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Contents

Editorial (v)

Our contributors (vi)

1.K.K.Chaudhuri,
'Itihāsa' in Early India :Towards an Understanding in Concepts 1

2.Bhaskar Chatterjee,
Early Maritime History of the Kalingas 10

3.Animesh Kanti Pal,
In Search of Ancient Tamralipta 16

4.Mahammad Shafi,
Lost Fortune of Dacca in the 18th. Century 21

5.Sudipta Mukherjee (Chakraborty),
Insurrection of Barabhum in Jungle Mahals and the creation of Manbhum district in Bengal,1832-33 25

6.S.C.Mukhopadhyay,
Changing Profile of the Santhals in Purulia District 31

7.Arabinda Samanta,
Some aspects of the impact of malarial fever on the supply of labour to the estates of Assam,1926-31 42

8.B.K.Roy,
Indian National Congress and Maharaja Lakshmiswar Singh of Darbhanga Raj 51

9.Shyamapada Bhowmik,
Midnapore Students' Participation in India's Freedom Struggle,1905-47 54

Editorial

Our long-cherished dream for publishing from the PG department a research journal of History has atlast come true. We,the members of the department, pondered over this issue for the last five years or more. The opportunity came to us all on a sudden in the shape of a proposition to form a cluster with another department. But when it did not eventually materialise, we were allowed to publish an independent journal of our own. Admittedly, the publication of a research journal from a PG department not only testifies to the sustained academic endeavours of the members of the department, but also proves beyond doubt that the department concerned has reached a certain altitude of intellectual maturity. It also adds glory to the University.

Secondly on the one hand as humble votaries of Clio we will take pains as far as practicable to point new findings of historical research available to us, and on the other we intend to tender the journal a potential vehicle of a distinct school of Historiography, marked by scientific and secular attitude. Such proclamations may be taken as our avowed objectives of this publications.

The time at our disposal for publishing this journal was very short ; in spite of this we left no stone unturned to publish it within the narrow time limit given to us. We are glad to announce that we have become successful in our efforts. We are specially thankful to our contributors from outside who have sent their articles within a short time, notwithstanding their other pressing preoccupations. We would like to express our gratefulness to Dr.Bhaskar Chatterjee,Professor of History, Burdwan University,Dr.B.k.Roy,Professor of History,L.N.Mithilla University, Darbhanga and Dr. Mahammad Shafi, Professor of History, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh, for their continued support to our department and the University in various ways.

The articles chosen for publication largely reveal the areas of individual specialization of the authors. The writings have been arranged chronologically in order to manifest sequence of time - divisions. However, no writing on Mediaeval India could be inserted. We are hopeful that in the coming years we shall be able to publish our journal with greater care and attention. The volume of the journal may further be expanded and more research articles, included.

We crave the indulgence of the learned readers if they happen to notice any kind of lapse in the volume, which is our maiden effort.

Our Contributors

1. **K.K. Chaudhuri**, M.A, Ph.D., Dip-in-Chinese, is now a Reader in History, Vidyasagar University . His major areas of academic interest include Indian historiography, India's relations with foreign countries like China, and early Indian Numismatics. His research work on early Indian historiography earned him the degree of Ph.D. from the University of Calcutta . He is now engaged in intensive research work. His forthcoming treatise is concerned with the ideas of history in ancient India.A research project conducted by him on the socio-economic history of modern Lower Bengal has recently come to completion, leading to the award of Ph.D.degree of Vidyasagar University to one of his fellows.

2. **Bhaskar Chatterjee,**M.A.,Ph.D.,Professor of History, Burdwan University, is a noted Indologist, who has worked extensively on diverse aspects of ancient and early mediaeval phases of Indian history, such as Numismatics,Society, Religion, Constitution and Culture. He has authored a number of books including*Age of the Kushanas*, *Kushana State and Indian Society*, *Coins and Icons*, *Maritime History of Ancient India* etc. A large number of scholars have worked under his supervision.

3. **Animesh Kanti Pal**; M.A, Ph.D.,was a Reader in the Department of Bengali, Midnapore College. After serving nearly four decades (1958-94) , he has now retired from service but has deep interest in historical study . He was a guest lecturer, in Rabindra Bharati University and now works in the same capacity in the department of Bengali, Vidyasagar University. His fields of interest centre round Linguistics, Folklores, Literature and Ancient Indian History and Culture. He is a life-member of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta .

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9. **Shyamapada Bhowmik**, a triple M.A, followed by a Ph.D. degree, is now a Reader in History, Kharagpur College. He obtained the Ph.D. degree in 1995 from Vidyasagar University on *"Railway Working Class Movement at Kharagpur 1919-47."* He was a guest lecturer in History, Vidyasagar University during the sessions 1993-95 . He is also associated with Paschim Banga Itihas Samsad in which he is a convener of Midnapore district . He is now engaged in active research .

'Itihāsa' in Early India : Towards an Understanding in Concepts.

Korak K. Chaudhuri

The fact is well-known that the tremendous intellectual advancement in almost every discipline of European letters in the ages from the Renaissance onwards effected a complete metamorphosis of human mind. This phenomenon made man, inter alia. more rational, inquisitive,bias-free, liberal, scientific in temperament and human, thereby marking a break with the past and, in a sense, a redemption from the Age of Blind Faith. The study of history evidently could not afford to remain detached from the all-absorbing influence of this thorough change in attitude to life. From this time the questions of logical minds pertaining to the diverse issues of philosophy of history and the methodology of historical research gave birth to complicated debates in academic circles which lingered for centuries. The protracted intellectual wrangling eventually culminated in the production of modern mature historical thinking. It meant, among others, being conscious of every conceivable problem of historical past. India in the present ages can equally boast of sharing much of this advanced knowledge of intricate thought-process.

However, looking backwards, an inquisitive student of Indian historiography feels curious in the same degree to probe into the attitude of ancient Indians to the recording and reconstruction of past as well as the precise nature of their own concept of history, in the sense in which the term history is understood nowadays. This may be considered as a *desideratum*, inasmuch as the academic justification of such enquiry lies in being able to trace a continuous narrative of the evolution of Indian historical thinking from the early times to the modern period. In this context, it hardly escapes notice that some early mediaeval foreign writers like Al-Bīrūnī (973-1048 A.D.) placed on record a serious invective that ancient Indians lacked sense of history and chronology,and their compositions are marked by absence of critical acumen.[1] The allegation finds an echo even in the writings of modern competent historians, who have tended to reach an almost unanimous conclusion that anterior to the middle of the 12th century A.D. when the celebrated Kashmirian historian Kalhana authored his much-applauded regional chronicle Rājatarangiṇī in 1148-49 A.D., India did not witness any serious treatise on history, worth the name, as she produced no sound historian of the type of Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy or Tacitus, who could have left for posterity any genuine record of past.[2] These caustic remarks have expectedly provoked keen controversy, for it is hard to believe that India which had been from the dawn of history the birth place ofa

highly educated civilisation and kept intimate liaison with other counterparts of the world, should possess no sense of history and chronology. In this paper a modest attempt has thus been made to unravel the precise state of things in this regard, based on a study of the relevant primary sources.

In India the earliest name used for the art of narrating past was itihāsa, mentioned for the first time in the fifteenth book of the Atharvaveda. [3] Split into three words iti-ha-āsa, one gets the etymological meaning - this must have happened.[4] It implies that whatever had taken place or was in existence in the past is incorporated in itihāsa. This viewpoint immediately elevates itihāsa to the lofty position of the father of all disciplines mankind has ever been concerned with, for every kind of knowledge in the world has stemmed from its past. But historians least entertain this widest connotation of the subject and prefer to view it in the more specific terms of a chronological narrative of the evolution of human societies and civilizations, inclusive of as many angles of vision as possible. Early India too, despite designing a highly ambitious definition, understood the expression in a more restricted and classified sense, the horizon of which, however, expanded with the passage of time.

In order to grasp the true nature of ancient Indian concept of past one requires in the beginning to sift some relevant sources, which either contains the expression itihāsa , or are themselves claimed as examples of itihāsa . However, the self-contradictory and vague character of the evidence of such sources often pose a stumbling block. The clue to this problem is perhaps to be sought for in the complex political-social-cultural milieu of the country in which such literary works cropped up. It also seems futile to try to positively indicate the factors that shaped the character of such works. [5] In this context one requires to remember that in most cases ancient and tradition-based literature present similar impediments to the investigator who seeks to steer clear of them with comparative analysis of sources and reach most logical inferences. It is in the background of such intellectual intricacies that ancient Indian sense of history is to be determined .

The order in which itihāsa, coupled with its concomitant part purāṇa, occurs in the Atharvaveda is important in that it is placed after Rk, Sāman, Yajus and Brahman and before Gāthānārāśaṁsi (the hero-lauds sung during sacrifices).[6] Though the relevant Vedic verse does not yield any definite meaning of these words individually, the very placement suggests that to the Aryans itihāsa-purāṇa stood much higher in position than gāthā-nārāśaṁsi and included many ancient episodes as basic ingredients of past.

It is true that the apparent vagueness of the earliest reference embodied in the Atharvaveda has been embarassing . But the Brhaddevatā (composed about 500-400 B.C. as an epitome of divine stories in the Rgveda and attributed to the sage Śaunaka) comes of help, as it contains Śākáṭāyana's reference to a complete sūkta[8] of the Rgveda as itihāsa-sūkta. [9] This alludes to a distinct sense in which the term itihāsa was accepted by the contemporary educated class.

The connotation of Itihāsa-purana becomes clearer with taking into consideration the evidence of the Nirukta (believed to have been compiled between 800-600 B.C.) by Yaska, the earliest lexicographer of India. In connection with

the explanation of rk, gāthā, and itihāsa, [10] embedded in a sūkta of the tenth maṇḍala of the Rgveda the lexicon expounds itihāsa as an account based on true events. [11] Side by side, purāṇa, meaning old has been used as an adjective of itihāsa . From this it appears that Itihāsa-purāṇa together denoted any narrative of ancient events which was much known and based on truth.

But curiously enough, Yāska brands many stories as itihāsa (i.e., true events, as in the above analysis)[12] which can be unhesitatingly discarded as fictitious. The instances are the occurrence round Devāpi and Śāntanu (the two sons of the the Kuru king Pratipa), [13] the self-immolation of the divine artisan Viśvakarmā, son of Bhubana, at the Sarvamedha sacrifice, [14] the dialogue of the rivers with the sage Visvāmitra [15] etc. To these may be added the mention in the Brhaddevatā of itihāsa as purāvrtta (old legends, apparently true) [16]; though the numerous examples of such itihāsa or purāvrtta as provided by Bhāguri, Yāska, Śaunaka and Śakātayana in the above text are all imaginary and false stories of the Rgveda .[17] In some cases, Yāska has strictly differed form others when he calls them Samvāda .But Śaunaka is definite that they are itihāsa .[18] For such citations one may refer to the stories stating that the divine preceptor Bṛhaspati handed over his own daughter Romāśa to king Bhāvayavya, Indra King of gods fulfilled the prayer of Atri's daughter Apālā who wanted the cure of her leprosy and to regain her beauty, Soma or Moon fled from the company of the gods in fear of Vṛtra [19] etc.

One would be apt to infer from the above study that though primarily itihāsa denoted purāvrtta or genuine account of past events, it often signified other popular and age-old stories of no historical basis. This peculiar ambivalence may be explained away by the fact that like the people of other early civilizations the average Indians in ancient times too had natural proneness to believe old legends and regard them as ablolutely true. This is how the aspect of checking genuineness of these frame-stories was ignored and such concoctions found a free access to itihāsa . The way in which the analysis has progressed so far may give rise to the idea that ancient Indians did not possess critical acumen and hence failed to distinguish between truth and falsehood. But the tesiminy of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (c.500 B.C.) strikes at the root of such concept. It asserts that all the portions of the account of the long-drawn conflict between gods and demons, some of which are narrated in itihāsa and some described in purāṇa, are false . [20] In the opinion of Maurice Winternitz, the above statement is tantamount to declaring all the episodes in Brahmanical literature as baseless. [21] Besides, Julius Eggeling has translated the controversial itihāsa - purāṇa word as myth based on long-standing tradition. [22] Thus in the context of the development of early Indian historiography this evidence of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa cannot but be held as having conspicous significance, for it brings two strong possibillities to the limelight. First, the capacity of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, and therewith the faculty of critical scholarship, prevailed in ancient India. Second, since the early people of India did not necessarily consider itihāsa .to be a repository of correct accounts of past events, they did rightly utilize the opportunity of passing caustic remarks about the veracity of the stories of the protracted struggle between gods and demons. Simultaneously, such a speculation cannot also be ruled out that although at the initial stage of its development itihāsa was taken to have consisted only

of genuine events (as hinted at in the etymological meaning), the scope of itihāsa underwent much enlargement in the succeeding centuries, as the various expressions like purāṇa, itivṛtta, purāvṛtta, ākhyāna, gāthā-nārāśaṁsi etc, were being used as synonyms, substitutes or adjectives of itihāsa . This assumption receives strength from even a comparatively late work like the epic Mahābhārata, in which many incredible stories having only moral value appear as itihāsa. [23]

In the later Vedic period the copious usages of the term itihāsa available in the Brahmaṇa, Āranyaka, Upaniṣad and Sūtra literature clearly point to the loftly position, deep esteem and wide popularity of itihāsa in the eyes of the common people . Of the primary texts in which such references are lying scattered, mention may specially be made of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa [24] Gopatha Brāhmaṇa [25] Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, [26] Jaiminīya Upaniṣad . [27] Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad ,[28] Chāndogya Upaniṣad, [29] Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra,[30] Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhyasūtra,[31] Śāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra, [32] and Maitrāyaṇi Saṁhitā (attached to the Black Yajurveda) [33] The cummulative evidence of these sources doubtless reveal in the first place that itihāsa styled pāñcama veda or itihāsaveda, particularly in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, had been invested with the holy and divine character of a veda (vāko vākyamitihāsaḥ purāṇaḥ pāñcama vedānaṁ vedaḥ). [34] Secondly, adequate stress has been laid on the religious merit to be accrued from the reading of itihāsa litarature on all festive occasions by kings and common prople alike. For instance, reciting itihāsaveda happened to be a compulsory phenomenon in the complex rituals of horse-sacrifices, [35] which also yielded considerable wisdom to the listener king. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa and the Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra enjoin that as a result of the study of itihāsa everyday or on occassions like marriages, domestic sacrifices, worships of deities etc, the householder would earn worldly happiness along with divine blessings, religious merit and relief from natural calamities, diseases and unforeseen dangers. [36] The above texts further insist that when the death of a preceptor or precursor takes place, the members of the family should cast out the old domestic fire, kindle a new one and sit together reciting histories of famous men and discoursing on the auspicious itihāsa-purāṇa.[37] Again, according to the Gobhila Gṛhyasūtra, on the new and full-moon days the husband and the wife should spend the night with discourses on itihasa.[38] Thus the above literary data render the conclusion irresistible that itihāsa, particularly identified with the Veda, was accorded unusual sancitity as a canon of truth by the contemporary people, and also that it played a much positive role in the cultural life of the nation.

In the field of the evolution of early Indian concept of itihāsa a fresh and significant advance was achieved in the hands of Kauṭilya, whose Arthaśāstra, a renowned treatise on Indian polity, is generally held to reflect the conditions of the Mauryan age in the 4th-3rd century B.C., but may be of a somewhat later date. The passage in the Arthaśāstra, which assigns an almost sacrosanct character to itihāsa by grouping it in associstion with the four other sacred lores runs as follows: "The Sāmaveda, the Rgveda and the Yajurveda - these three constitute the triple vedas (trayi). (These three together with) the Atharvaveda and the itihāsa veda are also (known as) the Vedas". (Sāmargyajūrveda-Strayastrayī/ Atharvavedetihāsavedau cha vedaḥ). [39] This leads to the supposition that itihāsa/ itihāsa-purāṇa did

not represent any single book, but rather denoted a branch of learning or a huge literature (like the Rk, Saman or Yajuh), which absorbed ancient fables, legends and myths of every description. Kautilya also prescribes that in the latter part of the day the king should listen to itihāsa in the company of ministers and principal officers. [40]

But the passage which commands highest consideration is one in which Kautilya while explaining itihāsa has named six of its concomitant ingredients - Purāṇa, Itivrtta, Ākhyāyika, Udāharana, Arthaśāstra and Dharmaśāstra. [41] Each of these elements has to a large extent independent origin, development and ramifications. For example, the huge Purana literature is beleived to have five major segments (pañcalakṣaṇa) sarga, pratisarga, vaṁśa, manvantara and vamsanucarita. [42] Of them, the last segment alone represents lists of ancient royal dynasties of genuine existence, which certainly serve as basic components of political history. [43] Thus A.D. Pusalkar seems to be justified in commenting that in the age of Kautilya itihāsa outweighed purāṇa in importance and incorporated Arthaśāstra and Dharmaśāstra within its fold,[44] though in succeeding years the last two established themselves as independent pieces of literature.

Further, Kautilya shows that the archives kept the records of the history of customs, professions and transactions of countries, villages, families and corporations, gains through gifts to the royal family, treaties with and payments of tribute from or to freindly or inimical kings etc. [45] This makes manifest that in the Mauryan period the fundamental documents of history were collected in royal archives in classified forms with state patronage, which eventually gave birth to the traditions of court historiography.

The foregoing discussion leaves little room for doubt that Kautilya possessed the first definite and a very comprehensive idea about the scope and extent of itihāsa . His sense of itihāsa implied not only accounts of historical persons and traditions of all descriptions in their widest significance, but also almost all topics of human civilization (outside the pale of religion) such as political , social, economic and moral doctrines and their practical applications, legal usages and instituiosns etc.

