from 1965-66 to 1970-71 the rate of growth of the installed capacity declined to 9.0 per cent. There was also regional disparity in growth of installed capacity ( Table 10 ).

Table 10

Installed capacity of power of the Eastern region vis-a-vis other regions of India, 1980.

Regions	Capacity installed (M. W.)			Increase from	
	1951	1961	1973	1980	1951 to 1980 (%)
1	2	3	4	5	6
Eastern region	599 (34.5)	1241 (26.8)	3654 (22.4)	4335 (16.3)	724
Southern region	354 (20.4)	908 (19.6)	4075 (25.0)	7907 (29.9)	2234
Northern region	422 (24.3)	1359 (29.4)	4069 (24.9)	7318 (27.7)	1734
Western region	363 (20.8)	1115 (24.2)	4517 (27.7)	6897 (26.1)	1900
Total	1733 (100)	4623 (100)	16315 (100)	24457 (100)	1107

Source : *The Economic Times*, 29 July 1981.

Note : Figures in parentheses refer to percentage share to total.

While the growth of installed capacity of power in the eastern region during 1951-80 was only 724 that was around 2000 per cent for other regions of India. The eastern region had got during this period the lowest share of the total installed capacity of the country. Its share had been less than one-sixth of the total capacity of the country in 1980 though there was a large concentration of industries in this area and about one-fourth of the population concentrated here.

The basic structure of the regional industrial economy may be looked into. One distinctive feature of the industrial economy of the eastern region is that basic metals and alloys industry is important here accounting for 16 to 22 per cent of total value of industrial output in West Bengal and Bihar in 1978-79, while in the western and southern regions chemicals and chemical products industry comparatively important sharing 10 to 42 per cent of industrial output in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu in the same year. But it is the chemicals and chemical products industry which achieved higher growth rate since the late 1960's ( Table 11 ).

Table 11

Index of industrial production of India in two major commodity groups ( 1960 = 100 ).

Commodity Group	1961	1965	1968	1971	1976	1980-81	1983-84
1. Basic metal industries	118.7	180.9	191.5	213.5	286.4	270.5	316.3
2. Manufactures of chemicals and chemical products	113.3	152.6	168.4	256.3	355.2	414.7	510.0

Source : *Annual Survey of Industries*.

While more than 52 per cent of the value of output in basic metal industries was produced in Bihar and West Bengal during 1983-84 more than 41 per cent of the value of output in chemical and chemical industry was produced in Maharashtra and Gujarat.<sup>22</sup> During 1960-84 the chemicals and chemical products industry achieved more than 500 per cent growth while the growth rate for basic metals industry was 316. The absence of any petro-chemical complex in the eastern region led to its comparatively slow industrial growth, which affected adversely the growth of traffic of Haldia Port leading to the massive underutilisation of its phosphate berth.

The apathy and indifference of the Central government to issue industrial licences for new industrial units in the eastern region may be mentioned here. The percentage share of this region to total licences issued in India declined from 24.9 in 1965 to 10.8 during 1982-86 ( Table 12 ).

The share of western region increased from 50.8 in 1965 to 58.4 per cent during 1982-86, that of southern region from 21.1 to 25.7 per cent during the same period. Among the modern industrial projects for which the whole of the eastern region, particularly West Bengal (Haldia) has been so far denied industrial licences, the most important was petro-chemical complex.

In the agricultural sector also, the eastern region exhibited the least growth rate. The eastern region achieved lower annual exponential growth rates of agricultural production and yield per hectare during 1952 to 1979 than western and southern regions (Table 13).

Table 12

Number of industrial licences issued to different States of India, 1965 to 1986.

Region	States	1965	1970	1977	1980	1982-86
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Eastern region	Bihar	61	22	16	4	93
	Orissa	5	4	2	8	76
	W. B.	67	46	40	23	263
Total		133 (24.9)	72 (20.0)	58 (11.2)	35 (13.6)	432 (10.8)
Western region	Maharashtra	134	112	150	107	636
	Gujarat	39	39	60	85	421
	Madhya Pradesh	14	2	8	18	148
	Rajasthan	13	7	17	15	197
	Punjab & Haryana	24	39	46	38	594
Uttar Pradesh	48	26	41	30	348	
Total		272 (50.8)	225 (59.7)	322 (62.2)	293 (61.7)	2344 (58.4)
South region	Tamil Nadu	59	36	32	37	440
	Karnataka	22	17	45	40	259
	Kerala	8	10	16	11	89
	Andhra Pradesh	24	13	27	42	244
Total		113 (21.1)	77 (20.4)	120 (23.2)	130 (27.4)	1032 (25.7)
All-India		535 (100)	377 (100)	518 (100)	475 (100)	4015 (100)

Source : *Economic Reviews* : Government of West Bengal.

This explains very well why fertiliser imports through Calcutta-Haldia Port was lower (4 lakh tonnes in 1977-78) than those through Madras Port (6 lakh tonnes) and Visakhapatnam Port (8 lakh tonnes).

We note that the pattern of growth of hinterland of Calcutta Haldia Port explains, in a significant way, the relative decline in the share of the port. In the absence of any petro-chemical complex its growth has been less trade (export-import)—oriented than that in other regions of India. The growth of Bombay and Kandla Ports is mainly oil- and chemical-based, that of Mormugao Port is iron ore export-based and that of Visakhapatnam and Madras Ports is based on both, but that of Calcutta-Haldia Port was based on neither

of the two. It was mainly coal-based and general cargo-oriented. But the pattern of growth of sea-borne trade of India during 1960-80 changed in favour of petroleum oil lubricants (POL), iron ore and fertiliser but against coal. (Table 15). Hence, Bombay, Kandla, Visakhapatnam and Madras Ports benefitted largely from this type of change in India's sea-borne trade and their relative shares in total traffic of India improved while that of Calcutta-Haldia declined. (Table 8 is referred back).

Table 13

Annual exponential growth rates of agricultural production and yield per hectare in Indian States, 1952-1979(a)

Regions and States		Annual Exponential Growth Rate	
Region	State	Production	Yield per hectare
1	2	3	4
Eastern	Bihar	1.67	1.13
	Orissa	1.40	0.14
	West Bengal	1.85	0.89
Western	Maharashtra	1.83	1.53
	Gujarat	2.83	2.73
	Madhya Pradesh	1.09	0.36
	Rajasthan	2.24	1.27
	Punjab	4.28	3.10
	Uttar Pradesh	1.96	1.55
Southern	Tamil Nadu	2.13	1.89
	Karnataka	2.38	2.32
	Kerala	2.36	1.54
	Andhra Pradesh	1.84	1.71
All-India		2.35	1.72

*Source* : R. G. Nair, "Regional Disparities in Agricultural Production in a Developing Economy—a Case Study of India," 1980.

Note : (a) Based on the data for 28 crops. Among the factors responsible for slower growth rate in agricultural production, etc. in the eastern region the most relevant and important is lower fertiliser consumption in this region than elsewhere (Table 14).

Table 14

Consumption of plant nutrients and agricultural productivity in the eastern region vis-a-vis some other States in the southern region during 1978 khariff season.

Region	State	Consumption of plant nutrients (kilogrammes) per hectare	Productivity (yield per hectare in kg.)
1	2	3	4
Eastern region	Bihar	5	985
	Orissa	5	735
	West Bengal	13	1133
Southern region	Andhra Pradesh	27	1378
	Tamil Nadu	45	2129

Source : *The Statesman*, 16 June 1980.

Table 15

Change in pattern of sea-borne trade of India (quantity in lakh tonnes)

Year	POL	Iron Ore	Coal	Fertiliser	General Cargo & other Cargo	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1960-61	122.10	79.44	21.16	7.63	169.40	399.73
	(30.54)	(19.87)	(5.40)	(1.91)	(42.38)	(100.00)
1970-71	187.74	109.97	6.16	21.16	230.85	556.88
	(33.71)	(34.47)	(1.19)	(3.80)	(41.45)	(100.00)
1975-76	207.95	210.88	10.34	37.09	195.78	662.04
	(31.41)	(31.85)	(1.50)	(5.60)	(29.57)	(100.00)
1977-78	253.80	209.00	NA	41.00	—	667.75
	(38.00)	(31.30)		(6.14)		(100.00)
1979-80	285.00	230.00	15.00	59.00	21.000	799.00
	(35.67)	(28.80)	(1.81)	(7.38)	(26.28)	(100.00)
1983-84	475.00	218.60	46.10	35.90	230.40	1006.00
	(47.22)	(21.73)	(4.53)	(3.57)	(22.90)	(100.00)
1985-86	548.89	288.17	75.38	61.72	220.91	1195.07
	(45.93)	(24.11)	(6.31)	(5.16)	(11.49)	(100)
1986-87	555.49	305.98	94.22	49.93	237.1	1242.83
	(44.70)	(24.62)	(7.58)	(4.02)	(19.09)	(100)

Source : (i) Government of India.

(ii) Planning and Research Cell, Calcutta Port Trust.

The pattern of traffic has in recent years changed in favour of oil and coal which have helped a lot in increasing the absolute volume of cargo in Haldia or Calcutta-Haldia Port (Table 1 and Table 8 referred back). But volume of cargo in iron ore has declined absolutely in recent years (from 23.00 million tonnes in 1979-80 to 21.86 million tonnes in 1983-84). This has been responsible for the underutilisation of the capacity in iron ore berths of Paradip and Visakhapatnam Ports for which the respective volume of iron ore traffic declined absolutely from 2.20 million tonnes and 6.06 million tonnes in 1977-78 to 0.93 million tonnes and 4.97 million tonnes in 1983-84. It is no wonder that Haldia iron ore berth will be starving of cargo.

World demand conditions : we see that following the oil crisis of 1973 world steel industry has been passing through a recession and it has its impact felt on world sea-borne trade in iron ore which has been falling since 1975. This is also reflected in the volume of iron ore export of India, which declined from 23.47 million tonnes in 1976-77 to 22.40 million tonnes in 1980-81, leading to the massive underutilisation of capacities created in iron ore handling ports, namely, Mormugao, Madras, Visakhapatnam, Paradip and Haldia. In 1977-78, 85 per cent of the additional capacities installed in the iron ore berths of the first three ports mentioned above remained unutilised. It appears that the world demand conditions in iron ore put up the binding constraint on the growth of traffic of iron ore handling ports including Haldia.

Thus, our analysis shows that economic factors are significant enough to explain the trend of traffic of Haldia Port or Calcutta-Haldia Port as well as the falling share of Calcutta-Haldia Port in total sea-borne traffic of major ports of India in recent years.

### **Policy Variables**

Among the policy variables that might have affected the growth of traffic of Calcutta-Haldia Port, we first discuss the intermodel transport policy of the Government of India. Coastal shipping has recently faced severe competition from railways and road transport and the volume of traffic carried by coastal shipping in India declined from 41.0 lakh tonnes in 1962 to 12.8 lakh tonnes in 1980—the volume of coal from 19.8 lakh tonnes to 8.8 lakh tonnes, of salt from 4.8 lakh

tonnes to 2.4 lakh tonnes and of general cargo from 16.4 lakh tonnes to 1.7 lakh tonnes during the period.

Several factors are supposed for the decline of coastal coal traffic from Calcutta-Haldia Port. With the doubling up of railway truck in Southern Zones railways decided to carry most of their coal requirements in the South by all-rail route. Dieselisation of locomotives which reduced railways' coal requirements in these areas also contributed to this decline of coastal coal traffic. Besides, the industries in the South and the West which were depending on steam were progressively allowed to switch over to fuel oil.

Apart from coal, attempts were also made to divert considerable quantities of salt from the sea to the rail.

Let us now examine the economics of coastal shipping of coal through Haldia Port vis-a-vis the alternative modes of transport, viz., rail and road, to ascertain whether it is the only transport policy which has adversely affected the coastal traffic of the commodity for Calcutta-Haldia Port. The percentage of capacity utilisation of colliers is estimated to be 85 during 1977-78 to 1979-80 and the average stay period of colliers to be 10 days during this period. The comparative estimates of resource costs for railways, roads and coastal shipping for the period are shown in Table below.

Table 16

Resource cost comparison for transportation of coal : Railways, Roads Transport and Coastal Shipping, 1977-78 to 1979-80.

Pairs of Points	Resource cost per tonne in Rs.		
	Railways	Roads	Rail-cum-sea (coastal shipping)
1	2	3	4
1. Andal-Haldia-Tuticorin	234.3	240.1	138.7
Distance (kms.)	2579	2355	2704
2. Andal-Haldia-Cochin	187.1	237.8	137.5
Distance (kms.)	2442	2321	2952
3. Andal-Haldia-Navalakhhi	209.1	211.2	151.5
Distance (kms.)	22 <sup>0</sup> 9	2058	4676

Rail-cum-sea distance is seen to be uniformly higher in coastal shipping of coal between the origin of cargo and its different destinations. Despite the inherent difficulty, rail-cum sea resource costs of



coal movement from Andal via Haldia to all the destinations above are observed to be far less than all-rail and all-road resource costs.

Thus we observe that coastal shipping was really cost-efficient relative to railways and roads over long routes for movement of coal. Hence, the explanation for the fact that coastal movement of coal via Haldia Port did not pick up in the initial years (Table 1 is referred) might be found in government transport policy which encouraged railway movement. However, in recent years, coal cargo volume improved a lot on account of the large demand for coal from Tamil Nadu Power Plant of Tamil Nadu State Electricity Board.

#### **Economics of Haldia Port vis-a-vis its competitive Ports**

We shall here discuss the economics of cargo transportation via Haldia Port vis-a-vis other major competitive ports of India.

For a shipowner the economic result of a voyage for a ship is largely determined by what time of voyage was spent in ports and cargo handling cost.<sup>23</sup> Unless a large ship can be unloaded quickly in port, its advantage is lost.<sup>24</sup>

For a comprehensive economic study, we get not only interested in the cost of sea transport ( i. e., freight rate ) and the cost at ports but also in the cost at hinterland so as to optimise the entire system of which the ship, the ports and the hinterlands are parts. The costs at ports may be reflected at port charges while the cost at hinterland may consist of road, railway or/and water transport costs. These three components of costs—freight rate, the cost at ports and the cost at hinterland—constitute the total cost of cargo movement from origin of cargo to the destination.

In our cost study, we shall deal with two export commodities, namely, iron ore and coal and one import commodity, namely, fertiliser. We note in this context intra-modal transport decisions of the government trading agencies, namely, the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation ( MMTC ) of India Ltd., the Fertiliser Corporation of India, etc. and the concerned ministries like Ministry of Food and Agriculture, etc. which decide the port through which their respective cargo would pass.

**Iron Ore Export :** Both Haldia and Paradip Ports were the competitors for Barajamda iron ore of Bihar. This iron ore passed via Panskura to Haldia Port and via Kharagpur to Paradip Port. Since there are draft restrictions at Haldia Port for iron ore carriers, only the small carriers could visit Haldia Port. It is observed that

the MMTC channelised Barajamda iron ore of Bihar mostly through Paradip Port ( not through Haldia ) though the railway distance between the mining area and Paradip was about 296 kms. more than between the mining areas and Haldia, and hence at the existing telescoping rates the railway freight for reaching the ore to Haldia was cheaper than that up to Paradip. Though the fact remained that the bigger iron ore carriers could be handled at Paradip having deeper draft facilities than at Haldia, it is observed that at least 50 per cent of the iron ore carriers that visited Paradip Port in 1977-78 could have been fully loaded at Haldia and sailed in lesser time than they actually took at Paradip and in this process could have achieved transport cost economy ( Table 17 ).

Table 17

Comparative cost position in respect of loading iron ore from Haldia and Paradip in small carriers, 1979 80.

Port	Railway Freight (Rs)	Port charges (Rs)	Detention cost (Rs)	Total Cost (Rs)
Haldia	75.60	19.00	0.00	94.60
Paradip	98.72	13.34	3.24	115.30

*Source* : (i) South Eastern Railway, (ii) Calcutta Port Trust, and (iii) Paradip Port Trust.

*Note* : Rs 40,000 is taken for detention cost per vessel per day,

Haldia Port is seen to have enjoyed a cost economy of Rs 20.70 per tonne of iron ore when small iron ore carriers have been put in use.

**Coal Overseas Export** For the overseas export of coal from the Raniganj-Jharia fields Paradip and Haldia have been the competitive ports. So far as Paradip is concerned, coal was being loaded at General Cargo Berth. Haldia Port has, on the other hand, got a full-fledged coal berth with mechanical aids. Comparative position of costs in respect of loading of coal from Paradip and Haldia in 18000 DWT ships (optimum load of 16,500 tonnes) is shown in Table 18.

The total cost per tonne of loading coal from Haldia is seen to be lower than from Paradip.

**Chemical Fertilisers Import** : For the sake of simplicity, let us assume that (i) only four competitive ports are working, (ii) the origin of the cargo is in Canada ( Western Ports ) and the cargo is

Table 18

Comparative cost position in respect of loading of coal from Paradip and Haldia by 1800 DWT ships, 1976-77.

Ports	Railway freight (Rs)	Port charges (Rs)	Port days cost of ships for loading (Rs)	Total cost (Rs) per tonne
Paradip	42.30*	19.51	11.03	72.84
Haldia	26.00**	25.13	1.57	52.70

*Source* : (i) Calcutta Port Trust, and (ii) South Eastern Railway.

*Note* : \*The distance from Andal to Paradip via Dunkuni—Kharagpur is 612 kms.

\*\* The distance from Andal to Haldia via Dankuni—Panskura is 326 kms.

carried in Indian ships of the Shipping Corporation of India Ltd. (SCI), (iii) landing charges at the ports are variable and all other port charges are same and constant, the ports work under normal conditions, i.e., there are no surcharges, (iv) railways are the only mode used on transporting the cargo from the ports to the major centres of trade of India, and (v) these centres are Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi, Patna, Burdwan and Gauhati. Let the landing charges at the ports be denoted by LC and inland (railway) transport cost by LTC. Comparative cost conditions are shown in Table 19.

It is observed that for all the centres of trade excepting Kanpur, Haldia Port is more economic in respect of chemical fertilisers imports than any other East Coast Port, namely, Visakhapatnam and Madras, and West Coast Port, namely, Bombay.

It may be relevant here to introduce the concept of economic hinterland of a port which may be defined to be an optimum geographical area which minimises total transportation cost (consisting of inland transport costs, port costs and shipping costs) from the origin of cargo to destination points. So defined the destination like Kanpur, Allahabad and Varanasi of the Northern region, and Burdwan and Gauhati of the Eastern region of India fall within the economic hinterland of Calcutta-Haldia Port for the import cargo of chemical fertilisers. For other bulk commodities like coal, foodgrains, etc. the shipping charges being, more or less, the same for Indian ports, the above observation applied also for other bulk commodities.

Table 19  
Comparative costs of transportation of chemical fertilisers from Canada<sup>(a)</sup> (Western Ports)  
to some centres of trade in India ( Figures in Rs in 1979 ).

Destination	P O R T S											
	Haldia			Visakhapatnam			Madras			Bombay		
	L.C.	L.T.C.	Total	L.C.	L.T.C.	Total	L.C.	L.T.C.	Total	L.C.	L.T.C.	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Kanpur	19.50	112.50	1254.75	13.0	137.40	1273.15	15.84	184.60	1341.19	4.9	126.8	1254.45
Allahabad	19.50	96.80	1239.05	13.0	123.30	1259.05	15.84	174.05	1330.59	4.9	128.6	1256.25
Varanasi	19.50	87.00	1229.25	13.0	133.80	1269.55	15.84	180.50	1337.09	4.9	138.0	1257.65
Patna	19.50	74.00	1216.25	13.0	112.50	1248.25	15.84	164.80	1321.39	4.9	152.9	1280.55
Burdwan	19.50	30.70	1172.95	13.0	106.60	1242.35	15.84	162.10	1318.69	4.9	174.0	1301.65
Gauhati	19.50	110.40	1252.65	13.0	191.60	1237.35	15.84	216.20	1372.79	4.9	200.4	1328.05

*Source :* 1. The Shipping Corporation of India Ltd.  
2. Indian Railways ( SER,ER ).  
3. Major Ports of India.

*Note:* (a) From West Germany and USSR Ports, shipping charges were same for all Indian ports in chemical manures. Hence, the relative cost positions remain the same and the observations derived remain unaltered. For most bulk commodities, same SC for Indian ports.

It is seen that Calcutta-Haldia Port gains an internal transport cost advantage over Madras, Vizag and Bombay in handling cargo of/ for West Bengal, Bihar, Assam and other parts of North-Eastern region. It is a puzzle that in spite of such diversion traffic is encouraged in respect of bulk commodities, namely, fertiliser, foodgrains, etc. and in general cargoes like iron and steel. The low traffic performance of Calcutta-Haldia Port in recent years, therefore, is no wonder.

#### **Review of Haldia Port Planning**

The creation of large capacity in iron ore, coal and general cargo was not warranted by the then economic conditions of the hinterland of Calcutta Port and world demand conditions. Iron ore was never an important cargo of Calcutta Port since it was not a natural outlet of iron ore export from India. Still a large capacity ( 4 million tonnes per year ) in iron ore berth at Haldia was created on the assumption that creation of better port facilities would help rapid growth of this traffic. Similarly, a large capacity ( 3.5 million tonnes per year ) was planned in Haldia coal berth to partially cater to overseas market without due consideration being given to declining trend of overseas coal traffic of India on account of rapid increase in internal consumption of coal being made in the international market<sup>25</sup>. Over-optimistic projection was also made in respect of general cargo, which was not supported by the past trend of this traffic of Calcutta Port. All these deficiencies of Haldia Port traffic planning were, to a large extent, responsible for the emergence of large underutilisation of Haldia iron ore berth and coal berth and low growth of general cargo traffic at the port. Besides, the capacity created in iron ore berths of major ports ( namely, Visakhapatnam, Madras ) has been more than the capacity of the country to produce iron ore.

#### **Summary and Concluding Observations**

The Haldia Port was expected to supplement Calcutta Port with additional port facilities and capacity and thereby to enable Calcutta to get a proper share of the country's growing traffic. Our review of the performance of Haldia Port since its commissioning shows that excess capacity has emerged both in Haldia and Calcutta Port complex and Calcutta-Haldia Port has experienced declining share of traffic handled by major ports of India. While trade circles attribute these problems to physical constraints like deficiency in draft, low port productivity and labour unrest, our analysis shows that the root of the problems

lies in economic factors like slow and undiversified economic growth of the hinterland of Calcutta-Haldia Port, in some transport and other policy issues.

In the existing size-distribution of Indian national and overseas fleet that visited Indian ports, the draft available at Haldia Port posed marginal problems in the way of the growth of traffic of this port. The constraints of low productivity and labour unrest did not put up adequate limitations on the growth of traffic of this port. On the other hand, the economic factors and some policy variables could better explain the declining share of traffic of Calcutta-Haldia Port and the emergence of excess capacity therein.

Unrealistic traffic projections made in iron ore, coal and general cargo have also been partially responsible for the idle capacity in Haldia Dock system. However, the low rate of growth of the hinterland is the major factor for the fact that berths at Calcutta-Haldia Port are underutilised and its share in India's sea-borne trade has been declining.

Hence, the basic issue connected with the growth of traffic of Haldia Port or Calcutta-Haldia Port is how to increase the traffic flow through economic growth of the hinterland of the port and through the orientation of transport policy toward cost considerations. We should also wage a war against the adverse river conditions to maintain navigability so that they do not appear to be the over-riding constraint.

#### Notes and References :

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**TARA PADA GHOSH**  
**KARTICK CHANDRA PAUL**

**Viability of Poultry Farming in Midnapore District**  
**An Empirical Study Based on Poultry Farms**  
**at Garbeta Block**

**Backdrop**

Midnapore district has become a centre for poultry farming over the past ten years ; its adoption is partly as an allied activity to agriculture and other occupations and partly as a means of employment. Although poultry farming has been widely established throughout the district, its concentration in Garbeta Block is notable. It has been observed that in six villages of Garbeta (namely, Garbeta, Radhanagar, Raulia, Junesole, Fatesinghpur and Ganakbandhi) about sixty per cent households are engaged in poultry farming. Poultry farming is carried on by the agriculturists to diversify farm activities since it can generate an uninterrupted cash flow from agricultural farming. Also there is little scope of increasing the size of agricultural farms by improving cropping intensity due to restricted irrigation facilities. Persons engaged in small business or in any services have also inclined to poultry farming as an additional source of income. However, there

are large number of cases wherein the poultry farming has been resorted to as means of self-employment by the educated unemployed youth.

Scope of furthering agricultural activities is limited firstly by the quantum of cultivable land and secondly, by the lack of irrigation facility in the district. Cropping intensity of the district is only 1.32. Net area available for cultivation is 8,45,611 hectares and area sown more than once is 2,73,820 hectares.\* Although gross cropped area can be multiplied through better cropping intensity to deploy employment opportunities and raising per capita income of about 61.70 lakhs rural population of the district, infrastructural deficiency deters such possibility. And there is not much advancement in small scale industry in the district. Therefore, activities allied to agriculture has emerged almost sequaciously. Dairy, poultry, piggery, goatery and fishery are some of the important allied activities of the district.

#### **Objective**

This study has the specific objective of evaluating the viability of poultry farming of the district because of its important role in the economy of Midnapore. It is proposed to assess the viability by inter-farm comparison of profitability and cash flows based on empirical data. This study seeks to reveal the areas of prospects and inefficiencies requiring application of farm management techniques to highlight the important features of poultry farming in the district and to suggest some measures for improvement.

#### **Sample Selection**

Since poultry farming has been widely established throughout the district, it becomes a difficult task to cover each of 54 blocks in the district without sufficient time and financial resources. For this study, therefore, Garbeta Block-I was chosen for sample selection considering the tendency of concentration of poultry farms in this Block. It is also noted that the tendency of concentration is on the farming of layer birds. So in the assessment of viability, the poultry farms of only the layer birds are considered. But most of the farmers did not maintain any records of their farm activities. In poultry farming, sale of eggs and purchase of feeds are two vital types of transactions which occur on a daily/weekly basis. Out of fifty farmers visited,

\* Annual Action Plan, Lead Bank Office, Midnapore.

only ten were able to supply complete data. These farmers are within the size range of 204-1530. Of the ten farmers, four are completely engaged in poultry and six have other occupations. Details of the farms are given in Appendix 1.

#### Profitability Analysis

Profitability analysis through inter-farm comparison becomes difficult because of relative differences in investment of fixed capital and working capital in the sample farms and employment of family workers in dissimilar manner. Dissimilar investment pattern results in incomparable profit figures unless opportunity cost of capital invested is duly recognised. Similarly, in some farms family workers are engaged fully, while in other farms hired workers are engaged along with the family workers. So in the process of profit derivation, both the notional and actual wages should be charged against revenue. Thus, profit/loss as shown in Appendix 2 is of the type of 'C Profit/Loss' as defined in the Farm Management Survey. It is the difference between the revenue and the sum of all paid-out costs and notional costs of owned land, labour and capital. It is, in effect, the profit/loss assignable to management.

