

The Representation of Dalits in the History of Bengal from Ancient to Medieval Period (Around 1000 B.C.-1757 A.D.)

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the representation of Dalits in Bengal in ancient and medieval period through a subaltern intervention in institutionalized historiography. The paper will investigate the narratives of established historians of ancient and medieval history of Bengal like R.C. Majumdar, Nitish Sengupta, Niharranjan Roy, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Richard M. Eaton and others, from a subaltern perspective in order to discover the missing Bengali Dalit history. It will show through Foucault's concept of Right, Power and Knowledge/Truth triangle how the history of the underprivileged is subverted by institutional hegemony. In a caste-ridden Vedic society, there were prohibitions concerning sacred Vedic texts and Hindu temples that denied accessibility to *Shudras* or untouchables. These prohibitions interrelate, reinforce and complement each other to form a complex web of power and desire to dominate the untouchables in order to reproduce labour power. Vedic society possessed another principle of exclusion—division in society that rejected *Shudras* and appropriated them by the proposition of “reason” to justify Vedic texts and rituals; and “folly” of the untouchable's previous birth (much like the Divine Right of the Kings) for which he/she has been degenerated in his/her present life. The priests and Aryan kings actually created what Althusser calls common people's “imaginary transposition of the real conditions of existence in order to ‘represent to themselves’ their real conditions of existence.” By fortifying this discrimination the Aryans encounter with the culture of Bengal, which was dominated by indigenous cultural signifiers like the worship of local goddesses, the dialects of ancient Bengal, non-Brahmanic social structure (counter to Manu), and so on, saw loss of representation of the Bengali Dalit voice in the process. This happened due to intermingling of cultures where non-Aryans deities were adopted in the Aryan pantheon and certain strict rules slackened to incorporate non-Aryan Bengali culture. This lost narrative due to hybridization of cultures is evident in texts like the *Caryapadas*, *Mangal Kabyas*, and other extant literary compositions of the time. The paper attempts to give a glimpse of that history which was in subaltern aphasia.

Keywords: Bengali Dalits; subaltern; representation; hegemony; Dalit history.

“Probably the most common and naïve intuition about literature is that it is a ‘representation of life.’” (Mitchell 11)

The word “representation” has been interpreted by different philosophers and academics in different ways. Great ancient philosophers like Aristotle and Plato considered “literature” simply as one form of “representation”. Plato regarded literature as “a representation of life” (Mitchell 14) but cautioned his disciples that this representation creates worlds of illusion and therefore this representation needs to be controlled and monitoredⁱ. As Mimesisⁱⁱ is natural to man, Aristotle considered representation is essential for human learning. He analyzed “representation” in three ways:

Aristotle says that representation differs from one another in three ways: in object, manner and means. The “object” is that which is represented; the “manner” is the way in which it is represented; the means is the material that is used. (Mitchell 13)

Labour is reproduced only to serve the upper-caste people and it is produced by the *ideological state apparatuses*ⁱⁱⁱ by the privileged class (here upper-caste) from the ancient time in Indian society. So, the lower-caste people who are oppressed socio-economically or politically in modern context by the upper-caste people on the basis of caste discrimination or by birth are called Dalits.

Coming back to Foucault’s “rules of exclusion” in modern society it is found to have a replica in Vedic society too. In a caste-ridden Vedic society, there were also different types of prohibitions – concerning sacred objects such as Vedic texts and Hindu temples that denied accessibility to *Shudras* or untouchables; different Vedic rituals such as different sacrificial or performing rites or feast of Brahamanas (*Brahmana Bhoj*) were also inaccessible^{iv} to lower-caste Hindus. It was the privileged or exclusive right of Brahamanas to read sacred Hindu texts and talk about sacred Hindu texts and rituals which totally excluded the Shudras. These prohibitions interrelate, reinforce and complement each other to form a complex web of power and desire to dominate the untouchables in order to reproduce labour power. Vedic society possesses another principle of exclusion – segregation of Shudras from society – and appropriated them by the proposition of “reason” to justify Vedic texts and rituals. This justification is brought about by the argument that the “folly” of an untouchable’s previous birth has made him/her degenerated in this present life.

In ancient and medieval period in India, the priests and Aryan kings actually created common people’s “imaginary transposition of the real conditions of existence in order to ‘represent to themselves’ their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 163) like what Althusser says in the essay “Ideological State Apparatuses” that in the 18th century priests or despots forged beautiful lies (like Divine Right of Kings) so that in the belief

that they were obeying God, people would in fact obey the priests and despots, who are usually in alliance with those who enforce this imposture (163). In fact, a few cynical people try to enslave other minds by dominating their imagination in order to exploit the mass because ideology is nothing but imaginary representation of the real conditions of men in the relations of production in society.

