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## CONTENTS

### LECTURE

- Pandemics : Impact on Creativity through the Ages  
*Chandrima Shaha* 1

### ARTICLES

- An appraisal of Śaṅkara's Monism in the Light of  
Ānandamūrti's Philosophy  
*Bedabati Chowdhury and Nabin Kumar Jana* 17
- Disciplining the Women in Medieval Kerala :  
A Study of Maṅṅāpēti and Pulapēti  
*Shiji K. P. and V. V. Haridas* 37
- Sant Kabir and India's Esoteric Tradition: A Mystical Journey  
*Sudeshna Majumder* 51
- Historical Analysis of Akbar's Illiteracy  
*Tuhina Islam* 77
- An Emaciated Endeavour of a Declining Community :  
Examining the Muslim Community and Muslim Activists  
in the 19th Century Bengal  
*Md. Masud Akhtar* 97
- Sister Nivedita's Understanding and Perception of Islam,  
Islamic Culture and the Muslims  
*Anjashi Sarkar* 109
- Noise Level and Its Impact on the Quality of Life of the  
Street Vendors  
*Komal Singh, U. V. Kiran and Padmini Pandey* 125

**GLEANINGS FROM THE PAST**

Journal of a Trip undertaken to explore the Glaciers  
of the Kanchunjingah Group in the Sikkim Himalaya,  
in November 1861.

*Major J. L. Sherwill, Revenue Surveyor* 137

**NOTES ON GLEANINGS**

Interrogating Transit through an Imperial Lens:  
Major J. L. Sherwill's "Journal of a Trip undertaken  
to explore the Glaciers of the Kanchunjingah Group in  
the Sikkim Himalaya, in November 1861."

*Saptarshi Mallick* 161

**BOOK REVIEWS**

*Military Strategy and Diplomatic Institutions in Ancient India,*  
Anu Malick, Shubhi Publications, Gurgaon, 2014.

*Somnath Mukherjee* 169

*Bangla Panjikay Purono Kolkata,* Nilay Kumar Saha  
(Compiled and edited), Setu Prakashani, Kolkata, 2022.

*Nirmal Bandyopadhyay* 173

**CONTRIBUTORS** 177

**GUIDELINES TO THE CONTRIBUTORS** 179

## *Pandemics : Impact on Creativity through the Ages\**

Chandrima Shaha

### **Abstract**

Infectious diseases profoundly impact human life and have remained a challenge throughout history. Smallpox, the plagues of the 6th and 14th centuries caused huge destruction by killing millions of people. The H1N1 virus caused havoc by killing more than 100 million people in the 20th century. AIDS and Covid-19 pandemics are currently ongoing. Events of the past show that pandemics have been generative as well, where great works of art and literature and scientific innovation were created. It is instructive to look back to see what we have learned and what should we do in the future because outbreaks span across centuries and continents.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, plague, smallpox, black death, COVID-19

### **Introduction**

Large crises of any kind tend to bring deep social transformation, creating changes for facilitating society to glide through difficult times. The history of these times provides lessons for humanity to ponder upon and learn from these experiences. Among the numerous challenges that human society has faced in the past as well as in the current times, infectious diseases have stood out for their ability to profoundly impact multiple aspects of life.<sup>1</sup> More than 100 years ago, Robert Koch proved that microbes were responsible for infectious diseases.<sup>2</sup> As humans coevolved with microbes,<sup>3</sup> the selective forces of nature worked on both organisms, on one hand, bettering the ability of the pathogenic microbes to create disease and on the other hand

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\* *Foundation Day Oration*, delivered on January 15, 2023 at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata

improving the ability of humans or other organisms to fight back against such disease-causing organisms. Consequently, death and survival coexisted with organisms responding to a given situation as per their adaptations. The growth of the world population, the development of trade, and industrialisation enabled larger human interactions increasing the chances of disease spread. Diseases confined to one region or country started spreading to multiple countries and continents flowing into what is now termed a 'Pandemic'.<sup>4</sup> The history of humanity shows the appearance of pandemics at regular intervals, disrupting lives, changing the fate of nations, and outcomes of wars, thus transforming societies.

Coming to current times, with the COVID-19 pandemic we currently find ourselves pretty much in a similar situation as earlier contagions, threatened by an illness caused by a minuscule enemy that is turning our assumptions of supremacy upside down. The difference is that it came in a more technologically advanced world as compared to earlier times. Basically, the presence of disease particularly in the proportion of a pandemic like COVID-19 is anxiety provoking and is most often disruptive of life generally creating a negative thought process.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, a malady can influence human lives in a potentially creative way.<sup>6</sup> At times of these deep uncertainties, novel thoughts emerge because a new unexpected situation requires novel solutions. The situation shifts the normal course of thought process and modified reasoning must prevail, potentially serving as important catalysts for creative efforts. There are different levels of creativity and depending on the perception that varies between individuals, great literature, exceptional science, and masterpieces can result. Some of Europe's greatest artworks are an expression of experiences during outbreaks.<sup>7</sup> Painters create great works of art that communicate ideas and information to people especially those who are unable to read. Paintings stay, still speaking their accurate visual language, and remain available for future influence. Coping with adverse situations and understanding reality has been helped by literary works created during pandemics. In addition to the arts, great progress in science



empowering society has also emerged due to innovative thought processes instigated by crises situations of devastation and economic downfall.

### **The spread of diseases**

The spread of diseases is related to the evolutionary time scale and human migration patterns. Microbes evolved about 3.5 billion years ago and different microbial forms indulged in infecting the organisms that evolved thereafter. Humans evolved from apes about 6 million years ago and since then both the humans and microbes made a journey together with the microbes evolving to adapt to humans and the human immune system changing to develop arsenals to combat the invading pathogens.<sup>8</sup> Of the nine subspecies of the genus *Homo* that evolved from the apes, *Homo sapiens* is the only surviving species that now thrive across the world. The genus *Homo* originated in Sub-Saharan Africa and eventually migrated across the world<sup>9</sup> carrying pathogenic and non-pathogenic microbes to every corner of the earth that they populated. Different ecological niches and varied climatic conditions contributed to the evolution of a variety of pathogens.

The human species started out as hunter-gatherers slaying animals and foraging plants for food.<sup>10</sup> This period in human history shows rapid migration of small groups of people between places in the search of food. Because of the small size of the families, diseases circulated only within minor clusters. However, situations changed when the groups started living in villages comprising of multiple clusters of people during the Neolithic period.<sup>11</sup> This was just after the stone age when agricultural practices originated along with the domestication of animals. The near proximity and mingling of people increased the chances of the spread of diseases. Moreover, plant and animal viruses also found potential new hosts in humans. Gradually, large cities were built and diseases spread across the population of a given city, culminating in epidemics, confined to a relatively smaller region. With trade routes developing, ships were allowed to come into ports from other countries, and diseases were carried across to new locations across the world starting pandemics.<sup>12</sup>

From a Darwinian point of view, a pathogen does not want to kill its host but wants to survive long enough to spread the disease to others, therefore, a pathogen with greater spreading power is favoured by natural selection as opposed to an extremely virulent pathogen. When microbes encounter a susceptible host who has never been exposed to it, a race for survival begins. The host immune system struggles as it has no memory of the infection and is blinded, taking time to mobilise its forces for an offensive.<sup>13</sup> When immune system fails to mount an effective immune response, the pathogen becomes successful in establishing a disease. But if the host survives, the next infection is dealt with more efficiently as the memory immune cells become active and capable of initiating a prompt immune response.

#### **Pandemics through time**

History of the human race reveals the might of several pandemics that devastated the world in terms of killing people and causing enormous hardship and economic breakdown. One of the prominent pandemics was the Black Death or plague having returned several times in human history causing immense misery. Three major plague pandemics occurred, the plague of the Justinian (541-543 ACE), the Black death (1347-1351 ACE), and the third plague (1855-1959).<sup>14</sup> The Sixth-Century Plague was the earliest plague pandemic to be reliably recorded in history.<sup>15</sup> It came to Constantinople in 542, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium). Reports mention that as many as 10,000 people a day perished while people ascribed the plague as the will of God punishing humanity for sins. In the beginning of 14th century, Venice and other coastal cities like Genoa, Pisa and Amalfi had networks of trading throughout the Mediterranean.<sup>16</sup> Plague started spreading through these trading routes and ravaged Europe in the 14th century, killing almost half of its people, but the third plague also caused severe mortality eventually spreading across the world. Before arriving in the Italian peninsula, the devastating disease crossed through China, India, Russia, Persia and Syria and Asia minor.<sup>17</sup> The Black Death caused an economic collapse in Europe and labour became

scarce with market wages going up. There was a revival of medicine based on empirical evidence in the Middle Ages primarily due to the seemingly uncontrollable pandemic. All the three outbreaks of plague had devastating effects on society with large number of deaths and economic crises. The disease is caused by the bacteria *Yersinia pestis*, carried by the rat flea and therefore, rats are the agents that can carry the disease from one place to another fairly quickly. Rats were one of the reasons why plague spread so fast as rat fleas and rats could infiltrate everywhere coming with grains and other goods carried in ships and carts.

It was not only Black Death that caused the devastation, smallpox was another scourge that affected humanity. This disease not only triggered mass death but also could inflict severe disfigurement including blindness. Smallpox is thought to have appeared around 10,000 BCE during the Neolithic age of the first agricultural settlements.<sup>18</sup> Physical evidence of smallpox is found in Egyptian mummies dating back to 3000 years. The most recognised Egyptian mummies of Ramesses V, the fourth pharaoh of the Twentieth Dynasty of Egypt had visible marks of smallpox. Through immunoprecipitation and electron microscopic analysis of pustules for the virus, it was concluded that Ramesses had smallpox.<sup>19</sup> Smallpox has been described as early as 1122 BCE in China and in India. It was introduced to Europe sometime between the 5th and 7th centuries and was frequently epidemic during the Middle Ages. *Variola major*, the smallpox virus brought about 500 million deaths over a century.<sup>20</sup> In 18th century Europe, about 400,000 people died from the disease per year. It was a major cause of blindness. The source of the virus may be a terrestrial African rodent virus that jumped species between 68,000 and 16,000 years ago. The first recorded pandemic of smallpox known through paintings and writings was the Antonine plague in the 2nd century during the rule of the famous Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius at the height of Roman power throughout the Mediterranean. The name Antonine was after the family name of Marcus Aurelius. The details of the disease during the 2nd century are known through the writings

of a physician named Galen who described symptoms and course of the disease that led scholars to opine that the disease was indeed smallpox.<sup>21</sup>

As the world history goes, smallpox was introduced by the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors in Mexico which led to the decimation of the local population resulting in the fall of the empires of the developed civilisation of the Aztecs and the Incas. When Herman Cortés, a Spanish general and his army began their campaign against the Aztecs in 1519, over 30 million people were living in Mexico. One hundred years later, after a series of smallpox epidemics had decimated the local population, it is estimated only around 1.5-3 million natives had survived. This was primarily because the immune system of the Aztec and the Incans never saw smallpox before and by the time they could respond, death began ripping through the population. Similarly, early settlers in North America, introduced the disease of smallpox which led to a decline in the native population. Also, contributing to smallpox in the Americas was the slave trade<sup>22</sup> because the imported slaves came from regions of Africa where smallpox was endemic. Smallpox killed millions over the years and caused blindness to many and remains one of the diseases that as an endemic disease and as a pandemic caused severe suffering.

In a relatively modern world of the early 20th century, during World War I, the Spanish flu spread across the world. This flu, lasted from 1918 to 1920 and consisted of four waves.<sup>23</sup> It infected about 500 million people, resulting in the death of about 100 million people. Spanish flu is a misnomer as the origin of the flu was in Kansas, USA and not Spain. Because Spanish newspapers freely reported the flu while the news in the United States was censored, it was mistakenly labelled as Spanish flu. The first wave was relatively mild and lasted during the first quarter of the 1918. The second wave was much more deadly than the first and the third wave was less severe than the second wave but was deadlier than the initial first wave. The fourth wave affected different countries but was not as deadly as the second wave. In a world torn by war, famine and diseases, the Spanish flu

effect was severe<sup>24</sup> and was partly the reason why World War I came to an end.

Other than the Spanish flu and Black Death, cholera was a disease that plagued humanity. Seven cholera pandemics occurred in last 200 years, the first pandemic originating in 1817 in India. The seventh cholera pandemic has been going on since 1961 mostly occurring as outbreaks in different countries.<sup>25</sup> The first immunisation was developed by Pasteur after the cholera-causing pathogen *Vibrio cholerae* was discovered by Filippo Pacini and Robert Koch. The discovery of cholera vaccines and knowledge of the mechanism of how the disease operates have brought down the incidences of cholera, a testimony of the success of scientific research.

There are two pandemics that we are going through currently, the HIV pandemic that appeared in the 1980s, killing thousands of people.<sup>26</sup> We are still going through the pandemic and do not have any vaccine till now. HIV virus infection is not easy to treat. A million people die each year from the virus. Anti-retroviral therapy has now been developed and lives are being saved.

The second pandemic is the Coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) which is a viral illness that is extremely contagious and caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Figures differ as to how much death it has caused and figures vary from 6 - 17 million. After the first cases of COVID-19 illness reported in late December 2019 from Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, the SARS virus rapidly disseminated across the world in a short span of time. A global pandemic was declared on March 11, 2020. The disease overwhelmed healthcare systems and caused misery particularly for the underprivileged people. Substantial progress in clinical research with vaccines coming in, COVID-19 is somewhat controlled but the emergence of mutant variants of the virus is of great concern.<sup>27</sup>

### **Creativity and innovation during the pandemics**

#### *Black Death was generative*

The crisis created by the pandemics inspired creativity through the ages, whether it was in terms of art, science, or healthcare

management. The Black Death not only had a devastating effect on human society in the countries that were affected, but it also changed human imagination as well which flowered as creative works in various fields. People were forced to think differently because of an unpredictable situation. Humanist curiosity influenced by studies in human psychology and ideas helped society to keep its desire to create and grow while tackling difficult times. Distinct examples show how original thoughts flowed to tackle a crisis or simply were used to inform people about the incident and how to negotiate through. The enormous creative potential of the art schools in Europe thrived while society was fighting against an invisible enemy where artists tried to make sense of the death and destruction they saw around them. Their creations conveyed much to the public. In the initial phases of the plague pandemic, society suffered under the conviction that plague was imposed on humans because they have sinned and consequently, art was depicting scenes in that light. Later it represented a more sympathetic attitude toward the sick rather than ostracising them. This was a change for good. Importantly, the blossoming of Renaissance and Baroque took place in the aftermath of the devastations of the plague.

Most creative thought vis-à-vis healthcare in Europe emerged during the 14th century. Plague reached Europe through the trade routes and the fast spread of the disease was due to ships coming into ports with grains that carried rats, an animal carrier for the plague.<sup>28</sup> The Italian city of Venice was one of the wealthiest and most vibrant metropolises where the summer of 1575 brought plague and life stopped for the local population with carnivals, churches, shops, inns, and taverns closed and people dying in droves. In this predicament, the Venetian officials were perceptive and innovative, and they developed a world-leading infrastructure for plague control,<sup>29</sup> the best risk management practices of the time. The Rialto bridge was closed to isolate half the population at home, a concept that was implemented in many cities of the world during COVID-19. Venice implemented a 40-day quarantine for the ships before they could come to the shore.

The origin of the word quarantine, was derived from the Italian word '*Quaranta giorni*' which meant 40 days. Apart from the quarantine of ships, patients were also isolated from the general population in *Lazarettos* designated as quarantine stations. Realising that person-to-person contact must be avoided but at the same time doctors were needed, innovative thoughts designed a costume for the doctors. It had a cloak, hat, gloves and a mask filled with herbs so that the disease-causing agent is not breathed in, very much reminiscent of the PPE kits used during quarantine for COVID-19. A special stick was given to the doctors to keep the patients at a distance. In certain European cities like Florence and Perugia, plague doctors were requested to do autopsies to help determine the cause of death and how the plague affected the people. A plague doctor's principal task, besides treating people for the plague, was to compile public records of plague deaths. The use of this costume thrived for 300 years after this. Since Venice attracted migrants and visitors, a system of health passes was also introduced. What is to be noted that this was a time when the enemy was enigmatic, its way of propagation was unknown and only intuitive thinking helped the measures to be taken. While innovative activity and implementation of new ideas partially saved Venice, the artists in the various schools responded to the suffering through immortal creations of frescoes and paintings. Art, in a way was a defense against life's offenses as remarked by the 20th century poet Cesare-Parese. The Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venice, built and dedicated in the name of Saint Roch, the protector for plague, contains paintings by Antonio Zanchi, Tintoretto and others expressing the horror and sorrow of the 1630 plague. These masterpieces by themselves and are testimonies of a trying time in the history of Italy.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, surrounded by so much destruction, the images reflected death but also expressed joy for the future insinuating the birth of a new era emerging out of the calamity. European art rose to glory during an age of death and disease. The great Italian master Titian died of the plague. For creative artists like Michelangelo, Vermeer, Rembrandt and others, the mind was shadowed by death as

a silent companion whose influence remained as they worked. For 300 years the reign of terror of plague persisted but new creations emerged out of the difficult times. This was evidence of the strong resilience that humans possessed.

As we know, Italy was the seat of intellectuals in the 15th century with great writings and works of art flowing out of the various schools. Leonardo da Vinci, the Italian polymath survived a series of bubonic plagues that struck Milan between 1484 and 1485. These outbreaks, which killed some 50,000 people — a full third of the city's population, inspired the Renaissance artist to design concepts for a future city that he illuminated through a series of drawings and notations completed between 1487 and 1490. At the core of these concepts was da Vinci's perspective on changing the cityscapes of medieval cities with their narrow, crowded, and unclean streets and dwellings to a manageable, modern layout emphasising aesthetics, cleanliness, and efficiency.<sup>31</sup> To achieve this, da Vinci envisioned two signature features of a future city: a network of canals that would support both commerce and sanitation, and the vertical division of the city itself into as many as three different tiers, each for a different purpose.<sup>32</sup> This was a great contribution born out of the necessity to deal with a pandemic and used in the designing of cities in the future.<sup>33</sup>

The pandemic pushed a major change of society around the end of 14th century that trailed into the next century. The middle ages ended around the mid-15th century after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 followed by the Renaissance period which was perhaps the greatest time for science and art. Major changes that came in were the stagnant rule of religion being replaced by progressive thinking; and artists started introducing the concept of perspectives in their paintings. Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Dante, Boccaccio, Machiavelli, and Galileo became the founding fathers of European thought.

#### **Smallpox triggered imaginative activities**

Another destructive disease, the smallpox had a great influence on humanity. The massive deaths and disfigurements during smallpox



eventually triggered greatest public health achievements. It killed eight out of ten children and killed adults. From ancient times, dates for which are controversial, as a routine practice, a process called 'variolation' was in vogue, used as a preventive measure. A small amount of material from the pustules of smallpox victims was rubbed into superficial scratches made in the skin of healthy individuals. It was expected that these people will get used to the disease and will not catch the virulent form that might kill an individual. It is surprising that without any knowledge of immunity and virus, the practice originated possibly through empirical observations. Although scholar's opinion varies, it is more or less agreed that China, India, parts of Africa, and the Middle East practiced this process in ancient times. This practice was introduced in England after Lady Montagu, wife of the British ambassador to Istanbul in 1721, recommended the procedure for Europe having observed it being practiced in Istanbul. Although it was the best option available at the times, the practice was fraught with dangers of people catching the disease and also capable of spreading it.

In an age where scientific thought was in its infancy, around late 18th century, an English physician named Edward Jenner developed another method as variolation was not without potential dangers due to direct administration of smallpox pustules. He observed that people handling cows got infected with cowpox which was not deadly but these individuals were never infected with smallpox. Therefore, to answer his question of the relationship between smallpox and cowpox, he performed human experiments. He administered cowpox material to a boy named Phipps two times at intervals and challenged him with smallpox material from an infected human later. The boy did not develop the disease even after being injected with smallpox material. This proved that contracting the relatively harmless cowpox provided immunity against the killer disease. Unknowingly, this was a major advance of using a related less virulent virus for immunisation as opposed to the deadly virus itself. This was the discovery of the method of immunisation where a related virus (later knowledge) gave immunity to an existing deadly virus.<sup>34</sup> In 1797, Jenner sent a short

communication to the Royal Society describing his experiment and observations. However, the paper was rejected. Then in 1798, having added a few more cases to his initial experiment, Jenner privately published a small booklet entitled '*An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae, a disease discovered in some of the western counties of England, particularly Gloucestershire and Known by the Name of Cow Pox*'. Jenner's method of vaccination was the most significant application of science that helped save millions of people across the world. Although he received worldwide recognition and many honours, Jenner made no attempt to enrich himself through his discovery.

After Jenner's vaccine was distributed all over the world, gradually herd immunity was achieved where most people acquired resistance to the disease and consequently smallpox case numbers dwindled. Eventually, the disease was completely eliminated from the world through rigorous and ingenious methods of identification of areas to be vaccinated and maintaining supervision. A global effort for the eradication of the disease began in 1959 led by WHO that was further strengthened in 1967. It involved 10,000 health workers around the world who administered an estimated half a billion vaccinations. Smallpox remains the only infectious disease that was successfully eliminated from the world. On May 8, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) celebrated the landmark milestone of the declaration of smallpox eradication.

The launch of the smallpox vaccine marked an era where new vaccines began to be developed against other infectious diseases like measles, cholera, plague, typhoid, polio and others. Along with developed antibiotics as a treatment and vaccines as a preventive, combat against the infectious diseases achieved a new dimension, and the death rate reduced to a great extent, particularly in less privileged settings where affordability to treatment was problematic.

#### **COVID-19 linked creativity**

The COVID-19 pandemic situations spurred innovation born out of necessity. In tragic times, the world geared up to find new ways of

doing everyday tasks adjusting to the situation created by COVID. A sense of cooperation prevailed, united against a common enemy rampaging through different countries. The most important example of COVID-driven innovation is the vaccine. Available vaccines prevent millions of diseases saving numerous lives every year. There are conventional vaccine approaches against infectious diseases like live or attenuated or inactivated pathogens and also protein subunit vaccines. They are very successful but the difficulties are the rapid production and validation. Nucleic acid-based vaccines have emerged as promising substitutions to conventional vaccine approaches that can be floated in quick time. A totally new era in vaccinology has emerged. The mRNA vaccine area that was incubating possible cancer vaccines is developing rapidly and over time, a large body of preclinical data has accumulated with multiple human clinical trials initiated and ongoing.<sup>35</sup> An mRNA vaccine uses messenger RNA which is a nucleotide generated after DNA transcription. The vaccine delivers the mRNA into immune cells provoking them to make antibodies and generate cytotoxic cells that can identify and destroy pathogens.

There are many other advances that have come after COVID-19. The drones allow authorities to get a faster output of information. Agricultural drones are also spraying disinfectants in remote areas, while others have been used to deliver crucial medical supplies and transport samples.<sup>36</sup> Robots are also used in many Chinese hospitals to deliver food, medicine, and other supplies to patients; to disinfect hospitals and other public areas; check patients' temperatures; and answer common questions. Coronavirus is being diagnosed using AI, which can read thousands of CT scans in 20 seconds with an accuracy rate of 96%. Smartphones, delivery apps, mobile payment apps. online meeting softwares and collaboration platforms are also some of the prominent advances that humanity has come out with solutions in the modern world.

### **Conclusion**

Scholars are of the opinion that although crises can be very distressing it also generates creative actions and innovative thinking.

New ways of thought emerges out of doubts from the situations that one experiences.<sup>37</sup> When pandemics strike, a time of crisis ensues resulting in a paradoxical situation when decisive actions must be taken in the backdrop of a seemingly unfamiliar situation.<sup>38</sup> Leadership becomes very important and confidence in one's own thoughts and willingness to take risks of taking an action prevails. In the past, pandemics have motivated people to create great art and literature and also tools to tackle the immediate enemy. Our experience with the recent pandemic has seen the great success of different strata of society including doctors, healthcare workers, scientists, artists, and writers, each acting in their own sphere to bring about social good. It is this spirit that has flowed through humanity's trial during the testing times and it shows hope for the future.

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# *An appraisal of Śaṅkara's Monism in the Light of Ānandamūrtti's Philosophy*

Bedabati Chowdhury and Nabin Kumar Jana

## **Abstract**

The essence of Śaṅkara's<sup>1</sup> Advaita philosophy lies in its strong adherence to the Upaniṣadic principle of an absolute, non-dual *Brahma*. In supporting his absolute monistic view, Śaṅkara advocates *Brahma* as the sole reality, *Jagat* as false, and *Jīva* as identical with *Brahma*. This paper will delineate the essence of *Brahma*, *Jagat*, *Jīva*, and *Māyā* in the light of Śaṅkara and P. R. Sarkar's<sup>2</sup> ontological perspectives. This paper will focus on the discrepancies of Śaṅkara's monism. Further it will elucidate Sarkar's monistic view. Finally it will clarify the logical inconsistencies of Śaṅkara's monistic view with the help of Sarkar's ontological perspective.

Keywords : Nirguṇa Brahma, Saguṇa Brahma, Jīva, Jagat, Māyā, monism

## **I. Introduction**

Mystery of the substantive oneness of the cosmos is yet to be unveiled. The dichotomy of transcendental and empirical; spirit and matter; subject and object; accelerates a crisis of psycho-spiritual identity. Due to mechanical diversity and technological affinity, science has led us towards the experience of multitude of difficulties regarding social and cultural adaptivity. Despite the spectacular advancement of science and technology, men remain enigmatic in identifying totality of themselves. In pursuit of identification, humankind comes across several intrinsic questions: Who am I? Where do I come from? Is there any intimate kinship between progenitor and his progeny; any harmony of noumenal entity with phenomenal reality? How to

reconcile the phenomenal diversity with supreme unicity? Such perennial enquiries have led to many 'isms' like monism, dualism, pluralism, and idealism by conceptualising whether cosmogenic primordial constituent is one, two, or more than two. Subsequently, philosophers encountered several theories through the multitude of interpretations and illustrations. Some examples are the naturalistic polytheism in the form of 'henotheism' (Müller, 1878)<sup>3</sup> and 'anthropomorphism' (Ranganathan, 2011)<sup>4</sup> of the ancient Vedic religion; absolute monism of Upaniṣad and Vedānta philosophy (Bhajananda, 2010); atheistic dualism of Sāṃkhya philosophy (Sinha, 1915); and the qualified monism of Rāmānuja's philosophy (Ranganathan, 2011)<sup>5</sup>

Within these varied interpretations among the above religious and philosophical trends, Śaṅkara's Kevalādvaitavāda<sup>6</sup> is the most prominent and oldest school of doctrine in Vedānta philosophy delineating absolute monism. Śaṅkara's entire monistic preaching may be summarised in this half verse, which appears as follows: "*Brahma-Satyam, Jagat-Mithyā, Jīvo Brahmaiva Nāparaḥ*". That signifies only *Brahma* as the sole reality; except *Brahma* nothing can exist. Through the concept of *Māyā* (universal ignorance), which is described as *mithyā svabhāva*, this phenomenal world is depicted as an illusion of *Brahma*. Fundamentally, Śaṅkara's central conception of non-dual reality, evolves from the early Vedic (c.1500 - c.500 BCE) and Upaniṣadic (c. 800 BCE and c. 500 BCE) school. Śaṅkara developed the school of monism in Hinduism and it has made an immense impact on most Indian philosophy. According to Radhakrishnan (1888-1972), the non-dualistic school of Vedānta is an ideal of universal brotherhood, homogeneous humanity, harmony, and social service. Despite all these influential impacts of the Advaita school, Śaṅkara's non-dual monistic interpretation is not free from discrepancies, and still receives criticism. The most trenchant critiques of the advaitic outlook came from within the Vedānta tradition by Yamunācārya (950-1000CE) and Rāmānuja (1050-1139) and their followers. For them, if the world is not real, then nothing can be the subject of daily experience, but still we are experiencing it. Abhinavagupta, an outstanding thinker of the 11th century Kashmiri Shaivism, in his "*Īśvarapratyabhijñā-viṭṭi-*



*vimarśinī*" (Kaul, 1943), also explained some logical and psychological anomalies regarding Śaṅkara's monistic theory: "the concept of the absolute existence of *Brahma*, together with *avidyā* as its *upādhi* (a side element adjoining Him) cannot be taken as the exact representation of pure monism". Similarly, Murty (Murty, 1974) criticised that though Śaṅkara's monistic theory established two separate entities, but failed to reconcile between appearance and reality. Klostermaier (Klostermaier, 1998) has claimed that Śaṅkara created the distinction between a 'higher' and a 'lower' *Brahma*. Again he proclaimed that being a "Crypto-Buddhist", Śaṅkara brought emptiness into Hinduism by advocating the illusory nature of the world. In his book "Life Divine", Aurobindo also mentioned that being a 'hidden dualist' the entire monistic preaching of Śaṅkara led us to the experience of an insurmountable gap between *Brahma*, *Jagat*, and *Jīvas*. Along with the above mentioned critiques, there have been numerous endeavours to re-examine Śaṅkara's monistic contemplation (Burch, 1962, Betty, 1976, Kothari, 1981, Betty, 1994, Murthi, 2009, Robbiano, 2016).

To conceptualise the characteristics and objectives of absolute reality, the modern Indian philosopher of the 20th century Śrī Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar a.k.a Śrī Śrī Ānandamūrti, in his *Ānanda Mārga Philosophy*,<sup>7</sup> promulgated a convergent way of thinking with different logic and practical aspects, to re-investigate and re-interpret the absolute non-dual nature of ultimate reality as propounded by *Advaitavādin*. Among the contemporary Indian philosophers, Sarkar, by interpreting *Śiva*, and *Śakti* in different perspectives, strives to resolve so many baffling issues concerning monism, dualism, pluralism, idealism and materialism in oriental and occidental views. Asserting three fold conceptions of absolute reality, which is the combining state of *Nirguṇa Brahma*, *Saguṇa Brahma* and *Tāraka Brahma*, Sarkar took initiative to reconcile the dualistic theism with non-dualistic absolutism. Consequently, Sarkar's monistic standpoint is categorised as *advaitadvaitādvaita*. Although it is non-dualistic by nature, it leaves space for dualism, pluralism, and spiritual devotionalism. The term *advaitadvaitādvaita* is difficult to translate, but denotes an universal, unified, and rationalistic approach, that can best

be applicable as non-dualistic cum dualistic monism. Sarkar explicitly states that from singular *Brahma* (consciousness) a plethora of objectives in the sense of duality emerge in the process of evolution, and in due course of involution the multiplicity of world dissolve in supreme singularity viz. *Brahma* with the help of *Tāraka Brahma*. Therefore, Sarkar's monistic standpoint viz. *advaitadvaitādvaita* signifies that duality or diversity of the phenomenal world comes from non-duality in the journey of evolution and finally, in the return journey of involution, all duality or diversity inevitably merges with non-duality. But this depiction of duality or diversity is nothing but the interplay of *Śiva* and *Śakti* accentuating the concept of monism instead of dualism or pluralism. This is the significance of Sarkar's *advaitadvaitādvaita* perspective.