In the age of the Mahābhārata (the extant form of which was probably achieved between c. 400 B.C and 400 A.D.), itihāsa is found to have been termed purāṇa and veda . [46] The epic also states that by the aid of itihāsa and purāṇa , the veda may be expounded. [47] Another epic definition calls it, inter alia, devarsicaritāśraya (i.e. based on the lives of gods and sages).[48] However, curiously enough during this period much emphasis was laid on the didactic or instructive spirit of itihāsa .Thus according to one of the definitions provided in the great epic, it means the naration of past events accompained by (or arranged in the form of) stories, conveying instructions in dharma (religion or moral code), artha (economics comprising social and political behaviour). Kāma (pursuit of desire or culture), and mokṣa (salvation) - the four human values (Dharmārtha-kāma-mokṣāṇāṁ upadeśa samanvitaṁ/ pūrvavṛttaṁ kathāyuktaṁ itihāsaṁ pracakṣate). [49] Thus the Mahābhārata appears to have wanted the historian not simply to describe ancient stories, but also to impart teachings on the ethical importance of such stories so as to leave an edifying effect on the common people.

The religious connotation of ancient Sanskrit literature is so closely intertwined with its political and historical implications that the two can scarcely be dissociated for individual identification and study. None-the-less, the available pieces of information drive one to the conclusion that the Vedic literary elements called gāthās (metrical song-verses), nārāśaṁsīs (songs in praise of heroes), vaṁśas (genealogies of ancient sages), vākovākyas (dialogues representing the dramatic aspects as opposed to the narrative), akhyanas (also called Vyākhyānas, tales or stories) etc., were valuable repositories of age-old traditions and germs of political history. These fragments are also found in close association with the words itihāsa and purana, occurring in later Vedic literature and both signifying history or parts thereof, though certainly in a rudimentary sense. Thus notwithstanding the fact that in the beginning of their existence all these elements lay tied to the religious framework of the Vedic literature, in course of their evolution they disentangled themselves from such bondage and made appearance as an independent class of study, in which the presence of secular aspect can not avoid notice. Such pieces of literature were at one time sung as hero lauds by wandering poet-historians like Sūtas, Māgadhas, Vidāthins, Paurāṇikas etc. and were transmitted by them from place to place. [50] More pointedly, under the leadership of the Hotṛ priest and with the cooperation of the Sūta-Māgadha group these scattered, floating and versified songs were presented as Pāriplava ākhyānas (revolving narratives) as a constituent rite of the Aśvamedha sacrifice and this was how they first emerged as a distinctly classified unit. The opinion of R. C. Hazra that the bulk of the Purāṇic literature as well as the Mahābhārata owe their origin to these Pāriplava ākhyānas and highlight their manifold importance. Hence the Sutā-Māgadha class as the earliest of Indian historians (in a limited sense) as well as the gāthānarāśaṁsīs and the Pāriplava ākhyānas containing germs of political history played noteworthy roles in early Indian historiography. Despite many shortcomings in them noticed by modern historians, these portons must be considered as some of the earliest literary forms, reflecting historical or historico-biographical compositions of ancient India. In no time they constituted what may be called a vast storehouse of myths and legends and survived in the shape of oral tradition. Their religious and ethical import drew high veneration from the masses.

There is no gainsaying the fact that any genuine historical writing (in the sense in which it is understood in the modern age) is hardly met with in India prior to the 12th century A. D. This seems to be largely true despite the presence of the much talked-about rāja-vṛttas or historical biographies of early India. But the point to be noted is that having no genuine history and having no genuine sense of history are not synonymous and cannot be placed on the same pedestal of consideration. of late, a highly significant research on early Indian historiography has come to light, which, in course of pointing to deep links between history and time (Kāla, derived from the root Kal, to calculate), reveals growing awareness of country's historians regarding ancient Indian ideas of history. To start with it should be pointed out that for long, scholars were of the general opinion that the only concept of time known to early India was cyclic, but not linear. Since a sense of history is essentially

based upon linear time concept, the cyclic measurement of time considerably explains why Indians did not venture writing systematic historical narrative in that hoary past .

The above interpretation, maintained for long and advocated till now by many, has very recently been challenged by Romila Thapar (1996).[51] She has offered a number of new propositions and, while exploding the earlier misconceptions , helped us to obtain a fuller understanding of the concerned critical problem . (A) Available sources indicate that both cyclic and linear time computations were used in India, though their functions differed. While cyclic time occurs frequently in cosmological contexts, linear time appears only in historical texts . (B) Indian Sources amply indicate the existence of linear time sense, as manifested in genealogies, biographies and chronicles, where time-reckoning was recorded through generations, regnal years and eras . Thus Romila Thapar firmly supports the contention that historical consciousness did exist in early India .Decidedly, ancient Indians had a mature concept of history, which was marked by their own characteristics and which differed substantially from its modern counterpart.

The above survey has tried to draw attention to the sharp sense of history as possessed by ancient Indians, their efforts at writing history as possessed by ancient Indians, their efforts at writing history and the existence of numerous historical data in various sources, which, however, did not culminate in the production of any sound historiography. The probable reasons are not far to seek.

Firstly , along with the correct accounts, the legends of doubtful authenticity were also included in itihāsa solely because of their ethical appeal and didactic import. The latter were deemed important for their edifying value and not discarded on the charge of alleged historical inaccuracy, though the sharp sense of distinction between truth and falsehood is well attested by the Śatapatha Brāhmana evidence.

Secondly, itihāsa associated with the four vedas and esteemed as a veda by itself extracted so high veneration from the society that the genuine events existing within its fold required mostly to be wrapped up with further fictitious details so as to invest them with more sacred and sacrosanct character.

Thirdly, the supposed absence of writing for many centuries form India since the dissolution of the Indus civilization rendered oral tradition the only available repository for the preservation and continuance of all sorts of ancient myths, legends, ballads and stories, handed down through generations by memory-based recitations— an incredible feat of human intellect. This probably explains why the Vedic literature and the Dharmaśāstras are respectively known as Śruti and Smrti. After the reappearance of writing at a given period, many omissions and commissions naturally percolated into the written version, which disastrously filled itihāsa with distortions and consequently foiled all efforts at writing sober history.

Fourthly, much earlier than the birth of Chirst, religion in India had started adopting a pre-eminent role in all aspects of national life . This helped the vigorous growth of religious literature, which, though revealing many historical

events, eventually stood itself in the way of development of secular historical literature.

Fifthly, the general proneness of ancient people towards fancy, imagination, tale-telling, hyperbolic statements, fabrication, poetical embellishments, over-rating one's achievements in the interest of hero worship, excessive glorification of one's own tribe or nation at the cost of baseless defamation of rival groups etc., all reflected a psychological phenomenon which might have played a part in damaging the production of serious history in ancient India.

Whatever reasons might have been active, it must be pointed out that the greatest testimony of ancient Indian sense of history and her finest contribution to world historiography is her coinage of the very word itihāsa, [51] which embraces consciousness of past as well as awareness of correctness of events described. This two valuable attributes still constitute the bedrock of modern scientific sense of history.

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Early Maritime History of the Kalingas

Bhaskar Chatterjee

The territory of the Kalingas stretched by the sea-shore beginning from the junction of the Ganga and the Bay of Bengal. This information is contained in the Tirtha Yatra section of Vanaparvan of the Mahabharata. Pliny's (C.A.D. 23-79) account [1] also suggests that the northeastern part of Kalinga extended upto the Ganga. He furnishes us with the names of three tribes, namely, the Maccocalingae, the Calingae and the Modogalingae, according to Mccrindle's translation. A different version of the translation furnishes us with the names of the Mactocalingae, the calingae nearest to the sea, the Gangarid calingae and the Modogalinga. [2] Among these, the Modogalinga are stated to have settled in a Gangetic island. The Gangarid calingae lived, no doubt, in the part of Kalinga extending upto the territory of the Gangaridai, often referred to in the classical accounts . The Calingae nearest to the sea appears to be Kalinga proper . According to Pliny, the country of the Kalinga's stretched as far south as Sri Kakulam district, where the cape calingae and the town of Dandagula are placed by him . [3] Dandagula of Pliny is equated with Dantakura referred to in the Mahabharata and Dantapura of the Buddhist literature. It is identified with a place in the neighbourhood of Chicacole and Kalingpatam near the mouth of the river Languliaya. [4] From both the Mahabharata and the account of Pliny, we derive that the Kalinga people were introduced in different sections in association with different peoples. Our attention is also drawn to the terms Trikalinga often occurring in the epigraphic records. Scholars generally agree that it comprises northern, central and southern parts of a Kalinga that extended from the Ganges to the Godavari .[5] In course of time, Kalinga came to signify, in its limited sense only the southern part of Orissa and the northern part of Andhra. Because, Tosali formed a distinct unit with its northern and southern parts. While northern Tosali covered Puri district together with parts of Cuttack and Ganjam . Again, the northern part of Tosali came to be known as Utkala or Odra. The western part of Orissa including Sambalpur district and the ex-feudatory states of Patna, Sonpur, Bamra and Rairakhol formed part of Dakshina Kosala. [6] Ancient Orissa, except its western portion, lay mostly near the sea-shore and thus, the people of the country had a free access to the sea-trade . Foreign writers have thrown welcome light on the ports and market towns lying on the Orissan coast.

The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (sec. 62) states that beyond Masalia, "sailing toward the east and crossing the adjacent bay, there is the region of Dosarenie yielding the ivory known as Dosarenic" Dosarene may be derived from Sanskrit Dasarna, by which name two countries were known in the Mahabharata. In the Sabha Parvan (Ch. 32) mention is made of Dasarna in the west, that is equated with Eastern Malwa. Again, in the Sabha Parvan (ch. 30) we find

reference to Eastern Dasarna that formed part of the Chattisgarh district in the Central Provinces. [7] Schoff [8] has suggested the identification of Dasarna, evidently eastern one, with Orissa, on the ground that the river Dasaron mentioned in Ptolemy's Geography is identified with the Mahanadi. In both the Mahabharata and the Vishnu purana , the fame of ivory of this region has been referred to. The ivory was the most acceptable offering which the "king of the ordas" could take to the Pandu sovereign, [9] that is, Bhima who came to Eastern Dasarna as a conqueror (Sabhaparvan, Ch. 30) . The author of the Periplus, is , therefore, quite justified in suggesting the appreciation of Dosarenic ivory in international market in the background of Indo-Roman trade. It may be supposed that the forest regions of ancient Orissa were infested with elephants . The Hathigumpha Cave Inscription gives us to understand that the elephant corps formed one of the constituents of the powerful army in possession of Kharavela, king of Kalinga. The elephanttusk were presumably utilised by artisans and craftsmen to promote the ivory- industry . The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang [11] has informed us that Kalinga produced the great tawny wild elephants, which was much prized by the neighbouring provinces. In connection with foreign trade, it may be held that Indian ivory reached Rome by the land and sea-routes. "In Rome Ivory was used for making figures, furniture, book-covers, musical instruments and ornaments." [12]

The continuity of trade-relations between ancient Orissa and the Roman world are borne out by the discovery of a gold coin attributed to Maharaja Rajadhiraja Dharmadamadhara at the floor level of Sisupalgarh, assigned to the third century A.D [13] Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the excavations have brought to light the remains of a great well-planned city that flourished from the third century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. [14] The site has been identified by some scholars with Tosali on the ground of its proximity to Dhauli. [15] The Urbanisation in Dhauli or Tosali region might have been the result of its being a centre of trade and industry . On this ground, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the authour of thePeriplus in the first century A.D. actually meant Tosali by Dosarene [16]and not the whole of theOrissan coast.

Ptolemy (in the middle of the 2nd century A.D.) has referred to Paloura or Pakoura, [17] a town at the beginning of the Gangetic gulf (136^0 40 " east and 11^0 20" north). It is placed at 20" North of the apheterium where the vessels bound for Chryse Chersonese (Land of Gold) ceased to follow the littoral and entered the high sea. As pointed out by Gerini, in Ch. XIII , 7 of his introductory book, Ptolemy mentions Sada as the terminus of the sea-passage across the Gangetic Gulf or the Bay of Bengal from Paloura, effected in a direct line from west to east, and covering a distance of 13000 stadia. "It was, therefore, the first port touched at in his time by ships proceeding from India to the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal "[18] A village named Palur or Paloor, located just above the mouth of the Ganjam and close by Palur Bluff, better known to the navigators of the Bay of Bengal , appears to be the historical continuation of Ptolemy's Paloura town. [19] Ptolemy's apheterium or point of departure for ships bound for Chryse, should be located at Gopalpur, a little below the mouth of the Ganjam . As Sada (city) is located in a direct line from Paloura across the Bay of Bengal, the former appears to have been located near the Sados river identified with the Thate (sate)

river (Thate-chaung) flowing immediately to the north of the Sandowy River.[10]

Paloura of Ptolemy has been equated with Dantapura on linguistic grounds. The Dravidian word Ur meaning "city" has been traced by Sylvan Levi,[21] in Paloura.Pal in Paloura, according to Pizyluski,[22] admits of being treated either as a Dravidian word in the sense of "tooth" or as an Austro-Asiatic word meaning 'elephant's tusk". Sylvan Levi has interpreted Paloura to mean the "city of tooth" , that is Dantapura as known from the Pali texts.

In the Biddhist tradition, Dantapura is regarded as the capital of Kalinga[23] .According to the Pali Dathavanita,[24] composed by Dhammakitti, a tooth relic of the Buddha was deposited by king Brahmadatta of Kalinga with a magnificent stupa at Dantapura. The sacred tooth of the Buddah is said to have been taken to Ceylon from this place. The Mahagovinda Sutta of the Digha Nikaya (XIX .36) mentions Dantapura in Kalinga as one of the six famous cities of India. The Jaina Avasyaka Niryukti (1275) refers to Dantavakka as the ruler of Dantapura. The Uttaradhyayana Sutra (XVIII, 45-46) refers to the ivory of Dantapura and a merchant named Dhanamitra belonging to the city. The city is mentioned as Dantakura in the Mahabharata (Udyogaparya, XLVII). Pliny refers to Dandagula as a fortified place to the south of the promontory of Calingae lying at a distance of 625,000 steps or 3,645 stadia from the mouth of the Ganges. The Jirjingi plates [25] of Ganga Indravarman mention Dantapura as a city more beautiful than Amaravati, the city of gods. Dantapura is the same as Paloura of the Nagarjunikonda Inscriptions . [26]

While Paloura has been located by Gerini a little above the mouth of the Ganjam on geographical as well as historical grounds, it is not easy to trace the exact location of Dantapura. As pointed out by B.C. Sen , [27] a considerable tract of country including portions of the Midnapore district (where Dandabhukti was situated) and Kalinga was once known by same name having danta as one of its constituent elements and that some of its important towns were called Dantapura (Sanskrit) or Paloura (Telegu) some have identified Dantapura with Puri [28] .It has also been identified by some with Rajmahendri (Rajahmundry) on the Godavari. [29] According to Subba Rai, it is in the ruins of the fort of Dantapura, situated on the southern bank of the river Vamsadhara, three miles from Chicocole Road Station . Paloura of the Nagarjunikonda Inscriptions is also located near Chicacole. Sylvan Levi has searched for Paloura - Dantapura in the neighbourhood of Chicacole and Kalingapatam. G. Ramadas [30] has identified it with the present site of the fort of Dantavaktra standing on the way from Chicacole to Siddhantam.

There is least doubt that Paloura of Ptolemy occupied an enviable situation on the trade-route between India and south-east Asia. As we are informed by Ptolemy and Marinos of Tyre, the passage across the Bay of Bengal from Paloura to Sada was in a direct line and the journey from Paloura was undertaken for Goldenkhersonese via Sada and the city of Tamala. The importance of Paloura in Indo-Southeast Asian trade was most probably due to its natural resource in the form of ivory. The two components of the name Palour, namely, Pal and Our stand for'tooth' or 'elephant's tusk' and 'city' respectively . Apart from the Buddhist tradition regarding tooth-relic of the Buddha associated with Dantapura, one

can hardly miss the import of Pal (tooth or elephant's tusk) suggesting ivory as a characteristic commodity of trade exported from the port -town in question. From this point of view, it would not be unreasonable to locate Paloura in the region of Dosarene referred to in the Periplus.

Hiuen Tsang who visited Orissa in the seventh century A.D. found a trade-emporium on the coast in the northern part of the country. Travelling the distance of 700/ li or so in a south-westerly direction from Tamralipti, the Chinese pilgrim arrived at U-cha (Udra or Odra). Odra or Utkala, according to the tradition recorded in Kalidasa's Raghuvamsa (IV.38) , the Midnapore [31] and Soro grants [32] of Somadatta, comprised parts of Midnapore and Balasore districts. However, it is stated in Hiuen Tsang's account. "on the south - east frontiers of the country, on the borders of the Ocean, is the town Che-li-ta-lo about 20 li round. Here it is merchants depart for distant countries, and strangers come and go and stop here on their way. The walls of the city are strong and lofty. Here are found all sorts of a rare and precious articles".[33]

Che-li-ta-lo-ching is derived, according to Cunningham, from Sanskrit Charitrapura that is , the "town of embarkation" or "departure". [34] The location the sea-port has not yet been satisfactorily settled. Cunningham has identified it with present Puri. Fergusson has proposed its identification with Tamralipti, while Waddle locate it at Nendra, the site of an old port near the mouth of the Chitrotpala which is a branch of the river Mahanadi .[35] Some scholars have identified it with Chandrabhaga, which has been referred to as a famous port in the Oriya Mahabharata composed by Saraladasa (15th century A.D.) [36] Sylvan Levi [37] has equated Charitraputra, referred to by the Chinese pilgrim, as the port of embarkation , with Ptolemy's apheterium, that is, the point of departure for ships bound for Chryse .

