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Buddhism and Trade in the Eastern Himalayas: Some Aspects

Babhador Khongdup and Amrendra Kumar Thakur

Despite occasional forays at regional and trans-regional levels, either to study the trade practices or the development of Buddhism in Northeast India and neighbouring West Bengal, the relationship between the development of Buddhism and trade during the pre-colonial period in the Eastern Himalayan region of India has not been focused so far.¹ Thus, this paper aims to bridge this gap in the historical study of pre-colonial Northeast India by studying the relationship between the development of Buddhism and trade mainly from the c. 15th century in the Eastern Himalayan region. The Eastern Himalayan region comprises parts of Nepal, Bhutan, Northern Myanmar, Southeast Tibet and Northeast India. Towards this study, the approaches of Jason Neelis and some other scholars seem appropriate. Jason Neelis, while understanding the relationship between trade practices and the role of Buddhism, has rightly expressed that trade can be understood as a form of exchange that involved the movement of goods and commodities depending on the influence of environmental and geographical conditions and social, cultural and religious factors.² Analysing the view of J. Neelis, it can be said that there is an interconnection between trade and religion. When we talk about the relationship between trade and religion, this link can be seen in Buddhism. Pali Canon mentioned the important role played by traders and merchants in the growth and propagation of Buddhism.³ Merchants and traders received or attained positive acceptance from Buddhism.⁴ In this background, this paper mainly focuses on how trade facilitated the spread of Buddhism and *vice-versa* in the Eastern Himalayas.

The first part of the paper discusses how trade routes, including nodes, links and paths, played a role in spreading Buddhism and expanding trade simultaneously. The second part elaborates upon how Buddhist sites contributed to the growth and development of trade. Retracing of trade routes leads one to identify the Buddhist sites associated with trade.

I

A trade route is loosely defined as a specific configuration of certain links connecting a given set of origin and destination. Trade route usually refers to an extensive coverage between source and destination across the country boundaries, often across the boundaries of the continents, which developed historically over a long period.⁵ Trade routes and urban settlement were closely connected with the spread of Buddhist institutions.⁶ During the early three centuries A.D., the distribution of urban centres and monastic sites reveals the interrelation between the development of urban centres and the expansion of Buddhist institutions. Through a survey, it can be observed from western India to the Northwest and the plains of Ganges that most of the Buddhist monasteries can be noticed along the trade routes.⁷

Similarly, this type of connection can be observed in Northeast India. The social, political and economic life of the people of the Northeast can be strongly linked with the trade routes that existed along the region as a whole. Trade network or trade link in Northeast India is very much favourable to traders and merchants. This can be said by looking into the geographical location of the region. Many trade routes connected the region between Bengal and Assam and other neighbouring areas of the North, such as Tibet, which served as the originating point of trade.

There were three routes from Assam to Bengal, one by water and the other two by land. The river Brahmaputra was an excellent waterway for the movement of vessels. Of the two land routes, one was from Tezpur (Darang district of Assam) to Lakhnauti (the capital of Bengal Sultans) through the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara, in

the north of Brahmaputra; the route from Sibsagar and that of Nowgong-Gauhati, in the south of Brahmaputra, crossing over it, joined this path, respectively, at Tezpur and Barpeta in Kamrup. The other route went from Sibsagar, across the Jayantia hills, to Sonargaon (Dacca) *via* Sylhet and Mymensingh. Travel on this route was favoured by those traders who were interested in sea trade as it was well connected.⁸

In addition, there were numerous mountain passes in the north of Assam leading to Tibet, China, and Afghanistan. Several sources have testified these passes, such as that of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, which mentioned as many as thirty-five passes between Assam and Tibet.⁹ The narrow passes through the hills and mountains that separated Assam from her northern and north-western border countries served as the channels through which trans-border trade flowed. These passes were known as *duars*. According to William Robinson, these *duars* were similar to the 'Ghauts' in many parts of India. He also explained these *duars* as — they are lands adjacent to the passes into the hills. Through these *duars*, the hill men resorted to the plains to barter their products at specifically appointed *haats* or market places.¹⁰

Trade and migration of population have flowed through such passes from very ancient times. People of the hills and the plains of Assam had commercial contacts with the neighbouring countries like that of China through Tibet. Some of these *duars* and the Udalgiri to Lhasa route were also used during the Ahom period, besides others in the Northwest for trade with Tibet.¹¹

There is considerable evidence that show that Assam had many trade networks with Tibet. From Tawang, a road went to Tsona Dzong and thence to Lhasa. The bulk of the Tibetan trade was conveyed over this path to the plain. The Monpas and Sherdukpen acted as middlemen in trade between Assam and Tibet. During the summer months, they visited the Tibetan trading marts, and during winter, they visited the plains of Assam.¹² The Membas of Arunachal Pradesh was another tribe to have trade relations with Tibet and other

neighbouring tribes. It is also noted that the monk participated in the border trade with Tibet.¹³ Hence, trade activities between the Membas and Tibet were beyond commodity exchange, as socio-economic and religious exchange was also seen.

II

The traders terminated their journey at Hajo in Assam. Another important Buddhist site that happened to be an important trade centre frequented by traders from the neighbouring regions was Hajo. Hajo was a village in the district of Kamrup, which lay at a distance of 29 km north-west from the city of Guwahati on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River. Hajo was possibly known as 'Manikuta' as referred to in the *Kalika Purana* and the *Yogini Tantra*. Both of them refer to Manikuta as the place where Lord Vishnu in Hayagriva form is worshipped.¹⁴ Hayagriva Madhava is referred to in some early literature as one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Amongst the Hindu Gods, Hayagriva is considered not that important to have a temple in his name. But in Buddhist Tantras and amongst the Buddhist Gods, Hayagriva has an important place.¹⁵ In Tibet, Hayagriva is considered an important deity and is included in the Mandala or the ritual diagram used to make invocations to Buddha and other deities.¹⁶

It has been a tradition among the Lamas from Tibet, Ladakh and Bhutan to carry scrapping from the rocks in Hajo to their places to be placed beside the dead bodies, for use as a preventive against calamities in life or to be preserved as a treasure of great sanctity in the amulets. The dust from Hajo fetched a high price from the wealthy Tibetans who could not come to the site. The Tibetans have also built the replica of the Hayagriva Madhav temple in four different places for their people in Tibet.¹⁷ Even the sanctity of Hajo is shown by the fact that the first monastery in Tibet was built with the clods of earth from Hajo.¹⁸

It is also noticed that Hajo, which is famous for the Hayagriva Madhava temple, was a great medieval centre of the horse trade.¹⁹ Trade in horses and ponies during the pre-colonial period was very

active. The hill traders disposed of their commodities in the Hajo market, where the people assembled during the winter in a religious fair at the Mahamuni temple. The temple attracted both the Hindu and Buddhist.²⁰ The Tibetan traders sold off their commodities in these fairs to the visiting pilgrims as well as traders. These Tibetan Buddhists, to make their return journey profitable, procured as much as possible.²¹

Besides Hajo, hill traffic was diverted to other annual fairs in the foothills. One such fair was held at Kuriapara in the Darrang district of Assam. Similar fairs were also held at Udalgiri and at Doimara.²² During the winter months, the traders from Kalaktang used to visit the plains of Kuriapara *duar*. Some camps were established for carrying out trade activities from October to March every year. Through the Kuriapara *duar*, a large trade volume took place between the people of the hills and that of the plains.²³ These *duars* played a significant role in trade relations of the neighbouring countries such as Tibet, China, etc. with the northeastern region of India.

The region was under the direct government of a body of chiefs known as Sath Rajas, who call themselves subordinates of the Tawang Raja, a tributary of Lhasa.²⁴ However, later during the colonial period, the Sath Rajas surrendered their claims over the Land in Kuriapara in payment of Rs 5000/- paid by the British annually.²⁵ An annual fair was held at Kuriapara *duar*, where traders came with their merchandise from all parts of Tibet. Later the location of this fair was shifted to Udalguri.²⁶ The trade fair held at Udalguri in the Northwest of the (Rajya) Darrang district in February and/or March was mainly attended by Tibetans and Khamti and the people of all the surrounding areas of Assam, and by few Manipuris. They carried their merchandise on horseback, and several hundreds of such pack horses were brought down annually to the Udalguri trade fair.²⁷ This indicates the volume and importance of the Udalguri trade fair. The Monpas of Tawang, Kalaktang and Thembang were the ones who chiefly attended the fair at Udalguri. Some of the important items of import from the Monpa

areas were horses and ponies, gold, blankets, salt, musk, wax, spices, yak-tails and rubber; at the same time, export items were silk, brass and copper piece goods, iron, cotton twist, tobacco and betelnut.²⁸

Besides the annual fair at Udalguri situated in the Kuriapara *duar*, another significant trade fair was in the Charduar region, popularly known as the Doimara fair. Being located at the foot of Rupa hill ranges, Doimara was one of the important *duars* out of the four *duars* of Charduar. Trade transaction between Assam and Tibet from pre-colonial to colonial period was transacted through this *duar*.²⁹ The annual migration of Sherdukpens to Doimara during the winter season has impacted their socio-religious life. Through a survey in Doimara, it is found out that there are two Buddhist stupas and a few remains of Buddhism. The people of Rupa built the first stupa, and the people of Shergaon constructed the other. They contain their sacred images and religious text. In a nearby village north-west of Doimara, a rock inscription inscribing the mystic formula in Tibetan is noticed.³⁰ Therefore, it points out the fact that this place was not only a trading centre but also a religious centre. It was visited principally by the Sherdukpens and also by the Thembang Monpas. Another important annual trade fair was held at Silpota or Seelpota (Leepota) in Chatguriduar during the Bohag Bihu (Barbihu) festival, where the Kacharis of the Rajya participated. The hill traders brought down different hill products, such as gold, rock-salt, musk, ponies, woollen, cloths, yak tail, blankets and China silk. They bartered these articles for the products of plain such as rice, broadcloths, liquor and dried fish, etc.³¹

It is interesting to note that in lower Assam, which serves as one of the important commercial regions linking the trade activities of the neighbouring countries with that of the trade in Bengal had several Buddhist sites. One such instance one can notice is Bhaitbari, situated presently in the Garo hills of Meghalaya. Bhaitbari is located at the foothills along the strings of the weekly frontier markets of the Garos along its western border within the Goalpara district. The evidence unearthed from Bhaitbari established the fact that Bhaitbari was a

flourishing trade centre. The Garos from the western frontier of the hills visited the market at Bhaitbari and exchanged cotton and probably other items at this place.³² Through the archaeological excavation under the supervision of A.K. Sharma³³ a number of Buddhist relics, including a mud-cum-brick stupa was discovered at Bhaitbari.³⁴

It was a busy centre on the south bank of the Brahmaputra river. The riverine centre, in all probability, played an essential role in the trade and commercial activities with upper Assam and other parts of India through the river Brahmaputra. The discovery of potteries, predominately thin redware and *kaolin* ware at Ambari of Guwahati and Bhaitbari (Vadagokugiri) indicates the trade link between the two places.³⁵ The evidence clearly shows that the Brahmaputra was flowing through this course right up to the 12th-13th century A.D. It changed its course and now flows nearly 10 kms near Dhubri town.

However, a change in the river's course occurred after a devastating flood that almost destroyed the whole ancient township of Bhaitbari (Vadagokugiri). The evidence of this flood in the form of heavy silt deposits right over the stupa and temple remains are available at the height of nearly 5.50 m from the ground level.³⁶ The trade around Bhaitbari is supported by Dak as cited by S.L. Baruah that 'the merchants from Kamarupa, therefore, carried their merchandise in large boats down the Brahmaputra and reached the sea after skirting around the Garo Hills.³⁷ Jahnabi Gogoi Nath also writes, "big merchant who traded in Assam, Bengal, Garo hills and Bhutan regions mostly used boats."³⁸ Like in another part of the country or of the world as a whole where rivers played a significant role in trading activities, the same is with the Brahmaputra valley, especially the sites of Bhaitbari, Suryapahar, Goalpara, and other sites where traders from far-flung areas halted here, and it became one of the noticeable sites of worship as well.

The excavations at Suryapahar have revealed many Buddhist archaeological marvels. The monolithic rock-cut *stupas* found at Suryapahar are innumerable and of different shapes and sizes. The stylistic features of these *stupas* can be traced back to 1st century B.C.

Besides, it also reveals that Buddhism once again flourished in the Brahmaputra valley in the early medieval period.³⁹ It is to be noted that through archaeological findings, it appears that the important trade centres in Vadagokugiri (Bhaitbari) in Garopahar has evidence of strong Buddhist influence from the 1st century B.C.⁴⁰ *Stupas* and caves of the Buddhist faith at Jogighopa, Pancharatna, Suryapahar, Vadagokugiri (Bhaitbari) clearly show that Buddhism in earlier and later forms was a popular religion in the region.⁴¹

Another important trade centre was the Goalpara region. Goalpara-Suryapahar region has been an important transit region for traders. It served as the region where traders from the hills and foothills of Tibet-Bhutan-Arunachal Pradesh and Garo Hills of Meghalaya exchanged their goods. Here, through Bhaitbari and other land and water routes, traders had direct contact with Bengal. From an early period, Goalpara served as one of the important trade centres in Assam. This is evidenced by several routes which passed through it.⁴²

The trade with neighbouring inland provinces was mainly carried by river transport.⁴³ Under Mughal and early British rule, Bengal trade with Assam was carried out from Goalpara, Rangamati, and Jogighopa.⁴⁴ Several markets were held along the western border within the Goalpara district close to the Garo border not far from the Brahmaputra river, which served a navigable trade routes. Some amount of trade relations also developed between the Garos and Bhaitbari in the 10th century A.D. According to W.W. Hunter, the district trade was carried on through the periodical fairs of religious festivals and permanent markets. The principal seats of commerce were Goalpara, Bilasipara, Bijni, Dhubri, Jogighopa, Dumaria, Gauripur, Patamari, Agomani, Simbalari, Kherbari, Dimakari, Bagaribari, Marnai, Rangjuli, Damra, Jira, Niabari, Singimari, Rajabala, Putimari, Manikihar, Kraibari and Dalo.⁴⁵

Permanent shops existed, which can be seen in the Goalpara area from the pre-colonial period; lively seasonal fairs and *haats* were also

held. In Goalpara, fairs were usually connected with religious festivals. These religious fairs were frequented by hill tribes and traders from other parts of India, as Dhubri, Jogighopa and Singimari in Goalpara district were seats of commerce along the important rivers. Most of the trading houses were established around these towns. Between 1755 and 1763, a French outpost at Goalpara was set up primarily to trade with Assam, but it is likely that transactions also took place with Bhutan.⁴⁶

The presence of metallic money between the fourteenth and the early sixteenth century clearly shows that the Assam-Bengal trade was carried on a large scale in the 14th and 16th centuries. This trade went from Nowgong-Gauhati, and the Kachari domain to the river ports of Bengal as coins discovered from Gauhati, Nowgong (Rupaibari) and Karimganj suggest.⁴⁷ Besides these trading centres in the southern Assam, during the eras of the Sultans, the Bengal-Tibet trade was conducted via North Assam; through this trade, horses were brought from Tibet to Bengal regularly.⁴⁸

Towards the close of the 15th century, the Kochas gained control of the western part of Assam, and, for a brief period of the latter half of the 16th century (1562-65), they dominated the whole of North-Eastern India. However, later in 1581, their territories were divided into two: Koch Hajo and Koch Bihar; the former became a subordinate state of the Ahoms and the latter of the Mughals. Their acknowledgement of this distinct over lordship prepared the field for the battles between the Ahoms and the Mughals. In addition to the territorial expansion or the boundary disputes, the other reason for the Ahom-Mughal conflicts was the exploitation of the rich natural resources of Assam. Hence the seventeenth century became the epoch of the Ahom-Mughal struggles. In 1612-13, the Mughals subjugated the larger part of Koch Hajo, but it frequently changed hands, and finally, in 1682, the Ahoms amalgamated it into their kingdom. However, the direct clash of arms between the Mughals and the Ahoms began in 1616, and after that, until 1639, various battles were fought

in the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, which resulted in settling the Barnadi and Asrur Ali as the boundary between their territories for a period that extended from 1639 to 1658.

Further, in the time of Aurangzeb, the Mughals twice held a part of Assam; once by plundering the Ahom capital Garhgaon, they succeeded in fixing the rivers Bhareli and Kalang as their north-eastern frontier for five years (1662-67); and, on the other occasion, they were able to get hold of the region to the west of Barnadi for three years (1679-82). But the war between them in 1682 finally determined the river Manas as the demarcation line between Mughal India and Assam. The reasons for the Mughals' attacks over this region were its highly valuable wares, the routes to Tibet and China passing through it, and the disadvantage of the Bengal traders, in addition to the ambition of territorial expansion.⁴⁹

Sometime after 1682, Goalpara, Jugighopa and Rangamati became the three outposts of Bengal where the merchants conducted their trade. The Ahom Government's agent, Daria Barua, resided at the Assam Choky, established on the northern bank, at the mouth of the river Manas. He had the exclusive right of trade with Bengal on an annual contract. His officials received advances from the Bengal traders to deliver Assamese merchandise, or they accepted Bengal goods on credit. And, the non-compiled agreements, in both, affected the Bengal merchants. Further, Duaria Barua patronised certain individuals, which in turn gave birth to the monopolisation of trade.⁵⁰

Talking about goods and commodities, rock salt, blankets, madder, bee-wax, ponies, yak tails, spices, and gold were some of the items of trade brought down to lower Assam by the Tibetans, which later had their trade exchange with Bengal.⁵¹ However, most of the goods that went down to Assam mostly came from Tibet. There is evidence from the route or paths between Tashigang of Bhutan and Lhasa of Tibet. This can be noted from the two tracks between Tashigang and Lhasa (capital of Tibet), which run through the valley of the river Manas.⁵² Whereas paddy, rice, eri silk cloths, cotton cloths were some of the

commodities carried back by the Bhutanese. It is reported that the Kachari tribe of Assam wove a variety of fabric which mainly meant for sale to the Bhutanese traders.⁵³ These imported garments were fashionable only among the nobles, including the *lamas*, as the ordinary people were to satisfy themselves with coarse woollen dresses and cloths woven domestically. Imported woollen cloths found an additional extensive outlet in temple decorations. For their cotton garments, however, Tibetan women preferred the colour of white, in addition to light-blue and russet, and to maintain whiteness in cloths perhaps, the imported indigo was in great demand. For industrial purposes, again, Tibet imported wrought iron that was manufactured in Bhutan. Bhutan's imports from Tibet consisted of raw wool, musk, tea, silver, gold, embroidered silk piece goods and rock salt.⁵⁴ Some of these were domestically available in Tibet, while others were Chinese in origin. Among the domestic products, gold was an important mineral deposited in the form of gold dust in western Tibet. Another important item was musk that hunters gathered from deer. Tibetan rock salt was also an item of import in Bhutan which she largely re-exported to Bengal. Bengal had no other source than this though it had a high demand for prevailing socio-religious and medicinal practices.

Last but not the least, Tibet was a bulk exporter of raw wool. Rearing of sheep was a household activity in Tibet that generated substantial raw wool. It was partly used domestically in the thriving woollen industry at Lhasa and its surrounding area and partly exported to neighbouring countries. About 1500 mule-packs of wool were annually exported to Bhutan in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁵

People of Brahmaputra valley never produced wool, but woollen blankets were parts of individual and social life for the high and middle-class people. Yak is a rare species, but in Assam, its tail was considered high and holy. Therefore yak-tails were an important trade item between Tibet and Assam. The yak-tails were used as soft-breeze for gracious well-coming of gods and goddesses, honourable persons,

the bride and bride-groom. Both Buddhists and Hindus believed in the sacred power of the yak-tail in keeping the evil spirits at a distance. In all the places of worship, permanent or temporary, the Hindus of Brahmaputra valley used the yak-tails as part of the decoration. Accordingly, yak-tails were kept carefully by the high and middle-class families for ritualistic purposes. Besides yak-tails, also wood was another pivotal trade item which found use in rituals and other day-to-day activities on either bank of the Brahmaputra. The nobles and aristocrats of traditional Assamese society used Bhutanese rugs as winter wear and cushions on ceremonial occasions. The opportunity of having such a cushion in a social or religious gathering was considered a status symbol. In marriage ceremonies, the father-in-law, mother-in-law and other elderly persons of the bride's family were generally honoured by the bride-groom with the offerings of Bhutanese rugs. High religious preceptors also used to receive such gifts from their wealthy disciples. However, later the mill-made woollen and cotton blankets have substituted the *thangas* or Bhutanese rug, and Assamese *gamosas* are now used as soft-breezers for well-coming the honourable.⁵⁶

III

Thus, based on the above discussion, by way of conclusion, it can be observed that during the pre-colonial period, Buddhism and trade prospered together. This development has contributed to the growth of some of the urban centres in the hills and the plains of the Eastern Himalayan region. If the colonial rule in this part has not reversed the process, these would have certainly flourished and must have been studied by now. Further, as the conclusion and future scope of research on this topic and related ones, it can be suggested that the volume of trade and participation in trade activities from Tibet to Bengal (now West Bengal and some parts of Bangladesh) provide us ample evidence to counter the claims of the colonial writers. They termed the people of this region as the 'primitive' and 'barbarous'.⁵⁷ However, due to the rise of the colonial economy and polity in the Eastern Himalayan

region, the situation changed. The pre-colonial centres, such as Tawang, Hajo, Gauhati, Goalpara, Dhubri, Suryapahar, etc. lost their importance due to new commercial and administrative centres. The rise of neo-Vaishnavism and the fall of regional powers also contributed to the decline of this relationship. The cultural plurality which evolved at the trade centres during the pre-colonial period in the region is another important area of study. Due to the limitation of the length of a paper, some of these aspects have not been elaborated upon in this paper and will be researched upon on other occasion(s).

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A Burmese Coin Hoard in Assam: The Sundorpur Find

Shanker K. Bose

Historical setting

Between 1817 and 1824, the Burmese carried out several invasions in Assam with the pretext of extending military support to an Ahom prince. They plundered the country and ruthlessly suppressed the Assamese populace to expand the Burmese territory into North East India.¹

Around the 1820s, they even experimented to introduce a typical octagonal debased silver coin, known as "*Gahuri Nripa*". However, the attempt met with failure and so far, only two specimens of such coins have been noticed.²

A Recent Chance Discovery

On 29th August 2020, a number of large tin coins surfaced in Sundorpur village in Sivasagar district of upper Assam. These were similar to those in circulation in the Tenasserim region of Myanmar (Burma)³ during the 19th and early 20th centuries in some city states, recognised as trading centres; well connected with sea ports and land routes to neighbouring kingdoms.

These coins were found in a paddy field, owned by one Jituprasad Dutta. While transplanting paddy saplings, one of the women, Hemanta Dutta⁴, suddenly felt her feet had touched something hard, possibly metallic. When she first picked it up, she thought it to be some spare parts of the power-tiller used on the same land a few days before. On further examination, she decided that was not probably true. Several such pieces were then distributed between her and her companions as curiosities. However, the nearby police outpost at

Joysagar (Sivasagar District) got wind of the same who intervened to recover the pieces. A team from the Archeological Survey of India, working at Sivasagar, subsequently examined the find but could not come to any conclusion. They referred the matter to their Guwahati office with a request for experts. Local newspapers identified the pieces as coins of Ahom rulers bearing Ahom script.⁵

On receipt of the information, this author suggested a prompt site visit to Nirupom Khanikar, a numismatist from upper Assam⁶, with whom he has worked on several projects previously. The idea was to gather relevant information on the discovery as well as to record facts and figures before it was too late. Upon examination, they are convinced that these are indeed coins, but from Tenasserim, a southernmost coastal region of Myanmar, bordered by Thailand to the east and the Andaman Sea to the west.



The Tenasserim Region in Burma⁷

This discovery is significant because this was the first time that such coins have been noticed outside Myanmar.⁸

Geography and History of the Tenasserim Region

The Tenasserim region is bordered by Mon State to the north, the Tenasserim Hill to the east (beyond which Thailand is located), and the Andaman Sea to the west. Tenasserim was the old name during the British colonial rule, now changed to Tanintharyi Division, an administrative region. It includes many islands with its capital being Dawei (formerly Tavoy).

A considerable part of the area was within the Ayudhya kingdom of Siam. The region was ceded to the kingdom of Burma in 1793. It was but natural then for cultural, political, and economic influence of Siam on this part of the country.

Contents of the Finds

The coins were stored in a perishable container or cloth bag. This resulted in direct damage to the pieces, made of lead or tin, mixed with alloys and were either partially broken or almost completely broken into pieces.

Partially broken coins



Coin No. 2 (obverse & reverse)

Coin No. 4 (Obverse & reverse)



Coin No. 5 (Obverse & reverse)

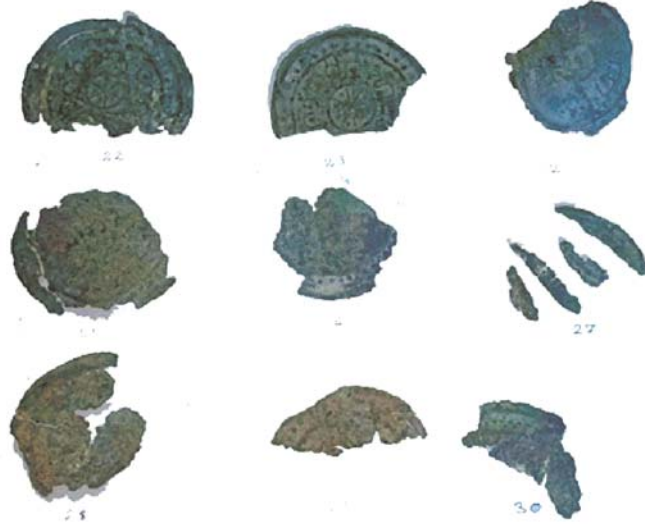
Coin No. 8 (Obverse & reverse)



Coin No. 9 (Obverse & reverse)

Coin No. 10 (Obverse & reverse)





(Coins in all the photographs are not to scale but reduced in size)

Legend and Script

Probably the most interesting aspect of these coins, both from this find as well as those from Tenasserim, bears a legend in Pali but written in Burmese script. On the reverse of the coin, there is a wheel in the centre around which "*Mahā Sukhāṅga Nagarān*" ('the greatly pleasant city') appears. Michael Robinson and Lewis Shaw read it as '*Mahā Sukhān Ga Nagarān*' and interpreted the legend as 'city (of) great rest or happiness'⁹. However, in Pali, the word '*ga*' is derived from the root '*gamana*' and used as a suffix as in *anuga*, *atiga* etc.¹⁰

Size and weight

Many specimens of large Tenasserim coins collected by European travellers and missionaries during the late 18th or early 19th centuries now rest in the coin cabinets of different European Museums.¹¹ On average, they are around 60mm or more in diameter, weighing about 30gm.

The average diameter of the coins found at Sundorpur is 66.63mm. This is similar to the coin preserved in the Manchester Museum (64mm). We have taken weights of the coins which were not totally

broken, as in the following table. But such statistics are only of limited helpful in our research as not a single coin found was intact.

Details of coins found at Sundarpur Village, Joysagar

New Serial No.	Weight	Diameter	Remarks
1	39.73	64.91	
2	37.81	69.45	
3	32.62	66.98	
4	35.67	71.07	
5	36.52	65.31	
6	35.86	65.98	
7	42.78	69.06	
8	39.60	65.21	
9	42.01	65.95	
10	40.49	65.86	
11	39.58	64.97	
12	38.87	66.10	
13	35.94	67.98	
14	36.23	64.21	
15	44.49	66.63	
16	31.42	64.59	
17	33.49	65.78	
18	37.15	69.38	
19-31			Broken pieces
32	Not known	Not known	Owner unwilling to be identified

It may not be out of place to mention that similar large silver coins were in circulation in Samatata¹² and Baraka areas in the 9th century. The said region within undivided India was connected with coastal of Burma via Chittagong. Such coins have also been discovered in Burma.

Denomination

Initially, though such metallic items were identified as religious medals¹³, subsequent records indicate that such large size coins, made

of tin or lead were used as mediums of exchange. The Valetti Museum in Rome possesses one such coin. The note with the said coin states that it was used in Tavoy (Burma) market for sundry purchases.¹⁴ Besides, many historical documents and books written by French travellers in second half of the 17th century referred to these items as money.¹⁵ There is reason to believe that coins made of lead were not counted but measured by the basket and accepted on the basis of weight¹⁶ whereas the light tin made pieces were used as units of value.

Tin coins were noticed in Dawei (formerly Tavoy) as mentioned above, but also in Kalein Aung (Aungthawadi), and Mergui, all within the Tenasserim region. Elizabeth H. Moore has mentioned a wood merchant at Dawei, who had collected more than a hundred such coins from the sands of Dawei river, where timber was loaded on vessels. On examination, while there was variation in design and size, the weight was more or less similar.¹⁷

Minting technology

Manchester Museum collection

The coins found in the Sivasagar hoard were all cast coins. The tin coin of Tenasserim in Manchester Museum coin cabinet mentioned previously (29.67 grams) clearly indicates that casting methodology was used to produce it (the place where molten metal was poured through a channel in the mould is shown by arrow marks). Terracotta die was probably used to produce such coins; liquid metal/alloy was poured into the die through the channels and allowed to cool. Subsequently, the coin was extracted by breaking the mould. It also appears that the centre of the die was concave which is why the coins were heavier there than in the periphery. This probably helped to get a better impression of the figures on the coins. Use of terracotta die in Myanmar is known to us from the early medieval period, discovered at Sri Ksetra.¹⁸

The easy availability of metals such as iron and tin locally was obviously an advantage. A few villages near Dawei were dedicated to

process such raw materials.¹⁹ The iron to produce many of the coins is said to have been obtained from the mountains between Myanmar and Thailand while the abundant local tin often replaced copper in alloys.



Minting technology

Significance of the discovery in Assam

The economic condition including numismatic history of the Burmese occupants in Assam has not yet been comprehensively discussed or analysed. This new discovery may impart impetus to the same and provide useful information in due course. The use of Pali legend on the coins again convincingly reconfirms ancient India's cultural and religious influence on Myanmar and on sea trade of India with southeast Asia.

As stated earlier, no further corroborative information is available on extension of the transactional zone of Burmese coins in Assam. The above coins were made with extremely cheap metal, rather than silver and gold coins which the Assamese populace were accustomed to. It may be concluded that this was a major reason why this second experiment, like *Gāhūrī* coins, was also doomed to fail.

Notes

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- ¹⁶ *Ibid*.
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Śauṇḍikas in Early Indian Literary Tradition: A Brief Outline

Somnath Chakraborty

Introduction

In the prolonged history of Indian literary culture caste, in general, from the perspective of history of society, played a very significant role.¹ The probable earliest statement of the four *varṇa* system is found in the *Ṛgveda* 10.90.12, a verse from the *Puruṣasūkta*.² Recurrent evidences found in over a period of 2500 years of literature and status of all the castes as well present in the Indian social order till date made the Indian caste system a topic of much discussion. Hundreds of scholarly articles, books had been written so far and are still being written reflecting various aspects of this prevalent custom as well as personal opinions of the authors. As per the survey of Department of Social Justice and Empowerment a total number of 1208 castes were present in India in 2008.³ It is quite obvious that increase in number of castes from that of the Vedic stage is a gradual development over ages and a result of different theories of various caste origins elucidated by the ancient Indian authors emerged in the *Smṛti* era. As the literary sources suggest, the inception and expansion in number of mixed castes, i.e. castes other than the four main castes, namely Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra, had been the consequence of rising numbers of practice of intermarriage between these four castes and further intermixture afterwards. The present MS, being the pioneering work for the later *Smṛti* texts, had in a large scale an impact behind the construction of social structure transformed from that of the Vedic period. Possibly the growing number of inter-caste marriages made a group of people rethink about the social reformation, and hence

pontification of a list of occupations for each of these castes came into effect more and more with the advent of Manu. We may refer A. A. Macdonell's view here.

Several of these mixed castes of Manu, however, evidently represent original tribes, as is shown in several cases by the very names, as the Māgadhas, Vaidehas, and Draviḍas; or others mentioned in the later Vedic literature, as the Niṣādas and Kirātas; or by the evidence of Buddhist Pāli works, as the Mallas, Lichavis, and Chaṇḍālas. These tribes were probably brought into the caste system by process similar to those which we have already seen to be going at the present day. Other so-called mixed castes, such as Sūtas, or charioteers, are occupational in origin, as we know from the early Vedic and epic literature. This theory of mixed castes, which contains many grotesque and absurd details, is thus evidently an attempt to explain as due to a single cause what is the result of several.⁴

Now *śauṇḍika*, a term in Indian culture taken in the sense of vintner or wine seller in general and included in the lists of mixed castes found in post-Manu *Dharmaśāstra* texts, is the point of discussion here, as the wide variety of Indian textual tradition over the centuries have put something intriguing in respect to the locution, which raises a little inquisition regarding the leitmotif. Among all its *paryāya* or synonyms viz. *śuṇḍin*, *śauṇḍin*, *śauṇḍa*, *madhuśreṇin*, *maṇḍahāraka* etc., found in the ancient Indian lexicographical texts and elsewhere like the *Smṛti* texts or *Purāṇas* etc., *śauṇḍika* in specific needs to be observed carefully. The point of dissent relating to the origin, social status etc. of the so called *śauṇḍikas* in the literary as well as oral heritage of India makes the term an intricate one.

Meaning of the Term as found in the Indian Lexicographical Texts

Amarasimha⁵ in his lexicographical treatise AK puts the synonym of *śauṇḍika* as *maṇḍahāraka* (*śauṇḍiko maṇḍahārakaḥ*, AK 2.10.10) which means a distiller.⁶ Kṣīrasvāmin (first half of 12th cent. CE)⁷, commentator of AK, in the commentary *Amarakoṣodghāṭanaṭīkā* explained it as follows: *śuṇḍā pānamadasthānam surā vā paṇyam asya*

*śaunḍikaḥ. maṇḍamac churām harati maṇḍahārakaḥ. surājivī kalyapālākhyāḥ.*⁸ According to the commentary *śaunḍika* is the person who sells wine and *maṇḍahāraka* stands for the person who steals *maṇḍamat*, i.e. *surā* or spirituous liquor or liquor in general. In addition to Amara, Kṣīrasvāmin puts *kalyapāla* also, another *paryāya* of *śaunḍika*.