Śaṅkara's *advaitavāda* is deeply rooted in Vedic and Upaniṣadic literature, while Ānandamārga philosophy owes its origin to the Tantra (fifth century AD) and Kashmiri Shaivism (after 850 CE). Sarkar's ontological monistic preaching is replete with terminological and conceptual similarities to Śaṅkara's monistic perspective, although Sarkar's theory considers substantial differences from Śaṅkara ensuring non-dualistic cum dualistic monism on the basis of *Śiva-Śakti* unification. The present endeavour is a critical analysis to re-conceptualise the monistic theory of Śaṅkara and Sarkar from ontological perspective in order to re-examine the non-dual cum dual nature of ultimate reality.

The present paper is organised as follows: The second section emphasises discrepancies of Śaṅkara's monism. The third section stresses Sarkar's monistic preaching. The fourth section attempts to clarify Sarkar's alternative approach to Śaṅkara's monism.

## II. Contradiction on Advaitic Monistic Ontology

### *Dualism of Nirguṇa Brahma and Saguṇa Brahma*

Śaṅkara, being the foremost advocate of Advaita Vedānta, has deserved the towering position in attributing absolute monism. Śaṅkara's absolute monistic view insists only one real entity viz. *Nirguṇa Brahma*. For Śaṅkara, initial inquiry of *Nirguṇa Brahma* can be delineated by

*svarūpa-lakṣaṇam*. In terms of *svarūpa-lakṣaṇam* *Brahma* deserves the absolute non-qualified status as it is disrupted by all possible qualities, and also dissociated by internal and external determinations, and distinctions, such as homogeneous (*svajātiya*), heterogenous (*vijātiya*), and internal (*svagata*).<sup>8</sup> Thus the ultimate reality is free from all internal and external varieties, and regarded as non-dual reality.<sup>9</sup> Being *nirguṇa* (qualityless) and *niṣkriya* (actionless) Śaṅkara's notion of non-dual entity appears to have ascribed as static, inert, pure consciousness, and an impersonal, inactive passive witness<sup>10</sup> substantiating the existence of the entire cosmos.

On the other hand, Śaṅkara advocates '*taṭastha-lakṣaṇam*' (incidental qualification) to explain *Brahma* as the creator of the universe. For Śaṅkara, *Saguṇa Brahma* is only "...a temporal manifestation of *Brahma*, creator for as long as creation lasts" (Klostermaier, 1994). This creation happens due to the veil of *Māyā* under whose influence *Brahma* becomes *Saguṇa*, which is also known as *Īśvara* (God), *apara-Brahma*, *saviśeṣa*, and *sopādhika*. *Nirguṇa Brahma* is the independent and imperishable truth of *Brahma*, and *Saguṇa Brahma*, due to its mere association with *Māyā*, is treated as an illusion or dream. Thus Śaṅkara maintains a subtle line of demarcation between *Nirguṇa Brahma* and *Saguṇa Brahma* as higher *Brahma* and lower *Brahma*. This distinction between a higher *Brahma* and lower *Brahma* is one of the emblems of Śaṅkara's Advaitavāda. Subsequently, Śaṅkara is often criticised for maintaining an unbridgeable gulf between *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa Brahma*. Hence, Śaṅkara's monistic preaching introduces the dualism of *Brahma* itself as it bifurcates the highest reality into *Brahma* and *Īśvara*, owing to the difference in their nature (Thibaut, 1962).

#### *Dualism of Brahma and the world*

From the monistic standpoint, Śaṅkara has repeatedly compared the empirical world with the "illusory vision" in his commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras. There are countless passages where Śaṅkara claims the world as unreal, and the only real is *Brahma*. For Śaṅkara, this world which is manifestation of different names and forms, is not the real transformation (*pariṇāma*), but it is an apparent manifestation

(*vivarta*) of *Brahma*. Instead of *pariṇāmovāda*, Śaṅkara insisted the doctrine of *vivartavāda*, to explain the multiplicity of the physical world. With the snake rope simile, Śaṅkara emphatically argued that “this entire apparent world, in which good and evil actions are done, is a mere illusion” and “does in reality not exist at all”. Śaṅkara’s grand Guru Gauḍapāda also stresses that “... the world is ultimately unreal, for it cannot exist independently and ...Consciousness which is the only Reality” (Sharma, 2009). To realise rope as snake, one has to have the knowledge of snake to identify it. Hence there is someone who acts as an experiencer. One just cannot ignore the experiencer, otherwise the concept of illusion would be meaningless as the ultimate truth about the illusionary object is known to *Brahma* himself. For this, even Radhakrishnan, a great admirer of Śaṅkara, notes with regret that “the entire phenomenal world does not exist for him who has realised the self” (Kothari, 1981). This hidden dualistic seed rather paves the way for illusionism in Śaṅkara’s philosophy.

Like Śaṅkara, if *Jagat* is taken as false or illusion then the relative existence of *Jagat*, as we experience and observe in our daily life, would have become false. But how can everyday experiences and various observations of the world become false? This is completely untenable. Murty has raised a pertinent question: if the status of the world cannot be categorised as either real or unreal, then the next question may arise, is *Brahma* real or unreal? Again how does this false world originate from Pure Consciousness? (Murty, 1974). Moreover, the absence of *jagat*, the very existence of *Saguṇa Brahma*, which is nothing but the manifested form of *Jagat*, would become meaningless. Therefore, in Śaṅkara’s monistic theory, we come across not only the dualism of *Nirguṇa Brahma* and *Saguṇa Brahma*, but also the dualism of *Brahma* and the world.

#### *Dualism of Brahma and the jīva (individual self)*

In Advaita non-dualistic perspective, *jīva* is nothing else but *Brahma* itself (*Jīvo Brahmaiva Nāparaḥ*). In his commentary on Vedānta Sūtra, Śaṅkara upholds the reality of individual souls as *jñātā* (knower), *kartā* (doer), and *bhoktā* (enjoyer). The individual souls are regarded as “a mere appearance not real transformation of *Brahma*, like the reflection

of the sun in the water". Due to the veil of *Māyā* or *Avidyā* (limiting conditioning), *Brahma* appears to be individuated and differentiated as *Jīva* having superimposed adjuncts like *antaḥkaraṇa* (which is four-fold as *mana*, *buddhi*, *ahaṁkāra*, and *citta*), body etc. and experiences the characteristics of merit and demerit, pleasure and pain, attachment and aversion, desire and violation. Therefore, "*jīva* stands for *anupraveśa* of consciousness in the limiting adjuncts" (Bhatta, 2021).

Moreover, *Jīva* has five *kośas*, viz., *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya*, and three states of existence, viz., *jāgrata*, *svapna* and *suṣupta* which distinguish *Jīva* as a sense-bound empirical identity from its own self-luminous transcendental nature. Not only that *Jīva* undergoes the subject of life and death repeatedly under the force of *karmas* until *Māyā* or *Avidyā* vanishes. Otherwise, *Jīva* is the same as *Brahma* which is eternal, infinite, indivisible, self-luminous, undifferentiated and unitary *saccidānanda* (Being - Consciousness - Bliss). With this absolute idealistic view, the difference between individual selves cannot be ignored. For example, if someone is feeling hungry, we have to feed that particular person, not others to satisfy his/her hunger. Similarly, if someone gets *mukti* then each and every one will not get *mukti*. So in this relative world there are differences among the individuals. By considering the relative world as *Māyā*, Śaṅkara tried to hide many questions under the carpet. For example: Why do the living beings want to keep themselves alive? What is *jīva dharma*? How can it be practiced? Why would *jīva* crave for *mukti*? In this relative world, what is the need for the concept of society? Can with an empty stomach, someone achieve liberation? Moreover, the concept of *vyavahārika satya*, *prātibhāsika satya*, *kośas* etc. invokes dualism between *Jīva* and *Brahma*. Thus, the depiction of *Jīva* as an appearance of *Brahma* is very much ambiguous in the theory of Śaṅkara.

#### *Dualism of Brahma and Māyā*

In the entire preaching of Advaita Vedānta, *Māyā* is used as neither *sat*, nor *asat*, nor both, rather, *anirvācanīya* (inexplicable mystery) which is only the ultimate source of delusion by concealing the real nature of

any object. For Śaṅkara, the only real entity is *Brahma*. This absolute singular *Brahma* appears as multiple names and forms due to the dexterity of *Māyā*, which is inherent in *Brahma*. *Māyā* conceals the true nature of *Brahma* i.e., *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* by its *āvaraṇa śakti*, and projects as the manifold universe by its *vikṣepa śakti*. Through *Māyā*, such multiplicity of names and forms are superimposed upon *Brahma*. Being a divine and cosmic force of *Brahma*, how can it be classified as a matter of illusion? Moreover, on account of its inexplicable mysterious nature, such as concealment and projection, the position of *Māyā* in *Brahma* raises very pertinent questions — is *Māyā* different from *Nirguṇa Brahma*? Does it act independently? Due to this, G. C. Nayak<sup>11</sup> described *Māyā* as the ‘Gordian Knot’ of the Advaitins. Moreover, Murty raises a certain significant question concerning Śaṅkara’s concept of *Māyā* that “where is this *Māyā*, in *Brahma* or in the souls? How can *Brahma*, which is Pure Consciousness, be associated with this *Māyā*? If *Māyā* or *Avidyā* belong to the souls, then how is there monism?” (Murty, 1974). By these observations, Murty concludes that the advaita criterion of absolute monism is completely untenable. Kothari throws light in explaining that “the doctrine of *Māyā* is therefore a sanctuary of ignorance, and does not reveal any special merit of its author” (Kothari, 1981). As a result of substantial segregation of *Brahma* and his inherent principle that insists to weaken the root of monistic theory, as monism is bound to accept an indivisible relationship between *Brahma* and its immanent principle. Therefore, the separation of *Brahma* and its inherent potency *Māyā* insists on the doctrine of dualism instead of monism due to lack of proper description of *Māyā* and her relationship with *Brahma*.

### III. Sarkar’s Monistic Preaching

Phenomenologically, Sarkar’s notion of monism is described as *advaitadvaitādvaita* which is non-dualistic in essence but gives recognition to dualism and pluralism classifying *Brahma* into three aspects — *Nirguṇa*, *Saguṇa* and *Tāraka Brahma*. According to him, *Brahma* is the combination of *Śiva* which acts as the cognitive faculty along with His operative principle, *Śakti* (Ānandamūrṭti, 1961)<sup>12</sup>. *Nirguṇa*, *Saguṇa* and *Tāraka Brahma* are different states of the same singular *Brahma* depending

on the interplay among *Śiva* and *Śakti*. This characteristic is the core of Sarkar's monistic preaching.

Sarkar defines *Śiva* as 'Cognitive Principle' or '*Citi-Śakti*' in the sense of pure consciousness who acts as the creator and provides Himself as material cause and identified as the 'Causal Matrix' (Ānandamūrṭti, 1979). Thus he equates *Śiva* with *Puruṣa* (*pure śete yah sah Puruṣah*) as 'the witnessing consciousness that lies quiescent in every entity'. Moreover, *Śiva* can also be compared with *Ātman* as '*Prati bodhasattā* or omnitepathic entity' (Ānandamūrṭti, 1958). Hence for Sarkar, all these three concepts of *Śiva*, *Puruṣa*, and *Ātman* bear the same essence in cosmo-ontological perspectives.

While *Śakti* is merely a divine force of *Śiva* which can not function without the supervision of *Śiva*.<sup>13</sup> *Śakti* is merely an attributional force. Regarding the subtle relationship between *Śiva* and *Śakti*, Sarkar maintains the pre-dominance of *Śiva* over *Śakti*. Therefore, *Śakti* is always subservient to *Śiva*. *Śakti*, the immanent force of cognitive faculty, is frequently used as *Prakṛti* (operative principle) and *Māyā* (cosmic creative principle) (Ānandamūrṭti, 1998). Basically, *Śakti*, the qualifying principle, qualifies *Śiva* into different shapes and forms by its three inherent binding principles (*sattva*, *rajaḥ*, and *tamaḥ guṇas*). Though *Śiva* and *Śakti* are defined as two different entities, they are the two poles of the same singular entity and can never be separated from one another. Their relationship can be compared with milk and its whiteness, fire and its burning capacity, and a piece of paper having two sides. The removal of one side from the other results in jeopardy of the existence of the paper. Therefore, both these two cosmic principles are very much interdependent and inalienable concomitance. However *Śiva* and *Śakti* possess different dimensions of spirit but monistic in essence.

For Sarkar, *Nirguṇa Brahma* is nothing but the 'metempirical state' or the 'non-qualified supreme state' or the state of *Brahma* where *Śiva* is free from the bondage of *Śakti* and remains beyond the scope of manifestation. And hence this is the unexpressed and unmanifested aspect of ultimate reality, wherein no attributes and qualities exist.

Thus, this state is absolutely Ānandamūrti “beyond the cycle of subjectivity and objectivity (*sāṅkalpa-vikalpa*)” (n, 1956). While *Saguṇa Brahma* is the ‘empirical state’ or the ‘qualified supreme entity’ where Śakti has scope to influence or qualify Śiva. This is the less subtle or more condensed state than *Nirguṇa Brahma* wherein attributes and qualities emerge for the sake of manifestation of the universe (Ānandamūrti, 1955). For linking the transcendental reality of *Nirguṇa Brahma* and immanent ground of *Saguṇa Brahma*, Sarkar introduces a soteriological aspect i.e., *Tāraka Brahma*, Liberating Brahman (“who lies in the non-attributional arena, but still keeps a close vigilance on the expressed universe”) (Ānandamūrti, 1978). With the help of five fundamental factors, having a physical structure *Tāraka Brahma* comes within the scope of *Saguṇa Brahma* otherwise He is *Nirguṇa*. Hence *Tāraka Brahma* is “The common point bridging together the empirical state of *Saguṇa Brahma* and the metempirical state of *Nirguṇa Brahma*”<sup>14</sup> (Ānandamūrti, 1969).

According to Sarkar’s philosophy, when Śiva wishes to get expressed, He allows His creative faculty, Śakti or Prakṛti to bind Him with triangles and many other polygons with the help of her three kinds of binding principles.<sup>15</sup> These binding principles are not static, rather they are changing among themselves from *sattva* to *raja*, *raja* to *tama*; and *tama* to *raja*, *raja* to *sattva* to create balance among themselves. Sarkar denotes this balanced state of Prakṛti as Śivānī or Kauśiki and Puruṣa as Pramaśiva and due to that *Brahma* remains in the *Nirguṇa* state.<sup>16</sup> When the preeminence of one *guṇa* over others, the state of equilibrium among three *guṇas* gets distorted and the expressed form of *Saguṇa Brahma* or the diversified manifested universe begins to emerge from *Nirguṇa Brahma*. Thus, Śiva becomes creator as well as plays the role of material cause. From this starting point, under the crudifying influence of Prakṛti, duality or diversity comes with the sequential emergence of *nāda*, *kalā*, cosmic mind, and five fundamental factors in the cosmic creative process of *sañcara* (extroversial movement) (Ānandamūrti, 1969).<sup>17</sup> Then under the influence of the *sāttvik* or santient principle, this cosmic transformation continues further and as a result the



advancement of unicellular, multicellular organisms, and finally, the finest form of evolution, the human mind occurs with the desire of infinite bliss (Ānandamūrtti, 1959) in the phase of *pratisaṅcara* (introversion reverse movement).<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the phenomenal world is a metamorphosed form of *Saguṇa Brahma*. Hence the world is termed as "Macrocosmic thought projection" or "macropsychic conation" of *Saguṇa Brahma* (Ānandamūrtti, 1971).

Each unit-consciousness has its origin in *Saguṇa Brahma*<sup>19</sup> and remains under the influence of *prakṛti* during the phase of manifestation in the movement from non-duality to duality, from subtlety to crudity, from subjectivity to objectivity. Consequently, this bondage or influence of the *guṇas* gets released by intuitional practice (*sādhanā*) of unit *mahat* that leads to the movement from duality to non-duality, from crudity to subtlety, from objectivity to subjectivity. This attainment of supreme merger to *Nirguṇa Brahma* is not possible unless unit-consciousness is freed from the bondage of *prakṛti*. As unit *mahat* by itself cannot go beyond the cosmic *mahat* only through the intuitional practice of his/her own and hence the help of *Tāraka Brahma*, the ultimate liberating entity<sup>20</sup> (Ānandamūrtti, 1959) is required. At the end, with the assistance of *Tāraka Brahma*, unit-consciousness gets liberated from the bondage of *Prakṛti* which is the ultimate mission of each unit-consciousness to complete the evolutionary journey of *Nirguṇa Brahma* to *Saguṇa Brahma* and again *Saguṇa Brahma* to *Nirguṇa Brahma*.

#### IV. Sarkar's Alternative Approach to Śaṅkara's Monism

Ontologically, Sarkar's theory of "*advaitadvaitādvaita*" accepts non-duality of *Brahma* but the nature and the status of ultimate reality differs from Śaṅkara's absolute monistic view. For example, in Sarkar's view, it is not a state of utter absolute attributeless, inactive, and impersonal like Śaṅkara's interpretation. Rather, it is the combining state of *Nirguṇa* (attributeless), *Saguṇa* (with-attributes) and *Tāraka Brahma* (liberating). In accordance with the first dichotomy of Śaṅkara's *Nirguṇa Brahma* and *Saguṇa Brahma*, Sarkar posits *Saguṇa* or *guṇayukta* or qualified consciousness is not completely different state; it is just a metamorphosed state of consciousness where the balance among

triangle of binding principles of *Prakṛti* get lost and through the sentient principle *Puruṣa* gets qualified. Consequently, being influenced or qualified by *prakṛti*, a portion of consciousness gets associated with the qualities and attributes to form *Saguṇa* (with quality), or *Saviśeṣa* (with objective), or *Sakal* (with sprout or *kal*) *Brahma*. Whereas, *Nirguṇa Brahma* is devoid of all *prakṛti*'s playful expression and remains beyond the scope of *prakṛti*'s influence. And hence *Nirguṇa Brahma* is beyond the periphery of subject-object demarcation. But *Nirguṇa Brahma and Saguṇa Brahma* are not completely two separate entities, rather both are two different states of the same singular entity composed of *Śiva* and *Śakti*. The dissimilarity in their forms is only due to the varying degrees of bondage of *prakṛti*.

Moreover, Sarkar's concept of *Tāraka Brahma* bridges the gulf between Śaṅkara's *Nirguṇa Brahma* and *Saguṇa Brahma*. *Tāraka Brahma*, a concept of *Tantra*, phenomenologically is *Nirguṇa* but his physical structure comes within the realm of *Saguṇa Brahma*. Due to their own actions, individuals remaining in the *Saguṇa Brahma* acquire *samskaras* to enjoy and continue the cycle of creation. On the other hand, being an objectless entity *Nirguṇa Brahma* is devoid of any association with the phenomenal world and has no function to manipulate the sufferings of this manifested world. In this circumstance, with the help of five fundamental factors, *Tāraka Brahma* physically appears as a tangential point to connect *Saguṇa Brahma* with *Nirguṇa Brahma*. Appearing a physical being, *Tāraka Brahma* takes initiative to associate "the world of *bhāva* [idea], and at the same time He remains connected with the world of *bhāvātīta* [transcendental entity], *nirguṇa* [unqualified], *nirākāra* [formless] which is beyond the periphery of mind" (Ānandamūrti, 1978, 26 August). By his 'active witnesship', *Tāraka Brahma* maintains a mutual harmony between *Nirguṇa Brahma* and the phenomenal world.

According to Śaṅkara the world can be treated as an illusion which is nothing but *vivarta* of *Nirguṇa Brahma*, the feeling of illusion by the unit-mind will also be an illusion if we don't accept the existence of the unit-mind. Thus for Śaṅkara not only is the physical world an illusion but psychic feelings will also be illusions. But in reality oxygen and

carbon dioxide are two different entities having different characteristics and utilities. If we ignore the differences of these two entities as *Māyā* or illusion and inhale carbondioxide instead of oxygen we cannot survive. This proves that in this relative world they are real, not mere 'idealistic' illusions. Thus concerning the dichotomy of Śaṅkara's *Brahma* and the world, Sarkar explained world is not merely an illusion.<sup>21</sup> If the world is *mithyā*, having no real existence, then what is there to witness by *Nirguṇa Brahma*. In the absence of anything to witness, His witness-ship becomes suspended to jeopardy His very own existence, which is absolutely untenable (Ānandamūrti, 1981). For this, Sarkar recognises the world as a relative truth so that every unit-being has got a task to realise the absolute truth. By advocating the world as the result of 'macropsychic conation' where differences are allowed to exist without creating any hindrance in this relative world.<sup>22</sup> Hence being a metamorphosed form of Cosmic Consciousness, the universe which changes depending on time, space, and person might be regarded as conventional real or relative real but not as completely false. For Sarkar, *Brahma* is absolute truth, and the Universe is also truth but relative truth.<sup>23</sup> Thus through the concept of *sañcara* and *pratisañcara* Sarkar overcomes the idealism of Śaṅkara concerning *Jagat* and removes the plethora of anomalies of Śaṅkara's monistic preachings.

Regarding the relation between *Brahma* and *Jīva* (individual self) again Sarkar differs from Śaṅkara. According to Sarkar, in the journey of its evolution, *Jīva* under the influence of *Prakṛti* is always bound by several bindings, suffering from numerous imperfections, and psycho-spiritual weaknesses and belongs to the periphery of microcosmic limitations. Unlike Śaṅkara, these attributional impurities or distortions are not unnatural or unreal as they are embedded in the human mind inseparably causing pain and pleasure. Ontologically, Sarkar does not subscribe to the notion of Śaṅkara — "*Brahma* and *jīva* are identical", rather the fundamental difference between *Brahma* and *Jīva* lies in certain attributional expressions as both have their own mind stuff with the combination of *mahat*, *ahaṃ*, and *chitta*. Regarding *Jīva*, the proportion of the constituents of mind varies among undeveloped and developed

unit-beings with the varying degree of influence of *prakṛti*.<sup>24</sup> But the thirst for happiness is the common denominator and mechanism for survival of each and every unit-being.<sup>25</sup> Consciousness being the material cause, every being has longing for consciousness that cannot be quenched only by getting limited material objects instead of *Nirguṇa Brahma*.<sup>26</sup> As the world itself is finite and hence it is not possible to quench the infinite thirst through this finite worldly object. Only the Cosmic Consciousness is infinite and this instinctual longing for infinite can only be contented by the attainment of Cosmic Consciousness<sup>27</sup> through sincere spiritual endeavour. The inherent quest for infinite is termed as *dharma* or *bhāgavatdharma* or psycho-spiritual longing.<sup>28</sup> This intrinsic property of the unit-being leads towards the path of salvation. Unit-being is the subject of physico-psychic limitations and always tries to transcend all those limitations. And hence *mukti* is the ultimate mission of each *Jīva* which helps to release *Jīva* from the bondage of his own reactive momentas or *Saṁskāra*.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, *Jīva* has to give conscious effort through *sādhanā* (spiritual endeavour), sacrifice, and service to get free from the bondages and become one with *Nirguṇa Brahma* which is the ultimate destiny in this journey of evolution.<sup>30</sup> For this spiritual practice, a healthy body and sound mind is required. Without basic minimum existential requirements body as well as mind can not be able to fulfil this journey. Therefore, basic needs for existence should be guaranteed for each and everyone to have their physical, psychic and spiritual development. Till date, there is no proper societal system to meet these basic existential requirements of everyone to fulfil their spiritual thirst. For assuring all these basic requirements, Sarkar advocates socio-economic consideration i.e., PROUT (Progressive Utilisation Theory) in his philosophy and has made his theory distinct not only from that of Śaṅkara but from everyone else.

Concerning the nature of *Māyā*, Sarkar again differs from Śaṅkara by clearly identifying *Māyā* as linking force between material and efficient cause of the universe with her three kinds of binding principles. This linking force acts only under the guidance of Consciousness and it has no separate existence as Sarkar states that “both these elements

are two for the sake of argument, they can under no circumstances be separated ... None of them can stand without the other" (Ānandamūrti, 1961). Whereas the significance of Śaṅkara's *Māyā* is illusive as it is stated as *anirvacanīya* or inexplicable. Unlike Śaṅkara, Sarkar made a contemplative attempt to advocate that being a cosmic inherent potency, there is no possibility of *Māyā* to become unreal or illusion; rather *Māyā* is as real as *Brahma*, as both these two principles are inseparable, and are bound to co-exist invariably in every evolutionary phase of creation. The principle of *Śiva-Śakti* unification is the foundation stone of Sarkar's perception of singular ultimate reality. Thus Sarkar's theory concerning *Śakti* is much more illustrative than that of Śaṅkara's *Māyā* in the concept of monism.

Moreover, for Sarkar, *jīvātmā* is nothing but the reflection of *Puruṣa* in a unit-object<sup>31</sup> which is similar to that of Śaṅkara. But Sarkar explained that the reflection of *jīvātmā* varies depending upon the composition of the reflecting plates i.e., unit-mind which is composed of five layers of *koṣa* just like the plantain flower.<sup>32</sup> This also differs from that of Śaṅkara. As for Sarkar, these unit-bodies are built up with *annamaya koṣa* for his physical structure and *kāmamaya koṣa*, *manomaya koṣa*, *atimānasa koṣa*, *vijñānmoy koṣa*, and *hiraṇmaya koṣa* for his mental structure. The perception or the reflection of *paramātmā* differs in the unit-mind depending upon the nature of the development of these *koṣa*. All these perceptions take place at *mahat tattva* of the unit-mind. These reflections vanish when *mahat tattva* ceases to exist without having any reactive momenta, *saṁskāra*. This stage only occurs when a unit-being attains *nirvikalpa samādhi* by dint of intuitional practice done by unit - *mahat*. Unit-minds by themselves cannot go beyond cosmic *mahat*, the subtlest manifestation of the *Saguṇa Brahma* as unit mind cannot exist without having any subject. There comes the concept of *Tāraka Brahma* of Sarkar to fulfil the practical aspects of the idealistic view of Śaṅkara. For the unit being, it is impossible to have the realisation of *Nirguṇa Brahma* as this state is beyond the scope of unit-mind.<sup>33</sup>

## Comparison between concepts of Śaṅkara and Sarkar

	Śaṅkara	Sarkar
Ultimate reality	<i>Nirguṇa Brahma</i>	<i>Nirguṇa Brahma</i>
<i>Brahma</i>	impersonal	personal with the concept of <i>Tāraka Brahma</i>
<i>Nirguṇa Brahma</i>	non-dual	combination of <i>Śiva</i> and <i>Śakti</i> who are in different spirit, but one in essence
<i>Māyā/Śakti</i>	illusory divine force	secondary efficient force controlled by <i>Śiva</i>
Views on <i>Jagat</i>	<i>Brahma Satyaṁ Jagat mithyā</i>	<i>Brahma Satyaṁ Jagadapi Satyamāpekṣikam</i>
Metamorphosis of <i>Nirguṇa</i> to <i>Saguṇa Brahma</i>	how <i>Māyā</i> act is not explained properly	explained as a process of <i>sañcara</i>
Metamorphosis of <i>Saguṇa Brahma</i> to <i>Nirguṇa Brahma</i>	lack details on how to acquire right knowledge to overcome the shackles of <i>Māyā</i>	explained as a process of <i>pratisañcara</i>
<i>Brahma</i>	<i>Nirguṇa Brahma</i> is placed higher than <i>Saguṇa</i>	<i>Saguṇa Brahma</i> and <i>Tāraka Brahma</i> are the attributional expression of same <i>Nirguṇa Brahma</i>
Types of <i>koṣa</i>	<i>annamaya koṣa</i> , <i>prāṇamaya koṣa</i> , <i>manomaya koṣa</i> , <i>vijñānamaya koṣa</i> , and <i>ānandamaya koṣa</i> .	<i>annamaya koṣa</i> , <i>kānamaya koṣa</i> , <i>manomaya koṣa</i> , <i>atimānasa koṣa</i> , <i>vijñānamaya koṣa</i> , and <i>hiraṇmayā koṣa</i>
Monism	<i>advaitavāda</i>	<i>advitadvaitādvaita</i>

## V. Conclusion

Monism is one of the most controversial and widely discussed central issues in the history of Indian philosophy and even to world philosophy. Here we observe that Śaṅkara's monistic theory has made a fundamental mistake by addressing a substantial difference between *Brahma* and *Māyā* and maintains an unfathomable gap between transcendental reality

and everyday world experience. While Sarkar's absolute monistic insight viz. *advaitadvaitādvaita* based on the principle of *Śiva-Śakti* union, which not only fill this gap, it has the potential for bringing revolutionary and dynamic change in our traditional interpretations and contemplations in the field of cosmology, ontology, and soteriology. Moreover, Sarkar's tāntrik principle of bi-polarity of *Śiva* and *Śakti* is dualistic in theory, but monistic in spirit. And, Śaṅkara's dualism of *Nirguṇa* Brahma and *Saguṇa* Brahma, Brahma and *Māyā*, Brahma and world, Brahma and individual self are easily circumvented with Sarkar's monistic standpoint as all these varied expressions are nothing but the different 'psychic manifestation' of cosmic consciousness.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Śaṅkara (788-820), also called Ādi Śaṅkara, is considered an eminent philosopher and theologian who consolidated the Advaita Vedānta. He wrote commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the Brahma Sūtras. He was a founder of Advaita (non-dualistic) doctrine, explaining the unity of Brahma (the universal Self) and Ātman (the individual Self).
- <sup>2</sup> Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921 - 1990), proponent of Ānanda Mārga Philosophy, also known as Ānandamūrtiji, is one of the most authoritative pioneers in introducing psycho-spiritual approach in Indian philosophy. Among all other philosophical discourses '*Ānanda Sūtram*' ("aphorism leading to *ānanda*, divine bliss") is a major contributing text of Ānandamūrtiji consisting with "original concepts of metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, ethics, and psychology".
- <sup>3</sup> Max Müller introduces the term 'henotheism' as a transitional stage from 'polytheism' to 'monotheism'.
- <sup>4</sup> The concept of anthropomorphism is a technical term often addressed to indicate various qualities and virtues of human beings as in the structure of God. For example, *agni* is recognised as *nṛṇām nṛtātmā*, i.e., the manliest hero.
- <sup>5</sup> Rāmānuja was most well known Indian theologian, philosopher, and the main proponent of Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda philosophy. The Śrīvāṣya is the most famous work of Śrī Rāmānuja which is based on Vādarāyaṇa's Vedānta śūtra.
- <sup>6</sup> *Kevalādvaitavāda* is often translated as "non-duality" or "one without a second". It means that except Brahma there is no other reality. Essentially, Śaṅkara's non-dual Brahma is characterised as *nirguṇa* (qualityless), *niṣkriyā* (actionless), *nirviśeṣha* (partless), *abhokṭṛ* (non-enjoyer). For Śaṅkara, there is no scope of duality between Brahma and ātman.
- <sup>7</sup> To establish harmony between transcendental and phenomenal reality the proponent of Ānandamārga Philosophy, Ānandamūrti advocates a comprehensive philosophy infusing philosophical treatise or *darśan śāstra*, spiritual treatise or *dharma śāstra*, and social treatise or *samāj śāstra* in a aphoristic style. The key text of the Ānandamārga Philosophy is *Ānanda Sūtram* (AS: 'Aphorisms of Bliss'). The AS consists of five chapters with 85 sūtras. *Ānanda Sūtram* was delivered by Sarkar in 1961 at Jamalpur. In this book, the author has attempted to present humanity with original concepts

of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and macro-history. He has set out for the first time a socio-economic approach conceived in the light of theistic philosophy, blending subjective approach with objective adjustment, that offers the world a well-knit and progressive social system based on economic justice.