We should consider whether the views expressed above stand on solid grounds. First, the identification with Tamralipti, as proposed by Fergusson,does not stand in view of the distance between the kingdom of Tamralipti and that of Odra indicated in the account of Hiuen Tsang itself. Second, Waddel's identification with Nendra stands on a doubtful assumption that Che-li-ta-lo is derived from the name of Chitrotpala, a branch of the Mahanadi. Third, the identification with Chandrabhaga, a port of doubtful existence, on the basis of an Oriya text of much later date can hardly be accepted. Fourth, Levi's suggestion equating Charitrapura with the apheterium stands on weak grounds. Because, Ptolemy's apheteium is located by the geographer himself at a little beyond the point of the Godavari, whereas Hiuen Tsang has clearly indicated the location of Charitrapura on the south - east frontier of Odra lying in the northern part of ancient Orissa. In order to accomodate the statement. "here it is merchants depart for distant countries" it may be held that Charitrapura served as the point of departure (apheterium) to Paloura or Dantapura, the capital of Kalinga. [38] However, N. K. Sahu appears to be more reasonable, when he supports the identification of the Chinese Che-li-ta-lo with Puri [39] for there is no other city - port on the sea-shore in south - eastern Orissa . Charitrapura probably maintained maritime intercourse with Ceylon, for standing over there Hiuen Tsang could think of the Tooth relic of the Buddha prescrived in that Island .[40] A copper Chinese coin of the 8th century A.D. has been found at Sirpur during the excavations.[41] This may be considered as a sub

standing evidence in support of commercial relation of Orissa with China .

The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea gives us to understand that the coast of Orissa was connected by coastal trade-route with the coast of the Gangetic delta, on the one hand, and the Coromandal and Malabar coasts, on the other— Gangetic spikenard, malabathrum and muslin from Tamralipti, and ivory from Dosarene or Tosali used to be transhipped to Kaveripattanam for onward transmissionn to Barygaza on the western coast that was maintaining brisk trade with the Mediternean world . Another route standing from Dosarene (Orissa) led to Suvarnabhumi (Chryse) via the port on the mouth of the Ganges. It was by the time of Ptolemy that a direct trade-route connected Orissa with the coast of Burma across the Bay of Bengal. Paloura Dantapura was connected directly with Sada. While Dantapura is known to have been the capital of Kalinga, Charitrapura in the days of Hiuen Tsang served as the port of embarkation (Samudraprasthanapattana). The latter port is stated to have been rich with rare and precious commodities. The natural resources and industries of Orissa suggest that in addition to ivory, clot.., various types of cereals, rice, wheat, barley, salt, incense, timber, conchshells, stone and iron-products, diamonds etc. were exported from this country. [42] The Kalinga varieties of cloth and rice find mention in the Manasollasa.

Spices such as cloves, spikenard and other fine spices which were the native products of Java and Sumatra attracted the traders from Kalinga since very early times. The Chinese referred to Java and other islands of the Archipelago as kling, an abreviated form of Kalinga. It presupposes intimate trade and commercial relationsof Kalinga with those countries where ultimately some groups of Kalinga traders might have settled. [43] The Annals of the Tang period (A.D. 600-906) mention Ho-ling as the most important kingdom of Java. Ho-ling is supposed to be the Chinese transcription of Kalinga. The adoption of such a name was probably due to the large-scale settlement of the people from Kalinga in that part of Java.[44] From the expression Tri - Kalinga, which often occurs in the epigraphic records of Orissa, was derived the name of the town Telangana and "employed to designate the country Kalinga proper on the western side of the Gulf of Bengal , as well as, the country of Mons of Telengs (Talaings) on the opposite shore, which had been colonised by them." [45]

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In Search Of Ancient Tamralipta

Animesh Kanti Pal

(I)

Tamralipta was the name of a Kingdom of ancient eastern India . It was the name of a city as well. And, there was also a port named Tamralipta [1]. The city and the port might have been on the same site but the port could also be slightly apart, for natural reasons. In ancient times, a city had to be very close to a source of portable water where as, the ocean going vessels had to depend on the tidal cycle for getting in and out of a port. That is why, the city might have been situated close to a river carrying sweet water and the port handling the ocean going vessels, by the side of a tidal creek . It should be kept in mind that we are considering the case of an ancient port when the available shipping technology was of a primary nature . The wooden vessels weighed not more than thirty tons or there about .

All traces of the kingdom and the city and the port were considered lost without a clue to its whereabouts . But in ancient and mediaeval literature references to the port and the city occur often enough, specially, in the travelogues of the Chinese pilgrims, notably of Hiuen Tsang, Fa-Hien and I-tsing and in the memoirs of a lone Korean . But Tamralipta could be older than the Mauryan empire. It could have existed before Alexandar of Macedon and even before the birth of Buddha . [2]

Even if there were no hard evidence, people believed that the modern town of Tamluk could have been identical with the lost city and the famous port .[3] But in Tamluk the temple of Bargabhima on a raised ground was the only notable relic of a bygone era . Some claimed it to be a Buddhist Vihara [4] and yet, no one cared to dig at the site and find out the truth .

(II)

After India became independent, an undergraduate college was established in Tamluk and Paresh Chandra Dasgupta came to teach history there . He picked up a terracotta Yaksini stauette from a way side pond, which later reached a museum in Oxford in a rather dubious way. However, Paresh Chandra Dasgupta later became the first Director of Archaeology of the government of West Bengal . He fervently believed that Tamluk was Tamralipta or it could be situated quite close [5] . He arranged to have a plaster copy of the Yaksini and put it on display at the West Bengal State Museum at Calcutta.[6] To Dasgupta the Yaksini was a very important pointer to the location of the city of Tamralipta . After his death, quite a few objects of archaeological interest

have been discovered in the same area and most of them are on display in a small museum in Tamluk [7] These objects certainly prove the antiquity of the place. These may also be the evidences of the existence of Tamralipta but they are hardly conclusive. No one has yet found even a small trace of a port in or around the town.

(III)

A port which handled the ocean going vessels for atleast a millenium could not just disappear without leaving the slightest clue . May be, we have not looked into the likely places because our entire attention is focussed on Tamluk alone. The most likely place for the location of an ancient port could be on a tidal creek long silted up . There is a parallel example of such a location. The ancient dry dock at Lothal in Gujrat is now far away from any kind of water front. The brick lining of the dry dock is still intact although it was once totally covered up by thick layers of silt. Apparently the place looks unlikely for the establishment of a port and yet, the magnificient dry dock of the Indus Valley Civilization is still there at the end of a dried up tidal creek [8] Can we hope to find such a silted up creek close to the modern town of Tamluk ? Such a place may be found not very far from Tamluk .

In fact, the place was identified as a dried up tidal creek and the possibility of a port being situated there had also been suggested in Midnapore District Gazetteer itself [9] But none had ever considered the possibility of the suggested port at the tidal creek of being the famous ancient port of Tamralipta . A person who has visited Lothal and studied its topography minutely may understand the feasibility of the location of a port of the ancient age . Only a tidal creek could assure a safe harbour, provided the channel had the required depth for easy navigation .

There is another important angle, the angle of security and stability. The bank of a river like Rupnarayan or Hooghly could be highly unsuitable for the construction of brick built permanent structures like a dock or a jetty etc. In the ancient times, people knew how to use bricks to ensure the permanence of a structure at the water front but the river banks were always unstable and uncontrollable. A tidal creek on the other hand, was idealy protected from the vagaries of the yearly onslaught of a swollen river. But the water level rose and fell alternately with the high and low tide, facilitating the entry and the exit of the vessels . With a dock and jetty, loading and unloading could be easier to handle . Moreover, with the help of the low tide the undesireable water could be flushed out from the brick built area of the dry dock, where necessary repairs could be undertaken. For such obvious and practical reasons the port of Tamralipta could have been built not on a river bank but on the bank of a sufficiently deep creek .

(IV)

We may consult the District Gazetteer for the whereabout of the tidal creek . - "Six miles to the South of Moyna there is depression about eight or nien miles extent, which was formerly subject to the overflow of tidal water .....The depression was perhaps a creek of the sea, which in course of time silted up . This supposition is confirmed by the discovery of traces of human occupation at a depth of 16 feet below the surface in the villages of Tildah, Jalchak and others, which stand near the depression . It is possible that there was once a port on its bank" .[10]

This, in brief, was the sum total of the observations of L.S.S. O'Malley in 1911 . Thereafter, the entire attitude during almost a whole century was nothing but sheer apathy and neglect so far as Tamralipta was concerned .

And Tamralipta was the peak of our ancient glory, a reminder of our past greatness and a witness to our millenia old maritime trade with the lands beyond the seas . How was it protected ? What military measures were taken for ensuring the adequate protection of the city and the port ? Marauding armies with unfriendly intentions could be a nagging problem because the city and the port fabulously rich could always allure the plundering conquerors . Certainly, an impregnable security system was very much called for. But only an army could not be enough because other armies of the north and the south could be bigger and mightier . Tamralipta deserved something unique to protect itself . A well thought out system of deep ditches and a great fort encircled by deeper circular lakes guarded by war ships could be the answer to the security problems of the city and the port. And Tamralipta was hardly invaded or was under alien occupation . The relevant literatures seldom refer to such a situation . Only the boastful proclamations of the great conquering Kings once or twice mention its name in passing. The reason of its impregnability could have been the naval nature of its defence system in an estuarine area where elephants and cavalry were of no use and the lingering rainy season was a natural repellent to the land based conquerors . Tamralipta might have died a slow death for natural and internal reasons. If all these seem to be empty and wild guesses only, it must also be conceded that there are no contrary views available either in the literatures or archaeological evidences .[11]

But an impregnable fort surrounded by the circular lakes and situated not very far either from the tidal creek or from the present town of Tamluk does exist, although in ruins . Again a quotation from the Gazetteer will be quite eloquent-"Moyna a village in Tamluk sub-division situated nine miles South West of Tamluk .It contains a police station and an old fort called Moynagarh situated on the western bank of Kasai, a little above its junction with Kaliaghai. The fort was evidently constructed by excavating two great moats almost lakes, so that it practically stands on an island, within an island. The earth of the first thrown inwards so as to form a raised embankment of considerable breadth, which having become overgrown with dense bamboo clumps was impervious to any projectile that could have been brought against it 100 years ago . Inside the larger island, the outer edge of which is this embankment, another lake has been excavated with the earth thrown inwards, forming a large and well raised island about 200 yards square " [12]

About the builder of the fort the narration is rather vague . The present occupants, the Bahubalindras, came after the Maratha invaders . Lausen, the hero of the mediaeval narrative poem Dharmamangal was described as the Lord of Moynagarh but no poet described him as the founder of the fort nor the uniqueness of the water encircled fort ever emphasised . The likely conclusions therefore, might be that —

1. the fort called Moynagarh had certainly existed in the mediaeval period ,
2. it might have existed much earlier,
3. it could be a port or the very centre of a naval security system backed by war ships,
4. no local cheif, no feudatory King could

ever afford the construction or maintenance of such a mighty and impregnable defensive stronghold,

5. except Tamralipta there was no other principality in the neighbourhood which needed such an elaborate defence system.

(V)

In India, if some one some day stumbles upon some old relics by chance, an obscure news item may come out in the papers among the news from mofussil . After a day or two the matter is forgotten and no one except a very few care about it . Same thing has happened to the relics found in the vicinity of Tamluk several times . The latest example is the following news item which I quote in full [13] - " Tildagunj to be excavated for Mauryan relics - Statesman News Service-Calcutta - September 8 - Tildagunj in Midnapore has been identified by the Directorate of Archaeology as its next site of exploration. Senior officials of the Directorate said artefacts relating to Mauryan period are likely to be excavated from the site .

Located downstream of Kansabati river, Tildagunj is expected to yield a rich collection of relics, as some archaeologists believe, the place was support area of Tamralipta now Tamluk .

The bustling hamlet finds mention in Buddhist texts as well as in travelogues of Fa hien , the Chinese traveller .

A team comprising of geologists and archaeologists will conduct the preliminary investigation. Exploration work is likely to start after the monsoons.

Though archaeologists are sure of unearthing Mauryan artefacts from the proposed excavation site they apprehend problems from other quarters . The mounds under which the relics are thought to be located are inhabited by villagers . Excavation work will be slow unless the people are rehabilitated elsewhere .

Officials are looking for ways to explore the site without displacing Tildagunj residents . The Geological Survey or India will be contacted to help locate the Mauryan relics without disturbing the structures on the top soil .

The rains, a senior official said, are expected to reveal the inner layers of the mound . This would enable the archaeologists to detect the relics . After inspecting the relics already discovered at the site the archaeologists feel the place was inhabited by a prosperous community ".

The reason for the quotation of the entire news item is the source from which it was collected . It is quite clear that the Directorate of Archaeology itself inspired this particular news item . It also proves that after almost a century of inaction the gurdians of our archaeological assets are trying to investigate the site at Tildah which in their opinion 'was support area of Tamralipta, now Tamluk'. The fact that there is a possibility of finding the traces of an ancient port in this region as observed by O'Malley is not mentioned any where in this report . And yet, the Directorate is confident that 'the place was inhabited by a prosperous community'. How that prosperity was achieved in such an obscure place could be a moot point to ponder over . O'Malley had reasons to believe that there could be a port in the vicinity . On the other hand, no one has found any trace of a port capable of handling seafaring

ships in or around Tamluk proper yet .

Mauryan artefacts were discovered earlier also from the vicinity of Tamluk town .[14] but these were no conclusive proof of the existence of Tamralipta which was a city with a port of considerable proportions .[15] At least some remnants of an ancient city need to be unearthed in Tamluk proper before identifying it as Tamralipta.

Finally, it appears that the Directorate of Archaeology is hopeful of finding some Mauryan artefacts from their proposed site of exploration at Tildagunj . If O'Malley was right, the proposed exploration might lead to the unearthing of an ancient port on the bank of a silted up tidal creek. Hopefully, it might also lead up to the unearthing of the city of Tamralipta itself . It is also possible that nothing will happen for this reason or that in the near future and the Directorate will again revert to their usual indolence to say the least .

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2. Ibid . Also Tamralipta Upabhasa o Janagosthi Samskriti Dr. Sukumar Maity , Vol. 1-1989 and Vol. 2-1991 . There are many relevant informations in this book .

3. Ibid. "Little is now left to mark the past glory of Tamluk". p. - 267.

4. Ibid.

5. Vide - Pratnatatwer Aloke Tamralipta, Paresh Chandra Dasgupta Smarak Grantha . Nikhil Banga Sahitya Sammelan, 1974 .

6. Catalogue of the West Bengal State Museum , Calcutta.

7. Tamluk Museum Publications.

8. The author had an opportunity to Visit Lothal in October 1995 and was greatly impressed by the skillful excavations of the site .

9. Midnapore , O'Malley ,p. - 252 and also p. 266 - "Hiuen Tsang in the seventh century A.D. said that it lay near an inlet of the sea and was 10 (about two miles) li in circuit ".

10. Ibid . p. - 252 .

11. Vide , Geography of Old Bengal , Manmohan Chakravarty , J.A.S.B. 1908 pp 289 -91 .

12. Midnapore , O'Malley, p. 251 .

13. This news item was published in The Statesman, Calcutta, on 9th september, 1996 .

14. Vide - Pratnatatwer Aloke Tamralipta .

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LOST FORTUNE OF DACCA IN THE 18TH CENTURY

Mahammad Shafi

The death of Aurangzeb brought the signal of the collapse of the mighty Mughal empire that was formed and consolidated by its rulers for centuries . With the decline of the Imperial authority at Delhi, Bengal like some other distant provinces might go to disintegration and decay, but for its able ruler , it emerged as an autonomous political entity. During the later part of Aurangzeb's reign, the fiscal administration of the subah was in the lands of Murshid Quli Khan . He was the diwan of the two provinces of Bengal and Orissa, while Azimus -Shan was the nazim of the subah . But in due course the relationship between the nazim and the diwan because strained . The diwan's gradual rise in Imperial favour increased the resentment of the nazim . The diwan paid due respect to the nazim, but the latter became so much zealous that he was even thinking of killing the former . To safeguard himself against any further attempts on his life, the diwan resolved to transfer the diwani headquarters from Dacca . [1] He discussed the move with his revenue officials and selected Muxadabad where "news of all the four quarters of the subah could be easily procurable, and which, ... was situated in the centre of the important places of the subah ". [2] Another reason for selecting Muxidabad was to control the English traders on the Ganges from the new capital . [3]

Before taking such an important decision , Murshid Quli did not take permission either from the nazim or subahdar or from the emperor, though his status was subordinate to them . When Aurangzeb got the news of Azimus-Shan's attempt on diwan's life, he at once wrote a letter to the nazim on the following purport : " Kartalab Khan (Murshid Quli Khan) is an officer of the emperor. In case of hair-breadth injury in person or property happens to him, I will avenge it on you my boy ".[4] Immediately after, the Emperor directed Azimus-Shan to retire to Bihar .[5] leaving Bengal altogether . Azimus-Shan left his son Farruk-Siyar at Dacca and began to stay himself at Patna from 1703 . [6] From now on, Dacca was deprived of both the diwani and nizamat headquarters . At the same time it also lost its former importance as a strategic base for operation against the Maghs and the Portuguse who were creating havoc on the base of the Bay of Bengal . [7] Dacca was also much less centrally situated than Murshidabad . Murshidabad was situated on the main line of trade communication between the Upper Ganges valley and the Bay of Bengal along which the treasures of India were now begining to find their way to the European settlements on the Hugli . [8] Murshid Quli Khan also took with him from Dacca all the revenue officials and some of the richest bankers and merchants who settled in different parts of the

district and they played a dominant role in the regeneration of commercial activities in Murshidabad. The family of Jagat Seth is worth mentioning here.[9] The history of Dacca from this time up to the acquisition of diwani by the English Company in 1765, presented little worthy of note. The subsequent naibs appeared to have resided for the most part of the year at Murshidabad, while Dacca was being administered by the deputies.[10] Dacca lost its provincial status and so its further growth had been checked in the 18th century. Now Murshidabad rose to prominence from a small market to a provincial capital at the cost of Dacca. With Murshid Quili Khan, a large number of merchants deserted Dacca. Though Dacca still remained a traditional centre of fine cotton, the Armenian competition as well as high local taxation made Dacca unpopular. On the other hand Murshidabad became increasingly attractive and offered an alternative scope for the supply of cottons.[12] The transfer of Bengal's Capital caused the growth of cotton industry at Murshidabad.