Interest on fixed capital has been determined by charging interest @ 12% p. a. on total acquisition cost of fixed assets (given in Appendix 1) for the operating cycle of a lot of layer birds. Interest on working capital has also been found out by charging interest @ 12% p. a. for the entire cycle on maximum cumulative cash outflows required within the operating cycle (given in Appendix 5) chargeable for the entire cycle. Daily wages @ Rs 16/- (for a day of 8 hours) is charged on account of notional wages of family workers working in the farm.

From the statement of profit (Appendix 2) it is observed that only one unit earned 'C-Profit' and all other units incurred 'C-Loss'. This means 90% of the farms did not earn any profit assignable to management. Moreover, only 60% of the sample farms managed to earn positive income assignable to owned capital or labour.

In Table 1 comparative data of the sample farms are presented to have an in-depth analysis of the losses shown in the statement of profit. Since only one unit (designated as Balaram) earned profit, the losing units are compared to the profitable unit. Losses were mainly due to high mortality rates of the birds, higher investment in fixed and working capital, higher incidence of cash cost, lower rate

Table 1

**Comparative Data of Investment, Cash Flow, Yield and Profit of the Sample Farms**

Particulars	Balaram	Subrata	Tapan	Mohan	Saileswar	Tarak	Shyamal	Barid	Swapan	Pradip
Gross Size (No)	924	612	612	915	1346	1530	850	925	204	612
Mortality (No)	25	83	100	62	216	116	64	57	37	81
Mortality (%)	2.71	13.56	16.34	6.78	16.05	7.58	7.53	6.16	18.14	13.24
Effective Size (No)	899	529	512	853	1130	1414	786	868	167	531
Profit/Loss per effective bird (Rs)	20.29	-13.64	-37.55	-51.35	-38.47	-34.54	-67.49	-19.37	-45.80	-70.85
Investment in Fixed Assets per effective bird (Rs)	16.34	40.68	35.09	120.32	110.31	151.77	144.52	58.07	56.43	161.57
Investment in working Capital per effective bird (Rs)	25.37	35.06	42.28	31.46	37.74	30.35	56.29	41.92	35.56	40.15
Cash outflow per effective bird (Rs)	114.17	134.95	132.10	107.12	139.63	181.24	194.54	136.27	108.83	142.96
Cash inflow per effective bird (Rs)	164.35	137.57	109.49	101.61	140.50	195.27	166.24	137.40	114.34	124.05
Yield per effective bird (Rs)	143.68	112.83	96.38	92.23	118.13	171.14	137.96	114.29	87.07	107.83

of revenue earning and low yield. Some of the causes are, however, inter-related. For example, high mortality rate leads to higher investment per effective bird. Also low yield results in lower rate of revenue earning and higher investment in working capital.

The mortality rate of the profitable unit is only 2.71% of gross size whereas such rate varies between 6.78%—18.14% in other units. The standard unit (profitable unit) purchased Hyline variety of chicks; Mohan and Pradip also used this variety and all other units used Babcock variety. Both the varieties showed high mortality in some farms and low mortality in others. Therefore, it is not possible to comment on the quality of chicks from this small sample. However, one of the contributing factors of profitability is undoubtedly the low mortality factor which has a favourable effect on effective farm size. By taking a large sample, it is obviously possible to suggest a particular variety of chicks with least mortality.

The standard unit made a profit of Rs. 20.29 per effective bird. It employed two family workers and therefore, earning per worker per day is Rs 31.51 (on the basis of profit plus notional wages) which is nearly double of daily wages. Income of the farm family per day becomes Rs 73.71 (on the basis of profit plus notional wages plus notional interest) in an effective farm size of 899 birds.

Total revenue is also dependent on the duration of the laying period. The standard unit had a laying period of 446 days. Excepting Tarak-farm, laying periods of other farms vary between 292-430 days. For cost reduction, growing period must also be standardised. If growing period lengthens, cost of rearing up increases. The standard unit took a conversion period of 142 days. In other units conversion period varies between 122-162 days. The average conversion period is 139 days. The position of the standard unit is slightly above the mean. However, its laying period of 446 days is much above the mean laying period of 378 days. Therefore, it appears that standardisation of conversion period and laying period may improve the cash flows pattern of the farm and such standardisation is possible through use of standard variety of chicks, proper quality and quantity of feed, timely application of medicine, hygienic accommodation, proper lighting and careful supervision.

Although some units managed to standardise laying and conversion period, the imbalance in investment caused losses to these units. Investment in fixed capital per effective bird in the profitable unit is only Rs. 16.34 in comparison to Rs 161.57 in Pradip-farm. Costly

poultry shed is the reason for such imbalance. Investment in fixed capital per bird in the losing units varies between Rs 35.09 and Rs 161.57.

Investment in working capital is determined by two factors : firstly, by cash outflows needed for rearing up the birds during the conversion period and secondly by cash outflows needed to cover the cash deficit during the initial phase of laying period. As soon as the cash surplus is generated during the laying period, no more cash is required to be invested by way of working capital. Thus, maximum cumulative cash outflows become the maximum amount of working capital investment in the respective poultry farms during the operating cycle. Therefore, investment in working capital is influenced by the duration of the conversion period, yield rate and cash flows pattern during the laying period. The standard unit showed a standardised conversion period, high yield rate and a good cash surplus of Rs. 50.18 per effective bird which leads to the reduction of its investment in working capital per bird to the lowest.

Inter-farm comparison of profitability helps to identify the causes of losses in poultry farming in Midnapore district. By effective steps, it is possible to create surplus in poultry farming despite the disproportionate effects of inflation on feed and egg prices.

#### **Cost Variations**

Cost efficiency in poultry farms may also be analysed to explain the desponding result. Apart from investment and yield factors, efficient management of chick, feed, medicine and labour costs may lead to generation of profit. These are the main cost items other than depreciation on fixed assets and interest on capital. However, labour cost is related to the scale of operation. In some of the sample farms workers were engaged on the basis of a planned farm size ; so reduction in farm size created idle labour hours resulting in cost increment. For example, in Shyamal-farm 6 workers were engaged for effective size of 786 birds ; in Tarak-farm 6 workers were engaged for 1414 birds whereas in Saileswar-farm and Balaram-farm only 2 workers were engaged for the effective size of 1130 and 899 respectively. Therefore, it appears that labour cost has an inflating effect in some cases. But in most of the cases labour cost was inflated due to imbalance in farm size. It appears from Table 2 that farms with effective size around 800-900 had shown variations of labour costs per bird between Rs 10.38—Rs 41.67 and farms with effective size slightly above 500

had shown variations of labour cost per bird between Rs 8.86—Rs 39.27. Two farms with effective size above 1000 had shown variations of labour cost per bird between Rs. 11.68—Rs 37.86 and labour cost of Swapan-farm was Rs 30.90 per bird. This indicates clearly that there exists lack of standardisation of labour cost and there is no clear trend of labour cost according to effective farm size.

Feed cost is a direct cost item of poultry farms. The feed cost per bird varies within a range of Rs 90.21 to Rs 132.54, the lowest being in Mohan-farm while the highest was in Tarak-farm (Table 2). Wide variation in feed cost may be partly due to mortality of birds and partly due to unfavourable quantity variance. The purchase price of feed by the different farms is also not unique. The relationship between mortality and feed cost per bird can be studied by applying two-variable linear correlation technique. Mortality rate is taken as independent variable and feed cost per bird is taken as dependent variable. The resulting co-efficient of correlation ( $r$ ) is  $-0.33$ . This negative correlation coefficient indicates that variation in feed cost per bird in the sample farms of the district is not influenced by mortality rate. Therefore, comparative inefficiency in feed cost per bird is the result of quantity and price variances which could be managed better.

Variations in cash cost per bird in different production stages can also be evaluated to segregate the fluctuations in cash outflows per bird. This can also identify the relative cost inefficiency of farms in comparison to minimum cost achieved. It is observed that cash chick cost per effective bird varies between Rs 12.47 and Rs 21.69, cash grower cost per effective bird varies between Rs 8.79 and Rs 25.29 and cash layer cost per effective bird varies between Rs 77.19 and Rs 151.33 (Table 2). It is also observed that the profitable farm (Balaram) showed least cash grower cost and its position was slightly above the minimum cost during chick and laying stages. So apart from lower mortality rate and better yield the profitable farm may also be considered as cost-efficient. The cost variation study explained that higher investment, higher mortality rate and lower yield are not the only factors responsible for loss in poultry farms, there also exists some sort of cost-inefficiency in the areas of labour and feed costs in particular and cash cost in general.

Table 2

## Comparative Cost Data of the Sample Farms

Particulars	Balaram Rs	Subrata Rs	Tapan Rs	Mohan Rs	Saileswar Rs	Tarak Rs	Shyamal Rs	Barid Rs'	Swapan Rs	Pradip Rs
Labour cost per effective bird	20.93	10.99	8.86	17.73	11.68	37.86	41.67	10.43	30.90	39.27
Feed cost per effective bird	102.66	110.81	109.70	90.21	110.46	132.54	130.25	112.45	95.70	102.88
Cash chick cost per effective bird	13.40	14.16	18.26	13.68	20.23	15.41	19.97	15.98	12.47	21.69
Cash grower cost per effective bird	8.79	16.10	18.68	16.25	12.42	14.49	25.29	18.15	19.58	12.46
Cash layer cost per effective bird	91.98	104.69	95.17	77.19	106.98	151.33	149.27	102.14	76.78	108.80



### Cash Flow Analysis

Cash flow pattern of poultry farm is quite interesting from the point of view of farm management. Cash flow pattern of the sample farms by way of monthly distribution is presented in Appendix 5. Comparing the data on cash inflow and outflow per effective bird, available from Table 1, it is evident that farms were able to generate cash surplus. These cash surpluses in absolute terms have been shown by way of cash flow pattern. Cash flow pattern has been developed on the basis of cash recurring expenses incurred during different production stages of chick, grower and layer. Cash outflows at different production stages are shown in Appendix 3. Total cash expenses during layer stage are again spread over the laying period on a monthly basis in proportion of days as shown in Appendix 4. Monthwise cash inflows are determined on the basis of sale proceeds of eggs, litter and culled birds in the corresponding month.

Working capital requirement of a poultry farm is determined by its cash requirement during the operating cycle. The operating cycle consists of three stages : chick, grower and layer in case of layer poultry, as has been stated earlier. In the first two stages, generally one-day old chicks are purchased and grown up. Cash outflows incurred during these stages are the basic components of working capital. As soon as the laying stage starts, there will be both way flow of cash-in and cash-out. However, initially the cash inflows are not sufficient to cover cash outflows due to low yield rate for which some additional working capital needs to be arranged in addition to the total cash outflows during chick and grower stage. As soon as the rate of laying picks up, cash inflows become more than the cash outflows and the operating cycle generates cash surplus. This feature of cash flows pattern may be empirically tested using the data of the sample farms which will give an idea of the pattern in Midnapore district. It has been observed that cash outflows pattern of the sample farms widely varies and therefore working capital requirement per bird in different farms are not uniform. Cash flows of the farms in the layer stage also do not show uniform behaviour. As a result, working capital requirement per bird also varies widely among the farms, which has been presented in Table 1. It is further observed that generally the process of generating cash surplus starts from the second or third month of the layer stage. Therefore, cumulative cash outflows become maximum in the month preceding the one in which the process of generating cash surplus starts.

Recovery of working capital is another matter of interest to the farm manager. But in the context of losing characteristics of the poultry farms in the district, this may be viewed from the opposite angle. Did the farms recover working capital? If so, when? It is another desponding area as reflected from the data of sample farms.

Table 3

## Recovery Pattern of Working Capital of Poultry Farms.

Farms	Investment in working capital Rs	Cumulative Cash flow at the end of the operating cycle Rs
Balaram	22,807	45,114
Subrata	18,546	1,391
Tapan	21,647	-11,577
Mohan	26,834	-4,696
Saileswar	42,645	984
Tarak	42,920	19,847
Shyamal	44,243	-22,245
Barid	36,342	979
Swapan	5,939	920
Pradip	21,320	-10,039

Six sample farms, however, managed to recover the cash invested as working capital and four farms failed to recover it. Excepting the profitable farm, other five farms managed to recover the working capital only at the end of the operating cycle by sale of culled birds. Another four farms turn up badly by losing about 50% of cash invested as working capital. As a result, the farmers were forced to scale down or to arrange for further working capital to maintain even the same size of a new lot. However, unless the farmer can at least recover the working capital at the end of the cycle it is not worthy to continue even in the short run. This becomes only an adventure to improve the efficiency from the lesson of the past.

The farmers who managed to recover working capital just at the end of cycle will face the problem of disruption in cash inflows. For an uninterrupted cash inflows pattern, the farmer has to add another lot of layer chicks while layer stage of the current lot continues. For

example, Subrata-farm experienced a 509 days cycle consisting of 138 days for growing and 371 days for laying. On the assumption of same type of cycle it could add a new lot at the expiry of 233 days of the laying period ; when the current lot will be replaced the new lot will enter into the laying stage. Only this process can yield uninterrupted cash inflows. But shortage of cash may stand in the way to follow this process. Its working capital is recovered only at the end of the cycle this continuous process cannot be followed other than fresh investment in working capital. The farmers will require additional working capital to finance the birds up to the grower stage. Scarcity of capital limits the adoption of the process and thus in most cases it was found that the farmers started a fresh lot only after the completion of an operating cycle and cash inflows are disrupted during the grower stage of the new lot. If this feature continues in the district, the financing agency may think over filling up the gap by financing.

But an ideal situation can be illustrated using the data of Balaram-farm. It recovered the entire working capital at the end of  $M_7$  (i. e., seventh month of the laying period). Thus it has experienced a favourable pay back period of working capital which can be reinvested for the fresh lot to maintain an uninterrupted cash inflows. It invested Rs 22,807 as working capital consisting of Rs 12,051 for chick stage, Rs 7,900 for grower stage and balance Rs 2,856 for layer stage for an effective farm size of 899 birds. Its gestation period is 80 days chick stage and 62 days grower stage. For a continuous cash generation it needed to introduce a lot in  $M_{1,1}$  (assuming a similar operating cycle). Then the farmer would not have to face the problem of additional working capital investment if other infrastructural facilities exist. But it is found on enquiry that the concerned farm bought the new lot only after the end of the operating cycle to the detriment of the continuous process of cash generation. As a consequence it had to maintain idle cash balance also.

Apart from timely adding a new lot, another possibility can be pointed out for squeezing the idle cash. It has been observed that the profitable farm had to maintain idle cash during  $M_3M_{1,0}$ . For continuous income generation working capital is required to be re-invested only in  $M_{1,1}$  as stated above. So the farmer could search for alternative investment opportunity during  $M_3M_{1,0}$ . Diversification may be resorted to for proper deployment of cash. Within this time-span rearing up broiler birds would yield some additional cash inflows within the available infrastructure with the only additional requirement

of shed. Some farmers having sufficient capital and additional sheds, however, have been following the practice of multiple lots of layer birds of different age-groups. This strategy can also squeeze idle cash in capital-intensive farms.

Cumulative cash flows pattern of three sample farms is presented in Fig. 1 to depict the cash flow variations. Data of the farms of Balaram, Subrata and Pradip are used for this purpose in terms of 100 birds. The first farm yielded cash surplus from the very beginning ( $M_3$ ) of the layer stage, the second farm managed to yield cash surplus only at the end of the operating cycle and the third farm faced the problem of erosion of working capital. It is attempted to highlight the three types of cash flows pattern observed from the sample farms, which may also be viewed as the cash flows characteristics of the poultry farms of the district. Cumulative cash flow graph clearly shows the magnitude of investment throughout the operating cycle. All the three curves firstly reach the lowest point (i. e., maximum cash outflows) and thereafter start to move upward. Uneconomic decisions about the timing of culling the birds of the lots are reflected in the second and third farms' graphs wherein the cumulative cash flow curves start to fall at point  $M_{10}$ . It would have been the wise decision to cull the birds at that point. The final rise of the curves reflect, in fact, the sale proceeds of culled birds and the litter at the end of the operating cycle. Some farms tried to maintain the lot even in the situation when additional cost was more than the additional benefit. Most of the farms discarded the lot after incurring some cash loss. Mention may be made to surplus/deficit column of cash flow pattern in Appendix 5. For example, Subrata farm started to yield negative cash flow from  $M_{10}$  but discarded the lot at  $M_{13}$ . If the farmer could discard the lot before entering the zone of negative cash flow, it would have been possible to avoid sizeable portion of the cash loss. However, in a continuous process discussed earlier the farmer could reap the benefit of higher rate of yield by timely discarding the old lot which would be the starting phase of laying of the new lot.

### Conclusion

This study is based on a small sample of ten farms which may affect the general findings. Further research covering the whole district taking a large sample may reveal some more interesting features of the poultry farming of the district. Subject to these

shortcomings, general findings of this study may be summarised as follows :

- (1) Poultry farms of the district are losing barring a few profitable farms.
- (2) Investment in fixed assets is ill-structured leading to high opportunity cost of cash invested.
- (3) High mortality rate of chicks purchased reduced the effective farm size in most cases.
- (4) Feed cost control was ignored which resulted in increasing cash outflows.
- (5) Unfavourable yield per bird was noticed in most cases.
- (6) As a consequential effect higher investment in working capital became a compulsion.
- (7) Managerial inefficiency was observed in timely replacing a lot.
- (8) Even the profitable farm did not take recourse to continuous cash generation process; rather it maintained the idle cash.
- (9) The profitable farm was not inclined to diversify for proper utilisation of idle cash.
- (10) 40% of the farms eroded a sizeable portion of their working capital. 50% of the farms managed to recover working capital only at the end of the operating cycle.
- (11) 90% of the farms incurred loss on C-Cost basis. Most of the farmers viewed that unfavourable relative price change of input and output is the only cause of this loss. However, it may be concluded that most of the cash loss is due to inefficient management. An extension of farm management knowledge can improve the situation.

**NARAYAN CHANDRA ADAK**

**Rural Development in Midnapore District  
Problems and Prospects**

**Introduction**

Most developing countries are trying to bring about rapid socio-economic development by introducing changes in almost all sectors including social overheads, infrastructural facilities and productive enterprises like industry and agriculture. "All developing countries are trying to improve the living standards of the masses who have so far been denied even the basic requirements of a decent living"<sup>1</sup>. Although the responsibility for development devolves essentially on the government, the private sector could so be induced to lend a helping hand. As an indispensable aid to nation-building, the role of public administration is now universally acknowledged and it is reflected in the new administrative science called "development administration".

In India concept of uplift owes its origin to a period long before independence, constructive workers inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and associated with Rabindra Nath Tagore in Sri Niketan have remained engaged in constructive work in different fields. In Baroda, Gurgaon and Madras, rural development programmes have generally

been carried on in some form or the other. At a later stage, various experiments were made at Etawah, Gorakhpur and Nilokheri. A good deal of experience was derived from the operation of such disjointed programmes.

After independence and since the advent of planning the major thrust in development has been directed towards rural areas. Several programmes have been undertaken for building up an appropriate social and economic infrastructure for development, lately accompanied by a bias towards improving the economic status of the rural poor. One of the earliest programmes is Applied Nutrition Programme while the latest one is National Rural Employment Programme. The spatial structure of rural development administration mainly comprises centre, state and district. "In order to understand the administrative process in rural development, there is an advantage in focusing on district administration, for it provides the basic operational machinery for rural development."<sup>2</sup>

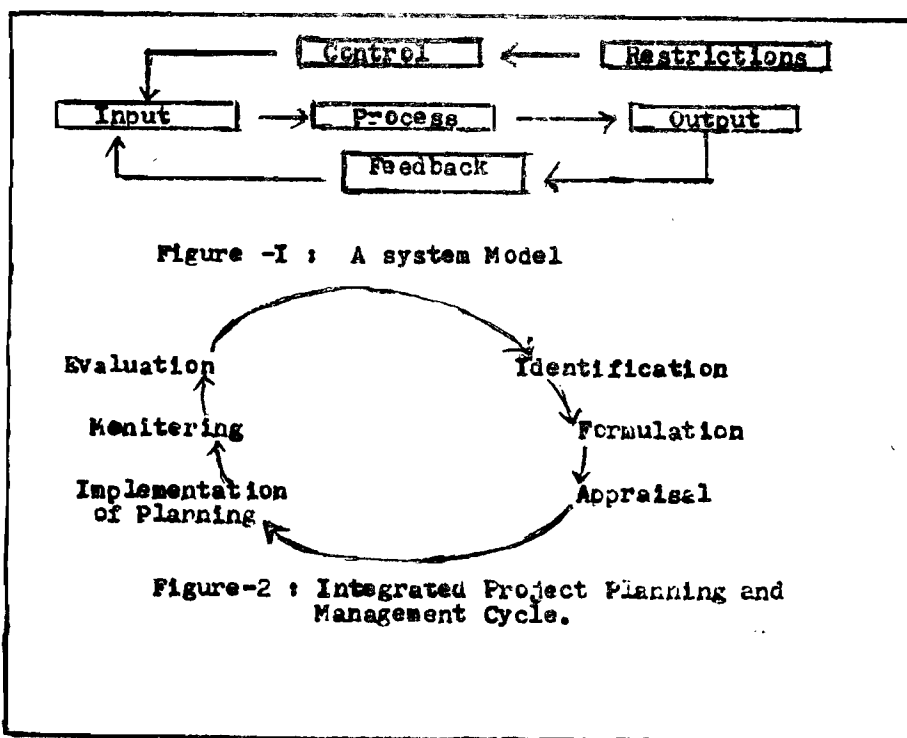
#### Theoretical Framework

Now what is rural development? Why is it felt urgent so much? In a predominantly agricultural country like India, the development of rural areas is a *sine qua non* of national development. As A. R. Patel has put it, "Abject poverty, gross inequality in the distribution of wealth and income, chronic unemployment, squalor want, ignorance and appalling insanitary and sub human conditions of living are still deep-rooted in rural areas in India. Rural development has therefore come to be realised as a *sine qua non* for national development and social welfare"<sup>3</sup>. According to the World Bank's Development Report 1978, about 800 million people in the developing world still live in "absolute poverty", which is defined by the Bank's the then President Robert McNamara as "a condition of life so characterised by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, high infant mortality, and low life expectancy as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency".<sup>4</sup> According to the Bank's optimistic estimates, the number of people in absolute poverty would be 60 crore even at the end of the present century. There is no denying the fact that unemployment, the main cause of poverty, is at present, the biggest social and economic problem of our country, which has been worsened with the rapid growth of population.

In his scholastic and yet down-to-earth review of the rural development programmes over the last three decades, C. L. Narasimhan

makes an attempt to identify features unique to rural society in India in order to determine if autonomous and self-reliant growth of villages is possible. According to him, "three reasons stood out as they still do as to why Indian growth had in contrast to be self-reliant and inward looking".<sup>5</sup> They are : (a) a settled and ancient population, (b) a highly unfavourable land-to-man ratio ; and (c) wide prevalence of poverty. The author points out that "the social scientists must, in developing societies strike out boldly and visualise growth models without fear of being reproached for enthusiasm."<sup>6</sup>

Some interesting models and charts and cyclic presentations have been designed by various scholars for rural development. We are giving below two such examples.



Source : K. S. Ramesh, "Rural Development Projects", *Kurukshetra*, 1 February 1981, p. 24.

In Figure-1, in the sphere of control, restrictions, process, the panchayat can play a vital role in any development project. Again in Figure-2, Panchayat bodies along with their members can play an effective role in all six phases of the management cycle for an integrated project planning.



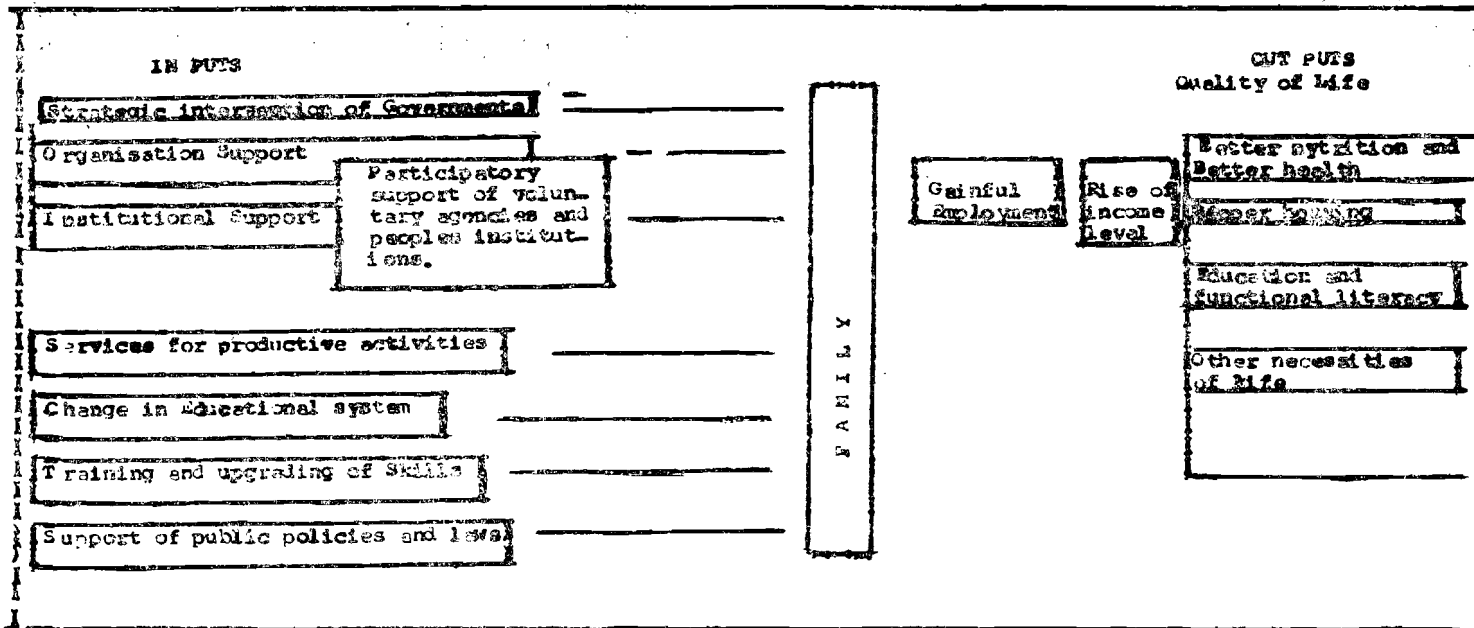
In a System-approach to socio-economic development of a rural family in the poverty group, B. Sivaraman in his article, "Role of Agriculture, Agro-Khadi and other Industries in providing Remunerative Rural Employment" presents the following model :

In the mentioned model (Figure—3) there is enough scope of panchayats' active participation and co-operation. In the input side the panchayats can do a lot in such aspects as organisational and institutional support, providing scope for training and upgrading of skills etc.