Another later Sanskrit-work on lexicography, entitled *VK* of Yādavaprakāśa (c. 10th-11th cent. CE)⁹ the term *śaunḍika* appears twice. In the *Manuśyādhyāya* of *Bhūmikāṇḍa* section (3.5.44) of his text Yādavaprakāśa echoes Amarasimha, as he gives the synonym as *maṇḍahāraka*.¹⁰ In the *Śudrādhyāya* of same section he added some more synonyms which are *āsutivāla*, *kalyāpāla* and *dhvajin* (...*śaunḍikās tv āsutivāla. kalyāpāla dhvajī...*)¹¹. *Kalyāpāla* of Kṣīrasvāmin, mentioned before, and *kalyāpāla* bear the same meaning, i.e. distiller.¹² The term *āsutivāla* has the same meaning,¹³ though it was used for “a priest (who prepares *Soma*)” also¹⁴. Radha Kanta Deva’s thesaurus *Śabdakalpadruma* elaborates the term extensively along with textual references to ancient lexicographers, which is as follows :

śaunḍikaḥ, purī, (śunḍā paṇyam asya. śunḍā + “tad asya paṇyam.” 4.4.51. iti ṭhak.) jātiviśeṣaḥ. śuḍī iti bhāṣā. tatparyāyaḥ. maṇḍahārakaḥ 2. iti amaraḥ. śunḍāraḥ 3. śaunḍī 4. śunḍakaḥ 5. iti śabdaratnāvalī. dhvajāḥ 6. pānaḥ 7. paṇaḥ 8. iti jaṭādharāḥ. kalyāpālaḥ 9. surājivī 10. vārivāsaḥ 11. pānavanik 12. dhvajī 13. āsutivālaḥ 14. iti hemacandraḥ. tasyotpattir yathā — tato gāndhikakanyāyām kaivartād eva śaunḍikaḥ | kaivartasya ca kanyāyām śaunḍikād eva śaucikaḥ || iti parāśarapaddhatiḥ. (asya gr̥he bhojananiṣedho yathā manuḥ, 4.216. “śvavatām śaunḍikanānī ca celanirṇejakasya ca | rañjakasya nṛśamsasya yasya copapatir gr̥he ||” eṣām gehe nādyāt ityarthāḥ. śunḍikād āgate, tri, atra “śunḍikādibhyo ’ṇ” 4.3.76. ity aṇ.).¹⁵

Here, Radha Kanta Deva compiled information from seven different sources: *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini (c. 4th cent. BCE or 6th-7th cent. BCE)¹⁶, *AK* of Amarasimha, *Śabdaratnāvalī* of Mathureśa (1588 or 1666/67 Śaka era)¹⁷, *Paryāyanānārthakoṣa* of Jaṭādharā (date unknown), *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi* of Hemacandra (1145 Śaka era)¹⁸, *Parāśarapaddhati* (*Parāśarasmr̥ti?*) and *Manusmr̥ti*. Radha Kanta Deva collected 13

synonyms (*maṇḍahāraka, śuṇḍāra, śauṇḍin, śuṇḍaka, dhvaja, pāna, paṇa, kalyapāla, surājīvin, vārivāsa, paṇavaṇij, dhvajin and āsutiṅgala*) altogether. Identification of *śauṇḍika* in the beginning as *jātivīśeṣa*, i.e. race or tribe and the verse given from the said *Parāśarapaddhati* in the end need serious attention, which will be discussed later in this article. The very first half of this specific verse is also cited in *Vācaspatya*, a lexicographical work in the 19th cent. CE by Taranatha Tarkavachaspati while elucidating the term *śauṇḍika*.¹⁹

Textual Appearance of the Term

The *VMbh*

Till date the probable earliest reference to the term *śauṇḍika* is available in the *VMbh*. Not a single mention of this term is found in the whole of the Vedic literature including the four *Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upaniṣad* or the *Sūtra* works. In *VMbh* the word *śauṇḍika* appears two times, in the *Sabhāparvan* it appeared first and the next one is in the *Anuśāsanaparvan*. The verses are as following:

śauṇḍikāḥ kukkurās caiva śakās caiva viśāṃ pate |
aṅgā baṅgās ca puṇḍrās ca śānavatyā gayās tathā || (Mbh 2.48.15)²⁰
mekalā dramidāḥ kāsāḥ paṇḍrāḥ kollagirās tathā |
śauṇḍikā daradā darvās caurāḥ śabarabarbarāḥ || (VMbh 13.35.17)²¹

The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki

In the verse 2.83.14 of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, mention of *śauṇḍika* among the people who followed Bharata in his attempt to bring back Rāma to Ayodhyā from forest-exile is found. The verse is as follows.

suvarṇakārāḥ prakhyātās tathā kambaladhāvakāḥ |
snāpakōṣṇodakā vaidyādhūpakās śauṇḍikās tathā ||²²

The *Smṛti* literature

Amidst the *Smṛti* texts the word *śauṇḍika* first appears in the MS (c. 2nd cent. BCE-2nd cent. CE)²³, the earliest and most authoritative among its kind. The term is referred to two times in this *Smṛti* work. The verses followed by respective translations are as follows.

*śvavatām śauṇḍikānām ca cailanirṇejakasya ca |
 rajakasya nṛśāmsasya yasya copapatir grhe || (MS 4.216)²⁴*

—[A Brahmin must also never eat food given by] ‘those who raise dogs, liquor merchants, a washer-man, a dyer, a heartless man, someone who lets his wife’s paramour live in his house.’²⁵

*kitavān kuśilavān kerān pāṣaṇḍasthāms ca mānavān |
 vikarmasthān śauṇḍikāms ca kṣipraṁ nirvāsayet purāt || MS 9.225²⁶*

— ‘He [the king] should quickly banish from his capital gamblers, performers, entertainers, men belonging to heretical sects, individuals engaging in illicit activities, and liquor vendors.’²⁷ The *Vyavahāra-prakarāṇa* of *Yājñavalkya-saṁhitā*, a *Smṛti* text ascribed to Yājñavalkya (date uncertain) prescribed that ‘the debts incurred by the wives of cowherds, wine-makers, actors, washer-men, or fowlers however, should necessarily be paid by their husbands; for livelihood of these depends on their wives.’²⁸ The verse is as follows.

*gopa-śauṇḍika-śailūṣa-rajaka-vyādha-yoṣitām |
 ṛṇaṁ dadyāt patis teṣāṁ yasmād vṛttis tadāśrayā || YS 2.48*

A later work entitled *Viṣṇu-dharmasūtra* (date uncertain) directed that [if a person has eaten food] “of a trainer of dogs, of a distiller of spirituous liquor, of an oil manufacturer or of a washer-man”²⁹ [must subsist on milk for seven days]. The text follows as: *svajīvi-śauṇḍika-tailika-cailanirṇejakānām ca...* (51.15).³⁰ The class of people in the contemporary social strata aimed at in this verse is very similar to MS 4.216, mentioned above. PV Kane in *History of Dharmasāstra* states that Aparārka (also known as Aparāditya), flourished probably in the first half of the 12th cent. CE³¹, in his extensive commentary entitled *Aparārka-yājñavalkīya-dharma-sāstra-nibandha* (or *Aparārka* as known popularly³²) on *Yājñavalkya-saṁhitā* referred to from Śaṅkha and *Brahmapurāṇa*, where also the term *śauṇḍika* is mentioned.³³

The *Purāṇas*

Amongst the *Purāṇas*, two in specific, namely the *BDP* and the *BrVP* mention about *śauṇḍika* while describing the origin of mixed castes. Genesis of these *śauṇḍika* people as instructed in Indian textual prevalence will be discussed later in this article. Narayan Chandra Saha in his discursive study on the origin and social position of *śauṇḍikas*, entitled *VKSS*, speaks of some words in other *Purāṇas*, which according to him are the other forms of *śauṇḍin* (a *paryāya* or synonym of *śauṇḍika*).³⁴ Let us quote Saha:

Shaundikeya= śauṇḍikeya = Shaundika śauṇḍika + aya (ṣeyan svārthe, ādarārthe) meaning used in the same sense; for endearment. Not commonly in use. Mr. M. Williams' definition, Shaundikeya is a demon, is rarely imaginary and utopian.

In *Mātsya Mohapurān* (ch. 44, verse 48-9) the term *koondikera kuṇḍikerā*, in *Vāyupurān* (2, 32, 51-2) *toondikera* in *Brahma Purāṇa* (2, 13, 204) *taunḍikerā* appear in the place of *śauṇḍikeya* in *Agnipurān* Chapter 274 verse 10-1. Monier's definitions *tuṇḍikerā* or *taunḍikerā* is the name a race are equally like his definition of *Shaundikeya* imaginary and utopian. *Kuṇḍikerā*, *tuṇḍikerā* or *taunḍikerā* find no room in any recognised Sanskrit dictionary of native make signifying their meaninglessness and insignificance.³⁵

Saha's statement mentioned above, thus, requires a little examination. First of all, his refusal of *śauṇḍikeya* being a demon as mentioned by Williams³⁶ is contradicted by the reference of *PāG* in his dictionary, that vindicates the explanation given by Williams. The part of the text of *PāG* that mentions *śauṇḍikeya* is as follows.

*dvāradeśe sūtikāgnim upasamādhāyotthānāt samdhivalayoḥ
phalīkaraṇamiśrān sarṣapān agnāv āvapati śauṇḍāmarkā upavīrah
śauṇḍikeya ulūkhalaḥ | malimluco droṇāsaś cyavano naśyatāditaḥ
svāhā | | (1.16.23)³⁷.*

Translation of this portion by Hermann Oldenberg is as follows:
Having established near the door the fire has been kept from (the wife's) confinement, he throws into that fire at the time of the

morning and evening twilight, until (the mother) gets up (from childbed), mustard mixed with rice chaff, (pronouncing the following names of demons and goblins). 'May Śaṇḍa and Marka, Upavīra, Śauṇḍikeya, Ulūkhala, Malimluca, Droṇāsa, Cyavana vanish hence. Svāhā!³⁸

Further, the commentaries on PāG also support Monier's view. Two commentaries, namely Jayarāma's *Sajjanaballabhabhāṣya* and Gadādhara's *Gṛhyasūtrabhāṣya*, on the aforesaid text explained *śauṇḍikeya* as *vighnakusāla*³⁹, which roughly indicates someone having the ability to destroy or impede. Besides this, the above mentioned *mantra* of PāG clearly shows that it should be uttered to eliminate omens before starting the ritual. Another commentary entitled *Gṛhyasūtravyākhyā* by Viśvanātha reads the term as *śaurikeya*, but no explanation is given there.

Monier-Williams' use of *tunḍikerā* or *taunḍikerā* is also an ill information given by Saha. Monier mentioned *tunḍikera* and *taunḍikera*⁴⁰ instead of what has Saha mentioned. His suggestion of replacing *tunḍikera*, *kuṇḍikera* etc. in the said *Purāṇas* with *śauṇḍikeya* is not clarified as well. But here it must be acknowledged that, Narayan Saha's admission of *śauṇḍikeya*'s association with *śauṇḍika* is not a groundless claim. It will be discussed in the 'Origin and Social Position of *Śauṇḍikas*' section of this article.

Reference in Grammatical Works

In *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, perhaps the most important grammatical treatise amongst its kind, in the rule *śuṇḍikādibhyo 'ṇ* (PāSū 4.3.76) Pāṇini instructed the appliance of suffix *aṇ* for transforming the nouns included in the *śuṇḍikādi gaṇa* or class to their respective adjective forms in a specific meaning, i.e. source of revenue. The first *prātipadika* or word in the list of this particular class is *śuṇḍika*, which means tavern.⁴¹ After adding the suffix *aṇ* to *śuṇḍika*, the term *śauṇḍika* forms, meaning excise revenue for liquors. Bhaṭṭoji-dīkṣita (1575-1625 CE or 1570-1635 CE)⁴², the author of *Vaiyākaraṇa-siddhānta-kaumudī* or simply *Siddhānta-kaumudī*, an authoritative commentary on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of

Pāṇini, explained the *sūtra* as follows: *āyasthāna-ṭhakaśchādīnām cāpavādaḥ. śauṇḍikād agataḥ śauṇḍikaḥ...*⁴³ The rule 4.3.76 is basically an exception to two of its previous rules namely *kṛkaṇa-parṇād bhāradoāje* (PāSū 4.2.145), that mandates application of suffix *cha*; and *thag āyasthānebhyaḥ* (PāSū 4.3.75), which gives instruction for another suffix *ṭhak*.⁴⁴ It is interesting to observe here that the same term *śauṇḍika* was used for two purposes, one for distiller and another for excise revenue at least till the time of Pāṇini, if not later, though the lexicographical works, texts on *dharmaśāstra* or *Purāṇas* deliberately used it in the sense for wine-seller or alcoholic only.

Śauṇḍa, another term having the same meaning as *śauṇḍika* does, also appears in one of Pāṇini's rule [*saptamī śauṇḍaiḥ* (PāSū 2.1.40)], used for constructing words in *saptamī-tatpuruṣa samāsa*. Like the aforesaid rule, i.e. 4.3.76 this *sūtra* also is related to a *gaṇa* or class called *śauṇḍādi*, of which *śauṇḍa* is the first one in the list. In *samāsa* these words should be *uttarapada*, i.e. they must sit in the end according to the rule. The interesting fact is that though *śauṇḍa* as an individual word stands for alcoholic and so on, but when compounded it semantically changed into 'skilled' or 'passionately fond of or devoted to'.⁴⁵

Mention in Other Works

Vātsyāyana's (3rd/4th Cent. CE)⁴⁶ *Kāmasūtra*, *Adhikaraṇa* 6, chapter 1, refers to *śauṇḍika*. The text along with English translation is as follows.

te tv āraṅṣakapuruṣā dharmādhikaraṇasthā daivajñā vikrāntāḥ
śūrāḥ samānavidyāḥ kalāgrāhiṇaḥ pīṭhamarda-viṭa-vidūṣaka-
mālākāra-gāndhika-śauṇḍika-rajaka-nāpita-bhikṣukās te ca te ca
kāryayogāt || (*Kāmasūtra* 6.1.9)⁴⁷

— (A courtesan...should...set upon by persons with whom she may have dealings of some kind or another.) These persons are: The guards of the town, or the police; the officers of the courts of justice; astrologers; powerful men, or men with interest; learned men; teachers of the sixty-four arts; *pīṭhamardas* or confidants; *vitas*

or parasites; vidushakas or jesters; flower sellers; perfumers; vendors of spirits; washermen; barbers; beggars; and such other persons as may be found necessary for the particular object to be required.⁴⁸

In relation to this, Ludwik Sternback's review in *Journal of the American Oriental Institute* (1961)⁴⁹ on "Marriage with Courtesans in Ancient India", an article by V. C. Sarkar, published in *P. K. Gode Commemoration Volume* (1960), gives valuable information regarding the social position of *śauṇḍika*, referred to in various texts of ancient India. Here we may quote Sternback.

...However, examples of this kind of marriage are more numerous. Furthermore, most important is the omission of the whole group of prostitutes whose husbands lived on their earnings. *Mānavadharmasāstra*, *Baudhāyana-dharmasūtra*, Kauṭilya's *Arthasāstra*, Śukranītisāra, Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra* and other sources do not call these women prostitutes but give a long list of men whose wives were known to be engaged in prostitution. These were the wives of actors (*raṅgavartin*, *naṭa*, *tālāpacāra*, *nṛśamsa*), wandering bards (*cāraṇa*, *kuśilava*, *bandin*), dancers (*nartaka*, *śailūṣa*), rope-dancers (*plavaka*), jugglers (*saubhika*), singers (*gāyaka*), players on musical instruments (*vādaka*), buffoons (*vāgjīvana*), fishermen (*matsya-bandhaka*), herdsmen (*gopālaka*, *gopa*), hunters (*lubdhaka*, *vyādha*), washer-men (*rajaka*, *kārtika*), vintners (*śauṇḍika*, *śaurika*, *surājīvin*) and barbers (*nāpita*).

Bṛhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira (c. 475-550 CE)⁵⁰, an astrological work also mentions about *śauṇḍika* in chapter 86. This chapter deals with signs of omens. The verse with its respective translation is given below.

naiṛṭi-vāruṇimadhye pramadā-sūti-taskarāḥ |

śauṇḍikāḥ śākuni himsro vāyavya-pāścimāntare | | (Bṛhatsamhitā, 86.13)

— The three parts between the South-west and the West are assigned to Pramada (an intoxicated young woman), Sūti (confinement or child birth) and Taskara (a thief); and those between the West and the North-west, to Saundika (toddy-wender) Sakuni (fowler) and

Himsra (murderous fellow).⁵¹

Among the classical literature *Abhijñāna-śakuntala* of Kālidāsa⁵² refers to *soṇḍiābaṇa* (in Prakrit) or *śauṇḍikāpaṇa* (in Sanskrit), i.e. wine shop in the 6th Act of the *nāṭaka* or drama.⁵³

RC Majumdar suggests that *Caryāpadas* have mentioned *śauṇḍikas*. "The early *Caryāpadas* refer to drinking at liquor shops where Śauṇḍika's wife sold the liquor after fermenting it by means of the fine powder of the root of a tree"⁵⁴

Origin and Social Position of Śauṇḍikas

It is mentioned earlier that nowhere in the Vedic literature a single appearance of *śauṇḍika* is seen. In all other sources except the *VMbh* wherever references to these people are made even once only, they all relate them to liquors, be as wine-sellers or as alcoholics. Their social abasement is evident from the references found in the post Vedic works. Probably the stringent caste system commanded by the *dharmaśāstrakāras* as well as the different mythological stories regarding the origin and distribution of mixed castes in the *Purāṇas* led to their social denigration like the other Śūdra castes in a society.

Use of spirituous liquors like *surā*, *soma*, *madya*, *madira* etc. are well evidenced from the Vedas.⁵⁵ Narayan Chandra Saha gives references from the Vedas regarding preparation and selling of *soma* and *surā*.⁵⁶ The *Mādhyāndina* branch of *Śuklayajurveda* in the *mantra* 30.11 refers to *surākāra*.⁵⁷ It should be noted that there was no hereditary system present in the Vedic period. We can quote Saha here,

"Then there was no hereditary caste, but then there existed many professions; and everybody would be called by the professional title arising from the profession he would follow. Thus Hostipa, a driver of elephant; Ajapa, tender of goats; Surakar, a manufacturer of wine by rotting method and so on...Occasionally the son, the grandson and the like would be engaged in the parental profession; but that would be on account of vicinity and acquired tendency and not for the requirement of hereditary caste system. Ultimately in this way indeed there arose the rudiments of hereditary caste system."⁵⁸

It is hard to find any evidence till date to establish whether the *surākāras* of the *Vedas* did have any connection at any point with the *śauṇḍikas* of the later stage. But their constant identification as alcoholic and so on in the *smṛti* era broadly can be questioned by the evidence of the two verses in the *VMbh* appeared in the *Sabhāparvan* and *Anuśāsanaparvan* which are mentioned already in this article. In both those verses *śauṇḍikas* are referred to as people belonging to Kṣatriya tribes. Now here comes an interesting fact. Verses 12, 13, 14 and 15 of the 48th chapter (BORI ed.) respectively in the *Sabhāparvan* is Duryodhana's narration to Dhṛtarāṣṭra about donation of wealth by some Kṣatriya tribes to Yudhiṣṭhira. To understand the complete meaning of these verses we need to have a look into the next verse, i.e. verse 16, which is as follows.

sujātayaḥ śreṇimantaḥ śreyāṁsaḥ śastrapāṇayaḥ |
ārḥṣu kṣatriyā vittam śataśataśo 'jātaśatrave || (*VMbh*, 2.48.16)⁵⁹

The adjectives *sujātayaḥ*, *śreṇimantaḥ*, *śreyāṁsaḥ*, *śastrapāṇayaḥ* in the first half and *kṣatriyā(h)* in the second half state the qualities of the tribes mentioned in the previous four verses, i.e., 12-15. *Sujāti* (>*sujātayaḥ*) means 'well born or produced or made of, of an excellent kind or nature etc.'⁶⁰; *śreṇimat* (>*śreṇimantaḥ*) stands for 'having a number of followers, presiding over an association or guild'⁶¹; *śreyas* (>*śreyāṁsaḥ*) stands for 'more splendid or beautiful, more excellent or distinguished, superior etc.'⁶²; *śastrapāṇi* (>*śastrapāṇayaḥ*) means 'weapon-handed, armed; an armed warrior.'⁶³ And it is also said that they are all Kṣatriyas. As *śauṇḍika* is one of the tribes included here, these traits qualify them also. Astonishingly, the other verse, i.e. 13.35.17 mentioned earlier has some contradictory thought included in it than that of 2.48.16. This verse too like the previous verse has to be connected with the next verse to get the complete meaning. The verse along with translation is as follows :

kirātā yavanās caiva tās tāḥ kṣatriyajātayaḥ |
vṛṣalatvam anuprāptā brāhmaṇānām adarśanāt || (*VMbh* 13.35.18)⁶⁴
— (with little different reading) 'The Mekalas, the Dravidas, the Lathas, the Pundras, the Khowashiras, the Shaundikas, the Daradas,

the Darvas, the Chauras, Shavaras, the Varvaras, the Kiratas, the Yavanas and numerous other tribes of Kshatriyas, have degenerated into the status of Shudras through the anger of the Brāhmaṇas.⁶⁵

These verses in the *Anuśāsanaparvan* are told by Bhīṣma to Yudhiṣṭhira. In 2.48.16 *śauṇḍikas* are considered to be of Kṣatriya class, while in the present verse they are classed as Śūdras. In both cases the common link is Yudhiṣṭhira. Is it possible for him to not know about the social position of the *śauṇḍikas* at all? Or is the verse an addition or interpolated one, that was included in the *Smṛti* era of later period, as *śauṇḍikas* in this period were considered to be as Śūdras, that we do not know. Hence the question remains. There are similar verses available in the *MS*, where gradual demotion of certain Kṣatriya tribes to the level of Śūdras are mentioned. Similarity in the list of the Kṣatriya people of *VMbh* to that of *MS* is quite interesting. The verses along with translation are as follows.

śanakais tu kriyālopād imāḥ kṣatriyajātayaḥ |
vr̥ṣālatvaṁ gatā loke brāhmaṇādarśanena ca ||
puṇḍrakās coḍa draviḍāḥ kāmbojā yavanā śakāḥ |
pāradāḥ pahlās cīnāḥ kirātā daradās tathā ||
mukha-bāhū-rūpajjānām yā loke jātayo bahiḥ |
mlecchavāco 'ryavāco vā sarve te dasyavaḥ smṛtāḥ || (MS, 10.43-45)

— “By neglecting rites and by failing to visit Brahmins, however, these men of Kṣatriya birth have gradually reached in the world the level of Śūdras — Puṇḍrakas, Coḍas, Draviḍas, Kāmbojas, Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas, Pahlavas, Cīnas, Kirātas and Daradas. All the castes in the world that are outside those born from the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet — whether they speak foreign or Ārya languages — tradition calls Dasyus”.⁶⁶

Now, if we consider the evidence of the story of social degradation of the Śauṇḍikeya Kṣatriyas of the Haihaya dynasty,⁶⁷ it has to be related with that of the *Anuśāsanaparvan* verse, then Narayan Chandra Saha’s assumption about Śauṇḍikeyas being identical to the *śauṇḍikas* might be justified. This ought to be an exaggeration until we get any authentic proof.

Then another question arises, who were these *śauṇḍika* people? Where do they come from? Vettam Mani talks about an ancient Indian town called Śuṇḍika. Here we quote Mani, “A town made famous in the Purāṇās, which existed in the eastern part of India. *Mahābhārata*, Vana Parva, chapter 254, verse 8 mentions that this town was conquered by Karṇa”.⁶⁸ If we put the suffix *aṇ* to Śuṇḍika, as per Pāṇini’s rule *śuṇḍikādibhyo’n* (PāSū 4.3.76), we get *śauṇḍika*, which now means ‘person or people who came from Śuṇḍika (the town, not the wine-shop)’. But we cannot say avowedly whether this theory is right or not till a concrete evidence comes to our hand.

MS prescribes nothing about the lineage of *śauṇḍikas*, it doesn’t even include *śauṇḍika* in the long confusing list of mixed castes discussed in chapter 10 of the text. In all probability it can be said that *śauṇḍika*’s inclusion in the list of mixed caste is a much later development. Following the Dharmasāstra tradition, both the *BDP* and *BrVP* speak of mixed castes and their origin, where bloodline of *śauṇḍikas* has also been talked about. Apart from these two *Purāṇas* two more sources mention origin of *śauṇḍikas*. They are namely, *Parāśarapaddhati* (as shown in the *Sābdakalpadruma*) and *VK* of *Yadavaprakāśa*. Here we quote the texts from the respective sources.

gopāt śūdrāgarbhajātau tathā dhīvaraśauṇḍikau || (*BDP, Uttarakhaṇḍa* 13.42)⁶⁹

vaiśyāt tīvarakanyāyām sadyaḥ śūṇḍī babhuva ha | (*BrVP* 1.10.109)⁷⁰

tato gāndhikakanyāyām kaivartād eva śauṇḍikaḥ | (*Parāśarapaddhati*)⁷¹

niṣṭyāc chudrā madhuśreṇīm śauṇḍikam maṇḍahāarakam || (*VK* 3.5.44)⁷²

It is quite interesting that how these four sources speak about four different lineages of the same caste, i.e. *śauṇḍika*. According to *BDP* *śauṇḍika*’s father is a Gopa and mother is a Śūdrā; *BrVP*’s view is of *śuṇḍin*’s (i.e. *śauṇḍika*) father to be a Vaiśya and mother a Tīvara; *Parāśarapaddhati* tells that *śauṇḍika* is a child from Kaivarta father and Gāndhika mother; and finally *VK* speaks of Niṣṭya father and Śūdrā mother for the same. It is for sure that all these sources, documenting the origin of mixed castes found in the Dharmasāstras

and elsewhere, are farragoes of different views of the authors or the people sharing those same ideas that had been forcefully induced over the society. Hence, identification of parents of *śauṇḍikas* as prescribed by these texts are not constant also like that of their child. So is their social status. According to *BDP* all except the Brahmins in the society are related to mixed castes, and this text has categorised social classes into three groups: *uttama-saṁkara*, *madhyama-saṁkara* and *adhama-saṁkara*. Among these three groups *śauṇḍika* according to the text should be included in the *madhyama-saṁkara* group.⁷³ On the other hand *BrVP* divided the mixed castes into two classes, namely, *sat-śūdra* and *asat-śūdra*. There *śuṇḍin* (= *śauṇḍika*) is included into the *asat-śūdra* group. One interesting observation is that the *Smṛti* texts or the *Purāṇas*, mentioned in this article, remain silent about the profession of the *śauṇḍikas*, though the commentaries on those *Smṛti* texts use terms like *surākāra*, *madyakāra* etc while describing *śauṇḍika*. P. V. Kane draws our attention towards another mixed caste called Pulkasa or Paulkasa whose social status was quite similar to that of the *śauṇḍika*. We now quote Kane :

Pulkasa (or paulkasa). The word is also written as pukkasā. Śaṁkarācārya on *Bṛhadāranyaka Up.* IV.3.22 says that pulkasa and paulkasa are the same. According to *Baud. Dh. S.* (I.9.14) and *Manu* X.18 he is the offspring of a niṣāda male from a śūdrā female. According to *Kautilya.* (III.7) he is the offspring of a niṣāda male from an *ugrā* female, while *Vaik.* X.14, *Uśanas* (17) and the *Sūtasamhitā* say that he is the offspring of a śūdra male from a kṣatriya woman and that he makes his livelihood by manufacturing and selling liquors or natural intoxicating sap. The same is the view of some teachers according to *Gautama* IV.17. According to *Vas. Dh. S.* (18.5) and *Viṣṇu Dh. S.* (16.5) he is the offspring of a vaiśya male from a kṣatriya female and the latter adds that he subsists by hunting. The *Agnipurāṇa* (151.15) says that pukkasas are hunters. *Yama* and *Hārita* quoted in the *Kṛtyakalpataru* make him out as the offspring of a śūdra male from a vaiśya female. *Manu* X.49 prescribes catching and killing animals that live in holes

as the occupation of kṣatṛ, ugra and pukkaśa. Kṣīrasvāmī (com. Of Amara) says that pukkaśa is the same as mṛtapa...*Āp. Dh. S.* (II.1.2.6) says that when a Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya or Vaiśya is guilty of the theft of gold, of the murder of a Brāhmaṇa, they undergo for some time in hell torments and then are respectively born as Caṇḍāla, Paulkasa or Vaina.⁷⁴

VK's reference to the origin of *śauṇḍika* needs a little attention here. Only this text speaks of niṣṭya as the ancestor of *śauṇḍika*. Monier-Williams states that this term *niṣṭya* means external, foreign, strange.⁷⁵ This word appeared in the *ṚV* (6.75.19, 10.133.5)⁷⁶, and the *AV* (3.1.3.6).⁷⁷ Sāyaṇa (14th cent. CE),⁷⁸ in his commentary explained the term as follows: *niṣṭyaḥ tirobhūto dūre sthitaḥ* (on *ṚV* 6.75.19); *niṣṭyaḥ nīkṣṭajanmā asmān upakṣayati jātārthe nīkṣṭavācino niḥśabdād avyayāt tyap pā sū 4.2.104*⁷⁹ . *hrasvāt tādau taddhite pā sū 8.3.101 iti śatvam* (on *ṚV* 10.133.5); *niṣṭyaḥ nīcaḥ nīkṣṭavalaḥ ityarthah* (on *AV* 3.1.3.6). Sāyaṇa's explanation on *ṚV* 6.75.19 supports Monier's view. If *niṣṭya* stands for external, then the reference to *niṣṭya* in the *VK* might be connected to *śauṇḍika*'s foreign lineage.

Two more texts, namely, the *Mayamata* and the *Śilparatna*, on hypothetical ground, may need our attention for *śauṇḍikas*' probable foreign descent. Both these texts are manuals of Indian architecture. The *Mayamata*,⁸⁰ generally ascribed to Mayamuni, in chapter 18 mentioned *śauṇḍika* among the eight heights of transoms. Similar list on same topic, with little differences, is also available in the 32nd chapter of the second text, i.e., the *Śilparatna* (16th century CE),⁸¹ ascribed to Śrīkumāra. The verses may be quoted here.

varāṭaṁ drāviḍaṁ caiva barbarāṁ kollakaṁ punaḥ |

*tathā śauṇḍikam ity ete vyāmiśrādilupodayāḥ || (Mayamata, 18.14)*⁸²

"Here are the names which correspond to these eight heights of rafter works, the first being *vyāmiśra*: *vyāmiśra*, *kaliṅga*, *kaūsika*, *varāṭa*, *drāviḍa*, *barbara*, *kollaka* and *śauṇḍika*."⁸³

vyāmiśrakaṁ kaliṅgaṁ ca tathā kāśikam eva ca |

vairāṭaṁ drāviḍaṁ caiva bālhikaṁ kaullakaṁ punaḥ ||

*tathā śauṇḍikam ity ete vyāmiśrādilupodayāḥ || (Śilparatna, 32.6-7)*⁸⁴

Now the technical terms, such as *kaliṅga*, *drāviḍa*, *barbara*, *bālhika* put in these verses definitely remind us of some ancient Indian tribes and places. Possibly the separate designs or styles used in their abodes by those separate clans became the prevalent identity of those structures, and hence these structures gradually grasped the clan names as their appellations over the years. If so, then there might be a chance that long ago *śaunḍikas* belonged to a tribe. However, this idea should be considered as a conjecture until we get any authentic proof to support our view.

And last but not the least, on the way of his attempt to prove *śaunḍika*'s Kṣatriya or Vaiśya lineage Narayan Chandra Saha's axiom about *vikarmasthān śaunḍikān* of MS 9.225 is not supported by the explanations found in the commentaries on Manu. He has taken *vikarmastha* as an adjective to *śaunḍika*.⁸⁵ But as has been said, all the commentators explained these two terms separately without putting any noun-adjective relationship between them.⁸⁶

Conclusion

All the textual evidences mentioned above have for sure made us question about the origin and social status of the *śaunḍikas*. Disparate views about their lineage in the *VMbh* and the *Dharmaśāstra* works of later period especially and the *Purāṇas* as well may ignite the view of their social debasement. We may conclude this article in hope to discover further evidences in future that can lead us to perceive definite answers regarding their origination, place in the society and transformation of their social status over the course of time.

Abbreviations used

AK (Amarasimha's *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* or *Amarakoṣa*), AV (*Atharvaveda*), BDP (*Bṛhaddharma-purāṇa*), BORI (Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute), BrVP (*Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*), MLBD (Motilal Banarsidass), MS (*Manusamhitā* or *Manusmṛti*), PāG (*Pāraskaragrhyasūtra*), PāSū (*Sūtra* of Pāṇini), ṚV (*Ṛgveda*), VK (*Vaijayantīkoṣa* of Yādavaprakāśa), VKSS (*The Vaishya Khondo-Saha and the Shaundika and the Commentary on Hindu-Castes*), VMbh (*Vaiyāsika-Mahābharata* or *Mahābhārata* of Vyāsa), YS (*Yājñavalkyasamhitā* or *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*).

Notes

- ¹ For a general outline of the history of caste in early India, Suvira Jayaswal, *Caste: Origin, Function and Dimensions of Change*, Manohar, Delhi, 2000.
- ² For text, *Ṛgvedasamhitā*, vol. 4 (9-10 maṇḍalas), Vaidika Samshodhona Maṇḍala, Poona, 1946, p. 618.
- ³ For survey report, <https://socialjustice.nic.in/UserView/index?mid=76664>.
- ⁴ A.A. Macdonell, "The Early History of Caste", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, American Historical Association, Oxford University Press, January 2014, pp. 235-6.
- ⁵ For Amarasimha's time, Claus Vogel, *Indian Lexicography, A History of Indian Literature*, vol. 5, fasc. 4, (ed. A.K. Warder), Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1979, pp. 309-10; cf. also Sures Chandra Banerji, *A Companion to Sanskrit Literature*, MLBD, Delhi, 1971, pp. 12-3.
- ⁶ See H.T. Colebrooke (ed.), *Kosha or Dictionary of the Sanskrit Language by Umura Singha*, Haragobinda Rakshit, Calcutta, 1891, p. 250.
- ⁷ Claus Vogel, op. cit., p. 314.
- ⁸ See Krishnaji Govind Oka (ed.), *The Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana (Amarakosha) of Amarasimha: With the Commentary of Kshirasvāmin*, Law Printing Press, Poona, 1913, p. 159.
- ⁹ Claus Vogel, op. cit., p. 323.
- ¹⁰ See Haragovind Śāstri (ed.), *Chaukhamba Bharati Academy*, Varanasi, 2008, p. 54.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 101.
- ¹² M. Monier Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, MLBD, Delhi, 2005 (reprint), p. 263.
- ¹³ According to the rule *rajaḥ-kṛśy-āsuti-parisādo valac* (PāSū 5.2.112) the word *āsutivāla* is constructed by adding the suffix *valac* after *āsuti*. For English translation of this rule, see Srisa Chandra Vasu (ed.), *The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Paṇini*, Book 5, Sindhu Charan Bose (Panini Office), Benares, 1897, p. 936; also V.S. Agarwala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, University of Lucknow, 1953, p. 114.
- ¹⁴ See S.M. Katre, *Dictionary of Pāṇini*, part 1, Deccan College, Poona, 1968, p. 104.
- ¹⁵ Radha Kanta Deva, *Shabda-kalpadrum*, part 5, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi, p. 144.
- ¹⁶ For Pāṇini's time, Banerji, op.cit., p. 78.
- ¹⁷ For Mathureśa's time, Vogel, op. cit., p. 365.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 335.
- ¹⁹ Taranatha Tarkavachaspati, *Vācaspatyam* (in Sanskrit), Vol. 6, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 2006, p. 5146.
- ²⁰ *The Mahābhārata: Text as Constituted in its Critical Edition*, vol. 1 (Ādi, Sabhā, Āraṇyaka and Virāṭa Parvans), BORI, Poona, 1971, p. 350. A different reading of this verse is available in the Biswabani Prakashani ed. of the *VMbh*,

which is as following: *śauṇḍikāḥ kevalās caiva śakās caiva viśāmpate | aṅgā baṅgās caiva śāṇavatyā gayās tathā* || 2.50.16. See Haridāsa Siddhāntavāgīśa Bhaṭṭācārya (ed.), *Mahābhārata* (in Sanskrit and Bengali), Biswabani Prakashani, Calcutta, 1348 Bengali Year (2nd ed.).