Dacca enjoyed undisturbed glory since 1610, when Islam Khan made it the Capital of Bengal. It served as the administrative headquarters and resident of the subahders of Bengal. It also became one of the chief centres of commerce from that time up to the beginning of the 18th century, except for a few years from 1639 to 1659, when Prince Shuja shifted the Capital of Bengal to Rajmahal. The very position of Dacca which was well connected by water in the neighbouring areas led to her rapid growth. This increased commercial activities met the supply and consumption requirements of the town. The growth of this town attracted artisans, manufacturers and other professional classes to settle there. With the establishment of the capital of the Bengal subahdars, the importance of Dacca was further increased.[13] Foreign travellers like Manrique, Manuchi and Tavernier visited Dacca in 1640, 1663 and 1666 respectively, recorded the commercial prosperity and found a large number of European merchants there. Besides the Europeans, the Armenians and the Muslim merchants from Arabia with the assistance of local merchants, made it a centre of business in the eastern part of the province. The cotton and the weaving goods of Dacca formed the major part of exports from Bengal to Europe. From 1660 onwards up to the end of the 17th century, Dacca reached to the peak of its glory.

The transfer of capital led to the development of trade and commerce in Murshidabad which attracted people of all walk of life. As headquarters of the province, the zamindars and others from all over the subha including east Bengal used to visit Murshidabad for paying their revenue and attending the annual ceremony of puniyah.[14] The bankers and other financial offices now opened their offices in the new capital city. As Murshidabad was situated on the bank of the Ganges, which was also connected with Hugli and Calcutta by water-route as well, its trade was obviously to flourish. Calcutta now developed as a busy trading centre that attracted treders from all over the province. So the traders of East Bengal during this transitional period thought of moving towards Murshidabad with an ultimate aim at Calcutta. It was safe to trade or to establish factories at Calcutta under the English protection. Thus the transfer of the Capital of Bengal was a great loss to Dacca.

Soon Dacca was reduced to a subordinate position for the transfer of diwani and nizamat

establishments This was obviously followed by the transfer of a number of officials attached with those establishment, with their large staff of clerks, treasurers, peons and some of the mansabdari contingents . It also led to the transference of a market for provisions and supplies from Dacca to Murshidabad . This followed some inevitable administrative consequences for the two cities . The shifting of capital automatically drove landed and trading interests from Dacca . The people who used to come to Dacca either to secure privileges or for any interest of help and advice from the provincial officers, began to leave the city and turned towards Murshidabad . [15] But the greatest blow to Dacca came from the establishment of panchotrabandar [16] at Murshidabad, which took away not only half of the jurisdiction of the Nawab of Dacca but became a signal for her economic ruin . [17]

On the other hand the growth of Calcutta was remarkable . Within twentyfive years since its establishment in 1690, Calcutta became the major centre of production and commerce . The bulk of Indian population presumably came to Calcutta in the wake of men who had settled there to do business with East India Company or with individual Englishman. Such men seemed to have found in the Company's government, for all of its obvious faults, a respect for the rights of property which made Calcutta relatively attractive place to live in, compared to cities under the protection of the Nawabs of Bengal . [18] This fact is also confirmed by Salimullah, who observes : " The mild and equitable conduct of the English in their settlement gained them the confidence and esteem of the Natives, which joined to the consideration of the privileges and immunities which the Company enjoyed induced merchants to remove thither with their families, so that in a short time, Calcutta became an extensive and populous city . [19] While Suart records that "both the European and the native merchants who were oppressed every year with increasing vaxations by the rapacity of the Nawab enjoyed a degree of freedom which was unknown elsewhere . That the city in consequence increased yearly in extent, beauty and riches . " [20] Long before Calcutta became the capital of British Bengal, more and more of the Nawab's subjects had been attrached to settle there . [21] Its inhabitants, besides the English, came from places as far off as Dacca, sought employment and protection of the English settlement against the excesses of local officials .

Thus the fame, glory and beauty that Dacca achieved in the 17th had been lost in the 18th century due to the rise, growth and importance of Murshidabad and Calcutta on the western side of Bengal .

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Insurgents of Barabhum in Jungle Mahals and the Creation of Manbhum district in Bengal, 1832-33.

Sudipta Mukherjee (Chakraborty)

Much light has been thrown on the first armed-resistance against the British in the western part of Midnapore district immediately after the grant of diwani to the British in 1765. The large tract of this western portion of Midnapore was known as Manbhum till recently and the upheaval of its tribal people were termed by the British as the Chuar rebellion.Due to this so called Chuar rebellion in the areas of Manbhum, the English Company, for a tighter control over this unregulated area, created the district of Jungle Mahals in 1805 . After the creation of this new district it seemed that the peace had returned to this area at least for a period of nearly 30 years. But it was not so and it was disturbed due to the Ganga Narayan Hangama (riot) in Barabhum Parganah, resulting in the creation of Manbhum in 1833. In the present article, an attempt has been made to show how there were arguments and counter-arguments among the government officials in transferring the areas from Midnapore for the creation of this new district of Manbhum. It is surprising to note that on this question, the historians on Midnapore so far had spent scant regard whatsoever, though it is a matter of great importance to know how the district was sliced down gradually.

In 1805, The Regulation XVIII was passed by which the tracts of Jungle Mahals situated in the districts of Birbhum, Burdwan and Midnapore were separated from the jurisdiction of the magistrates and placed under the jurisdiction of Magistrate of Jungle Mahals. The district of Jungle Mahals was composed of 25 Parganahs and Mahals, of which fifteen including Panchet were transferred from Birbhum ;[2] Senpahari, Shergarh and Bishnupur from Burdwan and Chatna, Barabhum, Manbhum, Supur, Ambikanagar, Simlapal and Bhalaidiha were transferred from Midnapore .[3] For administrative convenience, Bankura became the headquarters and Henry Strachey was transferred from Midnapore, who became the first Magistrate of Jungle Mahals.[4]

The area of Jungle Mahals was brought under closer control during the next 25 years. So far as the revenue settlement was concerned, things seemed to have been settled down to a great extent, though the Panchet zamindar was almost constantly in arrears . But the disturbances broke out in Barabhum on the question of a disputed succession. During the last quarter of the century, Vivek Narayan—the zamindar of Barabhum died leaving two sons, Raghunath and Lachman Sing.[5] The latter though younger by birth, was the son of the elder wife or Pat Rani and as such claimed to succeed his father. But his claim was rejected and was driven out by a military force only to be died in Midnapore jail.

On Raghunath's death in 1798, a similar dispute broke out among his sons - Ganga Govind and Madhab Singh, but it was finally settled in favour of Ganga Govind. Within a short time Madhab Singh settled his differences with his brother and became the diwan of Ganga Govind. But this made him a direct rival of Ganga Narayan, the son of his uncle Lachman. Diwan Madhab Singh soon became unpopular among the people for the imposition of additional taxes as well as for his money-lending business. All these things culminated his murder on April 2, 1832 by Ganga Narayan Singh. After murdering Madhab Singh, Ganga Narayan with the whole body of his ghatwals , marched to Barabazar, the munshiff's cutchery was attacked, the bazar plundered and the zamindar was obliged, out of fear, to conceede all Ganga Narayan's demands [6] as his kharposh . On the following day, Ganga Narayan once more burnt down the police thana of Barabazar.

Ganga Narayan exerted much influence on his followers as there already existed discontent among the tribal masses. Russell - the Jungle Mahals Magistrate pointed out that the disturbances occurred out of malice towards Madhab Singh. He was unpopular among the ghatwals and the Bhumijs. Besides the zamindar of Barabhum was totally deficient in managing the state affairs and so his son too. Naturally the management of the zamindari had fallen entirely on Madhab Singh - the zamindar's step-brother. Madhab had dispossessed Ganga Narayan of his lands which the latter had inherited from his father - Lachman Singh. Consequently the enemity between the two became stronger day by day.[7] Ganga Narayan felt that his father had the legal claim to succeed to the zamindari, which had been denied to him. In 1794, when Lachman Singh came to age, he challenged the decision of the British. He collected some tribal supporters and challenged the British authorities. But at last he was arrested by the British and while in prison, he died in Midnapore jail.[8] This led to the natural resentment in the mind of Ganga Narayan, who thought himself unjustly deprived of the zamindari of his ancestor by the British ruler. So he developed a close relation with the tribal Bhumijs. In due course of time, he became not only cruel and cunning but a man of violent temper.

The news of the outbreak of "serious distrubances" was received by Russell - the Magistrate of Jungle Mahals, from the daroga of Barabhum . But the local authorities could not cope with the outbreak. The irregular local forces became rather sympathetic to their fellow tribesmen. On his march to Barabazar, Russell stranded at Puncha when he heard the news with much alarm that "nearly every Bhumij, whether Ghatwal or Ryot ,had by this time joined Ganga Narayan who announced his determination to clear the country of police thanas as far as the great Beneras road". [9] Thus what originally appeared to be a private feud, assumed the features of an organised and extensive insurrection.

But Russell did not relax his efforts and reached at Barabazar from where he sent some messages to the ghatwals for seizing Ganga Narayan in person. But this became a total failure. On the other hand, the insurgents surrounded the camp of Russell from all sides. On 14th May, Ganga Narayan attacked the troops of Russell.[10] They came with horrible shouts, yells, beating of drums directly upon the British troops. Some of them danced with large swords on their hands "in an attitude of defiance". [11] But at last the

rebels were overpowered who took to flight. Russell then tried to exert his influence over the tribal people, declaring Ganga Narayan a rebel and offering a reward of Rs. 1,000 for his arrest, dead or alive. [12] He also issued directions to the ghatwals accordingly. Meanwhile Ganga Narayan had established contact with the neighbouring zamindar of Kharswan.

During the operation, sickness broke out in Company's troops and so the Bengal government urged the troops to withdraw. Thus the military operation of theCompany against Ganga Narayan became unsuccessful. On the way, the Company's supplies had been looted and some sepoys were wounded. Ganga Narayan had escaped attack and all attempts to win the ghatwals had failed. Moreover the attitude of the zamindars of Panchet and Manbhum was very suspicious. The Pathkum zamindar openly appealed for help to the zamindar of Singhbhum against the British. The daroga of Pathkum emphatically declared that both ghatwals and zamindars were in league with the rebels. Thus on repeated order from Bengal government, the Company's troops retreated from Barabazar to Bankura. [13]

In the absence of the Company's forces, Ganga Narayan once more assembled his followers and advanced to plunder to the east of Barabhum, the estates of Akro, Ambikanagar, Raipur, Shyamsundarpur and Fulkusma. The Bhumijs of these areas together with Silda and Koilapal joined the insurgents resulting a general state of disturbance. [14]The forces of Ganga Narayan thus traversed the whole of the eastern flank of the Jungle Mahals from Puncha to Fulkusma. Then the insurgents entered the zamindari of Panchet, plundering Gopalnagar, Puncha and Bagda on the way.

The Company's government thus resumed to arms against the insurgents . By the middle of August, with troops in position of Bankura, Puncha and Keshargarh in the north, the Company's troops holding lines from Silda to Dhalbhum in the south, encouraged the Burdwan Commissioner Braddon to act offensively against the insurgents of Barabhum. Meanwhile, the rebels withdrew to Barabhum, causing much alarm that "On the sound of the Nakra or drum being heard, the inhabitants of every village desert the place and leave their all to be pillaged, without waiting to learn whether many or few of the enemy are near ". [15] However by 19 August, the Burdwan Commissioner crossed the flooded Kasai river and reached Chakultore, where he had the first skirmish with Ganga Narayan who fled to Sagma to the south-west.

Ganga Narayan now retired to Dhalbhum, where he forced the zamindar to appoint his nominees as ghatwals of Dompara, Dhadka and Baridih. So during the absence of Ganga Narayan from Barabhum, Braddon's forces advanced to reoccupy Barabazar and this was actually done. A thana was established at Balrampur to quell the future disturbances. In November, Dent assumed charge at Chakultore and offered a free pardon to all except Ganga Narayan and some ten of his leading followers. Then Dent advanced to Bandhadih - the headquarters of Ganga Narayan and gained possession of the place. He made elaborate military operations in every directions to break up and destroy or to secure surrender of disorganised forces of Ganga Narayan. Ganga Narayan who had retired to Dhalbhum met a tragic death for attempting to establish among the Kols his reputation as a great military leader by attacking the thakur of Kharswan. The news was so unexpected that the thakur entitled to the

reward up to the tune of Rs. 5000; but ultimately it was not given, as he admitted that the intensive military operations of the Company since 19 January had been indirectly responsible for the downfall of Ganga Narayan. [17]

The Bhumij uprising in Jungle Mahals district was undoubtedly due to the family feud in Barabhum zamindari , but the general discontent of the tribal people under the pressure from the imposition of foreign rule, could not be altogether ruled out. The district of Jungle Mahals was created in 1805 but after 1823 the collectorship of the district was made a definite office,[18] the Magistrate - Collector had his headquarters at Bankura. So it could not be possible for the Magistrate to keep an effective control over Barabhum and Dhalbhum from so distant a land when there was no modern means of communication. Moreover the Magistrates had no incli nation to undertake tours in different parganahs[19]

The rising of the Bhumijs in Jungle Mahals alarmed the British authorities in India. The state of things disclosed that it was like the Kol insurrection that already found in Chotanagpur proper. In consequence thereof, it was already recommended "to exclude the area from the operation of the general regulations and form it into a separate jurisdiction superintendent by the political agent for the South-West Frontier as Commissioner acting under the special rules which might from time to time be prescribed for the said area by the Government and aided by one or more assistants as might be requisite for due administration of the tracts placed under the authority."[20]

For the regulation of this unregulated area, the Bengal Government had received several proposals that the parganahs of Chotanagpur and the adjacent areas of Jungle Mahals including Midnapore district might be put under a separate administration. The Government therefore directed the Joint-Commissioner to submit a detailed plan for the South-West Frontier. They were further directed to consult the Commissioners of Patna, Cuttack and Burdwan divisions, as well as the Magistrates of Bankura, Midnapore and Sherghati. [21] The Government also called upon Wilkinson to comment upon the points of dissent with the Joint Commissioners' proposals which Dent had submitted in January 1833.

After making a proper survey, D'Oyly - the Midnapore Magistrate had suggested that only Dhalbhum, the largest parganah of his district should be incorporated in the new jurisdiction. He argued that eleven jungle estates of Midnapore, lying east of Dhalbhum, were readily accessible for revenue collection. Thus he ignored the fact that several of those estates had the centres of great tribal unrest. Dick-the judge of Midnapore, on the other hand, argued that any portion of Midnapore should not be placed under the new jurisdiction. He strongly opposed the idea of including Midnapore within the tribal belt, because the people of the jungly paraganahs were gradually becoming more acquainted with the laws of the country .[22] Russell, the Magistrate of Jungle Mahals commented that Koilapal, Barabhum and Pathkum were the most turbulent areas with their Bhumij population . So he recommended for inclusion of those three estates within the unregulated area.

On September 6, 1833, Dent forwarded his comment to the government. About the areas of Midnapore to be included in the new regulation Dent pointed out that the government had already decided to include Dhalbhum in the new admin

istration. He also did not want to include some other mahals in order to form a jurisdiction large enough for the services of an additional assistant. From the district of Jungle Mahals, he proposed that in the new arrangement, the parganahs and mahals like Barabhum, Begunkodar, Baghmundi, Halsa, Jhalda, Kashipur, Koilapal, Pathkum, Fulkusma, Shyamsundarpur and Torang may be included. If these mahals with Dhalbhum were proved insufficient for a separate jurisdiction, some other mahals like Raipur, Manbhum and Silda might also be included within this area. [23]

Dent's final report on the Bhumij Revolt made specific suggestions for the future management of the tribal areas . He made suggestions for recovering the arrears of revenue and the zamindar's private debts. He also suggested the scheme for the maintenance of the younger brother of the chief families, so as to avoid future unrest. The sale of the estates in these areas were prohibited for the recovery of private debts. Dent also made provisions for the division of the estate lands for the support of the zamindar's relations, priests etc. Such grants, Dent suggested, should be made by the zamindar in consultation with his relations. In case of differences, it was suggested that a neighbouring zamindar or an European officer might work as an arbitrator. Dent also suggested that Bengali, the local language of the hill areas, should be substituted for Persian in all public offices and he requested the government to open a school for the children of the jungle zamindars. [24]

On the suggestions of Dent, the Bengal Government proceeded to make necessary arrangements. The Government announced on December 22, 1833 that "certain tracts of country now included in the district of Ramghur, Jungle Mahals and Midnapore, the nature of disturbances which recently prevailed in various parts of those districts, and the character of inhabitants had rendered it expedient to separate these tracts .[25]

This recommendation was given effect to, and embodied in regulation XIII of 1833, by which the district of Jungle Mahals was broken up and its Diwani-Adalat was abolished. The estates of Senpahari, Shergarh and Bishnupur were transferred to Burdwan and a new district called Manbhum with its headquarters at Manbazar was constituted. The new district included , besides the defunct Manbhum district of Purulia sadar and Dhanbad Subdivision, the estates of Supur, Raipur, Ambikanagar, Chatna, Simlapal, Maheswara, Bhelaidiha, Shyamsundarpur and Dhalbhum. During the time of its origin, it included Bankura town also, but in 1834, Bankura was transferred to Burdwan.[26] But at the same time, the area of Manbhum was withdrawn from a regular system of administration amalgamated into the South-West Frontier Agency and placed under an officer called the Principal Assistant to the Agent of the Governor-General for the South-West Frontier Agency.[27]

The Government of Bengal thus decided the fate of the tribal people of this disturbed hilly area and appointed Captain Wilkinson[28] as the political Agent of the South-West Frontier on a monthly salary of Rs. 3000. It was decided that the political Agent would be assisted by a number of "First Asistants" with a salary of Rs. 1000 per month and a junior Assistant, would look into the affairs of the district. It is noteworthy to mention that for the administration of newly created district of Manbhum, no civilian officer was appointed , instead the administration was en

trusted in the hands of the military officers for suppressing future unrest. The chief exeuctive officer of Manbhum district, who was known as Principal Assistant to the Governor-General's Agent, came to be known as Deputy Commissioner[29] with more powers than the District Magistrates of other districts of Bengal.