<sup>8</sup> cf. *vrkṣasya svaḡato bhedaḥ patra puṣpa phalādibhiḥ* // *vrkṣāntarāt saḡātīyo vijātiyaḥ śīlādītaḥ* - (The difference of a tree from its leaves, flowers, fruits etc., is the difference within an object. The difference of one tree from another tree is the difference between objects of the same class. The difference between a tree and a stone is the difference between objects of different classes) *Pañcadaśī*, II, 20.

<sup>9</sup> *ekamevādviṭiyam Brahma* (Brahma is one without a second), *Chandogya Upaniṣad*.

<sup>10</sup> *sākṣīscetākevalonirḡuṇaśca* (He is the Witness, the Animator and the Absolute, free from *guṇas*) *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 6.11.

<sup>11</sup> In his philosophical writings G. C. Nayak explicitly states that in ontological and metaphysical spheres the concept of *Māyā* would be identified as one of the impractical, and illogical theory, as the theory involves multitude of problems concerning the locus, and object of the *Māyā*....." *Māyā* the "Advaitin's Gordian Knot", Indian Philosophy Congress, 58th session.

<sup>12</sup> *śivaśaktyātmakam brahma* (Brahma is the composite of Śiva and Śakti) A.S.1-1.

<sup>13</sup> *Śaktih Śā Śivasya Śaktih* (Śakti (the Operative Principle) is the (force) of Śiva). A.S.1-2.

<sup>14</sup> *Bhāvaḥ bhāvātīyayoḥ setuḥ Tārakabrahma* (The bridge between *Nirḡuṇa Brahma* and *Saḡuṇa Brahma* is called *Tāraka* (Liberating) *Brahma*). A.S.1-25.

<sup>15</sup> *Trigūṇātmikā sṛṣṭimātrkā asheśatrikoṇadhārā* (The tri-attributional primordial force (progenitrix of creation) flows on in endless triangular forms.) A.S.4-1.

<sup>16</sup> *Prathamā avyakte sā śivāni kendre ca Paramaśivaḥ* (In the first stage (not yet a stage of actual manifestation), *Prakṛti* is called *śivāni*, and the witnessing *Puruṣa* at the nucleus is called *Paramaśiva*) A.S. 4-3.

<sup>17</sup> *Pravṛttimukhī sañcāra guṇadhārāyām: sañcāra* (in the Cosmic Cycle) is the gradual extroversial movement under the increasing influence of the *guṇas* (binding principles) A.S.1-5.

<sup>18</sup> *Nivṛttimukhī pratisañcāra guṇāvakṣayeṇa* (Pratisañcāra (in the Cosmic Cycle) is the gradual introversial movement under the waning influence of *guṇas*.) A.S.1-6.

<sup>19</sup> *saguṇāt sṛṣṭirutpattiḥ* (The creation originates from *Saḡuṇa Brahma*) A.S. 2-12.

<sup>20</sup> In Sarkar's philosophical treatise, *Ānanda Sūtram*, it has been enunciated, as "The common point bridging together the empirical state of *saguṇa* and the metempirical state of *nirḡuṇa* is called *Tāraka Brahma*". *Tāraka Brahma* is the "tangential point" between two states, and this bridge is *Tāraka Brahma*, with one 'foot' in *Saḡuṇa*, and the other in *Nirḡuṇa Brahma*....

<sup>21</sup> The world is not unreal deception, a diversion falsely tinged. *Prabhat Sangeet-71*

<sup>22</sup> *Vaicitryam prakṛtadharmah samānam na bhaviṣyati* (Diversity, not identity, is the law of nature.) A.S. 5-8.

<sup>23</sup> *Brahma Satyam jagadapi satyamāpekṣikam* (Brahma is Absolute Truth; the universe is also truth, but relative) A.S. 2-14.

<sup>24</sup> *Mahadahamvarjite anagrasare jivadehe latāgulme kevalamcittam* (In undeveloped living organisms, creepers and shrubs where *aham* and *mahat* have not yet evolved, there is only *citta*) A.S. 1-18; *Mahadvarjite anagrasare jivadehe latāgulme cittayuktāham* (In undeveloped organisms, creepers and shrubs where *mahat* has not yet evolved, there is *aham* as well as *citta*.) A.S. 1-19; *Prāgrasare jive*



- latāgulme mānuṣe mahadaham cittāni* (In developed organisms, creepers and shrubs, as well as in humans, there is *mahat*, *aham* and *citta*) A.S. 1-20.
- <sup>25</sup> *Sukhānuraktih paramā jaeviivṛttih* (The attachment to happiness is the primary *vṛtti* (propensity) of living beings). A.S.2-2.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ānandam Brahma ityāhuh* (This *ānanda* is called *Brahma*) A.S. 2-4.
- <sup>27</sup> *Tasminnupalabdhe paramā tṛṣṇānivṛttih* (That (*Brahma*) having been attained, all thirst is permanently quenched) A.S. 2.5.
- <sup>28</sup> *Bṛhadeśanāprañidhānam ca dharmah* (To long for and run after the Great is *dharmā*). A.S. 2.6.
- <sup>29</sup> *Manovikṛtīh vipākāpekṣitā saṃskārah* (A distortion of the mind-stuff waiting for expression (i.e., a reaction in potentiality) is known as a *saṃskāra*) A.S. 3.4.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ātmani sattāsamsthīh* (Every entity is embedded finally in the *Ātman*) A.S. 2.9.
- <sup>31</sup> *Viśaye puruṣāvabhāsaḥ jīvātmā* (The reflection of *Puruṣa* in a unit object is called the *jīvātmā* (unit-soul). A.S. 2-8.
- <sup>32</sup> *Pañcakoṣātmikā jaevisattā kadalīpuṣpavat* (The living being is the composite of five *kośas* (layers of mind), like a plantain flower (with its petals). A.S. 3-1.
- <sup>33</sup> *Tasyasthīh amānasikeṣu* (This state (of *nirvikalpa samādhi*) is beyond the mind.) AS. 1-23.

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## *Disciplining the Women in Medieval Kerala : A Study of Maṅṅāpēṭi and Pulapēṭi*

Shiji K. P. and V. V. Haridas

The society in medieval Kerala was stratified, held its own tradition, culture and rituals. The indigenous practices like *Mārgam* (old custom), *Maryāda* (obligation) and *Ācāram* (established custom) had taken care of the rule of law. The absolute subjection of people to their age-old customs and traditions resulted in the recognition of customs as laws. Thus, customs were institutionalised by continuous observances. The people of medieval Kerala followed *Chāturvarṇya* (four *varṇas* i.e. Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra) ideals of the medieval Indian social system. The social status and hierarchy of every caste was specifically delineated which were bound on them.

Peculiar customs and practices observed in medieval Kerala, particularly related to high caste groups to maintain moral code. *Smārttavicāram*, *Maṅṅāpēṭi*, *Pulapēṭi* and *Parapēṭi* are the foremost regulatory mechanisms of women based on the concept of chastity.<sup>1</sup> These regulatory measures are directly related to the caste and gender principles of medieval Kerala. Earlier scholars such as Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai argues *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* as customs in favour of low castes against high castes.<sup>2</sup> This paper attempts to make a re-appraisal of the customs called *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi*, which in fact acted against the outcastes in medieval Kerala. The process of disciplining the Nāyar women through *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* was also taken up in this paper. How the concept of chastity was utilised in the medieval period to curtail the freedom of Nāyar women also is an important aspect of the study.

### Foreign and Indigenous Accounts on *Maṅṅāpēṭi and Pulapēṭi*

According to indigenous tradition of Kerala, the womanhood represented as to be gentle, polite, self-sacrificing, sexually passive and monogamous. There was a belief that the status and position of a woman enhances basically with the proper maintenance of chastity. Chastity was not dependent upon class, caste and social status. It was the sole responsibility of women to maintain chastity.<sup>3</sup> *Smārtaavicāram* was a trial of Nampūtiri women for adultery from late medieval period to the early 20th century.<sup>4</sup> The punishment for such an offence was excommunication. The women thus punished became outcastes in that particular social system.

Nāyar women were forced to practice customs like *Maṅṅāpēṭi and Pulapēṭi*. However, it was not based on any Brahmanical texts that such customs were practiced.<sup>5</sup> In fact, values prescribed by Brahmin tradition are amended in the case of sexual relation between Brahmin men and Nāyar women. The practice of *Sambandham* (a form of marriage among matrilineal castes) was prominent feature of Nāyar society.<sup>6</sup> The Nāyar women had concubinage relation with many Nāyar, Nampūtiri and other high caste men. Thus, the application of the concept of chastity in the case of Nāyar women is intriguing.

The foreign travellers visited Kerala in medieval period, refer about *Maṅṅāpēṭi and Pulapēṭi*. Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese traveller who visited Malabar in 16th century, is the first to mention *Maṅṅāpēṭi*.<sup>7</sup> Sheik Zainuddin, the indigenous scholar who wrote in Arabic, also refer to this practice.<sup>8</sup> The foreigners mention this as the most abominable and unbelievable custom of the Kerala Hindus. This custom had varied names in different places. In South Travancore it was called as *Pulapēṭi* or *Parapēṭi*.<sup>9</sup> The details of *Maṅṅāpēṭi and Pulapēṭi* are also varied in the foreign accounts.

Barbosa elaborated that on certain days of a year, an outcaste man could throw a stone or twig at a woman or touch her. In most of the cases there was no witness. But the women herself revealed the truth and ran away with the outcaste who polluted her. If she

refused to run away with that man, her relatives would kill her to save their honour. In certain cases, she requested for help to the outcaste man to sell her to foreigners.<sup>10</sup> This description shows that there was no need of a touch by an out-caste man for pollution. At the same time Sheik Zainuddin says that, every year there is a certain day, when an out-caste person would enter the sleeping room of a high caste lady or would dare to touch her, she becomes polluted and is forced to run away with him. If not, she would be sold as a slave by the Nāṭuvāl; or she gets converted to Muslim or Christian sects.<sup>11</sup> Herman Gundert says that the period of *Pulapēṭi* is in the Malayalam month of Karkkīṭakam corresponding to July-August.<sup>12</sup> M.G.S. Narayanan, M. R. Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal use the term *Maṅṅāpēṭi* (grasp by *Maṅṅān*) and *Pulapīṭi* (grasp by *Pulayan*) to denote the custom.<sup>13</sup> It is argued that it was a type of 'kidnapping' of high caste women by outcaste men.<sup>14</sup> The description shows that the outcaste men entered in to the room of high caste lady. No accounts mention molestation in the case of *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi*. Thus, highhandedness from the part of outcaste men not seems to be the reason for the practice. In fact, the origin and development of such a custom seems to be more complex.

Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai made a detailed study of the practice of *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi*. According to him, this practice originated after 11th century AD as a result of the Cēra-Cōla war.<sup>15</sup> To him, prior to 7th century AD or before the coming of Brahmins to Kerala, the society was egalitarian. The Brahmin ideology created a stratified society of castes. He thinks that *Pulapēṭi* was a privilege granted to low castes after the origin of caste system and it was a way to increase the number of slaves in Kerala.<sup>16</sup> No evidences related to the origin and development of this custom in medieval Kerala is found. Elamkulam explains about a pleasant atmosphere of *Pulapēṭi* practiced in medieval Kerala. The Nāṭuvālī declared a particular date of *Pēṭi*. That day may be related to the festivals or other rituals of outcastes. During that time the outcastes like *Maṅṅān*, *Pulayan* and *Parayan* attain super natural power and kidnap the ladies of

high castes.<sup>17</sup> It is probable that the oral tradition on this custom may have created fear among Nāyar women. It is argued that *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* were not actually practiced as a custom in medieval Kerala.<sup>18</sup> But this argument is not convincing as we have evidence to it in the account of Duarte Barbosa, in *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin* and also in the inscription of Vira Kerala Varma abolishing this practice in Travancore. It is also argued that it was only an attempt to create an atmosphere of fear among Nāyar women. He considers it a ploy by the eldest male members of *Taravāṭu* (the matrilineal joint family of the Nāyars) making use of the outcaste servants, and also a technique to punish particular outcaste men who incurred their displeasure.<sup>19</sup>

#### Disciplining the women

Nāyar society practiced matrilineal form of inheritance in Kerala. However, in practice the society was not matriarchal. Nāyar women had no right to partition the property, exchange the land, sale the profits from the property and so on. This type of economic transactions was controlled by *Kāraṇavar* (senior most male member of the *Taravāṭu* in the maternal line). The young ladies were under the strict control of *Kāraṇavar* and *Kāraṇavatti* (senior most female member of the *Taravāṭu*). They were the kingpins of *Taravāṭu*, especially in matters of young ladies including their *Sambandham*, child birth, divorce etc. *Kāraṇavar* and *Kāraṇavatti* decided the *Sambandham* of their female family members with appropriate Nāyar or high caste men. They decided the number of *Sambandham*, its time and continuance of the relationship.<sup>20</sup> The senior male members of the Nāyar family made use of *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* as a disciplinary mechanism to suppress the daring Nāyar ladies on the pretext of custom. So, the atmosphere of obedience was maintained in the Nāyar family by these customs.

The tradition related to *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* may have created a fear psychosis among the Nāyar women in medieval period. They

had enjoyed the right to visit temples and attend festivals in that time. But when a woman travel outside, she should be accompanied by a man like Nāyar soldier, or at least a boy above three-years of age depending on the financial position of each *Taravāṭu*.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the social system, in multiple ways, restricted the movements of women. Elamkulam argues that the *Nāṭuvāli* announced a particular date for *Pēṭi* in every year.<sup>22</sup> However, this view is at best a hypothesis as there is no evidence for such a declaration by any *Nāṭuvāli* in Kerala.<sup>23</sup> *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* gained wide popularity as oral tradition. The fear psychosis of such a social ostracism had sinister effects on Nāyar women of productive ages. Thus, their space restricted within the compound of *Taravāṭu* itself. The punishments related to this *Pēṭi* are of unalterable in nature in the medieval period. A Nāyar woman was excommunicated without trial from the community in case a *Pulayan* or *Maṅṅān* touched her. The only options left for her was to run away with that outcaste man or convert to Islam Christianity or lead an ascetic life.<sup>24</sup> The relatives generally opted the honour killing if she preferred not to leave the family after such a pollution.<sup>25</sup> The fear of execution or a life of outcaste compelled the Nāyar women to be concerned of purity.

The women were vulnerable to *Pēṭi* only after evening. The companionship of at least a three-year-old boy protected her from *Pēṭi*, and safeguarded her purity.<sup>26</sup> This custom openly announces that if a woman was accompanied by a male 'representative', she would be immuned to any sort of 'pollution'. This upholds men as protector of women from all sorts of hazards.

The social regulations restricted the free movement of low caste people in medieval Kerala. They were even prohibited to see, approach and touch an upper caste man. The custom called *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* were practiced during a period when pollution to any high caste person by low castes or outcastes were met with severe punishment. Thus, the possibility of any such act voluntarily from the side of an outcaste man was generally

truncated.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, aristocratic family head, or chieftain occasionally would have instigated his outcaste servant to touch the disobedient woman of his *Taravāṭu*. Hence the woman was punished on the pretext of custom itself.

### Seclusion of outcastes

According to tradition all outcaste men have the right to pollute Nāyar ladies by this medieval custom. But a few outcastes like *Maṅṅān*, *Pulayan* and *Parayan* had particularly created fear psychosis to the Nāyar women. The Brahminic ideology of seclusion of outcastes from the Varna society seems to be detrimental in such practices. The outcastes were identified with sorcery and witchcraft, such as *Oṭividya*, *Kūṭōtram* and *Mantravādam*. A social stigma may have formed upon particular outcastes by such practices.<sup>28</sup> The elite class would have taken advantage of the situation by utilising the service of the outcastes as practitioners of sorcery to settle their scores with the opponents. In fact, such practices would have enabled the outcastes to take advantage of the situation against their immediate oppressor and even the estranged masters. Fear was considered as a major regulatory mechanism in the entire period of Kerala history. The practice of sorcery and witchcraft by the outcastes created fear among the high castes which was exploited to control their women.

The account of Barbosa shows that, even in the absence of any witness to the incident woman voluntarily informed it and ran away with the outcaste man.<sup>29</sup> It may be either due to the fear of the custom or in a bid to save the life from execution. The woman considered it as her responsibility to ensure the caste purity of her *Taravāṭu* and so suffered the pain of excommunication in silence. Another possibility is the elopement of woman with her outcaste lover taking advantage of the custom. Thus, it may be either a sacrifice of her life for the honour of her family or a selfish act to fulfil her desire. But evidence is scanty to ascertain the reason



behind the actual practice of this custom. Some ballads mention the marriage of upper caste women by low caste men, but of course not in the context of *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi*.<sup>30</sup> The caste rules prescribed and practiced in medieval Kerala denied any possibility of lower or outcaste men marrying upper caste women. Thus, the reappraisal of the custom of *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* will throw light on the implications of this practice.

Elamkulam suggested another possibility that the Nāyar woman herself created the circumstances for this custom to live with her outcaste lover.<sup>31</sup> To him, during that time, it was tough to touch a Nāyar woman by a *Pulayan* or *Maṅṅān*, as she was under strict vigilance of Nāyar militia.<sup>32</sup> But this argument holds no water, as all upper castes were not in highest glory during that period. So, unlike the aristocratic women, the ladies belonging to poor families were not protected by militia, but were only accompanied by a small boy or maids. The social status of Nāyars and outcastes were in the extremes. Thus, it is argued that the possibility of love relation between upper caste women and lower caste men seems to be unusual if not improbable in those social circumstances.<sup>33</sup> According to Hindu law, the exogamous marriage was strictly prohibited. The medieval texts on caste rules and customs like *Śankarasmṛiti*<sup>34</sup> and *Vyavahāra Māla*<sup>35</sup> preach against inter caste marriage. But the prescription against such *Varṇaśaiṅkara* implies such occurrences in medieval Kerala.

In medieval Kerala, the *jāti* regulations were not the creation of rulers like *Nāṭuvāli*. The formal order for conducting *Smārttavicāram* was announced by the ruler, but the outcome of the trial was nothing to do with the ruler as it was entirely managed by the community leaders.<sup>36</sup> There was no evidence regarding the royal proclamation of a particular date for the practice of *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* by the ruler.

Elamkulam argued that the freedom of adultery was permitted once in a year.<sup>37</sup> But this argument is in contravention to the social system of that period. During that time adultery was considered as

a serious offence which resulted in severe punishment. It seems that the custom called *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* existed not to promote adultery, but to prohibit adultery and ensure the chastity of Nāyar women. However, it is relevant in this context to reappraise the concept of chastity among Nāyar women. The practice of *Sambandham* makes polygamy an accepted norm. Thus, monogamy is not a necessary norm of chastity in the case of Nāyar woman. Here the concept of pollution and purity gained more emphasis. The male dominated ideology of caste always forbade and condemned the *pratilōma* type of marriage, which may be true in the case of medieval Kerala as well. In a matrilineal inheritance system, the elder male members ensured the purity of their successors. They were proud of begetting progeny from upper caste men, but frightened on any possibility of adulteration by lower or outcaste men. *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* seems to be the institutionalisation of the fear of *Varṇaśankara* by the elite males.

The heinous part of *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* was the award of punishment without trial. Thus, at the very moment of such occurrence they ran away from the *dēśam* due to the fear of execution. The woman involved in this solely bore the brunt of social ostracism. In most of the cases external agency did not implement the punishment but accepted themselves by the victims.

K. N. Ganesh analyse *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* based on the class theory of Marx. To him, the Nāyars and Pulayars were two distinct classes and their existed the possibility of class struggle between these two groups. He says that, in a traditional society, the class struggle is visible through the customs and beliefs and the violation of traditional *Maryādas*. He says that the low castes expressed their discontent against high castes through the customs of *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi*.<sup>38</sup> But in medieval Kerala history, we have not found any evidences of conflict between outcastes and upper castes. Purity and pollution practice seem to be abided by the people of Kerala. The outcastes not dared to challenge their impurity and they kept

away from the public sphere. They perceived untouchability and unapproachability as a result of their actions in previous life. In that social context class struggle seems to be a distant dream. M.G.S. Narayanan refutes the view of K.N. Ganesh. To him, during medieval period no one imposed customs and traditions on people, but themselves accepted it.<sup>39</sup> However, this argument of people voluntarily following customs and traditions in medieval period is contentious. The circumstances in which people became so subservient is only a matter of conjecture. They were not conscious of class exploitation and simply considered it as their fate. It is argued that they were not bothered about the freedom from that social system.<sup>40</sup> However, such over simplification of customs and practices in medieval period can be challenged. Brahminic ideology works in a social and political system, where power is used in visible or invisible manner upon the common people by the elite.

#### **Re-appraisal of *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi***

In the case of *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi*, adultery was not practiced like *Aṭukkaḷadōśam*. According to medieval travel accounts even pollution by personal contact was not required for excommunication in the case of these customs. In some cases, *Pulayan* or *Maṅṅān* had seen the Nāyar women from a distance and howled out 'Seen! Seen!' which resulted in the excommunication of the latter.<sup>41</sup> A native account of 16th century mentions that in some cases, a *Pulayan* or *Maṅṅān* threw a stone or twig at a woman of higher caste or touched her.<sup>42</sup> In any of these cases women were not allowed to stay back in her house. So, it was a case beyond chastity. It seems that it was a toll of gender discrimination devised by the aristocratic class to restrict the freedom of their women. The concept of purity and pollution is utilised for this.

The social structure of medieval Kerala places the *Maṅṅān*, *Pulayan* and *Parayan* as servile group of outcastes far below the upper castes. They never challenged their masters and generally remained loyal.

In such a social condition how far the outcastes might have enjoyed such a custom to touch the Nāyar women is highly debatable as the existing social system deprived the outcastes of any social space. It may be due to external compulsion if at all they practiced it. It is argued that the Kāraṇavar of Nāyar *Taravāṭu* compelled his outcaste servants to do that.<sup>43</sup> In fact the Kāraṇavar made use of this custom to discipline the audacious ladies in his family, who disobeyed him. Here the outcaste men and high caste women became the victims of existing social customs. Caste differences and gender inequality acted as a weapon to regulate certain groups of society. The power of patriarchy and caste system acted as a tool against the outcastes and women in medieval Kerala society.

Even in a matrilineal Nāyar *Taravāṭu*, males dominated the family structure. The mobility of women was regulated by the elder male member of the family. The space of women confined within the wall of *Taravāṭu*. But a few references related to *Maṇṇāpēṭi* shows that she was threatened within this limited space itself.<sup>44</sup> If any outcaste man touch high caste woman by entering the house, the family members of the latter supported the former. In fact, *Maṇṇāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* were not accidental incidents, but a well-planned conspiracy to discipline the women.

The daring attempt to abolish *Maṇṇāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* was made by Vira Kerala Varma in 1696 AD. In Kalkulam inscription the King orders that *Pulapēṭi* and *Maṇṇāpēṭi* shall not be practiced in the territory lying from the west of Tovāḷa, to the east of Kannēri and between the mountain range and the sea. If, in transgression of this order, *Pulapēṭi* and *Maṇṇāpēṭi* practiced, the very embryo in the womb of the *Pulayan* and *Maṇṇān* shall be extracted and slain. It is also ordered that if the *Pulapēṭi* and *Maṇṇāpēṭi* occurred to the woman, the pollution shall be considered as removed if the woman bathe in a tank.<sup>45</sup> This stone inscription was placed at the northern entrance of Keṇṭappāivīṭu. But most of the Nāyar *Taravāṭus* were not ready to accept the order, as they were bound to traditional customs and

rituals, which they considered more sacrosanct than the royal proclamation. This royal order protects the upper castes. Here cruel punishments are prescribed to *Maṅṅān*, *Pulayan* and *Paṛayan*. The entire family of the outcaste would be killed if anyone practiced *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi*. This punishment itself is directed against women. Here the victim was outcaste woman, who had no involvement in this practice. It indicates that the proclamation of Kerala Varma protects only the interests of upper caste people in the society.<sup>46</sup>

Even after the royal proclamation *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* were practiced in Kerala by Nāyar families. *Putuvapāṭṭu* depicts the story of the courageous ruler of Kottayam called Kerala Varma who stopped the custom *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* on Kollam Era 871 *Makaram* 25 (23 January, 1696).<sup>47</sup> But his daring attitude led to his assassination by nobles with the consent of Umayamma Rani.<sup>48</sup>

The present study makes it evident that *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* was one of the regulatory mechanisms to discipline the women of Nāyar community by the patriarchal society. They tried to ensure the purity of their women by restricting their mobility and free will with this custom. The public space was fully restricted to Nāyar women by this custom. Their free movements and independent actions were controlled by a fear psychosis of social ostracism. Thus, *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* can be considered as a disciplinary mechanism, to curtail the freedom of Nāyar women within a matrilineal community. This custom also used as a tool to alienate the outcastes from the rest of the society.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Maṅṅāpēṭi* and *Pulapēṭi* literally means fear of the *Pulayas* and fear of *Maṅṅāns*. It refers to a popular belief prevalent in some parts of Kerala roughly till the middle of the 20th century, that men of the outcastes like *Maṅṅān*, *Paṛayan* and *Pulayan* could approach young women of the Nāyar caste and pollute them on a particular day.

<sup>2</sup> Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Anathe Keralam* (Mal), p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> Parakkal Gauri Amma, 'Sthreekalum Pathivrathyavum' (Mal), *Lakshmi Bai*, Vol. 18, 1934 October, p. 146.

- <sup>4</sup> Parameswaran Moosath, *Śaṅkarasmṛti*, 1905, Kottayam, 2017, pp. 132-137; P. Bhaskaranunni, *Smārttavicāram*, Kottayam, 2009, pp. 148-209.
- <sup>5</sup> The significant texts of Brahmanical ideology in medieval Kerala are *Kēraḷōlpatti*, *Śaṅkarasmṛti* and *Vyavahāramāla*. These texts do not speak of these customs. Even in medieval chronicles called *Granthaavaris* these customs are not recorded.
- <sup>6</sup> *Sambandham* was a form of marriage practiced by high caste Hindus till middle of the 20th century in Kerala. The matrilineal family of high castes including Nāyars opted this form of marriage. In this form of marriage, the lady married a man of higher caste particularly Brahman. But the children born in this relationship had no property right of his father. Generally, in this form of marriage the women opted polyandry.
- <sup>7</sup> "In certain months of the year they do their utmost to touch some *Nayre* woman by night as secretly as they can, and this only for the sake of doing evil. They go by in order to get into the houses of the *Nayres* to touch women, and during these months the women guard themselves carefully, and if they touch any woman, even though none have seen it, and there may be no witnesses, yet she declares it at once, crying out, and she will stay no longer in her house that her caste may not be destroyed; in general she flees to the house of some other low caste folk, and hides herself, that her kinsfolk may not slay her; and that thence she may help herself and be sold to foreigners, which is off times done. And the manner of touching is this, even though no words are exchanged, they throw something at her, a stone or stick, and if it touches her she is touched and ruined. These people are also great sorcerers and thieves; they are a very evil race". M. L. Dames, ed., *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 68-69.
- <sup>8</sup> "If a woman of a higher caste, on certain particular nights of the year, happens to be hit with a stone or something else from the hands of a man of inferior caste and she was not at that time accompanied by any man, she will be turned out of her caste. In such circumstances, she has no alternative other than embracing Islam, Christianity or become a yogi. Otherwise she will be sold by the local ruler". S. M. H. Nainar, ed., *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin*, Kolalampur, Reprint 2009, pp. 43-44.
- <sup>9</sup> S. Achuthawarrier, *Kerala Samskaram* (Mal), Trivandrum, 2003, p. 139.
- <sup>10</sup> M. L. Dames, ed., *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, Vol. II, pp. 68-69.
- <sup>11</sup> S. M. H. Nainar, *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin*, pp. 43-44.
- <sup>12</sup> Gundert says that during the month of Karkkitakam high caste women may lose caste, if a slave happens to throw a stone at them after sunset. Hermann Gundert, *Malayalam English Dictionary*, (1872), Kottayam, 2013, p. 632.
- <sup>13</sup> M.G.S. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1972, p. 3; Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, *Keralacharithram*, Vol. II, Sukapuram, 2012, p. 155.