Aryans after their settlement in the Northern part of India by defeating Dravidians planned to oppress the enslaved Dravidians perpetually by labeling them *Shudras* and the *ideological state apparatus* started its operation from the *RigVeda*. The seed of the oppression of Dalit is sown in *Purushasukta* of *Rig Veda* in which the following hymn clearly indicates the position of four castes in Aryan society:

Brahmnoasayamukamasti
Bahu rajanayahkruta
Urutadasayyadvaishya
Padabhyamsudroajayat. (Rig Veda X. 90)

According to the hymn, Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Shudras were born from four different parts of Brahma.^v Brahmanas were born from the mouth of *Brahma*, the *Kshatriyas* from his shoulder and the *Vaisyas* from his thighs and the *Shudras* from his feet. Hence, the above scripture indicates the supremacy of Brahmanas as they were created from the head of Brahma and inferiority of *Shudras* who were the outcome of Brahma's feet. This theory of *Chaturvarna* is further re-established in *Manusmriti*:

But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds he caused the *Brahmana*, the *Kshatriya*, the *Vaishya* and the *Sudra* to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs and his feet. (Chap 1. Shloka no. 31, 1)

Manu further identifies the jobs assigned to each caste by his "self-existent (Svayambhu) which is unknowable and unfathomable." (Chap. 1, Shloka no. 3, 1):

... To Brahmanas he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit, for others, giving and accepting (of alms). The *Kshatriya* he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures. The *Vaishya* to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money and to cultivate land. One occupation only the lord prescribed to the *Sudra*, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes. (Chap. 1, Shloka no. 88-91, 3)

The early history of Bengal was not recorded before the rise of Gaur kingdom under Sasanka. Scholars of Ancient Bengal claimed that the caste system was established

in Bengal after Aryanization and the aboriginal people of ancient Bengal were despised by the Aryan Brahmanas living in the northern part of India. Its evidence can be found in Buddhist and Jaina literary sources. As for example, the *Jaina Sutras* describe the people of Radha or Rar (Burdwan and Purulia) as savage and uncultured. *Acharanga Sutra* represents the people of Rar as brutal and savage who set dogs upon mendicants.

From twelfth to fourteenth century, the *Vrhaddharma Purana* and the *Brahmavaivarta Purana* provide some interesting information which identifies a different caste division in Bengal from that of the Northern part of India. There was no separate mention of Kshatriya and Vaisya caste in Bengal. Apart from Brahmanas all other castes are regarded as the Shudras and were further divided into Sat and Asat categories. There were thirty-six sub-castes and mixed castes of Shudras. This type of classification was rare elsewhere in India.

Promodbaran Biswas in his research article “Bangler Ospishyota: Jol-Chol Pratha O Rajniti” (“Untouchability of Bengal: Jol-Chol Custom and Politics”) explains how “*Jol-Chol* and *Jol-Achol* custom” was initiated by a Sanskrit Brahmana and scholar Smarta Bhattacharya Raghunandana^{vi} in order to make a typical evolution of Hinduism. Raghunandan claimed that there were two castes in Bengal-Brahmana and Shudras. He further divided the Shudras into two categories- *Sat Shudra* and *Asat Shudra*. He opined that those Shudras would be called *Sat Shudras* who would abide by the rules, customs in their life like a Brahmana and a Brahmana could take their water, foods and participate in their marriage and other ceremonies. They would be categorized as *Jol-Chol*. Those Shudras who would follow Buddhist instead of Brahmana customs in their life would be called *Asat Shudras*. A Brahmana could not take their water, food, participate in their ceremonies. So, *Asat-Shudras* would become *Jol-Achol*. Kayastha, Karmakar, Kumbhakar, Dhopa, Gandhabanik, Kapli, Saha etc. belonged to *Jol-Chol* or *Sat Shudras* whereas Chandal, Pod, Kaivarta, Santhal, Bagdi, Hari, Dom, Chamar and so on were categorized as *Asat Shudras* or *Jol-Achol*. So, in the sixteenth century, a clear collision between Hinduism and Buddhism is seen when the agents of orthodox Brahmanism plotted to ex-communicate the followers of Buddhist rituals by labeling them *Asat Shudra* or *Jol Achol*. However, orthodox Brahmanism could not wipe out the culture inherent in religious practices of the aboriginals and Buddhists, instead an intermingled culture had been prevalent in ancient Bengal which bore the traits of orthodox Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and aboriginals and later it also included Islamic traits in the medieval period. After Aryan settlement in Bengal, a synthesis or hybridity of Aryan Brahmanical culture and that of aboriginal people of Bengal had been in a gradual process. In Bengal, this synthesis had begun probably in the fifth or sixth century when Aryan Brahmanical religion had a stronger force.