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2. The following mahals were transferred from Birbhum : Panchet, Baghmundi, Begunkodar, Katras, Halsa, Jhalda, Jharia, Jaipur, Mukundpur, Nawagarh, Chutty, Torang, Tundi, Nagarkeari, and Pathkum. - Jha, J. C. , The Bhumij Revolt, (Delhi, 1967), p. 29.

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6. Ibid, pp. 62-63.

7.Jha, The Bhumij Revolt, pp. 114-115.

8.Letter from Dent to the Company, September 4, 1833.

9. Quoted in Jha, The Bhumij Revolt, p. 69.

10. BDG, Manbhum, XXVIII, p. 63.

11. India Gazette, May 19, 1832 .

12. Letter from Russell to the Company May 14, 1832.

13. Jha, The Bhumij Revolt, pp. 78-79 .

14. BDG, Manbhum, XXVIII, p. 63.

15. Bengal Harkara, August 25, 1832 .

16. Letter from Chetan Singh to Wilkinson, February 7, 1833 .

17. Letter from Wilkinson to the Government, February 10, 1833.

18. Bengal Revenue Consultations, July 17, 1823.

19. Russell who was the Magistrate of Jungle Mahals from 1828 to 1833 had no sympathy with the Bhumij and he remained aloof from their grievances.

20. Quoted in BDG, Manbhum, XXVIII, p. 65.

21. Mukherjee, Sudipta, Agrarian discontent in Manbhum district, 1765-1857 (Unpublished M. Phil. thesis, Benaras Hindu University).

22. Jha, The Bhumij Revolt, p. 163.

23. Dent's letter to Bengal Government, September 6, 1833.

24. Jha, The Bhumij Revolt, p. 168.

25. Quoted in Ibid.

26. A separate full-flaged Bankura district under a separate district judge was created in 1881- O'Malley, BDG, Bankura , pp. 12-13 .

27. Ibid, p. 12. Also, BDG, Manbhum, XXVIII, p. 65.

28. Wilkinson was relieved from the command of Ramgarh battalion.

29. Hunter, W. W, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol - XVII (Delhi, Reprint, 1976), p. 353.

Changing Profile of the Santhals in Purulia District

S.C. Mukhopadhyay

The present article tries to focus the changing life-style of the Santhals in Purulia district. Naturally one may query why the Santhals of Purulia district alone, when the life-style of the Santhals are all the more same in the whole south -west region of Bengal, particularly in the districts of Bankura and Midnapore as well. So my article is self-explanatory due to three reasons. The main argument is that when the Santhals came to the territories which presently constitute the district of Purulia, they left their migratory habits and adopted agriculture as their main advocation of life. From here, like the earlier Jain settlers, they began to spread in other eastern districts. Secondly, it was in the district of Purulia where they are large in number in comparison to other two neighbouring districts. The first census report of 1872 would clearly testify to this point. And thirdly, due to the geographical location of the district, which is adjoining to the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.[1]

Our first information about the Santhals came from Colonel Dalton's L escriptive Ethnology of Bengal wherein he writes that the Santhals were found at interval, extending from about 350 miles from the Ganges to the river Baitarini. According to him the Santhals were found in the districts of Bhagalpur, the Santhal Parganas, Birbhum, Bankura, Hazaribagh, Manbhum, Midnapore, Singhbhum, Mourbhanj and Balasore . But these were not their original home-they had only migrated to these places. [2] About the original home of the Santhals, it is very misleading. However no old colonies of the Santhals are found between the Himalayas and the Ganges. Moreover the present generation of the Santhals have no clear idea from where their forefathers came. Their old tradition hardly support the theory of their northern origin and particularly from Himalayas. When Dalton wrote his book, he found the Santhals mostly on both sides of the river Damodar upto the mouth of the river Hugli. But the Santhals apparently regard their fatherland between the river Damodar and Kasai, which is situated within the territories of present Purulia district. And as the district of Purulia was once a part of Manbhum, it is essential at first to know the history of the Bhum-ending tracts, particularly of Manbhum, where the Santhals formed the majority.

From ancient time up to the reign of Emperor Akbar and before the accounts of Abul Fazl, the territories of Manbhum were ill-defined. At best it could be said that most of its territories formed a part of ancient Bengal. And it was always a bone of contention between Bengal and Orissa. When Hu-en Tsang visited Manbhum, he found Dandabhukti within the kingdom of Tamralipta.[3]

Up to the close of the 15th century there were three important estates in this region; namely Panchet with its headquarters at Telkupi and later on Kashipur, second-the kingdom of the Mallas with its headquarters at Bishnupur and third-Chatna . In the 15th and 16th centuries, according to Bhavisyat Puran there were four important estates in this region, namely Barabhumi, Tungabhumi,[4] Samantabhumi and Manbhumi.[5] The territory comprised by the district of Manbhum was acquired by the British in 1760 when Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong were ceded to the English Company.[6] At that time, the zamindari of Panchet was within Burdwan Chalka , while the south of the river Kasai including Manbhum and Dhalbhum formed a part of Midnapore. Pandra and the remaining smaller zamindaris of north Manbhum were apparently under the neighbouring zamindar of Birbhum. [7]

The territories of Manbhum formed the western mahal of Midnapore, the people who lived there seemed unruly and Graham - the collector of Midnapore, [8] who spent there the whole year of 1767 found it difficult to subdue these tribes or to settle any revenue with them. The near presence and the ever-threatening movement of the Marathas as well as the lawless situation of the district necessitated the preservation of a strong military control. [9] Unable to suppress these tribal zamindars, Graham adopted force against them and sent one lieutenant after another. But instead, the people flared up in rebellion which the British had termed as the Chuar Rebellion. It mainly spread in the estates of Barabhum, Manbhum, Dhalbhum, Pathkum, Baghmundi, Jhalda, Chatna, Raipur and Supur. To break the spirit of rebellion in early years, the British had transferred Panchet to Birbhum, but it could not produce the desired result. And when the Panchet zamindar refused to pay his revenues, his zamindari was put up for sale in 1795 . [10] But this could not be done and the British had to yield, making a compromise with Panchet zamindar.[11]

Due to this so called Chuar Rebellion in Manbhum, the Company for a tighter control over this unregulated area created the district of Jungle Mahals in 1805 . The tracts of Jungle Mahals situated in the districts of Birbhum, Burdwan andMidnapore were placed under the jurisdiction of the Magistrate of Jungle Mahals.[12] But this Jungle Mahals also did not last long. Within a short time, there occurred a disputed succession on the zamindari of Barabhum in 1832. The Bhumij rising in Jungle Mahals district was undoubtedly due to a family feud, but soon it turned into a general revolt against the foreign rule. In consequence thereof, it was recommended "to exclude the area from the operation of the general regulations and form it into a separate jurisdiction." [13] Thus in 1833, a new district known as Manbhum was created with its headquarters at Manbazar. But five years later, the headquarters was shifted to Purulia . The new district included besides Purulia Sadar and Dhanbad subdivision, the estates of Supur, Raipur, Ambikanagar, Chatna, Simlapal, Maheswara, Bhelaidiha, Fulkusma, Shyamsundarpur and Dhalbhum. [14] There were many changes up to 1872, during which many areas of Manbhum were transferred to Bankura, Burdwan and Singhbhum districts.

The territory of Manbhum from 1872 upto its dissolution in 1956 remained intact. But a great change in 1912 was effected when Manbhum was transferred from Bengal to Bihar. The people of Manbhum in the early year of 1912 protested

against this change but it was then refused. [15] From that time the fate of the people of Manbhum was linked up with Bihar which continued up to October, 1956. After independence in 1947 there arose the question of states reorganisation according to linguistic basis. [16] A movement was organised throughout the district demanding Manbhum's merger with Bengal. And according to the report of the States Reorganisation Commission, [17] most of the areas of Sadar subdivision of Manbhum under the name of Purulia district ceded to Bengal from 1 November 1956, [18] while Dhanbad subdivision remained in Bihar. In this everchanging territories of Purulia district, the Santhals came to stay in, leaving their migratory habit and character, adopting agriculture as their profession.

Dalton has placed the Santhals with aboriginal hill tribes of Rajmahal in the Dravidian group. He was of opinion that unlike the Kolarian and Mundas, the Santhals cared little for permanently settling themselves. It is true in case of their past tradition but from the middle of the 18th century, the Santhals began to settle permanently and had given up their nomadic habit. H.H. Risley also supports the theory of Dalton by regarding the Santhals as purely Dravidian stock, [20] though some modern scholars doubted it. They observe that no Dravidian language was used in the Gangetic Valley. Moreover the tribes residing from Manbhum to Central India still speak Austric language. Hence Prof. Nihar Ranjan Ray observes that the Santhals are similar to the aborigins of Australia ; hence they can be classed as Proto-Austroloid. [21] Owing to the migratory habit of the Santhals, their origin is very difficult to determine. However the Santhal settlements melted away with the disappearance of forest on the one hand and on the other, by the intrusion of the non-Santhals. According to the Santhal tradition their original home was Aihiri-Pipiri, which has been identified by the modern scholars with pargana Ahuri in Hazaribagh district.[22] But when multiplied the land could not hold all the children in Aihiri-Pipiri, they went to Chai-Champa. The Santhal tradition traces back their origin to a wild goose which coming from the ocean alighted at Aihiri-Pipiri. The Santhals, after wandering many places, settled in Chai-Champa in Hazaribagh, where they remained for several generations. [23] But in course of time,they could not remain at Chai-Champa due to the torture of one Madhu Singh. Then they proceeded to Chotanagpur with all their cattle, but could not remain there for long. From Chotanagpur, the Santhals came to Jhalda, the present area of Purulia district. But due to the oppression of the Mudas, the Santhals migrated to Pathkum in the same district, where the Bhumij oppressed them. From there the Santhals came to Sikharbhum which is corresponding to Panchet. Panchet became their permanent dwelling place, which is within the district of Purulia. This migration of the Santhals took place perhaps in the early 18th century . Hence the land between Damodar and Kasai rivers are regarded as the fatherland of the Santhals. [24] And when their number increased, they began to spread in the neighbouring districts of Bankura and Midnapore. Thus though formerly a food gathering tribe, the Santhals adopted agriculture as their profession in early 18th century and at the close of the century, became an important element in the agrarian economy in the whole of south-west Bengal . [26]

The Santhals like other tribes of India believe in totemism and clanship. There are practically twelve branches among the Santhals, namely 1. Baske 2.

Bedea 3. Besra 4. Chore 5. Hansdak 6. Hembram 7. Kisku 8. Marandi 9. Murmu 10. Pauria 11. Soren and 12. Tudu. The caste system is unknown to the Santhals but different clans used to practice different occupation in earlier times. Their priests belong to the Murmu clan, their kings belong to the Kiskus, the warriors from Soren clan, nobility from the Hembrams, musicians from the Tudus, while traders from the Baskes. Thus the Santhals have all the elements of the Aryan social system. But in due course of time the duties of all the clans have been forgotten

With the passage of time, practically all the Santhals had been turned to agriculture, while a few became share-croper. The Santhals also believe his relationship with the physical phonemena. [27] However intermarriages among the same totem have been forbidden.

What the tribe is to the family, that the race is to the tribe. The National God of the Santhals like other aborgins, is Marang-Buru , the great Mountain. Marang-Buru appears to their legends as the guardian of their race, the divinity who watches over their birth and brought their first parents together in marriage. In private and in public, in time of tribulation or in wealth, the Great Mountain invokes with bloody offerings. He is the link who binds religion with nation. Goats, sheep, bullocks, fowls, rice, fruit, flowers, bear or even a handful of earth, all are acceptable to the great mountain. He is in a sense a common father of all the people . [28] The worship of the Great Mountain is essentially a worship of blood. If one cannot afford an animal, he is to offer a red fruit or a red flower. [29] Besides the Santhals, Marang-Buru is the God of all the tribes.

The Santhals had no conception about the supreme God. Their religion was the religion of terror. Haunted and driven from place to place by the Aryans, they could not understand how a superior force could drive them, when the Santhals had done no harm to them. But though the Santhals had no God from whom they could expect favour, there existed a number of demons and evil spirits whose spite could do much harm to them . So though the Santhals had no definite religion, their rites were more numerous than the Hindus. The superstitious elements in their nature, their belief in the near presence of an unseen world, led them to shape their practical conduct. They knew no God who would reward the good, but a host of demons to punish the wicked, to scatter the diseases and to spread it among the cattle. The demons could be bribed by animal offering and a frequent outpouring of blood. [30] Besides due to their superstition, they believed in the witchcraft as well. [31]

The worship of the Santhals was based upon the family. Each household had its own deity. The prayers addressed to the family gods were to avert evil rather than to obtain benefits . On his deathbed, the head of the family whispered the name of his family God to his eldest son; and thus it handed over from one generation to another. In addition to family gods, the Santhals worshipped the ghosts of their ancestors. The Santhals had no conception of their own immortality or of a future life. They imagined themselves constantly surrounded by a shadowy world. Adjoining to every Santhal village, there was a grove of sal trees,which was considered as their national tree. This grove was the favourite resort of their family gods. The ghostly inhabitants of the grove were their sharp critics and hence to be appeased. Goats and red cocks were sacrificed before this sal tree. Beside this sal grove , the Santhals had

to appease gods and ghosts wherever they went. Traces of that superstitions survived in the Da-bonga (river demons), Daddi-bonga (well demons), Pakri-bonga (tank demons), Buru-bonga (mountain demons), Bir-bonga (forest demons)etc. [32]

Utmost liberty has been given to Santhal boys and girls for the choice of their life-partners. In the village, accommodation is provided to them in the house of their parents and there is no separate dormatory for them . The old Santhals have confidence in the virtues of the young. The young couple go to the markets, join the festivals and danced in groups. An open space has been reserved in Jagmajhi's house for their dance. The sound of flutes and drums attracts the maidens, who, after adjusting flowers in their hair join with them. [33] With such freedom their marriages are generally love matches. But sometimes arranged matches are also made by their parents. [34] During marriage, a day is fixed for a preliminary feast. No priest is officiated at a Santhal marriage. The bride and groom eat together during the social meal which forms the most important part of the ceremony. After marriage the bride ceases to belong to her father's tribe and becomes a member of her husband's family. Generally a Santhal husband has only one wife, but in case of barrenness he can remarry though the first wife remains as the head of the household and the second wife must obey the first. [35]

Santhals in early generations had been busy with cultivation . They have every year a great hunting festival. The hunting expeditions have been organised after much forethought. Generally these expeditions occur during summer, when the beasts come outside the jungles. The hunters form a long line with everyone a bow and arrow in his hand. They are usually accompanied by dogs. who like their masters are endowed with a spirit of hunting. Birds are beaten down with arrows and in this process, deer, pig, jungle fowl and hare are hunted. The Santhals generally avoid open conflicts with the tigers and bears. These hunting expeditions last for four to five days. At the end of each day, the Santhals feast merrily on the contents of their bags. [36]

It is surprising to note that the funeral ceremony of the Santhals differs from the practice of Ho and Munda tribes, but very much similar to the Brahmins or Hindus. The dead body of a Santhal is kept on a charpai or cot by the relatives and then taken to a funeral pire near reservoir or stream. The son or brother is the first to apply fire on the body by placing a piece of burning wood on the face of the dead and soon the ashes with a few fragments of bones are carefully preserved. On the sixth day, the relatives shave themselves and bathe. In due course of time the ashes and bones of the dead are sacrificed in the water of the river Damodar. [37]

The famine of 1770-71 may be regarded as one of the reasons for the large migration of the Santhals in the district of Purulia. Prior to this there was no such wide-spread devastating famine which brought Bengal on the verge of economic bankruptcy. Purulia being the dryparts suffered most in the famine . Hence depopulation was followed by a proportionate area of land falling out of tillage. [38] Thus in 1776 the scarcity of cultivators posed a great threat for the zamindars, as the land became surplus, whereas the tenants were limited in number. Under these circumstances the Santhals played most significant role. As the district of Purulia was worse affected, the area naturally attracted new agricultural labourers. Thus the Santhals did much

to fill up the vaccum of husbandmen caused by the famine of 1770-71.

The pre-permanent settlement period had witnessed some special features of cultivation. It became gradually apparent that the Company was slowly but steadily consolidating its grip over the areas of Purulia after many years of struggle against Bhum-ending tracts. Still the zamindar of Panchet-the biggest zamindari in Purulia did not come to terms with the British even in 1793. The time saw the Mughal revenue system was gradually disappearing, giving scope to the introduction of British administrative system. The period also witnessed the increasing recognition of the zamindars rights over the soil. Moreover draught and famine brought general lawlessness in the district. Under such a background the Santhals were encouraged to settle here. During this moment of crisis the Santhals must be given credit for having brought under cultivation the major portion of land in the district. Indeed the whole area of Purulia district became covered by the Santhals during this time, as a result even to-day, we find many name of Santhal villages.[39] As cultivators, the Santhals were much more expert on high jungle lands to produce more and better kind of rice than their counterpart.[40] The Santhals had the peculiar skill in converting jungle and waste lands into rice fields.