- <sup>14</sup> Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, *Keralacharithram*, Vol. II, p. 155.
- <sup>15</sup> Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Annathe Keralam* (Mal), p. 123.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- <sup>18</sup> P. P. Sudhakaran, 'Pulapeti, Puthiyoru Anweshanam' (Mal.), *Kerala Padanangal*, IV, January-March, 1994, p. 385.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*,
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 508.
- <sup>21</sup> A.S. Ramanatha Ayyar, ed. *Travancore Archaeological Series (T.A.S)*, Vol. VII, Part II, Trivandrum, 1930, pp. 26-28.
- Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Annathe Keralam* (Mal), *op.cit.*, p. 113.
- <sup>23</sup> There were a number of *Nāṭus* and *Nāṭuvāli* in medieval Kerala. Many of them such as Zamorin, Kolattiri, Venatu ruler and Cochin Raja attained the position of independent rulers in late medieval period. V.V. Haridas, *Zamorins and the Political culture of Medieval Kerala*, New Delhi, 2016, pp. 24-25.
- <sup>24</sup> S. M. H Nainar, *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin*, pp. 43-44.
- <sup>25</sup> P. P. Sudhakaran, 'Pulapēṭi Puthiyoru Anweshanam', p. 509.
- <sup>26</sup> Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Annathe Keralam* (Mal), *op.cit.*, p. 113.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- <sup>28</sup> P. P. Sudhakaran, 'Pulapeti Puthiyoru Anweshanam', p. 509.
- <sup>29</sup> M. L. Dames, ed. *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, Vol. II, pp. 68-69.
- <sup>30</sup> Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, *Keralacharithram*, Part II, Sukapuram, 2012, p. 158.
- <sup>31</sup> Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Annathe Keralam* (Mal), p. 113.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- <sup>33</sup> P. P. Sudhakaran, 'Pulapēṭi Puthiyoru Anweshanam', p. 507
- <sup>34</sup> N. P. Unni, ed. *Śankarasmṛiti*, Torino, 2003, p. 192.
- <sup>35</sup> *Vyavahāramāla*, Manuscript Library, University of Calicut, 1563.
- <sup>36</sup> N.P. Unni, ed. *Śankarasmṛiti*, pp. 260-261.
- <sup>37</sup> Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *Annathe Keralam* (Mal), p. 115.
- <sup>38</sup> K.N. Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalekal* (Mal.), 1990, Trivandrum, 2011, p. 169.
- <sup>39</sup> M.G.S. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, *op.cit.*, p. 3.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> M.L. Dames, ed., *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, Vol. II, pp. 68-69.
- <sup>42</sup> S. M. H. Nainar, ed. *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin*, pp. 43-44.
- <sup>43</sup> P. P. Sudhakaran, 'Pulapeti, Puthiyoru Anweshanam', p. 485.
- <sup>44</sup> Velayudhan Panikkassery, *Keralam pathinanjum pathinarum noottanduakalil* (Mal), Kottayam, 1963, p. 79.
- <sup>45</sup> The relevant portion of Kalkulam inscription are as follows: "The King having been pleased to order that *Pulappēḍi* and *Maṇṇāppēḍi* shall not be in practice in the territory lying to the west of *Tōvāla*, to the east of *Kaṇṇēri*

and between the mountain range and the sea, the two popular assemblages of Mahājanas met in deliberation and had this order (kalpana) engraved on stone.

If, in transgression of this order, *Pulappēḍi* and *Maṇṇāppēḍi* should again become prevalent, the very embryo in the womb among the Pulayarn and Maṇṇān shall be extracted and slain. It was also ordered that if (the pollution consequent on) *Pulappēḍi* and *Maṇṇāppēḍi* should happen to a woman, the pollution shall be considered as removed if the woman bathe (in a tank) and come out”.

A. S. Ramanatha Ayyar, ed. *T.A.S*, Vol. VII, Part II, pp. 28-29.

<sup>46</sup> M. R. Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, *Kerala Charithram*, Vol. II, Sukapuram, 2012, p. 157.

<sup>47</sup> M.R. Raghava Varier, ed. *Kēraḷōlpatti Kīḷipāṭṭu*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 2016, p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.



## *Sant Kabir and India's Esoteric Tradition: A Mystical Journey*

Sudeshna Majumder

### **Introduction**

Sant Kabir, the fifteenth-century mystic poet of medieval India attempted to reconcile his domestic life and weaver's profession with his mystical quest. He never sought a life of contemplation through mortification of the body, and rather embraced the body as the receptor of mystical experience and the seat of spiritual rapture. This article attempts an analytic representation of the co-existence of a life of toil and a life of mystical realisation in lyrics of Kabir.

### **I. Kabir and Bengal's Esoteric Tradition**

*"Bīnī Chādariyā": The Body is a Woven Fabric*

Kabir never promoted the doctrine of renunciation that was the staple of Indian ascetic life. His craftsman's mindset led him visualise the body as a carefully crafted work of art. Body, the seat of our senses and thoughts is central to our existence. We cherish, as our cravings, and satisfactions set ripples through our body. Whenever we are displeased with the surrounding, the body receives the first blow, through persecution or self-infliction. Being the potential carrier of disease, the body becomes subject to our critical enquiry and social suspicion. It is human body that is covered, isolated, segregated and mortified due to clinical purpose. In this scenario Sant Kabir's songs become very significant as it highlights the intricate mechanisms of the living body and its immense possibilities through the allegory of weaving, "*Jhīnī Jhīnī bīnī chadariyā. Kāhe hai tānā kāhe ke bharnī/ Kaun tār se bīnī chādariyā*":

Subtly and delicately the wrap is woven.  
 What is its warp? What is its weft?  
 With what fibre is this wrap woven?  
 Two veins form the warp and the weft,  
 And the wrap is woven with the spinal cord.  
 Eight lotuses spin the wheel,  
 Five elements add to the weaving.  
 The Creator takes ten months to sew it.  
 Knock by knock the wrap is woven.  
 This wrap is worn by gods, men and sages alike,  
 And they have soiled it through constant wearing.  
 This servant Kabir has worn it with care  
 And he leaves it as it was (unblemished).<sup>1</sup>

This particular song highlights the life of diligence as it glorifies the skill and concentration of the weaver at his loom. Kabir introduces Indian tantric concepts of *Idā*, *Pingalā* as vital veins that encapsulates spiritual power within the body. The body is glorified and adulated as the finest of earthly creations, while at the same time Kabir attracts our attention to the abuse of this very body, that is 'soiled' by mortals. Very strikingly, he depicts 'gods' wearing the same body (*'chādariyā'*) as humans. This non-conformist stance is quite symptomatic of the Bhakti poets. "Dās Kabīr jatan se oḍī" ("This servant Kabir has worn it with care") is Kabir's way of suggesting a moderate path of life to fellow humans. The body requires neither the hardship of austerity, nor the over-indulgence to gluttony, but should be tempered by absorbing all experiences of life. Notwithstanding the deep philosophical purport of the song, the appeal of this song rests on its simple adoration of the living body and its humane treatment. Incidentally, Tanti-pa, the eighth-century mystic poet of *Charyapada* likens the mechanisms of life with a handloom and interpreted human existence as the process of weaving.

In the loom pure cloth can be woven.  
 I am the weaver.  
 The yarn is my own yet I do not know how to describe it.

The world is three and a half arms long.  
 This yarn is enough to weave for the whole world.  
 'Anahata' looms prepare the static cloth.  
 Two places have been broken and joined again stronger than  
 ever.<sup>2</sup>

Guru Tanti-pa or Tantrī-pāda, as his name suggests, was a weaver by profession like Kabir Das and he too makes ample use of the metaphor of weaving to depict human body. For him, the 'three and a half arms long' world is the human body, and the yarn (the nerves) weaves the entire 'world' (the body). He refers to both his vocation as a weaver and his spiritual identity as a *siddhāchārya*, the one that shapes the soul: "The yam is my own yet I do not know how to describe it." In this magical yarn process the 'static cloth' or living body that is bounded by mortality (*had*), is prepared by boundless looms ('Anahata' or *anhad*). In this way Tanti-pa indicates the co-existence of the bounded and boundless within the same human form. The boundless human consciousness inhabits the bounded human form: "Two places have been broken and joined again stronger than ever." Incidentally, this *had-anhad* dichotomy forms the crux of Kabir's spiritual quest. In one of the verses he refers to the body as a vessel (*ghat*) and makes it a home of the eternal spirit (*anhad*): "*is ghaṭ antar anhad garjai, isī me uṭhat phuhārā*".<sup>3</sup>

"Teri kaya mein guljar": *The Garden within You*

Sant Kabir's method of visualising a garden within the body abides by the ancient Indian esoteric principles of the body (*Dehatatva*). According to this principle the body is often compared to a tree with branches and the meeting points of the nerves are often compared to lotus flowers: "*Bāgon nā jā re nā jā terī kāyā mein guljār*". This verse of Kabir is translated by Rabindranath Tagore in *Songs of Kabir* (1915):

Do not go to the garden of flowers!  
 O Friend! go not there;  
 In your body is the garden of flowers.  
 Take your seat on the thousand petals of the lotus, and there  
 gaze on the Infinite Beauty.<sup>4</sup>

In this particular poem the organic mysteries of human body is compared to the splendour of a garden. *Guru*, who is the spiritual guide, is depicted through the metaphor of 'man malī', the 'gardener of the mind'. A similar metaphor recurs in folk-songs of Bengal where the spiritual guide is often referred to as 'mon chāshā', or 'the tiller of the soul'.

The original *pada* of Kabir in Hindi deals with a more extended metaphor than that of Rabindranath Tagore's translation. Tagore's translation captures the crux of Kabir's argument, encapsulating the spiritual awakening of man in the beauty of a blooming lotus, whereas in the original verse the 'aṣṭ kamal' relates to the Hindu religious practice of defining the spinal cord and the nervous system. In Indian tradition a lotus with eight petals is a marker of spiritual perfection that is invoked by Kabir in his adulation of the human consciousness.

A similar metaphor recurs in the Lālongīti *Dil-doriyār mājhete āche mojār kārkhānā* to depict the blossoming of spirituality within the body: "There is a garden within the body/A flower has bloomed in it! The entire world is mesmerised by its fragrance/Only Lalan's heart is not yet satisfied."<sup>5</sup>

The song expresses the intense spiritual discontent, and eternal mystical yearning of the *sādhaka* self. The idea takes us back to the twenty-third poem of *The Charyapada* (Eighth- Ninth century CE), where Guru Bhusuku depicts the soul as a lotus-garden and to enter the soul one has to overcome the five senses:

If you want to go hunting  
Then kill five people.  
To enter the lotus-garden  
Remain single-minded  
At morning it is alive at night it is dead.<sup>6</sup>

In the same poem the umbilical-cord is visualised as a floral garland that remains even after the body perishes. Kabir seems to incorporate the esoteric same tradition in one of his verses, where he depicts five senses as five companions: "*Ghat hi mein panchou sakhiyān/ Dulhai nahvavain ho./Ghat hi mein man hai māli/Fulmāl le āvai ho*" (There are five

companions in this vessel,/those bathe their beloved./There is a gardener within this vessel, who comes with a floral garland).<sup>7</sup>

In Kabir's verses the human form is glorified both for its own sake and as a seat of spiritual awareness. He offers us a sight of the intricate human form along with an insight into that form. Within the body there is not only organic intricacy but also the workings of thoughts and emotions. Thus for Kabir the allegory of the garden with a lotus at its centre is symbolic of the human body as a haven of human consciousness. This shuttling between the realms of the physical and the metaphysical becomes a characteristic of Kabir's mysticism.

*"Sādho yeh tan ṭhāṭh tamboore kā": This Body is His Instrument*

In the song "Sadho yeh tan ṭhāṭh tanbūre ka" Kabir uses the image of a *tamboora* (an Indian string instrument) to depict how the human form is gradually attuned into spiritual realisation. Sant Kabir combined his vocation with his devotional quest and that is why his songs are interwoven with physical and metaphysical concepts. The corporeal metaphors recur in Kabir's lyrics as vehicles of spiritual transcendence. The song "Sādho, yeh tan ṭhāṭh tanbūre kā" appears in *Songs of Kabir*:

O friend! this body is His lyre; He tightens its strings, and draws from it the melody of Brahma.

If the strings snap and the keys slacken, then to dust must this instrument of dust return:

Kabir says: "None but Brahma can evoke its melodies".<sup>8</sup>

Tagore seemed to take some poetic liberties while translating this song. He interpreted 'Hujur' or the 'Supreme Entity' of Kabir's song as 'Brahma'. Steeped in the philosophy of the English Romantic poets, Tagore translated 'tamboora', for his targeted non-Indian readers as 'lyre'. 'Lyre' or 'harp' is an evocative metaphor in English literature that symbolises the inspired sensitive soul of a poet. Most appropriately articulated by Coleridge in 'Eolian Harp' (1795) and by P. B. Shelley through his fervent appeal to the West Wind, "Make me thy lyre" (1819), the parallel between the strings of a lyre and the emotional quivering of the poetic heart continues to inspire poets of successive

generations. It is interesting to relate how the image of the musical string moves across centuries and cultures to articulate the spiritual orientation of the human form.

Tagore was acquainted with verses of Kabir through the translation of Kshitimohan Sen as early as in 1910 when he was writing the lyrics of *Gitanjali*. Even before translating verses of Kabir into English in 1912-13, Tagore actively participated in Kshitimohan Sen's Bengali translation of Kabir's lyrics in 1910.<sup>9</sup> Tagore's English translation of Kabir's one hundred verses in *Songs of Kabir* (1915) often comes under the scrutiny of critics because they were not only based on Kshitimohan Sen's Bengali translation of Kabir, but are reworked versions of Ajitkumar Chakrabarty's English translation of Kabir's songs. Moreover, Evelyn Underhill, the well-known British writer on Christian mysticism had collaborated with Tagore in bringing out the English translations of Kabir that might be the reason for interpolation of Western concepts such as 'Lyre' (in place of 'tamboora') or 'brother' (to explain 'sadho') into Kabir's lyrics. Peter Friedlander in his essay "Tagore, Kabir and Underhill" (2011) had aptly suggested that the undercurrent of Christian mysticism in this collaborative translation had "a significant impact on popular images of Kabir in the West"<sup>10</sup>.

Tagore himself applied the image of a *veena* (another Indian string instrument) in one of his songs with anthropomorphic connotations. The song "Āmāre koro tomār bīnā" was written in 1894:

Make me thy veena, lift me, o lift me up!  
 My strings will be played by thy enchanting fingers.  
 O touch my heart with thy tender lotus-hands,  
 My heart will hum at thine ears.  
 It will look at thy face and shed tears  
 In sorrow and in joy,  
 It will silently lie at thy feet if forgotten.  
 Nobody knows in what novel tune then  
 A song will be played towards the space.  
 Its notes of ecstasy will attain the shore of Infinity.<sup>11</sup>

Layered in shades of love and devotion the song represents the sensitive creative soul as a musical instrument whose strings are receptors of worldly experience. The idea of a spiritual communion through music is also expressed in the subtlety of metaphors. A similar metaphor of musical instrument recurs in other *padas* of Kabir such as "Jhī jhī jantar bājai" and "Jantrī jantra anupam bājai" to interpret the harmonious nature of earthly existence.

*"Is ghaṭ antar bāg bāgiche": The Body is a Vessel*

Kabir's portrayal of the human body as a microcosm of the world makes him a traveller in the path of *Dehatattva* that was traversed alike by the eighth-century gurus of *Charyapada* and the wandering minstrels of Bengal, the *bauls*. The philosophy of *Dehatattva* interprets the physical mechanisms of human body as the storehouse of dormant spiritual power: "is ghaṭ-antar bāg-bagiche isī mein sirjanhārā":

Within this earthen vessel are bowers and groves, and within it is the Creator:

Within this vessel are the seven oceans and the unnumbered stars.

The touchstone and the jewel-appraiser are within;

And within this vessel the Eternal soundeth, and the spring wells up.

Kabir says: "Listen to me, my Friend! My beloved Lord is within."<sup>12</sup>

In this particular poem the microcosmic representation of the world within human form with the whole gamut of 'bowers and groves', 'oceans and stars' portrays man not as an omnipotent being but as a part of nature. The natural constituents of the body complement the elements of nature. The living body with its intricate metabolic system have been a source of wonder for the followers of esoteric faith, who accepted the physical world as a medium for their metaphysical aspiration. Human body as an earthen vessel is a recurrent symbol in Kabir's songs. Kabir's other verses "Cṭandā jhalkai yahi ghaṭ māhī—", "Yā ghaṭ bhītar sapta samundar,/Yāhi mein naddī nārā" represent

human body as an epitome of the universe through similar rhetorical expressions.

Kabir views human body as a container of the mind and a holder of experience. The fragile body that is bounded by death (*had*) contains the spirit that is boundless (*anhad*). The human form becomes the primary vehicle of Kabir's mystical journey and he often realises his 'sain' within his own body: "Kabir says, O brother, behold! The Lord is in this vessel of my body"<sup>13</sup>. The co-existence of emotional state of 'bhakti' and its conscious realisation within the physical body is interpreted by Kabir as the co-existence of the touchstone and the jewel-appraiser.

"Is ghat-antar bāg-bagīche" explores the state of 'being in this world'. The process of 'being' takes place through imbibing all the experience this world has to offer. That is how the entire world gets metaphorically reflected in the earthen vessel of the human form. Sitting within the circle of mundane life this desire to move beyond its periphery was the constant tendency in Kabir's poem that was quite symptomatic of other poets of Indian mysticism: Amir Khusrau, Raidas, Rajjab, Fakir Lalon Shah and Hasan Raja.

Sant Kabir, who attempted to reconcile his family life and weaver's calling with his mystical quest, most appropriately explained it through the verse 'tarvar ek mūl vin thādā', where the *guru* and the disciple sits on the same tree: "The disciple chooses the manifold fruits of life and tastes them, and the Guru beholds him in joy." Kabir likens himself to the disciple, who prefers to taste the innumerable pleasures that life has to offer and at the same time he witnesses the enjoyments of the body with a detached and serene mind. The *Guru* and the *Chela* (disciple) reside within the same self of man and the dichotomy between the life of gratification and the life of austerity is hence resolved as Kabir proclaims: "The formless is in the midst of all forms. I sing the glory of forms"<sup>14</sup>.

*"Murali bajat akhaṇḍā sadāye": The Body is His Flute*

In Kabir's verses, besides *ghat* and *veena*, the metaphor of *murali* (the flute) is also evocative of the human form and it is laden with esoteric



connotations. Like *bauls* and *fakirs* of Bengal, this fifteenth-century mystic too interpreted the human form as a vehicle of mystical experience, "Muralī bājat akhaṇḍ sadāye tahān prem jhankārā hai":

The flute of the Infinite is played without ceasing, and its sound is love:

When love renounces all limits, it reaches truth.

How widely the fragrance spreads!

It has no end, nothing stands in its way.

The form of this melody is bright like a million suns:

incomparably sounds the vina, the vina of the notes of truth.<sup>15</sup>

In this particular song the human form with its immense possibilities is visualised as a flute, whose sound resonates unceasingly across the world. In Kabir's songs the existence of a cosmic harmony is indicated through the music of instruments like '*muralī*' and '*veenā*' that echoes the esoteric philosophy of *The Charyapada*. In *Charyapada* 19, guru Kanhu-pa depicts "the mind and the vital breath are the flute and the cymbal." The porous human body with its continuous sensory interaction with this world through ingestion, excretion and copulation resembles a flute bending the wind through its holes.

Kabir also applies the analogy of 'a million suns' to explain the all-encompassing nature of human-existence (the melody of the flute). The metaphors of the flute and the *veenā* recur in many of Tagore's songs to express human soul. It is striking to notice how Rabindranath Tagore, while in the process of getting acquainted with songs of Kabir, applied the analogy of flute in a similar context in one of his songs from *Gitanjali* "Āmare tumi ashesh korechho" (1912). The image of a vessel (*ghaṭ*) which is the staple metaphor in Kabir's songs to express the glory of human form also appears in this song:

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.

This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresher life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales  
And hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands  
 My little heart loses its limits in a great joy and gives birth to  
 utterance ineffable.  
 Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands  
 of mine.  
 Ages pass and still thou pourest, and still there is room to  
 fill.<sup>16</sup>

For the eighth-century esoteric-Buddhist *siddhāchāryas* human body becomes the primary means of realising the essence of being (*Sahaja-sādhanā*). Another *Charya-guru* Vināpada visualises human form as a *veenā* that contains the characteristics of the sun and the moon:

“The sun was the gourd, the moon was used as its strings  
 The unstruck sound was the neck  
 And the ascetic woman became the disc  
 o maid, it is the sound of Herua’s Vina”<sup>17</sup>

Kabir’s songs are often associated with ‘*Sahaja yoga*’ or the spontaneous awakening of devotion within human form. The eighth-century poet-saints of *Charyapada* had introduced the philosophy of ‘*Sahaja*’, or attainment of enlightenment through the living body, an idea that led to the development of ‘*Sahajayana*’, a branch of esoteric Buddhism in eighth-century Bengal and Odisha. This particular philosophy continued to influence the ‘*sahajiya*’ philosophy of Bengal’s *baul* sect through successive centuries. Ananda Coomaraswamy has defined the significance of ‘*Sahaja*’ in the context of Indian aesthetics as the celebration of ‘everything that lives’: “There is then no sacred or profane, spiritual or sensual, but everything that lives is pure and void.”<sup>18</sup> In Kabir’s songs the recurrent metaphors of *ghaṭ*, *veena* and *muralī* are used to depict the human body, which are vital aspects of esoteric Buddhism. Regarding these points, though from a largely regional perspective, Sant Kabir’s philosophy of life could be traced back to eighth-century Bengal’s rich esoteric tradition.

“*Nācho Re Mere Mann Matt Hoi*”: *Sufism meets Bhakti*

Kabir can never be associated with dance or trance-induced emotional exuberance that is a common trait among mystics. Unlike sixteenth-

century Bhakti saint Meerabai and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu of the fifteenth century, who embraced dance as a means of spiritual communion, Kabir did not want 'Bhakti' or devotion to be demonstrative, and rather he wanted it to be realised within, through the composure of the mind. As Evelyn Underhill, in her introduction to *Songs of Kabir* has rightly pointed out: "he escapes the excessive emotionalism ... seen in India in the exaggerations of Krishna worship, in Europe in the sentimental extravagances of certain Christian saints"<sup>19</sup>. With his attachment to the life of toil, Kabir trod the middle-path between the life of rigorous contemplation and that of emotional excess. Though all these Bhakti *sadhakas* of medieval India strived to seek divinity in man, they could be differentiated by their characteristic ways of *sāadhanā*.

The legends of his life and his lyrics foreground the image of a serene and meditative man of labour. Hailing from the poor Muslim community of weavers, the family man Kabir becomes an embodiment of the domestic sage who accommodated a life of contemplation within a life of action. However, in the entire creative oeuvre of Kabir, "nācho re mere man matta hoi" is a standalone lyric that is suggestive of a dynamic movement.

Dance, my heart! dance to-day with joy.  
The strains of love fill the days and the nights with music, and  
the world is listening to its melodies:  
Mad with joy, life and death dance to the rhythm of this music.  
The hills and the sea and the earth dance. The world of man  
dances in laughter and tears.  
Why put on the robe of the monk, and live aloof from the  
world in lonely pride?  
Behold! my heart dances in the delight of a hundred arts; and  
the Creator is well pleased.<sup>20</sup>

The mind of the poet dances to the music of love and the entire universe revolves to its rhythm. For Kabir, dance is not a physical movement, but it occurs within. It is the mind that dances. In this

introspective state the mind seems to surpass the body and merge with the motion of universe, as he depicts through the rest of song.

The metaphor of dance associates Kabir the Sufi ideals. Though Sant Kabir's connection with Sufism is a matter of debate among academics, legends locate him in the Chistiya order of Sufi tradition. Though Evelyn Underhill, in her introduction to *Songs of Kabir* interprets the verses of Kabir as reconciliation of Islamic mysticism and traditional Brahminism, the inclusive nature of Kabir's lyrics debunked the rigidity of all institutionalised faiths. Dance as a means of prayer and transcendence was popularised in Sufism by Jalaluddin Rumi in the 13th century. He said: "There are many ways to the Divine. I have chosen the ways of song, dance and laughter"<sup>21</sup>. He is the founder of the Mevlevi Order of Sufism that is characterised by the whirling prayer dance. Dance as a metaphor of spiritual quest recurs in many of Rumi's poetical works.

Come! Come! Thou art the Soul, the Soul so dear, Revolving!  
Come! Come! Thou art the Cedar, the Cedar's Spear,  
Revolving!...  
... O silent Love! Teach me thy own Dance here, Revolving!

The content of Kabir's song echoes not only Rumi's vision of dance as the guiding force of universal motion, but also resembles the cosmic dance of Shiva Nataraja in Indian aesthetics. Thus it indicates Kabir's movement across different religious and cultural co-ordinates of India.

In "nācho re mere man" Kabir's expression "chhāp-tilak lagāy bans char ho rahā jag se nyārā" condemns the traditional Indian ascetic practice of austerity and glorifies the concept of 'Sahaj-sādhanā'. The concept of 'Sahaj-sādhanā' is indicated in the rhetoric of Kabir's verse "santo, sahaj samādhi bhālī": "O Friend, *sahaj-samaadhi* is the best way / ... I do not close my eyes, nor do I shut my ears! I do not persecute my body either! I see as I smile, with my eyes wide open! And I can see that beautiful form everywhere"<sup>23</sup>.

Kabir's deity is not an abstract one. Rather he is an all pervasive entity, existing in every small aspect of this mundane world. One need

not renounce this material life to realise this deity, but immerse in this very life and feel its variety to realise the Creator. This idea is asserted at the closure of Kabir's song and thus for him, dance becomes not merely a manifestation of emotional exuberance, but an expression of involvement into various activities of material existence. Kabir sought his deliverance through this very living state. His verse "sadho bhāi jībata hī karo āsā" explains his philosophy of life:

O friend, yearn for Him while you are still alive.  
 Try to understand Him and realise Him in this very life,  
 For Deliverance resides within this Life.  
 You did not get through your duties of this life,  
 And you hope for deliverance after death.  
 If you talk of uniting with Him after you leave this body,  
 That is a false hope.  
 If you get Him now, you'll get Him then as well,  
 Or else you'll live in hell.  
 Get drowned in Truth, know the True Guide and believe in  
 His Name.  
 Kabir says, 'I am follower of my Station, for this is the Ideal  
 Way.'<sup>24</sup>

In this way, by accepting the professional and familial bonds of life Kabir attempts to surpass them through his sincere devotion to the station of life, which he often depicts as 'sādhanā'. He seeks his deliverance through the very process of his spiritual quest and it indicates the co-existence of pragmatism and mysticism in this domestic-sage.

## II. Kabir and Amir Khusrau: Reconciliation of Sufism and Bhakti

*"Tohi Mori Lagan Lagāye Re Fakir va": The Mystical Union*

The emotional bond between the devotee-poet and his spiritual guide is an integral part of Sufi mysticism, as demonstrated in most of the *qawwalis* by Amir Khusrau. Sant Kabir's manner of addressing his fellow mystics as 'Sādho' or his call to his inner self as 'Fakiroā' points at this spiritual camaraderie:

To Thee Thou hast drawn my love, O Fakir!  
 I was sleeping in my own chamber, and Thou didst awaken  
 me; striking me with Thy voice, O Fakir!  
 I was drowning in the deeps of the ocean of this world, and  
 Thou didst save me: upholding me with Thine arm, O Fakir!  
 Only one word and no second-and Thou hast made me tear  
 off all my bonds, O Fakir!  
 Kabir says, "Thou hast united Thy heart to my heart, o Fakir!"<sup>25</sup>

This particular verse expresses the bond of love Kabir shared with his spiritual guide, Pīr Tākki of Jhānsī. Legends of Kabir's life posit him under the twin tutelage of Guru Ramananda and the famous Sufi Pīr, Tākki of Jhānsī. 'Fakir' is the manner of address usually applied to an Islamic sage. However, the term 'Faqeer' comes with a specific mystical connotation in Sufism, indicating a person with intense spiritual longing. In Kabir's verse the poet-persona's utmost emotional dependence upon the 'Fakir' locates him within Sufi tradition. This Fakir might be a person other than Kabir or he might be another self residing within the poet-saint. The 'Fakir' persona becomes the initiator of Kabir's spiritual awakening as his song suggests: "Sovat hī main apne mandir mein! Shabd māri jagāye re Fakirvā." The *Fakir* seems to emerge as a saviour figure and the prime-mover of the poet's life. Very strikingly, in this verse Kabir addresses both the '*Fakir*' and the '*Sādho*'. '*Fakir*' seems to be his spiritual guide while '*Sādho*' is a term he uses to address his fellow mystics in the path of the spiritual quest (*sāadhanā*). Kabir thus shares with his fellow mystics his utter amazement at the spell of the *Fakir*: "Kahat Kabīr suno bhāi sādho,/Prānana prān lagāye re Fakirvā."

This verse of Kabir follows the structure of a parable where the soul in a slumber is suddenly roused by a voice. The same soul is given a hand of rescue while being submerged. This soul is made to tear of all worldly bonds through a single divine utterance and ultimately merges into another soul in a mystical communion. The thirteenth-century Sufi mystic poet Amir Khusrau, who preceded Kabir in promoting the idea

of mystical communion through music, contributed to the cultural exchange between Sufi and Bhakti poets of successive centuries. The emotional bond of devotion that Khusrau shared with his spiritual guide Nijamuddin Auliya verged on romantic love and this spiritual companionship was also evident in the verses of medieval Bhakti saints, who connected with common people through the simple message of unconditional love.

The rhetoric of Kabir's poem strikingly matches with a *kalaam* by Amir Khusrau. The tone of ultimate submission reminds us of Amir Khusrau's famous verse 'Chhāp Tilak', where the poet's self is completely immersed within the self of his spiritual guide, through just a glance "Bāt agam kah dīnī re mose nainā milāike":

He created his own form and went near his Beloved,  
But the moment he saw the Beloved's form, he was oblivious  
of himself.