²¹ *The Mahābhārata: Text as Constituted in its Critical Edition*, vol. 4 (*Anuśāsana, Āśvamedhika, Āśramavāsika, Mausala, Mahāprāsthānika* and *Svargārohaṇa Parvans*), BORI, Poona, 1975, p. 2563.

²² https://www.valmiki.iitk.ac.in/sloka?field_kanda_tid=2&language=dv&field_sarga_value=83.

²³ For MS' time, Banerji, op.cit., pp. 106-7.

²⁴ Patrick Olivelle (ed.), *Manu's Code of Law (A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra)*, Oxford University Press, New York, p. 547.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 135.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 788.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 201.

²⁸ Kumudranjan Ray (ed.), *Yajñavalkya-Samhita (Vyavaharadhyaya)*, K. Ray, Calcutta, 1946, p. 123.

²⁹ Jülius Jolly, *Institutes of Vishnu, Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 7, (F. Max Müller ed.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1880, p. 164.

³⁰ <http://hinduonline.co/Scriptures/Sutra/VishnuDharmaSutra.html>

³¹ For Aparārka's time, Sures Chandra Banerji, *A Companion to Dharmaśāstra*, D.K. Printworld, New Delhi, p. 34.

³² loc.cit.

³³ See P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. 2, part 1, BORI, Poona, 1941, p. 97.

³⁴ For synonyms see above pp. 1-2.

³⁵ Narayan Chandra Saha, *The Vaiśhya Khondo-Saha and the Shaundika and the Commentary on Hindu-Castes*, Gladstone Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1906, p. 7.

³⁶ Monier Williams, op. cit., p. 1093.

³⁷ Mahādeva Gangādhara Bākre (ed.), *Grihya-sūtra by Paraskar*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1982 (2nd ed.), p. 154.

³⁸ Hermann Oldenberg, *The Grihya Sūtras, The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 29, part 1, (ed. F. Max Müller), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1886, p. 296.

³⁹ Mahādeva Gangādhara Bākre (ed.), op. cit., pp. 157, 163.

⁴⁰ Monier Williams, op. cit., p. 450.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 1081.

⁴² For Bhaṭṭoji's time, op. cit. Banerji, p. 24.

⁴³ Cf. Giridhar Sharma and Parameshwaranand Sharma (eds.), *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakaumudī*, vol. 2, MLBD, Delhi, p. 424.

⁴⁴ For English translation of the rules, Srisa Chandra Vasu, op.cit., Book 4, 1896, pp. 751, 774-5.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Book 2, Satyajnan Chaterji (Panini Office), Allahabad, 1894, pp. 235-6; and Monier Williams, op. cit., p.1093.

⁴⁶ For Vātsyāyana's time, op. cit. Banerji, p. 109.

- ⁴⁷ Gosvamī Dāmodar Shastri (ed.), *The Kāmasūtra by Śrī Vātsyāyana Muni* (in Sanskrit), Jai Krishnadas-Haridas Gupta, Benares, 1929, p. 273.
- ⁴⁸ Richard Burton and F. F. Arbuthnot (Translation), *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana*, George Allen and Unwin, London, pp. 245-6.
- ⁴⁹ Ludwik Sternbach, "Review", *Journal of the American Oriental Institute*, vol. 81, no. 2, (gen. ed. Edward H. Schafer), American Oriental Society, 1961, p. 158. https://www.jstor.org/stable/595066?refreqid=excelsior%3A982dcd2587e3ccb5256e9b65ad0916f6&seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents.
- ⁵⁰ For Varāhamihira's time, op. cit., Banerji, pp. 106-7.
- ⁵¹ V. Subramanya Sastri and M. Ramakrishna Bhat (eds.), *Varahamihira's Brihat Samhita*, V.B. Soobbiah and Sons, Bangalore, 1946, p. 655.
- ⁵² For date of Kālidāsa, op. cit., Banerji, pp. 48-9.
- ⁵³ For text, M.R. Kale (ed.), *Abhijñāna-śakunatalam of Kālidāsa*, MLBD, Delhi, 1980 (reprint), p. 204.
- ⁵⁴ R. C. Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, G. Bharadwaj and Co., Calcutta, 1971, pp. 458-9.
- ⁵⁵ For textual references Narayan Chandra Saha, op. cit., pp. 13-9; also Dhirendra Krishna Bose, *Wine in Ancient India*, K.M. Connor and Co. Ltd., Calcutta, 1922, pp. 4-9.
- ⁵⁶ Narayan Chandra Saha, op. cit., pp. 12-3.
- ⁵⁷ For text, Wasudev Laxman Śāstrī Paṇiskar (ed.), *Śuklayajurveda-samhitā (Śrīmad-Vājasaneyi-Mādhyandina)*, Pandurang Jawaji, Bombay, 1929, p. 521.
- ⁵⁸ Cf. Narayan Chandra Saha, op. cit., p. 103. Saha's view in this quotation is based on the 30th chapter of the *Mādhyandina* branch of the *Śuklayajurveda*.
- ⁵⁹ *The Mahābhārata: Text as Constituted in its Critical Edition*, vol. 1 (*Ādi, Sabhā, Āraṇyaka and Virāṭa Parvans*), BORI, Poona, 1971, p. 350.
- ⁶⁰ Monier Williams, op. cit., p. 1223.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1102.
- ⁶² loc. cit.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 1061.
- ⁶⁴ *The Mahābhārata: Text as Constituted in its Critical Edition*, vol. 4 (*Anuśāsana, Āśvamedhika, Āśramavāsika, Mausala, Mahāprāsthānika and Svargārohaṇa Parvans*), BORI, Poona, 1975, p. 2563.
- ⁶⁵ M. N. Dutt, *A Prose English Translation of the Mahabharata (Translated Literally from the Original Sanskrit Text)*, *Anushasana Parva*, vol. 13, Manmatha Nath Dutt, Calcutta, 1905, p. 99.
- ⁶⁶ Patrick Olivelle, op. cit., pp. 818-819 (for text); and p. 210 (for English translation).
- ⁶⁷ *Agnipurāṇa* (chapter 275, verses 10-11) enlists five tribes in the Haihaya dynasty. They are namely, Bhoja, Āvanta, Vītihoṭra, Svayamjāta and Śauṇḍikeya. For text, Shivaprasad Dvivedi (ed. with Hindi translation), *Agnipurāṇam*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, 2004, p. 588; for English translation, J.L. Shastri et al, *The Agni-Purāna*, part 1, MLBD, Delhi, 1998 (reprint), p. 741.

- ⁶⁸ Vettam Mani, *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia*, MLBD, Delhi, 1975 (1st English ed.), p. 765.
- ⁶⁹ Haraprasad Sastri (ed.), *Bṛihad-Dharma-Purāṇam*, *Bibliotheca Indica, New Series* no. 668, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, p. 577.
- ⁷⁰ Shanti Lal Nagar (ed.) *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa (Brahma-Prakṛti and Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa)*, (Text with English translation), vol. 1, Parimal Publications, Delhi, p. 47.
- ⁷¹ Radha Kanta Deva, op. cit., loc. cit.
- ⁷² See note 6.
- ⁷³ Cf. BDP 13.41-43 for complete list of *madhyamasankara*. For text, Haraprasad Sastri (ed.), op. cit., pp. 577-8.
- ⁷⁴ P. V. Kane, op. cit., pp. 88-9.
- ⁷⁵ Monier Williams, op. cit., p. 563.
- ⁷⁶ For text, *Ṛgvedasamhitā*, vol. 3 (6-8 Maṇḍalas) and vol. 4 (9-10 Maṇḍalas), Vaidika Saṁshodhona Maṇḍala, Poona, 1946, p. 262 for 6.75.19 and vol. 4, p. 795 for 10.133.5.
- ⁷⁷ Shankar Pandurang Pandit (ed.), *Atharvavedasamhita*, Government Central Book Depot, Bombay, 1895, p. 353.
- ⁷⁸ For Sāyaṇa's time, op. cit., Banerji, p. 93.
- ⁷⁹ Cf. *Kāśika* on PāSū 4.2.104 also. For text and explanation, Ishwar Chandra (ed.), *Kāśikāvṛtti*, part 2, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, 2010 (reprint), pp. 121-2.
- ⁸⁰ Probable date of the text is from 9th century CE-12th century CE. See, Bruno Dagens (ed. and translated), *Mayamatam: Treatise of Housing, Architecture and Iconography*, vol. 1, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, 2007 (reprint), p. xliii (introduction).
- ⁸¹ For date, op. cit., Banerjee, p. 325.
- ⁸² Bruno Dagens, op. cit., p. 254.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- ⁸⁴ T. Ganapati Sastri (ed.), *The Silparatna by Śrī Kumāra*, part 1, Government Press, Trivandrum, 1923, pp. 164-5.
- ⁸⁵ Cf. Narayan Chandra Saha, op. cit., pp. 3, 106.
- ⁸⁶ For commentaries, Viśvanāth Nārāyan Maṇḍlik (ed.), *Mānava-Dharma Śāstra (Institutes of Manu)*, Ganpat Krishnaj's Press, Bombay, 1886, p. 1230.

Vishvakarma Community: Manifestation of Artisans and Craftsmen in Early and Medieval South India

K. Mavali Rajan

Abstract

In South India, the Vishvakarma Community, both artisans and craftsmen, spread extensively throughout the region and played a vital role in the rural and urban economy. There were different categories of artisan community in early South India like engravers, sculptors, carpenters, ironsmiths, painters, etc., who were mostly considered as a class of master-craftsmen or skilled artisans. By virtue of their skilled labour, compassion, and association in art and craft activities, the artisans and craftsmen were able to exert great influence on the social and religious life of the people. The community had a very important role to play in the temple towns as these were nuclei of urban development in the medieval period of South India.

Artisan and craftsman are skilled and labourious in their traditional art and craft activities. There were different categories of artisan community in early India like engravers, sculptors, carpenters, iron smiths, painters, etc., who were mostly considered as a class of master-craftsmen or skilled artisans, believed to be a mixed caste, born of a father from higher *Varna* and mother from the lower order. The emergence of the structural temple in medieval South India led to the proliferation of the artisans and craftsmen, who were engaged in art and craft activities in the temple premises.¹ Even village community needed the artisans to make agricultural tools and other household things and they played an important role in the agrarian economy of the country. These artisans can be placed in two broad divisions,

namely general artisans and metal workers. Those who made a large number of daily uses woodwork, such as plough, sward, cart, chariot, utensils, pestle, bed, etc., were considered as general artisans and those who associated with the working of metals, such as gold, silver, iron, brass, copper, tin, lead and other precious stones, were known as metal workers.² The metal workers not only made axes, hammers, saws, etc. meant for the carpenters and smiths but also supplied agriculture implements, which enabled the farmers to produce surplus production.

The term 'artisan' is generally used in the sense of one who is possessed of practical skill in a particular trade or profession such as a handicraftsman, a mechanic, etc. and the term 'craftsman' is an artist or someone extremely skilled at art or craft. Both artisan and craftsman are highly skilled, painstaking, technical based, masterly works, specific in the manual arts. The *Mahabharata* celebrates the glorious position of the Vishvakarma community. It is exciting to note from the *Mahābhārata* that,

“Vishvakarma, lord of the arts, master of a thousand crafts, a carpenter of gods and builder of their palaces divine, the fashioner of every jewel, first of craftsmen by whose art men live, and whom, a great and deathless god, they continuously worship.”³

The *Manu Smriti*, considered as a law book of Varna-Hindus gives some references to artisans, craftsmen, practical arts, handicrafts, mechanical works, etc. These art exertions involved distinctive sections of the society; artisans for raising monuments, temples, patrons for financing the projects, priests for consecrating the monuments, and so on.

I

On the artisans and craftsmen of early and early medieval India very limited works have been done by the scholars. Among the scholars, Vijaya Ramaswamy who has been working on the search of artisans and craftsmen for more than three decades published several

articles and research monographs on the skilled labourers of medieval South India. Her major works include : *Vishvakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India* (2004), *Vishvakarma in South Indian History* (2018), *Craftwork & Wages in Medieval Tamilnadu (based on Inscriptions from the 8th to 13th century)* (1993), *Traditional Crafts, Technology and Society in pre-Colonial Peninsular India* (2008), etc. They are extremely commendable works in the field of art and craft activities and give a vivid picture of the social, economic, and cultural aspects of the artisans and craftsman communities.

Vijaya Ramaswamy in her recent edited volume on "*In Search of Vishvakarma: Mapping Indian Craft Histories*" published in 2019 emphasised the various aspects relating to the craftsmen and their divine skill. She says that 'the Vishvakarma community who was a specialist in making of crafting icons and building monumental structures'. This volume on the search of 'Vishvakarma' seeks to explore the hermeneutics of Vishvakarma and to document a rich tapestry of images as well as historical information regarding crafts and craftsmen through the ages.⁴ Further, Vijaya Ramaswamy's presidential address delivered at the 38th annual session of South Indian History Congress on 'Vishvakarma in South Indian History' focuses on some particular aspects of the Vishvakarma craftsmen and their social and economic life, based on epigraphic evidence, where she has attempted to answer the following questions; 1) who were the Vishvakarma craftsmen? 2) What constitutes the essential difference between artisan and craftsman? 3) Where did they live? and 4) What did they do in terms of their role and function in medieval society and economy?⁵ She logically tried to answer those questions and highlights the role and function of the Vishvakarma community in the growth of art and craft activities. Another work *Craftwork & wages in Medieval Tamilnadu* focuses on the work and wages paid to the Vishvakarma craftsmen based on inscriptional evidence.

R.N. Misra's (1975) monograph on 'Ancient Artists and Art Activity' seeks to define the craftsmen and their association with the creation of different monuments vis-à-vis their respective regions of operation

and various other aspects relating to them, such as the origin of stonemasons, their skill in *silpa*, their organisation and various categories in a hierarchical setting. The work consists of three chapters, dealing with artists and their art activities from the Vedic times to the pre-Gupta period in the first instance and from the Gupta Vākataka period to the medieval period in the next part.

Historian S. Settar was known for his multi-disciplinary work, encompassing linguistics, epigraphy, anthropology, the study of religious and art history. He had extensively studied Asokan edicts. In his work *Footprints of Artisans in History* (2003) he seeks the evidence of the artisan community like engravers, scribes, sculptors from the epigraphic as well as literary sources of early India.⁸ The other works on artisan community which include Meera Mukherjee's writing on *In search of Vishvakarma* in the context of Bengal is also a well-known work tracing out the origin and growth of the Vishvakarma, the craftsman community. Her first major work on crafts, metal craftsmen in India was published in 1978.⁹ Jaya Jaitly's independent work *Vishvakarma's Children: Stories of India's Craftspeople* studied the hereditary legacy of crafting skills of the Vishvakarma community. In the work Jaya Jaitly has examined the results of research surveys of artisans across the country, putting handicrafts in a wider socio-economic context.¹⁰

II

In the history of India the sixth century BCE is known for the development of industry, agriculture, and trade with the advent of iron; also known for the proliferation of cities and the class of artisans. From the Maurya period onwards the artists and craftsmen were given protection, allotted places of habitation. The artisans were also employed by the state and they were exempted from paying taxes to the state. In later years the artisan communities started systematising themselves into organisations like guilds of each occupational group to earn more social status and mobilise more economic resources. Early sources including *Megasthenes* have put both commercial

community and artisan groups together as the fourth class in the Indian social hierarchy.¹¹

In ancient India, the artisan community belonged to the general section of the society engaged in various craft production. Different categories of artisans are found clubbed together in one general group called *śilpin*. Likewise, the term '*śilpa*' is of a wide connotation and it includes within its realm various crafts, skills, and occupations.¹² Similarly the word *rūpakāra* was frequently used in ancient literature for the sculptor as well as the term '*śilpi*' for the painter, '*vaddhakis*' for carpenters. The *Arthaśāstra* also mentions the term *kāru*; which generally designates artisans, specifically connected with architecture and sculptural art. The *śilpin* received daily wages for the service and *dāsakarmakāra* working on food and clothing only.¹³ The stoneworkers were referred to in inscriptions as *śilakarmanta* or *śailakarma*. The sculptors are mentioned as *rūpakāra*, *aveśani rūpadaksha*. In *Rig-Veda*, the god Vishvakarma is mentioned as *dhātu-karmāra*, here *karmāra* is referring to artisans and artificers (black-smith)¹⁴ and *dhātu* refers to raw-material. The *Vajasaneyi Samhitā* categorises the artisans namely: chariot-makers, carpenters, potters, smiths, jewelers, herdsmen, etc.¹⁵ The ancient text *Mahāvastu* refers to various classes of artists and their field of specialisation; they are painters (*chitrakāraka*), carpenters (*vardhaki-rūpakāra*), carvers (*kārupatrika*), modelers of clay (*pustakāraka*), plasters (*pustakarmakāraka*), decorators (*lēpaka*), and architects (*sthapati-sūtrakāra*). The *Sūtradhāra/Sūtradhār* was a master-iconologist and iconographer in Indian art history; sometimes they were given a place next to the *sthapati*. These different categories of craftsmen were mostly involved in temple building, stone-carving, and architecture work.¹⁶

Professor S. Settar in his general presidential address delivered at the Indian History Congress views that :

“the first artisan in the history of Southeast Asia is found in Karnataka. It is with the artisan named Champada, who carved three edicts at Brahmagiri that the documented history of the Indian artisans begins”.

Further, he says that the monumental scale of communication both visual and verbal developed by Asoka (273-232 BCE), should have made him depend heavily on a corps of composers, scribes, engravers, sculptors, and architects.¹⁷ It is interesting to note that king Asoka sends scribes and engravers (who were experts in *Brāhmi* and *Kharōsthi*) from the north to the Karnataka region to spread the knowledge of writing to the people of the local region. The scribes (*lipikāra*) were responsible for training the local scribes. The evidence says that one such scribe travelled from Gandhara to the southern territory of Suvarnagiri. The engravers were responsible for transmitting Asoka's messages to the different parts of the country.¹⁸

The artisan communities in early India were mostly involved in the erection of edicts, *stūpas*, *vihāras*, *chaityas*, etc. S. Settar categorises the artisan community of Asoka time into five categories such as indigenous or local artisans, folk or rural artisans, descendants of West Asian artisans, traditionalists or purists, and skilled artisans.¹⁹ According to epigraphic evidence the king Asoka employed a large number of artisans to engrave the *Prākṛit-Brāhmi* (*Prākṛit* language and *Brāhmi* script were first used by Asoka for transacting official communication) edicts. One of his edicts mentions an engraver (*dpr=dipir*). A.H. Dani has made some interesting observations on the writers and engravers of Asoka's time. He says that (a) it was the writer who dedicated the style of writing, not the engraver because the latter's role was only secondary and (b) that writing of the inscription on the stone by the *lipikāra* preceded 'cutting the letters on the stone'.²⁰ From the statement it is clear that Asoka used a separate artisan community to write and engrave his edicts and another official for proclamation. King Asoka engaged several *Kharosthi* artisans to engrave edicts at Takshasila, Chunnar, Pataliputra, Girnar, etc. Not only the engravers and scribes, the sculptors and architects were also engaged in the making of sculpture and architecture in different regions of Asoka time. Epigraphic evidences give a detailed description of the development of the writers' community from the time of Asoka. Earlier the writers were called by different names but by the ninth

century CE, the writer class crystallised into the *Kāyastha* caste by passing through various stages of evolution.²¹

During the Gupta and post-Gupta periods the *Śūdras* were engaged in craftwork. The *Śūdra* artisans gained much importance during the early medieval period. The lawgivers permit art and craft works to the *Śūdra* community only. They worked with the gold, base metals, wood, stone, etc.²² We find references to in Buddhist *Jātaka* stories about the artisan guilds, which include those of woodworkers, smiths, painters, ivory carvers, site-explorers, and image-makers. B.D. Chattopadhyaya noticed four non-agricultural occupational groups namely chief artisans (*prathama-kulika*), the chief scribe (*prathama-kāyasthas*), the merchant (*sarthavāha*) and the guild president of the town (*nagara-sresthi*) in his work *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural society in early Medieval India*.²³

In early Tamil texts, there are references to five artisan community known as Kammālar or Kammiyar. For instance, the Kammālar are mentioned as goldsmiths and coppersmiths.²⁴ It is stated that in the early period the Kammālar have been the leading custodians and promoters of fine arts like architecture, sculpture, and iconography. In early Tamil country, the Kammālar were not only goldsmiths and carpenters but also stonemasons, who were referred to as *pon-meni seyvōr*, mostly involved in erecting images of gods and goddesses.²⁵ In *Sangam* texts there are also instances to the *Yavana* artisans, who were experts in making images, seems to have spread to the farthest corners of the country. In *Pattupāthu* (Ten Idylls) poet Nakkirar refers to a beautiful doll made by a *Yavana* artisan. In *Manimēkalai* we get references to the *Yavana* carpenters and their skilled works along with the mention of Magadhan craftsmen, Avanti blacksmiths, Maharāṭta Smiths, and the Tamil skilled labourers. From the descriptions, we can understand that the early Tamils of the second to fifth century CE invited many skilled artisan communities from different regions of both inland and foreign to make images and other artistic works.²⁶

III

In modern days the artisan communities are known by the name *Vishvakarma*. Even the community prefers the new name, which has evidential support in twelfth-century inscriptions that refer to smiths and sculptors belonging to the *Vishvakarma kula*. Vijaya Ramaswamy notes that :

“the Vishvakarma community is obviously cutting across caste lines and ... comprises five socially and economically differentiated castes.”²⁷

The community claims descent from the god Vishvakarma, who is considered to be the divine architect or engineer of the universe. According to *Vishvakarma Purana*, it is believed that god Vishvakarma had five children namely Manu, Maya, Tvastar, Shilpi, and Vishvajna, being respectively the clans of blacksmiths, carpenters, bell metal workers (metal casters), stonemasons, and goldsmiths. The five children served the gods as artisans and possessed the ability to create things by simply imagining them.

The Vishvakarma craftsmen have held a higher social status as they are expert in artistic works and scientific skills. According to George Varghese, their claim to high status is ‘one of the mainstays of Vishvakarma identity’ in what is otherwise a fragmented, incoherent community that has often suffered from internal differences of opinion. Vijaya Ramaswamy in her lecture states that :

... the craft persons collectively referred to as Vishvakarma, today constituted a unique craft/artisanal collective that cut through caste and class lines having as its constituents the humble blacksmith and carpenter as well as the affluent *Sthapati* who was the mason-cum-architect and the *pon-Kollar/por-kollar* or goldsmith. The primary identity of the craft persons stemmed from their community rather than their caste identity. The majority of medieval inscriptions emphasise that the artisan belonged to the *Vishvakarma kula*, rather than detailing his caste affiliation. Inscriptional evidences make it amply clear that despite belonging to different

professions and different *Jātis*, these craftsmen claimed a collective entity that transcended caste and class to form the larger community of craft-persons.²⁸

IV

The Vishvakarma community had played a vital role in the development of temple urbanism in medieval South India and they were an integral part of the urban society and economy. In South India during the eighth-thirteenth centuries the Cholas, Pandyas, Hoysalas, Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, and other regional powers started temple building activities, which led to the emergence of temple towns in the capitals as well as in cultural centres. While craft works occupied an important role in temple building, the craftsmen started settling around the temple premises, which resulted in the growth of the urban economy. All the temples of South India had architects, sculptors, masons, smiths, and carpenters, mostly settled around the temple in a permanent capacity. Many inscriptions speak of the employment of various categories of smiths, who were expert in making images, jewels for gods, etc.²⁹

The ritual and non-ritual activities of the temple including the management engaged different communities. Among them, the Brahmin functionaries played a vital role as priests, officials, owners of the temple lands, etc. They performed all the ritual services and received grants from the king and royal family in return for their ritual services. The Brahmin functionaries controlled the administration of the temples as well as the management of the *Brahmadēya* and *Dēvadāna* villages. The landed community, merchant community, and other privileged section of the society who also had the lively interest of the temple service. From the South Indian temple inscriptions, we find references to non-Brahmin residents, who rendered numerous services in the temple. They often had made several endowments to the temple for the religious offerings. Due to close association with the temple activities, many of them both Brahmin and non-Brahmin functionaries were contributing

their services to the local Śiva and Viṣṇu temples, which are recorded in the temple inscriptions of South India.³⁰

In addition to the Brahmin, land-owning community and merchant class, there were a few artisans and craftsmen, who settled within the limits of the temple-centered village and indebted to render their service to the temple as well as the village. Five of the leading artisan community in South India came together in a unique association and were hence collectively identified as the *Kammālar* in Tamil country, as the *Pānchālar* in Karnataka; as *Panchanamavaru* in Andhra Pradesh; as *Ainkudi Kammālas* in Kerala; some inscriptional evidences referred to them as *pancha kammālar* and *anjuvannam* (five classes of artisans).³¹ An inscription of 1579 CE referred to the five artisan groups as *pānchālattār*, who enjoyed their traditional rights of cultivation and service in the temple.³²

The Vishvakarmas has made up of five occupational exogamous social groups known as *pānchālar*, encompassing goldsmith (*tattan*), brass smith (*kannar*), blacksmith (*karuman* or *kollan*), carpenter (*tachchan*), and mason (*silpi* or *kal-tachchan*). The five artisan Vishvakarma communities of Bengal are known as *swarṇakār* (goldsmith), *karmakār* (blacksmith), *kansavaṇik* (bronze smith), *sūtradhār* (carpenter), and *bhāskar* (stonemason). These five Vishvakarma groups were also referred to as *kammāla rathakārār*, *pancha kammālar* in Tamil medieval inscriptions. *Patañjali* referred to the five village artisans as *pañchakāruki* and *kulāla*.³³ The *Kammālar* and *Pānchālar* consisting of different professions were not homogeneous. The professional activities of the *pānchālar* such as smiths, carpenters, and sculptors are varied. Yet they led a strong community identity as ‘the group of five’.

The *Kammālar* and *Pānchālar* were primarily engaged in the temple construction activities and engraving temple inscriptions that were revived in the eleventh-thirteenth century CE. The construction activities did not involve the mere erection of shrines but the building up of an entire temple complex spread over a vast area.³⁴ The *Kammālar*, weavers, and merchants were settled in the various streets located on

all four sides of the temple complex; those streets were called *Kammālar theru* (streets of the Kammālar), which still exist in some temple towns like Madurai (*Pāndimandalam*), Kanchipuram (*Thondaimandalam*), Nachiyarkoyil or Swamimalai (*Chōlamandalam*). Further, even in modern days, we find streets like 'therku ratha veethi' (south car street), 'vadakku ratha veethi' (north car street) in Madurai and other temple towns, from where the temple chariot used to go around these streets during the festival occasions.

Among the five artisan communities, the goldsmiths were experts in making beautiful gold ornaments mostly for the temple deities. Along with them, there were two distinct hierarchical categories. At the village level, there was a *tattan* (goldsmith) who worked for a small amount and lived at the subsistence level. Even now in villages and semi-urban centres we can see the *tattan*, sitting at home in a small room or at the street corners and eking out a living by repairing chains or the ornaments and also piercing ears. At the higher level in the big trade centres we can see the big goldsmiths (inscriptions referred them as *perum-tattan*), indicating master-craftsman employing apprentice gold-smiths, having engaged with the huge economic goods, played a vital role in the economy of the urban centres.³⁵

The blacksmiths or *kollans* were also a very active member of the village community, who did craftwork that was substantially different from the work of a *perum kollan* or master blacksmith, who was an integrated part of the temple building process.³⁶ The blacksmith seems to have been among the busiest metal workers, who were concerned with making objects of iron such as agricultural implements, arms, ornaments, etc. Iron objects excavated at Megalithic sites of Tamil Nadu and other places show that agricultural implements and tools of craftsman such as spades, axes, adzes, sickles and various articles of domestic use like nails, cramps, hooks, knives, etc. were made from iron by the blacksmiths.³⁷ There were some groups of people involved in engraving inscriptions and the images of gods in the temple building. These engravers seem to have been smith attached to that particular temple. Information on engravers (*porkōyil āchāri*) is available in the inscriptions of the medieval Tamil country.

South Indian inscriptions speak of a sculptor called *shilpi* or *kal-tachchan* and *tirumēni cheyvār*, expert in the sculpting of images and temple building. The architect of the temple is also referred to as *sthapati*, who knew the science of architecture of the temple.³⁸ A Thiruvavur inscription of the Chola period describes the *sthapati* as *vāstu tatvajñā*, which means that a person who is well versed in the science of architecture.³⁹ The *Matsya Purāṇa* describes a *sthapati* as one who is conversant with architectural design, skillful, industrious, and a champion in architectural matters. A *sthapati* must know the different subjects like astrology, astronomy, the science of numbers, crafts, mechanical devices etc. It was also essential that he knew painting, carpentry, masonry, stonework, metal-work, etc.⁴⁰ Besides the crafts production the *sthapati* is directly concerned with the temple building activities.

The *kal-tachchan* is very expert in identifying the right stone for making images and erecting the temple buildings. There was a specialist on examining the stone and cutting the stone, which identified for making idols. Inscriptions refer to stone-cutting as a separate occupation and stone cutters (*kal-kuttigar*), who were experts in cutting the stone.⁴¹ *Sūtragrāhi*, a specialist craftsman, who was responsible for measuring and marking the stone before the carving of images or crafting ornamental arches and pillars of the temple. An inscription of the Chola period speaks of different categories of Vishvakarma craftsmen such as stone markers (*sūtragrāhi*), the stone joiners (*vartaki*), and the sculptor (*shilpi*) called *thirumēni cheyvār*.⁴² The stonemason of villages in South India enjoyed some privileges such as blowing two conches, beating drums and so on at domestic occurrences; good and bad, use of sandals when they went out of their homes, and plastering the walls of their residences with lime plaster.⁴³ These kinds of privileges were also enjoyed by the other social group according to their community status.

The *Rathakāras*, chariot makers, one of the well known leading artisan community and privileged section in the village communities,

were engaged in the chariot-making and erection of temple tower. The chariot-makers were also used as a means of domestic transport along with the common carts and employed in the temple to draw the images of the gods during the festivals. Inscriptions make it clear that the craftsmen residing in the *thirumadaivilāgam* of the temple, served to the temple. Another inscription describes the residential quarter of the *Rathakāras*, like the blacksmith, and the village carpenter as *kammanachēri* which is located near the potter and other functionaries' residence.⁴⁴ The medieval Tamil epigraphs while recording the names of craftsmen refer to them as 'our temple goldsmith' or 'the temple mason' (*porkōyil*), etc. The temple also employed various smiths and had carpenters and even repairer attached to the temples. An inscription of Veera Pandya from Ambasamudram in Tirunelveli district mentions the apportioning of land to the smith/potter, drummer, barber, and others.⁴⁵

Rajan Gurukkal argues that the artisans and craftsmen became caste groups through their attachment to the temple society. They were settled at the fringe of the temple-centered villages and were obliged to render their services to the temple as well as to the landlords. Inscriptions of medieval Kerala refer to artisan communities like *taccar* (carpenters), *kollar* (blacksmith) *kalavaniyar* (potters), *vaniyar* (oil-mongers), and *vannār* (washermen), brought to settle in the temple-centered society. These skilled workers were appointed to the temple to perform various services.⁴⁶ The artisan community enjoyed occupancy right over village land and this constituted the material incentive for them to be professional groups, and further, there was no other alternative for them and functional obligations.⁴⁷ Largely the potters were appointed to supply new pots to bring water to perform *pūjas*. The washerman, barbers, tailors, jewel-makers were also appointed in temples to perform various temple services. The jewel-makers had to make various ornaments of the deities, braziers for making vessels, carpenters for making woodwork in the temple and goldsmith for making gold ornaments.⁴⁸

V

In regarding the social status of the artisan community there are several opinions. Some scholars opine that the artisan communities were the part of *Vaishya* class in the beginning and later they lost their social importance and became ranked with the *Śūdra* class. But some scholars consider them as *Śūdras* from the beginning of social stratification. However, literary references say that the artisans were different from the *Śūdras* and later were given the right of following arts and crafts from the *Śūdras* later on. If we argue that the artisans were not *Śūdras* earlier and were above their ranks, they must be from the *Vaishya* categories, followed all sort of economic pursuits including art and craftworks.⁴⁹

In a *Brāhmanical* society as outlined in *Manu*, artisans who belong to the lower orders had a far more degraded social status. The lower of *Varna* was occupied by the *Vaishyas* and *Śūdras*, who possessed the requisite technical knowledge and experience of production and distribution, which the members of the higher orders lacked. R.S. Sharma in his work *Economic History of Early India* critically analysed the functions of the different *Varṇas*. He says that the upper two *Varṇas* were non-producing social section mostly involved in activities like praying and conquering and the other two castes were engaged in the primary task of production. They were employed in more or less the primary task of production and by doing so they supplied the material basis for the existence of the whole social order. Accordingly, those who were considered as upper *Varṇas* were mostly non-producing social groups, enjoyed enormous social rights. The next two social groups were the producer community, produced for the whole society. It has been rightly pointed out by P. V. Kane that the principal taxpayers were agriculturists, traders, manual workers, and artisan communities.⁵⁰ Though historical sources strictly stress that the artisan community enjoyed a respectable position in the social system during the early period. Many literary texts cite that some of the artisans' groups engaged in various crafts work, belonged to the

Aryan community. The special place of *Rathakāras* and *Karmāras* and their responsibilities have been indicated in literary texts. Sometimes they were designated as *ratnins* and assigned important roles in the coronation ceremonies of the kings.⁵¹

The socio-economic status of artisans varied from a very high level to a low level in different parts of India, as they earned high wages in urban centre and low wages in villages. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* referred to the provision that artisans should work for a day in a month for the king. R. S. Sharma attests that this rule continued to work in practice in western Indian states that forced labour should be imposed on smiths, chariot-makers, barbers, and potters by the elders.⁵² *Vasistha* states that no taxes should be imposed on the earnings of craftsmanship. But during the Maurya period, there was provision for imposing a tax on the artisans. This provision for the payment of taxes shows that the artisans were no longer employed and controlled by the state. In the capital city, the artisans were attached to the king and temple. Some artisans were attached to the master's household of the king and enjoyed his patronage. Pāṇini refers to them as royal artisans. The Buddhist *Jātaka* story speaks of the royal potters (*rāja-kulāla*) and the royal garland-makers (*rāja-mālākāra*). Some artisans were also attached to the *setthis* and *gahapatīs*. But most of the artisan community were not attached with any households, kings, and masters; mostly they were independent craftsmen working as carpenters and smiths.⁵³ It is important to note that the artisans, who lived in the rural area found their own raw materials and produced their own commodities which they took to the urban markets for the use of both the rural folk and urban population. Some artisans lived in villages for catering to the needs of the village community, who may have been paid by their clients in kind.⁵⁴

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy declares that :

“the *Kammālar* (i.e. *Pāñchālar*) were known as *Vishva* or *Dēva Brahmin*. They spread gradually towards the south and then reached Ceylon, Burma, and Java. The *Vishva-Brahmins* claim to have been

the spiritual guides and priests and their position in the society survives in the saying the '*Vishva-brāhmin*, is a guru to the world".⁵⁵

The *Kammālar* wear the holy thread (*pūnūl*) and performed priestly rites in connection with the consecration of images. They both claim and possess various special privileges, which they always upheld with much vigour. Coomaraswamy also mentions that 'throughout the rest of ceremony all priest officers had been performed by the craftsman themselves acting as a Brahmin priest'.⁵⁶ The art of engraving and sculpture had attained a high stage of development. It was exclusively cultivated by *Pāñchālas* who wore sacred thread and considered themselves as *Vishvakarma Brahmins*. The craftsman being deeply versed in national epic literature always figured in the history of India as missionaries of civilisation, culture, and religion.