After a close examination of the various rural development strategies adopted from time to time since the beginning of First Five Year Plan, J. C. Adya and J. P. Lahoti in their paper, "Ensuring Genuine Rural Development",<sup>7</sup> make out a strong case for organising rural people to ensure development with justice. Any plan for rural development under Indian conditions must, the authors plead, take into account the five vital factors mentioned in the conclusion of their study. They are :

- (1) Optimum utilisation must be made of the resources of the rural areas for rural people.
- (2) For any scheme of rural development to be effective, organisation of the rural poor is a 'must', political power has to play the major role in establishing and training of dedicated cadres for this purpose and ensuring *en masse* participation of the beneficiaries in the process.
- (3) Village level plan should be drawn up, involving grass-roots rural people and taking into account the specific problems, culture, and the potential entrepreneurship available in the area. The urge for better living which has become extinct due to long years of poverty should be revived and motivation be created for development.
- (4) Appropriate technology should be made available to the rural poor who are no less responsive than other segments of rural population.
- (5) The role of industry in the form of a social contract, should be oriented towards seeking people's deep involvement in any scheme of development.

Be that as it may, it is at the grass-roots level that we should lay the foundations for a national policy of integrated rural develop-



Figure—3

Source : Proceedings of the National Seminar on the Eradication of Rural Poverty, Coimbatore, 7-9 October 1975, quoted in *Kurukshetra*, 1 October 1987, p 10.

ment. Decentralised development is the key-stone of rural development and the panchayat system would be an efficient instrument for the purpose, provided it is used for "effective participatory democracy at the grass-roots." According to V. K. R. V. Rao,<sup>8</sup> this would require the following conditions to be satisfied :

- (1) A deliberate effort has to be made to create a sense of motivation and identification of panchayat committee members, and officials should be required to give an account of their work at periodic meetings of their local electorate.
- (2) Without adequate financial resources no panchayat system can deliver the goods. The system then loses its credibility, and this means a mortal blow to the development of responsible democracy, the effect of which would be felt not only at the village level but also at the higher level of district, state and centre. The panchayat system must therefore include not only compulsory taxation and statutory grants-in-aid but also division of state revenue and labour contribution in lieu of financial payment by the local population.
- (3) The panchayat institutions must be brought into the mainstream of the planning process and they should be encouraged to play an effective part in identifying needs, making programmes and implementing them.
- (4) The system must provide for the accountability of local development officials to the local bodies.
- (5) It is necessary to give legitimacy and credibility to the panchayat institutions (a) compulsory periodic elections held simultaneously all over the state ; (b) strict regulation regarding suspension or supersession of local bodies ; (c) periodic evaluation of the functioning of local bodies by some kind of social audit.
- (6) Creation of village panchayats on the basis of cluster of 5 to 7 villages with an average population size of 5,000 and integrated by inter-village transport and communication links.
- (7) Establishment of training programmes for panchayat committee members and elected office-bearers.
- (8) Activisation of Mohila Mandala and Yuvak Sanghas.

- (9) Establishment of non-political recruitment boards for officials of local bodies.
- (10) Creation of panchayat service with promotion opportunities, security of service and grievance settlement procedure.
- (11) Establishment of a State Panchayat Commission with overall powers of monitoring and evaluation and mandatory discussion of their annual report in the state legislature.
- (12) Entrusting selected Universities and research institutions with periodic surveys of panchayat institutions.

We may now sum up, in the words of V. K. R. V. Rao, the major objectives of development, all of which have been accepted by the Indian Government and its planners, under the following heads :

1. Growth, 2. Employment, 3. Social Justice, 4. Spatial Co-ordination, 5. Quality of life.

Integrated development means a development that takes into account all these objectives and tries to integrate and link them together through the plans, programmes and policies that are followed for the promotion of development.<sup>9</sup>

### **Midnapore Schemes**

After a brief discussion of the theoretical side of rural development, let us now examine the prospect of some of the schemes for rural development in Midnapore district.

Midnapore district is now the largest district of West Bengal in respect of size and population. The territory of Midnapore district covers an area of 13,724 square kilometers. Its population surpasses that of any other district in West Bengal ; it is about 68 lakhs, according to 1981 census report. This district is unique in many respects. Not only its large area and big population but also its climatic variety and demographic diversity make it an object of interesting study. Its eastern part is easy victim to flood, its western part is prone to drought, and its southern part is a victim of cyclonic weather. There are within the district some hilly and forest areas, large number of rivers and canals, interesting tourist spots at Digha, Belpahari, Kakrajhore, Jhargram ; the adivasi people covering a sizeable portion of its population and the rich vegetable growing areas of Ghatal, Daspur etc. It is one of the most neglected districts in respect

of industry (only recently Haldia and Kolaghat are on the footing), the major occupation of the people of Midnapore is cultivation which is in its traditional stage. Its frontiers in South-West and West are kissed by Orissa and Bihar provinces. All these diverse elements are to be taken into account in any scheme of its economic betterment. In the initial years of full-fledged panchayat activities after 1978 election, the panchayats got little time and opportunity to devise new schemes and co-ordinate the existing projects for rural development, as panchayats remained mainly preoccupied with fighting natural calamities like flood and drought. There remains immense possibility of rural development together with huge employment potentiality within the Midnapore district. It appears to us that there is immense potentiality for providing jobs not only to all the inhabitants of the district but also to others belonging to neighbouring districts, and this can be done with the co-operation of panchayats. Finance will play the major role no doubt but planning supervision, co-ordination of various schemes and projects by panchayats, adopting technological and scientific benefits will have the major saying in this regard. Thanks to the venture of Vidyasagar University for including within its syllabus subjects like Political Science with Rural Administration and Economics with Rural Development, given proper attention and planned direction, this programme may initiate a new horizon of most realistic approach to rural problems rather than delving simply into theoretical abstractions.

Since independence and even before, there have been various approaches to rural development, both official and non-official. The famous "Bhudan-Yogna" of Acharya Vinoba Bhave is a case in point. This was designed to reduce the inequality of land holding in rural areas, thereby opening the possibility of rural development. The workings of Community Development Project enriched our experience and helped us to locate the pitfalls and also to suggest better methods and techniques of development. Since then a number of programmes and projects for rural development like IRDP, TRYSEM, DPAP, SFDA have been tried and worked out. Experience tells us that field investigation for collection of requisite data and information is the pre-requisite for devising any scheme of rural development.

The Employment Exchanges may come to a great help for collecting right information and suggesting right remedies. The

Employment Exchanges play a vital social role in many countries, but in our country they appear to be dormant. There is a common belief that our Employment Exchanges are unable to do anything substantial for the unemployed youths. Their mode of functioning are not in conformity with the expectations of the job seekers.

The first task of the Employment Exchanges would be to keep an account of the total manpower of the country. The whole working force should be divided into several categories in accordance with training, skills, education etc. Employment Exchanges should attend every house and take note of the nature of employment of the members of the house. The panchayats can help to a great extent in this regard. If they accompany the Employment Exchange officers during data collection, the work would be fruitful and as far as possible correct information would be secured. The panchayat members are in a better position to know the position and activities of their neighbours. New exchanges should be opened in rural areas to cater the growing needs of the rural people.

The gravity of the situation can be well understood if we look at the figures of unemployment of Midnapore district and compare it with those of other districts of West Bengal. But the registered unemployed does not show the real picture. Different statistical organisations, committees and commissions have however collected different figures regarding unemployment. Moreover, the rural people in most cases are reluctant to register their names or are unaware of the benefit of being registered. Let us now see the picture of unemployment of the sixteen districts of West Bengal (24 Parganas was not divided into two districts during the period of our study) for a period of four years by which we will be able to assess the position of Midnapore district.

It appears from the table—1 that about six lakhs of people are being added to the existing backlog of unemployment each year. The picture is alarming no doubt, though the actual number of unemployed people is believed to be much larger than this. The position of Midnapore district appears to be fourth in respect of new registration.

From the information available from the Directorate of Employment Exchanges, it appears that only a small portion of the huge unemployed has been placed at different posts through the Exchanges. The following table shows the picture of placement during last four years.

**Table—1 : New Registration in each year**

District	1979	1980	1981	1982
1 Calcutta	1,10,684	96,150	93,898	78,361
2 24-Parganas	95,961	94,834	90,257	1,01,962
3 Nadia	31,444	31,106	29,271	23,341
4 Murshidabad	39,742	31,006	25,095	30,651
5 Howrah	30,563	31,593	29,913	29,336
6 Hooghly	35,096	43,460	44,052	38,801
7 Burdwan	71,787	87,952	1,02,113	66,094
8 Birbhum	19,461	21,956	20,041	19,094
9 Bankura	18,855	31,109	23,354	23,737
10 Midnapore	41,367	73,605	63,380	58,061
11 Purulia	17,117	12,432	17,054	15,807
12 Darjeeling	16,050	17,568	16,866	16,323
13 Jalpaiguri	15,128	16,221	15,818	14,740
14 Cooch Behar	13,143	15,029	15,345	26,023
15 Malda	13,922	19,108	29,061	27,711
16 West Dinajpur	7,694	15,108	29,061	27,711
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,78,014</b>	<b>6,85,97</b>	<b>6,26,137</b>	<b>5,75,620</b>

*Source :* The table is supplied by the Directorate of Employment Exchanges, Government of West Bengal.

**Table—2 : Placement**

District	1979	1980	1981	1982
Calcutta	4,831	4,022	3,585	3,746
24-Parganas	1,480	1,228	884	1,285
Nadia	821	606	272	104
Murshidabad	554	1,030	1,034	281
Howrah	299	631	767	530
Hooghly	420	658	629	740
Burdwan	1,248	1,632	1,137	1,557
Birbhum	1,302	352	218	442
Bankura	187	399	275	837
Midnapore	592	1,137	971	1,234
Purulia	258	427	220	467
Darjeeling	732	1,230	943	832
Jalpaiguri	850	609	807	472
Cooch Behar	595	313	699	359
Malda	844	314	103	550
West Dinajpur	588	472	394	607
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,591</b>	<b>15,060</b>	<b>12,938</b>	<b>14,056</b>

*Source :* The table is supplied by the Directorate of Employment Exchanges, Government of West Bengal.

The table 2 tells that during a period of four years only 5,934 persons of Midnapore district were given employment through the Exchanges, whereas during that period the total number of registration of unemployed in Midnapore district was 2,36,413. Thus the percentage of placement in Midnapore district in comparison to total number of registration in this district is 1.66%. Naturally a large number of unemployed remains idle. The tables 1 and 2 also show that the percentage of new registration in Midnapore district in comparison to the total number of new registration in West Bengal is 9.77% and the percentage of placement in Midnapore district in comparison to the total number of placement in West Bengal is 6.82%.

This big backlog of unemployed should be provided with productive work otherwise they will eat up the proceeds of development and the country's development as a whole will remain stagnant. This problem requires the leaders, planners and social scientists to devise such plans and programmes for development, through which job seekers will find themselves profitably employed.

In Midnapore district the attempts for rural development got new impetus after 1978 panchayat election. Since then, various schemes and projects have been tried and executed for the upliftment of the rural poor. Among them are IRDP, TRYSEM, DPAP., SFDA etc. Recently schemes of rural development have come under the broad umbrella of NREP. The National Rural Employment Programme has two basic objectives. First, it is designed to provide employment to unemployed workers residing in rural areas. Wages are paid in cash and foodgrains. They are intended to improve the standard of living and nutrition of the rural poor. The second objective is the creation of durable community assets that will improve the infrastructure of rural areas. The assets created by the programme are supposed to promote economic growth that will eventually curtail unemployment and poverty. In a country with large amounts of surplus labour and extensive underdeveloped rural areas, the NREP relies on public works to utilize surplus labour to promote economic development. The type of works taken up include road construction, minor irrigation works, soil conservation, social forestry, construction of community buildings like schools and creation of assets that fulfil basic needs.

The NREP is one of the most important programmes in the Government of India's campaign to eliminate poverty. The Sixth Five Year Plan allotted Rs 1620 crores for the programme while setting the



goal of providing 300 to 400 person-days of employment. From its inception on 15 December 1980 to March 1984, NREP expenditures of Rs 13,236,481,000 have generated 1,422,063 person-days of employment.<sup>10</sup> According to recent government documents, NREP funding in the Seventh Five Year Plan is likely to be increased three to four times more than its outlay in the Sixth Plan.<sup>11</sup> The NREP in West Bengal is distinguished by the fact that the Government of West Bengal has given its revitalised Panchayati Raj institutions complete authority over the programme implementation.

NREP performance in Midnapore was slightly above average by West Bengal standards. The percentage of budget allotments that were utilized in Midnapore from fiscal year 1981-82 through 1983-84 was 108.6 per cent. This is slightly above the average of 105.5 per cent for all districts in West Bengal. It placed Midnapore fifth out of the state's fifteen districts. The average cost of generating a person-day of employment in Midnapore from 1981-82 to 1983-84 was 8.31 rupees. This was better than 8.80 rupees average for all districts and ranked Midnapore fourth out of 15.<sup>12</sup>

In an empirical study by a Fulbright scholar from USA<sup>13</sup> it has been argued that implementation of NREP through Panchayat raj institution has achieved success in the following respects :

- a) it has increased government officials' administrative capacity ;
- b) it has enhanced government's capacity for social control ;
- c) it has tried to improve iterative planning.

According to the viewpoint of this scholar, "despite these improvements, problems still exist in the rational processes of NREP implementation". In his extensive field work in Midnapore district during 1985, he points out the following drawbacks.

- i) Economic disparities within the district have not been given proper weightage.
- ii) Feedback system is not sufficient.
- iii) There has been lack of co-ordination between implementation of the NREP and other developmental programmes.
- iv) The tendency to neglect advance planning in favour of last minute planning once funds are in hand is widespread.
- v) Irregularity of NREP funding reduces the gram panchayats time-horizon of planning.
- vi) The lack of accessible technical expertise available to gram panchayats encourages them to take up small NREP projects.

- vii) The extent of corruption in the working of NREP scheme is within the district<sup>14</sup>.

These are, however, no insurmountable problems. Given the necessary faith and dedication they can be solved. The problems mentioned above are common to all panchayat bodies irrespective of districts or localities. It is clear that the democratic decentralisation through panchayats as a means to usher in a new social order for socio-economic transformation of the rural community of West Bengal has come to stay. "The Panchayats are living social organism and if the panchayat do not succeed, the best hope of our rural society will fail and this is a contingency which must be prevented by all possible means so that stability, democracy and economic growth of rural Bengal are well sustained."<sup>15</sup>.

The experiment with Panchayati raj has posed before us both a challenge and an opportunity. It has been nicely said by an expert scholar on local government, "it offers a challenge to the democratic genius of the people, and simultaneously it brings in the opportunity of training in the art of self-government."<sup>16</sup>.

### **Recommendations**

Let us now examine some of the projects which may fruitfully be adopted under the peculiar conditions of Midnapore district. The projects are labour-absorbing and requires little land and money. So they are very useful for the middle and lower-middle class people, whose number surpasses all other classes in any rural area.

#### *Drought-prone Area Programme*

In comparison to other provinces of India like Andhra Pradesh (seven districts of Anantapur, Chittoor, Kurnool, Guddapah, Mahaboobnagar, Prakasam and Nalgonda), Maharashtra (twelve districts of Ahmednagar, Solapur, Sangli, Sitara, Pune, Nasik, Osmanabad, Aurangabad, Beed, Dhule, Jalgaon and Buldhana), Rajasthan (ten districts of western and southern Rajasthan and six tehsils of the district of Udaipur (3) Jhunjhunu (2) and Ajmer (1), West Bengal has only three districts as drought prone, namely, Purulia (100%), Midnapore (23%) and Bankura (29%)<sup>17</sup>. The experience of working may fruitfully be adopted in West Bengal. The western part of Midnapore district centering round Jhargram subdivision is drought area. The average rainfall is low and the soil is hard. This large area of barren

land may be utilised through DPAP. The basic objective of DPAP is to improve the economy of chronically drought affected areas through a package of schemes designed for optimum utilisation of available land, water, live-stock, and man-power resources and thereby reduces the severity and recurrence of drought. In the entire gamut of diversification schemes comprising sericulture, horticulture and fisheries, the programme has an important role to play in the DPAP areas to help improve the economic levels of a sizeable section of rural society which could fruitfully be engaged in these activities. Apart from providing additional income and employment, diversification scheme will go a long way in restoration of ecological balance in these areas."<sup>18</sup> It is no doubt that cooperation of panchayat institutions and members are very much essential for the successful implementation of these schemes. But a team of experts for selecting appropriate scheme for a particular area is necessary. The Government of West Bengal has already started various projects like social forestry, fishery in those areas with the help of panchayat bodies, but the scope of its full utilisation has remained untaped.

#### *Sericulture*

As an agro-based activity, sericulture has a great prospect of development in DPAP areas. However, it has been taken up on a limited basis in West Bengal very recently. In Midnapore district, the first mulberry cultivator adopting modern methods is Durgapada Bhunia of village Itai, Alokendra. He started his cultivation in the year 1972 under the encouragement of Ramesh Chandra Ghosh, the then BDO of Debra Block. According to Durgapada Bhunia, it is a very profitable cultivation. It requires little land and little amount of money. It has the scope of providing jobs to almost the entire family members starting from the age group of 4/5 years up to the very aged. In an interview he said that even the students can earn from this cultivation by devoting only a few hours of their leisure period. According to Sri Bhunia<sup>19</sup>, from a land of 75 decimal area, a net profit of Rs 5640/- was earned by him providing employment to six members throughout the year. A.R. Patel in his article "Future of Sericulture Industry", states that "Recent experiments have revealed that by rearing 'bivoltine' variety with package of practices recommended by the sericulture department both for mulberry cultivation and rearing of silk worms, the net income can be stepped up from Rs 6,000/- to Rs 27,500/- per hectre. Likewise a seed prepare can

earn net profit of Rs 350/- per month from one batch of laying. He can raise three batches of laying per month and employ three workers per day, if a continuous supply of seed cocoons is ensured. A silk reeling unit employing ten domestic basis can provide job to twenty labourers per day and yield a net profit of Rs 15,000 per year, if cocoons at the rate of 110 kgs are made available to the unit per day. A silk reeler's industrial co-operative society, organised properly, can provide employment to workers (skilled and unskilled) and educated persons. It can also protect the interest of the members, arrange for finance, market the produce, secure raw materials etc"<sup>20</sup>.

The District Planning and Development Department may chalk out suitable plans for selected areas with the help of experts. Though panchayat has a wide scope to encourage this potential cultivation, yet the experienced cultivators like Durgapada Bhunia are not in favour of panchayat involvement in this regard. He fears that through panchayats, political parties may spoil the atmosphere of development. In Midnapore district, the cultivation of mulberry is still in a very limited area. It can be started in any area where there is a good drainage system.

#### *Horticulture*

In most DPAP areas the soil and climate are ideally suitable for fruit crops and fruit bearing trees. Plantation and tending of fruit trees is one of the oldest traditional activities of the local people in these areas. "Development of the horticulture, is therefore, taken up under the programme both from the point of view of raising the income and from the point of view of restoring the ecological balance in these areas. The activities conceived under horticulture can also provide the added benefit of firewood and fuel from clippings, shade and wind breaks and prevent soil and bandh erosion".<sup>21</sup>

In Midnapore district this culture has not been practised on a wide scale. Only some individuals have utilised their non-arable high lands for the purpose on a very limited scale. Panchayats with the help of experts should tap the possibility of its future development.

#### *Fishery Development*

In Midnapore district, there are large number of big khas tanks, and the Department of Land Revenue, is extending a large amount of financial help for their improvement. During the three financial years 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, an amount of Rs 6,534,000/- was

distributed to all the panchayat samitis of Midnapore district for the improvement of the Khas Tanks.<sup>22</sup> It was found from my field investigation<sup>23</sup> that only in five cases money was fully utilised. In ten cases less than 50 per cent of the allotted money has been utilised and in as many as fourteen cases the money was not utilised at all or utilisation certificate was not submitted. So the progress achieved in this sector is still very limited. The DPAP envisages intensive fishery cultivation both in perennial and seasonal tanks. The programme is however, more beneficiary-oriented than infrastructure-oriented and seeks to provide direct benefits to the poor fishermen and fish farmers. The main programme elements under this sector are : financial and technical assistance for the establishment of fish seed farms, nurseries, development of fisheries in natural ponds, irrigation tanks, deepening, deweeding and repairs of bundhs for adopting pisciculture practices, subsidy to individual fisherman for seed, fertilisers, nylon nets and boats etc., training of fishermen in fishculture, assistance to organisation of fisherman's co-operative marketing societies, etc. In Midnapore district, some big ventures have already been started. Junput near Digha and Julir Bundh of Jhargram are two such examples. The enthusiastic venture of Fishery Minister, Sri Kironmoy Nanda has already done a lot to solve the problem of one of the favourite item in the menu of Bengali people.

The individual initiatives in this sphere is however very encouraging. Jagadish Mandal, Lecturer of Pingla Thana Mahavidyalaya, is one of the pioneers of Midnapore district in fishery development. He is the group-leader of Debra Block Fish Production Group. In an interview, Sri Mondal states that from a pond of 33 decimel area, at least Rs 3500/- can easily be earned annually as a net profit only by investing Rs 500/- initially. It also provides ancillary employment opportunities, like net making, dairy farming etc. He recommends the following measures for its efficient working.<sup>24</sup>

- 1) There must be at least one Fishery technologist associated with each gram panchayat.
- 2) The fish production groups must be public oriented in their outlook and should check their temptation of profit-making only.
- 3) The credit system by banks should be liberalised.
- 4) The marketing facilities should be regulated by co-operatives and panchayats.

Chart—3

The Midnapore Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Limited—At a glance  
Area of operation—Entire district of Midnapore, Date of registration—10th August 1977

Particulars	Achievement	Target (1987-88)
1. Number of Development Blocks Covered	11	Whole Midnapore District
2. Number of Primary Societies organised	95	440
3. Number of Primary Societies supplying milk	70	440
4. Number of Milk producers covered.	3,800	58,400
5. Number of animals covered under Milk Procurement, Health coverage etc.	9,500	87,200
6. Number of artificial insemination centres	57	440
7. Number of cross breed calves born	5,700	26,000
8. Number of fodder minikits distributed	907	5,800
9. Quantity of balanced Cattle feed sold to the milk producers	600 MT/Year	3,140 MT/Year
10. Number of milk chilling centres	2	6
11. Number of feeder Dairy Plant	—	1
12. Area under milk marketing	Kharagpur and Midnapore	Whole of Midnapore district
13. Volume of milk marketed in local towns	2,000 LPD	20,000 LPD
14. Milk supply to Mother Dairy, Calcutta	3,000 LPD	30,000 LPD

Source : Chart exhibited by the Mid Milk at the 6th All India Krishi Mela held at Midnapore in 1982.

- 5) The people receiving *behar bhata* (unemployment-benefit) may be utilised in this respect.

#### *Social Forestry*

The per capita forest-wealth in Midnapore district is much lower in comparison to that of the world as a whole. The ratio is indicated in the following chart.<sup>25</sup>

World	1.25	hecta meter
India	0.14	" "
West Bengal	0.03	" "
Midnapore	0.029	" "

The total area of forest in Midnapore district is about 1,693. 708 square kilometers, of which 880 square kilometers is under Midnapore (West) Forest Division and the rest under Midnapore (East) Forest Division.<sup>26</sup> More and more emphasis is now being placed upon creation of social forestry in the country. According to B. P. Srivastava and M. M. Pant, "Social forestry is a new concept of forest creation, management and judicious utilisation of goods and services generated therefrom. It aims at combining the idle land, labour and water resources to optimise production of farm manure, firewood, fodder, small constructional timber and to stabilise soil. Social forestry embodies the Gandhian philosophy of self-sufficiency, economic growth and community development... For the success of social forestry programmes, a change in the attitude of the forester, villager, politician, decision-maker and all other involved is inevitable."<sup>27</sup>

In Midnapore district, several centres have been opened to distribute plants through the Panchayat samitis. In an experiment it has been found that by planting Eucaliptas trees in one acre waste land, Rs 6,000/- can be earned after six years. Garbeta Panchayat Samiti No I has come forward in this respect. It has started a large scale experiment of cashewnut cultivation on an area of 64 hectre garden.<sup>28</sup> In near future, this programme given proper attention, will improve financial position and ensure large employment and ecological balance.

#### *Dairy Farming*

Dairy farming has a very good potentiality for providing employment opportunities as well as ensuring nutritious food supply to the masses. The experiments in Gujarat and Haryana are very much alluring. Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya (Nadia) has within its

curriculum a separate discipline of Dairy Technology, and Vidyasagar University may profitably include such courses, particularly in the Economics Department for helping students to gather first-hand experience in such projects and also for actively helping rural development projects in Midnapore as well as other districts of West Bengal. But considerable emphasis should be placed on popularising the scheme through exhibitions, seminars etc. with the help of Panchayat institutions. The following chart shows the progress of dairy farming in Midnapore district during the initial four years of its workings.

The headquarter of Midnapore Milk Producers' Co-operative Society is situated at Birajabhaban, Rangamati. In an interview with Nurul Islam, the Marketing Officer of that Society, it is learnt that the progress has been slowed down due to dispute over policy matters between the Central and State governments as a result of which a major amount of money sanctioned by the Central government remains unutilised.

The panchayat institutions can encourage rural people in this prospective field of development and hereby make the idea of "Operation Flood" or what is sometimes called "White Revolution" being translated into reality. Progress in this respect has already been achieved to a considerable extent particularly in rural area but yet much remains to be fulfilled.

#### *Poultry Farming*

Among the districts of West Bengal, Midnapore is the pioneer in poultry-farming. The following report indicates its progress. The number of Poultry-Farm Societies registered in different years is as follows :

1979-80	1980-81	1981-82
9	35	65

*Source* : Exhibition of Charts at the Sixth All-India Krishi Mela held at Midnapore in 1982.

But the number of unregistered Farms seems to be much greater. Still, the rate of progress in Poultry-farming in this district seems to be encouraging. Training through institutions organised by District Planning and Development Department with the help of Panchayats and expert advice through radio broadcast may help the villagers to earn their bread through it, and thereby feed the society



protein and nutritious food. In addition it has the scope to provide employment to the whole family.