You have taken away my form and my soul by just a glance.  
You have said the inexplicable, by just a glance.

You have made me intoxicated by making me drink the nectar  
of love with just a glance.

My fair wrists with green bangles on them are snatched by  
you with just a glance.

I surrender to you, O my Cloth-Dyer! You've dyed me in your  
hue with just a glance.

Khusrau dedicates his life to you, Oh Nizam, you have made  
me your bride with just a glance.

You have said the wonder by just a glance.<sup>26</sup>

Incidentally, in both verses of Khusrau and Kabir the metaphor of spiritual rescue works through the imagery of holding hands. The attainment of spiritual knowledge is expressed in Kabir's verse through a cosmic sound: "Sovat hī main apne mandir mein/Shabd mār jagāye re Fakirvā", whereas in Khusrau's verse the inexplicable is explained without a sound, through just a glance: "Bāt agam kah dīnī re mose nainā milāike." Similarly, the image of a mystical union at the closer of

Kabir's verse "prānana prān lagāye re Fakirvā" echoes Khusrau's address to Nijām: "Khusro Nizām ke bal bal jaiye, / Mohe suhāgan kīhī re mose nainā milāike." The way Khusrau applies the non-Islamic concept of 'tilak' (mark on the forehead) in this *qawwali* is a marker of cultural fusion. 'Chhap-tilak', the traditional markers of Indian ascetic identity is rejected as an irrelevant glitter in this spiritual communion. The same phrase recurs in Kabir's verse 'Nacho re mere man matt hoī' with a similar message: "Chhāp-tilak lagāy bāns charh ho rahā jag se nyārā / Sahas kalā kar man mero nāchai rījhe sirjanhārā." In this poem too, the application of 'Chhap-tilak' condemns the traditional Indian ascetic life of austerity. These cultural interactions between the Hindu inhabitants and the Muslim settlers, occurring since the twelfth century were thus manifested in the rhetoric of both Khusrau and Kabir.

*'Koun Rangrezva Range Morī Chunarī': The Way of Soul-Making*

Dyeing of threads and fabric is an integral part of textile craft in India since ancient times. This method from professional domain is often applied in mystical verses as an evocative metaphor of transformation. In verses of Sant Kabir and Amir Khusrau, the metaphor of dyeing indicates the transformation of the soul through the colour of love and devotion:

Who is the dyer that has dyed my scarf?  
 This scarf consists of five elements,  
 And the scarf looks so good upon me.  
 Adorned in sixteen adornments and thirty-two ornaments,  
 I play with my beloved cooing his name.  
 Kabir says, listen O Friend,  
 How can one be redeemed without the company of Truth?<sup>27</sup>

As Kabir wonders "Koun rangrezvā range morī chunarī", he refers to the mortal body that is consisted of five elements (earth, water, fire, air and space): "Pānch tattva ke bonī chunariyā" and he sings the glory of this human form "Chundarī pohirke lāgai borī sundarī". A similar image recurs in a famous *kalaam* by Amir Khusrau "Tori surat ke balihāri Nizām" where the poet-saint imagines his soul to be the bride (*rājdularī*)



of Nizām and wants Nizām to transform his soul. The entire process is allegorised through the image of cloth-dyeing:

What a beautiful face you have O Nizām,  
 My scarf is the dirtiest of all and people are making fun of it.  
 Dye it anew and save my honour, O Nizām.  
 In the name of Baba Ganj Shakar, save my honour, O Nizām.  
 Qutab and Farid have come with wedding offerings, Khusrau  
 is the royal bride, O Nizām.  
 Some are fighting with the mother-in-law, while some with  
 the sister-in-law.  
 But I expect your support, O Nizām.<sup>28</sup>

The figure of *Rangrezvā* recurrently appears in mystical verses of both Kabir and Khusrau as 'the transformer of the soul', as a symbol of the Divine Lover or the Spiritual Guide. In Khusrau's other famous kalāms like 'Chhāp Tilak' and 'Āj Rāng Hai' 'Rangrezvā' plays the role of the prime-mover in the spiritual communion between the poet and his Murshid: "Bal bal jāūm main tore rangrezvā./Apnī sī rang dīnī re mose nainā milāike" (Khusrau, 'Chhāp Tilak'). Kabir with his weaver's instincts finds it appropriate to express his mystical yearning through the metaphor of dyeing. "Sāin-ghar dāg lagāye āyī chundarī/U rangrezvā ko maram na jānai" and "Sāhib hai Rangrez,/Chunar merī rang dārī" are two significant verses of Kabir that play with the symbolism of dying of the soul.

'Rang' indicates not only the 'pigment' applied on textile, but also the 'colour' used in the traditional Indian festival of colours 'Holi' or 'Dhulat'. Amir Khusrau applies 'rang' in this particular sense in one of his famous *qawwalis*. In "Mohe apne hi rang mein rang de rangīley" ("Dye me in your hue") Khusrau blends threads of Hindu festival of colours to interpret the Sufi's longing for spiritual transformation. Incidentally, in this particular verse the poet's appeal is not towards the Dyer ('Rangrezvā') but to the Coloured One ('Rangīley'), a phrase often applied to Lord Krishna in Bhakti bhajans. In the Vaishnava legend Krishna celebrated Holi with his companions by smearing coloured

powder on them, which is symbolic of his spiritual amalgamation with the selves of his devotees. Holi, the secular folk festival of colours got a religious identity with the revival of Vaishnavism in fifteenth-century India. Holi, with this traditional Hindu religious connotation is thus applied by Khusrau from a very inclusive perspective to disseminate Sufi-thoughts in a more populist manner throughout the country. Kabir, in one of his verses applies the word '*rang*' to explain 'colour of love', which adds to the beauty of human existence: "Pānch rang ki hamrī chunariya/Prem binā rang fik dikhay." All these allegorical instances of cloth-dyeing portray the poet-persona as a woman and thereby corroborate the traditional representation of human soul as a feminine figure eternally yearning for a male god. This concept is reiterated in Sufi and Bhakti poems where the devotee poet adapts a feminine identity and pines for uniting with the self of his Spiritual Guide (*Murshid*) and this emotional bond between the devotee and the divine entity verges on homoeroticism.

*"Jaag Piyari Ab Ka Sovai": The Dawn of Consciousness*

In mystical poetry the dawn of human consciousness is often compared to the state of awakening. In this light Kabir's verse "Jāg piyari ab kā sovai" serves as a significant metaphor that urges the human soul to remain ever awake and prepared for spiritual realisation.

O friend, awake, and sleep no more!  
 The night is over and gone, would you lose your day also?  
 Others, who have wakened, have received jewels;  
 O foolish woman! you have lost all whilst you slept.  
 Your lover is wise, and you are foolish, O woman!  
 You never prepared the bed of your husband:  
 O mad one! you passed your time in silly play.  
 Your youth was passed in vain, for you did not know your  
 Lord;  
 Wake, wake! See! your bed is empty: He left you in the night.  
 Kabir says: "Only she wakes, whose heart is pierced with the  
 arrow of His music."<sup>29</sup>

This apparently romantic verse featuring a bride in her nuptial bed is layered with a metaphorical purport that indicates a feminine soul inhabiting a male body. This coexistence of two selves within the same body is one of the prominent features of mystical poetry. The lyrical mood of Indian classical *bandish* is introduced within this spiritual verse. As Kabir says: “soyi dhun jāge/shabd bāṅ ūr antar lāge” the rhetoric of romance merges into that of prayer. The human soul that is often conceived as a bride is described in a state of sleep that has missed the auspicious hour of epiphany. The image of the heart pierced with arrow of music connotes a state of erotic sublimation amounting to mystical rapture. Another significant verse of Kabir “Jāg rī merī surat suhāgan jāg rī/Kyā tu sovata moha nīd mein,/uthke bhajaniyā mein lāgrī” likewise summons the sleeping soul to wake up to the call of self-awareness.

Kabir's verse “Jāg piyārī” has a narrative structure that talks about the unfortunate bride whose husband has left her unaware in her nuptial bed. ‘The Parable of the Ten Girls’ in the ‘Gospel of Matthew’ (24, 25) strikingly deals with a similar narrative as that of Kabir's verse. In this parable ten girls went to meet the bridegroom with their oil lamps, five of them took extra oil to keep the lamps burning and remained awake through the night, waiting for his arrival, whereas the other five girls did not take extra oil for their lamps and fell asleep. When the bridegroom arrived at midnight, the five girls who were alert and awake went into the wedding feast, and the other five missed the chance. Thus Jesus concluded, “Watch out, then, because you do not know the day or hour”<sup>30</sup>. Likewise, Kabir's expression “Jin jāgā tīn māṅik pāyā” alerts the devotee to remain conscious and ever vigilant in mind to attain the moment of realisation. It is interesting to notice how similar images are transmitted across cultures conveying the common message of a devout vigil. Human mind, the seat of both instinctive desire and conscious realisation, becomes a chamber with multiple doors witnessing the entry and the exit of the beloved alike, as the tradition of secular romance deftly blends with Bhakti and Sufi religious consciousness in verses of Kabir and Khusrau.

### III. Sant Kabir and Sant Ravidas: Prayer of the Downtrodden

*“Ab Kaise Chhute Nām Raṭ Lāgī”: Kabir and Ravidas*

Kabir’s younger contemporary Ravidas hailed from a family of tanners (*chamar*) in Varanasi and he was a shoemaker by profession. His family vocation of tanning hides and his contact with dead animals gave him the status of an untouchable in Hindu society. And yet he held devotion (*bhakti*) as the sole means to overcome the differences of class, caste and creed. Eventually, Ravidas became the voice of the entire *chamar* caste and emerged as a Dalit spiritualist. Sant Kabir (1440-1518) and Sant Ravidas (1450-1520) or Raidas shared the same milieu and their mutual respect for each other’s spiritual quest is reflected in their respective works. Kabir in his verse “santan jāt na pūcho nirguniyān” refers to Raidas to explain how spiritual awareness can come to persons irrespective of caste and creed:

The barber pursues his spiritual quest.  
So do the launderer and the carpenter.  
Sant Raidas follows his spiritual quest.  
So does sage Supach, and both belong to the caste of tanners.<sup>31</sup>

In a similar way one of Ravidas’s verses testifies his wonderment at the intensity of Kabir’s devotion:

Who is more compassionate than You? ...  
Your Name has saved Namdev, Kabir, Trilochan, Sadhna and Sena,  
Ravidas says, listen, O brother, Lord Hari can do the impossible.<sup>32</sup>

Both Kabir and Ravidas are generally identified by their respective family trades and their caste-identity was determined by their callings. Kabir belonged to the caste of *‘jula’*, who were Muslim weavers and Ravidas was *‘chamar’*, a shoemaker. Both of these poet-saints in their respective *‘padas’* mention people, who belong to the lowest rung of the Hindu caste hierarchy by their humble vocations: the barber, the tanner, the weaver, and the butcher.

However, the shell of their caste-identity hardly matters in the mystical journey: "santan jāṭ na pūcho", as all of them are endowed with a spiritual kernel. This co-existence of a world of toil and a world of devotion made verses of the poet-saints so appealing to the toiling downtrodden mass.

Verses of Kabir and Ravidas are marked by rhetorical similarities and identical metaphors to describe the spiritual longing of the mystic for the divine entity. A well-known '*pada*' of Ravidas "Ab kaise chute nām raṭ lāgī" explains the closeness of this bond in the following way:

How to escape? Thy Name is everywhere.  
 O Lord, if you are the sandalwood, I am the water,  
 with your fragrance filling each part of my form.  
 O Lord, if you are the deep forest, I am a peacock,  
 Just as a partridge longs for the moon, so do I.  
 O Lord, if you are the lamp I am its wick,  
 That burns through days and nights.  
 O Lord, if you are a pearl, I am the thread,  
 Just as the gold melts in borax, so do  
 O Lord, you are my master and I am your servant,  
 Thus Ravidas surrenders to Thee.<sup>33</sup>

The rhetoric of devout submission is at play through the analogies of water-sandalwood, partridge-moon, lamp-wick, pearl-thread and the ultimate merging of the selves is indicated through the metaphor of gold melting through borax. A similar vocabulary was adapted by Ravidas's greatest disciple Meerabai to express her earnest surrender to 'Madho' (Krishna). In a very popular Meera-bhajan "Kunjana-bana chhādi he Madho, kāhān jāo gunadhām" metaphors of pearl, cuckoo and fish are applied to express the intense yearning of the devotee for the Divine self. The recurrence of identical metaphors thus strengthens the impact of Ravidas's teaching on Meera. Two verses of Kabir mirror the same thought through similar parallels of moon-partridge, lamp-wick, and master-servant that indicate the common rhetorical domain these *bhakti* poets shared:

Oh, what a flute that plays and fills me with joy!  
 My mind is aflame as a lamp without a wick,  
 The lotus blooms without a root,  
 And flowers bloom in bunches.  
 Just as the partridge surrenders its heart to the moon,  
 Just as the bird drinks from the drops of the star Swati.  
 The same way the lover has composed all his life in the single  
 tune of love.<sup>34</sup>

The metaphor of mystical union is extended in the next verse:

Oh, how can my bond with you be ever destroyed?  
 Just as a drop of water dwells on the lotus leaf,  
 You are my master and I am your servant.  
 Just as the partridge longs for the moon through the entire  
 night,  
 I serve you, my Lord.  
 My bond with you lasts from the beginning to the end,  
 How can this union be terminated?  
 Kabir says, 'my heart is bound for you,  
 Just as a drop of water merges into the sea'.<sup>35</sup>

Their verses express the dual world they inhabited: the world of labour (*karma*) and the world of devotion (*dharma*). They succeeded in synthesising their '*karma*' and '*dharma*' in a unique way that made them endearing to the poor unlettered mass of North India. Though their caste identity set an obstacle in the social recognition of their voice, it gave them a certain fluidity to mingle with the greater multitude of medieval India, even engaging in a cross-cultural dialogue with the Islamic esoteric saints, the Sufis. However, thoughts of Kabir and Ravidas were gradually appropriated within the folds of Hinduism. The interpolation of their songs with frequent words like Ram, Hari and Madho acts as catalyst to the process of religious appropriation through the rhetoric of Bhagvat Vaishnavism.

*The City without Sorrow: An Abode for All*

Little is known about the life of Sant Ravidas except from his own verses. Though Ravidas emphasises his own humble origin and cobbler's vocation in many of his hymns, simultaneously he also underlines his attainment of spiritual emancipation within this very station of life. This spiritual awakening enabled him to rise above all sorts of social segregation.

"My caste is low, so are my customs. I am lowly born.  
Nevertheless, I have served Lord Rama', says Ravidas, the  
cobbler."<sup>36</sup>

From this subaltern caste-consciousness Sant Ravidas envisioned a city without sorrow or, 'Be-gham-pura', as he named it and he conceived it as an abode for all:

Grieve not is the name of my town.  
Pain and fear cannot enter there,  
Free from possessions, free from life's taxes,  
Free from fear of disease and death  
After much wandering I have come back home  
Where the wheel of time and change turns not,  
And my Emperor rules, without a second or third,  
In Abadan, fills with love and wisdom.  
Where the natives are rich in the wealth of the heart,  
Where all live ever free in the City of God,  
Listen to Ravidas, just a cobbler:  
All who live here are my true friends.<sup>37</sup>

Ravidas's Beghampura denotes a utopian state, 'free from fear of disease and death'. It suggests also a state of the mind, 'free from possessions', which can erase economic and caste-related differences between people. He implies this city to be an abode for people of different profession, 'free from life's taxes', who belong to the same stratum: "All who live here are my true friends". Thus by accommodating all within the common fold of Beghampura, Ravidas seems to advocate a democratic worldview on behalf of not only the

*chamar* caste, but on behalf of the entire toiling multitude of medieval India.

A similar concept of a 'country without sorrow' appears in Kabir's verse 'Awadhu begham desh hamāra' and it also offers a classless society:

Oh Sage Brother, my country is without sorrow.  
I am calling out to the king and the beggar, the badshah, and  
the fakir,  
Those who are willing to take the utmost position should  
come and live here.  
Those who have come weary, you can shed the weight of your  
heart here.  
Stay here O Friend, so that you can easily get across the river  
of life.  
This country doesn't have earth or sky, neither has it the moon  
or the stars.  
Those who follow the way of truth come here to serve the  
Lord,  
Kabir says, listen o Friend, the way of truth is the ultimate  
path.<sup>38</sup>

The term 'begham' (Sorrow-less) occurs in verses of these two contemporary poets, which proves similar egalitarian vibes prevailing in their world of thought. Just as Ravidas envisions his 'City without Sorrow' as a mental state with positive energies ('where natives are rich in the wealth of the heart'), Kabir too, visualises his 'City of Love' as a spiritual abode that accommodates both the badshah and the fakir irrespective of their class and caste and here love acts as a great leveller.

Both Kabir and Ravidas realised that in their contemporary society discrimination occurs primarily due to economic and caste-related discrepancies, and the only way to overcome it is through unconditional love towards humanity. That is why the 'City without Sorrow' becomes a 'City of Love' as both ideas get interlaced. In modern India, as political parties flaunt the issues of equality and democratic rights, while dangling



the bait of public interest before people to barter majority in elections, this simple stance of the *bhakti* poets towards a 'abode for all' might serve as a truly inclusive clarion call for the revival of the underprivileged.

### Conclusion

In this way this particular syncretistic study of Kabir-bhajans with reference to Rabindranath Tagore's poems of *Gitanjali*, *baul* songs of Bengal, lyrics of *Charyapada*, qawwalis of Amir Khusrau and bhajans of Sant Ravidas, attempts to locate traces of India's rich esoteric tradition in Kabir's verses. Moreover, in Kabir-bhajans the reconciliation of Sufi mysticism within Bhagavad Vaishnavism is a marker of cultural exchange taking place across the Indian subcontinent between Hindu inhabitants and Islamic settlers from the twelfth century onwards.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> "Jhini Jhini Bini Chadariya". Kabir Song by Gundecha Brothers. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arGkaFKhHqM>. My translation.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Charyapada: A Translation of Poems from the Original*, Open Knowledge Foundation Network, India. Retrieved July 19, 2020, from <https://in.okfn.org/files/2013/07/The-Charyapada.pdf>, verse 25.
- <sup>3</sup> "Kabir." Retrieved July 30, 2020, from <https://sufinama.org/sant-vani>. emphases mine.
- <sup>4</sup> Kabir, *Songs of Kabir*. Trans. Rabindranath Tagore, Macmillan, New York, 1915. Retrieved June 2, 2020, from <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/6519/pg6519.html>. verse 4.
- <sup>5</sup> Lālon gīti, traditional, my translation.
- <sup>6</sup> *Charyapada*, verse 23.
- <sup>7</sup> Kshitimohan Sen, *Kabir, 1910-1911*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 1995, 181, my translation.
- <sup>8</sup> *Songs of Kabir*, verse 39.
- <sup>9</sup> Sen, 1995, Introduction.
- <sup>10</sup> Friedlander, Peter. 2011. "Tagore, Kabir and Underhill." Retrieved November 30, 2020, from [http://www.india-seminar.com/2011/623/623\\_peter\\_friedlander.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2011/623/623_peter_friedlander.htm)
- <sup>11</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Gitabitan", *Rabindracharanabali*, Vol. 4, Pashchimanga Sarkar, Kolkata, 1961. 218. My translation.
- <sup>12</sup> *Songs of Kabir*, verse 8.
- <sup>13</sup> *Songs of Kabir*, verse 23.
- <sup>14</sup> *Songs of Kabir*, verse 47.

- <sup>15</sup> *Songs of Kabir*, Verse 50
- <sup>16</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (1912), Visva Bharati, Kolkata, 2018, 9.
- <sup>17</sup> *Charyapada*, verse 17.
- <sup>18</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Shajha", *The Dance of Shiva: Fourteen Essays*, Rupa, New Delhi, 1918. Retrieved December 1, 2020, from <https://www.pdfdrive.com/the-dance-of-shiva-fourteen-essays-e157070740.html>
- <sup>19</sup> *Songs of Kabir*, introduction.
- <sup>20</sup> *Songs of Kabir*, verse 32
- <sup>21</sup> Rūmī, "Rumi Quotes." Retrieved May 15, 2020, from <https://4solok.wordpress.com/tag/rumi-quotes/>
- <sup>22</sup> Jalāl-ad-Din Rūmī, 'The Festival of Spring', *Divan*, Trans. William Hastie, James MacLehose & Sons, Glasgow, 1903. Retrieved May 16, 2020, from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/57068/57068-h/57068-h.htm>. verse 15.
- <sup>23</sup> Sen, 1995, 55, my translation.
- <sup>24</sup> Sen, 1995, 48, my translation.
- <sup>25</sup> *Songs of Kabir*, Verse 10.
- <sup>26</sup> Āmir Khusrau, 'Chhāp Tilak', Song by Zafar Hussain Khan Badayuni & Party, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQrwqX04jsA>. my translation
- <sup>27</sup> Sen, 1995, 156, my translation.
- <sup>28</sup> Āmir Khusrau, "Tori Surat Ke Balihari." Song by Pt. Vitthal Rao. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mha-HHvDpj8>, my Translation
- <sup>29</sup> *Songs of Kabir*, verse 36.
- <sup>30</sup> "The Gospel of Matthew", *Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament in Today's English Version*, American Bible Society, 1966, parable 25.
- <sup>31</sup> Sen, 1995, 30-31, my translation.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ravidas-bhajan*, traditional, my translation.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ravidas-bhajan*, traditional, my translation.
- <sup>34</sup> Sen, 1995, 74, my translation.
- <sup>35</sup> Sen, 1995, 125-126, my translation.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ravidas-Bhajan*, traditional, my translation.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ravidas-Bhajan*, Trans. Nirmal Dass, [onetrue.name.com](http://onetrue.name.com).
- <sup>38</sup> Sen, 1995, 62, my translation.

## *Historical Analysis of Akbar's Illiteracy*

Tuhina Islam

### **Abstract**

The great Mughal emperor Akbar was known to history for his appreciation of arts, culture and literature. However, it is surprising to know that Akbar was formally an illiterate man. Recently, a very pertinent question arises among the contemporary historians that whether Akbar was illiterate or literate? There are some historians who asserted Akbar's lack of scholastic attitude in his childhood and others have been throwing light on Akbar's good memory. In the present paper an attempt has been made to analyse the fact that, whether the great Mughal emperor Akbar, was truly an illiterate (*Ummi*) or his reputation as illiterate was baseless.

**Keywords :** Akbar's literacy, contemporary historians, illiterate, scholastic attitude, memory.

Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar (*arsh-ashiyani*), was the son of emperor Humayun and Hamida Banu Begum. He was born at Amarkot on 15th October, 1542. Akbar was 'a foreigner in India', who had not a drop of Indian blood in his veins. The particular branch of the Turks to which Akbar's ancestors belonged was known by the name of Chagatai. On the father's side he was a direct descendant of Amir Timur, a Central Asian Turk and from his mother's side, a Chagatai. The blood of the Turki tribes in Central Asia was much blended with that of the Mongols. Thus, the character of Akbar, so far as it depended upon heredity, was based on 'three distinct non-Indian strains of blood— the Turk, the Mongols and the Persian'.<sup>1</sup>

Akbar in his days of infancy was reared up in an adverse atmosphere, beyond the control of his parents. When he was born, his father

Humayun was impoverished and had been driven from the throne by Sher Shah Suri. Thus, the infant boy was separated from his parents who migrated to the Safavid court in Iran. While the parents of Akbar were in exile in Persia, he was brought up in Kabul by the extended family of his paternal uncles Kamran Mirza and Askari Mirza, and his aunts particularly the wife of Kamran. Later on in 1545 the three years old little Akbar met his mother once again and recognised her easily among a group of women. During that time, Akbar was looked after by a number of nurses; the chief of whom was Maham Anaga, wife of Atga Khan.<sup>2</sup>

However, in 1555 emperor Humayun restored the throne of Mughal empire and formally declared his son Akbar as the heir-apparent but Humayun's restoration to the throne of Delhi was not a bed of roses as he died in a couple of months later. So, Akbar ascended the Mughal throne at the age of thirteen under the regency of Bairam Khan who was a friend of emperor Humayun. Later on, Akbar successfully consolidated the Mughal Empire and became the greatest monarch of medieval Indian history.<sup>3</sup>

We find that the age of Akbar is very well documented in the historical sources. Abul Fazl,<sup>4</sup> an official court historian of Emperor Akbar has narrated many events of his reign and the works of two distinguished Muslim chroniclers Abdul Qadir Badauni<sup>5</sup> and Nizam-ud-din Ahmed,<sup>6</sup> who were in Emperor Akbar's services, are histories of high value. Besides these, many important documents and letters are written by Jesuit missionaries namely Father Monserrate,<sup>7</sup> Du Jarric<sup>8</sup> etc who often spent many years at the imperial court. All these sources depicted Akbar, as a man of extraordinary intellect. The historical documents recorded that the ancestors of Akbar were great patron of education and learning, and he inherited his princely manners, love of arts, literature and characteristically Persian delight in philosophical discussion from his Persian mother Hamida Banu Begum. His father Humayun was well-versed in Turki, Persian and Arabic languages and also showed interest in traditional sciences, and his grand-father Babur was a man of fine literary taste and fastidious critical perception. He

was also an accomplished poet and in native Turki he was master of a pure and unaffected style in prose and verse<sup>9</sup> alike. Under such an academic atmosphere Akbar inherited his scholarly tastes and love of books.

The reign of Akbar also brought a prolific development for Indo-Persian literature.<sup>10</sup> He patronised a large number of poets who came from far wide. Most of them migrated from Persia. In fact, Akbar was possibly the first who instituted a formal position of *Malik-ush-shu'arā'* (poet laureate) at the court. The *Malik-ush-shu'arā'* during his time were Ghazali, Khwaja Hussain Sanai of Meshed, Talib Amuli, Kalim Kashani, Qasim-i-Kahi, Urfi of Shiraz, Khwaja Hussain of Merv, Qudsi Meshhadi—all were Iranians but Abul Faiz Faizi was the sole exception. There were nine out of fifty-nine rated as the best amongst the thousand poets of Persian who completed a *diwan* or wrote a *Masnawi* which could be identified as non-Iranians. The source *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* gives a list of eighty-one poets and *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* mentioned one hundred sixty-eight poets in the court of Emperor Akbar.<sup>11</sup> According to Abul Fazl, 'thousands of poets are continually at court and many among them have completed a *Diwan* (collection of artificial odes) or have written a *Masnawi* (composition in rhyme couplets)'.<sup>12</sup> The histories, written at that times were '*Diwan-i-Sanai*', '*Diwan-i-Hijri*', '*Kulliyat-i-Naziri*', '*Diwan-i-Mushfiqi*', '*Diwan-i-Faizi*', '*Diwan-i-Kahi*' etc.<sup>13</sup> Abul Fazl also wrote about Akbar that 'the inspiring nature of his majesty is strongly drawn to the composing of Hindi and Persian poetry'.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes he composed verses in Persian and also familiarised himself with the Persian mystic tradition as contained in *Kimiya-i-Sa'adat* of Imam Ghazzali, the *Hadiqa* of Sana'i, the *Jam-i-Jam* of Auhadl, the *Masnawi* of Rumi, the *Maktubat* of Shaikh Sharaf-ud-din Yahya Maneri and the *Diwan* of Khusrau, Hafiz and Jami. Besides these, the works of Sadi's *Gulistan* and *Bustan*, the *Diwans* of Khaqani and Anwari were the favourite studies of Akbar. As a ruler, his interest also lay in the significant literary works of *Shah Nama*, *Qabus Nama*, *Zafar Nama* and the *Chengiz Nama*. About this Abul Fazl remarks, 'though the mystic works might have provided to Akbar certain ethical and moral concepts

of value but the real structure of his thought was built on *Shah Nama*, *Qabus Nama*, *Zajar Nama* and the *Chengiz Nama* and there was hardly any escape from it for a ruler of the times'.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Akbar's reign is marked as a new epoch in the literary history of India.

Akbar not only knew Persian but was also well-versed in Arabic, Sanskrit and Hindi, besides, he also had at least a working knowledge of these languages. The historical source *Ma'sirul Umara* mentioned that Akbar had begun to read '*Mizan*', the Arabic grammar. The historian Badauni also stated that before the establishment of Ibadat Khana, Akbar spent much time in discussing the word of God i.e., *Quran* and *Hadis*. It would not have been possible to discuss *Quran* and *Hadis* which were in Arabic without knowing the language.

The era of Akbar has also been defined as the period of renaissance in the field of Hindi literature. According to V. A. Smith, 'The brilliant development of original Hindi poetry in the time of Akbar may be ascribed partly to the undefinable influence exercised by a glorious and victorious reign, which necessarily produces a stimulating effect on all the activities of the human mind. Almost all Hindu poetry of merit is closely associated with the unrestricted practice of the Hindu religion, which was absolutely assured by the government of Akbar'.<sup>16</sup> One of the notable poets during the period of Akbar was Tulsi Das, the author of *Ram Charit Manas*. He has been acknowledged as 'the greatest man of his age in India — greater even than Akbar himself, inasmuch as the conquest of the hearts and minds of millions of men and women effected by the poet was an achievement, infinitely more lasting and important than any or all of the victories gained in war by the monarch'.<sup>17</sup> The other contemporary luminaries were Sur Das, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, Ras Khan and Birbal.