It appears from the *Atharva Vēda* that *rathakāras* (chariot-makers) and *karmāras* (metal workers) occupied an important position in society. The *Rathakāras* are treated as the people of mixed origin. They were a progeny of a *Vaishya* from a *Śūdra* woman. The *Dharmasūtras* and *Arthaśāstra* considered them as a *Vaishya* community, by virtue of their occupations. The Buddhist texts also refer to them as *hina-sippas*, as people following low occupations and even equate them with the *Venas*, who are considered as born of *pratiloma* order, to be the progenies of one of the doubly mixed castes.⁵⁷ The smith (*karmāra*), the carpenter (*taksan*), the tanner (*karmamna*), the weavers, and others, whose occupations were quite dignified in the *Rigveda* and practiced by respected members of the society.⁵⁸ Vijaya Ramaswamy says that the social privileges enjoyed by the Vishvakarma craftsmen mainly consisted of the right to blow the conch shell on all ritual occasions (*sangu*) and the right to ride the palanquin (*tandu*). It could also mean the right to wear certain types of cloth. Further, she noticed that in course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the weaver community (*Kaikkolas*) secured from the Vijayanagar kings the right to *sangu* and *tandu* at Kanchipuram, Thiruvannainallur, Thirukoyilur and Brahmadesam.⁵⁹

Besides enjoying some social privileges, the artisan community

suffered from many social disabilities too. The law of *Manu* clearly shows that the members of the upper classes were prohibited to deal in the articles produced by artisans. A greedy man of a higher *Varna*, who stole gems, pearls, coral, or any other precious things, is condemned to take birth among the goldsmiths. If the higher *Varna* work in mines and execute great mechanical works, they cause the loss of their own caste.⁶⁰ Thus the artisans and craftsmen enjoyed higher social status on one side and also suffered from various social disabilities on the other hand.

VI

The *Valangai* and *Idangai* social division had been an important feature of South Indian society and the origin of the classification is traced from the Imperial Chola period. The clear manifestation of these peculiar social divisions appears in the inscriptions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries C.E.⁶¹ The *valangai*, the Tamil word for right hand or 'right side' as a social designation dates from the tenth century when contingencies of Rajaraja I's armies, *valangai vēlaikkāra padaigal*, are mentioned.⁶² References to groups of the left hand or 'left side', *Idangai* appears somewhat later. The meaning attached to the term 'division' is that of the occupational combination of agrarian centered groups, on one hand, and artisan-traders on the other at a level beyond the localities in which both kinds of the group lived.⁶³ The left hand (*idangai*), division of lower social groups during the Chola period was as certainly associated with the mercantile and craft occupation as the 'right hand' division was with agrarian activities. The core *Idangai* groups in all parts of the medieval period were certain merchants and craftsmen conventionally expressed by the numeral five as in the terms of *pānchālar* or *kammālar*.⁶⁴

The existence of the two peculiar categories in medieval South Indian society is found in the inscriptions; familiar with the leadership of Vellālas and Kammālas respectively.⁶⁵ The *Valangai* always considered superior in caste status to *Idangai* which is considered inferior. The Vellāla communities are grouped under the *Valangai*

category consist mostly of the agricultural community. The artisan community, the *Kammālas* that helped the agriculturist to pursue their work, like the carpenters, the ironsmith, the stone cutters, etc., belonged to the *Idangai* group or the Left-Hand group. Each division had 98 sub-castes.⁶⁶ But in the beginning there were no 98 sub-castes among the two factions but later it was extended.⁶⁷ This social division prevalent in the Tamil country from the eleventh century down to the beginning of the twentieth century C.E. The earliest inscriptional evidence to the existence of the *Valangai* class comes from the period of Rajendra Chola 1(1014-1044 CE).⁶⁸

We find frequent references to the *Kammālar*, as the members of the *Idangai* castes (Left-Hand group). According to a Chola inscription,⁶⁹ the *Idangai* sect claimed mythical origin from the sacrificial fire (*agnigunda*) Burton Stein attributes the origin of *Idangai* to the temple urbanisation and the rise of artisan classes during the twelfth century C.E.⁷⁰ Further he says that the *Valangai* caste groups were not to be identified with the low-based cultivating castes. He said that *Idangai* included the traders and artisan castes at least during the early phase of history.⁷¹ Another theory guesses about the origin of the divisions. For instance, it is suggested that the basic factor which accounts for the rise of the division of castes into Right and Left-Hand ones was based upon the age-long rivalry between the old agricultural population and the new industrial and manufacturing classes. The landowners and agriculturists constituted the Right-Hand caste, while the artisans, industrialists, and traders formed the Left Hand castes.⁷²

It is interesting to note that the *Valangai* and *Idangai* caste groups often conflict with each other for their social status. The most important conflict was that of the artisan and manufacturing communities like *Kammālar*s over rival claims for social status. The Pasupathishwara temple inscription states that the *Kammālar*s who belonged to the *Idangai* class enjoyed certain privileges like wearing shoes, sounding drums and conches, living in tile-roofed houses and houses with two

doors.⁷³ They competed with the Brahmins and their social allies like the Vellalas.⁷⁴ Some marginalised artisans, tenants, and peasants who also struggled against the rich landlords, the oppressive establishment, and the *sabhās* that were invested with the powers of collecting the rent and taxes during the fifteenth century C.E. in Thiruchirappali, South Arcot, and Tanjavur districts of Tamil country. B.S. Chandrababu speaks of the increasing conflict of the people, especially of the Left Hand and Right-Hand factions, who are in general, remembered for constant rivalries, disunity and incompatibility among themselves.⁷⁵

Epigraphic evidences are available to identify the regular rivalry between these groups. Inscriptions of 1429 C.E. which are found in the various region of Tamil country, broadly and specifically portray the events leading to the unrest of the exploited agrarian classes.⁷⁶ Inscriptions of the Imperial Cholas and Vijayanagar period speak of the conflict between the *Valangai* and *Idangai* caste groups. The *Idangai* people like Kammālars, refrained from any association with the *Valangai* counterparts.⁷⁷ In the social conflict the Brahmins and the Vellalas favoured only Right-Hand castes.⁷⁸ The conflict between these two sects was prominently from the eleventh to eighteenth century C.E. and particularly from the fourteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. The earliest dispute between the two classes has appeared in the inscription of the 1080 C.E.⁷⁹ or perhaps that of 1072 C.E. at Rajamahēndra *Chaturoēdimangalam* in the Tanjavur district.⁸⁰ A Pandya inscription from Thiruchengatangudi indicates that the tension and conflict assumed great proportion during the first half of the fourteenth century C.E.⁸¹ During the Vijayanagar regime in Tamilnadu the Left-Hand castes like Kammālar appeared and were accommodated suitably in society.⁸² But the conflict between Right-Hand and Left-Hand groups continued up to the days of East India Company.⁸³ These quarrels arose just to elevate each group on the social ladder. M. Srinivasa Iyengar considered this faction dispute as an outcome of political, social, and religious jealousies among the Hindus.⁸⁴ In the ultimate analysis it is to be discerned that this conflict was not due to any

superficial causes like flimsy desire or jealousy or fascination for some social privileges. It is to be noted that it was an age of a rigid caste system.

VII

In South India, the Vishvakarma community spread widely throughout the region and played a vital role in the rural and urban economy. By virtue of their skilled labour, compassion, and acquaintance in art and craft activities, the artisans and craftsmen were able to exert great influence on the social and religious life of the people. The community had a very important role to play in the temple towns as these were nuclei of urban development in the medieval period of South India. Vijaya Ramaswamy proposes a social separation between the artisans and craftsmen as 'two different kinds of economies' since they presented two kinds of the manufacturing process in pre-Colonial India. The artisan communities were more skilled, more socially mobile, and had better access to technology compared to craftsmen who lived in the village community with a certain degree of relative physical mobility, socio-economic security, and comparatively static living standards.⁸⁵

The artisan and craftsman community composed of different *Jāti* jointly constituted Vishvakarma *kula* and reaped the maximum social and economic benefits from expanding external trade, a consolidating temple economy, and expanding clientele in South India. The economic enrichment allowed the Vishvakarma craftsmen to wrest some privileges during the medieval South India especially under the Vijayanagar period. They emerged as temple donors who received special *darshan* and privileges in the temple *pūjas* and festivals. In the concluding part, it is important to note that the number of artisans and craftsmen settled in temple land to ensure their services to the temple as well as its settlement, these people were granted the right to settle down in the temple's landed property, which they were bound to respond through their arts and crafts services.

Notes

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- ² Rajeshwar Prasad Singh, "Artisans in Manu", in B. D. Chattopadhyaya, ed., *Essays in Ancient Indian Economic History*, Indian History Congress Monograph Series, Second Edition, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 89-92.
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Fore-Warned is Fore-Armed : Negotiating the 'servant problem' of the British Colonial Domesticity

Rituparna Ray Chowdhury

Introduction

The trial of Indian housekeepers does not consist in the lack of suitable furniture, food, and dress, so much as in the deceit and dishonesty of the people.¹

The above quote (1855) familiarised the Anglo-Indian² expatriates about the intrinsic qualities of indigenous servants and warned them about the trials of raising English homes in the colony. This essay examines the 'Servant Problem' of the English household and the ways of managing the 'problem' as laid out in the contemporary colonial household management guides and conduct books. Indeed, the management of servants was the central focus of almost all household compendiums. In this context, this article then proposes to examine how the boundary of Anglo-Indian domesticity was redefined in colonial context which demanded control as prescribed by the domestic manuals. This invariably entailed discipline and punishment of the indigenous servants whereby imperial control within the colonial domesticity was legitimised.

A typically Anglo-Indian family employed at a time an array of servants. The tally of servants was also dependent on the size of the bungalow and extent of the household. As pointed out by Edward Braddon (1882),

In a larger household, the domestic machinery is still more complicated. To put a dinner on the table it is necessary to have

(1) a *khansamah*, or butler, to superintend generally; (2) a cook, with, perhaps, (3) a mate or assistant; (4) a *kitmutgar*, to assist the *khansamah* in pretending to wait at table; and (5) a *mussalchee*, to wash the plates and dishes, and clean the knives and forks. Children require something like one female attendant (*aiyah*) per head, to insure approximate cleanliness and reasonable immunity from broken limbs. If there is a garden, a *mahlee* (gardener) must be entertained for every hundred square yards. Every additional horse involves the necessity of keeping two additional men to look after it. Every *punkah* that is kept continually working calls in the services of its own special menial triumvirate. Two or three bearers are required to perform, as far as possible, the duties of one housemaid, and one is employed to attend upon the children. Two or three tailors (*durzees*) are fully engaged in repairing the havoc done to the linen by the washerman, and in making such new garments as, for economical considerations, it is inexpedient to order from a milliner or haberdasher. Then there will probably be from one to half a dozen *chuprassies*, whose duties consist of sleeping in the verandah, carrying *chits* (notes) about, and holding the powder and shot when the master goes out shooting. And there are, of course, the indispensable sweeper, water-carrier, and washerman, possibly in duplicate.³

The innumerable service providers were an integral part of British colonial culture. As pointed out by Fae Dussart, domestic service in colonial India employed more than two million people at the time of 1881 Census of British India.⁴ The number of servants was exemplary of the status and position of the officials of the company; higher position demanded a greater show of luxury and abundance. However, the onus was invariably put on the indigenous religious and caste restrictions along with the extremities of the tropical climate as the *prima facie* cause for employing the host of servants. Managing the

abundance of domestics with their peculiarities was regarded as the most important challenge to the novice *memsahib* and there was no dearth of advice regarding it, in the contemporary colonial literature. However, the household manuals almost invariably portrayed the native servants in negative light. *The Wife's Help to Indian Cookery* (1888) for example warned the readers about the misgivings on Indian servants through a poem.

INDIAN DOMESTIC TROUBLES

WHO, when I've found a friend to dine,
 Declares we drank both flasks of win,
 Though half, I know, was left in mine?
 My Khidmatgar.

Who evermore to fool me tries,
 And tells my wife a pack of lies,
 And charges *twice* for all he buys?
 My Khansamah.

Who smokes my food and cribs my tea,
 Or sends the *second* brew to me,
 And cooks in *fat* instead of Ghee?
 My Bawarchi.

Who takes good care no stranger tries
 To cheat me of a single pice,
 Yet steals himself before my eyes?
 My Behra.

Who sits and claims each joint of bone
 That leaves my table as his own,
 And fat and lazy now has grown?
 My Mehtar.

Who beats my shirts to ribbons fine,
 And changes (why, I can't divine,)
 Old Jones's trashy things for mine?
 My Dhobi.

Who with my horses' Gram makes free,
 Deducts one seer from every three,
 And sells the balance back to me?
 My Sais.

Who wakes me from my slumbers deep,
 As bawling loud, the house he'll creep,
 To tell all thieves that Sáhib's asleep?
 My Chokídár.

Who bathes me every day, full well,
 In soap obnoxious to the smell,
 And marks me so, my chin can tell?
 My Hajjám.

Who try me fifty times a day,
 Till wrath and passion get their way,
 And what I'd do —' tis hard to say?
 My servants.⁵

The negative representation of the servants was a crucial part in the creation of 'difference' between ruler and the ruled. The indigenous servants were ideally and typically constructed as the Orientalist 'other' in sharp contrast to the white 'superior' master race. Almost all the journals, travelogues and domestic manuals alerted their readers about the nature of the local helps. Nearly all the household manuals habitually projected the domestic servants as indolent, avaricious, deceitful and stealing something now and then. Edmund C. P. Hull (1871) corroborated, "[Servant] is not strictly honest or truth-loving...".⁶ There was no dearth of examples about the servants and their *lack of ignorance and utter disregard* for hygiene or 'proper' conduct of doing work. To the sahib and memsahib⁷ all native people seemed alike and this categorisation was based on observing their household servants and this impression was etched on to the psyche of other members of the ruling class and other prospective *memsahibs*. The

authoritative overtone, as a reflection of the colonial governance, both at public and private sphere, had grown further after the experience of events of 1857. Racial difference between the ruler and master was permanently established.

As to cheating, a certain amount always goes on, and you must just give in to it if you want a quiet life. ... there seems no use in setting out to make the native world come up to our standard of propriety.⁸

Indeed, any new comers to the colonies quickly adapted to the ways of the colonials and became educated about how to treat their servants, as Mrs. Carol Hyde, wife of a civil servant found out. Writing in the 1930s, Mrs. Hyde freshly arrived from England was at first astonished to find the way of Indian servants' doing things, without taking a break. She mentioned a hard-working bearer who was taking care of all their belongings and luggage while they were on tour through Raipur. She recollected how the bearer sat himself with the luggage throughout the journey without excusing himself even for minimum necessities.

...how he stuck out the whole journey I don't know - we never gave him any food or drink and God knows where he slept at night after getting out our bedding and hanging up our mosquito nets.⁹

Interestingly Mrs. Hyde soon became acquainted with the ruler's way of behaving with the native servants and eventually got 'cured' of treating the servitude as 'human beings'.

I kept wanting to treat him like a human being but I'm cured now. Edgar [her husband] says they only have two meals a day - rice early in the morning and again at night, and they just lie down and go to sleep anywhere, in the garden, on the verandah or even by the roadside if its convenient.¹⁰

The 'servant problem' was not unique to the Indian colony only. The British Malayan colony too, it was argued, was plagued by similar

servant trouble. So much so that servant issue received a lot of attention even in contemporary newspapers. For instance, during the early twentieth century, there was a long article on the fallibility of native servants in the *Malayan Saturday Post*, on the 'Servants Problem' elucidating the diverse troubles each particular servant offered to the *memsahibs* of the Anglo-Malayan household. The report sympathised with the new-mems who were 'fresh to the country — to their dismay, find themselves up against...the Servant problem' and tried to warn the *memsahibs* about the servant 'menace', because 'fore-warned is fore-armed'.¹¹

The Ways of Disciplining the Domestic Servants

In the colonial household disciplining and punishing the household menials was a normal occurrence which often included physical assault. Florence Marryat in her journal *GUP* (1868), narrated an incident of an army officer,

An officer in our regiment, who aggravated at the slow and solemn manner in which a young Mussulman in his employ was carrying a pile of plates from the luncheon table out at his back door, jumped up, and regardless of the fate of the crockery, gave the tardy domestic such an energetic kick that he sent him flying, plates and all, down a flight of some dozen steps, into the garden.¹²

This had been a regular feature of British lifestyle from the initial days of the Company rule and continued even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A diarist in the *India Gazette* of December 30, 1780, confessed, 'with some glee, that he derived much pleasure from kicking, and flogging his servants for trifles'.¹³ Radhika Singha in her *A Despotism of Law* provides many examples when the British used Servant Law (1814) or a Servant Bye-Law (1814, 1816) to punish servants for their alleged flouting of duties including punishing the cooks who absconded leaving their masters without dinner, coachmen and *syces* who left their masters to take care of their own dogs and horses,

wet nurses who exposed children to danger for want of milk, *mehtars* (sweepers), and *mehtaranis* (female sweeper) who left privies dirty.¹⁴ Servant thumping was an unwritten code in the master-servant relationship and was done unabashedly. It was a tool used by the employers off and on, to punish the servants and also to remind them of their 'inferior' and subordinated status. *Burmese Days* by George Orwell also provided an example of one such incident of servant beating. The servant himself narrated this incident,

Colonel Wimpole Sahib used to make his orderly hold me down over the table while he came running from behind and kicked me with very thick boots for serving banana fritters too frequently. At other times, when he was drunk, he would fire his revolver through the roof of the servants' quarters just above our heads.¹⁵

Even though *Burmese Days* is a fiction, it could be assumed some of the characters were based on real people, on what Orwell himself observed in his sojourns in British Burma. Incidents of physical chastisement against native servants could also be found in personal memoirs of Anglo-Indian sojourners. Sir Henry Cotton, for instance, recollected in his memoir (1911), how every Sunday a considerable crowd waited outside church expectantly to watch Chief Commissioner of Lahore, John Lawrence who "would be sure to hammer his *Syce* (groom) on some pretext or other".¹⁶

The servants often protested and there were cases against European employers which were filed to the police department. Unfortunately, the exact details of these cases are difficult to gather as these files are still restricted and yet to be transferred to the National Archives in New Delhi from the Home Ministry, for instance, — 'Assault by a volunteer sergeant instructor on his native servant at Guahati in Assam,¹⁷ and Charge of assault brought against Mr. T. Barrisow, by his *Khansama*.'¹⁸ Fae Dussart has conjectured that the Indian servant, "like any British Subject, had a right to freedom from assault under

the Indian Penal Code.”¹⁹ This may have been legally true, nevertheless it was far from the actual reality. In the colonial context, the domestic workers always remained out of formal structure of protection. The complaint of the servants, was hardly paid any heed to. Florence Marryat (1868), recollected about a lady who was famous for her notorious conduct against the household servants.

Her servants had constantly been with complaints of her conduct to them to the police-magistrate, but as . . . the lady’s husband was a man of standing, they did not gain all the credence which they deserved.²⁰

In fact, it was possible to send a native or “when one’s butler was disrespectful to the police with a note - ‘Please give the bearer fifteen lashes’ and it would have been accomplished without any hesitations.”²¹ Flogging was a favoured way of punishing native offenders, as was evident from the passing of the Whipping Act of 1864. Henry Cotton estimated that the number of judicial floggings in 1878 was 75, 223, while in 1900 it came to 45,054.²² Undoubtedly many of the victims of the judicial floggings were helpless servants of Anglo-Indian household. Indeed, during 1878, official correspondence regarding the proposal to amend the Whipping Act mentioned “Theft in a building, tent or vessel as defined in Section 380 of the said Code” and “Theft by a clerk or servant” as cases where whipping was sanctioned punishment meted out to the offender.²³ Moreover, the furniture allotment for the District Court Head Quarter at Bassein, Irrawaddy division of British Burma, sanctioned Rupees 30/- for the purchase of a whipping triangle and three bamboo mat walling for surrounding the triangle.²⁴

In a collection of letters donated by Miss M. Tait to the Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, there’s a letter written to an uncle of Miss Tait, John Porter by a C.B. Clarke, dated 18th January, 1865, mentioning the punishment of an English planter for flogging his servants. The punishment of two years of imprisonment,

as the letter suggested was regarded by the contemporary Anglo-Indian community as too severe because the offence was 'not too serious' as it was common among the English to beat their servants.

There was an English planter yesterday sentenced to two years penal servitude for tying up three of his servants and flogging them two days running *till* they fainted, in consequence of which one of them died. I find society here indignant at the two years local servitude. They say he ought to have been fined a sixpence, everybody flogs their niggers.²⁵

In another incident in 1876, an English resident of Agra, Mr. Fuller was fined only rupees 30, even though he was found guilty of brutally killing his *syce* for being late.²⁶ The offenders were, however, not always brought to justice or even apprehended, as it was rather expected that it was natural for the employers to strike their servants. The life of a menial mattered little to the ruling class. It should be pointed out that offences committed by the European employers were not always reported too. Fae Dussart rightly pointed out that in British India cases of physical brutality against the servants featured as 'small entries' in the Police columns of Anglo-Indian newspaper in comparison to England where maltreatment of servant girls created lot of sensationalisation.²⁷ The lack of empathy garnered against the indigenous servants definitely could be associated with the racial status of the victim. Whereas, even petty crimes committed by the servants received a greater attention from the European newspapers and the punishment was often harsher. *Malaya Tribune* of October, 1917, for example, reported that a Chinese servant was "sentenced to four months" rigorous imprisonment for the theft of a pair of shoes, the property of his employer Mr. Phillips of Batu caves in Selangor.²⁸ The hierarchised power dynamics inherent in the master-servant relationship was clearly evident in the punishment of the Chinese servant. Moreover, the indigenous servants invariably had to comply with the double-edged sword of colonial subservience and racial

conceit simultaneously. The native offender had little to expect from the overtly European magistrates. It was not surprising that the amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Indian Penal Code by C. P. Ilbert (1883) was met with hostile response from colonial ruling class. This bill sought to increase the purview of jurisdiction by the native prosecutors over the Europeans in rural areas or *Mofussil* towns. Mrinalini Sinha (1995) in her seminal work, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali'*, argues that debates over Ilbert bill strengthened the construction of stereotypical notions of "colonial masculinity", which "reinforced not only the racial hierarchies of colonial rule in India but also the gender hierarchies in both Britain and India."²⁹ Anglo-Indian women emerged as the one of the major opponents against the bill. The British women suspected, as a result of the Bill they would be falsely accused by their servants and would be at the mercy of the vindictive native judges. Indeed, in order to stop the enactment of the Bill, the *memsahibs* in a petition, pleaded to the Queen, in the following words,

...owing to the low estimate in which the Natives of India hold the female sex, it would be imposing a special indignity on us, and inflicting a cruel wound on our self-respect, to subject us to trial by Native Magistrates. Nor would the evil thus resulting be confined to this unnecessary and unbearable injury to our feelings. For the knowledge of the injury and of the dread with which we should regard it, would operate as a powerful incentive to any ill-disposed Natives to resort to false charges against us for the purpose of extortion, intimidation, and revenge; and this temptation would be increased by a belief in our helplessness before an alien tribunal.³⁰

Sumit Sarkar rightly pointed out, racism in India was more brutal and glaring regarding the lower orders as it was "overdetermined by class".³¹ The *punkah* puller in particular was in the line of perpetual fire. It was found from an official report (1877) that an English soldier guilty of kicking and killing a *punkah* puller in the Delhi Fort was

acquitted in the absence of any solid evidence. Even after the incident was witnessed by another fellow *punkah* puller and was reported, the military inquisition found no reason to punish the offender.³² Regarding the use of violence by the colonisers, Elizabeth Collingham believes that the British were convinced that only physical force could make them work hard and as members of 'higher' race they have a claim on the labour of the Indians.³³

Managing the Colonial Household with 'A Firm Hand'.

The Anglo-Indian household along with the servants became a site of imperial claim of ordering rationality amidst chaos and disorder. The bungalow, after all was a microcosm of the British empire and its governance reflected the ideal way, i.e., the British way of administration. The colonisers had to ensure that these servants were properly trained along English lines so that just as imperial rule had, according to the colonialists, brought order and unity to the tumultuous Indian subcontinent, so too, British housekeeping principles would introduce efficiency and discipline among domestic servants. The servants however were responsible for maintaining the Imperial homes. The ruling class was completely dependent on them for their daily chores. The conduct books hence were rather cautious in prescribing corporal punishment for the servants. The compendiums constantly harped on disposing careful behaviour towards this section of the subjects, positional hierarchy being very subtly imposed instead of apparent brutality. Fae Dussart has pointed out that the ideas of Evangelicalism from the early nineteenth century professed refraining from violence in everyday living and that's why the advice manuals suggested abstaining from physical injury to the servitude.³⁴ In managing servants, it was counselled to keep one's temper and to avoid scolding and to gently point out their errors and mistakes.³⁵

Bad conduct with the servants could also have given the employer a 'bad name' and it would have been hard to find good service providers. Florence Marryat (1868) narrated one particular incident

involving a *memsahib* who had gained quite a name in the servant's circle with her disagreeable behaviour.

One day, however, a boiled batter-pudding appeared at her dinner-table, and excited her easily-aroused ire; this 'lady' seized the offending comestible with a spoon, and threw it at the native butler's head, and the shot, ... hit the servant right in the eye. ... [The butler] clapped his hand upon the poultice ... tore out of the house, and into the very presence of the magistrate. ... 'Master not believe she give 'garley!' Master not believe she throw knives! Master now see what that missus doing.³⁶

The guidebooks accordingly recommended disciplining the servants but with prudence. Interestingly, while the sources from the narratives and advice manuals insisted on the conscious surrender to the norms and practices of the land and its society, the records from police and law courts and other private sources revealed instances of torment and oppression taking place on the native servants.

The household guides insisted that levying fine was a more lenient way of punishing the servants. *The English woman in India* (1864), for example declared that fine was the most suitable way to punish the servant and resorting to flogging should be the last recourse.

For wilful damage, as well as lost articles, it is positively necessary to fine . . . There is no other remedy, unless the delinquent is sent up the police and flogged.³⁷

Mrs. C. Lang (1909) also favoured penalising through fines for 'bad' conduct,

the only way of punishing them is to fine them. Also it is a good plan to withhold one rupee of the month's wages and restore it at the end of month, if conduct has improved.³⁸

Steel and Gardiner (1909) advised 'rewards and punishments' for managing errant servants, i.e., paying a little extra as an incentive for good service and exacting a penalty for minor offences. They

contended that servants should be procured at the lowest wages obtainable.

For instance, a *khitmutgar* is engaged permanently on Rs. 9 a month, but the additional rupee which makes the wage up to that usually demanded by good servants in fluctuating assessment! From it small fines are levied, beginning with one pice for forgetfulness, and running up, through degrees of culpability, to one rupee for lying. The money thus returned to imperial coffers may very well be spent on giving small rewards; so that each servant knows that by good service he can get back his own fines.³⁹

There could be no doubt that minor offences as laid out by Steel and Gardiner included breaking of utensils, for which fine was imposed on the servants. Indeed, as E.C.P Hull (1871) declared, “[the servant] should understand, distinctly, that he is held responsible for anything that may be lost.”⁴⁰ The author of *The Wife's help to Indian Cookery* (1888), further advised the European employers to enter into an agreement before employing any servant. So that,

if they destroy anything through culpable carelessness, or lose any article under their care, they must replace it or pay its value; and if they leave your employ abruptly, without any consent, they must forfeit any wages that may be due to them.⁴¹

Hence, to the colonials the ‘agreement of trust’ between an employer and employee was breached at the very outset.

Nevertheless, the servants were structural part of colonial domesticity, without whom the household of the English rulers failed to function properly. Among the countless number of servants employed in the Anglo-Indian household, the *ayah* and the wet nurse are the two categories of female servants who enjoyed a specially significant status.

Within English domesticity, there always remained a space for motherhood. However, *memsahibs* as mothers were always under a lot of pressure. Child mortality remained a constant threat to British

motherhood as the tropical climate and insufficient medical back up often proved lethal. Their dependence on the *ayahs* and wet nurse for child rearing made them vulnerable. Moreover, within the colonial home one cannot ignore the disquietude between the *Ayah-Memsahib* contrasting relation. The relationship between *ayah* and *memsahib* was ambivalent, it was both of angst and reliance. As far as the children were concerned the *ayah* was seen as the chief contender by the *memsahib*. The fear of bonding between the *ayah* and the English child loomed large in the colonial household and it made the Anglo-Indian home a contested site between the *memsahib* and the *ayah*. At the same time, it should be pointed out that the necessity of the *ayah's* service regarding the upbringing of the children made her one of the key members of the domestic retinue. It was also not unusual for the *ayah* to develop a close camaraderie with the *memsahib*. The presence of another female in an otherwise male dominated household must have brought about some kind of solace to the mistress of the home. Yet the precarious affinity between the child and her *ayah* definitely created tensions and anxiety within the colonial home. However, this *ayah-memsahib* interface remained a contentious area of a multilayered relationship. Often the dependence and affection of the two evolving around the child made the relation a cordial – intimate bonding which created strong exception in the master-servant paradigm in the colonial domesticity. Moreover, their position in the masters' household did often reflect in their salary structure, which was high enough to be at par or even more than most of the male servant's salaries.⁴²

In spite of mistrust and contempt on part of the mistresses, the helpless dependence and insecurity on this category of female servants did not subvert the hierarchical mistress-servant relationship. However, this issue of *ayah* and wet nurse with its myriads complexities and diverse dimensions actually remains beyond the purview of this essay.

Master-domestics dynamics in the colonial homes, had also witnessed an ensemble of racial conceit, native subordination and class differentiation. Gender however was a more complex matter. The

servants were mostly male, female servants being fewer. It forced the mistress to be in direct contact with the native men. For the *memsahib* this was an unfamiliar terrain. The *memsahibs* who were brought up with the notions of assertive *masculinity* and feminine diffidence was rather conflicted when it came to deal with the male indigenous domestic class. The *memsahib* had to establish a chain of commands over the colonised men in order to maintain her influence in the household. Her position as the member of the ruling class, no doubt gave her an advantage over the subjugated indigenous domestics.

Command over the domestic servants depicted the desire of the ruling class including the *memsahibs* to achieve class as well as racial hierarchy. Yet, there were visible intersectionality present at certain occasions when class, race and gender were at work to complicate the domestic life. In many of their recollections *memsahibs* mentioned how gender bias intervened and threatened her jurisdiction. Gendered outlook on part of the native servants often undermined the *memsahib's* position. The English household was gendered territory, and undermining *memsahibs'* authority jeopardized the imperial prestige. The *memsahib* had to often invoke her husband's positional hierarchy in order to assert her dominance over the servants. Mrs. Handley (1911) cited one incident where a servant failed to answer to the repeated call of the *memsahib*, however the same servant responded with alacrity when summoned by the *sahib*. After enquiry the servant revealed that the fear of getting a thrashing from the *sahib* forced him to respond immediately. 'Why didn't you answer the mistress when she called three times? You answered me, the master, immediately.' The servant replied trembling, 'Missus plenty talkee only, Master beatee.'⁴³

The master-servant relationship within the colonial household was not of mutual co-relation; rather it was based on oppression and intimidation of the menial class. Steven Patterson clearly elucidates, "The positional superiority of the Anglo-Indian gave the Anglo-Indian the upper hand, and the separation between East and West in an Orientalist

discourse could be clearly seen in the bungalow."⁴⁴In a colonial household it was the natural order of things. "This superiority", according to Swapna M. Banerjee, "claimed both explicitly and implicitly in the European discourse, justified the white man's mission to civilize and discipline the Indian population and legitimize the colonial regime."⁴⁵

The Infantilisation of the Servant

One of the ways to not to disturb this natural order of things as prescribed in the household compendiums was to treat the servants more like children, who needed to be 'treated firmly'. Steel and Gardiner (1909) declared, "...the Indian servant is a child in everything save age, and should be treated as a child; that is to say, kindly but with greatest firmness."⁴⁶ Voicing this 'Mai-Baap' paternalism of British colonial administration the household digests infantilised the relationship between the *memsahib/sahib* and her servants. The graded relation between the coloniser and the colonised never allowed the British to accept Indians as 'responsible' adult humans. Like any 'defiant' children the unruly servants needed incessant control and regular disciplining. The master/mistress and the servant were bound by the benevolent bond of paternalism that constituted an element in the colonial mindset. Ann Laura Stoler remarked, "racialized Others have invariably been compared and equated with children, a representation that conveniently provided a moral justification for imperial policies of tutelage, discipline and specific paternalistic and materialistic strategies of custodial control".⁴⁷ In fact paternalism was the dominant ideology of the Raj in post 1857 India. Their conduct with the servants was imbued with authoritarian benevolence which was one of the key elements of Anglo-Indian society. In this way Dussart argues, "the employer's role was constructed as a paternalistic one, in line with wider discourses on the ideal structure of employer-servant relations".⁴⁸ And in the private arena the memsahib were the

carriers of the paternalistic bond between the Indian servants and the ruling class. The image of mother being superimposed on the *memsahib* made her appear as an illusory benefactor that had various shades of complexities within. Being the 'Angel of the home', the *memsahib* was in not only charge of her husband and children, she was also responsible for the 'discipline and punishment' of the indigenous servants. The goal of the European women was to "replicate the empire on a domestic scale — a benevolent, much supervised terrain where discipline and punishment were meted out with an unwavering hand".⁴⁹ Yet, physical assault against the indigenous service providers was a regular feature of colonial domesticity.

However, the service providers also sometimes retaliated with some rather ingenious ways to irritate their employers. Perhaps it was their way of answering back for all the ill treatments they received. As Steel and Gardiner (1909) cautioned their readers to be aware of "...the *khitmutgar* using his toes as an efficient toast-rack (*fact*); or ...the soup [being] strained through a greasy *pugri*".⁵⁰ Or as a *memsahib* found out, "I found that our dirty handkerchiefs were pausing on their way to the Dhobi and were being used as glass clothes".⁵¹ And when the *memsahib* discovered that all her "lovely new silver was getting very scratched, especially a tea tray and salver"⁵² for the leather for polishing silver was being kept in a large tin of demerara sugar which was then vigorously applied to the silver. There were instances when the butler ran a successful business by "hiring out Gerald's [sahib] shirts to men who were having wedding parties and wished to look smart".⁵³ And when caught the butler "began to behave rather oddly and on two occasions when I was sitting on the sofa, I got an uneasy feeling and found him standing behind me and rubbing his hands and grinning".⁵⁴ These little mischiefs were seen as an integral part of the native servants' nature and a general part of the 'servant problem' that the European employers had to undergo every day.

The Proposal for Servants' Registration Ordinance

There could be no doubt that disciplining of domestic servants was a pressing issue for the European community. So much so that official attempts were undertaken to introduce servants' registration bill in Burma, particularly in districts of Rangoon and Pegu on the lines of Ceylon Ordinance of 1871, which provided for the registration of domestic servants.⁵⁵ The Ceylon Ordinance was taken as an example and some residents urged to do the same in Burma. However, as was evident from a letter to the Commissioner of Irrawaddy division from the Chief Secretary of the Government of Burma, written on 3rd August 1909, this Bill was rejected.⁵⁶ One of the reasons given for its rejection was that it would affect the demand and supply ratio of the servants, as "registered servants would be comparatively scarce and dear and in a large town like Rangoon serious inconvenience might arise from the diminution of their numbers".⁵⁷ More than that this type of ordinance it was argued would "impose irksome restrictions and obligations on masters, and [would] involve police interference between employers and employed".⁵⁸ Police intervention without any necessary cause in domestic affairs was viewed as *sine qua non*.