#### *Mat Industry*

Though mat industry has a long heritage in several regions of Midnapore district, the organised venture in this sector was started only in the year 1978. In that year Midnapore District Mat-Welfare Co-operative Society was first registered with its Head Office at Sabang. The regions where mat-industry has its footing are Sabang, Pingla, Pataspur, Egra and Narayangarh. Pilot programme to help the rural artisans engaged in this cottage industry has started after the flood of 1978. It has the potentiality to provide jobs to many including women, aged, minors and even to handicapped. In an interview, Manmathanath Roy<sup>29</sup> suggested that collection of mat-sticks, its distribution among the artisans, collection of manufactured mats and its marketing must be regulated through the appropriate authorities like co-operatives or Panchayats or Industrial Officer. Given proper attention this industry can solve disguised or seasonal unemployment in rural areas to a large extent.

#### *Hand-Weaving*

Hand-weaving is a cottage industry of every house in Pataspur, Tamluk, Moyna, Mahisadal areas of Midnapore district. The initial requirement for that industry is indicated below.<sup>30</sup>

Purchasing cost of a machine—Rs 1500/- to Rs 2000/-

Raw materials—Rs 2500/- to Rs 3000/-

With this financial assistance and with six months training, an artisan can provide job at least to six members of a family and a man can earn Rs 300/- per month by devoting a few hours of a day. The artisans are sometimes compelled to sell manufactured articles at a low price due to financial difficulty and if panchayats or co-operatives come to help in this regard they will be in a better financial position. There is a weaving school at Midnapore for imparting training to the unemployed youth.

#### *Betelvine Cultivation*

Though betelvine cultivation is an age-old cultivation and though it has a good potentiality for earning foreign money still it has not received proper attention either from the government or from the

Agricultural Universities. In an age when population pressure is too much upon land, a small piece of land can provide a good return through this cultivation. The experience of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana betelvine cultivation has drawn the attention of the planners and economists. In West Bengal, though it has a very good scope, only some sporadic attempts have been made by some individual enterprises for the improvement of this cultivation. The effort made by Prof. G. Si, under the auspices of Panskura Banamali College Science Club for scientific improvement of this cultivation is an encouraging exemplary case. In an interview<sup>31</sup> Prof. Si told that from a land of 10 decimel area, a net profit of Rs 4,000/- could be earned annually thereby providing job to three persons throughout the year. The initial expenditure, according to Prof. Si, is as follows :

Plot—10 decimel land.		
For Bangla betelvine.		Rs 12,000/-
For Sanchi betelvine.		Rs 13,000/-
For Mitha betelvine.		Rs 15,000/-
It starts to give return after nine months.		
Annual average return.		Rs 14,000/-
Annual maintenance charge		
(a) Material expenses.	Rs 3,000/-	} Rs 10,000/-
(b) Labour expenses.	Rs 7,000/-	
Annual net profit.	=	Rs 4,000/-

The maintenance cost can be minimised if proper plant protection measures are adopted after due research. The betelvine has a good export market in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ceylon, U.S.A. and in South East Asian countries. Not only that there is much scope for industrial and other uses of betelvine stems, leaves and roots. New markets can be captured through exhibition in Industrial Fairs in different countries of the world.

In Midnapore district, the following regions are famous for betelvine cultivation : Tamluk I and II, Mahisadal I and II, Ramnagar I and II, Panskura I and II, Sutahata I, Mohanpur and Egra. According to Prof. Si, government, Agricultural Universities, Panchayats and Co-operatives have much role to play for the improvement of this cultivation. As it requires major financial investment initially, so the above mentioned agencies should come forward in this regard. IRDP of Midnapore has already recognised it and is extending loans to

betelvine cultivators Direct government loans and subsidies may be granted to the cultivators either through the Panchayats or through the Industrial Officers at the Panchayat Samiti level. Panchayats can assist the financial agencies by selecting beneficiaries and helping loan realisation from the cultivators. Co-operatives and Panchayats can help to organise "Growers Organisations" for supply of raw materials at reasonable price, for removing marketing difficulties, assuring transportation facilities, packing and bleaching. The government and Agricultural Universities can make arrangement for research and training for developed modern agricultural "package of practices" and for popularising the cultivation and its use. Recently Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya and Government of West Bengal are giving attention to the various problems of of this cultivation.

### Conclusion

Thus there are hundreds of such schemes and projects for rural development. There is no doubt that the potentiality of rural development with the help of Panchayat and thereby creating a huge employment opportunity is immense. Sincere, enthusiastic leadership with the co-operation of Panchayats and financial institutions may bring the best results. Though it is a hope, it is certainly not a utopia with no foothold upon reality. Experiment and experience will enrich our horizon of knowledge and this may take time, but there is no short-cut to progress. Among many points which emerge from our foregoing discussion, the snags listed in actual implementation stand out prominently. Obviously no development programme, however well conceived, has any reasonable chance of success in the absence of a matching mechanism devised for its implementation and there is no doubt that this matching mechanism is definitely the Panchayat institution assisted by specialists and experts in the field.

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ANIL KUMAR JANA

### Quit India Movement in the Subdivision of Contai

The Quit India movement was 'by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857, the gravity and extent of which was concealed (by the Government) for reasons of military security.'<sup>1</sup> It was the last mass movement led by the Congress in the history of India's struggle for freedom. The Quit India resolution of the All India Congress Committee expressed the sincere desire of the Indian people for independence, and the people together with their leaders were psychologically well prepared to win the last battle at any cost even at the risk of violence.<sup>2</sup> The initial stage of the movement was marked mainly by hartals, strikes and clashes organized by the people. A fortnight or so after the movement was launched the course of the movement was shifted, which may be characterized as organized militant activities spearheaded by younger generations in the remote parts of the country. During this phase a good number of *National Governments* were set up by the people in different parts of the country.

The August movement gathered momentum in the subdivisions of Contai and Tamluk though there were endless protests and incidents throughout the district of Midnapore. In Contai and Tamluk the movement took the form of a rebellion which brought the government

functioning to a standstill and established National Governments in different police stations for a considerable period of time. It is highly interesting that the population of Contai and Tamluk constituted two-thirds of the total population of the district. Moreover, the two subdivisions were the areas worst affected by the 'Denial Policy' of the Government. The policies pursued by a perplexed and puzzled Government in the face of possible attack by Japan failed to elicit public sympathy; on the contrary, these caused discontent among the masses as they occasioned untold and inhuman sufferings to them. Again, both the subdivisions had a glorious record of mass participation in movements against the British Raj. Naturally the movement took a serious turn in these two subdivisions culminating in mass uprising against the mighty alien rule.<sup>3</sup>

## I

The people of Contai were very much inspired by earlier movements which took place in the remote parts of the district and took part in different movements against the alien rule since the days of partition of Bengal and faced courageously the stormy days of the non-co-operation era. More significant was their protests and fight against the Government attempt to force Union Boards on the villagers in the area of Contai and Ramnagar thanas on the recommendations of the District and Local Boards.<sup>4</sup> Besides formal and constitutional methods of resistance, terrorist methods were also pursued.

In the late twenties the 'Bengal Volunteers' (B. V.) was organized at Contai. Prior to that, in some distant and inaccessible parts of the subdivision training camps were organized to train up the terrorists. Kshudiram Bose used to train up the volunteers personally in some of these camps.<sup>5</sup> The non-co-operation movement launched by Gandhiji took a new turn in the subdivision under the leadership of Birendranath Sasmal and it was intermingled with the local call for boycott of Union Board. People belonging to different walks of life left Government offices, schools and courts to join the fray. Teachers who left the school later organized National Schools in different parts of the district. Kalagachhia School was the first National School in West Bengal established on 1 March 1921.<sup>6</sup> The people of Contai fought successfully the Government decision to bifurcate the district of Midnapore and to add the southern part of Midnapore to Orissa in 1931. In the face of massive opposition throughout the district the Boundary Committee headed by Sir Samuel O'Donnel was forced

to disapprove the partition though some people including a few influential officials pleaded for amalgamation with Orissa.<sup>7</sup>

The perspective for a mass uprising in the subdivision of Contai was created by the callous attitude of the Government. The continually soaring prices further aggravated the popular dissatisfaction. Besides, the Second World War inflicted untold sufferings on the commoners and the Kaleghai floods of 1940 made their living conditions utterly miserable. Prior to this devastating flood, crops of the cultivators had been severely damaged by successive natural calamities in 1938 and 1939. The relief measures were all too meagre to meet the needs of the people.<sup>8</sup> Again, new taxes were imposed on the people to raise funds to support war requirements.<sup>9</sup> The Government did not take steps to help farmers by providing irrigation facilities to enable them to enhance production inspite of repeated appeals from the people.<sup>10</sup> The prices of essential commodities rose to such an extent that even a callous and repressive administration was compelled to control the prices of some essential commodities by applying the Defence of India Rules.<sup>11</sup>

All these things increased the dissatisfaction and anger of the masses towards the Government. Again the conditions of the Bargadars and poor peasants deteriorated to such an extent that in the days of the war they grew more and more desperate. They became anxious to face up to the prevailing situation and were confident that their lot would improve with the abolition of exploitation with the achievement of independence.<sup>12</sup> Bargadars were severely exploited by the landlords and the local moneylenders as well. The landlords used to collect from them different kinds of *abwab* (a kind of illegal cess) in addition to the usual shares payable by the sharecroppers.<sup>13</sup> In some places these were known as *tuts*. The bargadars were also subjected to limitless exploitation by the rural moneylenders.<sup>14</sup> Naturally in most cases they failed to bring home their produce after paying these rural extortioners.<sup>15</sup> The movements of the bargadars were intensified in the late thirties and early forties. It is interesting to note that the Congress leadership inspite of having its basis among the middle and upper class people and rural gentry extended its full sympathy to the movements of the bargadars.<sup>16</sup> The bargadars and poor peasants found the cause of their immense sufferings in the British rule which was in most cases preferred to protect the interests of the zamindars and moneylenders. The movements of the bargadars and the support of the



local Congress leadership brought home an alliance between these two which helped the former to stand up to their common enemy.<sup>17</sup>

The British Raj in India was faced with the menace of attack by the axis powers. The Government apprehended advance of the Japanese through the Bay of Bengal and the river Hooghly and, in the event of such a thing happening, it was afraid of possible capture of public conveyances, especially boats and launches by the enemy forces. To avoid such a mishap the District Magistrate of Midnapore issued an Order on 8 April 1942 by which he took over all the boats of the subdivision serving at different points. Boats and cycles were seized from the public and were gathered before the police stations without any care. Permits allowing the bicycles were issued to the doctors in special cases after endless importunities<sup>18</sup> The police staff found a good business in it. Withdrawal of public conveyances caused great hardship to the people. On the contrary, it helped the volunteers to take shelter in safe places beyond the reach of the police. Not content with these anti-people measures the government resorted to various repressive measures against the political leaders. At different times orders were enforced prohibiting the movement of volunteers and confining people in their homes from sunset to sunrise. The period of confinement of political leaders were from time to time extended the police authorities. (If the Government orders were drastic their execution were more severe and inconsiderate.) From these activities of the Government a suspicion arose in the public mind that if attacked by the Japanese forces the Government would leave the people in the lurch as it was doing in Malaya and Burma. In the face of Government repression the Congress workers did not remain silent. They were organizing people under different constructive programmes with the ultimate aim of preparing people to be self-confident and self-sufficient to meet the challenge.<sup>19</sup> Mahatma Gandhi and other senior leaders were arrested in Bomboy in the small hours of 9 August. Prior to the arrest of national leaders meetings and discussions were used to be organized in different parts of the district to convey the 'Quit India' proposal and to finalize the course of action to be taken by the people after the formal call was given by the All India Congress Committee. But the news of sudden arrest of the national leaders came to the people like a bolt from the blue. The wrath of the people knew no bounds; it led them to organize processions, meetings and demonstrations of spontaneous character in the absence of concrete programme at the initial stage of the movement.<sup>20</sup> The active and

articulate leadership of the subdivision was convinced of the need of maintaining constant communication with the people through their own media. Accordingly, *Swadhin Bharat*, a weekly bulletin in Bengali came into existence on 30 August 1942, which served as the mouthpiece of the Subdivisional War Council during the days of the August movement.<sup>21</sup> The Subdivisional War Council was constituted sometime in the third week of August and was authorised by the Subdivisional Congress Committee to organize and conduct the movement in the subdivision. It was headed by the *First Dictator* (Commander-in-Chief). To avoid the collapse of the Council in case of arrest of the *First Dictator*, a panel of men to succeed him one after another was prepared at the very first meeting of the Council. Besides, individual members were entrusted with various responsibilities like publicity, food and supplies, communications etc.<sup>22</sup>

## II

On receipt of the news of arrest of the national leaders amidst high tension and great anxiety people in different localities organized hartals and processions. Mass hartals were observed at Pataspore, Bhagwanpur and Khejuri police stations on 14 August 1942, protesting against the arrest of the national leaders.<sup>23</sup> Throughout the course of the movement the students and the youth followed suit and took the leadership of the movement. The authorities closed down the institutions to prevent the students from organizing resistance to the Government. From the very beginning the Government tried to suppress the movement by employing brute force. Local leaders were arrested by the police.<sup>24</sup> Amidst government repression and mass arrests, public meetings, processions and hartals were a regular feature.<sup>25</sup> Volunteers were enlisted and camps were set up with the task of popularizing the cause of the movement. The planning and its implementation was so perfect and extensive that not a single village of the subdivision was left untouched by the currents of the movement. Besides picketing and strikes in different parts of the localities, in some cases active resistance to government functioning was organized. One such incident drew the attention of the people when the volunteers marched through the town appealing to the people not to attend the 'dance' arranged by the SDO on 6 September 1942 to raise funds for war.<sup>26</sup> The movement entered the militant phase when on the 14th twenty processions comprising about ten thousand persons from all corners of the subdivision entered the town all at a time at 3 p.m.

through eight main entrances.<sup>27</sup> This created confidence among the people and a great sensation throughout the subdivision. During this phase of the movement the War Council decided to destroy the connexion between the villages and the police stations by forcing the resignation of the chowkidars and dafadars, the twin pillars of the British power in rural India. Some of the chowkidars and dafadars were forced to resign and some others did not report to the police stations.<sup>28</sup> In some places uniforms of the chowkidars and dafadars were taken away by the volunteers.<sup>29</sup> There was organized a spontaneous participation of the people throughout the entire subdivision. Thus the ground was prepared for direct action from the people.<sup>30</sup>

The second phase of the movement started with the capture of different police stations to dislodge the British Raj since these were symbols of the Raj in India.<sup>31</sup> At a meeting of the Subdivisional War Council it was decided unanimously to capture the thana offices of Bhagwanpur, Pataspore, Khejuri and Ramnagar and not to raid Contai and Egra police stations since these were easily accessible to the police.<sup>32</sup> Midnight of 29 September 1942 was fixed by the Council for such operation with a plan to capture all the targets all on a sudden at a particular time.<sup>33</sup> The people of Bhagwanpur was always courageous and adventurous. The Thana Council of Bhagwanpur rejected the proposal of War Council and decided to capture the thana in broad daylight instead of capturing it at night since operations at night would amount to cowardice.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, at about 3.30 p.m. about twenty thousand people marched towards the police stations through different ways.<sup>35</sup> The thana building was well protected. Moreover, Sudhangshu Dasgupta, the Khasmahal Officer of Contai, was endowed with the powers of a First Class Magistrate and was deputed to Bhagwanpur to meet the challenge of the 'Home-Rulers.'<sup>36</sup> When the processionists approached the thana fencing and were about to move inside, the Magistrate in collusion with the Second Officer of the thana, Amulya Ghosal, started firing from behind of a bus at random on the masses. As a result of this ruthless firing 16 persons lost their lives and more than hundred others were injured.<sup>37</sup>

After the sad incident of the 29th the volunteers were not overwhelmed with fear and despair; rather they continued their efforts to execute their plans already adopted earlier. They decided to paralyse the supply and stop import of foodgrains from outside the

thana for the police so that they could be forced to surrender to the people. Volunteers carried on their destructive activities including setting fire to the Government offices and disconnecting roadlinks.<sup>35</sup>

In Pataspore the *Thana Samar Parishad* endorsed the decision of the War Council and, accordingly, collected food, medicine and materials for first-aid and instructed the people by secret message to assemble at seven strategic points.<sup>39</sup> The people arrested a constable, set fire to all the government offices.<sup>40</sup> They on their way back destroyed almost all the bridges and culverts on the road and made cuts at ten points of the road. Telegraph wires were cut and posts were destroyed.<sup>41</sup> The constables arrested by the people were provided with food and money to facilitate their return to native places.<sup>42</sup> Pataspore was declared independent and National Government was established. Villagers formed their own protection force and Boards of Arbitration at the Union levels. One hospital with four doctors and twelve nurses was set up. Police informers were treated as traitors, socially boycotted, and were severely dealt with.<sup>43</sup> All in all, Pataspore was out of government control for next three months and administration was run by the National Government.<sup>44</sup> Evidence of P. W. 3 who was a sub-Manager of Bhagwanpur Khasmahal office from the later part of 1941 to October 1943 showed that the normal work of their department remained temporarily suspended due to political disturbance even up to 20 January 1943. Similar arrangements were made in Khejuri police station. Geographical location of this police station was extremely helpful to the volunteers as shelter when chased by the police.<sup>45</sup> The Khejuri leadership was very much cautious and practical and they included some noted criminals of the localities and youths, specially trained with lathis in the volunteers' group for conducting the raid.<sup>47</sup> Seven to eight thousand people gathered before the thana building. One sentry of the thana was about to sleep while another was reading the *Ramayana* loudly. A few activists suddenly jumped over and overpowered the sentry while others captured the *malkhana* (stores). The thana building was sprayed with kerosene and set on fire. The OC of the thana was out and the rest of the force was at once arrested by the volunteers. They were treated well during their confinement and were provided with food and other necessaries.<sup>48</sup> After a day or two they were sent towards the Sundarbans. Other offices of the Government were also destroyed and burnt. Participation of the masses in the raid of Khejuri police station was so well organized that raids were conducted at twenty

five different places within a specified time.<sup>49</sup> The Khejuri happenings included an incident like the abduction of a Circle Officer of Police when he was carrying ration and foodstuff for the police force posted at Khejuri. The CI together with his eleven armed companions were intercepted and disarmed by people on their way.<sup>50</sup> The captives were kept confined at different places for ten days after which they were released. Destructive activities were also carried out in other police stations of the subdivision. Particularly the destructive activities in Ramnagar PS started from 27 September on which day the police resorted to firing at Belboni Volunteers' Camp causing death to ten persons as a part of their repressive measures to terrorize the people in general and to demoralize the volunteers in particular.<sup>51</sup>

Thus the British Raj in the subdivision was completely paralysed and National Governments were formed. The Governments formed in Pataspore and Khejuri took over public administration and performed all the functions like an organized public authority. It was an interesting fact that it took two days to reach the report of the abduction of the CI to the headquarters at Contai.<sup>52</sup> In Khejuri the police administration was carried on by the Government from a ferry boat near the river Rasulpur till December 1942.<sup>53</sup> The National Governments were headed by the *Sarbadhinayak* who was assisted by a few ministers like the Judicial Secretary, Secretary-in-Charge of National Guards, Finance Secretary, Propaganda Secretary, Food and Health Secretary.<sup>54</sup> Swaraj Panchayats, a three-tier judiciary, was organized to administer justice.<sup>55</sup> In some places hospital, post-offices, offices of Registration were also organized.<sup>56</sup> Again, in a few cases, ambassadors were appointed to maintain communication with the neighbouring thanas. However, these Governments were shortlived. The cyclone that hit the subdivision in the middle of October reduced the functioning of these Governments to the minimum.<sup>57</sup> Prior to that their existence was threatened by the largescale repression launched by the Government. The National Governments disintegrated gradually and was officially dissolved after two years when the 'Quit India' movement was called off.

### III

The District authorities planned and adopted unprecedented measures to put down the popular uprising from the very beginning. The measures taken in the subdivisions of Contai and Tamluk were

inhuman, horrific and barbarous. Nobody could imagine today that the British committed such heinous crimes through their agents. It would be unbelievable as well that these acts of crimes were done by the 'natives' against their countrymen. Virtually these two subdivisions were brought under military rule during the days of the movement. The Contai-Belda D. B. Road—the only link road from outside Contai—was taken over by the military and military patrol was posted throughout the road.<sup>58</sup> The District Magistrate issued a strong warning to the people on 7 September asking them not to be engaged in any sort of subversive activities including the destruction of roads and telelinks.<sup>59</sup> People were threatened with 'collective fines'.<sup>60</sup> Orders of internment were passed on the political workers for confinement.<sup>61</sup> Movements of persons at night and blowing of conchshells by the people except on religious occasions all over the subdivision were prohibited.<sup>62</sup> The Government took over all the buses excepting the 'Mail Bus' plying between Contai and Belda. Again its use by private individuals was very much restricted.<sup>63</sup> Boats and cycles were earlier seized and now the withdrawal of transport inflicted untold sufferings on the people.<sup>64</sup> Beside these measures, the Government enforced strict censorship in all the post offices of the subdivision and declared some youth organizations illegal under Section 16(1) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1916.<sup>65</sup> Affiliations were also withdrawn from some of the educational institutions.<sup>66</sup>

Repression and torture by the police reached the climax when the police force led by Mr Samar Sen, the SDO, started combing operations in different localities and Volunteers' Camp from the middle of September. The first such raid was conducted at Gopinathpur Volunteers' Camp of Bhagwanpur where a crowd of ten thousand encircled the SDO and his team, and forced them to release the volunteers.<sup>67</sup> The police raided the Chandanpore Volunteers' Camp under Contai police station on 27 September belaboured the volunteers mercilessly and threw them in a nearby pond with their hands tied up.<sup>68</sup> The police then moved towards Belboni Camp under Ramnagar PS. They started assaulting the volunteers who were sleeping. After burning down the articles of the inmates they marched inside the village and faced a crowd. On seeing the crowd the police got nervous and opened fire on the innocent villagers causing death to three persons on the spot and injury to fourteen others. The police were not the least repentant after the said incident and resorted to firing to disperse a crowd when they encountered it in the other

part of the village on their way back. Two persons lost their lives and about sixty others received injuries, five of them succumbing to their injuries in the hospital.<sup>69</sup>

The military took control of the entire subdivision from 1 October and about 500 soldiers were posted at twelve camps. Soldiers posted on a launch and a boat on the river Rasulpur used to take their bath naked and made indecent gestures to women.<sup>70</sup> To terrorize the people and make them loyal aeroplanes patrolled all over the subdivision everyday.<sup>71</sup> The people of Pataspore were the worst affected by police atrocities.<sup>72</sup> The police exhibited their strength and cruelty in Ramnagar police station which they selected as the testing ground of their barbarous and heinous operations.<sup>73</sup> In Ramnagar on 20 September the police were compelled to release the arrested persons by the people after which they became furious and were determined to teach a good lesson to these audacious boys. On 22 September, a batch of armed constables headed by the SDO and the SDPO opened fire and shot 35 rounds on the people at Sarisaberia under Ramnagar while the batch went out in search of people who made cuts on Contai-Ramnagar Road. As a result of the firing twenty-four persons were injured some of whom were dragged away by the police from the bank of a tank to the cut by holding their legs to put them in their Contai bound truck. Two persons succumbed to their injuries on their way to Contai and two others died in the hospital.<sup>74</sup> The total casualty in this incident was six.<sup>75</sup> The firing at Alangiri under Egra police station provides an example of police atrocity. A group of soldiers entered the village to plunder the belongings of the villagers. On approaching the village they detected some persons standing on the bank of a tank. The soldiers apprehended attack and started firing at the people, thereby causing death to three.<sup>76</sup>

The government retaliation was not confined to the killing of innocent persons and volunteers ; it extended to primitive crimes like looting and burning of houses of the villagers in broad daylight even in the presence of the dignified officials like the SDO and SDPO. Records suggest that on one occasion the District Magistrate, N. M. Khan himself was present when some houses at Tajpur village under Egra police station were looted and burnt down by the police.<sup>77</sup> Police camps were used for this purpose. Innocent villagers were implicated in false cases and were harassed by the police for months together.<sup>78</sup> A moderate estimate revealed that about 788 houses in different villages

of the subdivision were burnt by the police involving an approximate loss of Rs 541,434.

From the very beginning the Government contemplated measures to suppress the movement boldly. It was suggested on evidence that "...the British Government had made full preparations to suppress the movement even before it was launched."<sup>80</sup> To perpetuate repression the subdivisional authorities began to pursue the policy of 'Divide and Rule' invented by the British. Most of the cases of looting and setting fire to the houses of Hindus were done by the police with active assistance from the Muhammedans.<sup>81</sup> It was also reported that the Government authorities bribed the Muslims to persuade them to take part in those heinous crimes.<sup>82</sup> Imposition of collective fines on the villagers as a penal measure was very much popular with the Government. Collective fines amounting to thousands of rupees were imposed on the villagers of different thanas of the subdivision which could not be realized due to cyclone, flood and famine.<sup>83</sup> Women were the objects of police outrage. The military and the police usually encircled a village, either arrested or forcibly removed the male members and committed rape upon the women inmates. 228 cases of rape and molestation of women were reported. Even beggar women could not escape their lust.<sup>84</sup> The story of these acts were too harrowing to be described. On a few occasions a single woman was raped by three or more soldiers one after another.<sup>85</sup>

Rapes, raids, lootings and assaults continued on the people for months together. About 12,600 people were arrested throughout the subdivision. Most of them were kept in the jail *hajat* as undertial prisoners for considerable period of time ranging up to two years.<sup>86</sup> In the *hajat* they were treated miserably like beasts.<sup>87</sup>

#### IV

It is a fact that the leadership of the movement was provided mostly by the educated persons of the middle class who gave up their jobs at different schools at the call of the motherland. The leaders were all moderate gentlemen who enjoyed highest confidence of the people.<sup>88</sup> The course of the movement also reveals that it was not an uncontrolled and spontaneous popular uprising but, on the contrary, it was a deliberately organized movement of the people which took the form of a rebellion against the British Raj. The establishment of National Governments and their organizational and operational structure exhibit the maturity and organizational ability of the leaders.