Akbar not only patronised poets but he also instituted a bureau of translation where different books of various languages like Hindi, Sanskrit, Greek, Arabic and Persian were, translated.<sup>18</sup> Abdul Qadir Badauni also opined about Akbar's interest for the translations into Persian or Hindi from Sanskrit or other languages. The *Mahābhārata* was translated into Persian under the title of *Razmnāma* and it would

have been impossible if the emperor had no knowledge of Sanskrit.<sup>19</sup> The translation of *Rāmāyana* into Persian was completed by Abdul Qādir Badauni after a long labour of four years.<sup>20</sup> The *Atharva Veda* was translated into Persian by Haji Ibrahim Sirhindi, the *Lilavati*, a treatise on arithmetic by Faizi, the *Tājak*, a treatise on astronomy by Mukammal Khan Gujrati, the *Wāqī'āt-i-Bāburi* in Turkish by Rahim Khān Khānān and the *History of Kashmir* in Sanskrit by Maulana Shah Muhammad *Shāhābādī*. The *Jamī'ul-Rashidi* was translated by Abdul Qadir. The *Majma'ul-Buldān*, a geographical work in Arabic, was translated into Persian by several scholars such as Mulla Ahmad of That'hah, Qasim Beg, Shaikh Munawwar and Abdul Qadir.<sup>21</sup> The *Haribansa* was also translated into Persian, while Nasrullah Mustafa and Maulana Husiani Waiz had made a Persian rendering of the *Pañcatantra* known as *Kalilah-Damnah*. The translation of the last-named work was difficult, so an easier adaptation entitled *Ayar-Danish* was also made. The work described the love of Nala and Damayanti which was translated into Persian on the model of *Lāyla* and *Majnun*. The emperor also instructed Abdul Qadir Badauni to translate the work *Simhasana Battiśi* into prose and verse. A learned Brahmana was appointed to interpret the work to Badauni. The work known as *Khīrad Afza-Namah* after its completion and placed it in the royal library. The *Shah-Nama* was turned into prose, and the *Hayatul-Haiwan* was also translated.

A part of the Astronomical Tables of Ulugh Beg was, translated under the supervision of Amir Fathullah Shirazi. The Sanskrit works such as the *Kishan Joshi*, the *Gangadhar* and the *Mahes-Mahananda* under Abul Fazl. Babar's Memoirs was translated from Turkish into Persian by Abdul-Rahim Khan Khanan in 1590 A.D.<sup>22</sup> The, *Tarikh-i-Alfi* or the history of 1000 years was begun by Naqib Khan and Maulana Ahmad That'hahwi had a great share in the compilation. Later on, Ja'far Beg and Asaf Khan completed it.<sup>23</sup>

The emperor Akbar was also a great lover of fine arts such as painting and calligraphy. The notable painters of his reign were Mir Sayyid Ali of Tabriz, Khwaja Abdus Samad styled as *Shirin-qalam* (sweet pen), Daswanth and Basawan. During his reign, the court painters were also asked to ornament the standard Persian works, both prose and poetry,

with picture and illustrations. The work such as *Dastan-i-Amir Hamza* was represented in twelve volumes, and the 'clever painters made the most astonishing illustrations for no less than one thousand and four hundred passages of the story'. Abul Fazl writes that the emperor 'himself sat for his likeness, and also ordered to have the likenesses taken of all the grandees of the realm. An immense album was thus formed, those that have passed away have received a new life, and those who are still alive have immortality promised them'.<sup>24</sup>

Among the great calligraphists the names of Abdullah, Abdul Haq, Idris and Hosain Munshi were praiseworthy. Akbar takes great interest in different system of writings and the following mode of writing such as Suls, Tauqi, Muhaqqaq, Naskh, Raihan, Riqā' and Ghubar were prevalent during his time. He gave great encouragement to good penmanship, particularly to the Nasta'liq hand. The most excellent penmen attached to Akbar's Court were Muhammad Husain Kashmiri Zarrinqalam, Mulla Mir Ali, and his son Maulana Baqir, Muhammad Amin Mashhadi, Mir Husaini Kulanki, Maulana Abdul Hai, Maulana Dauri, Maulana Abdul-Rahim, Mir Abdullah, Nizami Qazwini and Ali Chaman Kashmiri etc. He paid much attention to the art of writing and was an excellent judge of calligraphy and painting. He often gave prizes according to the beauty of writing.<sup>25</sup>

The ancestors of Emperor Akbar loved and collected books. They also built public libraries which displayed their production and multiplication. The founder of Mughal Emperor Babur had a library at Delhi which included books brought from his native place Farghana and ones acquired from India. Humayun also set up his own collection in the Sher Mandal of Purana Qila and it was this collection of his grand-father and father which emperor Akbar expanded. Though he himself had 'a peculiar acquisitiveness and a talent for selection by no means common, had made his own all that can be seen and read in books'.<sup>26</sup> His literary interest was also shown from his imperial library at Agra where different books on various themes were kept. The imperial library was located in an immense hall on one side of the octagonal tower in the fort and included a section in the *zenana*. The women of



the royal household had their own libraries and this tradition was begun by Gulbadan Begum, the daughter of Babur and continued till the time of Zeb-un-nissa, the eldest daughter of Aurangzeb.

Akbar organised his library more systematically and it had on its shelves more than 24,000 books, at the time of emperor's death, all in manuscript 'written by great men, mostly by very ancient and serious authors'.<sup>27</sup> The manuscripts were catalogued and classified by its staff. V. A. Smith in his book on Akbar says that his library had few rivals in the known world. Besides the head librarian called the *Nazim* or *Mutamad* and his deputy, there were assistants who entered details of the books into separate registers for each subjects such as astronomy, music, astrology, commentaries on the Koran, theology and the law. Other staff included scribes, calligraphers, book-binders and book-bearers. Manuscripts were covered in silk, bound with leather and richly engraved and inscribed. This library also contained some of the contemporary historical works such as the *Jama 'at' Tawarikh*, a book on the Turkish Mongolian dynasty, *Babur-Nama*, autobiography of Emperor Babur. There were two copies of the *Khalil-wa-Dimnah*, the *Dewal Rani Khizr Khan*, work of Amir Khusrau. All were lavishly illustrated.<sup>28</sup> These books were enriched with beautiful illustrations by the best artists, valued at nearly six and a half millions of rupees. Abul Fazl informs that the imperial library at Agra included four thousand and three hundred choice manuscripts which had been transferred from the personal library of his elder brother Faizi, after his death in 1595 A.D.<sup>29</sup> Some of which were exquisitely copied with extravagant care and expense. Most of them were autographs of their respective authors or were at least copied by their contemporaries. All were removed to the King's library and catalogued and numbered in three different sections. The first section included poetry, medicine, astrology and music, the second — philology, philosophy, Sufism, astronomy and geometry, and the third — commentaries, traditions, theology and law. There were also one hundred and one copies of the poem *Nal-Daman* in Faizi's collection.<sup>30</sup>

Abul Fazl wrote about the arrangement of this library as follows, 'His Majesty's library is divided into several parts; some of the books

are kept within, and some without, the Harem. Each part of the library is sub-divided, according to the value of the books and the estimation in which the sciences are held, of which the books treat. Prose books, poetical works, Hindi, Persian, Greek, Kashmirian, Arabic, are all separately placed. In this order they are also inspected. Experienced people bring them daily and read them before His majesty, who hears every book from the beginning to the end. At whatever page the readers daily stop, His Majesty makes with his own pen a sign, according to the number of the pages; and rewards the readers with presents of cash, either in gold or silver, according to the number of leaves read out by them. Among books of renown, there are few that are not read in His Majesty's assembly hall; and there are no historical facts of the past ages, on curiosities of sciences, or interesting points of philosophy, with which His Majesty, a leader of impartial sages, is unacquainted. He does not get tired of hearing a book over again, but listens to the reading of it with more interest'.<sup>31</sup>

Akbar made an arrangement for imparting regular education to the ladies of imperial harem and also kept a part of his library inside the harem<sup>32</sup> so that it could be accessible to him at all times. Akbar also established a girls' school in Fatehpur Sikri<sup>33</sup> and appointed some mistress to work in it. Monserrate, who visited India in 1580 A.D. remarks, 'He (Akbar) gives very great care to the education of the princesses ... They are taught to read and write and were trained in other ways by matrons'.<sup>34</sup> In Akbar's harem, we find the name of some prominent ladies like Salima Sultana Begum, Bega Begum, Maham Anaga and Hamida Bano Begum who were not only educated but remarkably interested for the promotion of learning. They established *madarsahs* and gave stipends. Salima Sultana Begum, the wife of Akbar wrote many Persian poems under the nom de plume of *Makhfi* (concealed). She also acted as the superintendent of the Palace School of Fatehpur Sikri.<sup>35</sup> Bega Begum, consort of Humayun founded a college near the mausoleum of her husband.<sup>36</sup> Maham Anaga, the foster mother of Akbar established a school at Delhi which was attached to the *Khair-ul-Manazil Masjid*.<sup>37</sup>

Besides this, Emperor Akbar also paid great attention to the education of his sons and grandsons, and appointed learned men of very high reputation to superintend their studies. Qutbuddin Khan and Abdul-Rahim Mirza were appointed as Salim's tutors, Faizi and Sharif Khan for Murad and Sayyid Khan Chaghtai for Daniyal. Akbar committed the education of his favorite son Murad to Father Monserrat to be instructed in the sciences and religion of Europe. He also received instruction in Christian doctrine and read the New Testament. The Emperor placed one of his grandsons under the tuition of Abul Fazl and a Brahmana.<sup>38</sup>

Akbar's reign marks a new epoch for the educational system of schools and colleges. The liberal minded Akbar brought an innovations and improvements in the field of education. He was sincerely eager to spread education among the Hindus and the Muhammadans alike. Thus, they received education for the first time in the same schools and colleges. Akbar also brought some major educational reforms. A distinction was made between the Arabic and Persian studies. The Arabic studies dealt with the Islamic scriptures and the Persian studies included natural sciences and medical studies to attract Hindus and Muslim alike. Later on, the study of Persian language and literature was popularised on an all India basis. He expanded the elementary education and introduced a new curriculum of studies for the *maktabs* and also improved methods of instruction for the children. The boys were first taught the Persian alphabet along with accents and marks of punctuation within two days. Then they were taught the combinations of two letters. After a week, they had to read short lines of prose or verse containing religious or moral sentiment, in which those combinations frequently occurred. They must strive to read these themselves with occasional assistance from the tutor. Then, for a few days, the master proceeded with teaching a new hemistich, and in a very short time, the boys could read with fluency. The teacher gave the young students four exercises daily, viz. the alphabet, the combinations, a new hemistich or

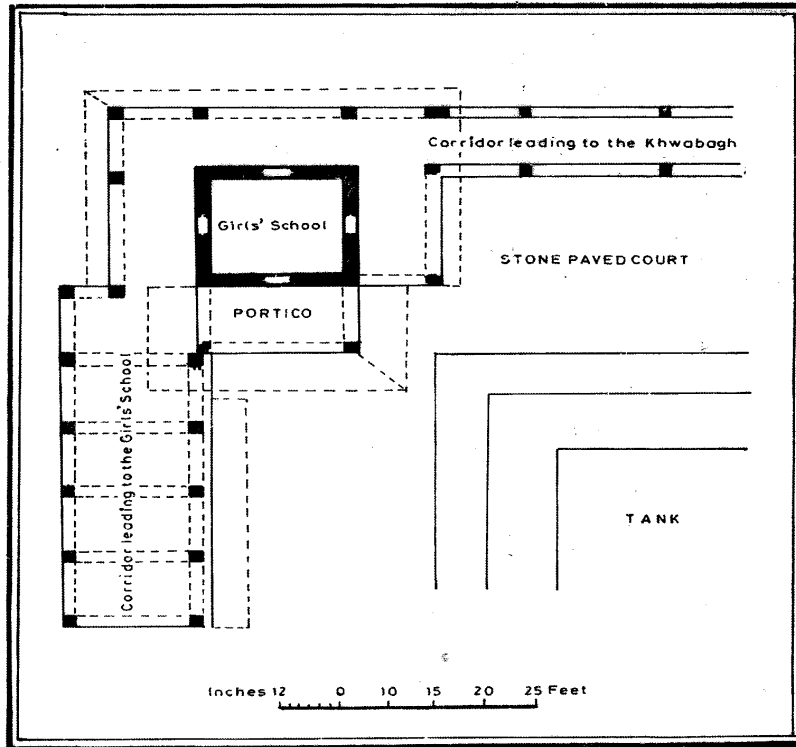
distich, and repetition of what they had read before. This method proved very successful and it accomplished within a few months.<sup>39</sup>

About the curriculum, the subjects for higher studies prescribed by Akbar were morality, arithmetic, accounts, agriculture, geometry, goniometry, astronomy, geomancy, economics, the art of government, physics, logic, natural philosophy, abstract mathematics, divinity and history. The Hindus read the following books on their subjects of learning, viz, Vyākaraṇa, Vedānta and Patañjali, everyone being educated according to his particular views of life and his own circumstances. These regulations gave a new form to the schools and made the colleges lights and ornaments of the empire.<sup>40</sup> Akbar made his efforts to secularise the teaching process and encouraged the Hindus to join the ranks of Persian teachers in the state-run *Madarsahs*. The system of grant-in-aid was introduced to the educational institutions of Hindus also. He encouraged the Muslim scholars to study Sanskrit and Hindi and translate the religious as well as secular literature of the Hindus into Persian and Arabic for the benefit of the Muslims.

The Emperor was not satisfied with these educational changes alone and made efforts to increase the number of educational institutions in his empire by 'continually giving employment to a number of hands in erecting fortifications and palaces, colleges and masjids'.<sup>41</sup> Thus, a big college was founded by Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri 'on the hill, the like of which few travellers can name'.<sup>42</sup> Lala Silchand said 'Akbar on his return from Ajmer made Fatehpur his capital and built many buildings there, including *madarsah*, *khanqah* etc'.<sup>43</sup> Besides this college, there were several other *Madarsahs* in the city founded at the order of Akbar.<sup>44</sup> There were several *Madarsahs* in Agra also where the professors brought from Shiraz, the famous centre of Muslim learning to teach the students. Akbar engaged a philosopher of Shiraz for this institution also.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, during the reign of Akbar education was promoted not in the emperor alone but also in private individuals belonging to the nobility or the middle class.

### PLAN OF THE GIRLS' SCHOOL AT FATEHPUR SIKRI UNDER AKBAR



However, it is surprising to know that despite such type of literary development under Akbar and his royal patronage to scholars and poets, some historians are opined that he was 'utterly unlettered'. However, the views that Akbar was unlettered cannot be accepted for various reasons.

On the basis of historical evidences, we find that the arrangements of Akbar's formal education were made by his father Humayun after his restoration to the throne of Kabul. He appointed Abdul Latif as the tutor for his son, who did not arrive at the court till the death of the emperor proved the solicitude of the latter for his son's education. After the death of Humayun, Bairam Khan, Akbar's guardian, chose Abdul Latif Qazwini as Akbar's tutor. Moreover, Pir Muhammad Khan and Haji Muhammad Khan were also appointed as Akbar's tutors.<sup>46</sup>

Abul Fazl also says about Akbar's education that when the Emperor was four years, four months and four days old in 1547, he was put to school and Maulana Azamuddin was charged with the responsible task of educating him.<sup>47</sup> He did not remain long as the tutor of Akbar because of his addiction for pigeons flying and Maulana Bayazid was appointed in his place. Later on, Munim Khan was selected for giving him training in military art and he became an expert in all martial exercises, riding, swordplay and so forth. Thus, the efforts of his best tutors failed to develop any taste for the formal education in reading and writing in Akbar's heart.<sup>48</sup> Instead in his boyhood he showed great fondness for animals, and devoted much time to camels, horses, dogs, and pigeons. Although Akbar would not learn to read books for himself but he enjoyed hearing them read by others and willingly learned by heart the mystic verses of the Sufi poets, Hafiz and Jalal-ud-din Rumi.<sup>49</sup> He also took much pleasure in Indian fables. He was fascinated by the *Stories of Mir Hamzah* in his childhood. Every day some competent person read to him books which he used to hear from the beginning to end. He marked with the dates and places where he left off and he paid the reader according to the number of pages read. This sound progress of study made him familiar with many works on different subjects. About this, Abul Fazl says that there was 'hardly a work of science, of genius or of history, but has been read to his Majesty : and he is not tired with hearing them repeated, but always listen with great avidity'.<sup>50</sup>

V. A. Smith correctly observes that 'Indian rulers have always been accustomed to dictate orders and to leave most of the actual writing to subordinate professional secretaries and clerks'. Akbar was a highly learned man who had acquired vast and multifarious knowledge in the lap of nature; 'he possessed a memory of almost super-human power which enabled him to remember accurately the contents of books read to him'.<sup>51</sup> He further states that 'Akbar was intimately acquainted the works of many Muhammadan historians and theologians, as well as with a considerable amount of general Asiatic literature, especially the writing of the *Sufi* or mystic poets. He acquired from the Jesuit

missionaries a fairly complete knowledge of the Gospel story and the main outlines of the Christian faith, while at the same time learning from the most accredited teachers the principles of Hinduism, Jainism and Zoroastrianism; but he never found an opportunity to study Buddhism. As a boy he took some drawing lessons, and he retained all his life an active interest in various forms of arts. The architecture of the reign unmistakably bears the impress of his personal good taste. A man so variously accomplished cannot be considered illiterate in reality. He simply preferred to learn the contents of books through the ear rather than the eye and was able to trust his prodigious memory, which was never enfeebled by the use of written memoranda. Anybody who heard him arguing with acuteness and lucidity on a subject of debate would have credited him with wide literary knowledge and profound erudition, and never would have suspected him of illiteracy'.<sup>52</sup> Thus his formal illiteracy does not seem to have caused the slightest practical inconvenience. It is stated that the exceptionally powerful memory which Akbar is known to have possessed in mature life evidently began to develop at an extraordinarily early age.

According to V. A. Smith, 'Akbar resisted all attempts to give him book-learning so successfully that ... and to the end of his days he was unable even to read or sign his own name'. He again says, '... no tutors could make him pay attention to books, even so far as to learn the alphabet'.<sup>53</sup> The same view has been held by the scholars like Beveridge and Muhammad Hosain Azad. The contemporary chroniclers like Abdul Qadir Badauni and Nizamuddin Ahmad also referred that Akbar was not a learned man. Jahangir in his memoirs *Tuzuk-i-Jahāngiri* stated that, 'My father used to hold discourse with the learned men of all persuasions, particularly with the Pandits and the intelligent persons of Hindūstān. Though he was illiterate, yet from constantly conversing with learned and clever persons, his language was so polished, that no one could discover from his conversation that he was entirely uneducated. He understood even the elegances of poetry and prose so well that it is impossible to conceive of any one more proficient'.<sup>54</sup> On

the other hand, *Wāqī'āt-i-Jahāngiri*, autobiography of the same royal personage says that though Akbar was not profoundly learned, yet his conversation with the learned might lead one to believe that he was profoundly learned in every branch of science. So, it does not say that he was *utterly unlettered*. The *Wāqī'āt-i-Jahāngiri* makes the following statements such as, 'With these Pandits my father (Akbar) was in constant habit of familiar conversation on every subject. He associated, indeed, with the learned among the Hindus of every description; and although he might not have derived any particular advantage from the attainment, he had acquired such a knowledge of the elegance of composition both in prose and verse, that a person not acquainted with the circumstances of his elevated character and station, might have set him down as profoundly learned in every branch of science'.<sup>55</sup>

The above two divergent views have also been found in other sources of Jahangir's period for e.g., *Iqbāl Nāmah*, *Tarikh-i-Salim-Shāhi*, *Jahāngir-Nāmah* etc. About this, Portuguese foreign traveller Father Monserrate says about Akbar, 'He can neither read nor write, but he is very curious and has always men of letters around him ...'.<sup>56</sup> He also stated though Akbar himself was an illiterate so far as the art of writing was concerned but he was so well acquainted with current and classical literature that wise were astonished by his intellectual horizon. Monserrate writes that 'no one who did not know that he is not literate would suppose him to be learned and erudite. He excelled many most learned subjects in eloquence'.<sup>57</sup> Thus, it is not possible for an entirely uneducated person to appreciate the conversations on learned topics, enjoy abstruse controversies with learned men and to appreciate the elegances of literary compositions.

According to Jerome X'avier, Akbar was gifted with a wonderful memory. He retained whatever he heard.<sup>58</sup> His handwriting which is evident from an autograph on the Colophon of *Zafar Nama* shows that he could write with ease though Binyon feels it is 'laboriously written in a childish hand'.<sup>59</sup>





**Handwriting of Emperor Akbar**  
(Garret Zafarnama Ms. Waiter Arts Gallery)

However, some historians are pointed out that the specimen of Akbar's handwriting had not been found whereas all the Mughal princes and princesses leave to their credit a large number of memoirs and autobiographies. The European writer Von Noer in his work '*Kaiser Akbar*' also stated that Akbar was absolutely illiterate.<sup>60</sup>

J. N. Samaddar<sup>61</sup> in his article mentioned about two manuscripts like '*Diwan-i-Hafiz*' and '*Diwan-i-Mirza Kamran*' which bear numerous marginal notes in the handwriting of the emperor Humayun and Jahangir, Shahjahan and seals and signature of many distinguished nobles and officers of the court of these emperors and Akbar. However, it does not contain any initial or autograph of Akbar though these are

not subsidiary evidence to prove the fact of Akbar's illiteracy but it can be said that he may have been illiterate.

Few articles have come out in favour of the literacy of Akbar but sufficient new materials were not put in support of their conclusions. N. N. Law was the first to write against the myth of Akbar's illiteracy. According to him, as the 'House of Timur' was gifted with extraordinary literary taste, which is prescribed in '*Tuzuk-i-Taimuri*', Akbar also got some literary taste from this environment. Recently, it has been suggested by Schimmel<sup>63</sup> that Akbar might have been dyslexic as his genealogy is related to the mythical Queen Alanquwa. It is said that a light was emanated from Hamida's face, the mother of Akbar before his birth. Thus, a divine glory '*Farr-i-izadi*' surrounded and permeated him. The contemporary chronicle Mukatabat-i-Imam Rabbani's '*Farman to Chalpi Beg of Shiraz*' throws light on Akbar's academic interests and his inquisitive nature which shows his keen interest for education.<sup>64</sup>

According to V. A. Smith, 'Akbar was intimately acquainted with the works of many Muhammadan historians and theologians, as well as with a considerable amount of general Asiatic literature, especially the writings of the *sufi* or mystic poets. He acquired from the Jesuit missionaries a fairly complete knowledge of the Gospel story and the main outlines of the Christian faith, while at the same time learning from the most accredited teachers the principles of Hinduism, Jainism and Zoroastrianism, but he never found an opportunity to study Buddhism. As a boy he took some drawing lessons, and he retained all his life an active interest in various forms of arts. The architecture of the reign unmistakably bears the impress of his personal good taste. A man so variously accomplished cannot be considered illiterate in reality. He simply preferred to learn the contents of books through the ear rather than the eye and was able to trust his prodigious memory, which was never enfeebled by the use of written memoranda. Anybody who heard him arguing with acuteness and lucidity on a subject debate would have credited him with wide literary knowledge and profound erudition, and never would have suspected him of illiteracy'.<sup>65</sup>

The modern writers like Yusuf Hussain Khan<sup>66</sup> in his article '*The Educational System in Medieval India*' also mentions Akbar's keen interest for education and his efforts to introduce various reforms in the curriculum of primary schools such as courses like astronomy, geometry, logic, arithmetic, mensuration, public administration etc. He also expressed his love for child education and says that 'Children are the tenderest bud of the garden of existence. By loving them we praise the creator'.<sup>67</sup> Abul Fazl also introduces 'Akbar as a scholar of the Divine academy and graduate of God's college'.<sup>68</sup> It is strange that if Akbar was entirely uneducated then how he could understand the conversation on learned topics, enjoyed abstruse controversies or take part in discussion with learned men.<sup>69</sup> The above information clarifies that Akbar neither totally unlettered nor properly educated. He took keen interest in the development of education for both the segments of society, male and female.

Thus, on the basis of above information it can be said that the great Mughal emperor Akbar occupied a unique place in the Indian literary world of his times. He was a man of literary taste who not only well-versed in Persian, the then court language, but also had knowledge of Arabic, Sanskrit and Hindi. We have also seen that how Akbar showed his potential influence on the literary world by his intellectual tastes and association largely with the learned men like Abul Fazl, Faizi, Abdul Qadir Badauni and others. With the same intellectual zeal, he involved himself in the debates and discussions of the *Ibadat Khana* and conversed with the scholars of different religions — Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Christians and Muhammadans. The emperor's eagerness for extending the bounds of his knowledge by participating in such academic platform became a valuable asset to the country at large. So, the fact that Emperor Akbar was illiterate is very fascinating, though few readers accept it as historical truth. However, the early life of Akbar and the literary atmosphere of his family, the attempts of his father Humayun and the effort of best tutors for his education, his discussions with the learned men in the court, his active participation in literary gatherings and his encouragement of education for both the segments of the society arises the doubt to the tale of his illiteracy.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Smith, V. A., *Akbar the Great Mogul: 1542-1605*, London, 1919, pp. 9-10. See also, Elphinstone, Mountstuart, *History of India*, vol. II, London, 1843, p. 143. Schimmel, Annemarie, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, London, 2004, p. 29.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.  
See also, Mukhia, Harbans, *The Mughals of India*, New Delhi, 2004, p. 127. Sharma, S. R., *Mughal Empire in India: A Systematic Study Including Source Material*, vol. I, New Delhi, 1999, p. 168.
- <sup>3</sup> Smith, V. A., *op.cit.*, p. 30.  
See also, Spear, Percival, *A History of India*, vol. II, London, 1965, p. 29. Qureshi, I. H., *Akbar: The Architect of the Moghul Empire*, New Delhi, 1987, p. 25.
- <sup>4</sup> Allāimī, Abul Fazl (1551-1602) — Akbar's court historian. His major literary achievement was a history of Akbar and his predecessors *Akbarnāma* (*Book of Akbar*), the last part of which is constituted by *Ā'in-i-Akbari* (*The Institutions of Akbar*). Both works give a vivid and detailed description of Akbar's court and reign. He also translated the Bible into Persian.
- <sup>5</sup> Badauni, Abdul Qadir, (1540-c. 1615) — an Indo-Persian historian. His most important work is the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* (*Selection from History*), a history of Muslim India including Muslim religious figures, physicians, poets, and scholars. The work contains the author's hostile remarks about Akbar and his religious practices.
- <sup>6</sup> Ahmed, Nizam-ud-din, (d. 1594) — a prominent official during the reign of Akbar, from 1593 a paymaster and commander-in-chief of the entire empire. His important work *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, is a comprehensive historical study of the rule of Akbar and includes a study of the other Indo-Muslim dynasties from the 10th to the 17th centuries.
- <sup>7</sup> Father Monserrate, a Portuguese priest who accompanied two other priests, Father Rodolfo Acquaviva and Father Francisco Enriquez, on the first Jesuit mission to the court of the Emperor Akbar in 1580. His important work entitled *Mongolicae Legationis Commentaries* (1582), is an authority of the highest credit and importance.
- <sup>8</sup> Du Jarric, who condensed the original letters of the missionaries into narrative form, is an extremely accurate and conscientious writer, entitled to high rank among the historians of the world. Unfortunately, his great book is extremely rare and little known.
- <sup>9</sup> Lane-Poole, Stanely, *Babur*, London, 1899, p. 12.
- <sup>10</sup> Nizami, K. A., *On Sources and Source Material*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 110.  
See also, Ansari, Azher, "Social Condition at the court of Akbar and its influence on Society", *Islamic Culture*, (hereafter *IC*), vol. 33, 1959, p. 11.
- <sup>11</sup> Badauni, Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Eng., tr. Haig, T. W., vol. III, Calcutta, 1899, pp. 299-310.
- <sup>12</sup> Allama, Abul Fazl, *A'in-i-Akbari*, vol. I, Eng. tr., H. Blochmann, Calcutta, 1949, p. 618.  
*Ibid.*, Persian text, vol. I, p. 189.
- <sup>13</sup> Nizami, K. A., "Persian Literature under Akbar", *Medieval India Quarterly*,

(Hereafter MIQ), vol. III, 1958, pp. 117-121.

- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 299.
- <sup>15</sup> Nizami, K.A., *Akbar and Religion*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 19-20.
- <sup>16</sup> Smith, V.A, *Akbar the Great Mogul : 1542-1605*, p. 421.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 417.
- <sup>18</sup> Nizami. K. A., *On Sources and Source Material*, pp. 146-151.
- <sup>19</sup> Shastri, Roychoudhury, "Was Akbar Literate?" *Journal of Indian Historical Quarterly*, (hereafter IRQ), vol. 16, 1940, pp. 730-31.
- <sup>20</sup> Elliot and Dowson, *History of India-as told by its own Historians*, vol. v, New Delhi, 1877, p. 539.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 478.
- <sup>22</sup> *A'in-i-Akbari*, vol. I, Eng. tr., p. 104.
- <sup>23</sup> Allama, Abul Fazi, *A'in-i-Akbari*, Eng. Tr. Gladwin, vol. II, London, 1800, pp. 85-86.
- <sup>24</sup> Abul Fazl, Allama, '*Ain-i-Akbari*', vol. I, Eng. tr, Blochmann. H, p. 113.
- <sup>25</sup> Shastri, Roychoudhury, *IHQ*, p. 730.
- <sup>26</sup> *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Eng. tr, Lowe. W. H, vol. II, p. 263.
- <sup>27</sup> Smith, V.A., op.cit, p. 425.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 426.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, Eng. tr, Blochmann. H, p. 550.
- <sup>30</sup> Elliot and Dowson, op.cit., p. 519.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, Eng. tr., Blochmann. H, pp. 109-110.  
See also, Nizami, K.A, *Akbar and Religion*, pp. 22-23.
- <sup>32</sup> Law. N. N, *Promotion of learning in India during Muhammadan Rule*, London, 1916, p. 151.  
See also, Nizami, K.A., *On Sources and Source Material*, p. 110.
- <sup>33</sup> Islahi, Zafarul Islam, *Taleem Ahed e Islami Ke Hindustan Mei*, Azamgarh, 2007, p. 99.  
Binyon, L, *Akbar*, London, 1932, p. 78.
- <sup>34</sup> Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*, Eng. tr., Hoyland V.S., London, 1922, p. 203.
- <sup>35</sup> Banerjee, S.K., *Humayun Badshah*, vol. II, Lucknow, 1941, p. 324.  
See also, Law, N.N, op.cit., p. 202.  
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- <sup>36</sup> Banerjee, S. K., op.cit., p. 317.
- <sup>37</sup> Khan, Yusuf Hussain, "The Educational System in Medieval India", *Islamic Culture*, (Hereafter IC), vol. 30, 1956, p. 84.  
See also, Khan, Syed Ahmed, *Asar-us-Sanadid*, ed. Anjum Khaleeq, vol. III, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 365-66.  
Kausar Zinat, *Muslim Women in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 1992, p. 140.
- <sup>38</sup> Von Noer, Friedrich August, *The Emperor Akbar: A Contribution Towards the History of India in the 16th Century*, vol. II, Calcutta, 1890, p. 247.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari*, I, Eng. tr., Blochmann. H, pp. 288-89.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 278, 279.  
See also, *A'in-i-Akbari*, II, Eng. tr., Gladwin, p. 192.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 146.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. II, Eng. tr., Jarrett. H.S, Calcutta, 1891, p. 180.