In the Straits Settlements of the British Malaya though, European residents of Singapore argued in favour of servants' registration. The major concern was against the Chinese *amahs* who were frequently accused of administering drug to their charges and this provided "most convincing argument in favour of such a measure".⁵⁹ The Europeans, argued that they were severely affected by the servant problem and readily supported the cause for servants' registration. "By far the greater number of Europeans in this country are strongly in favour of registration of servants and are really anxious that it should be introduced both in the colony and the FMS".⁶⁰ It could be gathered that the government of Federated Malay States under pressure from its residents, particularly from the European section, passed an ordinance for domestic servants' registration. However, the bill was never officially enacted. It was reported in the newspapers published

in the 1920s, that the servant's registration bill could not be implemented as there was "no official who could be set aside for this work owing to the war".⁶¹ Perhaps the real reason behind for not enforcing the law was because of the severe objections of the Chinese and Indian communities; the British Government did not wish to alienate these communities over the question of servants. They had already burnt their hand once in India while interfering into traditional customs of the land, they did not want to repeat the same mistakes in Malaya too. They had passed the servants' registration bill to please the Europeans but hesitated to implement it. The *Straits Times* reported about a meeting of Perak Branch Committee of the F.M.S Chamber of Commerce on the implementation of the servants' registration bill, in which, it was said:

A letter from the secretaries of the Planters' Association of Malaya was read, in which they stated that the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and the Asiatic planting community were strongly against compulsory registration, and the European bodies were very qualified in their support.⁶²

The European residents continued with their hankering for the servants' registration bill by announcing that it would benefit good servants and would encourage more Malays to take up the job of domestic servants, but it seemed to no avail.⁶³

A similar bill was introduced in the Bengal Legislative Council in 1925 to register the domestic servants.⁶⁴ It is interesting to note that in Calcutta also this bill was mainly moved by the Anglo-Indian residents, and should be regarded as another ploy to harass the indigenous servants without any valid cause. This would have especially enabled the master to take advantage of the illiterate servants who would not have been in a position to decipher what was being written in the registration book. The registration of servants' bill which was introduced at Bengal Legislative Council however had another intriguing insight. Dr. H.W.B. Moreno, who, it seemed, was one of the primary petitioners for this bill, while tabling this bill argued, it

was particularly essential for the middle classes because “the better class servants”⁶⁵ were being employed by the more “affluent members of European or Indian communities in Calcutta”⁶⁶ and they were the ones who were forced to hire the remaining, “worst men. ... some of them have previous convictions and some of them are addicted to pernicious habits such as drug-taking habit or worse”.⁶⁷ These types of servants, it was further claimed, that “as soon as they secure the first opportunity”⁶⁸ tend to steal on “whatever they can lay their hands”⁶⁹ and invariably flee leaving the police “powerless”⁷⁰ against them. In such circumstances, this bill, it was forwarded, could have brought the perpetrators to justice and the employers would be careful of not employing them anymore. This petition clearly demonstrated that there were servants who were honest and faithful to their masters. The negative portrayal of the servants as found in contemporary Anglo-Indian literature was necessarily not always correct. Besides the bill recommended two months imprisonment and hundred rupees fines for the offender if he was found guilty of, firstly, “Intentionally [making] any false statement whether on oath or not to or before any Registrar or to any other person acting in the execution of this act”⁷¹ and secondly, “falsely impersonates another and in such assumed character applies for employment as a servant or makes any false statement or does any other act in any proceeding under this Act”.⁷² Hundred rupees fine in the 1920s unsurprisingly was an exorbitant amount which the poor servants could hardly have had paid. It was obvious that this bill was prejudiced and discriminatory against the indigenous servants.

Moreover, it could be argued that the petition failed to garner enough support showed that the English upper classes were not in favour of jeopardising their privileged position as far as hiring ‘good’ native servants were concerned. In this context, the question of ‘class’ was more important. The ruling elite considered themselves as a ‘superior’ class and hence were qualified to keep what they considered as ‘worthy’ servants for themselves. The ambiguous position of the Europeans hence could be clearly visible. On the one hand they

consciously portrayed an adverse image of the servants, on the other hand the Britons deliberately categorised servants based on class and efficiency level. It could be consequently assumed then that the indigenous domestics were a hardworking and loyal lot. The offensive portrayal of the menial class was a deliberate attempt to defame the vanquished subjects in order to legitimise the prevailing position of the ruling class. However, it should be pointed out that the efforts to introduce ordinance against the servant problem was something not new. Nitin Sinha has shown how in the 1870s attempts were made to extend the 'contract of employment' as it existed in Britain to govern domestic servants in India, although it failed.⁷³ One of the reasons for its failure as Nitin Sinha argues, was that it "proposed to make physical chastisement illegal as well as proposed to remove the practice of fines, which was not acceptable to European masters".⁷⁴ For the colonial masters the curtailment of the power to enact 'justice' among the native service providers was widely seen as an infringement of their social authority as the master race.

The domestic sphere in imperial context became a cultural domain where English social and official identities were constructed. And in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and even during the inter-war periods when the proliferation of India's demand for political reforms manifested through the nationalist movements, the colonial ruling elite tried more stringently to hold on to their domestic sphere by demanding more control over the servitude. Evidently the nationalist upsurge against the British rule also made its presence felt within the perimeters of European household. In a recollection of their life during the last decades of the British rule by a wife of a district officer, a reference was made to a defiant servant who was believed to be under the influence of Gandhian movements.

It was always thought that we lived an indolent, spoilt life, surrounded by servants to do our bidding. Up to a point was so, but like servants all over the world, they could try one's patience very high, and when Gandhi started his successful campaign to

insert trouble makers in the forms of servants into our houses, it became a daily hell trying to keep one's temper.⁷⁵

The *memsahib* agreed that they led a luxurious life in India being served by numerous servants. However, as the freedom struggle intensified their comfortable bubble began to show ruptures and this irritated them. A *memsahib* recollected of witnessing slogans being plastered against the British, in Delhi during the Quit India Movement in the 1940s.

At this time Connaught Circus, the main shopping area for Europeans, was well decorated with "QUIT INDIA", "BRITISH GO HOME", and such slogans.⁷⁶

The colonial expatriates realised that their hegemonic authoritative power was being challenged and domesticity became the site of imperial contest between the master and servant, and who should hold the reins of power within the colonial home became a burning issue. The decades of 1930 and 40s was rather tumultuous for the British as their empire was rocked by successive nationalist uprisings and it left its mark within their inner domain too. An English *memsahib* for example, found out that her servants were getting aroused by the nationalist fervor that had gripped the Indian colony because of Gandhian movements.

I had one, a cook, when we were in New Delhi. He turned all my nice old servants anti-British, and Gerald made investigations into his background, and found he had been a student from Aligarh University. I sacked him three times but he took no notice, until I said that he could stay, but that I would give no further pay to him, but he was welcome to go on cooking for us for nothing. That got rid of him, but the damage had been done, and one by one our old faithful took to being dishonest, and had to go.⁷⁷

Relation between the master and servant was not consistent. The political discontent in the public domain motivated the servants to challenge their employer's dominance. As the imperial authority was

being challenged in the public domain, the masters/mistress tried to assert their control more stringently over the domestics and their inner domain. It naturally caused tensions and frictions within the colonial domestic structure. As observed by Swapna M. Banerjee,

Through a critique of Indian domestics, the logic of racial dominance was stretched to the domain of the private lives of the colonized Indians and reflected particularly the British desire to reign not only over Indian public life but also to extend their sway over Indian domestic culture.⁷⁸

Conclusion

Master-servant dynamics is generally based on hierarchical positioning and social stature across human categories. One should not be oblivious of the fact that this hierarchy and power equation was omnipresent in every society from very ancient days, the Eastern colony was not an exception. Yet, the same hierarchical relationship between master-servant received a much further complicated dimension in case of colonial households as it was based on the self-righteous claim of superior racial conceit. The rationale applied by the colonial rulers was linked with their broader ideological framework of racial arrogance and contempt. It was therefore understandable that colonial attitude, behaviour and justification would be based on their notion of racial hierarchy and imperiousness in their dealings with the native servants. The vast numbers of domestics were not only a symbol of being the ruling elite; they were an indispensable part of the English colonial home. In a manner of speaking, it was the servants who sustained the British empire and it was upon their service the British depended to continue their rule as colonial masters. However, one could extend the master-servant relationship in colonial context, based on Hegel's master-slave dynamics that "Master needs the slave not for his labour but without him his identity as master is incomplete".⁷⁹ The master depends on the slave for not only the satisfaction of his material demands but his recognition as a master

is dependent on the acknowledgment of the slave as well. His individual identity as a master is depended on the slave's recognition of him as a master. The slave, in his turn, becomes aware of his independent self-consciousness by means of his labouring in the natural and material world.⁸⁰ In Marxian understanding the Hegelian slave is analogous to the worker of capitalism, but with a crucial difference. If the worker-proletariat realises that he is the real subject of production, then he can free himself from class domination ultimately leading to a classless society.⁸¹ This dialectic in the context of colonial structure found best expression in the domestic paradigm. The English, taking advantage of his positional dominance as the ruling race, demanded service from the subjugated natives as their right. The native servants unlike the worker-proletariat however were not in a position to realise that they were the 'real subject of production'. Hence, the English could appropriate the labours of the servants claiming it as their right for being the ruling class. For the British, their status was dependent on the servants and their acknowledgement of the fact that the British were their masters. This arrangement was advantageous for the continuation of British colonialism. The domestic servitude in the Eastern colony was sought after but their personhood was ignored. The negative image as portrayed in the contemporary colonial literature was a conscious attempt to nullify the status of the servants as a fellow human being. To the European employers bodily punishment of the domestics was seen as the acceptable behaviour and admissible custom. In this way the colonial masters tried to establish their authority not only over the servants as well as their 'body'. This was deemed necessary to enforce social control within the domestic domain. The sympathy was invariably with the employers who largely emerged as the victim of the 'servant problem' who needed protection and sought legal ordinance against the servants. Thus, the employer-servant relationship was based on difference and those "differences translated into cultural superiority and ideological dominance of one group over another".⁸² The contemporary colonial literature too advocated assertion of English

mastery over 'inferior' menials through various ways of regulation and regimen, physical abuse being one of the acknowledged ways. In this way 'order' could be restored in the colonial domesticity, where the power to punish and discipline the natives ultimately rested on the hands of the master race.

Notes

- ¹ John Welsh Dulles, *Life in India; or Madras, the Neilgherries, and Calcutta*, American Sunday School Union, Philadelphia, 1855, pp. 116-117.
- ² The term "Anglo-Indian" has been used to refer to the members of the civil service posted in the subcontinent who constituted the official English community. They should not be confused with the present-day Anglo-Indian descendants of the British and Indian parentage, residing in India or abroad.
- ³ Edward Braddon, *Life in India*, Longmans, Green and Co, London, 1882, pp. 116-117.
- ⁴ Fae Dussart, "Strictly Legal Means: Assault, Abuse and the Limits of Acceptable Behavior in Servant-Employer Relationship in Metropole and Colony 1850-1890", in Victoria K. Haskins & Claire Lowrie, eds, *Colonization and Domestic Service: Historical Perspectives*, Routledge, New York, 2015, p. 157.
- ⁵ W.H.Dawe, ed. *The Wife's help to Indian Cookery*, Elliot Stock, London, 1888, pp. x-xi.
- ⁶ E. C. P. Hull, *The European in India or Anglo-India's Vade Mecum*, Henry S. King & Co., London, 1871, p. 99.
- ⁷ The terms *Sahib* and *Memsahib* have been used extensively to denote white man and married white woman respectively. The meaning of the word "Memsahib" as found in Oxford dictionary is a married white or upper-class woman, often used as a respectful form of address by non-whites. For details, see URL:<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/memsahib>, accessed June 5, 2016. While a "Sahib" is used when addressing or speaking to a European of some social or official status by the native inhabitants of colonial India, URL: www.meriam-webster.com/dictionary/sahib, accessed on May 7, 2017.
- ⁸ Mrs. Mitchell Murray, *In India: Sketches of Indian Life and Travel from Letters and Journals*, T. Nelson and Sons, London, 1876, pp. 72-73.
- ⁹ Centre of South Asian Studies (hereafter CSAS), Cambridge University, UK, Hyde Papers, 1932-1933, p. 9.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ *Malayan Saturday Post*, 'The Servant Problem', 1 November, 1926, p. 15.
- ¹² Florence Marryat, *GUP: Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character*, Richard Bentley, London, 1868, p. 35.
- ¹³ Cited from Rudrangshu Mukherjee, 'Forever England', in Sukanta Chaudhuri, ed., *Calcutta: The Living City*, Vol I, *The Past*, Reprint, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010, p. 50.

- ¹⁴ Radhika Singha, *A Despotism of Law: Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000 (pb), pp. 150-152.
- ¹⁵ George Orwell, *Burmese Days*, first published 1934, Penguin Classics, England, reprint, 2009, p. 118.
- ¹⁶ Sir Henry Cotton, *India and Home Memories*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1911, p. 65.
- ¹⁷ National Archives of India (hereafter NIA), New Delhi, Home Department, File. Nos. 123-24, December, 1905.
- ¹⁸ NIA, New Delhi, Home Department, File Nos. 115-116, July, 1905.
- ¹⁹ Fae Dussart, *op. cit.*, 2015, pp. 158-159.
- ²⁰ Florence Marryat, *op. cit.*, 1868, p. 44.
- ²¹ George Orwell, *op. cit.*, 2009, p. 27.
- ²² Sir Henry Cotton, *op. cit.*, 1911, p. 79.
- ²³ NIA, New Delhi, Home Department, File Nos. 19-21, August 1878.
- ²⁴ National Archives of Myanmar (hereafter NAD), Yangon, File 2E/8, Accession No.- 9558, 1894.
- ²⁵ CSAS, Tait Papers, 1890-1950.
- ²⁶ NIA, New Delhi, Home Department, File No. 1098, July 1876.
- ²⁷ Fae Dussart, *op. cit.*, 2015, p. 159.
- ²⁸ *Malaya Tribune*, 10 October, 1917, p. 5.
- ²⁹ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali'*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995, p. 44.
- ³⁰ "Petition of English woman in India to her most Gracious Majesty the Queen" in *The Ilbert Bill: A Collection of Letters, Speeches, Memorials, Articles & C.*, London, 1883, 91. URL: <https://archive.org/details/ilbertbillcollec00lond>, accessed on 17.09. 2018.
- ³¹ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern Times: India 1880s-1950s*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2014, p. 60.
- ³² NIA, New Delhi, Home Department, File Nos.147-152, November 1877.
- ³³ Elizabeth Collingham, *Imperial Bodies : The Physical Experience of the Raj 1800-1947*, Polity Press, UK, 2001, p. 110.
- ³⁴ Fae Dussart, *op. cit.*, 2015, p. 157.
- ³⁵ W. H. Dawe, *op. cit.*, 1888, 5.
- ³⁶ Florence Marryat, *op. cit.*, 1868, p. 45.
- ³⁷ A Lady Resident, *The Englishwoman in India*, Smith, Elder & Co, London, 1864, p. 60.
- ³⁸ Chota Men, (Lang, Mrs. C.) *The English Bride in India: Being Hints on Indian Housekeeping*, second edition, Higginbotham & Co., London, 1909, p. 55.
- ³⁹ F. A. Steel & Grace Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, first published 1888, seventh edition, William Heinemann, London, 1909, p. 3.
- ⁴⁰ E. C. P. Hull, *op. cit.*, 1871, p. 107.
- ⁴¹ W.H. Dawe, *op. cit.*, 1888, p. 4.

- ⁴² For wages of *Ayah* please see the following sources : Mrs. Eliot James, *A Guide to Indian Household Management*, Ward, Lock & Co, London, 1879, p. 47. F. A. Steel & G. Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, seventh edition, William Heinemann, 1909, London, pp. 54-55. Edmund C.P. Hull, *The European in India; or Anglo-Indian's Vade-Mecum*, Henry S. King & Co, London, 1871, p. 119.
- ⁴³ Mrs. M. A., Handley, *Roughing it Up in South India*, Edward Arnold, London, 1911, p. 7.
- ⁴⁴ Steven Patterson, *The Cult of Imperial Honor in British India*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009, p. 180.
- ⁴⁵ Swapna M. Banerjee, *Men, Women, and Domesticity*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, p. 94.
- ⁴⁶ Steel and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 1909, p. 3.
- ⁴⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1995, p. 150.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ Rosemary Marangoly George, "Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home", in *Cultural Critique*, Vol. 26, winter 1993-1994, p. 108.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 2.
- ⁵¹ British Library (hereafter BL), London, MSS EUR C 462:1935-1947, Decimal Curtis Papers, p. 8.
- ⁵² *Ibid*, pp. 8-9.
- ⁵³ BL, MSS EUR C462:1935-1947, Decimal Curtis Papers, pp. 8-9.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ NAD, Yangon, File 67/8 M-105, Accession no. 597, 1909.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ NAD, Yangon, File 67/8 M-105, Accession no. 597, 1909.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ *The Straits Times*, Letter to the Editor, 4 December, 1913, p. 10.
- ⁶⁰ *Malay Tribune*, 30 November, 1921.
- ⁶¹ *The Straits Times*, 7 February, 1920, p. 10.
- ⁶² *The Straits Times*, 22 December, 1927, p. 9.
- ⁶³ *Malay Tribune*, 25 May 1933, p. 3.
- ⁶⁴ BL, London, IOR/L/PJ/6/1916, File 184: Dec 1925 - Oct 1926.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ BL, London, IOR/L/PJ/6/1916, File 184: Dec1925-Oct 1926.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ BL, London, IOR/L/PJ/6/1916, File 184: Dec1925-Oct 1926.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁰ BL, London, IOR/L/PJ/6/1916, File 184: Dec1925-Oct 1926.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷² BL, London, IOR/L/PJ/6/1916, File 184: Dec1925-Oct 1926.

⁷³ Nitin Sinha, "‘Servant Problem’ and the ‘Social-Subaltern’ of Early Colonial Calcutta", in Nitin Sinha, Nitin Varma and Pankaj Jha, eds, *Servants’ Pasts: Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century South Asia*, Vol.I, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 2019, p. 315. For more details on ‘Servant Problem’ see pp. 311-322.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 316.

⁷⁵ BL, London, MSS EUR C462:1935-1947, Decimal Curtis Papers, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁶ CSAS, Cambridge, Hall Papers, 1938-1962, Chapter VII, p. 2.

⁷⁷ BL, London, MSS EUR C462:1935-1947, Decimal Curtis Paper, p. 3.

⁷⁸ Swapna M. Banerjee, *op.cit.*, 2004, p. 94.

⁷⁹ Hegel Quotes, URL: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/help/quotes.htm> accessed on 21 January, 2018.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

⁸¹ This was further developed by Frantz Fanon in the context of black man and white rulers in his *Wretched of the Earth*.

⁸² Swapna M, Banerjee, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 95.

*Orientalist Prodigy and Post-Colonial Plight: The Works of
Colin Mackenzie (1754-1821)*

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Abstract

The publishing of the book 'Orientalism' by Edward Said in 1978 has marked a new genre in post-colonial studies. By posing East and West into two 'pre-determined' categories he argued that the 'Orient', having no historical consciousness, was being 'imagined' by the West. Here, in this article my intention is to show the works of Colin Mackenzie in juxtaposition of this argument to prove that the efforts of the early colonial 'scholar-administrators' can never be described in a linear way. Their obligations towards the Company on the one hand and their inquisitive zeal on the other, require deeper introspection.

Keywords: post-colonial studies, Indology, antiquarianism, acculturation, Mackenzie Collections.

In the opening of the play, *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, written by Girish Karnad, the conversation between the Orientalist scholar Colin Mackenzie and an indigenous historian of Mysore Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani has conveyed that developing a sense of objectivity is a prime factor of being a historian. It has also in turn taught us to judge historical facts from a distance which help historians to give an unbiased comprehensibility about the facts.¹ In this fictional role, Colin Mackenzie, being the proponent of the sense of historical objectivity argued that, the flipside of every story bears another version of history without which the whole panorama could not be understood. The process of perceiving the past of some place is not only a complex

one but also multi-dimensional. The works of Colin Mackenzie in South India is relevant in this perspective. During the late eighteenth century the 'western methods' of perceiving past and writing history were gradually imported to India through the works of various Orientalist scholars whose whole-hearted contributions, though shaped by contemporary political events, can be regarded as pioneering works in the case of initiating scientific methods in comprehending India's own past. Here the 'western method' denotes the Rankean model of writing history which emphasised basically on the individuality of the historical development. The first maps drawn by James Rennell or the antiquities collected in the South India by Colin Mackenzie or the trigonometrical surveys initiated first by William Lambton or the numerous contributions made by early colonial 'scholar-administrators' to comprehend India's past, were just the steps ahead towards this direction of making India's past visible. It is evident from the pages of numerous volumes of the *Asiatick Researches* which bear the writings of company servants and their contributions and efforts to know the native land. If the British intelligentsia were ready to learn the foreign cultures, languages in the late eighteenth century, the intellectual environment in India was also ripe for such pursuits. This environ was initially personified in Warren Hastings and William Jones. Warren Hastings was surely a colonial administrator by heart but his urge for knowing the land and its people was unparalleled. William Jones, the greatest Orientalist who founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, is also remembered for uncovering the past heritage of India.² The Asiatic Society gradually has become the centre of Indological researches. As the *modus operandi* of India during the eighteenth century was colonial rule, the nature of the scientific processes, practised to dig up the country's past is used to be considered as exploitative and instrumentalist. The surveyors or the map makers are regarded as the gatherers of information for the sake of the colonial rule. But their personal zeal for knowing the indigenous customs, habits, traditions had surpassed their role as Company servants and

Colin Mackenzie is one of the most notable figures of this trend.

Colin Mackenzie was one of the brightest stars among the brilliant galaxy of Indologists. The inquisitiveness of 'scholar-administrators' like Alexander Dow, John Malcom, Monstuart Elphinstone and Colin Mackenzie and many more about the pre-colonial Indian society has brought out the ambivalences within the early colonial historicity. The term, 'scholar-administrator' had been initiated for this group of people whose initial obligations were towards the East India Company but that did not minimise their role as a true knowledge-seeker. Territorial reshaping and cultural reshaping were going on side by side in the hands of these 'scholar-administrators'. Colin Mackenzie joined the Madras Engineering service in 1783 under East India Company and toured many regions in South India. First thirteen years of his career in India were troublous times when the country was emerging from famine, penury and war. The frequent changes and removal from province to province, from garrison to camp as well as the circumscribed means of a subaltern officer prevented him from giving that undeviating efforts to the pursuit of a collector as it demanded. It was not until his return from the Ceylon expedition in 1796 that gave a fresh impulse to his dreams of collecting manuscripts and information regarding South India.³ Mackenzie first made detailed topographical surveys of the provinces of Coimbatore and Dindigul during the end of the second Mysore War in 1783. Then it was followed by the surveys of Madras, Nellore and Guntur provinces. In the year 1796, the first map of Nizam's dominion was submitted to the Government.⁴ He was also part of the successful Java expedition from 1811 to 1813 where he was also engaged in collecting manuscripts and in contributing to a journal of Transactions published by the Batavian society.⁵ In 1810 he was appointed as the Surveyor-General of Madras and in 1815 when the office of the Surveyor-General at Madras was ordered to be abolished, he was promoted to the post of Surveyor-General of India.⁶ When he left Madras for Calcutta, he brought with himself the entire literary and antiquarian collections to Calcutta with

an intention of preparing *Catalogue Raisonnee*. Before he completed his work, he died at Bengal in 1821. While being at Madras, he developed a curiosity about the scripts and history of the local people. The renowned Mackenzie collection consisted of a vast collection of manuscripts and inscriptions on Religion, History, Biography, Geography, Medicine, Literature, Science, Architectural plans of various temples, Drawings, Coins, Antiquities which were in no fewer than fourteen languages.⁷ Manuscripts occupy an important place in his collection. Telegu manuscripts are more in number in comparison with other languages.⁸ Most of these documents are preserved in the Government library at Madras and in Indian Office in London. These manuscripts have become focal point of interest for the Indologists. For example, in 1828 H.H. Wilson prepared a detailed catalogue of the Mackenzie collection preserved in the Madras Government Library. Rev. William Taylor also prepared another catalogue in three volumes. Then, C.P. Brown (1798-1884) prepared replicas of damaged manuscripts.⁹ Later, many works also have been done around this vast Mackenzie collection. Thus, the Mackenzie collection have remained in the focal point over centuries for the Indologists.

The Scottish Enlightenment continued to influence the philosophic basis for Indian administration during the Governors like Sir Thomas Munro, Sir John Malcolm and Sir Monstuart Elphinstone, as Martha McLaren has pointed out, that the universality of the human nature was the main principle of the workings of these administrators.¹⁰ The military operations and the search for Oriental knowledge overlapped with each other during the early colonial period. Colin Mackenzie as a conqueror, surveyor, in the eighteenth-century India served as the best role to understand these dynamics of perceiving knowledge within colonial context. After the British victory over Tipu Sultan in 1799 when he was entrusted with the task of surveying the Mysore region, he interacted with the indigenous folk, received the help of a Brahmin, named Boria and made a huge collection of illustrations, manuscripts, coins, translations, paintings which were regarded as the best primary

initiatives to know the region. Colin Mackenzie had spent most of the time of his staying in India as the Surveyor-General and cartographer. The collection of historical records and artifacts he amassed, during his staying in South India is regarded as his best achievement and contribution to the history writing of this country. In later days Mounstuart Elphinstone, Mark Wilks while reconstructing the political history of (1809) the Deccan, depended solely on Colin Mackenzie's record. It is a kind of a trend during the early phase of post-colonial history-writing to believe that colonial rule was feeding on colonial knowledge which were gathered by these 'scholar-administers'. Richard Drayton has argued that the intellectual environment created by the early British officials was amateurish in nature. But he also continued to argue that Westminster, in the initial phase chose to leave the practice of scholarship to the church or to the volunteer.¹¹ That also indicate that the scholarship developed during the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century colonial India very much depended on the Company instructions as much as on the individual expertise and it was the periphery rather than the metropole where this kind of expertise flourished. By the time of his death in 1821, Colin Mackenzie had made a huge collection of historical artifacts that is still regarded as the largest set of sources for studying the early modern historical anthropology of South India.¹² Rama Sundari Mantena in her book *The Origin of the Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology 1780-1880* has given a vivid description of the works of Colin Mackenzie which is mainly concerned about the place of Colin Mackenzie in the modern South Indian historiography. She mainly focused on the interplay of antiquarianism and philology in forming historical knowledge about South India. Before the coming of Colin Mackenzie, Francis Buchanan and Alexander Hamilton had made a minute observation of the newly conquered territories on the instructions of Richard Wellesley. Though Buchanan and Hamilton differed from each other in their way of observations, they paved the way for the intensive workings of Mackenzie. Rama Sundari Mantena

has pointed out that Mackenzie differed from his two predecessors in choosing the materials for acquiring knowledge. Mackenzie concentrated mainly on the materials which were deemed to be historical materials.¹³ He mainly focused on the *kaifiyats* and *kavilas* which were information recorded by local villagers or village assistants regarding the social, economic, financial and administrative conditions of the village. These were in various South Indian languages such as, Tamil, Telegu, Kannada, Malayalam etc. By choosing these indigenous sources Mackenzie followed the path of his predecessor Francis Buchanan in prioritising local beliefs and customs to comprehend the history of the South India.¹⁴ To make a complete picture these sources can be juxtaposed to the high literary traditions of South India. These conventional indigenous sources on which Mackenzie had mainly focused during his survey also acted as the important materials to cross-check the information gathered from other sources. Another important implication of choosing the local village records as historical source is that the static, a historical image of precolonial India as Said claimed to be portrayed by the colonial masters, is hampered. The local customs, belief system thus seemed to be regarded as important source for comprehending the previous history of the area by the colonial rulers for the first time. According to Professor T.V. Mahalingam, much valuable information might be in the darkness forever without the efforts of Colin Mackenzie.¹⁵ Looking through the memoirs and plates in the library and museum of the Asiatic Society the present research aimed at throwing a new light on the re-reading of existing historiography.

I

The history of the relationship between East and West has gained momentum since the publication of the book '*Orientalism*' written by Edward Said in 1978. In the following years it has become a much-debated issue, whether West utilised the information gathered during their rule to control the Orient or it was just a knowledge seeking process. It is well proved that colonialism as a political-economic

phenomenon has scandalous history, but the cognitive aspects of the colonial rule cannot be ignored. Since the 1980s there was a shift in the study of the colonial history from the high politics and economics to the cultural studies. The history of British imperialism is not merely a linear story of subjugation of the inferior by the superior, but it was much complex labyrinth of political, economic and cultural constructs which are required to be studied from an unbiased position. The 'European rule' and the 'European scholarship' in the early colonial phase acted side by side to make a whole phenomenon like colonialism. The role of 'European rule' is sometimes over emphasised. The role of 'European scholarship' during the colonial rule was shaped by the domestic politics and was subjected to change from time to time. The constructive phase of British Orientalism which produced many new facets to know the subcontinent is important for the sake of the development of knowledge systems of the world. The universalist character of science as a global knowledge is to be recognised from this context. Andre Gunder Frank in the opening of his book *Re Orient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* has mentioned that writing history is part of history itself.¹⁶ According to him, it can be said that the early Orientalists were part of a knowledge making process knowingly or unknowingly and this did not bother about any metropole-colony binary. Edward Said's passionate indictment of orientalist erudition as an inseparable part of a dominating imperialist enterprise has made the orientalist scholarship a single discourse, undifferentiated in space and time overlapping all types of identities.¹⁷ At the same time the concept of the homogenous west is problematic. David Ludden in his article '*Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge*' considered the connections between the histories of political power in South Asia and knowledge about Indian traditions. He has argued that Said in the manner of Foucault detached his chosen texts from history, has lost sight of the politics that reproduce the epistemological authority of Orientalism today.¹⁸ The early Orientalist 'scholar-administrators' like Mackenzie were both makers of history as well as

actors of history. It is true that without considering the politico-economic environs the process of acquiring knowledge cannot be comprehended. In the eighteenth-century India the nature of British Imperialism was multilayered and Victorian chauvinism could not be the only parameter to judge it. P J Marshall in an article, *The Whites of British India (1780-1830): A Failed Colonial Society?* has argued that the white community in India in the early colonial period was not a homogenous community. During the first half of the eighteenth century the role of private European capital in India was a restricted one. The savings of the company officials and the Indian bankers were the main source for acquiring capital. The export of capital from Britain was initiated as late as 1830s.¹⁹ For defending their own interest, the private British businessman and the Indian 'banians' had opposed the interest of the East India Company though the position of the Indian 'banians' was subordinated to that of the British businessman. Thus, a small number of resident whites in India would have assimilated with the elite Indians for their own survival.²⁰ The term 'Orientalism', when it is used for projecting the total subordination of the colonies to the interest of the metropole in Saidian version does not recognise the multi-dimensional phases within the colonizers themselves. To 'manage' the 'Orient', the colonisers had to manage themselves first. The negative connotation of the word 'manage', in this context seemed to be diminutive. William Darlymple in his book *White Mughals* has shown the cosmopolitan multiculturalism in contrast with the 'Victorian chauvinism' in the early British India which is more evident from the clash of interests between Utilitarians like James Mill, Charles Trevelyan and Orientalists like William Jones.²¹ It must be understood that the colonial policy in India was subjected to change from time to time due to the changes in the policy of the metropole. This present researcher is consensual with Said on one point that is centrality of knowledge in the colonial system vis-à-vis world order. But the purpose of accumulation of that knowledge was never unidirectional. C. A. Bayly in his book *Empire, Information,*

Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India 1780-1870 has pointed out that the legacy of collecting information was carried forward from the pre-colonial times to colonial times. Knowledge is itself a systematically socially constructed heuristic device which is the marker of ongoing process of being politically and economically stable.²² Thus, the process of accumulating knowledge cannot be separated from the socio-economic structure but always posited prior to it. William Jones in his presidential address in the Asiatic Society, established in the 1784 as the epitome of the Orientalist studies in India, clarified the intended objectives of the Society. He argued that, the performance and production of man and nature and their cohesive coexistence in broader context is the main objective of the study of the Society. According to Jones, memory, reason and imagination, these are the three main faculties according to which human knowledge, that is, history, science and art, must be analysed.²³ When he talked about the relationship between the man and the nature, he must have the broader context beyond the Orient in his mind.

After many decades, Joseph Needham in his voluminous work, *Science and Civilization in China*, has properly shown the historical and civilisational perspective of science which has no boundaries. Deepak Kumar opposing Basalla's linear theory of exporting Western science to the colonies, has showed ample evidences of precolonial scientific practices in India. He mentioned Fathullah Shirazi who in the sixteenth century made the first multi-barrelled cannon. He also refers to the inspiring zeal of Mughal Emperors to promote scientific researches and to enquire into nature.²⁴ Alongside he made references to the colonial researches which were great initiatives for the advancement of science worldwide. Thus, the scientific inquisitions are meant not only to be divided by colony-metropole binary. Historical inquisitions also can move beyond boundaries. In the case of Mackenzie, his search for Indian antiquities in a scientific way had no precedence. Throughout his work-life he had made it clear that the indigenous notion of historical sensibility besides the European

historical awareness, was something that needed attention. According to K. Paddayya, Mackenzie occupies a place in South India comparable to that of Sir William Jones in Eastern India. He in his article *Learning From the Indological Researches of Our Early Native Masters* has also highlighted the pivotal role of the indigenous scholarship along with the notable efforts of Mackenzie in making a composite South Indian history.²⁵ Here lies the true essence of the early colonial interactions which was multi-faceted and multi-layered. The efforts of the 'scholar-administrators' and the indigenous scholarship mingled together to make a total body of knowledge.

Said in his book once claimed that the 'Asia' has spoken through the imagination of the 'West'.²⁶ This argument can be contradicted by the methodology of Colin Mackenzie which emphasised the importance of the indigenous materials. In his methods of acquiring knowledge about South India, the subjectivity of imagination was mingled with the objectivity of indigenous sources. To decipher village records Mackenzie took the help of the Kavali brothers. Among them Mackenzie was very much well-aware of the potentiality of Kavali Venkata Boria who was very much enthusiastic about cartography and numismatics which helped Mackenzie in discovering the indigenous traditions with a new zeal. Mackenzie himself recognised his contribution by mentioning the name of Boria over a copy of an inscription.²⁷ To him, his native assistants were never mere informers, rather he always appreciated their personal knowledge. Thus, it seemed that the 'Oriental' history is not just a mere imagination of the colonisers as assumed by critics. Mary Louis Pratt in her book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* has used a term, 'contact zone'.²⁸ In the context of colonial encounters, this term means the interaction between geographically and historically different people by which both sides of the participants could relate themselves with the knowledge-seeking process. Within the asymmetrical power relationship, they could find their place properly through this contact. In a letter to Alexander Johnston in 1817, he cherished his memory by

arguing that Boria's pursuits of knowledge had opened new avenues for him for gaining hindu knowledge.²⁹ Mackenzie himself admitted in the same letter that the assistance of Boria itself was an introduction for him to the 'portal of the Indian knowledge'.³⁰ K. Paddayya in an article also argued in support of this view that, Boria's methodology was another important contribution that was added to the efforts of Mackenzie in making South Indian historical archive. In 1802, he submitted to Mackenzie a list regarding climate, plants, soils, seasons, tribal groups of Karnataka region and the method was questionnaire which we regarded today as the most scientific one to conduct research. This methodology was applied by Mackenzie in his further surveys with remarkable results.³¹ The process applied by Mackenzie, of locating sources, sorting of sources and then preparing the questionnaire to judge it, denotes a scientific process of acquiring historical knowledge step by step. Colin Mackenzie had lamented on the early death of Boria. He described the tough situation which was ushered just after the victory of the British Government over Tipu Sultan, through which he was carrying on the search for knowledge. Mackenzie described the difficulties arising from 'the nature of the climate, of the country, of the government'. The working environment was full of contending passions, prejudices and interests that was again and again mentioned by Mackenzie in his letter to Johnston.³² It must be remembered that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when Mackenzie came in India and made a strong foothold here, was a period of the expansion of the British Empire. That also implied that it was difficult for him to gain a stronghold over foreign language during the period of turmoil. Thus, the assistance of the indigenous people like Boria and his brothers, for the process of making a comprehensive knowledge regarding South India became very much essential.