The ruthless atrocities perpetuated by the British Raj could not diminish the spirit and zeal of the people for freedom. The men who formed the National Governments in different thanas, even though crushed, were no longer prepared to recognize the right to rule of the Government established and maintained by force. It was also realized that "...the British would never again risk such a confrontation, and that the decision in 1945 to try for a negotiation was not just a gift of the new Labour Government."<sup>89</sup>

## Notes and References

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2. Secret Report in S-25. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.57.
3. Interview with Upendra Nath Jana.
4. Buddhadeva Bhattacharyya (in collaboration with Tarun Kumar Banerjee and Dipak Kumar Das), *Satyagrahas in Bengal : 1921-1939*, pp.21-2.
5. Chitta Ranjan Das, *Medinipurer Baiplabik Itihas*, p. 18.
6. Interview with Nagendra Nath Bera.
7. *Nihar*, vol. 31, 12. 12. 31.
8. *ibid.*, vol. 41, no. 20, 27. 1. 42.
9. Interview with Radhanath Das Adhikary.
10. Letter to the Editor, *Nihar*, vol. 41, no. 41, 23.6.42.
11. Government Notification, *Nihar*, vol. 41, no. 44, 14.7.42.
12. Interview with Amarendra Krishna Goswami.
13. Interview with Prasanna Tripathy.
14. See note no. 3.
15. See note no. 12.
16. Basanta Kumar Das, *Medinipure Swadhinatar Ganasangram:Khejuri Thana*, pp.26-27.
17. See note no. 12.
18. Personal notes of Radhanath Das Adhikary.
19. Interview with Hrishikesh Chakraborty.
20. See note nos. 3 and 19.
21. *Swadhin Bharat*, vol. 1, no. 1, 30.8.42.
22. See note no. 3.
23. *Nihar*, vol. 42, no. 2, 25.8.42.
24. Government Press Note, *Nihar*, 8.9.42.
25. *Swadhin Bharat*, vol. 1, no. 2, 6.9.42.

26. *Swadhin Bharat*, vol. 1, no. 3, 13.9.42. Also interviews with Hrishikesh Chakrabarty and Abinash Chandra Manna.
- 27-28. Records of the Subdivisional Congress Committee, Contai.
29. Deposition of P.W. no. 20, G.R. Case no. 264/66 TR of 1943, P.S. Bhagwanpur.
30. *Swadhin Bharat*, vol. 1, no. 3, 13.9.42.
31. See note no. 19.
32. The date of the meeting of the SWC could not be ascertained for want of records. According to Dr Rashbehari Pal, the then Secretary of the SDCC and a prominent member of the SWC, the meeting was held sometime in the third week of September 1942 in which the decision to capture the police stations was taken. Sri Nagendra Nath Bera, another leader of the movement, pointed out that the meeting was held at Namaldiha on 26-27 September 1942.
33. Interview with Dr Rashbehari Pal. See also note no. 19.
34. See note nos. 3 and 6.
- 35-36. Probodh Chandra Basu, *Bhagwanpur Thanar Itibritta*, p. 144.
37. Records of the SDCC, See also Martyrs' columns at Bhagwanpur and Bibhisapur.
38. G.R. Case no. 508/42 and no. 559/42, Bhagwanpur P.S.
- 39-40. See note no. 18.
41. G. R. Case no. 547/4, dated 30.9.42. See also note no. 13.
42. See note nos. 18 and 13.
- 43-44. See note no. 18.
45. Court records re : Emperor Vs, U.N. Maiti and others, Pataspore, G.R. no. 107 of 1943.
46. See note no. 6.
47. See note no. 20.
48. Basanta Das, op. cit., p. 66.
49. See not no. 6.
50. Report of the Circle Officer, re : Case no. 140, G.R. no. 135 TR of 1943 Emperor Vs. Nibaran Chandra Panda and others, P.S. Khejuri.
51. Records of the SDCC.
52. See note no. 6.
53. *Nihar*, vol. 42, no. 14, 8.12.42.
54. Proceedings of the meeting of the SDCC, 22.5.43. Also corroborated by Dr Rashbehari Pal in his interview.
55. Basanta Kumar Das, op. cit., p. 75. See also note no. 13.
56. See note nos. 18 and 13.
57. Interview with Dr Rashbehari Pal.
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- 59-60. *Nihar*, vol. 42, no. 5, 15.9.42.
61. *Nihar*, vol. 4, no. 25, 10.3.42.
62. Records of the SDCC. Also corroborated by Bhuteswar Paria.
63. Records of the SDCC. Also corroborated by Dr Rashbehari Pal.
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66. *ibid.*
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71. Records of the SDCC. See also note no. 18.
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73. Interview with Abinash Chandra Manna.
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80. P.N. Chopra (ed.), op. cit., p. 8.
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84. *Swadhin Bharat*, vol. 1, no. 25. See also note no. 6.
85. *ibid*, vol. 1, no. 7, 19.12.42. See also note no. 13.
86. Records of the SDCC.
87. Prasanta Das, op. cit., p. 83.
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89. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 404.

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 Rashbehari Pal  
 Upendra Nath Jana

TARUN KUMAR BANERJEE

## Maoist Experiment in Midnapore

*TOWARD AN IDEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE*

The reverberation of the maoist movement<sup>1</sup> was, like elsewhere in India, felt in Midnapore district too. The movement in the district was significant in more than one respects. First, the maoist activities were organized in a district which had no notable communist background at the time.<sup>2</sup> Even one of the main centres of the movement in the district, viz., Gopiballavpur, had a 'clean page' so to speak, bereft of any tradition of struggles whatsoever—let alone any movement guided by communist ideology.<sup>3</sup> Given this political background, it was somewhat conspicuous that 'only significant armed struggle' on the maoist line was waged after Naxalbari, in Midnapore in 1969-70,<sup>4</sup> which ultimately led the Indian fourth estate to nickname it 'the second naxalbari.'<sup>5</sup> The maoist action in the district was moreover said to be an effort to interlace the other movements in the Gangetic plains (Bihar and West Bengal) with that of the tribal movements in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh.<sup>6</sup> In another important respect, the movement in the district deserves attention : it coincided with the rule of left-dominated second United Front (UF) government in West Bengal in 1969, the predecessor of which in 1967 promised land redistribution leading

ultimately to 'radicalisation of peasants' of the district along with the other parts of the state.<sup>7</sup> Again to their sheer chagrin, it was alleged, the same peasants experienced the same government quell their struggles against the higher echelon of the feudatory system in the district.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Midnapore was the only district in India where the maoists took a novel strategy of forming a border region committee called the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Region Committee (BBOBRC), modelled after the famous Sensi-Kansu-Ningsia border region committee which was formed during the establishment of second united front with the Kuomintang against Japanese imperialism by the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1937.<sup>9\*</sup>

Still, the most remarkable aspect of the maoist experiment in Midnapore may be said to lie in its instructive value. Lessons of such an experiment seems to be that no revolutionary action can ever achieve success with a blind infatuation with the revolutionary experiences elsewhere (in this case, it was the revolutionary experiences of China), as was resorted to by the maoists in the district. Any such move would simply tend to betray the utter ideological immaturity of the activists who are inclined to gloss over the specific situation of the country concerned as well as the tortuous and protracted nature of revolution. As a result, they ultimately plunge into impetuous petty bourgeois adventurism.

Given the nature of the issue, the present paper seeks to examine the ideological dimension of the maoist experiment in Midnapore in the context of its different phases.

#### **The Movement in General : a Brief Resume**

A brief sketch of the development of naxalite movement in general<sup>10</sup> seems to be advisable as that would offer us a broad perspective for better understanding of the action-process of the maoists in Midnapore.

To begin with, it is well known, just two months after the assumption of power by the first UF government in West Bengal in March 1967, a 'minuscule' peasant uprising was organized in May by the so-called 'extremist' section of CPI(M) at Naxalbari under Siliguri police station of Darjeeling district. The uprising

\*For the Chinese names, the Wade-Giles, instead of Pin Yin (current official Chinese) system of spelling has been followed in this essay.

created a convulsion—organizationally as well as ideologically—in the CPI (M). On both levels, the party faced a dilemma: ideologically, it refused to consider the uprising as 'a struggle for seizure of power,' and looked upon it as no more than a movement for the 'protection of economic and democratic rights of the tribals.' At the same time the CPI (M) considered that it would be erroneous to envisage the uprising as merely an issue of 'law and order' and that the UF government should examine the 'fundamental question relating to the socio-economic basis of the agrarian system' which the uprising raised. In addition, the party called the line followed in the naxalbari struggle an 'adventurist' one. Simultaneously deliberations began with the party members in the area so that they shunned their method. Process to wage ideological struggle through party literature started against the 'left-sectarian' trends within the CPI (M).<sup>11</sup>

The 'rebels' in the party however thought of the uprising to be a 'right path.' They did not relent at the leadership's steps, nay, they resolved to urge the party members to fight against 'revisionism.' Consequently, purge followed while some members willingly deserted the party. Both the expelled and break-away party members initiated since the first half of July 1967, ideological struggle against the 'neo-revisionist' CPI (M) leadership through *Liberation* and *Desabratsi*, which coincided with the plaudits for the naxalbari uprising by the CPC through *People's Daily*. Four months later in November, these members formed the All India Co-ordination Committee of Revolutionaries (AICCR) only to be restyled afterwards as the All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) in May 1968 after the Burdwan Plenum of CPI (M). The Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Co-ordination Committee (APRCC) opted out from the all-India committee and began to function independently. On 22 April 1969 out of the AICCCR was born the CPI (ML), later formally announced on 1 May at a public meeting at Calcutta. The new party held its First Congress in May 1970.<sup>12</sup>

The basic politico-ideological line of the maoists adopted between the formation of the AICCR in November 1967 and the First Congress of the CPI (ML) in May 1970, may be summed up as follows:<sup>13</sup> The principal contradiction of the period was between feudalism and the broad masses of the Indian people. With the resolution of that contradiction, all other contradictions would also be resolved. The Indian bourgeoisie was compradore in character and it was subservient to US imperialism and Soviet social imperialism. The stage of the Indian

revolution was democratic and its essence was agrarian revolution. The cardinal task of this revolution was to overthrow the rule of feudalism, comprador - bureaucratic capitalism, imperialism and social imperialism. In order to carry out revolution it was imperative to build up a united front of the peasantry, the working class, the petty bourgeoisie and even a section of the small and middle bourgeoisie, under the leadership of the working class. However, the main force of the revolution would be peasantry. It was emphasized that the so-called united front could only be built up when there was a unity between the working class and the peasantry in the course of an armed struggle and after the establishment of red political power, at least in some parts of the country. Besides, in the period of democratic revolution it was the guerrilla warfare coupled with the annihilation campaign which would be the main form of struggle as it could alone expand the small bases of armed struggle to a large extensive areas 'through the mighty waves of the people's war' and develop the people's army that would encircle and capture the cities. It was also laid down that the Indian revolution was to be a part of the world revolution being led by Mao Tse-tung.

#### **Maoist Action in Midnapore**

Naxalbari-inspired action was initiated perhaps for the first time in Midnapore in the last week of September 1967 at Debra. It was then followed by such other areas as Nandigram, Salboni, Keshpur, Ghatal, Daspur, Binpur and Chandrakona. Struggles in these areas were waged mainly against the eviction of peasants by the local jotedars and landlords, and also against the police oppression.<sup>14</sup> Of all these places, the maoist activities at Chandrakona were more impressive, though those were short-lived. Peasants in this area were organized through different conventions where they were urged to boycott elections and to seize crops and land forcibly from the jotedars and landlords. Accordingly, it was reported, the peasants first prepared a list of *khas*, vested and *benami* land and then seized them through armed action.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Debra and Gopiballavpur : Main Centres of Action**

In point of intensity and organizational strength, however, actions at Debra and Gopiballavpur were ahead of all other places.

We have already stated that in Midnapore the first ever action of naxalbari type was launched at Debra P. S. on 27 September 1967,



The peasants of the area organized demonstrations under the leadership of *Krishak Samiti* against eviction from land. Agricultural labourers, sharecroppers and small and middle peasants were mobilized in these actions. With the movement spreading *Krishak Samitis* were being formed from locality to locality.<sup>16</sup> The leadership was given by a group of CPI (M) members led by Bhabadeb Mandal and Gunadhar Murmu who later broke away from the party to form the nucleus of a maoist group.<sup>17</sup>

While at Debra the maoist group was primarily a 'break-away' organization of the CPI (M), at Gopiballavpur it was Santosh Rana, a local young man studying at Calcutta, who at the end of 1967 came to the area 'to organise and politicalise' the local peasants for a maoist type of agrarian revolution. For the purpose, a youth association comprising mostly young men of peasant families, was formed. Response to Rana's 'preaching of armed struggle and revolutionary politics' was positive. Later Rana was joined by Asim Chatterjee and some other members of the Presidency Consolidation Group (PCG)<sup>18</sup> in March 1968.

Meanwhile Santosh Rana was arrested on 30 May 1968 in connexion with a May Day rally at Gopiballavpur. Undeterred by Rana's detainment, Asim Chatterjee and his friends resolved to carry on the struggle and subsequently about 65 young men of the PCG joined Chatterjee. The idea of the PCG members to move from village to village in the guise of peasants and to organize 'revolutionary struggle' was said to have 'caught the imagination' of the maoist student community and 'the romantic appeal was irresistible to many.' Besides the PCG members, others came from Bishnupur of Bankura district and Midnapore town.<sup>19</sup> In fact, as Samanta observes, Rana's arrest 'gave a fillip to the Maoist movement in Midnapore district.'<sup>20</sup>

But the PCG members did not join the Midnapore District Co-ordination Committee of the CPI (M) revolutionaries (MDCC) which was formed in 1968 primarily at the initiative of Bhabadeb Mandal of Debra.<sup>21</sup> The Committee was not affiliated with the AICCCR and it was alleged that the erroneous politics to build up party from below gave birth to the MDCC. Also, there was no political unity in it as the representatives of other groups like *Dakshin Desh*<sup>22</sup> were associated with it.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the PCG resolved to work in close co-operation with the MDCC. Subsequently these two political formations guided by maoism, had throughout 1968 and early 1969 organized actions in Debra and Gopiballavpur

respectively, and their efforts, 'though not politically very well-equipped,' were reported to have 'created a very favourable impact on the mind of the peasantry.'<sup>24</sup>

The PCG however could not remain aloof from the MDCC for a long time. With the CPC hailing Kanu Sanyal's 'Report on the Peasant Movement in the Terai Region,'<sup>25</sup> and also with the help of some 'leading comrades' of the AICCCR, the PCG could identify certain erroneous sectarian trends prevailing within it and, as a result, it felt the need to get affiliated with the AICCCR. Subsequently, in a general meeting of the maoists working at Gopiballavpur and Baharagora in March 1969, the PCG resolved to join the AICCCR.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile the CPI (ML) was born on 22 April 1969, and two days later on 24 April the PCG attended the meeting of the MDCC at Daspur. Soon the district co-ordination committee was dissolved and in May 1969 a new district organizing committee was formed.<sup>27</sup> In this committee, the members of PCG played somewhat a commanding role because of their 'education' and 'impressive articulation.' Since most of them had been engaged in actions in neighbouring areas including those in Orissa and Bihar, the maoists resolved to bring all those areas under one organizational unit, which culminated in the formation of the so-called Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Regional Committee (BBOBRC) in December 1969.<sup>28</sup> Inspired by Mao's *Human Report*,<sup>29</sup> the Committee started organizing the local poor and landless population.<sup>30</sup> The 'focal points' of the organizational and militant activities of the BBOBRC were to all practical purposes Debra and Gopiballavpur and the adjacent areas under these two police stations.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Different Phases of the Movement in Debra and Gopiballavpur<sup>32</sup>**

For the convenience of analysis, the maoist action in Debra and Gopiballavpur may be divided into three phases: the first was the phase of initiation with the so-called 'revolutionary politics,' and the second was concerned with the programme of 'guerrilla action and annihilation campaign,' while the last phase concentrated mainly on its expansion elsewhere in the district.

##### *First Phase : Initiation with 'Revolutionary Politics'<sup>32</sup>*

Since the initiative for maoist action at Debra was taken by the break-away group of the CPI (M), activities at the outset in this area mainly followed the conventional type of peasant struggles.

From the end of 1967 towards the end of 1968, the peasants in different places under Debra police station 'fought' against the jotedars, usurers and their 'lackeys,' and against the 'wicked gentry.' Initially, they took the UF government of 1967 in good faith as 'an instrument of class struggle' and 'took the call for stepping up mass struggles as a genuine one for which they had waited so long.' With this end in view several rallies were organized at different villages of Debra.<sup>33</sup> In those rallies, peasant leaders like Bhabadeb Mandal, Gunadhar Murmu, Asoke Maity, Bijay Das and others urged the peasants to have recourse to naxalbari type struggles against feudal oppression and also to form revolutionary organization for the purpose. From the first week of April 1968, the peasants had been waging struggles for the seizure of land of jotedars and usurers. The main issues were : appropriation of *benami* land to peasants ; eviction of peasants from *benami bhag* and *bastu* land to stop ; appropriation of *khas* land to agricultural labourers and landless peasants ; installation of tubewells in the areas where tribals and agricultural labourers live ; introduction of the modified rationing system all over Debra police station ; and withdrawal of legal cases against the peasants.<sup>34</sup>

As the local feudal bosses reacted violently against the 'actions' of the peasants, the latter 'far from being frightened,' it was reported, 'stood firm' and was prepared 'to resist the jotedar's attacks with bows and arrows.' During harvesting season, the 'flare-up' was even more serious' as the 'class solidarity and class struggle' of the peasants against the entire jotedar class of the area, 'began to overstep the pale of economic demands.' And, while arming themselves in demonstrations, the peasants began to realize through their struggles that they 'must wage armed struggle against the armed counter-revolution.' Given the backdrop of jotedar's counter-offensive coupled with police action, it was observed, a stage was reached during the 1967 movement when the annihilation of class enemy and building up a base area came up as an 'inescapable task,' leading the peasant actions to 'transcend' the limits of economic struggle. Subsequently, the issue of seizure of power 'appeared as a natural and inevitable question.'<sup>35</sup>

The district CPI (M) leadership did not, it was alleged, support the peasant actions at Debra as it was in favour of settling the issues through deliberations with the government, instead of waging any agitation.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the party leadership was said to be 'in a fix' ; it even accused the actions of the maoists of 'trodding the adventurist path.' Without caring the leadership's disapproval, the peasants entered

'a new phase'—the phase of getting themselves 'initiated in revolutionary politics.'<sup>37</sup>

Two constraints—theoretical as well as practical—stood, however, in the way of implementing the new line of 'revolutionary politics.' Failure to identify the real nature of the naxalbari peasant struggle that it was 'a heroic attempt to seize political power,' and the 'vote-grabbing and legalist' character of the CPI (M) were said to have prevented the peasants from declaring the 'seizure of political power' as the 'only and immediate task.' In practice, the agricultural labourers and sharecroppers had, on the other hand, to fight a two-pronged battle against the jotedars : to put up armed resistance against them while at the same time fighting legal battles in law courts. As these two kinds of battles were 'mutually exclusive,' they could not be carried on simultaneously for long. In addition, apprehension of large scale police repression and also inability of the peasants to withstand such repression, put a brake on their initiative. This, in turn, led the struggles to 'get struck as if trapped in quicksand.'<sup>38</sup>

Unlike Debra, in Gopiballavpur, as we have noted, initiative for maoist action came from outside. Here the initial phase of the struggle was more concerned with ideological transformation of the local peasants. Thus with the intensive propagation of Mao's thought, particularly his ideas of people's war and mass line as well as those embodied in his so-called *Three Essays*,<sup>39</sup> the activists of the PCG plunged into action. As a result, in the first place, revolutionary classes of a few villages were said to have freed themselves from 'reactionary, particularly revisionist thinking,' and thus a few 'revolutionary peasant activists' were born. Secondly, peasant struggles in this area were united with those carried on by youths and students who started thinking in terms of armed peasant struggles. The fundamental line in this phase was : 'Know the masses, understand them, consider them as the master, and to that end, work and think in unison with them.'<sup>40</sup>

In carrying out their activities the maoists of Gopiballavpur tried to adhere to the following rules as formulated by Charu Mazumdar, the 'caliph' of the movement : (i) to live with the poor and landless peasants, (ii) to partake of their food, and to eat nothing unless offered, (iii) to share the physical labour of poor and landless peasants, (iv) to avoid as far as possible nearby towns, highways and shops, (v) to read no other books than the *Red Book* and the *Three*

*Essays*<sup>41</sup> of Mao, and (vi) to avoid taking cash for security as that would lead to depend on money and not on the masses.<sup>42</sup>

During the course of ideological propagation, the idea of seizure of power by means of armed struggle was conceived but without any definite programme. Like their counterparts at Debra, the maoists in Gopiballavpur had somewhat a 'nebulous' idea about the naxalbari struggle, and broadly, there had been a plan for seizure of political power after the models of Hunan peasant movement<sup>43</sup> and naxalbari uprising. There was also the idea of building guerrilla squads out of the armed clashes that occurred at the time of seizing crops, and also of a regular army to be organized by dint of unifying those squads. In fact, at that time, it was admitted, the maoists saw no differences between guerrilla squads and units of regular army, and that was why in militant economism they found greater possibilities. As such in order to give priority to politics, they failed to take up any other programme than propagation of the politics of seizure of power by armed method. Accordingly, months after months with the help of the propagation they had been engaged in building party units and secret organizations. To put it succinctly, as did the BBOBRC report, there was subjective will to struggle but objectively the activists revolved round the idea that time was not ripe. Moreover, their action was limited by the fact that eloquence was preferred to absorption and application of Mao's thought. As a result, the agricultural labourers and poor peasants took no initiative. While mouthing the differences between revolutionary and revisionist tactics in peasant struggles, it was admitted, the activists of Gopiballavpur exposed their organization by mere show of holding open and middle class type rallies with the slogan hailing naxalbari struggle, and thus had fallen prey to 'reactionary attack.' Afterwards they had been groping for right path again with the simultaneous expansion of the organization. Contacts were also made with the like-minded activists, and in this way it took no time to get in touch with the maoists of Debra who had already resolved to sever their relations with CPI (M). Thus the BBOBRC was born.<sup>44</sup>

*Second Phase : 'Guerrilla Action and Annihilation Campaign'*

Meanwhile, by the time the members of the BBOBRC were in search for a 'right way,' they received a report on Srikakulam struggle in Andhra Pradesh,<sup>45</sup> which provided them the line of guerrilla war through the policy of annihilation as formulated by Charu Mazumdar.

Accordingly, on 21 August 1969 they met at Surmuhi village where Sushital Roychoudhuri, then a member of the State Organizing Committee of CPI (ML), was also present, and resolved to implement the same line in the border region area on and from 1 September. For the purpose, Debra, Gopiballavpur and Baharagora were selected as the main centres of action.<sup>46</sup>

Of the three centres, Gopiballavpur was the first to initiate 'guerrilla action' on 1 September 1969 when, it was reported, a squad of nine 'guerrillas' plunged into shock attacks on a group of 'class enemies' who were returning from *hat*. But as the maoists had no political and military experience about guerrilla war, the action ended in smoke. No class enemy was hurt ; instead an activist was seriously injured. The incident was said to be an 'eye-opener' to the activists and the next day they attempted another 'action,' the significance of which was 'immense' to them : 'through just one action the masses in the border region realized the significance of annihilation policy.' It had 'shaken the bases of exploitation' in the border region, which led the 'class enemies' to get 'panick-stricken.'<sup>47</sup>

Having welcomed the action as the 'spontaneous manifestation of class hatred,' the BBOBRC however admitted that it failed to realize the role of guerrillas in bringing about peasant initiative. This inability on the part of the maoists ultimately delayed the 'second' programme of 'guerrilla actions' as the Committee demanded 'organizational overcentralization' instead of directing its 'own independent initiative.' Subsequently from 27 to 29 September 1969, a few 'guerrilla actions' were organized, which terrorized the 'class enemies.' Some of them deserted the area and those who opted to stay, surrendered to the 'guerrillas' through letters of appeal. In this way, it was claimed, temporarily there had been a void of authority and mass initiative gradually increased and was manifested in some more little 'actions.' But owing to the deployment of police forces, the activists devoted themselves to propaganda and to strengthen the organization by working secretly among the masses.<sup>48</sup>

The 'actions' in Gopiballavpur had 'tremendous impact' on the maoists working at Debra. In fact, it was one of the three 'factors' that helped them to overcome their initial hesitation to launch 'guerrilla action.' The other two were the formation of the CPI (ML) on 22 April 1969 and its *Political Resolution*,<sup>49</sup> and the teaching of Charu Mazumdar. While the *Political Resolution* and Mazumdar's

teachings emphasized the need to wage guerrilla war,<sup>50</sup> actions in Gopiballavpur tried to translate those into practice. All these factors taken together were said to have facilitated the formation of 'guerrilla units' at Debra by fighting against all kinds of 'opportunism and legalist illusions.'<sup>51</sup> Thus the manifesto of the Debra Zonal Organizing Committee of the CPI (ML) pointed out how the peasants' miserable conditions prevailed against the luxurious livelihood of jotedars and how ineffective were the legal measures to ameliorate such conditions. In view of such a situation, the Committee insisted to abhor the idea of peaceful solution to the problem, and castigated those who proffered it. As such its call was : to follow the path of armed struggle ; to annihilate class enemies and seize their properties ; to snatch and appropriate the hoarded paddy and distribute the same among the peasants ; and to assert peasants' right over the impending harvests.<sup>52</sup> Gradually 'annihilation of class enemies' by guerrilla method became the 'touchstone' to the Debra peasants, and operationally the following five principles (*pancha pradhan*) were scrupulously adhered to : (i) class analysis, (ii) investigation, (iii) learning to work as part of the whole, (iv) living application of living ideology, and (v) criticism and self-criticism<sup>53</sup>

For the implementation of the line of 'guerrilla action', a 'central guerrilla unit' was formed at Debra under the joint leadership of Debra, Gopiballavpur and Baharagora organizations. The local guerrilla units were also built up and their bases were strengthened under the joint direction of the party and central guerrilla unit. While undertaking actions the peasants were however left with two alternatives : either they were to mobilize the armed people for raiding the houses of jotedars and annihilate them (while the raiders were preoccupied with 'finding out and seizing the stocks of hoarded rice,' the guerrillas would get their job done), or, the guerrilla unit was to pursue through investigation and annihilate jotedars 'at an opportune moment.' They ultimately preferred the first method to the second while at the same time emphasizing that subsequently 'guerrilla method' was to be an 'ideal' one and the cadres should be convinced accordingly.<sup>54</sup>

In pursuance of the above line, it was decided to launch 'guerrilla action' on and from 1 October 1969, just a month later than the 'action' in Gopiballavpur. Afterwards, in addition to two 'actions' on 1 and 4 October which failed to implement the 'annihilation programme,' from 13 October through the rest of 1969 up to April

1970 there had been, it was claimed, as many as eleven 'guerrilla actions' with ten class enemies annihilated.<sup>55</sup> And all those actions were acclaimed to 'have helped to make the situation favourable' for the peasants.<sup>56</sup>