With the introduction of permanent settlement, the territories of Purulia district witnessed a new agrarian tension. By this system the individual ownership on land had been established. Its long term objective was to promote the extension of cultivation to the vast areas of waste lands. Unfortunately in Purulia, this long term objective was somewhat different from the rest of Bengal. This was partly because of its regional problems and partly for total ignorance of the tribal people about any systematic revenue laws. Though in the beginning the land tax was not so heavy in Purulia as in Bishnupur. But when the Santhals increased the cultivable lands from waste lands, the rents began to increase . Hence the happy days of the Santhals in Purulia were short lived. The zamindars asked for more rent from the Majhi , who was responsible for paying rent on behalf of the Santhals. The Majhi had therefore to collect more rent from the Santhals. [41] This caused a widespread discontent among the tribals of Purulia and particularly among the Bhumij. The Bhumij rose in revolt which the British had termed as the Chuar Rebellion. But in spite of discontent prevalent among the Santhals, they were not the party of this Rebellion.

The Santhals of Purulia though dissatisfied for their present lot, did not then rise in rebellion against the people who exploited them. On the other hand, a rebellion of the Santhals had been broken out in the neighbouring districts in 1854-55.The disturbed area of the Santhals was then from Hazaribagh to Birbhum , the area was known as 'Daman-i Koh'. Against the exploitation and injustice mostly by high caste Hindus, the Santhals of Daman-iKoh rose in rebellion . [42] Still the rebellion in the neighbouring region did not affect the Santhals of Purulia.

But for the rebellion in Purulia, the Santhals had not wait for long. The revolt of 1857 brought Purulia under fire. The Deputy Commissioner Captain Oak was forced to leave Purulia out of fear and took shelter at Raniganj. Rajah Nilmoni Singh of Panchet took the leading part in the movement supported by his Santhal subjects. [43] The Ramgarh battalion stationed at Purulia looted the treasury, released the prisoners from jail and then marched off towards Ranchi. Most

of the respectable residents left the town of Purulia out of fear. Captain Oak reported that the Santhals of the district were in great excitement, who attacked the zamindar of Jaipur . After sometime Captain Oak returned from Raniganj with a fresh reinforcement and arrested Rajah Nilmoni Singh, who was sent to Calcutta. Thus the peace had been restored in Purulia due to the prompt arrest of the Rajah as well as for the absence of any suitable local leader. Though Coupland remarks that the rising of the Santhals was entirely due to the local issue, can only be doubted. On the other hand, the British government suspected the gun-makers of Jhalda and Tanasi in 1857 of supplying matchlocks and other weapons to the discontent Santhals, who gave troubles to the zamindars of Jaipur and Gola. [44]

From the Revolt of 1857 onwards, the history of the district differed little from other districts of Bengal. Agrarian troubles threatened at Tundi in 1869 and 1870 . The place is situated in the north of the district where the Tundi zamindar and his Santhal subjects were at variance. This was due to the great famine that occurred in this area since 1866. The harvest of 1863 and 1864 were below normal. The people of Manbhum sent a petition to the Deputy Commissioner in October 1865 praying that the exports might immediately be stopped. As a result of famine the number of gang robberies increased. The Commissioner of Burdwan suspected the Santhals for such robberies on the border of Manbhum and Midnapore. But the Commissioner of Chotanagpur asserted that it was not the Santhals but the Bauris who committed such numerous gang robberies. [45]

The revenue survey of the district of Manbhum was concluded in 1864-67. Two years later, in 1869, a preliminary census was held but the outcome was not accurate. In 1872, the first census was conducted in which the population of the district was returned as 9,15,570 for and area of 4,914 square miles. [46] It was recorded in the first census that "the vernacular of the district is the western dialect of Bengali known as Rarhi Boli,which is used by 72 percent of the population." About the Santhali language the census report states that among the non-Aryan languages, "the most prevalent is Sonthali, spoken by 182,000 persons or nearly 14 percent of the population. "[47] The earlier races such as Kurmis, Santhals, Bhumijs and Bauris[48] largely predominated the district. There was marked traces of the Kolarian village system in the district, the Mahato or village headman of the Kurmis corresponding with the Majhi of the Santhals , the Sardars of the Bhumijs and the Munda of the Ho races. The Santhals were well distributed throughout the district. At Tundi they were nearly half of their population , while at Barabazar and Manbazar one-fourth. In the census of 1931 the number of the Santhals population considerably increased to 2,42,991 persons [49]

On the eve of World War II, on the question of Congress support to Britain, the Congress ministry of Bihar resigned under the direction of the Congress High Command. Thus there occurred individual satyagraha against the government. In Manbhum it was led by Atul Chandra Ghosh. Sri Tikaram Majhi Ex MLA of Bihar Legislative Assembly had started individual satyagraha on 6 December 1940 at Belmi in Topchanchi P.S. of Manbhum. [50] Some enthusiastic Santhals of Manbhum had also joined in the Quit India

Movement. During this movement when the important leaders of the district were kept in jail, some of the Santhals, in small groups, under the leadership of Chaitan Majhi and Barka Majhi kept the movemnt alive by secretly negotiating with the leaders in prision. [51] This example of the Santhals was also followed by the other tribes like the Savars and Bhumijs who joined this movement at Bandwan P.S. [52]

Before Indian Independence, the organisation of the Communist Party of India began to develop in Manbhum district as well under the leadership of Prabir Kumar Mallick. The Communist influence began to grow in the unions of factories and mines. In the lac factory of Balrampur, the leader of the union was one Santhal Vikram Tudu, who tried to mould the Santhals accordingly. [53] Later on in 1951 there occured a protest movement against the oppression of the zamindar of Arsha, resulting in armed-clash with the people. Prabir Kumar Mallick together with Suren Hansda and Mutru Majhi joined in this protest movement against the zamindar. [54] Later on, Nakul Chandra Mahato became the leader of the Communist movement in the district.

After independence the people of Manbhum faced a bitter problem for the imposition of Hindi language on the educational institutions undermining their own vernacular. So a regional party under the name of Lok Sevak Sangha was formed among the members of the Congress. They started a satyagraha movement from 1949 onwards against the government of Bihar under the leadership of Atul Chandra Ghosh and Bibhuti Bhusan Dasgupta. In this satyagraha movement some of the Santhals joined with them. On the third day of the satyagraha held at village Punura in Puncha P.S., Kunja Bihari Majhi was the leader of the satyagrahis. Similarly at Ankro in Manbazar P.S. , the satyagraha was led by Dasarath Majhi . And both these Santhal leaders were tortured. [55]

On the eve of the general election of 1952 Chaitan Majhi contested for the seat of the Lok Sabha from the reserved constituency comprising the areas of Purulia, Hura, Puncha. Manbazar, Barabazar, Bandwan, Patmada, Chandil, Balarampur, Ichagarh, Dhalbhum and Saraikela-Kharswan. And for the Bihar legislative Assembly Ledu Majhi contested under reserved constituency comprising the areas of Kashipur, Raghunathpur, Neturia and Santuri. [56] And both were elected.

November 1, 1956 was a memorable day for the people of Manbhum when the defunct Manbhum under the name of Purulia district had been merged with West Bengal. The people of Purulia, out of joy, staged processions and meetings in different places in the district which continued during the first week of November. In the meeting at Kashipur held on 7 November the people came from far and near under the leadership of Ledu Ram Tudu. They led the procession by beating the drums throughout the town and assembled at Harimela under the Presidentship of Smt. Sailyabala Devi. The meeting was addressed by Rashna Tudu alongwith Bibhuti Bhusan Dasgupta , Bholanath Mukherjee and Satya Kinkar Mahato. In Hura P.S. on the same day, Chaitan Majhi addressed the public where the Santhals celebrated their dances. [57] The Santhal's celebration of dances were also held during the meeting at Ankro under the Presidentship of Jagabandhu Bhattacharya. [58]

Santhals of Purulia became politically more conscious after the district's merger with West Bengal. In the general election of 1957 they contested

for the Assembly seats of West Bengal. From Manbazar reserved consitituency, Chaitan Majhi was elected MLA and as there were two reserved seats in Kashipur constituency, both the elected MLA's were Santhals - Ledu Majhi from Lok Sevak Sangha and Budhan Majhi from the congress. [59]

After Independence there seems changes in the life-style of the Santhals. They are now no longer confine themselves in cultivation but take much interest in employment in coal mines and factories. In the coal mines of Neturia P.S. as well as during the establishment of Santhaldih Tharmal Power, the Santhals were largely employed. [60] Though the Santhals social habits are on transition, they retained some of their old practices and customs. Even to-day the hunting expedition is the great enjoyment to them. During the full-moon in April every year, the Santhals join in the hunting expedition at Ajoydha hills. Every young man participate in this expedition who come from different places like Bankura, Midnapore, Ranchi and Singhbhum. [61] Ajoydha hill is regarded to them as the Ajoydha Buru. The second important winter festival is known as Baha festival. Besides the Santhals have adopted some Hindu festivals like the Karam, Chhata, Bhan Sing etc. In many villages the Santhals join with the Hindus in celebrating Durga Puja . The Santhals also represented in their dances the scene of Lord Krishna in Braja and Brindaban. About funeral rites of the Santhals, Hunter rightly observes that "when the Santals in disposing of their dead differ from the Mundas, they approximate to the Brahminical custom. It is in fact , a rough outline of the Brahman ritual. "[62] The long associations of the Santhals with the Hindus and other tribes gave birth to a regional Bengali language of Purulia, which is peculiarly of her own. So great is the assimilation of languages that the Bhumijs of eastern Barabhum profess Bengali as their mother tongue but can speak freely with their Santhal neighbours in Santhali. [63]

In due course of time, the Santhali language has reached a much higher stage of developemnt than other sister tribal languages of Chotanagpur. It was due to the influence of Bengali on them. So long they had no script of their own. Earlier they adopted the Roman script under the influence of Christian Missionaries, but in Bengal, they followed the Bengali script. [64] Recently they have adopted Alchiki script of their own, which needs futher development. After 1970-71, some magazines and newspapeers have been published in Santhali from Purulia. Jharna was the first magazine in Santhali script in Purulia which was edited by Sravan Kumar Tudu . Besides there are some writers and poets also. Among them the oldest Santhali writer in the district was Rajendra Nath Hembram. Among the famous writers and poets in this district, Sarada Prasad Kisku, Mahadeb Hansda, Rabilal Mandi, Ramdhan Murmu, Niranjan Saren and Ratanlal Majhi enriched this language to a great extent by bringing Santhali higher than other tribal languages.[65]

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3. Bhattacharya, Tarundeb, Purulia (Calcutta, 1986), pp. 85-93.
4. Tungabhumi is identified with present Raipur thana of Bankura.
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29. Hunter observes that when the English Company first obtained possession of the Birbhum mountains, human sacrifies among the Santhals were common. A regular trade was carried on to supply the victims.

30. Hunter, Annals, pp. 181-182.

31. Tarundeb, Purulia, p. 245.

32. Hunter, Annals, p. 182-184.

33. Ibid, p. 314.

34. Hunter observes in the late 19th century that during marriage the price for the girl averaged rupees five with presents of cloths to her parents.

35. Hunter, A Statistical Account, XIV, p. 316.

36. Ibid, pp. 316-317.

37. Ibid, p. 318.

38. In 1765, in Bengal, 6,000 villages were under cultivation but after three years of famine it was reduced to a little over 4,500 villages. - Sen, Jungle Mahals, p. 32.

39. There are many villages of Santhali name in the district of Purulia. A few are cited here: Bodam, Koldih, Majhidih, Murardih, Saradih, Santhaldih etc. - Chattopadhyay, N. N., Namer Malay Manbhum (Purulia, 1986), p. 4.

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41. Ibid, pp. 42-47.42. Hunter, Annals, p. 236. Also, Taurndeb op. cit., p. 164.

43. Coupland, op. cit. , pp. 65-66.

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45.Ibid., pp. 131-132.

46. Ibid., p. 69.

47. The census of 1872 records that while Bengali was spoken by 72 per cent , Santhali by 14 percent and Hindi by 12[1] per cent of thetotal population of Manbhum. - Ibid, p. 72. But Hunter observes that the total number of Santhals in the whole province of Bengal was returned by the census of 1872 at 9,32,532, of whom 455,513 resided in Santhal Parganas. Manbhum came next with a Santhal population of 1,32,445. - Hunter, A Statistical Account, p. 308.

48. Kurmis and Bauris are now Hinduised and much progressive in Manbhum.

49. Sangathan (Purulia, 1947), p. 4. In the census of 1931 the total population of Manbhum was 18, 10, 890, among whom 12, 22, 689 were Bengali speaking, while 3,21, 690 were Hindi speaking people.

50. Mukti (1940) , 2 December .

51. Tarundeb, op. cit. p. 195.

52. The names of Ram Savar, Lakshman Savar, Ratan Majhi and Durga Charan Bhumij may be mentioned who took active part in the movement.

53. Tarundeb, op. cit, p. 198.

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55. Sangathan (1949), 12 April.

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Some aspects of the impact of malarial fever on the supply of labour to the tea estates of Assam, 1926-1931

Arabinda Samanta

Contrary to what Mullan, the Census Superintendent of Assam, tells us to believe that the decade of 1921-31 was probably the best decade in the history of Assam from the point of view of public health. [1] We have evidence to show that the decade in question, witnessed a severe type of malarial fever which imposed serious constraints on the supply of labour to the tea estates of Assam. The only epidemic, Mullan argues, which affected the province with any severity during the decade, was cholera. But strangely enough, the phenomenon of malarial fever which ravaged the province quite for some time escaped his attention. Evidence given by Dr. G.C. Winchester, Medical Officer, Thanzie Tea Co. Ltd. (Jorhat), before the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, proves the presence of malaria in that area.[2] Dr. Charles E. P. Forsyth, Medical Officer, Tezpur and Gogra Division, Bengal United Tea Company Limited and Dr. E. E. Jameson, Medical Officer, Empire of India and Ceylon Tea Company (Tezpur) also speak of intense malaria prevalent in Cacher and Tezpur.[3]

In fact, from the begining of the British occupation of the province of Assam, agricultural and industrial operations had been heavily handicapped by the scourge of malarial fever. It spelt death to many, and worse still, sapped the vitality of many more. The principal industry of the province, the production of tea, was its first casualty. This paper attempts to appreciate the nature of the problem of labour supply to the tea estates of Assam in the period between 1926 and 1931, and seeks to evaluate the nature of losses caused by widespread malarial fever.

Indigeneous tea plants were discovered in the northeast corner of Assam in 1823 [4] but the attention of the East India Company was drawn to the possibility of starting tea cultivation in the province only after 1833 when its monopoly of tea trade with China was thrown open. Nevertheless from the very beginning of tea plantation in Assam, the planters had faced great difficulty in securing the necessary labour force. They tried with the immigrant Chinese labour, but the experiments foundered on two rocks : 1. the cost of recruitment was enormously high, 2. their maintenance and management was increasingly difficult. Local labourers were not available in sufficient numbers, for indigeneous population was either sparse or work-shy.[5] Even if some labourers were recruited, there had always been the strong risk of desertion . Thus it was felt increasingly necessary to import labourers from other parts of India to cope with the necessary

expansion of the tea plantation in Assam. As a result, there was a continuous inflow of immigrant labourers pouring in large numbers to the tea producing regions of the state. [6] It so happened that after the expiry of the terms of their contract, some of the labourers used to settle down in the farm lands near the tea gardens and take to ordinary cultivation.[7]

Now, the practice of the importation of practically all labourers, though immediately solved the problem of paucity of workmen, actually complicated the situation in the long run. It only rendered the phenomenon of fever, largely prevalent in the province, effectively more exacerbant. [8] Assam had already been malarious, and it was particularly so in the period under review. And the importation of working coolies from more or less malarious regions of the country only worsened the whole situation . Speaking before the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, 1921-22 , Dr. Charles E. P. Forsyth commented, 'very often coolies bring disease with them from their country on arrival in Assam e. g. skin disease, hook-warm and malaria. [9] The fact is aptly illustrated by the example of Kachugaon forest settlement where Gupta, Das and Majumder conducted a malaria survey sometime in 1932. [10]

Kachugaon, a forest settlement, established sometime in the beginning of the present century, covered an area of 205 acres containing a bazar, the residential quarters of the forest officials, and petty shopkeepers. The surveyors argue that since the establishment of the settlement, a number of villages had sprang up in the immediate neighbourhood, and it led to the progressive extension of paddy cultivation. The settlement and its bazar contained a heterogeneous population, originating from different parts of Assam, Bengal, United Provinces, and Nepal. The adjacent villages were inhabited mostly by Santals who had migrated from the Santal Parganas in Bihar. These settlers had been attracted to the neighbourhood by the remission of rent in exchange for manual labour, as contrasted with the condition in their native districts where land was scares. The bazar area was inhabited by petty merchants while the villagers were all cultivators .

Gupta, Das and Majumder examined altogether 528 children between 2 to 10 years of age in this settlement. of these, 450 i.e. 85.2% were found to have spleenic enlargement[11]. and 370 i. e. 70% were found to have malaria parasites in blood. In addition to this, they examined 26 children below 2 years of age, and surprisingly, all of them were found to have enlarged spleens. Of 805 adults of both sexes examined, the spleen ratewas 41.7 % and parasite rate 39.4% . The most interesting point in Das, Gupta and Majumder's survey, and which is most relevant to our present study, is that the spleen rate among adults was much higher among the immigrant population than among the indigeneous inhabitants, being 71% in the former case and 29.5% in the later.