But that process of cultural hybridity was, of course, not without conflict. It was probably because the vast majority of people in Bengal belonging to the lower castes never accepted orthodox Hinduism whole-heartedly like the people of North India. As for example, the first recorded conflict between such orthodoxy and lower-caste liberalism in Bengal or the first recorded Dalit resistance in ancient history of Bengal was the *Kaibarta Rebellion*^{vii} in 1070 A.D. Consequently, caste discrimination in Bengal was not as strict as in *Aryavarta* (North India) or *Dravida* (South India). Dominance of Buddhism in Bengal from eighth to eleventh century was probably another reason behind it. In order to attract a large number of tribal people from hill and forest Mahayana Buddhism took refuge in Tantricism which deals with secret, mysterious, esoteric incantations which emerge from aboriginal people's belief in magical power or supernaturalism. However, Tantricism has been gradually adopted both in Brahmanism and Buddhism in order to attract aboriginal people. The songs of *Caryapada* were composed by such Tantrik Buddhists influenced either by Buddhism or by Sahajia cult during Sena dynasty. As the kings of Sena dynasty were the patrons of orthodox Hinduism and despised the Buddhist for having other religious identity, they were not in the favour of the Kings of Sena dynasty and excluded themselves from Vedic ambience. Moreover, some poets of *Caryapada* belonged to the people of the lower castes who had no access to Vedic literature but enjoyed the status of composing texts in *Caryapada* because the early writers of the songs were reared in casteless atmosphere under the Buddhist influence during Pala dynasty. For the very reason some low-caste composers had accessibility to the *Caryapada* and some characters labeled as untouchables or lower castes like *Dom*, *Sabar*, *Vyadh* (hunter), *Jale* (fishermen) have got place in the songs of *Caryapada*. In Sena dynasty, the upper-castes excluded the lower castes as untouchables and compelled them to live outside the city:

Nagar bahira Dombitoharikuria
Choi choijaho so Brahmonaria. (*Caryagiti*10)

These lines reveal that in this period lower-caste people like Dom lived outside a city so that the upper-caste Brahmanas did not get touched by the untouchables. A poverty-stricken lower caste family's predicament is also portrayed in *Caryagiti* number 33:

Talamatomorghaarnahiparabeshi
Haritobhatnahinitiabeshi.

Here probably a lower caste woman moans that her isolated house is located at the citadel and she has no neighbour nearby. She has no rice in her pot but the relatives or guests regularly visit her family.

Different songs of *Caryapada* reveal that in a caste-ridden society, the lower caste people suffered from economic deprivation and depended on menial labour in exchange of minimum wage to earn their livelihood. As for example, the people belonging to Dom

community weave handloom and make baskets of cane (*Caryagiti* 10), some of them were boatmen and took Kari or Buri (local medium of exchange at that time) as fare (14). Kapaliks also took the profession of dramatist for minimum remuneration. Dr. Nirmal Das in his *Caryagiti Parikarma* remarks:

Among other occupations [of the lower-caste people of that time], wine merchant (3), hunter (6 & 23), wood cutter and carpenter (5 & 45), weaver (25 & 26) are referred in *Caryapada*. From these occupations, it is understood that all lower-caste people were working class people, menial labour instead of intellectual activities were the main capital of their occupations. (98) [Translation mine from Bengali]

Though the lower-caste people were involved in menial labour and excluded from intellectual activities, Brahmanas established the idols of *Hari*, *Har*, *Bramha* in their household and lived an honourable and affluent life by reading and discussing sacred Vedic texts and by practicing priest hood (Das 47). The lower-caste people sometimes took the path of burglary and dacoity^{viii} to earn their livelihood.

Inter-caste marriage was strictly prohibited during Sena dynasty but the composers of *Caryagiti* influenced by Sahajia cult did not oppose inter-caste marriage. In *Carayagiti* 19, a Brahmana boy's lustful love for a lower-caste woman belonging to Dom community and his ultimate marriage with her was portrayed as means of attaining *Moksha* (Salvation) for the Brahmana boy by removing the ignorance of the Dom girl:

Dombi-ersange jo joirotto.
Khanah n chara o sahajounmatto.