*Third Phase : 'Phase of Expansion'*

The maoists in both Debra and Gopiballavpur, because of their 'guerrilla actions,' incurred counter-actions from the state power.<sup>57</sup> Since they had no clear-cut understanding of how to combat the policy of 'encirclement and suppression' as followed by the government, the 'guerrillas' showed no further initiative and gradually their militant attitude was converted into a 'passive escapism and self-defence.' In the midst of such a situation Charu Mazumdar visited the border region area and advised the maoists to expand the area of 'guerrilla actions' to sustain their activities, by forming more squads, and for that, urged the landless and poor peasants to take more responsibilities and independent initiative. He also advised not to abandon the programme of annihilation of class enemies for political propaganda which was though important and to be waged always. For, to him, with the development of annihilation programme, the level of peasants' consciousness would gradually increase, and a 'new man,' a 'death-defying man' inspired with the thought of Mao, would be born.<sup>58</sup>

In accordance with Mazumdar's advice, the programme of expanding 'guerrilla actions' was initiated in Kharagpur local police station on 4 January 1970, to be followed by other actions in several places of the district such as Keshpur, Sankrail, Belebera Block of Gopiballavpur.<sup>59</sup> And in all those 'actions' the BBOBRC saw the possibility of Mazumdar's call, 'Make the decade of seventies a decade of liberation,' becoming a reality.<sup>60</sup>

**End Results**

But the call never brought fruition as with its gradual intensification the maoist actions in the district incurred the wrath of state administration, which ultimately resulted in its total liquidation. Initially, the Government was reluctant to take any stern measures other than 'restrained' police action, against the maoists as it expected a political settlement of the issues raised by them. One of the reasons of taking such a stand was that the second UF government which had been running the state at the time was in principle committed not to



suppress any popular struggle, particularly led by the peasantry and working class. But when the maoists resolved to launch annihilation campaign, the Government decided to intensify its action.<sup>61</sup> The Government attitude towards the maoist actions at this stage was succinctly reflected through the comments of Hare Krishna Konar, the then Land Revenue Minister and a front-ranking peasant leader of the CPI (M), who refused to consider those actions as 'political struggles.' To him, those were 'banditry pure and simple.'<sup>62</sup>

In conformity with the Government outlook, police action ensued from the end of October 1969 when two companies of EFR troops and a few more armed men were deployed in Debra and a few more armed police camps were posted at Gopiballavpur.<sup>63</sup> In addition, a joint programme was launched by the police of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in the same month with a view to suppressing the maoist activities in the border region area.<sup>64</sup> By the end of November, the armed forces were even asked 'to shoot to kill' in Debra and Gopiballavpur, if necessary. However women and children were to be spared, if they could be.<sup>65</sup>

As the annihilation campaign gained momentum by the early December of 1969, the Government galvanized its action by deploying further a company of the EFR along with 350 armed district police and 250 state reservists in Debra and Gopiballavpur in a move to flush out the maoists from those areas and also to 'keep them on the run so that they would be unable to regroup.' Moreover, in view of the considerable mass involvement in the harvest, the police took a different approach now: instead of directly confronting the huge numbers of militant labourers, sharecroppers and small holders, 'rampaging over the estates of the area,' they resorted to recovery operations' among landless peasants with quantities of stored paddy. There had of course been reports of police excesses because of the 'arbitrary nature of raids.'<sup>66</sup> By 15 December however 355 maoists were reported to have been arrested while 1500 maunds of forcibly harvested paddy were recovered.<sup>67</sup> followed by 700 more arrests in the district by early January 1970.<sup>68</sup>

Thus it is evident from Government action, and also from later disclosure by the Government sources, that the main purpose of vigorous mass arrests in this period was 'to fragment and disrupt the Naxalite logistic base, together with their chain of command.'<sup>69</sup> And the success of the move was manifested in the arrests of almost all the front-ranking leaders by March 1970, creating a vacuum of the

effective leadership in the movement. Although Santosh Rana was able to evade arrest for a much longer period, the maoist organization in the district was in his own words, 'isolated from the people.' And ultimately, with the fall of the UF government followed by the imposition of Governor's rule in March 1970 the para-military forces entered the so called 'liberated areas' in massive strength and thus within a very short period, the movement crumbled altogether.<sup>70</sup>

Counter-insurgency measures of the state power was not the only factor which helped the maoist action in Midnapore to get collapsed. It was undoubtedly an important factor, but there were others too like inexperience of the activists as well as intra-party differences within the organization. For example, it was admitted, while initiating 'annihilation campaign,' the 'guerrillas' lacked correct and accurate investigation of the class enemies, and because of that, more than one raid was required to carry on 'a single annihilation.' The consequence was that the activists tended to become desperate and frustrated, which was 'contrary to the guerrilla spirit.' There was also no 'correct strategic estimation of the enemy.' The maoists had even no 'correct understanding of weapons.' As such there prevailed a sense of defeatism and frustration among the peasants in case of their failure to carry on an 'action.' And, finally, the 'actions' tended to stagnate in one place because of the absence of constant movements of the 'guerrillas' from one place to another. This limitation was said to have facilitated the police campaign of 'encirclement and repression'.<sup>71</sup>

Even the efficacy and credibility of annihilation programme was seriously questioned. In this respect five important 'mistakes' were identified by the BBOBRC led by Ashim Chatterjee.<sup>72</sup> Those were : (1) Repeated annihilation programmes failed to encourage the poor and landless peasants to join the guerrilla squads. Even those who joined the squad in the beginning, deserted it ; those who did not, were isolated from the masses. (2) Annihilation programme did not find favour with the masses for long. (3) Expectation of the leadership about the frightened class enemies leaving the area was belied, nay, those who left earlier, returned in strength. (4) Only students, youths, middle classes, robber bands and lumpen proletariat were attracted to annihilation campaign in the area. And (5) finally, instead of the areas where feudal exploitation was intense, the campaign got deep-rooted among the petty bourgeois elements.<sup>73</sup>

Besides operational and tactical snags, the maoist action in the district was handicapped by internecine squabbles of the leadership of

BBOBRC. The first area of disagreement was over the issue of implementing the annihilation programme. It is learnt from the *BBOBRO Report*, at the meeting of Surmuhi village on 21 August 1969 where the issue of annihilation programme was being deliberated, the maoists of Debra argued that the programme be carried on only at the time of harvesting as the peasants would then be united on the common demand of protection of their tenurial rights. And such a command was expected to create a situation when they would possibly go to the extent of annihilating the landlords. The Debra maoists also detested the idea of secret killings as that would be counter-productive. On the contrary, those working at Gopiballavpur wanted to start annihilation forthwith.<sup>74</sup> They also accused the leaders of Debra of their failure to carry the 'struggles of 1967' forward in their area effectively by confining those within legal bounds.<sup>75</sup> Differences in attitude was also reflected in the schedule for starting annihilation programme: at Gopiballavpur it started on 1 September 1969 while at Debra, on 1 October.

There were, secondly, divergent views as regards the mobilization of peasants. Drawing 'rich lessons from the experiences of mass movements during 1966-67,' the leaders of Debra favoured launching similar type of movements in the area. But their counterparts in Gopiballavpur emphasized annihilation programme to the exclusion of other forms of movement. Continuation of isolated annihilations in the absence of any firm base area, would, in the opinion of leaders of Debra, lead nowhere, and as such, in a meeting of the BBOBRC on 1 November 1969 they proposed the formation of Peasants' Committees. The proposal was not accepted, rather it was criticized by the leaders of Gopiballavpur. In another meeting held in January 1970 they even accused the leaders of Debra of opposing annihilation programme<sup>76</sup>

Notwithstanding all those limitations, the maoists were said to have achieved successes, albeit partially and temporarily. By the standard of their self-appraisal, achievements were two-fold: politico-ideological and operational. Politically, the maoist actions made a significant exposure of 'the deceitful mask of 'progressive' U. F. Government,' and also raised for the first time after naxalbari uprising, 'the question of armed struggle as directly opposed to the parliamentary path.'<sup>77</sup> Those actions were also able to increase mass initiative and to rouse the class hatred of the peasantry as well as their level of political consciousness.<sup>78</sup>

Backed by this politico-ideological understanding, the peasants, in practice, started since the first week of October 1969 seizing the harvest of jotedars through 'a mass-upsurge-in-miniature' and were able to establish 'a red political power, though very small in form.' In denying feudal authority, the peasants were said to have asserted their own rights over land and crops. They did not care a fig for the existing revenue records and consequently with the help of the party, selected land for harvesting. At the same time they were very much careful in defending the interests of small rich peasants, middle peasants and 'sympathetic' rich peasants whose harvests were spared. Despite the small size of the party, it was claimed, by the end of December 1969 and early January 1970 during harvest about 40,000 armed peasants had been engaged in seizure of crops. Eight guns of the jotedars were also seized and their resistance was virtually ineffective: a few of them fled away earlier, a few more now followed them while the remaining surrendered to the party. In this way for a while there had been a void of authority in the area. The law of peasants was promulgated and prevailed upon. Trials of jotedars were held: some of them were warned and others were charged with fine and given light punishment. Those who deserted the area were sentenced with capital punishment whenever the opportunity would come. The usurers who had not left the area, were asked to return the mortgaged utensils and other things to the peasants. The order was said to have readily obeyed.<sup>79</sup> In addition to all these steps, the peasants also fixed 5 kg. paddy as wages for the agricultural labourers in that year. The rule was applicable only to jotedars and rich peasants, and the middle peasants were exempted as they were considered as allies of peasants' struggles. Prices of the commodity were made fixed in all the big shops and the step was successfully implemented in some areas too.<sup>80</sup>

#### **Maoist Experiment sans Maoism<sup>81</sup>**

The maoist experiment in Midnapore despite its ephemeral 'achievements' fell through not only because of drastic police measures or of inherent organizational weakness. Abysmal misreading of maoism and its consequential application to the district also contributed to its utter failure. In fact, the whole edifice of general ideological moorings of the naxalites was shabby, and in the absence of a decisive tactical orientation the movement as a whole reached its shattering point.<sup>82</sup> As the present exercise is very much limited in

its scope to assess the movement in general, efforts have been made here to analyse only those tactical issues that preponderated in the district naxalite action over other considerations and also to examine whether those steps measure up to classical maoism.

To be precise, as it appears from different phases of the district maoist experiment, three distinct politico-tactical issues reigned supreme : that struggle of the maoists in the district particularly in Debra and Gopiballavpur and in its adjacent areas, was one for 'seizure of state power ;' that, to that end, no other forms of struggle than armed one was necessary ; and finally, that the whole course of action was to be a 'carbon copy' of the revolutionary experiences in the pre-liberation China. The issues now may be examined in the light of the teachings of Mao Tse-tung in whose name the naxalites in the district were fond of swearing in.

#### *Seizure of State Power*

The issue of 'seizure of state power' stemmed largely from the culmination of gradual reassessment of naxalbari peasant struggle by the maoists. Initially, the struggle was looked upon as one for land. In its wake on 20 May 1967 Jangal Santal, a key figure of the struggle, underlined in the form of a statement, that naxalbari was 'a focus of resistance against the illegal occupation by jotedars of vested land tilled by the peasantry for years.'<sup>83</sup> The 'Naxalbari O Krishak Sangram Sahayak Committee' (NKSSC) which was formed on 14 June 1967 to aid naxalbari and other peasant struggles,<sup>84</sup> observed in its first meeting that the peasant struggle at Naxalbari was launched against the illegal eviction of peasants from their own land and against the joint clique of jotedars, reactionary forces and police.<sup>85</sup> The trade union convention organized by the NKSSC on 25 July 1967 also emphasized that the content of the naxalbari struggle was 'land revolution and class struggle of the peasantry,' and it was a 'historical necessity' that the Indian peasant struggles should follow 'naxalbari path.'<sup>86</sup> In the same vein, the inaugural issue of *Desabrati* made it stridently clear that it was a 'legitimate' struggle of the Terai peasants 'for land' and their 'class struggle' against the landlords.<sup>87</sup> Once more Jangal Santal, now reportedly from gaol, reiterated that naxalbari was an agrarian struggle 'to liberate peasants from the age-old domination and exploitation of feudal lords.'<sup>88</sup>

But since the end of May 1968 there had been a radical shift from the earlier assessment of the naxalbari struggle. In a small piece of his

writing dated 23 May, 'One Year of Naxalbari Struggle,' Charu Mazumdar thus hailed it as the 'first' struggle of the peasants not 'for their partial demands but for the seizure of the state power.' What is more, he added : 'If the Naxalbari peasant struggle has any lesson for us, it is this : militant struggles must be carried on not for land, crops etc., but for the seizure of state power.'<sup>89</sup> The spirit of Mazumdar's evaluation was shared by Kanu Sanyal, the 'uncrowned' leader of the naxalbari struggle ; to him, it was 'an armed struggle—not for land but for State power.' For, he insisted, 'We all know that every class struggle is a political struggle and that the aim of political struggle is to seize state power.'<sup>90</sup> Subsequent naxalite literature emulated the changed characterization of naxalbari struggle and the idea of seizure of state power educed as and when there were actions.

The maoists in Debra and Gopiballavpur were deeply impressed upon by the new assessment of the naxalbari struggle. Thus it was disclosed that while the maoists of Debra were groping for a new path, the projection of naxalbari struggle as the struggle for seizure of state power, bailed them out of the ideological quagmire. Their counterparts in Gopiballavpur had the same experience. As a result, both the maoist groups considered seizure of state power as the 'only' and 'immediate' task,<sup>91</sup> and resorted to action accordingly.

Now, it is well known in the common marxist parlance, the issue of seizure of state power is a fundamental question of any revolutionary action. In fact, in tune with classical marxism, Mao Tse-tung too urged the need for seizure of state power :

The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all countries.<sup>92</sup>

While making out this point, as Asit Sen rightly holds, 'Mao himself had not even the ghost of an idea that the struggle for seizure of power and the struggle for land were independent of each other and one could stand as an alternative to other.'<sup>93</sup> In his belated realization, Ashim Chatterjee also observed that the attempt to launch an armed struggle in a 'semifeudal' country was in effect 'to build an armed struggle without the class struggle.' To him, in the democratic phase of Indian revolution, 'the agrarian programme must be a programme of land seizure.' In the arena of struggle, he asserted, land question 'must remain both a goal and a process.' Therefore 'the process of seizure of power cannot operate in isolation from the land question.'<sup>94</sup>

Mao, in fact, warned that if the people were mobilized only 'to carry on the war and do nothing else,' there would be no success in defeating the enemy.

If we want to win, we must do a great deal more. We must lead the peasants' struggle for land and distribute the land to them, heighten their labour enthusiasm and increase agricultural production, safeguard the interests of the workers, establish co-operatives, develop trade with outside areas, and solve the problem facing the masses—food, shelter and clothing, fuel, rice, cooking oil and salt, sickness and hygiene and marriage.<sup>95</sup>

In emphasizing the need to spread revolution 'at all costs' throughout China, Mao categorically observed that 'in no way,' the issue of the 'immediate interests, the well-being of the broad masses' be neglected or underestimated. 'For the revolutionary war is a war of the masses; it can be waged only by mobilizing the masses and relying on them.'<sup>96</sup>

Therefore, to look upon the issue of seizure of state power as the 'only' and 'immediate' task is tantamount to caricature of marxism or of 'the thought of Mao Tse-tung' which the naxalites used to call adoringly, 'Marxism-Leninism of the present era.'<sup>97</sup>

#### *Forms of Struggle*

Enlightened by the assessment that the naxalbari struggle was for seizure of state power, the maoists of Debra and Gopiballavpur now plunged into armed actions to achieve their ends, and thus with this their actions were said to have entered its second phase. At this stage they drew their ideological inspiration from the tactical line of CPI (ML) as enunciated in its *Political Resolution* of 1969: 'The basic tactic of struggle of the revolutionary peasantry led by the working class is guerrilla warfare.'<sup>98</sup> This succinct expression of party's method of action was subsequently embellished in the writings of Charu Mazumdar from October 1969 to January 1970, which to all practical purposes provided the guidelines for later maoist actions in Debra and Gopiballavpur (as well as elsewhere in the country). The fundamental stipulations of Mazumdar as were religiously sought to be implemented in Debra and Gopiballavpur, may now be examined here. Broadly the line was as follows :

(a) The members and sympathizers of CPI (ML) had voluntarily taken upon, among others, the task of 'carrying the agrarian revolution in the countryside through victory, spreading the flames of armed

struggle throughout India, building a revolutionary people's army by organizing peasants' guerrilla warfare, consolidating rural liberated areas in order to win victory in the revolution.<sup>99</sup>

(b) The guerrilla warfare was to be and would remain 'the basic form of struggle for the entire period of revolution.' For, it would alone 'release the initiative and creative genius of the masses, lead them in making the impossible possible so as to bring about changes in the conditions of the masses and the countryside, and inspire the masses to engage in various spheres of work, and establish links and co-ordination between the bases of armed struggle.'<sup>100</sup>

(c) As had been demonstrated by the struggle of Srikakulam,<sup>101</sup> the peasants would 'carry on protracted war only through guerrilla warfare 'which was his own mode of fighting,' and it would be started wherever there were peasants. Neither mass movement nor mass organization was 'indispensable' for waging such warfare. 'Mass organization and mass movement increase the tendency for open and economist movement, and expose the revolutionary workers before the enemy, which makes it easier for the enemy to launch attacks.' As such both were 'obstacles' in the way of the development and expansion of guerrilla warfare. Since no other class was able to wage this warfare, it was 'only by relying on the poor and landless peasants' that it could be developed and expanded. For, it was this class that have the most intense hatred against the feudal class.'<sup>102</sup>

(d) Finally, guerrilla warfare could be started only 'by liquidating the feudal classes in the countryside.' And, annihilation of class enemy was 'the higher form of class struggle' while the act of annihilating class enemies through guerrilla action was 'the primary stage of the guerrilla struggle.' Once the guerrilla fighters tend to deviate from annihilation campaign, politics 'loses its place of prominence among them resulting even in moral degeneration of the guerrilla units.'<sup>103</sup>

The second phase of maoist actions in Debra and Gopiballavpur evidently shows how the above line of guerrilla action was put into practice in those areas. But it may be questioned whether the line prescribed by Charu Mazumdar was in consonance with the teachings of Mao Tse-tung. True, in view of the objective situation in China in her pre-liberation stage, Mao emphasized that 'the principal means or form of the Chinese revolution' was to be 'armed struggle, not peaceful struggle.' For, the enemies of revolution had 'made peaceful activity



impossible for the Chinese people' and had deprived them of all political freedom and democratic rights. Under the circumstances, according to Mao, it was 'wrong to belittle armed struggle, revolutionary war, guerrilla war, and army work.'<sup>104</sup>

But this emphasis on armed struggle did in no way preclude other forms of struggle. As Mao categorically pointed out, 'armed struggle cannot succeed unless co-ordinated with other forms of struggle.' To him, 'In leading the people in struggle against the enemy, the Party must adopt the tactics of advancing step by step slowly and surely, keeping to the principle of waging struggles on just grounds, to our advantage, and with restraint, and making use of such open forms of activity as are permitted by law, decree and social custom ; *empty clamour and reckless action can never lead to success*'<sup>105</sup> Even when Mao waged armed struggle against Chiang Kai Shek and established liberated zones and revolutionary bases, he appealed for intensification of the democratic movement all over the country. At that time he held that the revolution could be turned into 'a seething tide that will surge through the country' only by launching 'a political and economic struggle for democracy.'<sup>106</sup>

Contrarily, at its heightening phase, it had been observed how the naxalites of Midnapore ignored this teaching of Mao ; rather they countered his views by their rash actions, coupled with terror. For, given the objective situation of India in the late sixties, her bourgeois democratic constitutional framework, despite its otherwise exploitative nature, offered an overall, though not total, opportunities for 'such open forms of activity as are permitted by law, decree and social custom.' But the maoists were in no mood of engaging themselves in such activities as to them, armed struggle was the one and only correct path.

The faith in the omnipotence of armed struggle as well as reluctance for open and constitutional activities ultimately led the maoists to conclude that only guerrilla warfare could alone 'release the initiative and creative genius of the masses.' Therefore they were confident that mass organization and mass movement were 'not indispensable,' rather 'obstacles' to the development and expansion of guerrilla warfare. But this apparent presumptuous expression has but anything to do with Mao's ideas. For he had time and again stressed that there could be no mass movement without mass organizations and in their absence the revolutionaries would become isolated from the masses. While, dilating on the methods the communists 'must employ'

in whatever work they do, Mao noted that however 'active' the leadership might be, 'its activity will amount to fruitless effort by a handful of people unless combined with the activity of the masses.' On the other hand, a leading group 'that is genuinely united and linked with the masses can be formed only gradually in the process of mass struggle, and not in isolation from it.' And from this idea follows Mao's famous dictum: 'from the masses, to the masses.'<sup>107</sup> In fine, Mao suggested that if the support of the masses were to be won over, the communists 'must be with them, arouse their enthusiasm and initiative, be concerned with their well-being, work earnestly and sincerely in their interests and solve all their problems of production and everyday life—the problems of salt, rice, housing, clothing, childbirth, etc.' If that was done, Mao was sure of enjoying support of the masses who would then 'regard the revolution as their most glorious banner, as their very life.'<sup>108</sup>

Even during the days of the anti-Japanese struggle, in dealing with the conditions for establishing base areas, Mao urged the need, among others, 'to arouse the masses for struggle' against Japan. 'In the course of this struggle,' Mao wrote, 'we must form mass organizations, we must organize the workers, peasants, youth, women, children, merchants and professional people—according to the degree of their political consciousness and fighting enthusiasm—into the various mass organizations necessary for the struggle against Japanese aggression, and we must gradually expand them.'<sup>109</sup>

Needless to say, all these suggestions were manifestly unheeded by the naxalites of Debra and Gopiballavpur. What is more, they were even instructed by Mazumdar to shun the 'mass line.' Santosh Rana disclosed that while criticizing the harvesting campaign, Mazumdar declared, 'I don't want any more Gopiballavpurs.'<sup>110</sup>

Again, it was held, guerrilla warfare was not only the 'only' form of struggle the maoists would have to resort to, but for its development and expansion they were to rely 'solely' on poor and landless peasants since no other class was able to wage guerrilla warfare. The tenet simply negates the role of the working class in a revolutionary activity, thereby countering at the same time even the kernel of CPI(ML)'s tactical line as embodied in the *Political Resolution*. While the resolution considered the guerrilla warfare as the 'basic tactic of the struggle of the revolutionary peasantry led by the working class,' Mazumdar outrightly denied any role of the working class, not to speak of its leadership, in such struggle, which stands in complete

opposition to what Mao says in this regard. Since we have no opportunity to discuss in detail about the experience of working class leadership in Chinese revolution, following Mao, suffice it to point out that armed struggle by the Chinese Communist Party took 'the form of peasant war under proletarian leadership.'<sup>110</sup> And, despite 'certain unavoidable weaknesses,' the Chinese proletariat, to Mao, was 'the basic motive force of the Chinese revolution.' Without its leadership, the revolution 'cannot possibly succeed.'<sup>112</sup>

The maoists of Debra and Gopiballavpur were more attracted to Mazumdar's line than Mao's one and that is why we see nowhere in any phase of their struggle they talked of working class leadership in the peasants' action, and in its absence, those actions were deprived of the support of the working class. This ultimately sapped the core of the experiment as a whole.

Charu Mazumdar's line of annihilation too seems to contradict Mao's proposition on the issue. Historically speaking, during the Second Revolutionary Civil War period (1936) Mao favoured annihilation of enemy's 'effective strength' in order to smash his 'encirclement and suppression' campaigns and to expand the 'revolutionary base areas.' The concentration of superior armed forces and the adoption of encircling or outflanking tactics were, according to him, the two interdependent elements of the war of annihilation.<sup>113</sup> As such, when the revolutionary forces are inferior to the enemy 'in technical equipment and troop training,' as was in the case of anti-Japanese struggle in China in 1938, it is often difficult, according to Mao, to achieve the maximum in annihilation, such as capturing the whole or greater part of an enemy force, especially when fighting in the plains. Given the situation, the communists should, in his opinion, fight battles of annihilation 'as far as possible,' depending on the prevalence of 'favourable circumstances' leading to concentration of superior forces in any battle and application of encircling and outflanking tactics.<sup>114</sup>

The maoists of Debra and Gopiballavpur tried to emulate the Chinese experience in their 'guerrilla actions.' But those actions in practice were not aimed at the 'armed component of state power' as their sole target was individual jotedar and landlord. As a corollary their actions found expression only in annihilation of individual. 'Their class struggle, their political struggle, their fight for state power—everything had now been pinned on annihilation.'<sup>115</sup> Concretely, without a programme of mass struggle, where feudal exploitation was 'fierce,'

this line, according to Ashim Chatterjee, could never be effected despite the 'best efforts' of the activists. Chatterjee admits, 'I can assert from personal experience that in the Jhargram subdivision, even in Gopiballavpur, where contradictions with the feudal elements were the sharpest, this line could not be implemented.' In fact, the working class of Kharagpur who were engaged in large scale industrial sector discarded this line.<sup>116</sup>

Moreover, for the purpose of annihilation, Mao points out, the following conditions are 'indispensable': popular support, favourable terrain, a vulnerable enemy force and the advantage of surprise.<sup>117</sup> Can it be said that all these conditions were fulfilled in the maoist experiment in Debra and Gopiballavpur? Certainly not, at least facts proved otherwise. Still the maoists doggedly waged their annihilation campaign for more than six months killing more than 50 persons.<sup>118</sup>

*Rehash of Chinese Revolutionary Experience*

It is now amply clear that in the course of their activities, the naxalites of Debra and Gopiballavpur in tune with their general politico-ideological line, made frantic efforts to emulate the revolutionary experience of pre-liberation China only to deviate from them or the basic tenets of maoism. More importantly, while doing so, they, wittingly or unwittingly, ignored the peculiar characteristics not only of their areas of operation but of the country as a whole. They seemed to forget that India in 1969 or 1970 was not China in 1930 or 1937 or 1947. As Harris made the point very clear :

There was no Japanese invasion that paralysed the Kuomintang government and permitted the building of the Yen-an base. Indian forces in 1970 could reach almost all parts of the country speedily in a way the Kuomintang could not, even before the Japanese invasion. There were no local landlords jeopardizing the power of the national government. Even if there had been a foreign invasion it seems unlikely that a stable rural base could have been created in areas with a potential for material and political survival.<sup>119</sup>

The failure of the maoists in Debra and Gopiballavpur to comprehend this basic distinction between the objective conditions of the two respective countries may be attributed to the general political line of the CPI (ML). It is not that the naxalites were not at all aware of this difference or of waging struggle corresponding to the concrete situation in India. In fact, as early as November 1967 in the very first issue of *Liberation*, Charu Mazumdar wrote : 'The only purpose the

Marxist-Leninists have behind all ideological discussions is how to apply the ideology in the objective conditions existing in their own countries.' To him, therefore, an abstract discussion of ideological issues had 'no revolutionary significance because its truth is subject to test through its application in the particular context.'<sup>120</sup> Mazumdar's perception at that time might probably have been drawn its inspiration from what Mao said in the context of anti-Japanese struggle with regard to the study of Chinese 'historical heritage' with the marxist method :

For the Chinese Communist Party, it is a matter of learning to apply the theory of Marxism-Leninism to the specific circumstances of China. For the Chinese Communists who are part of the great Chinese nation, flesh of its flesh and blood of its blood, any talk about Marxism in isolation from China's characteristics is merely Marxism in the abstract, Marxism in a vacuum.<sup>121</sup>

But, after the formation of CPI (ML) when the line of 'guerrilla warfare through annihilation' overtook the party, all these pronouncements began simply to be forgotten. Now onwards references to the experiences in pre-liberation China along with Mao's annotations, regardless of its perspective were evoked willy-nilly in order to justify the party's 'action'-oriented exercises.