Gupta, Das and Mujumdar argue a case for the possible importation of malaria from outside. They state that at the beginning of each winter floating population of about 500 men with thier families used to come to the district from highly malarious areas of Bengal, Nepal and the United Provinces, and settled in various parts of the forest . These people used to visit the local market held weekly on Sundays, and spent Saturday nights at Kachugaon. It is probable, the surveyors argue, that the weekly visits of these highly

infected persons played an important part in the dissemination of malaria among the local inhabitants. [12]

Against the background of this specific study, we may consider the case of immigrant labour, who constituted 90% of the total labour force in Assam in 1931, and had a possible spleen rate of 71 % approximately. We can fairly imagine the impaired efficiency of labour brought about by repeated attacks of fever, and the phenomenon of spreading infections, effectively aggravated by this immigrant population. Quite surprisingly, despite definite knowledge of such ill-health among the working coolies, little was done in the period under review to cope with the problem and this little was entirely on the lines of treatment, and not prevention.[13] The palliative measures certainly had prevented the possible depopulation of many an estate, but more certainly it failed to diminish the endemicity of the disease, and prevent considerable loss of life. An occasional experiment of mass-treatment by quinine proved of but slight use. Further, there was no systematic investigation of the epidemiology of the disease, and thus there prevailed and almost complete ignorance of the local species of Anopheles.

One may of course, honestly argue that what was true of a forest settlement in particular, might not have been true to all tea estates in general. So let us examine another report of malaria survey conducted in more than a dozen tea gardens in Assam. Presumably, the report on a Malaria Survey of the tea gardens in Mariani Medical Association , Assam, 1931, prepared by Mac Donald and Chowdhury may serve our purpose.[14]

The Mariani Medical Association had charge of a group of seven tea Companies, controlling eighteen gardens. Out of 1.737 children between ages of two and ten examined, Mac Donald and Chowdhury found that 991 or 57% had enlarged spleen. They rated the area as hyper-endemic. Of 225 adults examined, they found a spleen rate of 24% and a parasite rate of 22%. The parasite and spleen rates were evidently much less among the adults. Mac Donald and Chowdhury explain this peculiarity by arguing that the yound children passed through a series of serious attack of malaria comparable to those which were experienced by the newly arrived Europeans. After a number of these attacks a relative immunity was gradually acquired with the result that the frequency of the attacks was much reduced . The adults who had passed through these stages in their childhood had developed a considerable degree of immunity and only showed, as we see, the clinical symptoms and signs of malaria after their resistance had been reduced. They recovered from such an attack in a shorter time than would a child or a new-immune adult. They might however be debilitated for a long period by chronic infections.

Till now two things are clear, the first that the major portion of labour employed in various tea gardens of Assam were of immigrant nature and the second that a considerable section of them had been subjected to repeated attacks of malaria fever. Taken together, the cumulative effects of these two factors must have seriously comprised the effeciency of the labour force. It is evident that during the period between 1920 and 1925 the number of estates increased by no less than 54, but the area under cultivation did definitely shrink. Again, during the next 5 years between 1925 and 1930 , the number of estatesin

creased by 66, but the increase in the area under cultivation was marginal and quite disproportionate to the increase in the number of estates. This phenomenon might be explained partly in terms of world-wide economic depression of the 1930's and partly in terms of workers' strike of 1926-27 .[18] but it was, in our opinion, largely due to diminutive labour supply. To examine this proposition, we would first see the amount of labour living in the tea estates. Evidence available indicate that in 1931, of 1,076 thousand labourers ready to serve the expanding tea estates , only 531 thousand would be employed.[19] In other words more than 50% of the labour population remained idle. We have already noticed that there was a definite increase in the number of estates, acreage and area under cultivation of tea vis a vis an increase in labour population . But still, for nearly 20 years (1921-1938) there was no evidence of increased employment of labourers. The phenomenon can only be explained in terms of malarial fever which, literally speaking, played havoc with the working coolies. As a result of this nearly 50% of the population waiting for ready employment could not be effectively utilised in the tea producing process though the situation so demanded.

Since we argue that malaria had been the prime factor responsible for the scarcity of labour, it is necessary to evaluate the nature of losses that it brought in its trail. First, we would show the amount of absenteeism caused by the sickness. The Royal Commission on Labour believed that absenteeism was an important factor in the Assam Plantation. [20] In regard to the causes of absenteeism, the Report emphasized the subsidiary occupation of the garden workers, e.g. private cultivation , household duties such as the purchase of weekly supplies from the market, the collection of firewood, the grazing of cattle etc. [21] but this explanation appears to be an oversimple evaluation. In our opinion, malaria had a major responsibility for the causes of absenteeism. This can be shown from the report of malaria survey of two tea estates in upper Assam, prepared by Rice and Savage. [22] Of the two estates (Estate A and Estate B), let us take, for instance, the situation of Estate A and compare it with that of all-Assam. Rice and Savage provide the following table to show the average monthly labourers on book, available labour days, actual labour days and percentage of labour efficiency.[23]

TABLE - 1

Mear	Average monthly labourers on book	Available labour days*	Actual labour day	Percentage of labour efficiency
1926	915	27,4500	159,538	58.12
1927	759	227,700	137,377	60.33
1928	863	258,900	147,091	56.81
1929	879	263,700	158,532	60.12
1930	901	270,300	183,209	67.77
1931	1,061	318,300	214,396	67.35
Total		1613,400	1,000,143	
Average		268,900	166,690	

* 'Available labour days' taken at 300 working days per year per working coolie on the book.

The table shows that of an average 268,900 available labour days, only an average 166,690 labour days was presented i. e. 60% labour efficiency was available. In other words, 40% of available labour days could not be effectively tapped. Coming to the all-Assam situation, one may argue that 60% of 1,076 thousand labourers in 1931 i.e. 645 thousand were available for employment. But actually 531 thousand were used, i.e. 50%

In other words 10% of the total labourers were yet to be employed , but they were not actually employed. The answer is that most of them were in fact languishing in the huts of the coolie lines because of malaria sickness. This point may be substantiated by the following table furnished by Rice and Savage. [24]

TABLE - 2

Sickness : Labour loss in days, 1926-1931

Year	Malaria	All Diseases
1926	2,840	7.974
1927	3,109	7,806
1928	3,804	10,198
1929	4,675	12,502
1930	5,013	12,020
1931	5,387	12,383
Total	24,828	62883
Average	4,138	10,480

The table shows that the losses directly due to malaria were 4,138 days in avarage, while from all diseases 10,480. It means that about 40% of the labour days lost was directly due to malaria. There are, however, still more points to ponder. Considering the weakening properties of malarial fever one can fairly argue that 25% of the balance of sickeness other that malaria was primarily brought about through lowered resistance due to that disease, and this , Rice and Savage argue, is probably a low estimate. So to the 4,138 days of labour lost directly due to malaria, we must add another 1585 days, making the total 5,723 days, due directly or indirectly to malaria, i.e. 50% of the labour loss was due to malaria. This figure equals to our hypothesis with regard to the all Assam situation. Moreover, there was a great many number of coolies who when ill could not or did not report it to the hospital. If we take these facts into account and assume that the proportion of such unreported cases was as moderate as 5% , the aggregated percentage would even then surely leap up .

The annual visitation of an epidemic at the plucking seasons when the labourers were most needed was a source of direct financial loss to the gardens. The actual loss incurred through labour absenteeims compelled by malaria is difficult to determine due to paucity of individual garden data. We would therefore, try to evaluate the nature of loss under the following heads 1. absenteeism directly due to malaria, 2. absenteeism indirectly attributable to malaria, and 3. general debility which does not of course account for labour absenteeism, but does definitely account for their lowered efficiency.

First we consider the number of sick days lost annually through malaria. For this purpose we would like to consider the following table prepared by Mac Donald and Chowdhury. [25]

TABLE - 3

Malaria Morbidity

Number of sick days lost annually through malaria per 1000 population.

	1926	1927	1928	1929	Average
Bandersulia	1685	856	1727	1162	1357
Keremiah	..	..	2257	2570	2413
Mariani & Hatte juri	2061	1584	2185	1553	1846
Hunwal	3015	1120	1531	1687	1888
Nagadholie	3673	3210	2131	3735	3187
Kathalguri	..	..	2850	1550	2200
Heleaka	..	..	1517	1032	1274
Hattipatti	..	..	735	995	865

It appears from the table that there was an average loss of 1872 days through malaria for every 1000 persons living on the estates or about two days per person per year. Gupta, Das and Majumdar calculated through their study in Kachugaon, Goalpara[26] that an attack of malaria entailed a loss of one week or more. Col. W.G. King in an unpublished memorendum prepared in 1911 estimated the loss of labour days as being 14 [27]. Bentley states that on a tea garden in the Bengal Dooars with 1350 working coolies, he frequently saw during the rains 50 to 70 women visiting hospitals on one day because of fever in their nursing infants or grown up children. [28] He estimated that many of the coolies were off the work from 1 to 5 days. Rice found in the same area that a good number of women who worked otherwise regularly during the cold season, rarely turned up for work during the plucking season explicably for nursing their babies fallen to malaria . [29] His figures indicate that about 4% of the working days were lost due to malaria. This equals to about 12 days in a year.

Taking all these information into account we can safely conclude that for a wage-earning adult coolie in the tea estates of Assam, on an average at least 10 days per annum were lost directly due to malaria. In 1931 there were as many as 1,076 thousand labourers in Assam. Gupta, Das and Majumdar show the spleen rate at about 42%, while Mac Donald and Chowdhury put it at 24%, which means that on an average 33% of the population had malarious infections and suffered heavily from it. Now if we suppose that a conservative estimate of 25% of the 1,076 thousand labourers in the tea gardens of Assam had experienced malaria once, the number amounts to about 269 thousands. If each labourers experienced at least one attack of fever, which is rather unusual, considering the relapsing property of the disease, the total number of days lost through sickness and the consequent absenteeism come to around 269000 X 10 = 2,69,00,00 days per annum.

As regards the second aspect of out consideration i.e. the question of absenteeism indirectly attributable to malaria, we should examine the cases registered as sickness other than malaria. It has been noticed that the figures for sickness due to 'other causes than malaria' show a seasonal curve very similar to that of malaria curve. This can be shown with the figures for the garden of the Hunwal Tea Company for the two years 1928 and 1929. [30]

TABLE - 4

New cases seen at hospitals of Hunwal Tea Company. during 1928-29

Months	Malaria	Other causes than Malaria.
January	105	453
February	70	562
March	126	710
April	133	962
May	191	665
June	421	763
July	522	859
August	510	1,052
September	440	1,468
October	408	1,011
November	268	834
December	142	592
Total	3,336	9,931

The figures for 'other causes than malaria' show a marked increase during the malaria season i.e. months from June to November, There were 2,043 more cases under this head than in the non-malarious months of December to May. Mac Donald and Chowdhury argue that half of these at least may safely be attributed to malaria. Then the number of cases indirectly attributable to malaria may be put at 1,020 in these series, i.e. 31% of the number of cases directly attributed to malaria. Coming to the all Assam context the number seems fairly enormous.

Finally, we may also consider the loss of efficiency among coolies actually at work, i.e. the loss due to general debility. In any community subject to repeated attack of malaria, there is always a certain amount of sickness. It cannot of course prevent the labourer from going to work but it certainly compromises his efficiency. It is extremely difficult to make a proper estimate to such losses but experience of planters in other parts of the world shows that there is an increase in the amount of work achieved per day after the successful completion of anti-malaria measures. For instance, the United Fruit Company, operating in highly malarious regions in the Gulf of Mexico, found a progressive increase in the amount of cane cut per man per day from one ton to 1.61 tons as the health of the district was improved. [31]

Rice, in his survey on the economic aspects of malaria in the tea estates of the Bengal Dooars argues that it can be seen everywhere that the coolies being constantly subjected to malarial fever cannot, as a whole, be anything like 100 percent efficient. [32] He estimated a minimum of10% reduction of efficiency for all diseases, in the case of the Dooars 6% through primary and secondary malaria. We may assume an average 5% loss of efficiency of the actual working coolies in the tea estates of Assam.

In conclusion we may say that the assumption of Mullan on Assam, as being the healthiest in the 1920's , is largely a myth. On the contrary, it was intensely malarious. The situation was further aggravated by the immigrant labourers. Information available show that the rate of spleen enlargement and the rate of malaria parasite were much greater among the immigrant labourers than among the native inhabitants.

Consequent to this, we may argue, at least 40% of the labou. population, indegeneous or immigrant in the various tea estates of Assam had experienced the fever at least once a year. Moreover, absenteeism was an important factor in the Assam plantation, pre-occupation at home with private pursuits might be one explanation for this, but more tangible cause of this absenteeism was the malarial fever. On an average estimate at least 10 days per annum were lost directly due to malaria. And in some estates, where malaria was intensely active, at least 50% of the labour days lost was directly and indirectly due to the malarial fever. And significantly, the government took little or no notice of it worth the name .

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THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND MAHARAJA LAKSHMISHWAR SINGH OF DARBHANGA RAJ

B. K. Roy.

Even before the advent of the Indian National Congress in December, 1885, Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh of Darbhanga Raj, had emerged as an important figure in the political scene of India. As the President of Bihar Landholders Association and member of the Bengal Legislative Council, this young Maharaja of Darbhanga had already attracted the attention of educated Indians of that time. During the controversy regarding the Ilbert Bill, he took a bold stand and without being perturbed by the possible adverse reaction of the British Indian Government, asserted that the Indians have a right to racial equality. In order to put the feelings of his fellow countrymen about this controvertial subject of racial equality on record, he moved an amendment to Ilbert Bill for the extension of Jury trial to Indians in all sessions cases, giving the defendant the option of claiming a Jury. (I) In March, 1884, a new political organisation was formed known as 'The Indian Union' under the Presidentship of Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh of Darbhanga Raj with W.C. Bonerjee, (who later on became the first President of the Indian National Congress) as its Secretary. The second National Conference, which was held at Calcutta in 1885, was sponsored by several political organisations, including 'The Indian Union' led by Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh. While taking a leading part in the deliberations of this conference, he also became the Chairman of the select committtee, set up by it, for drafting a constitution for the proposed expanded Provincial Legislative Councils.(2) It is very significant and interesting to note that while Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh, in his capacity as thePresident of 'The Indian Union' was actively participating in the national conference at Calcutta in 1885, W. C. Bonerjee, the secretary of 'The Indian Union' was presiding over the first meeting of the Indian National Congress in Bombay.

Thus , it would not be out of place to assume that the Maharaja had taken a very keen interest in the activities of the Indian National Congress from its very inception . At the time of the second annual meeting of the Indian National Congress in 1886 in Calcutta, the Maharaja had contributed a sum of Rs. 2,500 / out of the total expenditure of Rs. 16,000/ . He also sent a letter of sympathy to the Indian National Congress, when it was holding its third annual meeting at Madras in 1887.(3) Before the fourth annual meeting of the Indian National Congress, which was decided to be held at Allahabad, the British Indian Government began to try its best to prevent it. Owing to this attitude of the Government , some members of the Indian National

Congress had become so disheartened that they had even began to plan for its postponment. But the valiant patriotic Maharaja of Darbhanga Raj, was not prepared to accept defeat and without caring for the displeasure of the British authorities, decided to help the organizers of the Indian National Congress, inorder to enable them to hold its annual meeting at Allahabad as decided earlier. He even went to the extent of purchasing the Lowther Castle with its extensive grounds at Allahabad, which enabled the local reception committee of the Indian National Congress to hold its meeting there without any difficulty. According to the Hindu Patriot dated 31st December, 1888, Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh gave all possible help to the reception committee for the Allahabad session of the Indian National Congress, though he could not attend it, due to indisposition. On account of his pro-Congress attitude and help given to it, Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh had to incur the displeasure of the British authorities, which went to the extent of instituting a confidential enquiry regarding his involvement in the Congress movement and his financial help to the Indian National Congress party. The enquiry report, submitted to the Government in 1889 alleged that the Maharaja had donated a sum of Rs. 28,000/- to the Indian National Congress Party .

After the introduction of the reforms of 1892, there was a set back to the Congress movement, as the early enthusiasm of the Congress leaders had cooled down to a great extent with the establishment of the reformed council in 1893. This state of affairs in the Congress party greatly pained Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh, who wrote to his private secretary from Calcutta in deep anguish:"I am sorry to say, that the Congress Movement is very much cooled down. No enthusiasm exists among the followers".(4)

This assertion of the Maharaja regarding the prevailing state of affairs in the Congress party, particularly about the cooling down of the enthusiasm among its members was corroborated in a later government report dated 18th July, 1899, which had also observed that the Congress movement had lost much of its interest to the educated classes since the expansion of the Legislative Council and the election of representative members.(5) On the basis of the above, it can be safely asserted that Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh had made an indepth study of the situation prevailing in the Congress party at that time which showed his great political acumen and capability of understanding the true political situation prevailing in the country.

In recognition of his great and selfless services to the cause of the Indian National Congress, the Maharaja was accorded a right royal reception, when he arrived at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in 1896. A vivid description of this grand spectacle was published in "The Bengalee" dated 2nd January, 1897. Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh died in December, 1898, but before his death, he did not forget to leave instruction for his successor to continue to give all support to the Indian National Congress. Speaking at the Madras Session of the Indian National Congress, its President A. M. Bose, condoled the death of this great supporter of the organisation and referred to the late Maharaja of Darbhanga Raj as "a friend, a generous helper and a warm supporter..... whose value no word ..... can adequately express." A resolution was also adopted in the same session, lauding the great and generous services of the late Maharaja to the Indian National Congress.