These lines reveal the passionate love of a Brahmana boy for his newly wedded bride, a Dom girl. When the Brahmana boy is involved in physical love with the Dom girl at night, this amorous madness does not leave him for a moment.

During the rule of the Sena Dynasty the lower caste people of Bengal were suffocated in the rigid caste system imposed by the Brahmanas. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khilji^{ix} brought alternative religious ideology to the lower caste people of Bengal by bringing Islam to them. During the rule of Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1519 A.D.), wandering dervishes or peers (also called *qalanders*) took the responsibility of preaching Islam in Bengal. *Peers* or *qalanders* did not despise local Hindu gods and goddess or more specifically popular Hindu culture; instead they tried to infuse local Hindu tradition and practices into Islam. Consequently, a large number of lower caste Hindus were converted into Islam for socio-economic emancipation^x. Despite a large number of conversions of the lower caste Hindu people into Islam, many lower-caste Hindu people were in dilemma at that time. They were torn between the oppression of a caste-ridden orthodox Hinduism on one hand

and on the other hand, hesitant of giving up their forefather's religion. At that time, Shri Chaitanya (1485-1534) showed them a way out from their confusion. He preached a new form of *Vaishnavism*^{xi} which attracted the people of all castes and religions. "The path was open to Brahmins or Chandals or Yavanas (Muslim) alike. Some Muslims also came under his influence, among them, his favourite disciple [was] Haridas." (Sengupta 96) The Sufis^{xii} and *Vaishnava* poets dealt with the common philosophical aspects of both communities. In course of time the people of Bengal share common rituals such as Satyanarayan (Satya Peer for Muslims),^{xiii} in Sunderban region the worship of Dakshin Roy (combination of a Muslim saint and a Hindu God) and Bonobibi^{xiv}, and seeking prayer or blessings from the shrines of Peer Babas in rural Bengal.

This intermingling of cultural traits of different religions and aboriginals had created a new culture in Bengal which shaped the *Mangal Kabyas* during Medieval period. In this period, Hinduism with its orthodoxy and caste system had become the dominant religion in Bengal. Consequently, the aboriginals of Bengal, Buddhists and Jains struggled to establish their gods, goddesses and religious practices in the hybridized culture of Bengali society due to the Aryan hegemony of orthodox Hinduism. This struggle of establishment and ultimate inclusion of local gods and goddesses into the paradigm of dominant Aryan gods and goddesses was the main theme of *Mangal Kabyas*. These *Mangal Kabyas* also point out that the orthodox Hinduism patronized by Sena Dynasty did not evade the mass demand of inclusion of local gods and goddesses into that prototype.

Among the *Mangal Kabyas*, three *Mangal Kabyas* had become legendary from sixteenth to eighteenth century: *Manasa Mangal*, *Chandi Mangal* and *Dharma Mangal*. All these *Mangal Kabyas* had been written by various writers but Bijay Gupta's *Manasa Mangal*, Kabikankan Mukunduram's *Chandi Mangal* and Ghanaram Chakraborty's *Dharma Mangal* had become very famous. All these *Mangal Kabyas* depict the struggle of establishment of the non-Aryan local gods and goddesses in the society of Bengal. In *Manasa Mangal*, Manasa, snake-goddess, struggles to be established in elite Hindu society by the strong disapproval of her worship by a rich merchant and a devout of Shiva^{xv} named Chand Saudagar. His despise and contempt for a non-Aryan goddess clearly reveals the contempt of upper-caste Bengalis to include a local goddess in their divine ambit. Manasa's revenge to ruin Chand's life by killing his seven sons and destroying his cargos may be interpreted as a symbol of local people's anger and threat of vehement revenge for the negation of their popular demand by the orthodox Hindu society. In the end Chand's ultimate surrender to goddess Manasa implies the triumph of lower-caste people over Brahmanic hegemony.

Similar kind of story is repeated in the second part of *Chandi Mangal* when Dhanapati, a rich merchant and worshipper of Shiva like Chand Saudagar kicks the pot of goddess

Chandi and consequent vehement revenge by the goddess to get him imprisoned by the King of Sinhala. Later he was restored by his son Srimanta who was a worshipper of Chandi. Ultimately Dhanapati had also become an ardent worshipper of Chandi at the end of the story.