- <sup>43</sup> Silchand, Lala, *Tafrihul-Imarat*, MS. leaf. 243, Asiatic Society of Bengal.
- <sup>44</sup> Sarkar, Jadunath, *Studies in Mughal India*, Calcutta, 1919, p. 24.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, MS. leaf. p. 41.
- <sup>46</sup> Ferista, Muhammad Qasim, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Eng. tr., Briggs, John, vol. II, Calcutta, 1909, pp. 193-201.  
See also, Elphinstone, Mountstuart, *History of India*, vol. II, London, 1843. p. 262.
- <sup>47</sup> Abul Fazl, Allama, *Akbar-Nama*, vol. I, Eng. tr., Beveridge, H, New Delhi, 1939, p. 518.
- <sup>48</sup> Smith, V.A., *op.cit.*, p. 307.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- <sup>50</sup> Ferishta, *op.cit.*, p. 280.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 337-38.
- <sup>53</sup> Smith, V.A., *op.cit.*, p. 23.
- <sup>54</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Eng. tr., Roger Alexander and Beveridge H, vol. II, New Delhi, 1914, p. 33.  
See also, Law. N. N., *op.cit.*, pp. 139-140.
- <sup>55</sup> *Wāqī'āt-i-Jahāngiri*, Eng. tr., Price, Major David, London, 1829, pp. 44-45.
- <sup>56</sup> Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate on His Journey to the Court of Akbar*, Eng. tr., Hoyland, J.S., London, 1922, p. 201.  
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- <sup>57</sup> Ansari, Ahzer, *IC*, p. 11.
- <sup>58</sup> Beveridge, H, "Father Jerome Xavier", *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1988, p. 37.  
See also, Jarric, Pierre Du, *Akbar and the Jesuit*, New Delhi, 1979, p. 206.
- <sup>59</sup> Binyon, *op.cit.*, pp. 41-42.  
See also, Nizami, K.A, *Akbar and Religion*, pp. 22-23.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 727-737.  
See also, Ojha, P.N, "Some Aspects of Education in India under the Great Mughals", *Proceedings. 13th Indian History Congress*, 1950, pp. 240.
- <sup>61</sup> Samaddar J. N., "Akbar's Illiteracy", *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research*, (hereafter *JBOR*), vol. 6, 1920, p. 443.
- <sup>62</sup> Law, N, *op.cit.*, pp. 151-152.  
See also, Shastri, Roy Choudhury, *IHQ*, pp. 727-737.
- <sup>63</sup> Schimmel. Annemarie, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, London, 2005, p. 33.
- <sup>64</sup> Nizami, K.A, *Akbar and Religion*, p. 19.
- <sup>65</sup> V. A., Smith, *op.cit.*, pp. 337-338.
- <sup>66</sup> Khan, Yusuf Hussain, *IC*, pp. 111-112 .
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.
- <sup>68</sup> Abul Fazl, 'Akbar-Nama', vol. I, Eng. tr., p. 5  
*Ibid.*, Persian text, ed. Rahim, Abdur, p. 270.
- <sup>69</sup> Law, N. N, *op.cit.*, p. 141.

*An Emaciated Endeavour of a Declining Community :  
Examining the Muslim Community and Muslim Activists  
in the 19th Century Bengal*

Md. Masud Akhtar

**Abstract**

The introduction of Permanent Settlement, application of Resumption Laws on rent-free grants, abolition of Persian as the language of the Court and administration, introduction of English as the medium of instruction and enforcement of new rules for recruitment to the government posts adversely affected the position of the Muslims and accelerated the process of their decline. It was, therefore, not an easy task either for the Muslim theologians or the Muslim elite to find out a clear path in the midst of these cross-currents though efforts were made by some of them, of course, from their own perceptions, from time to time, in this direction.

In this paper, I am going to adopt a compilation between different perspectives and analyse the social, religious, political and educational views. I wish to marshal a variety of sources and try to extract facts from them.

**Keywords :** Muslim community, Colonial rule, Persian language, Mohammedan society.

As far as we know about the past of Muslims in Bengal, it can be said that this society and of many elements. Bengali Muslim's past refers a long history from the time Muslims came to Bengal, till the beginning of the British rule that is from the 12th century to the end of the 18th century. It is easily conjecturable that the Muslim community of our country has not gone through the same situation for this long time.<sup>1</sup> But Muslim predominance remained intact. But the beginning of the British rule changed the scenario.

**Muslim participation in administrative and educational sectors in Bengal**

Calcutta Madrasha was established 20 years before Fort William College, with the aim to produce competent employees for Indian courts. Elite section of Kolkata met Hastings with the proposal of establishing educational institution, then Calcutta Madrasha was established at Government expense. Persian and Arabic took preference but Bengali and English was not included in the syllabus of Calcutta Madrasha. At that time, Arabic and Persian education became dominant in Calcutta Madrasha as Persian language was used in the courts.

Moulana Mozuddin appointed as Head Moulana of Calcutta Madrasha. Mohammad Israil replaced him in 1792. Then Abdur Rahim (1808-1828), Giyasuddin (1828-1837), Mohammad Wazih (1837-1856), Abdul Haque (1856-1857), Abdul Hai (1875-1891), Samsul Ahamed (1892-1912) took the responsibility of the head post accordingly.

Civilians came from England got education and training at Fort William College. Along with European teachers, native scholars were also associated here. From the record of 1814, out of 176 teaching staff of Fort William College, 116 were Muslims (69.5%) and 51 were non-Muslims (30.5%). Among those Muslims, most of them were non-Bengalis. They wrote many books, most of the books were written to fulfil the needs of text books.

The Calcutta School Book Society (1817) and the Calcutta School Society (1818) allowed English, Hindu and Muslim educated classes to work together. Among 24 members of the School Book Society's Management Committee, 16 were European, 4 Hindus and 4 Muslims. In the beginning year, Muslim members of the Management Committee were Moulana Amanullah, Moulana Karam Hossain, Moulana Abdul Wahid and Moulana Abdul Hamid. Also, out of 225 contributing members of the Society, 68 were Muslims, 35 were Hindus and remaining 122 were Europeans.<sup>2</sup>

Before the British came to India, the Islamic Education was primarily based on religion. Nobles and chiefs started Madrashas and Maktabs. There were no reliable records of these Institutions except William



Adam's reports. Persian was the medium of instruction and this was because of its close contact with Islam. As a result of British policy, the educational institutions lost their endowments. So the failure to appreciate and adjust with Western civilisation led to their decline.

Along with the Government, missionary supported schools also did not include Muslims. In the early 19th century, there were hardly any Muslim intellectuals who could urge them to study English. On the other hand, the idea of improvement created unequal opportunities for Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. As a matter of fact, the 19th century witnessed a significant wave of socio-religious reform movement that spread mainly among the Hindu community.

Before 1829 the Asiatic Society had no native members. Ramkamal Sen, Maharaja Kalikrishna, Radhakanta Dev and Rasmoy Dutta became members in 1829. In 1836 the names of Shah Kabiruddin Ahmed and Nawab Tauhar Jung were found in the members list of the Society. Syed Keramat Ali, Matwalli (trustee) of Hoogly Imambara, became a member of the Society in 1836 and held the position till his death. In 1847, Nawab Feradun Jha of Murshidabad became an honorary member.<sup>3</sup>

Being associated with this center of knowledge did not have any effect on the Muslim Community. Hindu members of the Society led their community forward, but the Muslim members could not do the same for their community. Even Touhar Jung, Feradun Jha, Mohammad Basiruddin, Mohammad Jalaluddin could not do any significant work for Muslims, though they had a flourished family tradition. Fascination with old traditions and values, aversion to modern consciousness and values were probably the main reason. Linguistic distance was also a major obstacle in this regard.

### **Impact of British Rule on Muslims**

After the demise of Aurangzeb (1707), local chiefs and kings, mostly Hindus, began carving out their little kingdoms without even caring Delhi's reaction. According to P. H. Plumb, 'These chiefs and kings paid only lip-service to the titular Emperor of Delhi.' In a little more than a

half century these regional chiefs managed to fill the gap gradually and imposing their hegemony over the Indian Subcontinent.<sup>4</sup>

The Coming of the British and their civilisation that was at that time prevalent in the Western World had different repercussions among the various communities that made up the Indian subcontinent, notably, Hindus and Muslims. In fact, following the Battle of Plassey,<sup>5</sup> which marked the beginning of the process of the British conquest of the subcontinent, the imposition of British rule took place piecemeal. The latter proved to be very receptive to foreign cultures. In fact, for Hindus, it did not matter whoever ruled them and the advent of the British did not make any difference. They had already been used to being ruled by foreigners. The coming of the British was only 'one imperialist sitting in the seat of another'.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the Hindus took advantage of the education and liberal ideas brought by the British. According to S. Hay, the Hindus responded to the British presence on their soil with an eagerness to learn from them whatever would contribute to their advancement. This attitude on the part of the Hindus towards the British and their civilisation brought them many advantages. The Hindus were, indeed, the main, if not the only, beneficiaries of British rule. They availed themselves of the many opportunities that the British offered in all spheres of life. By embracing Western education and culture, they became trusted subjects in the eyes of the new rulers and by learning English language, they offered services in the Government.

On the other hand, this transition phase is considered as phase of decline, or rather a dark era for the Muslims of Indian subcontinent. Whereas for Hindus it meant only a change of Masters, for Muslims it meant the loss of power, position, wealth and dignity. J. Masselos wrote, 'It was argued that psychologically they (Muslims) had not recovered from their loss of power when they were supplanted as rulers of the subcontinent by the British and that they lived in the past, in a nostalgic world of former glories'.<sup>7</sup>

The Indian people, including the elites, were quite aware of the British exploitation, and resisted it on several occasions such as the Santhal

rebellion, Indigo revolt, Wahabi movement, Faraizi movement and many others. Hindus such as Rammohan Roy and Muslims like Syed Ahamed, Abdul Latif, Ameer Ali felt that the Indians first needed national unity and modern western education through the British rule, before they could attempt the final onslaught for Independence.<sup>8</sup>

It is sad to reflect that Susobhan Sarkar, Tapan Ray Chaudhuri and many other scholars writing on Bengal Renaissance have glossed over the Indian histories of Muslim dominance (till 1757), decline (1757-1857) and revivalism/separatism (since-1857). They could have at least emulated Kazi Abdul Wadud, who has carefully chronicled the 'Muslim Response' to the Renaissance movement, criticising the Hindu revivalists and the Muslim revivalists in equal measure. Wadud pointedly observed that the Muslims were far more conservative than the Hindus in accepting other cultures and languages, particularly because they had dominated over the Hindus for such a long period.<sup>9</sup>

Hunter's 'Indian Musalmans' was completed in mid-June and published in mid-August of 1871. It consists four chapters of which the first three were devoted to so called Indian Wahabi Movement and its aftermath, with particular reference to Bengal. The last chapter analyses the Muslim's grievances and suggests some modification in the state system of education in order to attract them to it and make them more suitable for official employment, thereby weaning them away from the path of disloyalty.<sup>10</sup>

'A hundred years ago, the Musalmans monopolised all the important offices of State. The proportion of Mohammedans to Hindus, as shown above, is now less than one-seventh. The proportion of Hindus to Europeans is more than one-half; the proportion of Musalmans to Europeans is less than one-fourteenth. The proportions of race which a century ago had the monopoly of Government, has now fallen to less than one-twentythird of the whole administrative body'. So many reasons behind this. Less interested in English education, they confined themselves in the traditional education. It is too tough for any British employee to understand the *Musalman dialect*. Side by side Musalmans have so many careers open to them in non-official life.<sup>11</sup>

## DISTRIBUTION OF STATE PATRONAGE IN BENGAL, APRIL 1871.

	Euro- peans.	Hindus.	Musal- mans.	TOTAL.
Covenanted Civil Service (appointed in England by the Crown), . . . . .	260	0	0	260
Judicial Officers in the Non-Regulation Districts, <sup>1</sup>	47	0	0	47
Extra Assistant Commissioners, . . . . .	26	7	0	33
Deputy-Magistrates and Deputy-Collectors, . . . . .	53	113	30	196
Income-Tax Assessors, . . . . .	11	43	6	60
Registration Department, . . . . .	33	25	2	60
Judges of Small Cause Court and Subordinate Judges, . . . . .	14	25	8	47
Munsifs, . . . . .	1	178	37	216
Police Department, Gazetted Officers of all grades,	106	3	0	109
Public Works Department, Engineer Establishment,	154	19	0	173
"    "    Subordinate Establishment,	72	125	4	201
"    "    Account Establishment, . . . . .	22	54	0	76
Medical Department, Officers attached to Medical College, Jails, Charitable Dispensaries, Sanitation and Vaccination Establishments, and Medical Officers in charge of Districts, etc. etc., . . . . .	89	65	4	158
Department of Public Instruction, . . . . .	38	14	1	53
Other Departments, such as Customs, Marine, Survey, Opium, <sup>2</sup> etc., . . . . .	412	10	0	422
TOTAL, . . . . .	1338	681	92	2111

The Permanent Settlement (1793) seriously damaged the position of the Mohammedans. S. R. Wasti stated that the Permanent Settlement Act ... 'elevated the Hindu collectors to the position of landlords, gave them a propriety right in the soil and allowed them to accumulate wealth.' Meanwhile if '... practically reduced the Muslim peasantry to serfdom.'<sup>12</sup>

According to Hunter, 'This, then, is the first public wrong on which the Mohamadani aristocracy arraign the British Government. They assert that we obtained the administration of Bengal from a Musalman emperor on the understanding that we would carry out the Musalman system'.<sup>13</sup>

Persian had flourished as the court language of India for many centuries. The Turks, the Pathans and the Mughals had made it the official language of the country and extended to it all favours of royal

patronage. Persian did not lose its old importance during the days of Maratha ascendancy either. Even the East India Company in the beginning accepted it as a legacy of the erstwhile rulers. The Persian language was replaced by English language in India in the year 1832. Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General of India during 1828-1835, introduced many administrative reforms. One of them was abolition of Persian as the court language. Because it was not easy for the litigants to fight in this language. After 1843, Hindustani (Urdu) and English gradually replaced Persian in importance in the Indian Subcontinent as the British had full suzerainty over the Indian subcontinent.<sup>14</sup>

In the gradual process of linguistic change, a complete set of relationship developed among the language attitudes of the British and the Indians, British language policy, Indian reactions to that policy, Indians initiatives towards that policy and British reactions to Indian reactions and initiatives.<sup>15</sup> Abolition of Persian as court language destroyed the Muslim hegemony over administration. Educated Muslims and rank holders lost their positions.

There is a little evidence to show that Muslim masses were prospering earlier, the Muslim backwardness is usually traced from the aftermath of 1857, when British suspected that the ill-planned uprising had a predominant Muslim character and choose to chastise community for its anti-establishment stance. After the Uprising, British understood the significance of keeping Hindus and Muslims divided. An essential part of Muslim chastisement also consisted in promoting Hindus in the administration with the result that 'all sorts of employments great and small are being gradually snatched away from Mohammedans and bestowed on men of other races particularly the Hindus.'<sup>16</sup>

From the analysis of various social, economic, political and religious factors impacting the Muslim backwardness, we can broadly summarise that,

1. Muslim backwardness in India is an age-old phenomenon and can not be traced from a specific period;
2. Muslims being as heterogeneous as Hindus do not have similar range of problems across the various regions of the country;

3. Faith in Islam is not responsible for keeping Muslims' backwardness, rather, the material conditions and the kind of response that the community frames to them proves to be a determining factor in its economic condition and
4. State support can mitigate Muslim backwardness but only to an extent. Major efforts in this direction need to come from the community itself.<sup>17</sup>

### **Emaciated Endeavour of Muslim Community**

Edward Said mentioned that each and every era there were some people who define the phase or being defined by others. In colonial India majority of Muslim masses were defined. Only few exceptions were there. Syed Ameer Ali in his memoirs, complains that the Muslims have short memories. It is indeed one of the shortcomings of Muslim people that they do not give due recognition to the works of their leaders and forget their services and sacrifices for the community.

Kolkata-centric modern middle class emerged in 19th century. But only few Muslims were belong to this group. But Muslim majority were against British rule and away from British patronage. Gradually, Muslim masses failed to keep pace with that changes. A handful Muslims were aware and changed themselves according to the situation and demands of time. Abdul Latif, Syed Ameer Ali, Jamal Uddin Afgani, Munshi Meherullah were few names who took initiatives to change the scenario.

Haji Mohammad Mohsin (1732-1812) played a crucial role for the benefit of Muslim community. He played the role of an institution even as an individual. He got a huge ancestral property from father Haji Faizullah and sister Monnujaan. In the first phase of 19th century he donated his money for Islamic educational and religious institutions through 'Mohsin fund'. Hooghly Imambara and Hooghly college established in his patronage.

Abdul Latif's father Qazi Fakir Mohammad (1744-1844) was a scholar of history and theology. He advocated for 28 years in the Civil Court of Calcutta. He was known in the society as a Persian scholar. Abdul Latif described his father as a 'Muttaki' or silent worker. Although he himself

found the light of knowledge but he did not play the role of inspiring the society by giving others his search.

Abdur Rahim Dahiri (1786-1853) was a tutor to the children of the Mysore royal family in Tollygunj. He was appointed the first Superintendent of Dhaka Madrasha. A free thinking and rational person like him could have made a revolution in the society, but it did not happen. Even after the abolition of Persian as the official language, he did not realise that its practice had no more importance. He did not accept any of the languages and failed to keep pace with the changes going on the society. This rare talented person remained unrecognizable in the society.

Karamat Ali (1800-1873) was a religious and social reformer. Before coming to Bengal, he had established Madrasha-i-Hasafia at Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh. The movement started by Karamat Ali was called 'Taiyuni'. He struggled to eradicate Shirk and Bidat from Muslim community. He visited Noakhali, Chittagong, Assam, Rangpur and many other interior areas. He wrote about 46 books and booklets, has been acknowledged in the subcontinent as major works on Islam.

Syed Karamat Ali (1794-1876) went to Persia at the age of 19 for higher study, where he spent 18 years. In 1838 he was selected as the trustee of 'Wakf estate' founded by Mohammad Mohsin. Syed Ameer Ali described 'Two accomplished scholars who exercised great influence on Musalman thought about this period were Moulana Syed Karamat Ali and Moulvi Kabiruddin Ahamed. Syed was indeed a remarkable man..whatever knowledge of Arabian philosophy. I possess, I owe my revered friend Karamat Ali'. He excelled in history, mathematics and Arabic study. He freely discussed physics and other subjects. He was a long time member of the Asiatic Society.

Nawab Abdul Latif (1828-1893) established 'Calcutta Mohammedan Literary Society' in 1863. It was basically a socio-cultural society but it took initiatives to raise demands to colonial rulers for political and educational matters. Syed Ameer Ali founded 'Central National

Mohammedan Association'. Munshi Meherullah had transcended his very humble origins to occupy the role of reformer and social conscience for a large section of Bengali Muslims, across the spectrum of class of sectarian differences from the plebeian 'Atrap' to the aristocratic 'Ashraf'.

Delwar Hossain Ahmed (1840-1913) was the first Muslim graduate of Calcutta University. He started his service as District Magistrate and later got the rank of Inspector General of Registration. He was in favor of social reform but failed to bring any significant changes for the sake of Muslim community.<sup>18</sup>

Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928) resumed his legal practice at Calcutta High Court on his return to India in 1873. The year after, he was elected as a fellow of Calcutta University as well as being appointed as a lecturer in Islamic Law at the Presidency College. In 1878, he was appointed as the member of Bengal Legislative Council. He founded Central National Mohammedan Association in Calcutta in 1878. The Association played an important role in the modernization of Muslims and in arousing their political consciousness.<sup>19</sup>

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932) is widely regarded as a pioneer of women's liberation in South Asia. She advocated for men and women to be treated equally as rational beings. Her major works include *Matichur*, *Sultana's dream*, *Padmarag* and *Abarodhbasini*. In 1916, she founded the Muslim Women's Association, an organization that fought for women's education and employment.

Abu Bakr Siddique (1845-1939) was not only a religious but also an educationist and philanthropist. He constructed and shaped the identity of Bengali Muslim community in 19th century Bengal. According to Syed Ameer Ali he was an 'accomplished scholar'. He used to run a printing press named 'Urdu Guide'. With the help of Colonel Nassau Lease he printed so many editions of history and law books. The list was not long but it was quite appreciable. It was an emaciated effort from a handful Muslims to rebuilt their community.



### Conclusion

Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) and Titumir (1782-1831) were contemporaries. Both of them tried to reform their own society but in different ways. That is why the approach and fate of the two were opposite. One realized the needs of the age while the other clung to medieval sentiments. Martyr Titumir's sacrifice is not worthless, but the results were different as the two currents Hindu-Muslim flow in opposite directions. The first half of the 19th century was a transitional phase of leaderlessness, decline and uncertainty for Muslim community in Bengal. They did not try to cope with changes that occurred in the political and economic field of the country. According to James Long, Muslims in Calcutta accepted many Hindu customs and rituals but never mixed with Hindus. Fascination with the golden days of the past and indifference to the realities of the present pervaded the Muslim community of this period in Bengal. Muslim scholars like Abdul Latif, proficient lawmaker like Syed Ameer Ali, religious reformer like Abu Bakr Siddique did responsible work for Muslim society. But that least hope was not enough to wake up a declining community.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> M. Hassan ed. *Muslim Samaj Ebon Ei Somoy* (vol-2), National Book Agency. Kolkata: 2003 : 57
- <sup>2</sup> W. Ahamed. *Banglar Musolmaner Chinta Bhabnar Jagat-Unish Satak*, Pustak Bipani. Kolkata: 2003 : 218-219.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> P. H. Plumb. *The Pelican History of England: England in the Eighteen Century*, Penguin Book. Middlesex : 1990 : 172.
- <sup>5</sup> J. Gardiner. *The Penguin Dictionary of British History*, Penguin Books, London: 2000:538.
- <sup>6</sup> K. K. Aziz. *The Making of Pakistan: A Study of Nationalism*, Chattos and Windus, London: 1967:17.
- <sup>7</sup> J. Masselos. *Indian Nationalism: A History*, Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi: 1996:119.
- <sup>8</sup> K. A. Wadud. *Banglar Jagaran*, Visva Bharati Granthalaya, Culcutta: 1956.
- <sup>9</sup> A. K. Biswas. *The Muslim Community Response to the Scientific Awakening in the 19th Century India*, Indian Journal of History-Science, 2013 : 219-238.
- <sup>10</sup> M. M. Ali. *Hunter's Indian Musalmans: A Re-examination of its background*, Cambridge: Faculty of Classics, 2017 : 30

- <sup>11</sup> W. W. Hunter. *The Indian Muslims*, Trubner and Company, London: 1876:97-98.
- <sup>12</sup> S. R. Wasti; *Muslims in Bengal : An Historical Study up to 1905*, Renaissance Publishing House, Delhi : 1993 : 58.
- <sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 101-102.
- <sup>14</sup> E. Abbas. "The Role of Persian language before Independence in India", *International Journal of pure and applied Research*, Vol.-1 2016 : 232-233.
- <sup>15</sup> C. R. King. *One Language, two scripts*. Oxford University Press, London: 1999 : 53-54. *ibid.*, 161.
- <sup>16</sup> W. W. Hunter. *The Indian Muslims*, Trubner and Company, London: 1876 : 161.
- <sup>17</sup> S. Shakir. *Backwardness among Indian Muslims*, Marathwad University, Maharastra: 2013 : 1-11.
- <sup>18</sup> W. Ahamed. *Banglar Musolmaner Chinta Bhabnar Jagat-Unish Satak*, Pustak Bipani, Kolkata: 2003 : 209-226.
- <sup>19</sup> K. K. Aziz. *Ameer Ali: His life and Works*, Lahore : 1968 : 506.

*Sister Nivedita's Understanding and Perception of Islam,  
Islamic Culture and the Muslims*

Anjashi Sarkar

A fair share of analysis has been tossed around during the last few years on the life and achievements of Sister Nivedita, originally named Miss Margaret Noble. Over the last few years, she was in discussion for her 150th birth anniversary (2017) observed in India and elsewhere therefore this calls for foremost retrospection on her life which is unknown to us. Factually speaking, her writings on Indian history<sup>1</sup>, philosophy and religion as well as religious customs, festivals, travelogues and interactions with eminent personalities are well acclaimed. All endeavours as such have led to a worldwide phenomenon of making Indian social thinkers / activists emerge on the world map with philanthropy being an asset and characterise people as enough hospitable and compassionate. Sister Nivedita's love and attachment to the Indian life and the Indians has conferred on her the label of being one of the respectable 'foreigners' who made up their minds to live in India and mesh with the Indian culture and apply a humanistic approach. What makes her an exemplary figure could be the fact that although she was an 'outsider' and was not born in the Indian soil, she did not hesitate for a moment to extend a hand of kindness to the people who were a part of her life in India. Hence, she needs no special occasion to be celebrated posing as an inspirational figure. She came to India in 1898 in response to Swami Vivekananda's call and began initially for the spread of women education, especially for the girls following the Indian tradition. She was known to have stood for humanism and made a 'miraculous discovery' of India.

In spite of her extraordinary fascination for Indian culture and religion, Sister Nivedita had singularly expressed respect and love for Islam as a religion in many of her writings and speeches. She was fascinated by this religion and thereby acknowledged the universality of Islam. She could find tenderness and compassion in Islamic thought and philosophy and was moved by its humanitarian approach. This was a development one could witness after Sister Nivedita had an opportunity to visit a good number of cultural centres of India and perceived the cosmopolitanism in respect of religious understanding among the people of India. Her travel to Banaras and many other religious places like this justifies her approach to such truth of Indian tradition. She could also observe the ethos of Hindu culture with the Islamic idea of brotherhood of man which according to her happens to be the base for a pan-Indian thought. On this point she could fairly realise the inner meaning of Indian civilisation and thereby characterised the unity of life of the Indians. She has beautifully narrated, "To the Hindu of all provinces, his Motherland is the seat of holiness, the chosen home of righteousness . . . the place to which sooner or later must come all souls in the quest of God. To the son of Islam her earth is the dust of his saints. She is the seal upon his greatest memories. Her villages are his home. In her future lies his hope."<sup>2</sup> She aspired to see every morning with a 'new sunrise' of the Indian nation and thus envisioned Hindu-Muslim unity in addition to a society based on humanism and religious toleration.

Some influential names which are intimately connected with Swami Vivekananda comprise Sri Ramakrishna, Mother Sarada Devi but Sister Nivedita is inevitably an exception! In several sources we come to know that Sister Nivedita has been shown as the 'spiritual daughter' of India, especially to Vivekananda, and that makes her memorable and revered till date. This exceptional woman is some times termed as Vivekananda's '*Nivedita*' (the dedicated), benevolent mother of the people (*Lokamata*) named by Rabindranath Tagore and to Abanindranath Tagore a simply 'Worshipping Mother' of India (*Dhyaner Bharatmata*).<sup>3</sup>

Nivedita was born in Ireland. A substantial part of her life was spent (almost two thirds of life span) in her own motherland. Her journey to being one of the best 'worshippers of Mother India' (*Bharatswadhika*), the eternal sister of the Indian soul is a tale worth listening to.

On 28th October, 1867, Margaret Elizabeth Noble was born in a small town of Duncannon in North Ireland. Nivedita's father, Samuel Richmond Noble, was a priest, and her mother's name was Mary Esabel Noble. Margaret lost her father in her childhood and was brought up by her maternal grandfather Hamilton. Incidentally, Hamilton was one of the first-ranking leaders of the freedom movement of Ireland.<sup>4</sup> From a distant land and crossing miles away from her birth place, she landed in India and in course of time she not only loved this country but embraced people and the surroundings as of her own, making her one of them despite her Irish roots. She loved and honored its heritage, history and culture and all the more she deliberately searched her identity within it.

The primary purpose of this article is to highlight the viewpoints of Sister Nivedita regarding Islam as a religion and how she perceived the Islamic culture which she could observe during her stay in India. It may be noted that, Nivedita had written two books namely (a) *Cradle Tales of Hinduism*; and (b) *Aggressive Hinduism*,<sup>5</sup> but very surprisingly, she has analysed the Muslim community and Islam in a rational outlook which was uncommon at that point of time and obviously rare and unheard of in those days.

Swami Vivekananda had an influence on Nivedita and most of her opinions or judgments that had emerged regarding Islam were by-products of such an influence. While one evolves through times and experiences, her ideals underwent transition and so did her temperament due her adherence to Swami Vivekananda. The attraction of Nivedita towards Islam was moulded in such a situation. Swamiji has admitted and recognised the contributions of the Muslims in India in terms of its ancient civilisation and method of administration which were applied in India in course of time.<sup>6</sup> Sister Nivedita had internalised

these principles of Swami and she applied it with devotion and sincerity in her life.