One of the reasons for this refusal to make a concrete analysis of a concrete situation may be attributed to the profuse and blanket blessings of the CPC from the very beginning of the movement on whatever the Indian maoists did. Only one instance is sufficient to mention here, that is, the editorial of *People's Daily* dated 5 July 1967 under the title, 'Spring Thunder Breaks Over India'<sup>122</sup> which afterwards became as if a holy scripture to the Indian maoists. It hailed the naxalbari peasant uprising as a 'peal of spring thunder' that had 'crashed over the land of India,' and also applauded 'the revolutionary group of the Indian Communist Party' for having done the 'absolutely correct thing' as well as for having 'done it well.' What is more, it indicated as if in the form of directives :

The Indian revolution must take the road of relying on the peasants, establishing base areas in the countryside, persisting in protracted armed struggle and using the countryside to encircle and finally capture the cities. This is Mao Tse-tung's road that has led the Chinese revolution to victory and the only road to victory for the revolution of all oppressed nations and peoples.<sup>123</sup>

The general instruction of the editorial then was followed by ungrudging eulogy for every action of the Indian maoists regardless of whether it conformed to maoism *per se* or corroborated with the Indian objective situation. The coverage of maoist actions by the Chinese media in effect boosted the morale of the Indian naxalites. Even the activities in Debra and Gopiballavpur were enthusiastically highlighted.<sup>124</sup>

The CPC song of praise for the Indian maoists however lost its tune in no time.<sup>125</sup> Their disapproval of the naxalite actions came in the wake of a reported meeting dated 29 October 1970 between Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng and Sourin Bose, a front-ranking leader of CPI (ML) who had managed to slip through to China and thus had an opportunity to have a dialogue with the CPC leaders. In this meeting those leaders were reported to have offered a few 'fraternal suggestions' which were, among others, as follows: (1) As each country had its own specific conditions, the path and tactical line in each country had to be correctly formulated. Hence application of the Chinese line mechanically was wrong. (2) The International was not necessary for the accomplishment of revolution as had been evidently proved by the Russian and Chinese cases. (3) The relations between the communist parties of different countries could only be fraternal and one of exchanging opinion. There could be no vanguard party, nor the leader-led relations. (4) That guerrilla warfare was the only form of struggle was formulated in the context of the Japanese occupation in China. It could not be applied everywhere at any time. Mass organizations and mass movements were essential for a revolution. (5) Indiscriminate annihilation would only isolate the party ultimately leading to the defeat of revolution. (6) It was erroneous to preach that struggles should be directed only for the seizure of state power and not for land.<sup>126</sup>

The essence of all these suggestions is that a revolutionary struggle can never succeed by importing strategy and tactics elsewhere. But, historically speaking, those are nothing new. Long before in 1935, the international communist movement laid down similar guidelines. In his speech in reply to discussion in the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International Georgy Dimitrov made it categorically clear :

Communists must carefully utilize in their countries not only the experience of the past but also the experience of the present struggle of other detachments of the international

labour movement. However, correct utilization of experience does not by any means denote *mechanical transposition* of ready-made forms and methods of struggle from one set of conditions to another, from one country to another, as so often happens in our Parties. Bare imitation, simple copying of methods and forms of work even of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in countries where capitalism is still supreme, may with the best of intentions result in harm rather than good, as has so often actually been the case.<sup>127</sup>

In conformity with this international line, Mao also urged the need to abolish 'foreign stereotypes' and said, 'there must be less singing of empty, abstract tunes, and dogmatism must be laid to rest.'<sup>128</sup>

The CPI (ML) and for that matter its local organization at Debra and Gopiballavpur too, had evidently ignored all these valuable suggestions. As such estranged from the masses, their actions landed, to all practical purposes, in impetuous and terror-stricken adventurism which, to put it mildly, stands opposed to Marxism as well. In the ultimate analysis, notwithstanding the fact that by their initial actions the maoists of Debra and Gopiballavpur had been able to rouse expectancy and enthusiasm among the peasants of Midnapore, their subsequent activities, in the absence of a decisive ideological perspective, proved to be fatal.

#### Notes and References

1. As the meanings of the terms, 'maoist' and 'naxalite' are the same in the context of the present essay, they have been used interchangeably.

Quite a good number of accounts of the naxalite movement have been published ever since its inception. Notables among them are : J. C. Johari, *Naxalite Politics in India*, The Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies, Delhi, 1972 ; Biplab Dasgupta, *The Naxalite Movement*, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1974 ; Sankar Ghosh, *The Naxalite Movement ; a Maoist Experiment*, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1975 ; Asish Kumar Roy, *The Spring Thunder and After : a Survey of the Maoist and Ultra-Leftist Movement in India : 1962-75*, Minerva Associates, Calcutta, 1975 ; Sukharanjan Sengupta, *Naxalbari Theke Urban Guerrilla (From naxalbari to urban guerrilla)*, Datta, Chaudhury & Sons, Calcutta, 1977 ; Tarun Kumar Bandyopadhyay, *Naxalbari Rajnitir Bibhinnna Dhara (Different strands of the naxalite politics)*, Pratyay, Calcutta, 1978 ; Sohail Jawaid, *The Naxalite*

*Movement in India*, Associated Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979; Sumanta Banerjee, *In the Wake of Naxalbari: a History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 1980 (an updated version of the book was published under the title, *India's Smoldering Revolution: the Naxalite Uprising*, Select Book Service Syndicate, New Delhi, 1984).

2. Biplab Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 52. cp. In terms of electoral politics (Assembly elections) up to 1969 the district was mainly dominated by the Congress. Even in 1967 and 1969 elections when the communists shared powers with other non-Congress political parties, their achievements were hardly satisfactory as is evident from the following Table :

Year	Total no. of Seats	Congress	CPI (undivided)	CPI	CPI (M)
1952	35*	12	6	—	—
1957	32*	22	5	—	—
1962	32	27	3	—	—
1967	35	12**	—	8	1
1969	35	6**	—	10	3

\* Multi-member constituencies included.

\*\* In these two elections it was the break-away group of the Congress, organized into the party of Bangla Congress which subsequently became the partner of two UF ministries in 1967 and 1969, that won 10 and 11 seats respectively in the district.

Source : V. B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *State Elections in India: Data Handbook on Vidhan Sabha Elections: 1952-85*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1987, vol. 3, Part Two, Section Two, pp. 188-90, 229-34, and 319-30.

3. *Desabratā*, 23. 4. 70, p. 9.
4. Asish Kumar Roy, op. cit., p. 202.
5. Cited in a broadcast from Peking Radio dated 26 February 1970 as quoted in *Desabratā*, 5.3.70, p. 9.
6. See note no, 4.
7. Sumanta Banerjee, op. cit., p. 179.
8. cp. "The peasant armed struggle in Midnapur has ripped open the deceitful mask of the 'progressive' United Front government. This is why the guerrilla actions in Gopiballavpur and Debra assume such significance. The peasant armed struggles in Andhra, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh did not directly affect the United Front government in West Bengal and so it could afford to remain indifferent to them. But the guerrilla actions in Debra and Gopiballavpur taking place in quick succession forced the United Front government to discard its mask of indifference." —'Revolutionary Armed Peasant Struggle in Debra, West Bengal,' being a report of the Debra Thana Organizing Committee, CPI (ML), *Liberation*, December 1969, p. 73. See also *Desabratā*, 20.11.69, p. 8.
9. "The Sensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region was the revolutionary base area which was gradually built up after 1931 through revolutionary guerrilla war in northern Sensi. When the Central Red Army arrived in northern Sensi after the Long March, it became the central base area of the revolution and seat of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. It was named the Sensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region after the formation of the Anti-Japanese National United



- Front in 1937, and it included twenty three counties along the common borders of the three provinces."—See *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (hereafter *SWMT*), vol. II, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1975, p. 77 n.
10. For details of the naxalite movement, see references cited in note no. 1.
  11. Biplab Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 9.
  12. Tarun Kumar Bandyopadhyay, (hereafter Bandyopadhyay), op. cit., pp. 6-13.
  13. For the text of the Programme of the CPI (ML) adopted at the First Party Congress (May 1970), see Biplab Dasgupta, op. cit., Appendix A, pp. 141-5. For details of an analysis of the politico-ideological line of the CPI (ML), see Tarun Kumar Banerjee, *The Naxalite Movement: Currents and Cross-currents* (an unpublished Ph. D. thesis submitted at the Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta, 1982), Ch. II.
  14. For details of the maoist actions in this period in these areas see *Desabratā*, 4.7.68, pp. 1 and 11.
  15. For details of the maoist activities at Chandrakona, see *Desabratā*, 31.10.68, p. 1; 14.11.68, p. 12; 12.12.68, p. 1; 16.1.69, pp. 1-2 and 12; 13.2.69, pp. 11-2; 17.4.69, pp. 3-4; and 29.5.69, p. 12.
  16. *Desabratā*, 5.10.67, p. 1 and 26.10.67, p. 8.
  17. Amiya Kumar Samanta, (hereafter Samanta), *Left Extremist Movement in West Bengal: an Experiment in Armed Agrarian Struggle*, Firma KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, 1984, p. 153. The author observes that Mandal's initiative came largely from his 'personal frustration.' According to him, 'His (Mandal's—TKB) disenchantment with the electoral politics developed when he was humbled in the general election of 1967 as a CPI (M) candidate, having polled only 6,099 votes.' See pp. 153-4.
  18. The PCG was organized under the leadership of the 'extremist' students of the Presidency College with other 'like-minded' students in and around Calcutta to form 'an active Maoist group.'—Samanta, op. cit., p. 174n.  
For details of the activities of PCG, see Democratic Students' Centre (West Bengal), *Shat Dasaker Biplabi Chhatra Andolan*, (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1986, pp. 18-31.
  - 19-20. Samanta, op. cit., p. 153.
  21. *ibid.*, p. 154. Mandal was the convener of the MDCC while Gunadhar Murmu and Dilip Pyne were its members. *ibid.*, p. 175n.
  22. This group later organized into what is known as the *Maoist Communist Centre* (MCC) in 1969, had been propagating Mao's thought even before the naxalbari peasant uprising. For details of its ideology and politics, see Bandyopadhyay, op. cit., pp. 31-41.
  23. *Desabratā*, 23.4.70, p. 9.
  24. Samanta, op. cit., p. 154.
  25. For the full text of the Report, See *Liberation*, November 1968, pp. 28-53.
  26. See note no. 23.
  27. Bhabadeb Mandal, Asim Chatterjee, Santosh Rana, Gunadhar Murmu, Mihir Rana, Prithwi Ranjan Dasgupta, Ranabir Samaddar, Sakti Mandal and Netai Das were the members of this Committee. - See Samanta, op. cit., p. 175n.

28. The Committee comprised (1) the entire districts of Midnapore and Bankura, (2) Baharagora and Chakulia of Singhbhum district under Bihar, and (3) Beripada, Sulipada and Bangripashi police stations in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa.—Samanta, op. cit., pp. 156-7.
- Sankar Ghosh observed that the motive behind the formation of such a type of committee was to make police evasion easier 'for the police of one state cannot function in another without authorisation from government.'—*The Naxalite Movement: a Maoist Experiment*, op. cit., p. 78.
- The BBOBRC consisted of 13 members who are as follows: Asim Chatterjee (Secretary), Bhabadab Mandal, Gunadhar Murmu, Sakti Mandal, Ranabir Samaddar, Santosh Kana, Mihir Rana, Prithwi Ranjan Dasgupta, Prabir Banerjee, Moni Chakrabarty, Leba Chand Tudu, Pradip Singh and Bankim Nayak.—See Samanta, op. cit., p. 176 n.
29. For the full text of the Report, see *SWMT*, vol. I. Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1977, pp. 23-59.
30. Edward Duyker, *Tribal Guerrillas: the Santals of West Bengal and the Naxalite Movement*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, p. 80.
31. Samanta, op. cit., p. 157.
32. This section is mainly based on two reports published by the Debra Thana Organizing Committee. CPI (ML) and the BBOBRC. CPI (ML) entitled 'Revolutionary Armed Peasant Struggle in Debra, West Bengal.' (hereafter *DTOC Report*), and Bangla-Bihar-Orissa Simanta Elakar Sasastra Krishak Sangram Bikas, Agragati O Abhijnata—Ekti Report' (The development, progress and experiences of the armed peasant struggles of the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa border (hereafter *BBOBRC Report*), respectively. For the full text of the first report, see *Liberation*, December 1969, pp. 63-82, and for the second, *Desabradi*, 23.4.70, pp. 8—12.
33. See *Desabradi*, 5.10.67, p. 1; 26.10.67, p. 8; 7.12.67, p. 12; 11.4.68, p. 1; and 18.4.68, p. 2.
34. *ibid.*, 11.4.68, p. 1.
35. *DTOC Report*, pp. 64-6.
36. *Desabradi*, 5.10.67, p. 1.
37. *DTOC Report*, p. 65.
38. *ibid.*, pp. 66-8.
36. These refer to Mao Tse-tung's three articles, namely, 'Serve the People,' 'In Memory of Norman Bethune,' and 'The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains.' For the full text of these writings, see *SWMT*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, Vol. III (1975), pp. 176-7; Vol. I (1977), pp. 337-8; and Vol. III (1975), pp. 271-4 respectively.
- For Charu Mazumdar's comments on these three essays, see his 'Chairman Tinti Lekha' (the three writings of Chairman) in *Collected Works: Sraddheya Neta Comrade Charu Mazumdar*, Desabradi Prakasani, August 1973, pp. 1—4.
40. *BBOBRC Report*, p. 8.
41. See note no. 39.
42. See note no. 40.
43. See note no. 29.

44. See note no. 28.
45. This refers to 'Report on Peasants' Armed Struggle in Srikakulam,' of the District Communist Committee, Srikakulam. 25 February 1969. For its full text, see *Liberation*, May 1969, pp. 58 - 79.
- For details of the movement in Srikakulam, see Tarun Kumar Banerjee, 'Girijan Movement in Srikakulam 1967-70,' *Society and Change*, July-September 1980, pp. 1 - 29, and October - December 1980, pp. 61 - 90.
- See also Shantha Sinha, *Maoists in Andhra Pradesh*, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1989.
46. *BBOBRC Report*, p. 9.
47. *ibid.*, pp. 9 - 10.
48. *ibid.*, p. 10.
49. For the full text of the resolution. see *Liberation*, May 1969, pp. 4 - 16. See also Samar Sen, *et al.* (eds.), *Naxalbari and After*, Kathashilpa, Calcutta. 1978, vol. II, pp. 251 - 63.
50. cp. 'The basic tactic of struggle of the revolutionary peasantry led by the working class is guerrilla warfare.' - "Political Resolution : Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)," dated 22 April 1969. *Liberation*, May 1969, p. 15.
- Also, 'Members and sympathisers of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) - you have voluntarily taken upon yourselves the task of freeing and liberating India, inspiring the working class. carrying the agrarian revolution in the countryside through to victory, spreading the flames of armed struggle throughout India, building a revolutionary people's army by organizing peasants' guerrilla warfare, consolidating rural liberated areas in order to win victory in the revolution, freeing and liberating India and transforming her into a people's democratic state, and building an India without exploitation by ushering in socialism.' —Charu Mazumdar, 'Develop Revolutionary War to Eliminate War of Aggression against China,' dated 19 September 1969, *Liberation*. October 1969, p. 9.
51. *DTOC Report*, p. 68.
52. *Desabhati*, 30.10.69, pp. 5 and 10.
53. *DTOC Report*, pp. 68 - 9 and 81.
54. *ibid.*, pp. 68 - 9.
55. For details of the 'action', see *Desabhati*, 9.10.69, pp. 1 - 2 ; 16.10.69, pp. 1 and 11-2 ; 30.10.69, p. 11 ; 13.11.69, pp. 1 and 11 ; 8.1.70, pp. 1 - 2 ; 2.4.70, p. 8 ; and 23.4.70, p. 14.
56. *DTOC Report*, pp. 70 - 3.
57. For details of the police action, see the section, 'End-Results' of the present essay.
58. *BBOBRC Report*, p. 12.
59. See the Appendix.
60. See note no. 58.
61. cp. 'Although some arrests were made ... and the EFR were deployed to help police in that area, for understandable reasons the Police Minister (Jyoti Basu—

TKB) was unwilling to do everything possible to suppress the revolt.'—Biplab Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 54.

Also, "Much of the Naxalite 'rule' in the district owed more to the embarrassed ambiguity of the U.F.'s position on the movement than, for example, to favourable military factors. As the avowed champions of the downtrodden, they did not wish to be seen suppressing a genuine 'people's' movement. Unable to diffuse the Midnapore movement with political or restrained police measures, the Government ultimately felt it had little choice but to employ more force.'—Edward Duyker, op. cit., p. 83.

62. Cited in *DTOC Report*, p. 73.

63. *Liberation*, November 1969, p. 99.

64. *Desabrati*, 30-10.69, pp. 1 and 12. See also, *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 24.10.68, p. 5.

65. *The Statesman*, 3.12.69, p. 4.

The *DTOC Reports* alleged that by sending a large number of tribal policemen to Debra, the Government attempted 'a dirty trick to confuse 'those *adivasis* who were most active among the landless peasants.—p. 76.

66. *The Statesman*, 7.12.69, p. 7; and *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 28.12.69, p. 12. See also, Edward Duyker, op. cit., p. 85.

67. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 15.12.69, p. 5.

68. *ibid.*, 1.1.70, p. 5.

69. Duyker's interview with R.N. Bhattacharya, the then Superintendent of Police in charge of Midnapore operations, dated 5 January 1979. See Edward Duyker, op. cit., p. 86.

70. *ibid.*, pp. 86-7. See also, Biplab Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 54.

71. For details, see *DTOC Report*, pp. 77-81.

72. BBOBRC, CPI (ML), *Bartaman Party Line O Amader Abhijnatar Sarsankalan* (The present party line and summing up of our experiences, July 1971, p. 23.

73-74. See note no. 46.

75. cp. Amiya K. Samanta observes, "The difference of opinion brought to the focus the differences in the political background of these two groups. The urban young men from Calcutta, living underground in Gopiballavpur and Baharagora for more than a year, were now eager for some exciting action. They had become bored with the monotony of mere politicisation work. The Debra group, on the other hand, covered people who had been peasant leaders in their areas long before they joined the new party. They were more realistic and they understood the possible repercussions of a programme of annihilation. As such they tried to forewarn their comrades."—op. cit., p. 160.

76. Cited in Sumanta Banerjee, op. cit., p. 141.

77. *DTOC Report*, p. 74. In his perceptive analysis, Duyker has shown how the maoists in their areas of operation had been, though partially, able to reconcile the grievances and aspirations of the tribal peasants with 'the Marxist-Leninist explanations of the root causes of oppression and with blueprints of an alternative society.'—For details, see Edward Duyker, op. cit., Ch. 7.

78. *BBOBRC Report*, p. 10.

79. Santosh Rana remembered in his 'retrospective account' of the maoist action in the area how the villagers in the court recalled 'the misdeeds committed by the landlords,' and accused them. The latter admitted the 'accusations' and vowed to act according to the 'instructions of the peasant committees.'—Quoted in Edward Duyker, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
80. *BBOBRC Report*, pp. 10-1.
81. In using the term 'maoism' the present author shares the view of Manoranjan Mohanty who opines that although the term was never 'favoured officially,' yet keeping 'the nature of Mao's various ideas and theories in mind,' it is justified to use the term 'maoism.' See his *The Political Philosophy of Mao Tse-tung*, Macmillan (India), 1971, p. 6n.
- Isaac Deutscher has also used the term 'maoism.' See his essay, 'Maoism: Its Origins, Background and Outlook' in Ralph Miliband and John Saville (eds.), *The Socialist Register 1964*, Merlin, London, 1967, pp. 11-37.
82. For a brief ideological critique of the naxalite movement as a whole, see Tarun Kumar Banerjee, *The Naxalite Movement: Currents and Cross-currents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 597-616.
83. Cited in Asish Kumar Roy, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.
84. Promode Sen Gupta, Satyananda Bhattacharyya and Parimal Das Gupta were the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the NKSSC respectively.
85. *Naxalbari O Krishak Sangramke Raksha Karun*, (in Bengali), being the resolution of the meeting of NKSSC, dated 14 June 1967, p. 1.
86. *Convention Ahbaner Uddesya*, (in Bengali), being a leaflet published by the NKSSC on the eve of the Convention, p. 6.
87. *Desabrat*, 6. 7. 67, p. 1.
88. *ibid.*, 2.11.67, p. 2.
89. *Desabrat*, 23 May 1968, p. 1; and *Liberation*, June 1968, p. 27.
90. 'Report on the Peasant Movement in the Terai Region,' *Liberation*, November 1968, p. 39.
91. See note nos. 38 and 43.
92. 'Problems of War and Strategy,' *SWMT*, vol. II, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1975, p. 219.
93. *An Approach to Naxalbari*, Institute of Scientific Thoughts, Calcutta 1980, p. 102.
94. 'Hold High the Genuine Lessons of Naxalbari,' in Samar Sen, *et. al.* (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 387.
- 95-96. 'Be Concerned with the Well-Being of the Masses, Pay Attention to the Methods of Work,' *SWMT*, vol. I, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1977, p. 147.
97. 'Declaration of the Revolutionaries of the Communist Party of India (Marxist),' *Liberation*, December 1967, p. 6.
98. See note no. 50.
99. 'Develop Revolutionary War to Eliminate War of Aggression against China,' *Liberation*, October 1969, p. 9.
100. 'China's Chairman is Our Chairman, China's Path is Our Path,' *Liberation*, November 1969, p. 10.

101. See note no. 45.
102. 'March Forward By Summing Up the Experience of the Peasant Revolutionary Struggle of India,' *Liberation*, December 1969, pp. 10-1.
103. *ibid.*, p. 13.  
In mid-January 1970, in his 'A Few Words About Guerrilla Actions,' Charu Mazumdar 'gave some practical advice regarding guerrilla actions in the countryside.' The maoists of Debra and Gopiballavpur presumably had very little opportunity to heed to such advice as by that time the backbone of their actions had been broken by the armed forces of the state. For Mazumdar's advice, see *Liberation*, February 1970, pp. 17-23.
104. 'The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party,' *SWMT*, vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 316.
105. *ibid.*, pp. 317-8, Emphasis added.
106. 'The Struggle in the ChingKang Mountains,' *Mao Tse-tung: Selected Writings*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1967, p. 132.
107. For details, see 'Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership,' *SWMT*, vol. III, *op. cit.*, pp.118-9.
108. 'Be Concerned with the Well-Being of the Masses...', *op. cit.*, pp. 149-50.
109. 'Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War against Japan,' *SWMT*, vol. II, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-9.
110. Cited in Edward Duyker, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
111. 'Introducing *The Communist*,' *SWMT*, *op. cit.*, p. 291.
112. 'The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party,' *op. cit.*, p. 325.
113. 'Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War,' *SWMT*, vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 248.
114. 'On Protracted War,' *SWMT*, vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 177.
115. *cp. Asit Sen*, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
116. 'Hold High the Genuine Lessons of Naxalbari,' *op. cit.*, p. 389.
117. See note no. 113.
118. See Appendix.  
Biplab Dasgupta points out a similarity between the naxalite theory and the experience of armed struggle in Cuba: "There (i. e., in Cuba—TKB) as in the Naxalite campaign in Debra and Gopiballavpur, the struggle was launched by a small number of inexperienced youngmen of the middle class, but soon after peasants joined in large numbers. There was much in common between the Cuban experience and the role assigned to young people in the Naxalite armed struggles, although unlike the Cubans the Naxalites failed to draw the peasants into the movement, and unlike the Naxalites the Cubans never resorted to individual killings. Moreover, Guevara opposed armed struggle until all the peaceful alternatives had been exhausted."—See his *The Naxalite Movement*, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
119. Nigel Harris, *The Mandate of Heaven: Marx and Mao in Modern China*, Quartet Books, London, 1978, p. 250.
120. 'It is Time to Build Up a Revolutionary Party,' *Liberation*, Miscellany, 1967, p. 63.

121. 'The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War,' *SWMT*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 209.
122. For its full text, see *Liberation*, Miscellany, 1967, pp. 20-4. See also Biplab Dasgupta, op. cit., pp. 241 - 4.
123. *Liberation*, Miscellany, 1967, p. 21.
124. For example, see note no. 5.
125. Manoranjan Mohanty points out that CPC's 'militant support' for the naxalite movement in July 1967 coincided with the party's policy as formulated by a 'leftist group' which at that time was dominating China's Foreign Ministry. But Chou En-Lai and Chen Yi followed the same policy after they 're-established their control.' The reason for continuing such policy was that it 'fitted with China's emerging foreign policy line of confrontation with the Soviet Union.' Essentially 'confined to the level of propaganda through press and radio,' the CPC's support gave, according to Mohanty, 'premature legitimacy to tentative formulations by the CPI(M-L) leadership.' The Chinese publicity thus led Charu Mazumdar to believe that his line of action was correct. Subsequent developments showed on the contrary that 'the Chinese were giving only routine publicity and perhaps were not aware of its consequences.' Ultimately the Chinese 'seemed to realize this by October 1971 after which their coverage of the Naxalite movement declined sharply.'—*Revolutionary Violence : a Study of the Maoist Movement in India*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1977, p. xix.
126. For the full text of these suggestions, see *Bharatiya Biplab Kon Pathe ?* (in Bengali), being a collection of some documents published by a maoist group in West Bengal, n. d., pp. 153-62. For its English paraphrasing, see Sankar Ghosh, op. cit., pp. 12-21.
127. Georgy Dimitrov, *The United Front*, 1938, p. 122.
128. 'The Role of the Chinese Communist Party...', op. cit., pp. 209-10.