He was concerned about the local customs, myths and relied on them to assume the true essence of the indigenous society. For example, analysing the agricultural conditions of Malayalam country, he described *Parsu Rama*, one of the incarnations of Lord Rama, as giving

the local inhabitants the advice to cultivate the land which included four parts step by step describing the methods of cultivating land. Rev. William Taylor has argued that this information was useful for understanding the general history of agriculture of the Malayalam country.³³ Mackenzie also described subdivisions of people. 'One who abuses a Brahmin, is to have his tongue cut out' – as Mackenzie pointed out in his description about Malayalam country in the section IV of book no. 3. He also pointed out the different classes among the Sudras having different measures of distance assigned to them.³⁴ In a search for the Muhammadans in Malayalam speaking areas he found out sixteen mosques and continued to argue that the Muhammadans did have privileges during the time of Cheruman Perumal who himself became a Mussalman and after his death Muhammadan system disseminated in some places.³⁵ In the section V of the same book the name of Sankaracharya, the eminent Indian philosopher, has been mentioned alongside the names of various rajas, chiefs and tribes. From all these works it seems that while acting as Surveyor-General of the country, his antiquarian soul was also in action. Description of the Malayalam country was only one instance. There was also vivid description of Telegu, Tamil, Chola rajas and various tribes which became very important source material for the construction of South Indian history. As Rev. William Taylor remarked on the note of the Book 3 that the content of this book is of so varied value.³⁶ Mackenzie collected numerous historical memoirs of the royal families of the Southern region. He studied intensively the genealogical inheritance of the local tribes and chieftains. From his collection, a manuscript named *Parsu Rama Vijaya* Mackenzie claimed vehemently that he had no doubt that all alleged *avatars* of Vishnu signified some great historical event and the incarnation of Parsu Rama points to the first acquisition of power by the Brahmins after their coming to India from the north of Himalayas.³⁷ Rev. William Taylor has analysed these descriptions as 'half legendary, half historical', but continuously admitted the unique value of it as it could not be found elsewhere at

Madras.³⁸ The mythical explanations of the origins of the local tribes rendered some references to their sociological origins. The colonial need to understand the nature of the local tribes was in the heart of these enquiries, yet by measuring the whole-hearted efforts of Mackenzie only in terms of colonial need is just a mere diminutive act. 'The individual mindfulness, intellectual excitement, lively curiosity and the pursuance of scientific methods', that Mackenzie had showed in building his vast collection, brought him the credit of having a separate place besides the colonial masters.

The Mackenzie Manuscripts on Botany (1804-1809) consisted descriptions of a vast range of flowers, plants etc. The scientific method of describing the well-known local flowers, plants are very much interesting. Not only their scientific names and their place of origin or where they were found, had been mentioned in detail, but also their utility had been explained in thorough way. For instance, there were two types of wild dates, *Kerry Eechel* and *Dod Eechel* and only from the later type the natives of Canara and Bednore drew liquor.³⁹ In the same manuscript he mentioned another flower as *Hibiscus* by describing its amazing diurnal changes in the colors of the petals.⁴⁰ From the drawing of the flower we can find resemblance with the famous Indian flower '*Sthalapadma*'. In another manuscript named, *Hindoo Antiquities, A Collection of Architecture and Sculptures Civil and Religious (1803-1808)*, Mackenzie had described the various types of funeral-monuments of Jain sects and various Brahmanical Mythologies and Mythologies of Vedas.⁴¹ H.H. Wilson has described the way in which Mackenzie made possible the huge task of collecting documents of almost unknown territory. He argued that, 'Col. Mackenzie's intercourse with the Brahmins impressed him with the idea that the most valuable materials for a history of India might be collected in different parts of the peninsula, and during his residence at Madura, he first conceived and formed the plan of making that collection which afterwards became the favorite object of his pursuit for 38 years of his life.'⁴² The whole set of books and inscriptions had been lodged in the

Madras College Library in 1828. The two years later, the Committee of Madras Literary Society and Royal Asiatic Society asked Government to transfer the Mackenzie collections to them and eventually they started to utilise the valuable information from it. H.H. Wilson had pointed out that due to the shortage of fund at first one or two subjects were selected, for instance, Jain Literature and Inscriptions.⁴³ Mackenzie himself admitted that not only the indigenous learned people, but also a set of Company officials, such as, William Kirkpatrick, Alexander Lead, John Leyden, Mark Wilks, was very supportive of his work.⁴⁴ Col. Mark Wilks while preparing his *History of Mysore* relied on the Mackenzie's collection to a great extent. In the later days even when Elphinstone turned to an intensive study of the Indian History beyond the Orientalist lens, he relied on the Mackenzie collection as the source material for the Deccan.⁴⁵ It must be noted that while Mackenzie was busy in surveying the Deccan and collecting manuscripts and inscriptions, there prevailed Permanent Settlement in Bengal (1793) and the Ryotwari system, the brainchild of Thomas Munro was to be introduced. Thus, the main thrust area of Mackenzie's enquiries in South, the local chiefs, village heads and other tribes were of very much importance to the colonial Government as they potentially formed the bulk of the so called 'zamindar class'. It was not so difficult to assume that Mackenzie and his assistants were aware of the political-economic implications of their searching for historical knowledge of the region.⁴⁶ But it never over-shadowed their ardour for knowing the land.

II

In the first volume of the *Asiatick Researches* (1788), President William Jones had once clarified the intended objects of the enquiries of the Orientalists. It was the study of the relationship between man and nature, 'whatever is performed by the one and produced by the other'.⁴⁷ In doing so, they stressed upon the study of history, science and art. The works of Mackenzie testified this objective in a true sense. 'Madras School of Orientalism' as Thomas Trautman coined

the term in 1999, flourished totally depending on the works of Colin Mackenzie. If we consider the term 'Orientalism' as a discourse in the line of Said, it must be understood that colonisers and colonised both had played the role in creating that discourse. The enlightenment zeal of empiricism was in the core of orientalism and the application of empiricism in an unknown place was never devoid of the efforts of the colonised people, though in the colonial settings British Indian interaction was hierarchical in many senses. As Trautman said, orientalism is a self-conscious intellectual formation with definite ideology.⁴⁸ The main concern should be the formation of a composite knowledge in the making of which both indigenous and Orientalist urges were in action. Mackenzie while availing the assistance of Boria, had continuously appreciated the indigenous value and awareness of perceiving history and that gave rise to the complex sociology of knowledge. The relationship between Dr. Heyne and Mackenzie on the other hand shows the internal tensions of the British rule. Dr. Heyne, Company's botanist on the Madras establishment accompanied Mackenzie during his first few months on the North-West frontier. But after returning to Bangalore Mackenzie reported that he had been very troublesome.⁴⁹ The life and works of Mackenzie clearly demonstrated the many facets of colonial rule. Homi K. Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture*, has argued that the dependence on the 'fixity' in the psychological construction of otherness is another important feature of colonial discourse.⁵⁰ The function of ambivalence in the working of the colonial discourse can undermine this 'fixity'. The constantly changing historical and discursive conjunctures in colonial India were the main catalysts to this ambivalence. Unlike Foucault, who posits epistemological breaks in defining the power-knowledge relationship, Said overlooked this ambivalence. He proposed the unified character of Western domination over the Orient. Knowledge was never imparted without suspicion and the direct invocation of British authority, but the British authority was never unified. During the early colonial rule in the knowledge making

process, both the colonisers and the colonised acted as coordinators of knowledge rather than being part of a mere dominant-dominated structure. This process of acculturation in which both parties represented themselves in a unique way. The term 'Representation' has a very nuanced connotation. It can be intentional or constructive. In the Mackenzie collection, the indigenous plants, customs, mythologies, architectures, were represented just as it were. His zeal as a collector was reflected in his work. When he described the sculptured windows in the Jain *bustee* of *Chandragupta* on the lesser hill of *Shravana-Bellagolla* on the left and right side, his descriptions cannot be categorised as the eurocentric urge to represent the orient⁵¹. There is no doubt that in the context of the early colonial rule when Company was trying to get stronghold over the newly conquered areas, the surveys and studies of the local mythologies and the origin of the local tribes, chieftains, plants, architecture had immense political significance. To highlight the political significance, we cannot undermine the intellectual significance of the Mackenzie Collection. *The Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* by Immanuel Kant and *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784) by Johann Gottfried Herder paved the way for considering history as an interaction of cultures rather than separate progression of religions, individuals or states. Apart from them, Schlegel, Schopenhauer all were propounding a sense of connectivity influenced by the enlightenment ardour. The early colonial scholar-administrators were invoking this sense of connected history in their works. Through their efforts the late 18th century British Indian history, connecting world history sustained the above-mentioned idea. The economic-political presence continuously loomed behind the intellectual search for knowledge. Wilhelm Halbfass in his book *India and Europe : An Essay in Philosophical Understanding* has argued that, as Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of India, explicitly encouraged the study of the Indian traditions and conceptual world to control the Indians within

their own worlds, but this did not hamper the sustainable development of the scholarly works.⁵² Thus, it is evident from the above detailed discussion of Colin Mackenzie's work that, the imposition of a homogenous West against the homogenous East is not very much historically approved fact. My argument here is that the contact between Europe and India has helped both continents to reshape each other, to define each other in a more critical way that cannot be measured just as a marginal impact of the global phenomenon like colonialism. The tenacious way of acquiring knowledge, the relentless urge to perceive the local customs, beliefs in their own terms have made Mackenzie one of the main protagonists of this postcolonial trend of writing history. After his coming to India till death the primary concern of Colin Mackenzie was to collect things to understand the South Indian life and reality. His life and work cannot be measured in the linear monolithic way of 'Orientalism'. It was not possible for British people to continue historical search in an unknown place without the help of the Company. The Company servants who searched for the Orientalist knowledge were part of the system of universal knowledge production unknowingly. The primary sources based on the letters and plates which were found in the library and museum of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, bears the evidences of Mackenzie's efforts in perceiving South Indian history impartially. His primary and main concern was to study the indigenous culture, customs and for serving this purpose he mainly concentrated on the previously untouched historical materials and by doing so, Mackenzie had linked Indian history with the broader horizon of the universal history.

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Notes

- ¹ Karnad, Girish, *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan and Bali : The Sacrifice: Two Plays*, USA: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 7-9. This also have been used by Rama Sundari Mantena in the beginning of her second chapter on Mackenzie. But here the usage of the context is different than that of the previous.
- ² Kejariwal, O. P., *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 22-23.
- ³ Wilson, H. H., *The Mackenzie Collection: A Descriptive Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts and other Articles, Illustrative of the Literature, History, Statistics, and Antiquities of the South India collected by Lieut. Col. Colin Mackenzie*, Calcutta, 1828, second edition, pp. viii-ix.
- ⁴ Johnston, Alexander, 'Biographical Sketch of the Literary Career of the late Colonel Colin Mackenzie, Surveyor-General of India; comprising some particulars of his Collection of Manuscripts, Plans, Coins, Drawings, Sculptures, & c. illustrative of the Antiquities, History, Geography, Laws, Institutions, and Manners, of the Ancient Hindús', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1834, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1834), pp. 335-338.
- ⁵ Wilson, H.H., *The Mackenzie Collection*, p. ix.
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“We are all migrants through time”: Understanding
Contemporary Refugee Question through Mohsin Hamid’s
Exit West

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Abstract

Since the Second World War, there has been a tremendous rise in the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, it has reached its highest in the second decade of the 21st century. In *Exit West* (2017), Mohsin Hamid attempts to understand this global refugee and migrant situation. In this coming-of-age novel, Hamid presents snapshots of the lives of anonymous people in different locations around the globe “swollen by refugees”. These fragments are juxtaposed with the complex narrative trajectory of the novel’s only named characters, protagonists Nadia and Saeed, as they start their lives, fall in love, begin to cohabit, flee the city of their birth, and experience the migrant or refugee’s precarious existence. This paper investigates *Exit West* as Hamid’s response to the contemporary migration and refugee question. In doing so, this paper highlights Hamid’s perception that “we are all migrants” and focus on the binary areas occupied by angry, scared white “nativists” on the one hand and the other burgeoning number of migrants. This paper will also examine how *Exit West* offers a necessary foil to decentre canonical notions of “purity” in the world.

Key Words: *Exit West*; Refugees; Borders; Mohsin Hamid; Purity

Introduction

Fiction instigates change. Fiction can say what might otherwise appear unsayable. In *Acts of Literature* (ed. Derek Attridge, London: Routledge, 1992), Jacques Derrida described Literature as a “strange

institution” and argued that the “institution of fiction ... gives in principle the power to say everything, to break free of the rules”. Robert Eaglestone, in his opening chapter of *Contemporary Fiction*, writes: “Literature thinks. Literature is where ideas are investigated, lived out, explored in all their messy complexity.” And adds, “Of all the arts, the novel is the most thoughtful, the closest, the most personal.” British Pakistani writer Mohsin Hamid’s work enfolds in the same classification of Literature. He has been breaking the silence on contemporary issues through his fiction. He is preoccupied with critical issues of global relevance, like identity and the refugee crisis. Mohsin’s novels are not only topical; he is also concerned about the future.

In his fourth novel, *Exit West*, published and shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2017, Mohsin Hamid situates a love story amidst the refugee crisis. He paints a nuanced portrait of contemporary migration, from the horrors of Western hysteria to what it means to leave one life behind in the hope of building another. Hamid draws us into an imagined universe characterised by the immigration apocalypse, particularly the possibility of witnessing a place one loves being confronted by existential threat and rapidly descending into chaos. In the new immigration policies and post-Brexit, the question of free migration and borders are being closed down on “unwanted outsiders”. Mohsin tries to imagine a world with no strict borders and where people move across places with relative ease. This novel is a prominent literary response to the sharp increase in the number of refugees and the sense of political and humanitarian crisis that has accompanied these increases.

The refugee crisis and *Exit West*

In 2011 Hamid published a short story titled “Terminator: Attack of the Drone” that evokes a post-apocalyptic future in which the narrator tells us: there “ain’t many” humans left (Hamid, 2011) and in which drones terrorise survivors. There is a similar situation in *Exit West*, Hamid reveals the equal measures of violence and possibility that

reside in Giorgio Agamben's claim that "the refugee is perhaps the only thinkable figure for the people of our time and the only category in which one may see today [...] the forms and limits of a coming political community". *Exit West* tells the story of Nadia and Saeed, the only people named in the novel. They go to class, do their errands, discuss things, fall in love and explore their new relationship with the enthusiasm of youth. Their love first blossoms in an unnamed city, first teetering on civil war, a city that becomes by inches a lattice of "fraying seams" and "deadly patches", where every window is a "border" (Hamid 69-71). Soon after, and somewhat imperceptibly, the unnamed city becomes war-torn, and everyday life gradually becomes intolerable. Given their youth and vigour, Nadia and Saeed, decide to leave the city. Because of the war, Saeed's mother gets tragically killed; Saeed's father decides to stay in his home town. He feels too old to move. There is a piercing moment in which Saeed's father thinks he sees young boys playing soccer, but on looking closer, realises they are teenagers, and "they were not playing with a ball but with the severed head of a goat, and he thought, barbarians, but then it dawned on him that this was the head not of a goat but of a human being, with hair and a beard" (Hamid 87). In an interview about the book, Mohsin says:

"My view on the refugee crisis is that I am sceptical of nations' right to control the movement of these people. It is not clear to me that we have the right to tell people that they can't come. So if millions of people now need to flee Afghanistan, let's say, and come to Pakistan for safety, it is not clear to me that Pakistan has the right to say no to these people. What is the basis of that right?" (Muddasir, 2023)

As Claire Chambers notes, Hamid "engages in onomastic play with this choice of names because the initials of "N" and "S" in his characters' names supplement the missing compass points implied in the title *Exit [East] West*. Nadia aligns with generalisations about the global north and Saeed the global south" (Chambers, 2019, p. 216). The opening part of the novel takes place in Saeed and Nadia's

unnamed home city, which “seems to be Aleppo” (Shriver, 2017). In *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, respectively, Viet Thanh Nguyen (2017) and William Giraldo (2017) noted parallels with both Aleppo and Mosul. In another interview, Hamid states that he “model [ed]” the city on his birthplace:

“I wrote it thinking of Lahore, modelling it after the city of Lahore, where I live. And I just couldn’t bring myself to fictionally ... cause to befall to Lahore the terrible events that happen to Saeed and Nadia’s city. [...] But partly, I also wanted to open it up - to have people from other places imagine this as their city, so [as] to widen the entry point into the novel, for different types of ... readers from different places.” (Frostrup, 2017)

Chambers observes, in a sense this is characteristic of Hamid’s work, which frequently underscores and seeks to enhance the active role that readers play in the production of literary meaning; like the use of second-person modes of address elsewhere in his oeuvre, the namelessness of Saeed and Nadia’s city “enables readers to involve themselves in the co-production Hamid espouses in his art” (Chambers, 2019, p. 244). The names of the protagonists’ country are left blank, then, in part to encourage readers to insert those of their own. Indeed, when the novel begins, Saeed and Nadia’s city is not officially at war, as its carefully crafted opening lines make clear:

“In a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war, a young man met a young woman in a classroom and did not speak to her. For many days. His name was Saeed and her name was Nadia, and he had a beard, not a full beard, more a studiously maintained stubble, and she was always clad from the tips of her toes to the bottom of her jugular notch in a flowing black robe.” (Hamid1)

Notably, the first clause of the novel is highly pejorative about refugees: the city being “swollen” by their arrival seems to liken them to the cause of some debilitating ailment, and in this construction, the conjunctive ‘but still’ implies that refugees inevitably bring conflict

with them. They are referred to only as a collective, with no adjectives or other description assigned to them, and the very syntax of the prose marginalises them. The collective term "refugees" may be the sixth word of the novel, appearing before references to any individual characters, yet their mention occurs in a subordinate clause of which they are not even the subject (the unnamed city is).

When the subject and object of the first sentence as a whole emerge, they are, in stark contrast to the undifferentiated mass of "refugees", an individuated man and woman whose meeting is the main focus of the sentence and upon whom the third sentence confers names as well as physical descriptions. These descriptions even give early indications as to their characters: like his beard, Saeed is studious, and as suggested by the "flowing black robe" that covers her body, Nadia is guarded but also elegant and laid-back. In due course, Saeed and Nadia themselves become refugees, but the novel's opening works hard to distinguish them from refugees.

When Saeed and Nadia do speak to each other, a few paragraphs into the novel, more details emerge about the violence taking place in their city. However, this too is rendered incidental to the development of their relationship, which takes centre stage: Not long after noticing [a beauty mark on her neck], Saeed spoke to Nadia for the first time. Their city had yet to experience any major fighting, just some shootings and the odd car-bombing, felt in one's chest cavity as a subsonic vibration like those emitted by large loudspeakers at music concerts, Saeed and Nadia had packed up their books and were leaving class.

As Nadia and Saeed's relationship develops, the number of refugees arriving in their City continues to increase, and the effects of this do not go unnoticed by the pair. In the second chapter, we encounter the first of several descriptions of refugee camps in the novel: Refugees had occupied many of the open places in the city, pitching tents in the green belts between roads, erecting lean-tos next to the boundary walls of houses, sleeping rough on pavements and in the margins of streets. Some seemed to be trying to recreate the rhythms of a normal life, as though it were entirely natural to reside, a family of four, under a sheet

of plastic propped up with branches and a few chipped bricks. Others stared out at the city with what looked like anger, surprise, supplication, or envy. Others did not move at all: stunned, maybe, or resting. Possibly dying. Saeed and Nadia had to be careful when making turns not to run over an outstretched arm or leg (Hamid 23).

A World without Borders

Nadia and Saeed flee through a “magic door”. First, they seek refuge on the Greek island of Mykonos, then in London, and finally in Marin County. There, the “spoilage” of their relationship happens. They fall out. *Exit West* explores contemporary geopolitical events through the lens of a near-future narrative. It incorporates elements of magical realism: its protagonists escape their unnamed war-torn city through a “door” that instantaneously transports them to Mykonos, and they subsequently travel through other such “doors” to London and California. Their story is interspersed with a series of vignettes in which other migrants also find themselves magically transported across national borders. As well as considering how Hamid’s novel seeks to humanise refugees, this paper also considers the novel’s evocation of a world in which human beings — like capital, images, and (mis)information — have gained access to essentially ungovernable networks of instantaneous travel across vast distances. It argues that Hamid’s novel is not just “about” refugees but also constitutes a reflection on how they and their journeys are represented and mediated by actually-existing technologies.

Exit West depicts a world experiencing a migration crisis that can no longer be controlled by physical borders, military surveillance, or international agreements. The novel allows its readers to understand the urgency of today’s turbulent global conditions of social unrest, war, and human displacement. Through the use of a surrealist device of portals, the opening of black rectangles that function more like magical wormholes that enable thousands of people to “slip away” (Hamid 211) from the economic destitution and “murderous battlefields” (Hamid 211) of their homelands to the safety of the West.

Exit West depicts a world on the verge of collapse. Regular doors that "become special door [s] ... without warning" (Hamid 72) let migrants from different countries, ethnicities, and religions appear all of a sudden at people's doorsteps and transform the globe into denationalised cultural spaces, causing an enormous split between the First and the Third World to be reproduced within the experiences of everyday life.

Consequently, a new reality emerges, a new mapping of the self and the other where "otherness" in its full diversity and contradictoriness is experienced not as external to the nation-state but as internal to its being. Hamid linguistically entangles the idea of the "doors that could take you anywhere, often to places far away" (Hamid 72). With the more familiar technology of the mobile phone, which "sniffed out, as if by magic, a world that was all around," and that could take one "to places distant and near, and to places that had never been and would never be" (Hamid 39). The idea of a magic door is also not so far from our own daily experience of technology that not so long ago would have been indistinguishable from magic. This (non)-metaphor of a magic door captures a central fear in the populist right mythology: the fear of an uncontrollable tide of migrants, driven by war (among other things), which will, in the end, swamp their civilisation. Indeed, the book plays out the next logical step in that populist narrative: When the pair land in London after leaving Mykonos, they land in a city that is becoming a war zone. There is a "tightening cordon" around the city, "great holding camps", and a zone of "soldiers and armoured vehicles, and above ... drones and helicopters" (Hamid 137). This is the unravelling of democracy fearfully thought to accompany migration, especially migration of the unwashed Muslim poor.

Muslimness in *Exit West*

Saeed and Nadia both belong to a culturally Muslim tradition, but to start with, neither of them is particularly religious. Nadia chooses to wear the hijab, not as a sign of her religious beliefs — and indeed

she is described in the novel as less and less religious as time passes — but to underline her emancipation and self-worth as a woman, particularly when she moves to the United States towards the end of the novel. When Saeed asked why she wears an abaya, she smiles and tells him, “So men don’t fuck with me” (Hamid 17). As for Saeed, he starts out as non-religious, but after some years as an immigrant, he finds himself praying “several times a day” (Hamid 201). Saeed remains more religious than Nadia, throughout the novel. Hamid illuminates that this is: “... as a gesture of love for what had gone and would go and could be loved in no other way. When he prayed, he touched his parents, who could not otherwise be touched, and he touched a feeling that we are all children who lose our parents” (Hamid 201). Thus we witness two young people who start one way but change perceptibly over time, to the point where their initial identities are almost unrecognisable. Their religious evolution is an example of the non-static nature of cultural and religious identity that Hamid underlines. It could be said, as I understand Hamid to be arguing here, that we become altogether different people when we are moved — or when we actively move — to a different location, putting in doubt notions of a stable underlying identity that we may like to believe is inherent within all of us. This fundamental human impulse to define ourselves addresses the need for predictability and continuity. However, the experience of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants, eloquently drawn in *Exit West*, starkly underlines the fundamental shifts our very identities can undergo, not just as a result of the possible trauma following moving, but crucially also as a result of the desire to move and the unanticipated consequences of locating to a different cultural and national context.

In *The New York Times* article titled “Does Fiction Have the Power to Sway Politics?” Mohsin Hamid says, “Politics is shaped by people. And people, sometimes, are shaped by the fiction they read”. So *Exit West* is not merely a devastating attack on the idea of a monolithic “Muslim” culture propelled by war through the viral agent of migration to pollute the pristine West. It also critiques the idea that one such culture should

be shielded and fostered. In Hamid's hands, Europe is a place of concentration camps, hunger, and causal cruelty "under the drone crossed sky and in the invisible network surveillance that radiated out from their phones" (Hamid 188). If there is a Millian story of liberal self-fashioning in the East-West, it is to be found in the way that Nadia and Saeed make and remake themselves in the teeth of civil war, detention, and contempt. It is the notational Muslims here, as the social science has suggested, who are the truly faithful liberals here.

We Are All Migrants

Another argument concerns the idea that Western culture is to be protected from the migrant tide. Late in the book, Hamid breaks away from Nadia and Saeed to tell a brief story about an "old woman" who had lived in the same house near Palo Alto all her life, near a "local university that had gone from being a local secret to among the world's most famous" (Hamid 207-208). Hamid argues that migration is about space and moving through physical locations and about moving through time. In an interview given in Berlin in 2017, Hamid elaborated on a similar idea:

"If you were born in Berlin 80 years ago and lived in the same house today, you were born in a Berlin where Adolf Hitler was the Fuhrer. When you were 2 years old, you witnessed the Second World War. Your city was virtually destroyed. Sometime in your 50s, the Berlin Wall fell and East and West were reunified. Today, perhaps, you have many Turkish speaking neighbors. And you have not moved houses, but have migrated profoundly."

It is in this sense that we are all "migrants through time" (Hamid 209). And it is in this sense that the populist claims to a unitary and unchanging culture is a fallacious one. Hamid, thus, has articulated what Samuel Scheffler has called Heraclitean pluralism, an understanding that "culture and cultures are always in flux, and that individuals normally relate to cultures through the acknowledgement of multiple affiliations and activities." When asked how the title "Exit West" came about, Mohsin replied:

“The title *Exit West* stuck because there’s so much in it that spoke to me: the notion of people physically exiting to the west, a frontier impulse — ‘Go West young man, or young woman. There’s almost a stage direction or theatrical quality to it as well — ‘exit stage right. And then, there’s a notion embedded within it that may steer us away from the idea of actual characters exiting to the West and instead, focus on the possibility of the West itself exiting. Is it still possible to think of a West that is full of people who grew up in the East, or are dynamics of migration and cultural change making the notion of a West impossible? Alternatively, was the notion of a West always impossible, fictitious, and is that fiction, too, disappearing? All of this came together and seems to align nicely with the content of the book.”

In his text, Hamid establishes the importance of individuals considering their planetary placement in the Anthropocene era early. He sets the scene and describes Saeed’s apartment and how it is an optimal location that would induce a “premium during gentler, more prosperous times” but then quickly turns “undesirable in time of conflict” (Hamid 11). The narrator answers, “Location, location, location, the realtors say. Geography is destiny, respond the historians” (Hamid 11). The impact of this passage is felt more since it is backdropped by the civil war happening in the streets. Hamid points out that so much of a person’s life is grounded in their physical positioning on the planet and the accident of their birth into a particular country, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Location is everything. Those who live in lands that are peaceful and prosperous do not live in fear. However, those in locations that are being torn apart by violence, hatred, and destruction due to natural disasters are searching to change their destiny by relocating geographically. Realtors know the value of this fact and recognise that people are willing to pay unknown amounts of money just for the location of a property because where a person is on this planet determines everything, including their future, safety, lineage, and peace of mind. Hamid argues that in the world as it exists today, the geography of someone’s

life determines their destiny in most cases. So, the necessity of transnational migration becomes apparent when the number of habitable places dwindles due to the planetary change in the Anthropocene. People will scour the Earth to find the "location" that will grant them normalcy, or at the very least, survival. In the novel, Hamid imagines a world that takes this migration crisis to a global scale through the use of the doors and this forces the nations of the world to make a choice: war or adaptation. Hamid illuminates the emphasis on one's position on the planet. However, he examines this issue through the scope of the Anthropocene that shifts the perspective to how time is also a factor in transnational migration. The narrator describes how, "Saeed's father would sometimes bring out the telescope, and the family would [...] take turns to look up at objects whose light, often, had been emitted before any of these three viewers had been born — light from other centuries, only now reaching Earth. Saeed's father called this time-travel" (Hamid 15). The deep time here that is being pointed out in the multi-generational existence of the stars reframes the narrative and connects the characters to the larger scheme of the Anthropocene. This time span calls to a form of time travel as another form of migration, just as how the characters will later be migrating in a physical and geographical sense. The stars not only represent the deep connection to time but it also is important in relation to space and transnational migration. This relationship can be seen when Saeed is talking to Nadia about "Darkened Cities", a photography collection in which a French photographer captures what the night sky above major cities around the world would look like without electricity. Saeed explains to Nadia that he did not get the cities to turn out their lights for the photos since:

"above these cities you can barely see the stars. Just like here. He had to go to deserted places. Places with no human rights. For each city's sky he went to a deserted place that was just as far north, or south, at the same latitude basically" (Hamid 56).

Stars here represent a time before the Anthropocene, since the light they emit reaches us on Earth centuries after the star burns. The

photographer had to go to a place untouched by “human rights” or by human impact. Seeing that the stars are vessels that represent time travel, this passage collapses the geographical migration (the photographer travelling around the world for the night sky) and temporal migration. Hamid thus raises the point that humans are not only injuring the present but also endangering the future and severing the ties that connect to the past. In a later scene, Hamid envisions a mindset for the future that hinges upon an adaptation of the mind by unifying the human species regarding migration through time. In one of the final episodes with the doors in the novel, Hamid depicts an American woman in California who has lived in one place for her whole life and is now witnessing the city outside her house dramatically changing due to the doors and the migrant crisis going global. Hamid writes, “and when she went out it seemed to her that she too had migrated, that everyone migrates, even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives because we can’t help it. We are all migrants through time” (Hamid 209). The “we” the narrator refers to transcends humanity and reaches even deeper into the migration that the Earth has made through time. “We” move from stage to stage through lifetimes, just as migrants move from location to location. Humans migrate from childhood to adulthood, to marriage, parenthood, differing phases along the way, until the final migration to death. This concept also applies to the Earth. The planet has migrated through the Paleocene to the Miocene and now has put roots into the Anthropocene. Hamid is arguing that migration is an unavoidable truth, and to not be migrating in some capacity is to have reached death, a place with no time. Hamid is calling for what Scranton would define as a “collective humanity” mindset, where humans are connected through similarities of the human experience (Hamid 25). Rather than resort to nationalism and the dehumanisation of migrants, Hamid argues that we should respond with acceptance and adaptation as a species. Just how the American woman accepted the shifting landscape of her neighbourhood, Hamid is promoting his Western

readers to make this shift in their minds and imagine a different form of civilisation for the human species in the Anthropocene. This episode links back to Hamid and Scranton's optimistic mindset in letting go of the past in order to create a better world in the Anthropocene. Ultimately, through *Exit West*, Hamid presents an alternative future to the human rights crisis of climate refugees. The transnational migration of the people travelling through the black doors provides a human thought experiment as to what would happen if societies could not regulate migrants crossing borders.

Conclusion

Exit West explores contemporary geopolitical events through the lens of a near-future narrative. However, while that story is a typical piece of dystopian fiction in that it "conjur[es] up a terrifying future if we do not recognise and treat its symptoms in the here and now" (Gordin, Tilley, & Prakash, 2010, p. 2), *Exit West* is ultimately in stark contrast to his short story "Terminator: Attack of the Drone". Saeed and Nadia symbolise the human rights crisis of people seeking refuge from both war and the ecological devastation of their homes. This paper analysed *Exit West* in these terms and conveyed what Hamid explored: humans must keep moving to new geographical locations because staying in an uninhabitable environment would destine them for death. Moreover, the collective reality that all entities share by migrating through time paints a larger and more comprehensive picture of the perspectives and challenges of migration and human rights. Hamid's book is a window on a technologically assisted future in which the senses are enhanced by digital advances. His refugees seem powerless, but they make use of technology in unexpected ways which appear to protect them, or at least hold at bay hostile larger forces. The real issue of migration is the gulf between the haves and the have-nots. Hamid emphasises that a lack of material goods and basic amenities is the lot of global outsiders. This contrasts with the affluence of "natives" in the West. However, when even the powerless have powerful technologies in their hands, things start to change.

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*Existential Despairing in Arun Joshi's selected Novel
The Foreigner*

Deepalakshmi Shanmugam and K. Sundararajan

Abstract

Arun Joshi's first novel 'The Foreigner' (1968) and his second novel 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas' sight seen in depth the problem of the protagonist's intellect of emptiness and isolation at being unable to get significance in survival. A series of reflections on freedom, suicide, love, marriage, life, and detachment are swirling throughout the story. It started as a thriller novel but ended as a mystery. The story dealt with the theme of the east-west encounters. Joshi had very masterly handled challenging, grave issues like rootlessness, detachment, and frustration, search for better substitutes, self-predicament, and self-realisation. Due to the modern lifestyle, this novel took us to the inferior complexities of social misery and agony. The people could be surrounded by thousands and still be lonely.

Keywords: Arun Joshi, west encounter, predicament, identity, detachment.

Arun Joshi entered the Indian English Legendary prospect with the book of his main novel 'The Foreigner' in the year 1968. It established Arun Joshi as a mature and outstanding novelist. It was considered a most compelling work of fiction. It holds the attention of the reader constantly. The novel runs over three parts further divided into ten chapters — the first part has four chapters, the second part has three and the last part has eight. 'The Foreigner', Arun Joshi addressed the dark, mysterious realm of an individual's tormented consciousness from his hostility toward the surroundings, convention, and himself. The signs of isolation: inability, purposelessness,

aimlessness, cultural separation, isolation, and seclusion are exposed by Arun Joshi in his novels. His heroes suffer a different hunger and the novels under consideration, analyse the severe mental conflict experienced by them. The protagonists go through an agonising sense of desolation and indulge in examining to find the cause of their unusual mental suffering. They also tried to find solutions to their problems. The characters try to find themselves, to analyse themselves and their minds. In this process, they question their attitudes to the activities around them and how they respond to the above situations. Their response is considered as their experiences.

Sindi found himself in the dilemma of a foreigner. In the analysis of the novel, Meenakshi Mukherjee described the protagonist of 'The Foreigner' as a "perennial outsider" (22). The novel is about the struggle of an individual who seeks the way in the complicated labyrinth of life that he passed through. It was a representation of the uprooted hero Sindi Oberoi. Away from his home grounds, he regards his past as absolutely meaningless. Life had not given hope for him in the coming and he felt that it will be as miserable as in the past. The hero was wandering to find out the means of his life in search of peacetime, self-identity, and resolution of his life. The novel showed the hero's drive from procrastination to accomplishment, from disinterestedness to association, and from delusion to realism.