Dharma Mangal had a slightly different story from the above two but it also depicts the benevolence of the god Dharma on two kings: King Harish Chandra in the first part and king Karna Sen in the second part. Both the kings were the symbolical icons of orthodox Hinduism but they had got their successors by the blessing of god Dharma who did not hold an important place in pantheon of the upper-caste Hindu household gods in Bengal.

This struggle of the lower caste people in Bengal had been portrayed indistinctly by the institutionalized historiographers and no conscious effort yet has been made by them to write a complete history of Bengal from the subaltern point of view. Subaltern historians were satisfied only to write a fragmentary, incoherent history of modern India which may be a suggestion that an alternative history can be written on similar lines like “the project of provincializing “Europe””^{xvi} proposed by Dipesh Chakrabarty. However, a complete and coherent history of Bengal (or in a broader aspect India) ought to be written based on Dalit or Subaltern consciousness to reveal the socio-economic and religious life of the lower-caste people of Bengal. The historians may get sources of their writing from the literary texts available in ancient and medieval period like *Carya Pada* and *Mangal Kabyas* which are the testimonials of a complex culture of Bengal and ultimate success of the lower-caste people of Bengal after a long struggle of their cultural and religious existence to subvert orthodox Hinduism patronized by Sena Dynasty which imposed “rules of exclusion” along with the Aryan Brahmanas like Smarta Bhattacharya Raghunandana upon the Dalits of Bengal to perpetuate the ideology of orthodox Brahmanism and to reproduce the production of menial labour. However, to bring out this hidden narrative from a state of aphasia to a state of reckoning in academic institutions and into common discourse is not only difficult but also challenging. The challenge for a historian, in this case, is to intervene as well as to destabilize a prevalent set up is daunting but the appropriation is needed. Dalit history has for long been in the dark, especially in Bengal, and the light at the end of the tunnel is just becoming visible by the conscious efforts of the Bengali Dalit writers like Manohar Mouli Biswas, Jatin Bala, Achinta Biswas, Kapil Krishna Thakur by deciphering Dalit history from the prominent Bengali literary texts and by mingling history with fiction in their literary works.

Notes

ⁱ Representations, Plato reasoned, are mere substitutes for the things themselves; even worse, they may be false or illusory substitutes that stir up antisocial emotions (violence or weakness), and they may represent bad persons and actions, encouraging imitation of evil. Only certain kinds of representations, carefully controlled by the state, were to be permitted into Plato's republic of rational value. (Mitchell 14-15)

ⁱⁱIn his *Poetics*, Aristotle defines poetry as an imitation of human action. By "imitation" he means something like "representation", in its root sense: the poem imitates by taking an instance of human action and re-presenting it in a new "medium" or material—that of words. (Abrams 123)

ⁱⁱⁱ According to a famous French Marxist Louis Althusser, the state has no meaning except as a function of State Power (Repressive State Apparatus or RSA) but a state functions both by its Repressive State Apparatus such as the government, the police, the Army, the Courts, the Prisons etc. and by its Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) such as the Religious ISA, the Educational ISA, the Family ISA, the Legal ISA, the Cultural ISA, the Communications ISA and so on.

Three main differences between RSA and ISAs are:

There is one RSA but there is a plurality in ISAs; RSA belongs to public domain while ISAs belong to private domain and RSA functions primarily by violence and secondarily by ideology while ISAs function mainly by ideology and occasionally by Violence.

^{iv} In *The Ramayana*, *Shambuka*, a Shudra boy was killed by Rama (the hero of the epic) when the hungry boy came to participate in a feast arranged by Rama for Brahmana.

^vBrahma is the creator God in the Trimurti of Hinduism. He has four faces (Sullivan 85-86). Brahma is also known as Svyambhu (self-born) or vagisya (lord of speech). He is believed to be the creator of the four *Vedas*, one from each of his mouths.

^{vi} Raghunandana was a great Sanskrit scholar of Bengal in the 16th century. He wrote 28 *Smriti* digests on civil law and rituals; they are collectively known as *Astavimsati-tattva*.