*APPENDIX*

**A list of self-proclaimed achievements of the maoists in terms of their implementation of the policy of annihilation in Midnapore district**

Date	Place	Class character of the slains
2 September 1969	Gopiballavpur	a blackmarketeer, a moneylender. a stockist and a broker.
26 "	"	a jotedar, a shopkeeper, a pawnbroker and a broker,
30 "	"	a jotedar and an usurer.
13 October 1969	Debra	an usurer, a moneylender and a jotedar,
18 "	"	a jotedar.
20 "	"	a broker.
22 "	"	an agent of a jotedar.
27 "	"	a jotedar and an agent of police.
7 November 1969	"	two jotedars, brother of a jotedar. and an agent of police.
—	Gopiballavpur	an agent of police who was alleged to have cheated the ignorant tribal people.
3 January 1970	Debra	a jotedar, and an agent of police.
4 January 1970	Kharagpur	a jotedar, a moneylender and an agent of police.
31 "	"	a jotedar, a moneylender, a broker and a lumpen.
13 February 1970	Sankrail	a jotedar, a usurer and a moneylender.
17 "	Keshpur	a jotedar, a moneylender, an usurer, and a litigious person.
5 March 1970	Gopiballavpur	a jotedar, a moneylender, a broker, and a lumpen.
7 "	"	son of a jotedar, and a lumpen.
16 "	"	a jawan of EFR.
19 "	Debra	a jotedar.
21 "	Gopiballavpur	a jotedar.
22 "	Keshpur	a jotedar.
4 April 1970	Gopiballavpur	a jotedar.
10 "	Debra	two jotedars,
—	Kharagpur	a police.

*Source : Desabarti, 23 April 1970, p. 15.*



Rural Development through a Developmental  
Agency : the CADC Experience

SANKAR KUMAR BHOUMIK

The attempt to understand the socio-economic patterns at the village level has long been confined to anthropologists and sociologists. Of late, the economists concerned with developmental issues have also been attracted to the study of 'Indian Village' and the implications of various governmental measures on the village economy.<sup>1</sup> The study under review\* by Dr Asok Kumar Maiti, falls in that direction in that it examines the implications of a special developmental strategy, pursued by the West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Corporation (WBCADC) at the village level.

I

The study contains seven chapters. At the outset ( Chapter 1 ), the author reviews some of the existing literature on village studies and raises the issues to be drawn for empirical scrutiny in course of the study. The issues highlighted in particular are : the mode of utilisation of various productive forces, the distribution of means of production and production relations in village agriculture, the relation

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\* Asok Kumar Maiti, *Rural Profile : Halting Change in Mode of Production : A Study of the Comprehensive Area Development Strategy*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 249, Rs 190.

between farm size, productivity and efficiency and the distribution of assets, income and consumption expenditure. What makes the study distinct from others is that it examines all these issues from the standpoint of changes in 'forces' and 'relations' of production in their interactions within a period of five years (1975-80).' (p. 18).

Chapter 2 introduces the village Joyrambati drawn from Tamluk I CADC area in the district of Midnapore. The village is a 'naturally and minimally stratified' one as regards the distribution of land and assets. According to the author, it could not be termed as 'backward' from the consideration of its location, literacy rate and availability of the package of modern agricultural inputs (assured irrigation through deep tubewell, HYV seeds, fertiliser etc.) through the CADC. However, even with the intervention of the CADC, the author shows, both in Chapters 2 and 3, that the land-use and cropping patterns in the village remained almost unchanged with the productive forces in terms of labour powers (human and bullock) and irrigation facilities being grossly underutilised.

The author then hypothesises that the under-utilisation of productive forces could be attributed to the ownership and control over the means of production and men's relations of production. Thus he studies the distribution of means of production (private and social), the tenancy system, the credit system and production relations in the village. The distribution of privately owned means of production such as land and bullocks were found to be unequal with the degree of inequality showing an increasing trend. The system of tenancy did not change much except for the emergence of class of landless unrecorded sharecroppers and the campaign of 'Operation Barga' found limited appeal only with a handful of relatively better-off tenants. The credit market was largely dominated by private money-lenders and some well-to-do farmers. Although commodity production was prevalent in only one cash crop (betel-leaves), the author claims, all the contradictions of commodity economy (e. g., contradiction between debtor and creditor, landowner and sharetenant, employer and labourer) were evident in the village. Thus production relations were 'on the whole capitalistic in nature...growing in a halting process.' (p. 116). However, the author argues, as there had been no qualitative change in production relations during 1975-80, even with the intervention of the CADC, productive forces remained underutilised. (Chapter 4).

The economic factors governing production were examined and the issues of productivity and efficiency by farm size and tenurial

status were taken up in Chapter 5. The inverse farm size productivity relation remains valid even after the introduction of the package of modern inputs, the superiority of smaller farms in the matter of productivity being attributed to greater application of inputs per acre, labour and non-labour. Considering 'net value added per acre' as an index of efficiency, the author also found an inverse relation between farm size and efficiency. As regards the economic effects of tenancy, 'pure owner cultivators' are found to perform better in terms of yield per acre, 'pure sharecroppers' come next, followed by 'cultivator-cum-sharecroppers' and 'cultivator-cum-landowner' (i.e., cultivator-lessee).

The author then analyses the growth of asset-holdings, the distribution of income and consumption expenditure and the patterns of savings by different farm size groups. He also estimates the percentage of population below poverty line by adopting alternative measures of poverty. It is shown that the overall distribution of total assets became more uneven during 1975-80. However, the distribution of agricultural income became more egalitarian although the distribution of non-agricultural income became skewed. The pattern of consumption expenditure did not change significantly and a vast majority of population live below poverty line even in 1980. The households with per capita annual income of Rs 1200 and above contributed to positive savings but such savings found their way to unproductive channels of investment. (Chapter 6).

Besides summing up his main findings, the author concludes his study with a set of recommendations for the CADC. (Chapter 7). To his mind, the intervention of the Corporation has so far failed to check the underutilisation of productive forces and bring about any qualitative change in production relations in the village. Inasmuch as it is not possible to go in for complete socialisation of means of production under the present socio-economic set-up, any developmental effort (such as one attempted by the CADC), the author argues, should be directed to protect and strengthen the interest of weaker sections. To this end the CADC should involve the people in the village planning process and diversify its activities so as to create and provide better employment and income opportunities, particularly, to the weaker sections.

## II

Thus Dr Maiti has successfully evaluated in his study the programmes and policies as also the performance of the WBCADC in

changing the rural life. The chief merit of this exercise is that it sets out a clear-cut methodology under which the developmental strategy is evaluated. To this end the study has more in common with the marxian and structuralist approaches to agrarian development as opposed to the neo-classical approach which emphasizes social harmony and views development in terms of technico-economic parameters only. Another praiseworthy aspect of the work is that the author does not finish up with mere presentation of his empirical results; rather, he verifies his results, wherever possible, with the established economic theory or with the results of the studies by other researchers on similar issues. These are definitely the plus points of the study.

However, while going through the study, it appears to the present reviewer that the author seems to have failed to avoid his 'academic excitement' at various places of the work and this compelled him to arrive at either exaggerated conclusions or conclusions which were not fully supported by his data. For example, in his discussion of the development of productive forces, the author concludes that the creation of social means of production 'prompted an increase in the private stock of capital in the form of agricultural implements.' (p. 78). But nowhere in the study the author provides empirical information on implements except showing that one additional pumpset had been acquired during 1975-80. (p. 74). Secondly, the author considers percentages of households and irrigated land owned under different farm size groups (Table 4.2, p. 85) and computes the Gini Ratio to show that the better-off households benefitted more from the social means of production (such as deep tubewell). An obvious inconsistency in this exercise is that while col. 3, Table 4.2 (p. 85) shows that the sub-marginal households have 32.11 acres of irrigated land (44 per cent of total irrigated land owned), col. 13, Table 7 (Appendix I, p. 216) indicates that these households actually own 28.06 acres of land (25.96 per cent of total land owned). It is thus possible that data on irrigated land for these households have not been properly drawn. Further, to examine the distribution of gains from deep tubewell, it would have been much simpler to compare the percentage of owned area irrigated under deep-tubewell by different farm-size groups. Such an exercise, if attempted, is likely to reverse the impression of the author as regards distribution of gains from social means of production. Thirdly, the author argues that the smaller farms have higher productivity due to greater application of labour and non-labour (material) inputs and writes: 'neither fertility difference (soil

fertility), nor the percentage of irrigated area and intensity of cultivation were responsible for the inverse relationship between farm-size and yield in our area.' (p. 128). However, a close scrutiny of col. 4. Table 5.2 (p. 125) shows that the percentage of irrigated land to total irrigated land is in the side of the relatively small farms (while holdings above 2.5 acres have about 36 per cent of total irrigated area, the corresponding figure for the holdings below 2.5 acres is about 64 per cent). From this, the present reviewer is of the opinion that with greater application of labour and non-labour inputs and possibly with higher irrigation, the smaller farms came up with greater yield per acre. Fourthly, in his study of tenancy system, Dr Maiti compares the percentage of sharecropped land in the State in 1952 with that in the village Joyrambati in 1980 just to arrive at the conclusion that sharetenancy had not been that widespread in the village as it was in the State. (p. 101). Such a view, surely, is over-simplistic. In fact, the whole section on tenancy is not analysed properly. The study does not explain why the 'pure-sharecroppers' have higher yield per acre as compared to the 'cultivator-cum-sharecropper' or 'cultivator-cum-lessor'. To what extent the yield levels of recorded and unrecorded sharecroppers differ is not examined by the author ;<sup>2</sup> rather, the two categories seem to have been mixed up in the study. As regards the campaign of Operation Barga, the author argues, the poorer households with little or no means of production could not take protection under this programme. (p. 104). It is, however, not clear why dispossession of means of production should prevent these households from recording their names under Operation Barga. It is quite possible that the tenancy contract in case of these households is 'personalised' in nature and is interlocked with other contracts like labour, credit etc. These should have been analysed in greater detail to obtain a complete picture of the functioning of the tenancy system in the area under study. Fifthly, as the author does not attempt any statistical test of his results, the study leads to many over-simplistic conclusions. For example, while dealing with 'net value added per acre' (p. 136), the author recommends co-operative farming in case of *boro* paddy, instead of *aman*, on the plea that large farms have higher yield per acre in case of the former. However, if one looks at his figures at col. 14, Table 5.5 (p. 135) and attempts 'analysis of variance of mean productivity levels,' such superiority of large farms may not be established. In fact, many of the conclusions arrived in the study through tabular presentation of 'grouped data' are likely to appear less assertive if put to statistical test.

A final point about the author's method of defining and dividing rural families into social classes. By class the author means 'different categories of farm-size ownership holdings.' (p. 35). In so doing, the author commits the same mistake as is often done by the researchers working with National Sample Survey data on land holdings and Farm Management Studies. The point to remember is that from the point of view of accurately identifying class characteristics, grouping of data by acreage levels alone becomes highly inadequate method of aggregating data, particularly, in situation of institutional and technical change. What is necessary, and true to the spirit of Marxism, is the consideration of three related indices for the identification of class status: (a) the extent of possession of land and other means of production by the household; (b) whether the household exploits others by hiring labour and taking rent, i.e., the extent of exploiting or being exploited, relative to self-employment; and (c) whether the household is unable to meet subsistence requirements and is therefore enmeshed in usurious indebtedness, or whether it succeeds in obtaining a subsistence or produces a surplus available for investment.<sup>3</sup>

### III

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study stands as an excellent evaluation work of a special kind of strategy and may safely be considered as an important contribution to the existing literatures of village studies. It would surely become a valuable guide to all concerned with developmental issues at the village level. It is also quite likely that the book would encourage other researchers to take up similar studies in other villages/regions so that our understanding of 'Indian Village' gets enriched.

#### Notes and References

- 1 For example, recently Harris investigated, applying the method of historical materialism, the social and economic implications of the introduction of the new technology in agriculture of a village in Tamil Nadu. In another study Bliss and Stern, adopting somewhat a neo-classical framework, test various theories of underdevelopment and the motives and behaviours of farmers in a Uttar Pradesh village. See John Harris, *Capitalism and Peasant Farming: Agrarian Structure and Ideology in Northern Tamil Nadu*, Oxford University Press, 1982.

2. It is a pity that no comprehensive study has yet been undertaken to examine and compare the yield levels of recorded and unrecorded sharecroppers although a lot of studies were conducted in the past to test the relative efficiency of sharecropping system as such.
3. These are the indices considered by Patnaik to construct her 'Labour-exploitation Criterion' so as to identify various rural classes and explain their characteristics. See Utsa Patnaik, *Peasant Class Differentiation: A Study in Method with Reference to Haryana*, Oxford University Press, 1987.



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## Book Review

Krishnananda De, *Lokakanta Medinipur*, Amritalok, Medinipur, 1985, pp. 38 (References), Rs 6 (Hardcover).

Any description of 'folk' elements of a region must have a theoretical premise about the definition of 'folk' (here the Bengali equivalent *lok* is used) and the task becomes more difficult if one is restricted within an administrative division, in this case, Medinipur district. In a somewhat eclectic fashion, Dr De has tried to define 'folk culture' represented not only by the tribal and scheduled caste populations but he also mentioned about the Aryan elements within it : historically derived and assimilated in the indigenous way of life. (pp. 13-4).

About the second part of the problem, we can say that if one really tries to search for any kind of uniqueness in the 'cultural pattern' of Medinipur then one cannot avoid its peculiar geographical location — a gateway towards south India (*Dakshinapatha*) from the land of the Aryans (*Aryabarta*), and this has been aptly pointed out by the author. (p. 14).

These are all general points, if not truisms, valid for many other 'culture areas' of the world, where a frontier location (marginal when translated into cultural terms) gives rise to a melting pot like cultural and ethnic situation but at the same time a kind of 'regional cultural unity' seems to emerge transcending 'marginality' in course of time. The last point, though general, is important and in the light of this can one really measure the breadth and depth of any work devoted to the folk life of an area.

The major part of the book attempts to delineate and describe the folk elements of the 'sub-cultural areas' of Medinipur (if we take Medinipur as a distinct culture area), by picking out some magico-religious elements of the district (*gajan*, *badhma* etc.) which are of course found in the adjoining districts, viz., Bankura and Purulia. In the next phase, the author mentions one after another the names of different artisan groups and their distribution in the 'eastern region'



of Medinipur. But ultimately, he relies heavily on the search for a regional culture in the 'western part' of the district, and more particularly, the Jhargram subdivision. And at this point, the author justifies his argument by a quotation from an article written by Sanat Kumar Mitra. (p. 28).

In the penultimate section, we come to know about the folk literature and literateurs of the district. In the concluding section, Dr De again emphasizes the hybrid nature of the folk life of Medinipur, where tribal, Bengali, Oriya and the culture elements of Bihar are cross-fertilized till to date even in the face of rapid modernization and urbanization.

In fine, the book is an attempt to present a summary of a section of works on the folk elements of Medinipur which could have been much more successful had the author consulted some original works on the district produced during the census operations conducted by Dr Asok Mitra in 1951.

Abhijit Guha

Tarapada Santra, *Paschim Bangar Purasampad : Uttar Medinipur*, General Printers and Publishers, Calcutta, 1987, pp. IX+221, Rs 22.

The book under review is the sixth volume of a series (published in Bengali) edited by Amiya Kumar Banerji on the archaeological wealth of West Bengal. It may be noted here that under the able editorship of Sri Banerji the volumes on archaeological relics of Bankura, Birbhum, Howrah, Nadia and Murshidabad have already been published.

Tarapada Santra's present work is one of the most comprehensive accounts of the monuments of the 'Uttar' or northern portion of the district based on extensive field-works in the interior and often inaccessible places. Not only the specialists but also the general readers would not fail to appreciate the painstaking survey of the monuments which include measurements, detailed accounts of the construction, data on the social background of the founders, raw materials used for

construction, iconography of the terra-cotta ornamentation on the walls of the temples. In addition, the inscriptions have been quoted in full. The information provided by Sri Santra has been meticulously organized which shows a kind of scientific rigour as well as his passionate involvement in the subject.

However, the pioneer in this kind of investigation regarding the archaeological relics of Medinipur were scholars like Jogesh Chandra Basu (*Medinipurer Itihas*, in Bengali, 1936), Paribrajak Panchanan Roy Kavyatirtha (*Banglar Mandir*, in Bengali, 1974) and others. Among these scholars although Panchanan Roy deserves special mention but his survey on temples of Medinipur was confined to the Ghatal sub-division, particularly Daspur police station. Besides, Panchanan Roy did not have a regular and comprehensive scheme of survey. Hence the information supplied by him was often scrappy and his methods were slipshod in nature. And this is not unusual for a pioneer. Credit must be awarded to Sri Tarapada Santra who in a ship-shape manner advanced this fascinating area of research in the context of Medinipur started by the earlier scholars in the early part of this century.

Although Sri Santra has competently summarized the history and geographical context of the Medinipur district but some controversial remarks (p. 9) could have easily been avoided. Author's comments on the emergence of Khejuri port may also be noted in this context. He postulates that after the fall of the Tamralipta port Khejuri near Hijli rose as a prosperous port (p-13). This view may be contested on the ground that the interval between the fall of Tamralipta and rise of Khejuri is about 1000 years. But if these minor issues are glossed over the historical narratives of the district as portrayed by the author is useful for the future workers on this area. The detailed description of the old roads (water ways did not find any place in Santra's book) inter-connecting the different parts of the region deserve special attention.

Readers as well as tourists with interests in archaeology may be grateful to Sri Tarapada Santra for his book which will not only serve as a directory for visiting the archaeological relics of Medinipur but also of great use for various reasons like historical studies in architecture, art and religion, as well as sociological studies in patronage, distribution and choice of the temple.

Tarapada Santra, *Medinipur : Samaskriti o Manab Samaj*, Koushiki Prakashan, Bagnan, Howrah, 1987, pp. 202+VIII plates, Rs. 25 (Hard Cover).

In recent years the folklorists on Bengal have started to publish profusely on the folklife of different regions and sub-regions categorised in terms of administrative as well as political boundaries. These published materials often equate provinces and districts with culture areas, e.g., Lokayata Murshidabad, Lokakanta Medinipur, Paschimbanger Lokabadya etc. The books on folklore of these types are written in the format of District Gazetteers compiled by the British administrators before independence. As a result, although the authors of these works are conscious about the continuity of folklife down to the present time, they never attempt to describe the culture and society in any dynamic framework. In short, the books at their best become an inventory of a district presenting a sketchy account on the history of the name of district or province, topography, ancient monuments and archaeological relics, population, types of economic activities, names of tribes and castes along with their surnames, major deities prevalent in the region, major fairs and festivals and many other tit-bits of the area concerned which are already recorded in the Gazetteers and census handbooks.

The present book by Tarapada Santra is no exception to those above mentioned categories. Only distinction is this that Sri Santra has dealt intensively with the historical aspects of the district's name, roads and waterways, peasant struggles, folk tales etc. Surprisingly, the book did not describe the dynamic aspects of contemporary society and culture and therefore makes the title of the book somewhat confusing particularly in the context of its contents. Moreover, the present work is not very much systematically edited and organized. In fact, it is a collection of articles published previously by the author in various little magazines and journals of rural areas of Howrah and Medinipur.

The readers may find the book quite haphazardly arranged. The different sections of the book are not properly linked, as for example, we find a section dealing with the prehistory of Medinipur followed by a section describing the river system of the district. This kind of examples may however multiplied.

However, the merit of the book lies in documenting the historical aspects of the folklife of a region using some authentic

sources. One must appreciate the contribution of Sri Santra in the field of folklore research in Bengali where serious works linking social-cultural anthropology and history are urgently needed and his book is definitely an attempt to achieve it.

Falguni Chakrabarty

Partha N Mukherji, *From Left Extremism to Electoral Politics : Naxalite Participation in Elections*. Manohar, New Delhi, 1983, Rs 120.

The naxalite movement occupies quite a significant position in the mainstream of radical politics in India, and specially West Bengal. And for obvious reasons, there is no dearth of literature on naxalite movement. The work under review is an important addition to this.

The book is the outcome of a research study on CPI (ML)'s first ever electoral participation in 1977 in the Assembly constituencies of Gopiballavpur, Jhargram and Nayagram in the district of Midnapore. The study was done by a team of scholars of the Sociological Research Institute of the Indian Statistical Institute with the financial assistance of Indian Council of Social Science Research.

This study of Vidhan Sabha election in the three constituencies, particularly Gopiballavpur was considered necessary by the author, only under very special circumstances. It was not the election *per se* that was really of interest to him. It was rather the fact that a movement with revolutionary transformation of society as its avowed objective, which had earlier shunned the path of parliamentary politics, had now decided to enter the electoral arena. The interest centred around Gopiballavpur because this place has once been the scene of torrid extra-parliamentary revolutionary activity during the early seventies. For nearly six years the region had no occasion to feel apprehensive about its traumatic recurrence- Therefore, the return of the naxalites, although in an electoral arena, was quite significant.

The author observes : "a social movement provides a context in which new group formations emerge in relationship of conflict for structural change. These formations need not acquire permanency at the manifest level. When the naxalite movement, for instance, in

Gopiballavpur and Debra was suppressed and the region cleared of its activities, the organizations of peasants, youth and others which have come about during the movement were no longer visible." (p.7). The study argues that the arena of conflict and competition provided by the Assembly election would allow the surfacing of structures which remained 'invisible'. It hypothesized, in the context of Gopiballavpur, that "if the Naxalite movement which had run its turbulent course seven years ago affecting the entire region in which it operated, maintained a subterranean existence at the conscious or unconscious level, it would again become 'visible'." (p.8). This expectation was further reinforced by the study team's observations that the contradictions that had led to the generation of the social mobilizations were not resolved during this period of calm and peace.

The formulation of hypotheses for this research follows only after the author clearly states his theoretical position in Chapter 1. The theoretical orientation of the present study takes off with the 'Conflict model' of Marx, since social movements *per se* are processes directly having relevance with conflict and transformation. It is preferred to the Weberian model of 'dynamic equilibrium.' Though the author is clear enough to make his theoretical position, it remains a debatable point whether Marxist model can be so easily characterized as a 'Conflict model.'

The naxalites' participation in election was a clear shift in the tactics of the movement, and the study under review examines the social response to such a shift. Some major queries were: did the voting behaviour show any change compared to the previous elections? Was this change, if any, related to the earlier context of an agrarian movement? Could this change be identified in terms of new group formations which acquired a 'structure'?

After thus formulating the major research questions, in Chapter 2 the author gives us an idea of the methodology employed and the plannings of the field work. The research tool devised was a broad-based and flexible interview guide. In addition to the interview, the research team attended meetings, particularly of the CPI (ML), observed the cadres' style of campaigning. The units of study were individuals and/or groups drawn from different agrarian classes.

Why the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) [CC., CPI-ML] opted for participating in the 1977 Assembly election, retracting from their earlier standpoint, has been probed in Chapter 3. The discussions are informative and authentic

and free from distortions, a tendency often found in studies on naxalite movement.

Once the context and objectives of the study is clearly explicated, the next Chapter (Ch. 4) presents the description of a day-to-day exposition of the events as they unfolded themselves to the researchers. It is observed that "the style and structure of campaigning and the processes released as a consequence, signals a change in the functioning of the party which had earlier, on account of ideological and other compulsions, remained underground." (p. 56). The broad patterns that emerge are summed up in the subsequent chapters.

As far the election results are concerned, all the three seats were shared by the two marxist parties, the CPI (M) and the CPI (ML). In Gopiballavpur, the CPI (ML) candidate, Santosh Rana emerged victorious. It is observed that this victory had been marginal in at least two respects. "First a difference of 1,687 votes with CPI (M), running a close second, is not much of a difference. And secondly, a victory based on a little over 25% of the votes polled cannot be considered as anything other than marginal. Looked at differentially, the victory of one of the Marxist parties in a keenly contested election, in which the marxist vote base was divided and in which the non-marxist base of support was also fairly defined, is remarkable." (p. 154). It is revealed from this study that with the victory of Santosh Rana the agrarian question had received a shot in the arm. A keen sense of rivalry between the two marxist parties to outdo each other was in clear evidence.

After this brief review of election results in Chapter 5, the concluding Chapter (Ch. 6) deals with the post-electoral scene in which the victory of the CPI (ML) bore immediate and ample evidence of the intentions of the party. Some of the major issues taken up were wages, tenancy rights, usury, *begar* and *ghar majoor* system. "The issues that have been revamped were live issues of the movement period perhaps with the exception of establishment of an independent and parallel locus of governance and power." (p. 181). The arrival of the CPI (ML) in the scene after a long gap created its own currents in the Gopiballavpur constituency. Agricultural labourers and poor peasants voluntarily organized themselves, set up their own communication channels through kinship and market, devised their own method of electioneering, setting into motion a most remarkable process which, according to the author, enabled them to achieve an extra-ordinary class solidarity.

The study under review has observed in details the resurfacing of the movement structures, the consequent mobilization, and the spread of the party's influence, arguing that similar issues had been revamped, only the methodological idiom and style had changed. The researchers thus confirm their earlier position that suppression and temporary absence of a social movement do not necessarily indicates its total destruction. Given the appropriate stimuli, it can reappear.

It is clear from the present study that very few of the queries posed have been satisfactorily answered. This is no doubt a limitation. But the researchers are honest enough to admit this flaw. Notwithstanding this drawback, the study is a sincere and novel attempt to look at the naxalite movement from a new angle. It is an election study only incidentally. More specifically, it is a study of a movement in retrospect and prospect. And herein lies its importance.

Ambarish Mukhopadhyay

□ Acknowledgements

Our Consulting Editors  
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Guru Das Karmakar  
Chandranath Chatterjee  
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Intellectual interaction is the *sine qua non* of an academic community. With this in mind the Vidyasagar University Journal of Social Sciences seeks to promote an interdisciplinary cross-fertilization in different fields of social sciences, and to that end, to involve in this venture not only the members of Vidyasagar University community but also other scholars engaged in academic assignments elsewhere.

The inaugural number of the journal makes an humble attempt to present a comprehensive study of Midnapore. Efforts have been made to cover all the aspects of the district—its society, culture, economy, history and politics. Those who have contributed, have been engaged in research works in their respective fields of social sciences for quite a considerable period of time. The views and opinions expressed by them do not however necessarily reflect those of the Vidyasagar University or of the Editorial Board of the journal.

The Editorial Board feels honoured to dedicate this number to Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar on the occasion of his death centenary.

Managing Editor