The novel was written from the perspective of Sindi and described the experiences of the hero. The novel opened with the death of Babu Rao Khemka, the son of leading industrialist Mr. Khemka, who passed away in a car accident in Boston. And then the story shifted over to Delhi, where Sindi was an employee in Mr. Khemka's industry. The emotional impact of Babu and June's death upon Sindi and the further events were interwoven in the form of reminiscence. The juxtaposition of the past and the present, the real and the remembered, fantasy and reality had been added to the suspense. Sindi Oberoi narrated the story in an autobiographical manner. The first-person narrative was familiar

in Joshi's fiction. The novel is divided into main and subplots. The central plot deals with Sindi, Babu, and June, and the subplot of Sindi, Mr. Khernka, and his daughter Ms. Sheila. Sindi was left alone at the age of four when his parents died in an air crash. His search for life was the cause of the lack of parental love and care. He was studying Mechanical Engineering in Boston. But he had changed so many jobs for the experience. Sindi met Babu and their friendship has began also with June Blyth. The relationship between June and Sindi was very intimate for quite a long time.

June and Sindi met at the International students association party. June was a very beautiful, benevolent, and affectionate girl and she had longed for Sindi's love and care. Tapan Kumar Ghosh's observation of June's character in his book 'Arun Joshi's Fiction' makes the state additional trustworthy: "June is a memorable creation of Arun Joshi. She is the first of a group of humane, sympathetic, and sacrificial women who play a key role in the lives of heroes and catalyse their progress towards self-realization. June is aware of the inanity, pretensions, and play-acting of the people around her" (48). In the opening, June was the exact mate for Sindi, for she had an astonishing control to fascinate others and solution to them of their troubles. Her unselfish anxiety for others was extremely honored by him: "June was one of those rare persons who have a capacity to forget themselves in somebody's troubles" (TF 119). This occasional degree of sympathy and the capability to overlook herself in the hopelessness of others discriminate her from him and the break of the other characters. He practised a new phase of love and affection with June. Nevertheless Sindi strained to lock up himself from getting thoroughly intricate with June. June frequently requested Sindi for many outings to several places, but he had no optimal but to go along with her. But Sindi was not ready to accept her love proposal. Despite his confusion and afraid of human relations, Sindi avoided her. The attachment of human relationships gave pain and suffering. June told him about her wish to

marry him. However, Sindi says, "I was afraid of possessing anybody and I was afraid of being possessed, and marriage meant both" (TF 112). He further attempted to explain:

"Marriage wouldn't help, June. We are alone, both you and I, that is the problem. And our aloneness must be resolved from within. You can't send two persons through a ceremony and expect that their aloneness will disappear ... I can't marry you because I am incapable of doing so. It would be like going deliberately mad" (TF 133).

The obstacle in the relationship between June and Sindi was not only the fear of committing himself but also the sense of alienation in him and of being a foreigner, initiating from the absence of self-possession or the sense of durability and realism. June was disappointed with Sindi and left him for Babu. The following dialogue between June and Sindi showed why June leaves Sindi for Babu:

June said, "I thought you never loved anybody — except perhaps yourself (TF 167). When Sindi answers "Don't you believe that I loved you?" (TF 167). June replies, "I did at one time, and perhaps still do. But you are so tied up with your detachment, it makes little difference whether you love or you don't ... it just made me sad because I thought I was in love with you" (TF 167).

On the other hand, Babu was attracted to June's prettiness and he wanted to wed her. June comprehended the undesirable attitude toward Sindi and changed her mind to marry Babu. After Sindi refused June, she often met Babu and avoided Sindi. His predicament was revealed when he said, "You had a clear-cut system of morality, a caste system that laid down all you had to do ... I have no system of morality. How does it mean to me if you call me an immoral man. I have no reason to be one thing rather than another" (TF 143).

Sindi's anchorless float in the life stream was responsible for his hostility toward society, civilisations, and anything sophisticated. And his hostility or alienation was the cause of his being indifferent toward his environment, human life, and himself. Such a man with peace

neither within nor without, surrounded by riddles of life, was destined to be cynical. Sindi was a cynic. He always said that detachment had given the way to the human predicament. But actually, he wanted to attach to people. People who were close to Sindi knew about his true colour. Babu writes to his sister Sheila, "But he is so terribly cynical" (TF 55). Mrs. Blyth, June's mother, calls him, "You are just a cynic my boy" (TF 108). Sindi himself says, "I was cynical and exhausted, grown old before my time, weary with my own loneliness" (TF 161). Sindi did not have a desire to be attached and he wished to project him as a cynic. Anjana Das tells about Sindi,

Sindi is an epicurean, a pleasure seeker. He reveals his merry-making and has illicit relations with Anna, Kathy, Judy ... Christine and June. He avoids to marry anyone of them because he convinces himself that he shall remain detached. He even keeps himself aloof from performing daily routine duties. He wants to be freed from any commitment or involvement whatsoever (TF 167).

His cynical attitude was dominated while he spoke about love and marriage. He told to June, "I didn't quite know except that whatever I had seen so far in life seemed to indicate that marriage was more often lust for possession than anything else. People got married just as they bought new cars. And then they gobbled each other up" (TF 71). He said that love possession was worse than no love at all. In his cynical way, he tells June,

"Absence of love does not mean hatred. Hatred is just another form of love. There is another way of loving. You can love without attachment, without desire. You can love without attachment to the objects of your love. You can love without fooling yourself that the things you love are indispensable either to you or to the world. Love is real only when you know that what you love must one day die" (TF 180).

This passage helps to understand Sindi's case, his withdrawal from the world. It is based on Lord Krishna's message of detachment in *The Bhagavat Gita*. Chapter II-Verse 62:

*“dhyāyato viṣayānpurīṣaḥ saṅgastēṣhūpajāyate, |
saṅgātsaṅjāyate kāmāḥ kāmātkrodho’bhijāyate. ||*

While contemplating the objects of the senses, one develops attachment to them. Attachment leads to desire, and from desire arises anger” (para 1-2).

Sindi realised that objectivity consisted in getting tangled with the world. So he decided to act without any desire. Sindi had reached his meaning of detachment because he considered this world to be only an illusion, not a permanent one. Sindi had seen a lot of illusions in life. The world appeared to him to be hectic and he saw nothing real in life. He told to June obviously, “Nothing ever seems real to me, leave alone permanent. Nothing seems to be very important” (TF 113). Therefore he wanted to know the real and his relationship with it in the manner of an Indian sage.

After that, he loved her; at the same time, he had the fear of attachment and consequently he avoided June. June married Babu. Once Babu knew about June’s relationship with Sindi, he got angry and died in a car accident. June also passed away during her abortion. It knew how to be resolved that if June hadn’t passed away, Sindi would surely have wedded her. Several unpleasant practices taught Sindi that objectivity was a chief barrier in the route of charming life. Sindi felt deep regret and sorrow over his character in forcing June and Babu to death.

Sindi moved to India where he worked in Mr. Khemka’s concern as a personal assistant. The novel ended with Sindi’s acceptance to run the office of Mr. Khemka, who was behind the bars for cheating the income tax department. Mr. Khemka and Sheila had asked so many questions about Babu’s life in the United States and his relationship with June. While answering their questions, Sindi tried to hide the fact about Babu’s death intending not to expose the darkest part of his life. They considered June responsible for his death; this suspicion was aroused because of Babu’s letter. But on the contrary, in the process of narrating the past, the reality was revealed and everybody was allowed

to know of Sindi's confused inner self. But Sindi convinced them. Afterward, he joined as a personal assistant to Mr. Khemka to help him in all his work. Sindi got disappointment by the approach to life and set of morals followed by Mr. Khemka and his friends.

Sindi observed the dishonesty and phoniness of modern society in India and America. It was like his understanding at the communal gatherings at Mr. Khemka's house. He found gatherings to be a bit of deception with people sipping, acting, and talking of money — undertaking nothing meaningful. In America, Sindi did not absorb the culture of the people there. When he had an opportunity to attend a party or go to a public place or buy a ticket, he remained an ex-officio host or an alien. He had a feeling of alienation, solitude, and anxiety.

Sindi loses hope in life while seeing the awful conditions of Muthu's life. Sindi was shocked by Muthu's expression of the misery of his life "But it becomes difficult to remain calm when you find so many children going hungry most of the time" (*TF* 238). The poverty, the rejection, and the powerlessness of the employees made Sindi take up the sticks for them. He was stunned to find the employees in the earthly anxiety of Sheila and Mr. Khemka. Khemka was arrested by the police following an income tax raid in the office. He was accused of a fraudulent action against the Government and filing false accounts. He decided to make Sindi his scapegoat for his action. But Sindi said that an individual should admit the charge of one's deed: "Mr. Khemka had to suffer for his own action" (*TF* 221). Khemka's arrest and Sindi's dismissal left the employees deserted with the constant threat of liquidation hanging on them.

Muthu was the clerk of Mr. Khemka's factory. He requested Sindi to take the charge of the office for the worker's sake. One day Sindi went to Muthu's home. His family was in the hands of poverty. A single man Muthu takes care of his and his brother's family. Sindi lost his hope in life. He refused to take charge of the company. He had no wish to get involvement. Muthu replied, "Sometimes detachment, lives in

actually getting involved" (TF 239). Muthu's life had made a drastic change in Sindi's life. Muthu, an uneducated man, taught Sindi the distinction between detachment and involvement. He canceled his visit to Bombay. Sindi accepted to take over the administration of the caged Mr. Khemka's business for the sake of "the accumulated despair of their weary lives" (TF 240). Despite Sindi's sight on detachment, he was not mourning emotions and human values.

It was a challenging situation for Sindi, "I felt as if I had been dropped on a sinking ship and charged with the impossible task of taking it ashore" (TF 239-40). Sindi worked in a fair-minded style: "The fruit of it was really not my concern" (TF 242). He came to learn that true attachment had been lied not in the withdrawal from the world but involved with. His earlier detachment had been replaced by the unselfish attachment. With his new direction in his way of life and thought, he gave a new orientation to his name too, and instead of Surinder Sindi, he called himself "Surrender Oberoi" (TF 242).

Sindi's sincere action returned him and his company's harmony and happiness. Sindi was engaged with the longing to serve others with the desire and happiness of the soul. This approach not only lessens the feelings of solitude and insignificance but also created human happiness and enjoyment. To Sheila's question about his staying with the company, he replied, "I don't know. As long as I am needed. I suppose" (TF 243). At last, he flourished in absorbing the erratic and desirable worth of overlooking his discreteness and distinct identity. The complacent approach of those who were devoted to the consuming approach of existing did not last for very long. A quest for true reality concluded one achieved the state of a happy co-existence and organisation with his associated humans.

Sindi's journey was not over. He felt, "I took a general stock of myself. In many ways, the past had been a waste, but it has not been without its lessons ... And the future? In an ultimate sense, I knew, it would be as meaningless as the past. But, in a narrower sense, there

would perhaps be useful tasks to be done; perhaps, if I were lucky, even a chance to redeem the past" (*TF* 234). This passage exposed the degree of change that had come over him. He believed that the past could not be redeemed. Now, his realisation of the purposelessness of the past, he felt the necessity to change it with worthwhile tasks. He was a sad and skeptical but sensible man who was able to look at life exactly and undemonstratively with a vision to do something noteworthy.

Arun Joshi unraveled the sides of crisis in modern man's life. His characters were lively pictures of the dilemma of dual cultures. His novels formed a corporate cluster. The protagonists were searching for themselves wherever they go. The inward journey was also called a journey for existence, a search for identity, and a struggle for self-expression. This was different from his first novel 'The Foreigner'. 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas', too, reaches deep into seeking identity and the crisis of consciousness. The title of the novel is itself an indicator of this concern. Here, the protagonist was eponymous. The narrator went deep into the psychological problem of the crisis of Billy's identity. It was clear that human nature was mysterious like Billy Biswas. Romesh Sahai and Tuula Lindgren understood the nature of Billy Biswas and both of them didn't have a confusion regarding the root cause of the crisis of identity in the character Billy. After three years of his literary career, Joshi published this. He excelled in his themes and he attempted a serious probe into the existential problems of the human. The deep significance of primitive life is explored beautifully in his novel. Each one comes closer to the primitive life and started realising mental and spiritual tranquillity, solace, and contentment. According to Arun Joshi, 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas' "is about a mystical urge, a compulsion which makes Billy go away ... In several Indian legends and religious texts, people go away to forests to heal themselves spiritually, possibly that's what he is suggesting, though not consciously" (Banerjee : 4).

Joshi dealt with the dilemma of the separated personality of its hero Billy Biswas. The son of a Supreme Court Judge, Billy, was possessed with a sense of hostility from the social evolution. He felt an emptiness within himself as much as he tried to adjust himself to the cultured society. He set up that emptiness surrounded by insensible shadows. He apprehended the self-importance of living among men whose only aim in life was making and spending money. Billy's distressing condition was an unusual case when we came to know that Billy was a divided personality, split between primeval and urbane, in the United States and India the realisation of the emptiness of civilisation and the superficiality of its sense of values. Billy himself felt estranged from society, his friends, his parents, his wife, and comparatively from his true nature. Billy's instance was different from Sindi's. Unlike Sindi, he sneers "from the upper upper-crust of Indian Society" (*TSCBB* 9). He worked as a lecturer at Delhi University after he was awarded Ph.D. in Anthropology. Despite having such a circumstantial, he was unfriendly and at ease in the so-called cultured set-up of civilisation and was much involved in exploring his inner being. The narrator as Romi remarks,

"If life's meaning lies not only in the glossy surfaces of our pretensions but in those dark mossy labyrinths of the soul that languish forever, hidden from the dazzling light of the sun, then I do not know of any man who sought it more doggedly and having received a signal, abandoned himself so recklessly to its call" (*TSCBB* 8).

Arun Joshi expressed a story of struggle, pressure, and battle. We found the novelist re-joining in men's ability to tolerate unfriendliness and discover confirmation of a lifetime's determination by getting an answer to their troubling problem. We also set up the voicing of rigidities as well as the challenging varieties made by men to overwhelm them. In this novel too, the main theme was alienation, and the state of the hero was different from the other novels by Arun Joshi. Billy was not

like Sindi, he was a man of achievement and principles. He was worried by the consciousness that the longing for control, wealth, and famous was meaningless. This was his first launch and also the greedy longing to choose a primeval life.

In another sense, Billy was peculiar which is clearly shown by Joshi. He dared to leave the materialistic society which tried to entangle him. He got the meaning for his alienated life from the primitive society. Like all other heroes of Joshi, Billy was also from a rich background. Billy's consideration of his existent innermost life made him an existentialist being, estranged and alienated. He never felt at home in the middle-class society. Billy felt alienated from his roots. He did not get the purpose of his life in India as well as in upper-class Indian Society. His strange behaviour, his way of living, eating, dressing, and thinking were continuous efforts to search for himself in his primeval. At last, he felt alien from New York too. Most of the upper-class Indian society participated in drinking and money-making. He did not indulge in anything. In India too he felt like a foreigner. His frustration, suffocation, and anxious were made in him a sense of hollowness. Billy tried to convince himself socially and culturally, but it was in vain.

The novel presents a philosophical pursuit and compacts with an unfathomable study of mortal humanity. As 'The Foreigner' was inspired by the theory of *Karma Yoga*, 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas' draws its motivation from *Jñāna Yoga* (the way of knowledge). The novel is influenced by oriental theories. Its efforts to explore "that mysterious underworld which is the human soul" (Mathai: 8). Arun Joshi's answer to M.R. Dua in an interview, when he says: "My novels are essential attempts towards a better understanding of the world and of myself". The novel is a disapproval of the spiritual uprootedness of the post-independence westernised Indian society and is also a representation of the union of the male and female as expounded in the Sāṃkhya system of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Arun Joshi uses Hindu Philosophy to understand the predicament and meaninglessness of modern society. To 'Know Thyself is the supreme wisdom of the Vedanta as well as of Existentialism. To the existentialist, knowing oneself is a means to change oneself to face the reality of one's situation. Billy chooses the way of *Jñāna Yoga* (the way of knowledge). His renunciation is an effort to free him from all desires, longings, and egotism which are pre-requisites for man to attain peace in the way of knowledge.

Through this novel, Joshi revealed the falsity of the Indian tradition and culture and its consequential chaos. The main part of the novel contributes our sight the anxiety of Billy's personality in the middle of the upper-class Indian society. It is lost in the trivialities of life. Arun Joshi was a psychological novelist, who extracts from outside reality and researches profound into the inward respites of the human heart. The individuality predicament of Billy, the hero was different from other heroes of the author. Billy felt separated from the high crust of Indian society and preferred the ancient. Despite his outmoded roots, great societal prestige, and a sheltered job, he felt for primitive life. The restlessness was not due to the loss of traditional values in the materialistic searches by people in general. Romi, whom Billy met in New York while searching for accommodation relates the story. It was an attempt to understand 'a man of extraordinary obsessions' (*TSCBB* 7). Both of them stayed together during their higher studies.

Billy's character was the outcome of a new way of looking at life by the supplement of unfriendliness. He has not accepted the organised life and this activated his problematic identity instead of agreeing on it. He felt an abrupt inquisitiveness in his identity. "Who was I? Where had I come from? Where was I going?" (*TSCBB* 89). Billy himself said,

It was as though a slumbering part of me had suddenly come awake. You know, this happens with almost everybody at the time of adolescence. Strange passions are roused. Some get fascinated by

music, others by painting or literature or the sciences. Your life starts to take the final mould, so to speak. (*TSCBB* 89)

Billy Biswas did not enjoy his role. It created a difficult situation to get used to the workings of his job and place. He was in a cruel atmosphere. The people whom we meet are mere puppets of Western ideas. There is a wide gap between his thought and Delhi society. Billy's quest for self begins and he knows that he will be able to glance into the dark cells of his soul by escaping from the suffocating modern civilised society.

Billy in a way found himself in the primitive world and his search was a conscious search, he had a thought to change society through Romi. He forgot that civilised society would be as it had been. Billy could not have simultaneously two different worlds. He had to sever his links. Again, his friend Romi's action headed to the ruin. The primitive world had its boundaries and it was the most comfortable zone in society. This comfort zone was changed from one place to another. In 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas', it is the society that is blameable for the tragedy of Billy but in 'The Foreigner', it is Sindi who conquers the society. For the representatives of contemporary society like Meena, Billy's father, Billy was somebody being trapped by the tribal world and the man needs to be saved. This clash between modern-day worlds and somebody who wants to make a change in it persuaded till the end. That the leading role was killed in the end reflects the apathy of the civilised society.

In post-modernism, the theme of self-search, existentialism, and East-West encounter are common. The heroes are mostly educated abroad like Arun Joshi. The Gandhian values and ideas, *Bhagavad Gita*, and Western philosophers influenced Arun Joshi. The same post-modernism trend returned in the twentieth century too. Now people are searching for themselves in the materialistic world. They don't know, for what purpose they are born and living. All of them are running behind

money. But they don't understand human values. There is a life behind money. The detachment has frolicked a central role in westernised society.

Some of the influences of human development to all its extents are the impact of technological fall, hostility, materialistic aggrandisement, and self-delusion. The contemporary man is lacking trust and vision ruins in a self-centered vacuum incapable to take breaths of the uplifting air of redemptive truth. Joshi's novels are a continual search for realism in the present-day world. Industrial and technological development has generated problems in society as well as in the individual.

The hasty scientific and technological progress that man is supposed to be making for himself by his very own hands and mind slowly appears to be turning into a trap. The very comfortable, modern facilities, seem to be dominating man, and the effort of this rush has increased his fears and uncertainty and material comfort is comfort no more. The present civilisation may be termed a scientific civilisation; the essential defect of our civilisation being the downfall of many by the material.

However, Joshi said that modern civilisation could be saved by the love of truth and magnificence, compassion for the oppressed and beliefs in the organisation of man, righteousness and sympathy, and above all by the restraint of technology. By following our age-old spiritual culture, Joshi trusted that the scientific civilisation could be made to save civilisation from suffering and destruction.

The soul of Billy Biswas was never at rest. He went to study engineering in America, switched over to Anthropology, and became a revolutionary. The novelist as an all-knowing observer wrote about Billy that "he was one of those rare men who have poise without pose" (*TSCBB* 10). This seemed to be considered as a true colour of Billy's character. But this was hardly completely true. His tribal sympathies were only just due to any pose in him. He was impulsively fascinated by the direction of the tribals. There did not seem to be the company

of individualities in his character that could be said to create the component of self-confidence in him. He was a man given over to obsessions and fixations.

Arun Joshi represented an awareness that had appeared from the conflict amid practice and modernism. The colonial imaginary of British India was lastly melted in the first half of the 20th century, only to be flourished by another imaginary, that of the reinstated autonomous sovereign state. This reading argued that the two stages of history like the dualistic stages of Indian writing in English together signified the socio-historical progression of colonisation and decolonisation and the confirmation of individuality.

At the end of this novel, we can say that this novel showed the extension of the theme, the search for self-realisation which briefly came to an end in 'The Foreigner'. Though, the character of Billy Biswas was much different from Sindi Oberoi. The first part of the novel, revealed the deficiency of human values by the material advancement of modern self-realisation. The search for identity in this novel assumed a spiritual dimension. It is an explosion out of the socio-cultural clatters to which Billy was subjected. The novel is a brilliant satire on modern civilisation.

The chief theme of the novel was the commitment to life and action as opposed to submissive detachment. Here Joshi seemed to follow the theory of *Karma Yoga* (discipline of action), portrayed in the second and third chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita*, that one's exact was to work only, and never to its produces. The fruit of action should not be the purpose, and attachment should not be the reason for inaction. Sindi, the protagonist's journey to this consciousness, proved Krishna's preaching in 'The Gita' that with the growth of knowledge and purity in oneself actions become effortless and selfless. The individual self becomes the final self and well-intentioned actions achieve selflessly ultimately lead to freedom.

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Gandhian Nonviolence : Reflections from Ancient Indian Philosophy

Neena. T S

Abstract

Gandhi accepted all of the amazing ideas and philosophies that came his way with an open mind and heart. He studied Buddhism, Jainism, and Vedanta and was greatly influenced by ancient Indian scriptures such as the Upanishads and the *Gita*. Gandhi is not the first person to use the concept of nonviolence in a way that is distinct from the conventional definition. But he has emphasised key aspects of nonviolence that no other proponent of nonviolence has given the same weight. As a result of this focus, a Gandhian sense of the word has arisen, which, while similar to the conventional use, has certain distinct characteristics of its own. He emphasised the value of nonviolence in all spheres of life, including social, political, and economic concerns. Gandhi's nonviolent ideology, as it was articulated and practised, was dynamic rather than static.

Key words: Nonviolence, Buddhism, Jainism, Gita, Truth, Vedanta

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was the first Indian modern thinker to advocate nonviolence as a means of enlightenment. Though he was influenced by a wide range of philosophical traditions as well as a number of other influences in formulating this concept, his understanding of nonviolence has its own uniqueness. When we examine Gandhi's biography, we can see how, over the course of his life, he evolved as a person, thinker, and national leader as a result of his ever-evolving discoveries of truth and ongoing experiences with all facets of human society. Gandhi was never hesitant about praising his predecessors

for the wealth of ideas they provided. His writings, speeches, and autobiography, in particular, brilliantly depict the perspectives, origins, and influences that shaped and developed his thoughts. He accepted all of the wonderful ideas and philosophies that came his way with an open mind and heart. He critically analysed the beliefs he encountered. Since he was an eager and indefatigable experimenter of truth, he altered, amended, and enhanced these principles prior to their implementation after a careful examination in the light of his experience and knowledge.

Gandhi absorbed the essential lessons of Buddhism, Jainism, Vedanta, and also drew inspiration from the Upanishads and the Gita, both well-known ancient Indian texts. Among his many sources of inspiration, Gandhi valued the Gita the most. For him, the Gita was a daily reference book. Gandhi's mother instilled in him the basic teachings of Buddhism, Jainism, and Hindu philosophies. These teachings nurtured in him an equal respect for all religions, which later revealed itself in Gandhi's life as compassion and esteem for the various religions and sects existent in this world. He incorporated the essential precepts of all religions into his ideas, which served as a guiding force.

Gandhian philosophy, in some aspects, can be summed up in a single word: nonviolence. He emphasised the importance of nonviolence in all aspects of life, including social, political, and economic issues. Gandhi is not the first person to use the concept of nonviolence in a way that is distinct from the standard definition. He was influenced by several Indian philosophical systems in his formulation of the concept of nonviolence. He has highlighted the essential characteristics of nonviolence that no other proponent of nonviolence has given the same weight. As a result of this focus, a Gandhian sense of the word has arisen, which, while similar to the conventional use, has certain distinct characteristics of its own.

Reflections from Jainism

The term nonviolence has a negative connotation because it signifies 'absence of violence'. Nonviolence, or *ahimsa*, is commonly understood to imply 'non-killing, non-injury', which is the polar opposite of *himsa*.

Himsa refers to inflicting harm or murdering any life out of rage, selfish motive, or with the intent of injuring it. For him, refraining from doing all of these is nonviolence. In this case, Gandhi appears to have been influenced by the Jaina notion of nonviolence in this negative connotation.

Ahimsa is the foundational principle of Jainism and the epitome of what it stands for. The Jaina concept of nonviolence encourages its adherents to refrain from using violence in their thoughts, words, and actions. All living beings are equal and in a condition of serenity, according to Jainism. The entire universe is nothing more than a collection of living beings. Living organisms include the earth, water, fire, and air.¹ *Ahimsa* encompasses all *jivas* or souls, whether they are earth-bound, fire-bound, water-bound, air-bound, or mobile species, and accepts their right to exist. *Jivas*, or living forms, are all created equal. The equanimous state of mind leads to *ahimsa*, that is, *ahimsa* means regard for all forms of life and the avoidance of violence in thought, word, and deed in the Jaina religion. They believe that the universe is full of sorrow, and that the source of that suffering is *himsa*, injuring all forms of life, which can be done physically or through unpleasant and violent words or thoughts.

Gandhi's negative connotation of the term nonviolence or *ahimsa* is not as rigorous as Jaina's. His concept of nonviolence is little bit different. He is well convinced that adhering to *ahimsa* in the severe and rigid manner demanded by Jainism is impossible. He believes that *himsa* is unavoidable in some situations. He argues that killing or injuring someone might be considered as an act of violence when motivated by hatred, pride, selfish purposes, bad intentions, wrath, or other comparable factors. Any injury caused by these motivations is *himsa*. For Gandhi, the negative definition of *ahimsa* is not only 'not killing or not injuring others', but it must be free of anger, hatred, pride, and selfish motivations. He understands that if we regard earth, water, fire, and air as living entities, as Jaina thinkers, the basic necessities of existence, like breathing, eating and drinking, become impossible. In other words, it is difficult to maintain one's body without causing some damage to other beings. However, nonviolence is

accepted and advocated by both Jaina thinkers and Gandhiji as the highest ideal of life and as a method of achieving self realisation.

According to Gandhi, the positive features of *ahimsa* are more fundamental than the negative aspects. *Ahimsa* refers not only to the practise of not injuring living beings, but also to the development of positive attitudes towards other living beings. Gandhi insists that this does not rule out the possibility of *himsa* in our lives. In order to maintain one's existence, one has to commit *himsa* of some sort.

Reflections from Vedanta

For Gandhi nonviolence is the law of our species and this cohesive law that binds humanity together and makes collective life possible and meaningful.² As a neo vedantist Gandhi recognised two aspects of man, that is bodily aspect (apparent man) and spiritual aspect (real man). Each individual is the mixture of these two components. As per the laws of nature, the body grows and decays. As this can represent physical power, sometimes *himsa* will naturally follow from it. But Gandhi recognised that the real nature of man consists in its spiritual aspects. This spiritual aspect, according to Gandhi, is more vital, because man's inherent character consists in its spirituality. Every man's inherent goodness is evidenced by the presence of this essential spirituality. Man as spirit is essentially nonviolent. Gandhi here highlighted the Vedantic truth that there is an element of divinity present in every man. In his own words 'Non-violence is an active force of the highest order. It is soul-force or the power of Godhead within us'.³ This is why Gandhi claims that, while man looks to be selfish on the outside, he is good on the inside. When a person's spiritual side is awakened, his nonviolent nature is revealed. As a result, he claims that *ahimsa* is one of mankind's basic or essential attributes, and that it is thus regarded the law of our being. To put it another way, *ahimsa* comes naturally to humans.

On the belief that the essential spirituality and essential goodness present in every man, Gandhi adds that there is an essential unity of mankind. He believed in the fundamental oneness of God and humanity. Here, he agrees with Advaita philosophy, which ensures social unity as only an expression of the unity of the universe, and

the individual's oneness with the ultimate. Despite the fact that we have many bodies, we all have the same one soul. In his own words "I believe in Advaita. I believe in the essential unity of man , and for that matter of all that lives".⁴

Reflections from Buddhism

When he equates nonviolence with love, he expresses the whole significance of his positive interpretation of nonviolence. It is a kind of feeling of oneness. Gandhi recognises some requirements when he refers to nonviolence as love. One is *ahimsa*, which is exerting serious attempts to free one's mind of feelings of pride, wrath, revenge, jealousy, and other negative emotions that obstruct one's ability to love. The other is love as an energy that purifies and uplifts man, and it encompasses noble emotions such as compassion, forgiveness, kindness, sympathy, and so on. Here Gandhi deeply influenced by Buddhism, links nonviolence with love. In Buddhist teachings, *ahimsa* was portrayed as both compassion and the avoidance of harm to oneself and others. The Buddhist philosophy of nonviolence is more pragmatic, because it avoids extremes. Gandhi also emphasises the Buddhist values of compassion, sacrifice, and renunciation in order to promote world peace.

In his autobiography, Gandhi appreciated Buddha's love for the universe. "Look at Gautama's compassion!" said I. It was not confined to mankind, it was extended to all living beings."⁵

Gandhi believes that it is easy to hate, but that loving takes a great deal of energy and effort. Violence is primarily a manifestation of weakness that leads to a sense of fear and, as a result, to the arming of real or imagined opponents. Violence may appear to be a display of power, but it is actually a sign of weakness because it is developed out of fear. Fear can be conquered by a truly nonviolent person, and he does so by fearless love rather than sheer force.

Reflections from the Gita

Gandhi conceived nonviolence as a practical doctrine. It is not an attitude of indifference, passivity, or inaction, and it necessitates a great deal of patience on the side of the person who employs it. It is

the result of a conscious and deep effort to make the evil-doer see his errors and recognise them. It indicates that nonviolence necessitates sacrifice and suffering. Sacrifice, according to Gandhi, is an inevitable companion of compassion. Love necessitates a transcendence, a self-transcendence. Only those who are selfless, who believe in giving rather than taking, can love. "Love never claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself".⁶ This is self-sacrifice, and it entails suffering. To endure or sacrifice, one must love even one's enemy and have faith in the presence of essential goodness in him. Suffering is a component of love in this view. Thus core of love is not enjoyment, but suffering and sacrifice.

We can find some reflections from *Gita's* universal principle of action, *anāsakti* (non attached action), and *yajña* (action of sacrifice). In this view of nonviolence as the gospel of action, there comes an idea and feeling which involves both sacrifice and pain.⁷ The emphasis on unselfish action and obligation is the central subject of the *Gita*. Man cannot survive if he does not act, if he does not carry out his responsibilities. All worldly aspirations and rewards for action must be set aside, ignored. The concept of *Anāsakti Karmayoga*, according to the *Gita*, is a path to self-realisation. *Anāsakti* denotes a condition of selflessness, which is a prerequisite for practising *ahimsa*. Gandhi says, "I have no doubt that it is *anasakti* - selfless action. Indeed I have called my little translation of the *Gita* *Anasaktiyoga*. And *anasakti* transcends *Ahimsa*. He who would be *anasakta* (selfless) has necessarily to practise non-violence in order to attain the State of self-lessness. *Ahimsa* is, therefore, a necessary preliminary, it is included in *anasakti*, it does not go beyond it".⁸ The *yajñas* or sacrifices, mentioned in *Bhagavadgita's* fourth chapter are gradational attempts by the seeker to conquer selfishness and expand the dimension of one's self by regulating one's self to the larger self. Gandhi often interprets the *Gita* as encouraging a life of selfless service.

In the *Gita*, *Sthitaprajña*⁹ is depicted as an apostle of nonviolence who has no desire for earthly pleasures. According to Gandhi, a non-violent being in the *Gita* is a person with perfect mental stability who has risen beyond violence. A sincere practitioner of *ahimsa* can or

makes violence for the good of everyone without the least attachment, and can be nonviolent even while killing. The basic teaching of the *Gita* is to be nonviolent in one's actions, words, and thoughts. This notion of *Sthitaprajña* impacted Mahatma Gandhi greatly, and he referred to it in his concept of Satyagraha and the traits of a Satyagrahi.¹⁰

The relationship between Gandhian nonviolence and Truth is one of its most important aspects. Truth is the ideal of life or the goals that we must strive for. Gandhi believed that the pursuit of truth necessitated self-sacrifice. *Ahimsa* is the path to enlightenment. He saw *satya* and *ahimsa* as the sole common ground for human aspirations. He had seen '*ahimsa*' as a visible aspect of truth. According to him, "... when you want to find Truth as God the only inevitable means is Love, i.e. non-violence, and since I believe that ultimately the means and end are convertible terms, I should not hesitate to say that God is Love".¹¹ The manifest and transcendental ground of absolute truth cannot be acquired by man, but it can be obtained through love. Gandhi attempted to incorporate into the *Satya* concept all of the metaphysical and moral implications of Hindu tradition terms such as *Ṛta*, *Dharma*, and so on.

One of the essential virtues of life mentioned in the Upanisads is *ahimsa*. A religious man's ethical behaviour included nonviolence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, and kindness. There was a widespread belief that good behaviour and right actions were rewarded, that one became good through good actions and bad through bad actions. As a result, a nonviolent society is emerging in the Upanishads, emphasising the virtues of compassion, self-control, kindness, and the practice of non-injury to all living beings. As the people sought union of the *ātman* and *brahman*, nonviolence became a more important virtue in their lives.

Conclusion

The principle of *Ahimsa* was well-known and well-established in the history of Indian religions and philosophical systems, but Gandhi turned it into a highly effective tool. Gandhi was influenced by India's

proud history of *ahimsa*, yet he dedicated much of his life to arguing that self-sacrifice is superior to the sacrifices of others. In terms of idealising and interpreting nonviolence, he remains an unrivalled and everlasting personality. He highlighted the importance of nonviolence in all aspects of life, including social, political, and economic issues. His nonviolent views of life evolved through time. For Gandhi, nonviolence was more than a doctrine; it was a way of life. In his words, deeds, and thoughts, he demonstrated it. When nonviolence is accepted as a code of life, it must permeate all aspect of one's being, not just isolated acts.

Gandhi's doctrine of nonviolence, as enunciated and practised, was dynamic rather than static. It was radical in the sense that it tolerated nothing less than complete acceptance of the truth. It was intended to liberate man from legal, political, and moral constraints, as well as to uplift and reawaken his inner self. Thus, *ahimsa* denotes renunciation of the desire to kill or harm. Evil thoughts, lying, hatred, and wishing harm on others all endanger the gospel of *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* is more than just a negative condition of benignity; it is also a positive state of love, in which one does good, even to the evil-door.

Notes

¹ Jacobi Hermann, *The Golden Book of Jainism*, New Delhi : Lotus Press, 2008, p. 12.