^{vii} Sandhyakar Nandi's *Ramacharita* is the only recorded source of that revolution, though in Baidyadeb's *Karmaulli Pat*, Madan Pal's *Manhali Patta*, and Bhogbarman's *Belba Patta* the Kaibarta rebellion is referred. It was "a well-organized rebellion by a confederacy of lower castes led by Divya, an official of the *Kaivarta* (fisherman) caste." (Sengupta 37) Divya defeated and killed Mahipala II and captured Barendra or North Bengal. According to some historians, this rebellion was a mutiny of an ambitious Divya to acquire power but Shukla Sarkar in her article *Kaibarta Rebellion* argues that it was not possible for Divya to acquire power without spontaneous support of the common people. *Kaibartas* were farmers and fishermen and belonged to the lower strata of society. Pala kings were Buddhists but they also supported orthodox Brahmanism and its casteism. The supporters of royal power like Sandhyakar Nandi didn't accept the humiliating defeat of Pala dynasty against the lower caste *Kaibartas*. So, he defined Divya, the leader of *Kaibarta Rebellion* as *Dasyu*, *Upadhibrata*, *Kutsit Kaibartya Nripa* and so on.

^{viii}"Kanatcahuriniloadharati." (Caryagiti 2) means that a thief burglars ornament of ear at midnight.

"Au da au dangaladeshluriu." reveals that dacoits (dasyus) looted country.

The wife of Bhusuka, a Carya poet was plundered by a lower-caste *Chandala*: "Niya Gharanichandalaleli" and therefore he was degenerated into a lower-caste Bengali after the

plundering of his wife : “AjiBhusuka Bengali bheli.”From the above statement made by Bhusuka, two points are revealed. Firstly, after the plundering of a high-caste’s wife by a lower caste, the high caste man was also degenerated into lower caste. Secondly, as most of the people of Bengal belonged to the lower -caste communities, untouchables had become synonymous with the Bengalis.

^{ix}The royal patron of orthodox Hinduism in Bengal, the Sena Dynasty was overthrown by a Turkish invader named Muhammad BakhtiarKhilji who conquered Gaur and the capital of Laxmana Sen, Lakshmanvati in 1201. (Sengupta 47)

^xHistorian Richard M. Eaton, however, gives a different viewpoint of converting into Islam of the common people (most of them lower-caste peasants and artisans) of Bengal during the Mughal period:

...the introduction of Mughal rule had little sociopolitical impact beyond making changes of personnel at the apex of a densely populated and highly stratified agrarian order. In these circumstances the local population neither resisted Mughal authority nor adopted religious ideology of the dominant section of the new ruling class, Islam. (186)

^{xi}*Vaishnavism* is one of the major traditions of Hinduism. It is also called *Vishnuism* that consider Vishnu (one of the three main Hindu Gods) as the supreme lord of the world.

^{xii}Influenced by different *Sufi* orders, such as *Qadiriya*, *Chistia*, *Naksabandia*, *Mujaddedia* etc., *Sufism* had made a great impact on the common people of Bengal from 1200 to 1500 A.D. During this period the Sufis of Northern India such as Hazarat Khawja Muinuddin Chisti and Khawja Bahauddin became very popular and they sent their deputies to preach Islam in Bengal. The Sufis did not make any distinction between a convert Muslim and a born Muslim. Sufism also aided in the confluence of the *Murshids*, *Marfats*, *Baul* songs and *Gazir Gaan*.

^{xiii} “According to a myth, a Brahman was advised by god appearing in the guise of a Muslim mendicant to worship SatyaPir. God then appeared to him in the form of Krishna and again suggested he should worship the Pir; and the Brahmin was then convinced to do so.”

(Roy Barman117)

^{xiv} “[In Sunderban area, the local villagers] seek protection by worshipping the tiger god. In this area villagers turn to the Hindu goddess Bonobibi, mother of the forest, and her Muslim consort Dakshin Rai, making an intriguing link between the two religions. Few people set off into the tiger’s territory without making an offering to Bonobibi’s shrine: her blessings protect people from the tiger’s anger. But it is Dakshin Rai who is regarded as the supreme ruler of the Sunderbans, lord of all things whether ghosts or demons, crocodiles or tigers. He is depicted riding on the tiger’s back, and his ability to enter the body of the tiger is legendary. Bonobibi is offered rice, fruit, sweets and flowers, while DakshinRai attracts musicians, who perform with sacred drums around his image.” (Thapar117)

^{xv}Shiva is one of the three main Gods of Hindus.

^{xvi}“The project of provincializing “Europe” refers to a history that does not yet exist...” (Dipesh Chakrabarty 286) ...

“I ask for a history that deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices, the part it plays in collusion with the narratives of

citizenships in assimilating to the projects of the modern state all other possibilities of human solidarity. (Dipesh Chakrabarty 290)

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