This great son of Bihar, could not escape the displeasure of the British rulers, even after his death, as a confidential enquiry was set up at the instance of the then Secretary of State for India (Lord Hamilton)"to ascertain who subscribe among the Princes and noblemen to Congress". This enquiry revealed that the late Lakshmishwar Singh of Darbhanga Raj, had regularly provided pecuniary assistance to the Indian National Congress from the very beginning of its existence.

Thus it can be asserted with ample justification that Bihar should be proud of Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh of Darbhanga Raj, who, though belonging to a much maligned group of Zamindars — always suspected of being diehard supporters of the British rule, was bold enough to extend every possible support to the Indian National Congress, without the least fear of the wrath of the British masters.

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Midnapore Students' Participation in India's Freedom Struggle, 1905-47

Shyamapada Bhowmik

The contribution of the students of Midnapore in the freedom struggle of India was immense. The history of what is known as the student movement, however, is mainly confined in the 20th century. It is largely unknown, to what extent the students in the ancient and middle ages were politically conscious. We learn of the student movement in Bengal, during the Young Bengal period , which manifested itself through the activities of a group of students of the Hindu College who were inspired chiefly, by Derozio. But in the district of Midnapore, the beginning of the student movement can be traced to the early years of the present century, particularly during the agitation concerning the partition of Bengal. This was the first time when a section of the students of the district became involved in active politics. Whether they did so spontaneously or because of the influence of others, is a different issue. But the fact is that by participating in the freedom struggle of India in the early years of this century, the student community emerged as a powerful force in the political arena of Midnapore district.

The partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon struck a heavy blow to the unity and nationalist aspirations of the Bengalees. However, far from being dazed, the students of Midnapore attempted to resist this evil machination of the British rulers with unprecendented strength and determination.In protest against the partition of Bengal, hundreds of students gathered at a huge meeting in the Baily Hall of Midnapore and vowed not to take part in any festive occasion till the partition order was abrogated . At the leadership of Satyendra Nath Bose, one of those who initiated the revolutionary struggle, the students formed a group of volunteers and started the Swadeshi Movement. They were influenced by the discussion of Jnanendra Nath Bose, Gati Krishna Bag and others in their decision to boycott foreign goods. But their activities were not only confined to anti-partition move, they paid attention to the protection of the interests of students as well. They stood by the poor students by establishing a students' fund at Midnapore. This care and sympathy for the needy students added a new dimension to the student movement. However, their chief fight was against the British colonialists. And so, to protest against the partition of Bengal, the Midnapore students took out a procession on 20 September 1905 and paraded throughout the Midnapore town barefooted. (I) At first the district administration refused to give permission for the procession, apprehending the spread and growth of patriotic feelings among the students. But the administration bent down when Pyari Lal Ghosh himself took responsibilities for the procession. The huge procession and

the national anthem sung in chorus instilled a sense of pride and enthusiasm in the masses . Similar processions were taken out by students at Danton, Khirpai, Mahisadal, Ghatal, Contai and many other towns and villages of the district. The whole student community of Midnapore district observed 'ashouch'— (abstinence, fast etc.) as a form of protest.

At this stage, the forms of protest followed by the students of Midnapore were similar to those of the Indian National Congress. The students' protests were both of violent and non-violent nature. As there was sincere amity between the Hindus and the Muslims, the Hindu students joined in the festival of Id— in preaching Swadeshi. The students, from five central points of the town, delivered speeches, sung the national anthem and in this way attempted to inspire the people gathered in those meetings with nationalistic feelings. Apart from Midnapore, such gatherings were organised at Khirpai, Danton, Panchrol, Ghatal, Mahisadal, Contai, Mirgoda, Byabarta's Hat and elsewhere in the district.(2) On 16 October at dawn, the students of Midnapore, irrespective of caste and creed, took a dip in the Kansabati river, put rakhis on each other's hand and embraced each other. Their cheif pledge was to protect the unity of Bengal and the Bengalees. [3]

As a result of the Swadeshi Movement, the traders selling foreign goods at Midnapore had to face financial losses. For this they brought a criminal suit against the students in the law-courts, as, generally, the students also used to organise picketing in front of their shops. But fortunately for the students, the lawyers of Midnapore court sided with the students. At last, the businessmen were forced to withdraw all the cases, paying a compensation of Rs. one thousand as well as apologizing before the students in public.[4] It was a victory of the forces of patriotism. After this incident no trader of Midnapore, dared to sell foreign goods openly . The Swadeshi Movement succeeded in spreading far and wide because of the sacrifice and determination of the students.

The student movement in Midnapore district was generally peaceful and non-violent , however, occasionally it turned violent, too. The more active among the students went underground in order to strengthen the revolutionary organisations. Those who were vocal against the Carlyle circular of the British came to be known as revolutionaries later.[5] It is difficult to ascertain the number of students who joined the Anushilan Samity, Jugantar and other revolutionary organisations. For, they conducted their activities secretly. Numerous students were killed in police firing. The young students took part in physical exercises and training . A very well-known example was Khsudiram Bose who was a student of Midnapore Collegiate School and an active member of a secret society. As a vanguard of the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements of Midnapore, his sacrifice for the liberation of the motherland was an inspiration to all the students .[6]

When the partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911, this phase of the student movement came to an end. Thereafter although there was a lull in the political activities of the students, there occurred occasional outbrust of resentment among them. However, the student movement in Midnapore got a new lease of life when the non-cooperation movement gained momentum.
In spite of the lack of any familiarity and experi

ence of the method of Non-Cooperation Movement, the way of the Midnapore students conducted themselves was really praise-worthy . The active participation of female students in this movement was also noteworthy. At that time, the number of female students in the whole district was negligible And yet, they joined with the male students in the nationalist movement.

The intense desire for self - sacrifice among the youth that characterized the early stage of revolutionary activities was again noticed in 1924. At that time all the schools of Midnapore town had to join in 'Boys' Scouts, and all the scouts had to take an oath expressing their loyalty to 'God' , and to the king and the country. They had grave doubts about pledging allegiance to a foreign ruler. They protested against it but were punished.(7) As a matter of fact, these young minds were deeply moved by the trend of sacrifice and suffering that dominated people's minds from 1921 onwards. The youth of the district was not ready to be fettered. They were eager to have a taste of freedom. One day five adolescent students of Midnapore (Parimal Kr. Roy, Pulin Behari Maity, Birendra Nath Maji, Santosh Kr. Mishra and Haripada Bhowmik) took a vow with the Gita in their hands that they would give up their lives for the sake of the motherland. Their united endeavour was embodied in the shape of a 'Milan Mandir' which was established at the Town School. They were joined by another enthusiastic student, Prafulla Kr. Tripathi. Soon they established Midnapore Juba Sangha . Financial help was extended to the students by Debandra Lal Khan and Dr. Subodh Kumar Bose, a brother of the martyr Satyendra. The leaders of the Youth Movement in Calcutta were contacted and Midnapore Juba Samity was established. (8)

In 1928 Dinesh Chandra Gupta of B.V. Group came to Midnapore and as a student of Midnapore College tried to widen his area of influence. Kshiro Kumar Datta, a well-known activist of Anushila Samity, was admitted to Midnapore College, also started to organise a revolutionary society. The students of Midnapore were deeply inspired in the devotion to the country by the visit to Midnapore of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Maulavi Jalaluddi Hashemi and Dr. Subodh Chandra Bose in 1929.(9)

The students played a glorious role in the Civil Disobedience Movement in Midnapore. The students' protest against police atrocities centred chiefly in organising picketing in front of schools and colleges which totally paralysed the normal functioning of educational institutions. The Civil Disobedience Movement started in Midnapore on 6 April 1930. The students of Midnapore, Contai, Tamluk and other towns associated themselves in Civil Disobedience Movement. In Kalikapur, Mahisbathan, Tamluk and Contai sub-divisions of this district, the students actively participated in mobilising public opinion against the Salt Act .(10) Moreover, they also came forward in large numbers in selling journals and booklets containing patriotic emotions and ideas.

A truely spectacular role was played by the students of Tamluk town. At that time the late communist leader Biswanath Mukherjee was an activist of the student movement observes: In this district, Tamluk and Contai sub-division witnessed the most powerful manifestation of it. In Tamluk sub-division, not just the students and the youth belonging to the middle class, but hundreds of thousands of cultivators joined this movement... It was led by Ajay Mukherjee, Satish Samanta and their followers".[11]

During those days the students of Midnapore not only joined the mammoth meetings and processions, not only put forth their names in the volunteers' lists, not only hawked the Ananda Bazar Patrika , but plunged themselves totally in the national struggle for freedom. They succeeded in organising a general strike in all the high schools of the district and, in spite of heavy pressure by the British Government,forced the schools to remain closed for six months at a stretch . In this way hundreads of students of this district directly involved themselves in the Civil Disobedience Movement. At that time Biswanath Mukherjee, even though a student of First Class (equivalent to classX at present) , was an excellent orator. [12]

From 1933 to 1937, the students of the district had to live almost in strangulating conditions. The streets if Midnapore town wore a deserted look after sun-set. People had to move about with identity cards distributed from the police stations. For, a reign of terror was let loose in Midnapore as a consequence of the killings of three British District Magistrates. The students of Midnapore College were being tortured ruthlessly. Most of them ran away in terror. The College was all but empty-there were only 118 students. The handful of students. Who resided at the town then had to walk through the streets with white, green and red cards. Those who had white cards were regarded as harmless. Those carrying green cards were considered to be suspicious. But the students given red cards were regarded as dangerous. The colour of the card to be allotted to a particular student was decided by the men of the intelligence branch. [13] During these days notable among the active participants in the student movement in this district were Anil Kundu, Anata Maji, Anil De, Hiranmoy Pati, Anil Bhanja, Saiyad Ali Hussain etc.

After being released from jail , many young revolutionaries embraced communism. Among the students some were the followers of N.N. Roy, some of Soumen Tagore, some others were supporters of the Labour Party, and yet others belonged to the socialist Group. But irrespective of their different ideological allegiances, each of them had a similar perception of freedom, not through terrorist tactics, but through anti-imperial student movement. For, the history of the terrorist movement of the whole world have conclusively proved that the rational analysis of the processes of the development of society, the way to freedom, the ability to present an alternative socialist structure, cannot be found in parochialistic terrorism, alienated from the mainstream of socio-economic struggle. So a need for well-organised student movement was strongly felt at that time. The All India Students' Federation and its branch Bengal Provincial Students' Federation were born in this context. [14] The militant student leader of Midnapore, Biswanath Mukherjee was elected as secretary of the latter. This students' organisation had a well-atriculated constitution and a programme which were virtually a students' version of the then banned Communist Party of India. Of course,the problems and demands of the students themselves were given adequate importance. Indeed, the contemporary students of Bengal became more and more aware of the present and the future of the country. They were worried over the exploitation, torture and conspiracy of the alien imperial rulers and the resultant miserable economic condition of the country.

In 1939 the students of Midnapore College started study circles among themselves in four

groups and planned to conduct movements and to form various organisations. They undertook various social programmes to make the student activists popular among the masses. They picked up students from poor families like those of the sweepers, rickshaw-pullers and coachmen and distributed books, slates, pencils, kerosene etc. among them. They also visited their housses to give free tuition to them. Along with these measures they also formed poor Students' Relief Committee and arranged for food and lodging for needy students; ultimately a hostel for the very poor students was established at Kotbazar. The student-activists collected rice and financial donations from the residents of the town and its adjacent areas. Midnapore District Students' Cultural Association was established and various competitions were organised under the auspices of this associaion.[15] As a result, the activities of the student movement won popularity and a close relationship was formed between them and the residents of the town. The membership of the Students Federation also gradually increased.

The active members of the Students Federation assembled on the roof of the treasury of the Raja of Narajol and formed with the students of Midnapore town and Kharagpur — an organising committee of the Midnapore District Students Federation in September 1939. The meeting was presided over by Chhaya Gupta, a college student, while Ananta Maji was elected as Secretary. Barin Roy the then editor/secretary of Chatra Abhiyan and the Provincial Secretary of Girls Student Committee Santi Sarkar (now Bose) were present in that convention and explained the programmes of the Students' Federation. This meeting adopted the resolution of launching a movement, under the aegis of All India Students Federation, to win the right to form a union at Midnapore College. This movement turned into a united demand of all students. Posters began to be pasted on walls, picketing came to be organised. The demand of the right to form a students' union at Midnapore College was placed before the college principal. A strike was observed too, in support of this demand. This probably was the first successful strike observed by the students of Midnapore district, on the basis of almost unanimous demand of the students At last the Principal, Bankim Das Banerjee, conceded the students' demands regarding the right to form union and to hold an election. Indubhusan Dasgupta, the district Secretary Students Federation was elected as the General Secretary of the Students' Union of the college. The first district conference of the Students Federation was held in 1940 at Midnapore .[16] The problems of the students and the national situation were discussed in the conference. It may be mentioned here that the demand for forming students' union at Midnapore Collegiate School was also conceded to during this time.[17]

Mostly , the students coming from the countryside but living within the urban area took a more active part in the students' movement in Midnapore district. This was possible because first, these students, far away from their parents living at villages, could devote themselves to thinking and acting independently; secondly, they could procure and go through books, especially on Marxist thought , came into contact with the leaders of various political ideas and doctrines more easily, and could discuss various issues with them. Their programmes were to organise and educate themselves, to take out processions and hold protest meetings, to distribute pam

phlets, to deliver speeches in streetcorner meetings and to win sympathy and patronage from intellectuals and political leaders.

In pre-Independence days the number of Muslim students were very few in the district. The Muslim League tried to influence them, but could not gain full success. On the contrary they worked for the Students Federation . In 1937-38, Syaid Ali Hussain was one of the leaders of the student movement. The communal virus could not enter into the communal harmony among the students. It is true that the Muslim students did not take part in the Salt Satyagraha as spontaneously as they did in the Non-Cooperation Movement. However, they undertook a few programmes here and there in a less organised way. For instance, the students of Dacca Muslim Hall sent volunteers to Contai to participate in the Salt Satyagraha .[18] When the two notorious bootlickers of the British imperialism in Midnapore, Samir Sen, I.C.S. and Khawja Mohammad Kaisar, I.P.S., provoked the Muslims to rebel against the Indian National Congress, the students of the Muslim community did not respond to that provocation. However, it must be conceded that communal feelings were growing among the leaders. [19]

The students all over the country participated in the Quit India Movement of August 1942 in a big way. According to the finding of the Congress Inquiry Committee, the manner in which the students of all ages and all communities took part in this movement was unprecedented. The students of Midnapore too, were not lagging behing in this; thousands of students from Contai, Tamluk, Mahisadal, Sutahata , Nandigram,Panskura, Mayna and other sub-divisions and police station areas joined this movement spontaneously. Like never before, they took part in such militant activities as capturing po lice stations and government offices, destroying railways and dislocating the post and telegraph activities. Moreover, it may reasonably be guessed that women could not remain confined within their four walls after the self-sacrifice of an old woman like Matangini Hazra. Although the Students Federation opposed the Quit India Movement in principle, many members of this organisation could not keep themselves isolated from this mass movement and even some of them sacrificed their lives. [20]

The female students of Midnapore district played no less significant a role in the freedom struggle of India. A list of the names of those female students and workers who joined the communist party and were active in the female students' front in Midnapore district can be found in the reminiscences of Saroj Mukherjee. [21] It includes Sadhana Patra, Bimala Maji, Pramila Patra, Nirmala Sanyal and others. A number of women also participated in the revolutionary struggles in this district. For instance, Usha Sen was associated with the murder of the magistrate Burge. They were either students, or inspired with revolutionary fervour by the students.[22] Although less in number, the female students of Midnapore were an inseparable part of the organised student movement as a whole. At that time, the participation of female students undoubtedly added a new dimension to the student movement of this district.

On 13 April 1942, an all-party meeting at the University Institute Hall gave birth to 'Calcutta Women's self-defence Organising Committee". Before long, many branches of this committee were established in many towns and villages of

Midnapore. The chief purposes of this organisation were: to conduct various propaganda missions, to organise the acts of civil defence, to arrange shelters for homeless and destitute people , to collect food, garments and money, to run fair price shops selling rice, dal— etc.which were established by the district board or cooperative societies or with the assistance from the government, to form an organisation of women having training in Ju-Jitsu or lathi-welding etc,to form a defence party of women to protect themselves from atrocities and to provide help during guerrilla warfares, to cooperate in "Grow more" movements etc.[23] Manikuntala Sen reminisces that the first district conference of the women's self-defence committee was held at Tamluk. Later a primary unit of this Committee was formed in each of the places like Keshpur, Daspur, Salbani, Ghatal, etc. For the expansion of this committee Manikuntala Sen, Gita Mukherjee, Usha Chakraborty, Sadhana Patra, Batasi and others played major roles. The district conference was attended by Pratima Banerjee and a few other female students of Midnapore college. The district committee was formed at Tamluk itself .[24] Anupama Pattnayak was elected as District Secretary.

During the famine a memorable event of the same period was a massive 'Bhukha Michil' (procession of the hungry, 17 March 1943) led up to the Legislative Assembly and organised by 'the Women's self-defence Committee' with a demand for food as well as in protest against price rises. The residents of Calcutta were shocked at the sight of destitute mothers with their dying babies, all emaciated and barely clad in torn, worn-out fragments of clothes. Emulating this example, a "Bhukha Michil" was also organised by women activists of the Communists Party .

Contemporaneous with this, a strong anti-Fascist movement was also conducted [25]. Many of the students of Midnapore were then in the forefront of all these movements and processions.

Thus during 1905-47, the students of Midnapore district played the most crucial role in the freedom struggle of India. The breadth, intensity and depth of their movement not only frightened the British but also caused panic among the indigenous classes having vested interests. It may reasonably be observed that both the positive and the negative aspects of the student movement of the pre-independence era will guide the coming generations of Midnapore in their future struggles.

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