² *Young India*, 11-8-1920.

³ Gandhi M K, *My God*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962, p. 22.

⁴ *Young India*, 4-12-24.

⁵ Gandhi M K, *An Autobiography or The story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1968, p. 187.

⁶ *Young India*, 9-7-25.

⁷ Borman William, *Gandhi and nonviolence*, Albany: State University of Newyork Press, 1986, p. 35.

⁸ Gandhi M K, *The Message of the Gita*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1959, p. 18.

⁹ *The Gita* 2. 55.

¹⁰ Lal B K, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Ltd, 1973 p. 117.

¹¹ Gandhi M K, *My God*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962, p. 17.

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**CALCUTTA, WEDNESDAY,
THE 2D FEBRUARY, 1814.**

At a meeting of the (Asiatick) Society.

PRESENT

H(enry) T(homas) Colebrooke, Esqr., President.
J(ohn) H(erbert) Harington, Esqr., Vice Pres(iden)t.
Lieut. Col. (G. H.) Fagan.
Dr. (James) Hare.
Mr. (Richard) Blechynden.
Mr. (John) Bentley.
Mr. (William) Carey.
Mr. (William Lloyd) Gibbons.
Dr. (Nathaniel) Wallich.
Dr. (John) Macwhirter.
Dr. (Robert) Tytler.
Dr. (J.) Atkinson.
Capt. (Thomas) Roebuck.
Lieut. (W.) Price.
Mr. (Joshua) Marshman.
Mr. (Horace Hayman) Wilson, Secretary.

Proceeded to ballot for the Members proposed at the last meeting when

Sir Edward Hyde East,
Mr. J. C. Rich,
Major Doyle,
Mr. J. Thompson, and
Dr. M. Lumsden,
were unanimously elected.

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Mr. Moorcroft¹ proposed as a Member by the President, seconded by Mr. Harington.

Captain James Tod² proposed by the President, seconded by Captain Roebuck.

Read a communication from the Revd. Mr. Hindley³ on the connection between the Malay and Persian languages illustrated by extract from a translation from the former "On the duties of a Writer" published at Rotterdam by J. Walker, A. D. 1702.

Read an account the Tirthas or holy places of Hindus, also a translation from the Adhyatma Ramayana "on the principles of revealed wisdom" submitted to the Society by Dr. Tytler.

[135] Resolved that the thanks of the Society be given to Mr. Hindley and Dr. Tytler and that their respective communications be referred to the Committee of Papers.

A Number of inscriptions from Java submitted to the inspection of the Society by the President.

A set of maps and surveys in the Himalaya mountains made by Mr. Moorcroft and Captain Hearsay also submitted by the President to the inspection of the Society.

An inscription in the Cingalese character referred to the Society for explanation or translation by Major Franklin.

Read the following letter⁴ from Dr. Wallich

To H. H. Wilson, Esq.

Secretary to the Asiatick Society.

Dear Sir,

At the last meeting of the Society some observations were made by you and several other gentlemen on the propriety of proposing an establishment of a museum

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in the Society's apartments, which is to comprise every production of Art and Nature.

Having for a length of time been in the habit of collecting specimens illustrative of Natural History, I have had opportunity to form a kind of estimate of the obstacles which impede and the circumstances which facilitate such an undertaking. I trust therefore that I shall meet with the indulgence of the Society if I request the favor of you to lay the following remarks before them as prefatory to the proposal with which I shall conclude this letter.

The vast regions which are comprised within the sphere of the Asiatick Society's views exhibit an inexhaustible and perhaps unparalleled treasury of the most wonderful and interesting productions of Nature. The far greater portion of these have hitherto escaped the notice of Naturalists, or has been imperfectly, or what is much worse, erroneously described. The deplorable neglect to which the Natural History of this country has been exposed is very striking and must principally be attributed to the total want in India of that grand desideratum a public Museum.

The means of getting access to animals, plants and minerals are here innumerable and comparatively easier than in many other parts of the globe. A number of gentlemen who travel or reside in the interior of India would, I am warranted to say, be happy to exert [136] themselves if a repository existed under the auspices of the Society, where specimens could be deposited and preserved, and where they would admit of a closer and more attentive examination and comparison than what possibly could be bestowed upon them on the spot where they are found. Those members

who from want of leisure or from peculiarity of situation are prevented from enriching the pages of our Researches would certainly seize every opportunity and use every endeavour to contribute to the increase of our collection.

If the chief aim of the Society consists in communicating the labour of its members to the learned and curious, surely every measure which tends towards accomplishing and promoting this end can not but merit our attention and I know of none that has a stronger claim in this view than a public museum.

The principal obstacle which presents itself to an institution of such a nature resides in the difficulty with which specimens taken from the animal and vegetable kingdoms are prepared and preserved. They require an assiduous care and attention in order to resist the powerful influence of this climate which more than any other proves inimical to them. Yet this difficulty, which to an individual is very considerable, becomes less so and is greatly removed if it is opposed by the associated efforts of many.

The expences which are required will I hope form no objection if it is considered that they can not be heavy, and are only to embrace the fitting up of an apartment, the purchase of the necessary apparatus, such as glasses, spirit of wine &c., and lastly the wages of a few native assistants.

Having permitted these few cursory remarks, I now beg leave to conclude by proposing the establishment of a Museum to which all lovers of Arts and Science should be invited to contribute and that a Committee be appointed to superintend and arrange the institution.

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Finally I request that you will have the goodness to offer my humble service to the Society, and that the few articles which remain still of my former collection, the acceptance of which I will consider as the greatest honor bestowed upon me

I have the honor to be,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed). N. Wallich.

Calcutta, the
2d February, 1814.

[137] The following notes originating in the letter of Dr. Wallich read by the Secretary.

A collection of the substances which are the objects of Science and of those reliques which illustrate ancient times and manners, has always been one of the first steps taken by Societies instituted for the dissemination of specific or universal knowledge. Such a collection was one of the first objects also of the Asiatic Society, and any person engaged in the study of the history and languages of this country, or in the investigation of its natural productions, must have had frequent cause for regretting that such a purpose should have been hitherto so very incompletely carried into effect. No public repository yet exists to which the naturalist or scholar can refer, and the only sources of information, beyond verbal and often inaccurate description, have been found in the accidental accumulations of individuals, always of difficult access, indiscriminate selection, temporary duration, and little utility.

The Asiatick Society is now called upon to adopt active measures for remedying this deficiency, and

collecting, from the abundant matter which India offers, a Museum that shall be serviceable to history and science. In the former of these departments the Society is already in possession of several valuable articles, and there can be no doubt that enquiry and exertion, and the assurance of their being properly bestowed, would soon add considerably to the number. There are, however, many things of extremely easy attainment, that would afford much useful illustration, and the student of the original languages and compositions would be frequently extricated from perplexity and doubt by having it in his power to refer to specimens of various Eastern implements and instruments in daily and domestic use amongst the natives of these regions.

It is, however, in the departments of Science that a Museum in this country would be found most specially serviceable, and the facility of its accumulation is proportionable to the extent of its utility. In Natural History, Botany, Anatomy, Chemistry, Mineralogy and other branches, a collection would accumulate rapidly if once commenced; and from the first moment of its accumulation would furnish additional matter in the stock of knowledge. Many objects with which we are exceedingly familiar in this country are new or imperfectly known; to general science, and a vast variety of artefacts might be derived from sources hourly acceptable, [138] each of which could contribute some interesting supply to its extensive results of western enquiry.

The importance of the measure is, however, so obvious, that it must be unnecessary to urge it further, and it only remains to consider the means by which it can be effected. The Society possesses accommodation

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fit for the purpose, and the expense of adapting these to the reception of contributions could not be any amount. The present establishment might perhaps be sufficient to take charge of it, at least for sometime, and at any rate no great addition could be requisite. The principal difficulty lies in the selection of a person willing and able to devote some time and trouble to procuring and arranging the materials of which such a Museum should consist, and the removal of this difficulty is the chief inducement at present for the Society to take the subject into serious consideration.

Dr. Wallich offers, if the Society should determine to place the collection under his superintendence, to contribute to it the results of his own enquiries, to appropriate to it such further contributions as come within his reach, and devote all the attention in his power to the arrangement and conservation of the whole.

It is therefore proposed that the Society proceed to consider of the measure submitted to them.

Resolved accordingly that the Asiatick Society determine upon forming a Museum for the reception of all articles that may tend to illustrate oriental manners and history or to elucidate the peculiarities of Art or Nature in the East.

That this intention be made known to the public and that contributions be solicited of the undermentioned nature.

Inscriptions on stone or brass.

Ancient monuments, Mohummedan or Hindu.

Figures of the Hindu deities.

Ancient coins.

Ancient manuscripts.

Instruments of war peculiar to the East.

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Instruments of music.

The vessels employed in religious ceremonies.

Implements of native art and manufacture, &c. &c.

[139] Animals peculiar to India dried or preserved

Skeletons or particular bones of animals peculiar to India.

Birds peculiar to India stuffed or preserved.

Dried plants, fruits, &c.

Mineral or vegetable preparation peculiar to Eastern Pharmacy.

Ores of metals

Native alloys of metals.

Minerals of every description, &c. &c.

That the names of persons contributing to the Museum or Library of the Society be hereafter published at the end of each volume of the Asiatick Researches.

That the Hall on the ground floor be fitted up for the reception of the articles that may be procured.

That the plan and expence of so doing be regulated by the Committee of Papers and Secretary and the person under whose superintendence the Museum may be placed.

That the expence which may be incurred in preparing materials that may be furnished in a state unfit for preservation be defrayed by the Society within a certain and fixed extent.

That the thanks of the Society be given to Dr. Wallich for the tender of his services.

That the services of Dr. Wallich be accepted and that he be in consequence appointed Superintendent of the Oriental Museum of the Asiatick Society.

NOTES ON GLEANINGS

Proceedings as source of history : Case for Museum & Museology

Mahidas Bhattacharya

Since the very moment that a purpose of enquiring and developing a knowledge repository on History (Civil and Natural), Antiquities, Arts, Sciences, and Literatures of Asia¹ had been conceived, a section of colonial administrators were made curious by the thought; and it eventually gave birth to what today stands monumentally as the Asiatic Society – a unique historical establishment in its own right, and a milestone in the cultivation of Indian knowledge system. Several epoch-making events took place in the 240 years of its existence. The development of museology is an important aspect of it. Bereft to the knowledge of the generations belonging to the 21st century is how around the late 18th century, sincere intellectual efforts taken up by considerable number of scholars formed the foundation beneath such enormous development. E. H. Carr precisely notes, “...one can read, or even write, about the events of the past without wanting to know why they happened...but one should not then commit to the solecism of calling oneself a student of history or the historian”². Although ‘The Asiatic Society - An Institute of National Importance’, bears proudly a status of eminence in the country, the historical nuances behind such institutional grandeur, such as the attempt towards development of a pervasive knowledge depository of Asian antiquity, a conscious attempt at disseminating knowledge throughout the globe and an evaluation of the role of individual intellect – their foresight, perseverance, dedication and unbounded curiosity for the ancient and medieval Asian thoughts – since 1784 will remain as elusive. Misappropriation, or even ignorance towards it will essentially

undermine the role it has played to illuminate the east and west with the rise of oriental history, science and art; or even as to how it initiated the people of Bengal and India towards a development of modernity, to enter into a new socio-cultural and intellectual arena, against the medieval stagnancy.

In that case, the proceedings of the society preserve the factual details, leaving almost no room for speculation. But, irrespective of their reliability, these proceedings might appear to the general reader as unorganised, sometimes random, and even sporadic when placed in isolation. But these concise representations (or transcripts) of few words or lines, although minute, provides keynotes to juncture events of history. But, the interrelation of propositions scripted in these apparently distinct proceedings may provide an objective insight into the transformation of initiatives and efforts into practical executions.

After the demise of William Jones, Sir J. Shore, Bart became his successor as the President and took the responsibility which was released by Jones. Sir Shore noted that "Knowledge, and truth, were the objects of all his (Jones) studies, and his ambition was to be useful to mankind; with these views, he extended his researches to all languages, nations and times."³

The proceeding dated 2nd February, 1814, was prepared after a meeting headed by President H. T. Colebrooke (1806-1814) and secretary Mr. Willson (1811-32), with participation of 19 other members. After a session of discussion on 'connection between Malay and Persian languages, principle wisdom in Adhyatma Ramayana, inscriptions from Java, inscriptions on Cinghalese character, maps and surveys on Himalayan Mountains; a letter from Dr. Nathaniel Wallich, a Danish Botanist, attracted the primary importance of the house and it turned out to be an epoch-making moment in the history of Indian Museology.⁴

Keeping in view the desiderata of India, Arabia, Persia, China and Tartary drafted, handwritten by Jones, his successors started their journey and new areas were gradually added to it. The idea of a museum was not there in the Desiderata initially. Rajendralala Mitra

opined in the Centenary Review that, "In the inaugural address of the founder no reference was made to a museum: but the curiosities were sent in from time to time by mofussil members.."5. On 29th September, 1796, the following statement (mentioned at the very beginning) is recorded in proceedings - "...the society established at this presidency for the purpose of enquiring into the History - Civil and Natural, the Antiquities, Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia, generally known by the name of the Asiatick Society." The '11th proposition' in the same proceeding mentions "That the Society make it publicly known that it is their intention to establish a Museum and Library, and that donations of books, manuscripts and curiosities will be thankfully received and acknowledged."6 A letter was immediately drafted, addressed to Sir J. Shore, Bart, Governor General in Council (1793-98), for funding. They wrote, "In the expectation that the Society, which has overcome the difficulties of a first establishment, may, by permanency, be productive to further advantages; it is the wish of its Members to establish a fund for erecting a proper building for their future meetings, providing a Library and Museum and to defray all incidental expenses ..."7. The previously mentioned proceeding of 1814 was a product of this gradual development.

This evidently led to discussions for proposing a museum which would comprise every production of art and nature8 considering how Jones visualised it. That the intended objects of inquiries within the specious limits would be, MAN and NATURE. Although he had considered an unparalleled treasury of the most wonderful and interesting productions of nature, the systematic arrangement of natural history was yet to be considered. India then, has a 'grand desideratum a public museum' in the vast region of Asia. Also, people within the country keep travelling and gathering specimens now and then. If a space is built up as a repository, such items can be assembled. Alongside, a much richer collection will provide access to innumerable animals, plants and minerals which are comparatively more easily available in this vast oriental land than most other parts of the globe9. The chief aim of the society was to communicate the effort of the

members to the learned as well as the curious which could only be materialised by the formation of a public museum.¹⁰ Mr. Wallich, having deep interest in the flora and natural vegetation of India, had come to the Danish Colony in Serampore as a Doctor in 1807. Around 1813 he travelled to different parts of Indian Peninsula such as Nepal, Burma, and some parts of Western India. In lieu of his own interest, he chose to offer his humble service and his collections to the society. Mr. Willson complemented the idea of Jones and marked a step forward to the beginning of what we can refer to as the coming of epistemic modernity - a systemization of Oriental knowledge. Finally, it was secretary Wilson who in support of Dr. Wallich, accepted the proposal of establishing a museum and responded, "That the services of Dr. Wallich be accepted and that he be in consequence appointed Superintendent of the Oriental Museum of the Asiatick Society"¹¹. Ultimately, it was Dr. Wallich who became the first honorary curator of this museum on 1st June, 1814, which was renamed later as the Imperial Museum, and further later the Indian Museum.

From a bird's eye view of these few propositions and the resulting discussions and decisions, it seems clear enough to us that he considered this proposal for collection of substances as objects/objectives of a science/scientific endeavour. The Secretary noted this act of parallelly assimilating and looking back to history as one of the first objects of study. The objective here dwells in looking at nature, and identifying the laws of nature. And this methodology has had no space till then - "No public repository yet exists to which the naturalist or scholar can refer..." Considering this necessary epistemological break, we might refer to what Akhsay Kumar Dutta later asserted, that there was no cultivation of science in Bengal until the 19th century. The museum at such a juncture in history came to be treated as a scientific space, a domain of rational movement which, although intended to observe and study past reliques 'which illustrate ancient times and manners', could not quite be made to flourish in presence of the then prevalent medieval mindset.

The problem as noted by the Secretary was that the oriental contribution was often of "inaccurate description, have been found in the accidental accumulations of individuals, always of difficult access, indiscriminate selection, temporary duration, and little utility." The lack of consistency, exhaustiveness, and economy in the formation of principle provoked questions on the utility of the available repositories, and provided reasons to be skeptical when viewed with respect to the scientific approach which was being undertaken. About science, J. G. Crowther has noted that "Science is the system of behaviour by which man acquires mastery of his environment. His evolution from an animal into a man was accomplished by a new attitude towards nature, in which he began to study the contents of his environment in order to use them to his advantage. His initiation of this activity brought science into existence...".¹²

Now, if we deal with these negotiations which derived from the thought of Europeans in the late 18th century, then we have the opportunity to shift our perspective spatio-temporally. Back there in Europe, the approach to science (and hence, the scientific method) went through a transformation during the Renaissance. One overhauling difference between pre-renaissance and post-renaissance thought in Europe was that science in its own right, had no independent existence in the former. Hence, the aspect of science not only as an objective discipline but also as a method, remained absent too. The advent of enlightenment introduced rationality and marked itself as the age of Spirit of Reason.¹³

Back here in the Orient, in spite of its rich heritage caused by the gradual dialectical relationship between man and nature, the previous contributions, although represented empirical observations, its early experiments are characteristically individual, sporadic and accidental. Hence, observations failed to develop an independent domain of scientific discipline.

Such a moment in history invited an amalgamation of the theoretical framework of post-renaissance Europe alongside the oriental repository of knowledge. While the former's scholarship became the method of

study, the later's abundance became its object. The museum is where they corporeally came together.

Another aspect of this development is intricately connected with its location in the governmental domain of the period. The acceptance of this programme by Wallich visualised this new institute's greater expansion towards an autonomy at its very outset. The proceedings admit that "The present establishment might perhaps be sufficient to take charge of it, at least for some time, and at any rate no great addition could be requisite."¹⁴

In spite of their notable contributions, one point to be noted in the language used by the Secretary, although little, is that the desire for the knowledge of history, art and Science of (and for) the Orient countries reflects a type of imperial appetite. He has rightly pointed out that the Museum will become more effective by accumulating information on natural history, botany, anatomy, chemistry, mineralogy etc. Simultaneously he wrote, "Many objects with which we are exceedingly familiar in this country are new or imperfectly known; to general science [probably which was flourishing in Europe], and a vast variety of artefacts might be derived from sources hourly acceptable, each of which could contribute some *interesting supply to its extensive results of western enquiry.*" (italics for emphasis).¹⁵ The result of such a programme would not only enrich science in general but would also satisfy the need of Western Enquiry, the insatiable thirst for knowledge which would eventually also strengthen the imperial power to dominate the Oriental Knowledge system - the knowledge of oriental creations and contribution, its manners and intellect, its nature and climate, originating from the greater Oriental lands of Asia from Persia to China which includes Arab, India, and Tatar with their past and present, man and nature, and so on. For the forming of a museum, a temporary space, public contribution and 17 areas of collection and other material requirements were procured. This whole project paralleled the European's imperial developments. More than just the development of a museum, what becomes evident is the move towards domination on oriental knowledge and culture,

complementing the attempt to build up an empire smoothly. The same can be noted on the foundation of Calcutta University. Just after taking over power, the colonial rulers began introducing their own new institutional framework(s) which was a crucial requirement at that stage. On the forefront, it resulted in the Colonial Judiciary System (1773/4) and Calcutta Madrasa (1781).

One is, at this point, compelled to consider the importance of proceedings, words, propositions, participants, the temporal descriptions, and the comments of individuals which provide the most minute links to draft the developmental sketch of an institution. It also reflects the pattern of formative discourse regarding objectives and motives. The proceedings also provide a sketch of congruity/compatibility with their primary objective. To quote from the first anniversary discourse delivered by William Jones on 15th February 1784:

“... What are the intended objects of our inquiries within these limits, we answer, MAN and NATURE; whatever is performed by the one, or produced by the other. Human knowledge has elegantly analysed according to the three great faculties of the mind memory, reason and imagination, which we constantly find employed in arranging and retaining, comparing and distinguishing, combining and diversifying, the ideas, which we received through our senses or acquire by reflection; hence the three main branches of learning and history, science and art;...”¹⁶

However, looking back at history from the vantage point of the present, it appears that the baleful and obscure middle age, after the Islamic feudal system in India, had come to crossroads with a different intellectual arena of history, science, art, language and literature. Later, when Indians were permitted to participate in sharing the activities of the society, or even later, when the imperial power had to let go of this epistemic monument, the Institute has thrived on in the hands of its ‘natives’ and has kept growing into a representative of the Oriental Knowledge system. More than ever, the history of the institution becomes importantly entwined with our own social history. The

proceedings serve as a valuable anecdote to it. For it preserves the History in a truly reliable form. Historiography of History cannot be identified scientifically without the accountability of these efforts and its underlying systems of thought. We will be rootless if this treasure is kept aside. Established in 1784, around 240 years ago, the institution with its ever-expanding vast reservoir of episteme, keeps responding equivocally to the Orient's history and present, its man and nature.

Notes

- ¹ Chaudhuri Sibadas (ed), (1980) *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, Volume -1, Asiatic Society, pages 265.
- ² Carr, E. H. (1961), *What is history?* Penguin, page 87.
- ³ Presidential speech, 22nd May, 1794 [Chaudhuri S., *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, Vol-I, 1980, page 237].
- ⁴ <https://indianmuseumkolkata.org/about/history-of-the-museum/>
- ⁵ Mitra Rajendralala, *Centenary Review*, Part-1, p. 31.
- ⁶ Chaudhuri Sibadas (ed), (1980) *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, Volume -1, Asiatic Society, p. 265.
- ⁷ Chaudhuri Sibadas (ed), (1980) *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, Volume -1, Asiatic Society.
- ⁸ *Proceedings*, 2nd February, 1814.
- ⁹ *Proceedings*, 2nd February, 1814.
- ¹⁰ *Proceedings*, 2nd February, 1814.
- ¹¹ *Proceedings* 2nd February, 1814.
- ¹² Crowther J. G., (1941) *The Social Relation of Science*, Macmillan, p. 1. [in Sen Samarendranath, 1996, *Bijñāner itihās*, Shaibya Prakashan, p. 6.
- ¹³ Sen Samarendranath, 1996, 1st ed 1955, *Bijñāner Itihās*, Shaibya Prakashan, p. 4.
- ¹⁴ Nair P. Thankappan, 1995, *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, 1801-1816. The Asiatic Society.
- ¹⁵ Nair P. Thankappan, 1995, p. 470.
- ¹⁶ Jones, Sir William, (2017, Reprint, 2010), *Man and Nature*, The Asiatic Society, pp. 3-4.

BOOK REVIEW

Historical Essays in Memory of Professor Subhasis Biswas : Themes in Science, Technology, Environment and Medicine, edited by Mahua Sarkar, Alfabeta Books, Kolkata, 2021, Price Rs 695/-

This book is a tribute to the memory of Professor Subhasis Biswas, the young, energetic, erudite Professor of History and erstwhile Dean of Arts, Jadavpur University, whom we lost in 2020 due to the onslaught unleashed by the dreadful virus covid. We miss Subhasis physically but to pay our homage to his everlasting memory, his departmental colleagues, researchers and students led by Prof Mahua Sarkar took upon themselves the cudgel of bringing out an academic publication in his memory which will remain for the posterity to remember the departed soul. Each article in this book resonates the deep pain and sorrow enmeshed at this sad and untimely demise of a gradually blossoming intellectual and a superb teacher.

In her editorial note Prof Mahua Sarkar stated that the present book is an attempt to present the overview of history of Science, Technology, Environment and Medicine (HISTEM) in India in colonial and post colonial times. In course of her discussion she has demonstrated that despite introduction of western scientific education in the form of establishment of Medical College in 1835 and other institutions, Indian scientists had to endure a differential treatment in comparison to their British counterparts in the hand of colonisers. It is also a matter on record that on the implementation part, the advantages of science were not extended to all stratas of society, as a result of which famines, loss of wild life leading to scarcity of resources had devastated a large section of Indian milieu time and again. This statement of Prof Sarkar has been corroborated by contemporary magazines where pitiable condition of Indians reeling under poverty, malnutrition and unhygienic living condition had been referred to.

The book is divided in four seasons :

1) Mapping Science 2) Colonial Technology: Appropriation and Expropriation 3) Environment : Dissent and Disaster 4) Medicine : Colonial Trajectories.

That apart, the book contains three illuminating articles at the outset. Authored by Late Professor Subhasis Biswas, the first article "M.K. Gandhi and the Concept of Nature: An Analysis from the perspective of ecological history of India with special reference to Gandhi-Tagore debate on the Bihar earthquake", highlights a crucial difference in outlook of our two great stalwarts, Gandhiji and Rabindranath. While Gandhiji considered the devastating Bihar earthquake of 1934 as an "Act of God" in the form of "Divine Chastisement" as a result of the ill treatment meted out to the backward caste downtrodden i.e so called "Harijans", Rabindranath took serious exception to such a remark, emanating from an iconic figure like Gandhiji, which, in his opinion, will augment superstition among a milieu, already fiercely dependent on divine dispensation. The author has emphasised that this debate actually reflects "two types of rationalities, reasoning and faith". Admittedly, curse as punishment for a sin or a grievous offence committed, is quite familiar in Indian mythology and Puranic texts but whether that idea or faith can be relied upon in 19th century as "non-anthropocentric and truly helio centric" as argued by the author, is debatable indeed.

The second article "A tale of rivers of Bengal : An environmental history" by Professor Ranjan Chakrabarti is immensely interesting and thought-provoking in view of the fact that the author, in his attempt to establish the impact exerted by the rivers of Bengal on the gradually developing political economy, production, demographic pattern and culture of Bengal has cited the example of several rivers like Ganga-Padma river system, Bidyadhari, Darakeswar, Silai and the much-discussed Saraswati — all of which paved the formation of several settlements in Bengal throughout the annals of history. It may not be out of place to mention in this context that ancient Indian civilisation flourished on the banks of rivers and Saraswati, predominantly a river as described in the *R̥gveda* had later been eulogised as a goddess of knowledge because of chanting of Vedic hymns across its bank. While lamenting on the indifference of the historians to delve deep into the relation of ecological and historical

importance of rivers in the context of history of Bengal, the author made an interesting comment about the ship building activity in ancient Bengal as a corollary to the naval activities centred round "Vanga". The author had referred to several inscriptions of medieval Bengal to substantiate his point. Indeed, this article is a brilliant attempt to establish Bengal against the background of riverine bounty.

Admittedly, sustenance of pollution-free environment has become an issue of much discussion in both academic and public arena recently. Mahua Sarkar has attempted to connect environmental upgradation and the response of the so called "Bhadraloks" in 19th and early 20th century in her article "Environmental sanitation and the Bhadrals of Calcutta 1817-1911". Prof. Sarkar has highlighted that with the establishment of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784 and the foundation of the Medical College in 1834, modern science and allopathic treatment were introduced in phases in Calcutta under British subjugation. Simultaneously, consciousness about scientific knowledge also dawned among the Bengali intelligentsia with the establishment of "The Society for the acquisition of General Knowledge" and especially Brahmo movement, bent on eradication of disease, superstition and propagating for development of education. Unfortunately the advantages of town planning and medical health facility did not reach all segments of population as in the words of Prof Sarkar "the basic intention of these efforts was to protect the army and the administrators." The Contagious Diseases Act of 1864 was passed to keep pace with the health needs of the army. Prof Sarkar has demonstrated how the Indian elite was at bay in confronting changes in urban set up, implemented by colonisers and in compromising with their indigenous notion of sanitation and cleanliness. The author has also cited passages from contemporary literary works and journals reflecting their consciousness about the necessity of cleanliness and proper hygiene and at the same time a note of hesitation about the efficacy of this modern scientific urban planning, the advantages of which were not equally distributed among the coloniser and the colonised. While conflict of opinion persisted

among the local intellectuals, no serious effort was undertaken to improve the condition of the general milieu. In fact, the disparity in treatment towards the colonised turned out to be a stumbling block towards the implementation of fruitful urban planning and development in the city of Calcutta in 18th and first half of 19th century.

In Section I, Owafi Biswas in her interesting article "Exploring Institutional Science in Colonial India : The dynamics of Botanical Garden and Meteorology", has shown how exploring botanical garden and meteorology in India had served the interest of the colonisers by supplying resource from various plants to England both for commercial purpose and also for medicinal research which benefited the world through discovery of quinine to combat malaria. The writer has aptly coined the term "economic Botany", as distinguished from pure Botany. On the other hand, meteorological observatories, through their predictions of rainfall could assist the extending empire to pinpoint the exclusively fertile regions, conducive for good harvest. So both these institutions were utilised to promote colonial interest. It may be mentioned in this context that information and articles about Botanical Garden as well as meteorological information were regularly published in the journal of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. A brief mention of these informations is expected in this otherwise well-written article.

Deblina Biswas in her essay "Cartography in early colonial India 1764-1777 : The works of James Rennell", has attempted to assess the contribution of James Rennell, the first Surveyor-General of Bengal and later Surveyor-General of India in the development of cartography in India as an integral part of a transaction of knowledge between Europe and its colonies. The writer has pointed out that after the establishment of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784, there emerged an urge among the Europeans to explore India and its treasures, as a result of which a sharing of knowledge took place between the Orient and the Occident. In this context, we encounter Rennell who made a scientific comparison of the different landscapes to comprehend the vast size of the Indian subcontinent. One has to agree with the author

when she remarks that notwithstanding Rennell's colonial motivation, he deserves to be regarded as "the father of Indian Geography" in view of his unraveling of a new vista of technical knowledge. This section contains two more essays.

In Section 2, Sudeshna Barui in her article "Nature, Science and Technology : A Review of Saltpetre Industry in Bihar 1793-1814", has highlighted the indigenous method of manufacturing saltpetre in Bihar in late 18th and early 19th century. She has discussed in details the various methods used in the production of saltpetre by the local people who had hardly any scientific knowledge whatsoever. The procedure of production was absolutely nature-centric and based on indigenous method. The author deserves appreciation for exploring the indigenous method of saltpetre production — a process which is hardly discussed at any level. Two more articles adorn this particular section.

Under Section 3, Priyanka Guha Roy in her article "Controlling wild life: State strategy to empower or ensuring safety" has tried to explain state approach towards wild life in different phases of history. Starting her discussion from the Mauryan state, where, according to her, control of forest was prerogative of the imperial machinery, she discussed about Mughal's fascination for hunting as a sport or a means of recreation, thereby asserting monarchy's control over wild life. On the other hand, European concept of subjugating nature and enslaving her led British colonisers in pre-independence India to indulge in ruthless killing of animals and destruction of forest resources, endangering thereby their very existence. Finally, their confinement in a closed space like zoo, made them an object of observation instead species of adoration. However, despite passing reference made by the author regarding wild life conservation in ancient India, a more detailed account of man-nature relationship in ancient India would have enriched the discussion.

The portrayal of nature in literature has become an integral component of eco-centric discussion. Ritusree Basu in her article "Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay's Aranyak: A Study on Eco-Criticism and Ecocide" has defined "Eco-Criticism" as a scholarly approach to

studying nature writing. She has shown quite admirably how in the novel, the principal character Satya, a resident of Calcutta and once absolutely averse to the forest life fell in love with forest and simply abhorred the idea of returning back to Calcutta - "Nature - rude and barbaric here had initiated me into the mysteries of freedom and liberation; would I ever be able to reconcile myself to a perch in the bird-cage city ?"

This feeling of bonding with nature has been aptly described in the essay. "His initial ego-consciousness yields place to his eco-consciousness. at the end". A few more articles in this section add weightage to this volume.

In Section 4, we come across an extremely informative article "Gender, Identity and Disease : Female 'lepers' in the Missionary Leper Asylums of Colonial Bengal, 1844 to 1946" by Apalak Das. The author has shown how female lepers, treated usually as sinners and outcasts of the society had been "objectified through spiritual, educational instruction and medical care". The paper highlights the treatment meted out to the female lepers in missionary assylums of colonial Bengal and how they had been segregated and put up in separate buildings. It had also been pointed out how their conversion into Christianity under the influence of missionaries led to their ostracised position both in the household and society as a whole.

Dedicated to the memory of Late Professor Subhasis Biswas, the present book, enriched by several scholarly articles on a plethora of topics, encompassing science, environment, medicine etc. has turned out to be a collector's item and a repertoire of future research material.

Tapati Mukherjee

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6. Diacritical marks should be used wherever necessary. Where diacritical marks are not used, the word should be spelt phonetically, e.g., *bhut* and *bhoot* (unless in a quotation, where the original spelling should be used).
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Books :

Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, London, 1933, 7.

Articles in Books :

H.V. Trivedi, "The Geography of Kautilya", *Indian Culture*, Vol. 1, 202ff.

Edited Volumes :

C.W. Troll, ed. *Muslim Shrines in India : Their Character, History and Significance*, Delhi, 1989.

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G. Hambly, "A Note on the Trade in Eunuchs in Mughal Bengal", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (hereafter JAOS), Vol. 94(1), 1974, 125-29.

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P. Gaeffke, "Alexander and the Bengal Sufis", in Alan W. Entwistle and Francoise Mallison, eds, *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature, Research Papers, 1988-1991*, New Delhi/Paris, 1994, 278-84.

10. Book Reviews must contain name of the author/editor and the book reviewed, place of publication and publisher, year of publication, number of pages and price.

SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

SANSKRIT

आ = ā	ई = ī
ऊ = ū	ऋ = ṛ
ऌ = ṝ	च = ca
छ = cha	ज = ja
ट = ṭa	ठ = ṭha
ड = ḍa	ढ = ḍha
ण = ṇa	श = śa
ष = ṣa	' = m̄

TIBETAN

ཀ = ka	ཁ = kha	ག = ga	ང = ṅa/nga
ཅ = ca	ཆ = cha	ཇ = ja	ཉ = ṅa/nya
ཏ = ta	ཐ = tha	ད = da	ན = na
པ = pa	ཕ = pha	བ = ba	མ = ma
ཚ = tsa	ཛ = tsha	ངའ = dza	ཤ = wa
ཇ = zha	ཙ = za	འ = 'a	ཡ = ya
ར = ra	ལ = la	ཤག = śa/sha	ས = sa
ཨ = ha	ཨ = a	6	

ARABIC (both Cap & Small)			
ا	A	a	ا
ا (long)	ā	ā	ا (long)
ب	B	b	ب
ت	T	t	ت
ث	Th	th	ث
ج	J	j	ج
ح	H	h	ح
خ	Kh	kh	خ
د	D		د
ذ	Dh		ذ
ر	R		ر
ز	Z		ز
س	S		س
ش	Sh		ش
ص	S		ص (long)
			س (long)
PERSIAN			
ا	A		ا
ا (long)	ā		ا (long)
ب	B		ب
پ	P		پ
ت	T		ت
ث	Th		ث
ج	J		ج
چ	Ch		چ
ح	H		ح
خ	Kh		خ
د	D		د
ذ	Dh		ذ
ر	R		ر (long)
ز	Z		ز (long)
س	S		س (long)
ش	Sh		ش
ص	S		ص (long)



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It will flourish, if naturalists, chemists, antiquaries, philologists and men of science, in different parts of Asia, will commit their observations to writing, and send them to the Asiatick Society at Calcutta; it will languish, if such communications shall be long intermitted; and it will die away, if they shall entirely cease.

Sir William Jones
on the publication of the Asiatic Society