From the writings of a number of academicians and intellectuals of India as well as of foreign countries we come to know that although Nivedita was, by and large, dedicated to Hinduism and Hindu ideology, she was equally attracted and admirable to the norms and values of Islam. Incidentally, one Ramananda Chattaopadhyay, a reputed Bengali author highly praised Nivedita while writing about 'Islam in the Eyes of Nivedita' (*Niveditar Chokhe Islam*) and in one of his articles he wrote, "Though she usually moved in an atmosphere in Hinduism, she was not wanting in an appreciation of the good points of Islam and Islamic civilization."<sup>7</sup> Sister Nivedita in many of her letters has mentioned about the ideas and ideology of Islam, its theology and at the same time specifically admitted the contribution of Islam in the culture and civilisation of India. Incidentally in one of her letters written to Josephine Macleod on 21st May, 1899, that, "This week I want to write a tremendous appreciation of Mohammedanism for the Empress under the guise of an article on the *Mohurrum*. So I am going out to tea to meet Prince Jehand Marrzia and 2 or 3 others – today."<sup>8</sup> We know after the publication of the book titled, *The Web of Indian Life* (New Impressions, October, 1904, and July 1918).<sup>9</sup> Nivedita and her name became familiar to a number of readers and scholars because her areas of interest like studies on Indian women, status and dignity of this particular class and to top it all, a series of writings on the birth and death rates of women easily drew the attention of all people. In this book she wrote about Islam in seventeen pages and her perception of Islam proves her mastery on this religion and at the same time the descriptions justify her love and respect for Islam. In course of her statement about Islam as a religion, she referred the name of the Prophet Muhammad, carefully notes down some inner philosophy of this religion and that in turn helps to expose the depth and rare dimension of Islam. In course of her discussion, she mentioned about the great Prophet and her takeaways from the teachings are reflections that may be seen in further studies. In the words of Nivedita,

"We think of the Prophet too much as the preacher of a religion, too little as the maker of a nationality. We hear the Name of God so frequently that we forget the love of humanity that is taught. We fail, in short, to understand the Asiatic character both of messenger and message. In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful."<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the statement above, she has explained the idea of believing in God and the role and contribution of Muhammad for the sake of the Arabs as a nation, constituting the changing phase in the social life of the Arabs and it was found in the trend of the social revolution initiated by Muhammad. A certain character trait of Muhammad that Nivedita had observed was his care about the children and the respect for women. Beside this Nivedita has talked about the overall charisma of the Prophet, singularly about how this great man had helped to develop fraternity among the Arabs. The respect of Nivedita has fairly been reflected while she presents the orphan boy (Muhammad) in his childhood. But he (Muhammad) came out as a 'Great Man' (*Mahapurusha*) in the afterlife though he passed his life as a shepherd. Nivedita has written, "The Prophet's first task is to give life and vigour to this supreme intuition by making it only the starting-point of a searching appeal to conscience, an authoritative condemnation of insincerity and evil custom and terrible pictures of judgment and hell-fire. In all this he must only have uttered what was already in the air. Social life in Arabia must have been ripe for change. The sacredness of property, the protection of childhood and the fixing of woman's status, had already doubtless been felt necessities by good men of all tribes and cities. But the gigantic power of conviction that could use these very reforms as a means of welding the scattered and divided kinships into a single brotherhood, fired with common purpose of righteousness and armed with the mighty weapon of a divine mission – this was the sole right of one whose boyhood had been spent among the sheepfolds and whose manhood had known the solitary watch with the awful trance of revelation, in the mountain caves."<sup>11</sup>

This in more than one way explains the fact that Sister Nivedita had observed various aspects of the Indian culture and understood

the process of nation building of India. She at the same time tried to perceive what the Indian culture is in its basic essence and her views have been reflected in one of her essays titled, 'Beauties of Islam' where she has beautifully highlighted the values of Indo-Saracenic architecture and its contribution to enrich our Indian culture as a whole. She has referred to the fascination of the Muslim rulers and especially the remains found in the construction of the building architecture under the Mughals. Nivedita has especially emphasised on the architectural beauty of the Jumma Mosque of Delhi constructed by Shahjahan and Qutab Minar built up during the Delhi Sultanate, the aesthetics of which attracted her and she wrote, "Not alone in the vastness of a Jumma Masjid, nor in the solemnity of the lofty Chancel – screen at Kutub, but even in the tiny Oratory of the Emperors of Delhi, we have some of the world's supreme utterances of the religious sense. Never can I forget my own visit to this last, surely in truth, the pearl of mosques. It was evening. While the light lasted, we had all examined the decorations-carving of acanthus patterns in low relief of half-transparent marble on the pillars, and the almost sob of awe with which we had entered into the presence of Purity-made-Visible, had been justified."<sup>12</sup>

In her thought process, there cannot be a nation without a sense of national consciousness, or rather, collective consciousness towards the nation and its needs, and according to her logic there is no reason to treat the distinctions between Hindus and Muslims as two communities at loggerheads. This has fairly been reflected in writing of Nivedita titled 'The Syntheses of Indian Thought'. Nivedita has rightly indicated that,

"... it is certainly a mistake to read the history of India at any time as the account of a struggle between Hindu and Mohammedan thought, though it is a mistake which is perhaps inseparable from the European conception of the influence of faith on politics. But it cannot, on the other hand, be too clearly understood that the problem which the Indian idea has had to face, during the period between Sankaracharya and the nineteenth century, was the



inclusion of the Mohammedan element in a completed nationality. From the nineteenth century onwards it becomes the realisation of that single united nationality, amidst the vast complexity which has been the growth of ages."<sup>13</sup>

What might be the reason has been answered by Nivedita herself and in one of the portions of this essay she has written,

"At last then, Indian thought stands revealed in its entirety — no sect, but a synthesis; no church, but a university of spiritual culture — as an idea of individual freedom, amongst the most complete that the world knows. Certain conceptions such as maya, karma and reincarnation, popularized by Buddhism, and mukhti or the beatific vision, sown broadcast alike by Sankaracharya and Sufis, are characteristic of large areas."<sup>14</sup>

Thus, it is apparent that Nivedita could gauge the background of the universal religion (*Sanatan Dharma*) and all the more she had perceived the philosophy of Hinduism. In reality Nivedita had the ability to empathise and observe the temperament of the Indians and had concluded that the brotherhood between the Hindus and Muslims had continued for a long time. The people of India could not tolerate the madness of malice and even if they had appreciated the same it was a temporary case. The attraction of Sister Nivedita towards Islam is thus multifarious and in her essay titled, 'Islam in India,' she has mentioned the name of the rulers like Akbar and Shahjahan who had various qualities to make them sovereign rulers and worthy of admiration. Akbar was a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth-I of Britain but in Nivedita's assessment, Akbar can be described verbatim in the following words laid down in her assessment,

". . . with a still greater statesmanship and breadth of mind and heart, he undertook to inaugurate a vast national. as distinguished from a sectarian policy. Few indeed of the world's monarchs have ever used so marvelous an opportunity with such wisdom and magnanimity as this emperor of Delhi. And almost equal sympathy with the speculations of all religions, a deep understanding and admiration of the old Indian system, with a desire only to complete

and extend, never to nullify it; a love of everything that was national . . .”<sup>15</sup>

Not only the divine truth and spirituality of Islam as a religion, Sister Nivedita had also been honourable to any man as can be found in her lively discussion in an essay titled, ‘The Passing of Shah Jahan’. Here one can find a heart-rending description as to the imagined living scene that happened immediately after the death of emperor Shahjahan. Nivedita has written,

“But Shahjahan himself? To him the moment is glad with expectation. The sucking sound of the river below the bastions fills him with the sense of that other river beside which stands his soul. Yonder, beyond the bend, like some ethereal white-veiled presence, stands the Taj, - *her* taj, her crown, the crown he wrought for her. But tonight, it is more than her crown. Tonight, it is herself. To night she is there, in all her old-time majesty and sweetness, yet with an added holiness withal. Tonight, beyond the gentle lapping of the waters, every line of the stately form speaks tenderness and peace and all-enfolding holiness, waiting for that pilgrim — with weary feet, bent back, and head so bowed, alas! – who comes leaving behind alike palace and prison, battlefield and cell prayer, to land on the quiet shore on the yonder side of death.

“Truly a royal passing — this of Shah Jahan! King in nothing so truly as in his pace in a woman’s heart — crowned in this, the supreme moment of her to whom he gave the Crown of all the world.”<sup>16</sup>

Sister Nivedita has also presented another story which is not only heart breaking but also may touch the heart of any sensible man. In the words of Nivedita we see that the description is presented in the following words,

“At his own earnest entreaty as they tell to this day in Agra Fort, the bed of the dying man has been carried to the balcony beyond the Jasmine Tower, that over-hangs the river. Jahanara weeps at her father’s feet. All others have withdrawn, for no service remains to be rendered to the august captive. On the edge of the carpet lie

only the shoes and regal helmet, put off for the last time for Shah Jahan, the uses of the world are ended. Silence and night and the mourning moon, half-veiled in her scarf of drifting cloud, envelop the sad soul of the gentle princess."<sup>17</sup>

The statement of Nivedita indicates a very painful scene and story which twist the mind of any human being because the emperor who had power and popularity all over Indian subcontinent, today he was in his death bed. This situation might have been enough for Nivedita to express her feeling in the words like - "Truly a royal passing."

In the 4th volume of the *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, we come to know of her concern about the education scenario of India. For reference purposes, she has presented Banaras and Jaunpur. In her assessment, the Hindu culture that prevailed in Banares and that of the Muslim culture and its popularity in Jaunpur had inspired the national feeling of the Indians. These two cultures had led to the development of the spirit of synthesis and, as if, they represent the mixing point of the Hindu and Perso-Arabian culture. Sister Nivedita writes, "But in Banares, as a cultural-centre, even in the present generation, though it is fast vanishing, we have another extraordinary advantage to note. Being as she is the authoritative seat of Hinduism and Sanskrit learning, the city stands nevertheless, side by side with Jaunpur, the equally authoritative centre of Mussulman learning of India. She represents in fact the dividing line between the Sanskritic civilisation of the Hindu provinces, and the Persian and Arabic culture of the Mohammedan. And consequently she still has members of a class that once constituted one of the most perfect types of national education in the world, elderly Hindu gentlemen who were trained in their youth not only to read Sanskrit literature, but also to read and enjoy what was then the distinctive accomplishment of royal courts, namely Persian poetry."<sup>18</sup>

Sister Nivedita and her ideologies go a long way to prove that there are individuals who aim at in-depth understanding of social conditions and the need to unite forces rather than engaging in clash and confrontation. They may not be labeled as 'superior intellectuals' but choose to refrain from parochialism and meanness. In this

perspective Sister Nivedita could experience the assimilative trend that prevailed in Medieval India. She again seems to have strongly believed that this temperament can only be possible through proper and scientific process of education system in our society.

Incidentally, in the 4th volume of her *Complete Works*, Nivedita writes on the 'Civic Elements of Indian Life' and here we come across her views about the applied aspects of the Islamic culture and at the same time she refers the root of the civic sense of the society. In this respect she has written, "There is no Hindu township that would present an address of welcome to a distinguished guest without the inclusion of Mohammedan names. Similarly, the Mohammedan district will make no representative deputation unless the Hindu residents of good standing are also to be found upon it. India is supposed to be sectarian, but no one ever heard of the members of one sect trying to exclude those of another from collective action! In such mutual courtesy and recognition, we have the largest possible basis for civic self-realisation of the highest order."<sup>19</sup>

One of the main issues that Nivedita has highlighted is the caste system of India, but in her estimate its impact is not so active and acute in the social life of this country. Undoubtedly, this reality and reflection of the Indian society had pleased Nivedita and she has admitted it in her writings. In this 4th volume, we may also see the reference to the sense of nationality of the Indians. In her assessment of any nation or country in no circumstances may be narrow-minded and parochial.

Nivedita provides an appropriate explanation of the constituents of a nation stands for. She writes about it as, "A nation, a country, is no narrow or limited unit! It has room, and to spare, for all to which it can offer love! The Mohammedan's gain is not the Hindu's loss but quite the reverse. The Hindu *needs* the Mohammedan, the Mohammedan needs the Hindu, if there is to be an Indian nation. The battles of the past have been merely the struggle to assert an equal strength. Like the border warfare of Englishmen and Scots, they have proved the wrestling matches of combatants who knew themselves for kinsmen. Each whetted his sword on the weapon of the other.

Nothing is a better basis for friendship, than the fighting of brave men".<sup>20</sup> Nivedita has referred many examples like these and she thus explains the process of the nation building. She wanted to convey her message of national consciousness and in this respect she wrote, ". . . the nationalising consciousness is fresh and unexhausted. That which Ashoka was, seated, two hundred and fifty years before Christ, on the throne of Pataliputra, great — what Akbar was, at Delhi, eighteen centuries later, that, in the sense of national responsibility, every Indian man must become tomorrow".<sup>20a</sup>

It is said that she delivered several lectures in different parts of Northern India and her themes of the deliverance were just to cement up the Hindu-Muslim unity and friendship in this country. In fact, many times she came in touch with the common people and this had created an extraordinary inspiration in her mind. She repeatedly expressed her feeling of 'unity of man' and in this respect we may quote her, "The message of unity that I deliver is rooted in my heart and for this reason I can realise the heart of others and I can easily ventilate that feeling to the people I meet."<sup>21</sup> Rabindranath Tagore and Acharyya Jagadish Chandra Bose could realise the temperament of Nivedita and commented, "Nivedita was as if a life image of amity."<sup>22</sup>

In fact, in spite of being a foreigner, Nivedita very often dreamt of a united India where every man would live in a circle of kinship. In fact, Sister Nivedita is symbolised with a great woman who could love people deeply and without any difference. Very likely Rabindranath Tagore had seen this woman with his 'philosophic mind' and commented that "if anybody can realise the true mentality of a human being and particularly the mindset can understand the personality of Sister Nivedita. If any man can win over the external coverage of the identity of anybody and can see the true spirit may be considered as an exceptional human being. We are really fortunate that we could realize the level of greatness of Nivedita and she was really something exceptional".<sup>23</sup> There is perhaps no question to justify the statement of Rabindranath, because his observations inspire us and create deep regard for the lady. Truly speaking, Nivedita was

really a 'precious stone' and this quality of Nivedita has been proved all the time. Incidentally Swami Vivekananda on 29th July, 1897 wrote a letter to Nivedita and it was as follows, "Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman — a real lioness — to work for the Indians, women specially."<sup>24</sup>

Nivedita was an asset for the people of a country like India and from this farsightedness, Swami Vivekananda invited her. The significance of this call was proved by Nivedita in course of time. Why Swami Vivekananda had wanted Nivedita to come to India has been mentioned in the same letter where Vivekananda wrote, "India cannot yet produce great woman, she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination, and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the women wanted."<sup>25</sup>

The mentality, thought of life, love and attention to all men and above all her respect for various religions had given Nivedita an extraordinary position as a great woman. The life-philosophy and self-curiosity have been explained by the renowned researcher Shankari Prasad Basu who has written in one of his books titled, *Nivedita Lokomata (Nivedita, people's mother, Second Volume)* that "Sister Nivedita had truly extended her love for us and she is still living within us. She was ever concerned about this country and did not differentiate its society, religion or caste. She is a rare example of woman to us. She was Miss Margaret Noble and achieved status of 'white lotus' filled with grandeur. In a backward country like India, she appeared in the garden of spiritualism and floated with her glory with purity just like an idol. Her ideal of life and the philosophic mind were not confined within a limited boundary rather she extended her attention for the relief of poverty and sufferings of the human society."<sup>26</sup>

Sister Nivedita was fascinated by Islam, its ideas as well as the theology that Islam has contributed to the world civilisation. In this perspective she wrote an essay titled 'Beauties of Islam' and she praised the positive side of Islam in the following languages. "The secret of Islam seems curiously slow to yield itself up to Christian eyes. If it is

not true that our common conception of the Prophet is of a bold bad man (to quote a distinguished Mohammedan the other day) at least most of us will acknowledge that the name calls to mind chiefly glimpses of flashing sword-blades, charging horsemen and the sound of Moslem war-cries in one part of the world or another. That is to say the boundaries and antagonisms of the Faith are well defined in our thought; but of all that makes it a religion, all that it gives of Living Waters to its people, all that it offers of tenderness and consolation to the human heart, - of all, in a word that is positive in it, we have received no hint."<sup>27</sup>

It is, however, correct to assess that Nivedita was only able to recognise India through Islam and the followers of this faith. She rather observed how both the communities, the Hindus and the Muslims enriched the national consciousness of India. In this respect she wrote, "The whole task now is to give the word 'Nationality' to India, in all its breadth and meaning. The rest will do itself. India must be observed by this great conception—it means new views of history, of customs, and it means the assimilation of the whole Ramakrishna idea of religion, the synthesis of all religious ideas. It means a final understanding of the fact that the political process and economic disaster are only side issues -that the one essential fact is realisation of its own nationality by the nation."<sup>28</sup>

Sister Nivedita was an admirer of Prophet Muhammad as He was a preacher of Islam. It appears that she read the Quran thoroughly and this is evident as we see when she writes,"— those who study the Koran deeply are forced to the conclusion that what stands for the gospel of an army on the path of conquest was really born of an overwhelming emotion of love and pity for the world. Mohammad's constant synonym for God is, 'The Compassionate, the Merciful', and he is perpetually reiterating the message of forgiveness of sins and charity to all men. That he himself was as much saint as conqueror, the account of his entry into Mecca proves."<sup>29</sup> Nivedita has presented a lively description about the conquest of Mecca and presents the quality of a great warrior and kind administrator. In her languages,

“The day of Mohammad’s greatest triumph over his enemies was also the day of his grandest victory over himself. He freely forgave the Koraysh all the years of sorrow and cruel scorn in which they had afflicted him and gave an amnesty to the whole population of Mekka.”<sup>30</sup>

We may also cite an important observation of Nivedita which is striking as per her assessment on religion. She writes that, “a new religious teacher always stirs in men that sentiment of Humanity that we of this age are prone to call the sense of nationality, and in exact proportion as that is strong and active, do its limitations become vividly defined. Within its own boundaries, Mohammedanism was the most tremendous assertion of the Rights of the People and of Woman that the world has ever seen for that very reason, perhaps, it carried proselytism to the people of the land of ignorance with fire and sword.”<sup>31</sup>

In a world where religion and blanket statements are issued callously, Sister Nivedita stands as a primary role model because her ‘Other’ status does not deter the process of social reforms. If we look at the influence of ‘Indianness’ we may see that various individuals have more or less attempted to understand the entirety of a diverse culture. The time period that we are viewing while assessing Sister Nivedita’s act of service is a period where diseased minds could breed more orthodoxy and irresponsible actions. It still remains a dream for various visionaries that education somehow changes the balance of society because most people would want to invest in education and polishing themselves without the desire to utilise the same and give back to community. On one hand, we could either be proud about how the ‘Indian’ culture attracted a lot of foreigners but at the same time it is a matter to ponder about the fact that not many ‘Indians’ would take the initiative to understand what nationalism or patriotism, or even humanism stands for. One could be sitting in a classroom and listening to stories of Margaret Noble going on to become one of the greatest personalities the world has ever known by the name of Sister Nivedita, that one lecture may influence someone to feel inspired



enough to give back to society and there would probably be a group of minds who would sit through the class lecture only to pass an exam. The most important lesson we can acquire when we analyse personalities, who have engaged in philanthropy, is kindness knows no nationality and therefore, one should not think before extending a hand of help. While there are stances of religious bigotry, the experiences of Sister Nivedita teach us that unless we understand a religion or faith in its true essence, generalising it on the basis of a handful of undesirable circumstances is a waste of intellect and education. Children, especially, grow up with the same mentality that there is an 'Other' and that leads to differentiation rather than unity. One can be divided by faith, race, ethnicity or social status, what unites us is humanity. It is a pity that several authoritative people in nations express their homage and respects to personalities that have forever advertised on humanity and equality, yet during times of a humanitarian crisis, they have maintained deafening silences because the fear of losing power was greater than service to mankind. Sister Nivedita is a figure we could use to erase the aspect of 'foreign' because when it comes to social service, a helping hand has no label of nationality.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Sister Nivedita, *Footfalls of Indian History*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1980, (second reprint).
- <sup>2</sup> *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. IV, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1968, p. 270.
- <sup>3</sup> 'Margaret Theke Bhagini Nivedita', A Bengali article by Binayak Chakrabarti published in a Bengali periodical titled '*Sudhakshina*' (2015-2016), p. 99.
- <sup>4</sup> *Nivedita of India*, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, 2002, p. 1.
- <sup>5</sup> *Cradle Tales of Hinduism*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1988 (4th impression); *Aggressive Hinduism*, Udbodhan Karyalaya Office, Calcutta, 1914 (5th edition).
- <sup>6</sup> Sister Nivedita, *Swamijike Jerup Dekhiyachhi*, the Bengali version of the book by Nivedita titled, *The Master as I saw Him*, Longmans Green & Co. London, 1903, the Bengali translation by Swami Madhabananda, Udbodhan Karyalaya, Kolkata, 1975, pp. 145f.
- <sup>7</sup> For details see *Modern Review*, November, 1911.
- <sup>8</sup> *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 1. edited by Sankari Prasad Basu, Calcutta, 1982, p. 149.

- <sup>9</sup> 1st edition, Longmans Green and Co., New York, 1918.
- <sup>10</sup> Sister Nivedita, *The Web of Indian Life*, (hence forth *The Web*) New York, 1918, p. 224.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> For detailed discussion see *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. II, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1999, p. 472.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.
- <sup>16</sup> *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. III, Advaita Ashrama, 2000, pp. 64f.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.
- <sup>18</sup> *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. IV, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1996, pp. 182-83; also see *Footfalls of History* by Sister Nivedita, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1980, p. 252.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.
- <sup>20a</sup> See *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. IV, p. 270.
- <sup>21</sup> Mani Bagchi, *Nivedita* (in Bengali), 1362 (B.S). p. 203.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> For details see *Bhagini Nivedita* (in Bengali) by Prabrajika Muktiprana, Kolkata, 1909, p. 1.
- <sup>24</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VII, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1979, p. 511.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> Sankari Prasad Basu, *Nivedita Lokamata*, (in Bengali), Second Volume, Kolkata, 1987, p. 167.
- <sup>27</sup> *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 11, p. 471.
- <sup>28</sup> See *Nivedita of India*, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, 2002, p. 85f.
- <sup>29</sup> *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 11, p. 475.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 475-76.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.

## *Noise Level and Its Impact on the Quality of Life of the Street Vendors*

Komal Singh, U. V. Kiran and Padmini Pandey

### **Abstract**

**Aim:** The current investigation was to examine the noise level and its impact on quality of life of street vendors. **Methods:** The data for the current study was gathered using a structured questionnaire and interview schedule, which include general profile, work profile, health profile and quality of life scale. The quality of life scale (WHOQOL-BREF) was taken from World Health Organization (WHO). Noise level was assessed using a noise level meter. Sample for the study were 150 male and female respondents aged between 20-70 years. **Result:** Results of the study clearly indicate that there is a significant difference between noise level on quality of life and other health aspects of the respondents. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that noise levels have a major impact on the total quality of life of street vendors, whether it is physical health, psychological health, or any other aspect of their lives, since street vendors spend most of their time on the side of the road, they are at risk of hearing loss as a result of the sound of passing vehicles, loudspeakers, or any other source.

**Keywords :** Noise Level, Street Vendors, Hearing Loss, Quality of Life

### **Introduction**

The speed of human life has increased in this rapidly growing global environment (Devi and Kiran, 2016). India is a developing country with the world's second largest population; as a result, our government is unable to provide employment to all its citizens. To sustain their families, majority of people have moved from rural to

urban areas. Urban communities have all of the skills and job choices in these circumstances. Many bright people select white-collar employment in cities. Self-employment is essential for both educated and uneducated people in a range of situations, along with the informal economy (Karthikeyan and Mangaleswaran, 2013). The aim of the research is to determine how noise levels affect street vendors' quality of life.

#### *Street Vendors*

The informal economy in Indian cities enables the urban sector to survive. People migrate to cities because of poverty and lack of successful career opportunities in rural areas. People from rural backgrounds are unable to get well-paid work in the formal sector because they are not educated or skilled. They depend on the informal work for majority of their income. As a result, unorganised sector has grown rapidly in various cities. In comparison to other organised sectors, unorganised industry does not require large investments.

#### *Quality of life*

According to World Health Organization (1996) "Quality of life is defined as individuals' perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns". In the current study, quality of life scale, WHOQOL-BREF (2004) developed by World Health Organization was used.

#### *Working Pattern of the Street Vendors*

Lucknow is one of the largest cities in Uttar Pradesh. Majority of street vendors sell fruits, vegetables, foods, grains, flowers, and other items. They have a pattern of selling goods in sitting positions, bicycles, walking, open-air sales, roadside sales, and door-to-door sales. They market their products and work 12 or 14 hours per day (8am - 9pm). Vendors are dealing with lot of problems from dealing with public officials and as well the physical environment due to lack of proper facilities. Their working environment is exposed to hazardous weather

conditions such as heat, rain, dust, and noise pollution. As a result, their physical state declines, resulting in a variety of diseases such as body heat, acne, skin allergies, dust allergies, and various other issues such as hearing loss and physical disturbances.

*Effect of Noise on Quality of life*

Where there is unplanned urbanisation, occupational health risks and hazards related to polluted areas have become a severe public health concern (Gangwar and Kiran, 2017). Noise pollution at street level is a potentially significant source of overall noise pollution. Noise is usually defined as an unwanted sound or a group of sounds that can be harmful to people (Seidman and Standring, 2010). When it comes to street vendors, we can see how noise affects them. Because street vendors spend large amounts of time on the street, noise has a major impact on them. Among the most common work-related hazards associated with permanent hearing damage is noise exposure at work. Noise-induced deafness has been a well-documented occupational hazard, but the factors that influence perceptions of noise risks and, as a result, hearing loss prevention is insufficient (Milikau et al, 2016).

Road traffic and transportation are the most significant sources of noise pollution in urban areas. Noise pollution is becoming a severe concern in urban areas with increasing urban development, transportation and road traffic. This has both direct and indirect health consequences for street vendors. Excessive noise, sometimes known as noise pollution or disturbance creates psychological disturbances too.

A decibel survey undertaken by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) in 2011 revealed that Delhi had some of India's noisiest roads. According to the study, the worst noise pollution was found in Delhi, which studied data from 200,000 people in 50 cities around the world, including Delhi and Mumbai, Delhi residents, in particular, had the highest proportion of hearing loss compared to

their age. According to the study, noise pollution in cities is directly associated with 64% of hearing loss. The most common sensory deficiency in the human population is hearing loss (DTE Staff, 2017).

Noise has wide range of effects, ranging from mild but still significant concerns (e.g., communication disruption, insomnia, and decreased productivity) to the most serious risk of all, permanent hearing impairment. Even at low levels, noise can be harmful to human health.

Street-level sound is perhaps the most important component of the urban sound scape. Unwanted sound or noise can put street vendors under mental and physical stress. It can disturb human activity or balance. Occupational noise continues to be a concern in all parts of the world. The most prevalent work-related illness is occupational hearing loss. Many people, even street vendors, have lost their hearing capacity as a result of noise pollution. Noise causes hearing loss and so puts excessive stress on the delicate inner ear (Kinyua et al, 2016). Street vendors, retailers, and hawkers spend their days working alongside major roadways so they are constantly exposed to road noise.

Apart from noise pollution, they have some other problem which is as follows: - Falls, working in closed areas, risks of eye problem, accidents, tripping, as well as the danger of harm from items, working in uncomfortable positions or performing tiresome physical chores, standing for long periods of time, and lifting substantial or awkward objects are all concerns (Pandey and Kiran, 2020).

## **Methodology**

### *Statement of the problem*

The urban sectors are considered to be an important factor of trade association in the world. In urban sector the noise level is too high, which affects the quality of life of street vendors. Most of the street vendors are working in urban areas. The present study is

dealing with various aspects of noise pollution and its impact on quality of life of street vendors.

*Objective*

To study the impact of noise level on quality of life of street vendors.

*Sample and location*

The study is descriptive in nature. A sample of 150 respondents was selected for the current study using random sampling method. The data collection for the study was done between January to March 2022. The respondents were classified into four groups based on their type of vending (fruit, clothing, vegetable, and cooked food). Rajnikhand, South city, Bangla bazaar, Telibagh, Charbagh, Transport nagar, Krishna nagar, and Uthrathiya are the eight traffic locations categorised into three areas i.e. residential area, market area and areas adjacent to railway station were identified for conducting the present study.

*Tools for data collection*

The data for the current study was gathered using a systematic questionnaire and interview schedule. The demographic profile i.e. age, gender, marital status, and educational qualifications are included in the questionnaire, while the occupational profile such as current occupation, year of employment, daily income, and working hours. The noise level was assessed using a noise level meter. WHOQOL-BREF quality of life scale developed by World Health Organization was used. This scale has 26 questions measured in 4 dimensions Physical health, Psychological development, Social relationships and Environment factors.

### **Results and Discussion**

This study was explained using frequency, percentage, and hypothesis was tested using ANOVA. The tables below explain and examine many aspects of the noise level and quality of life variables.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondent

	Demographic profile	Frequency (N=150)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>			
1	20-30 years	24	16.0
2	30-40 years	37	24.7
3	40-50 years	39	26.0
4	50-60 years	35	23.3
5	60-70 years	15	10.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
	Male	141	94.0
	Female	9	6.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education</b>			
1	Illiterate	38	25.3
2	Primary	10	6.7
3	Secondary	13	8.7
4	High school	43	28.7
5	Intermediate	34	22.7
6	Graduate	12	8.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Family type</b>			
1	Joint	77	51.3
2	Nuclear	73	48.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Family background</b>			
1	Rural	59	39.3
2	Urban	91	60.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>			
1	Unmarried	18	12.0
2	Married	132	88.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>



Majority of the street vendors (26.0%) were from the age group of 40-50 years, while 24.7% street vendors were from 30-40 years age group and only 10.0% of the street vendors were found to be in age group of 60-70 years. This table also explains that majority of the respondents (94.0%) were male and only 6.0% were female. The data also shows that 22.7% of the group has completed Intermediate level studies and 8.0% of the sample only has completed graduation and 25.3% are illiterate. According to the data, majority of the total respondents (51.3%) belongs to a joint family and the remaining 48.7% to a nuclear family. The table also indicates that 60.7% of the sample lives in urban areas, while 39.3% lives in rural areas. The data also shows that majority of the total respondents (88.0%) were married.

**Table 2. Work profile of the respondents**

	Work profile	Frequency (N=150)	Percentage (%)
<b>Daily income (in Rupees)</b>			
1	100-500	55	36.7
2	500-1000	60	40.0
3	1000-1500	12	8.0
4	More than 1500	23	15.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Working hours</b>			
1	6 hours or less	9	6.0
2	7-10 hours	55	36.7
3	10-12 hours	55	36.7
4	More than 12 hours	31	20.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>No. of working days in a week</b>			
1	4 days	1	.7
2	6 days	34	22.7
3	7 days	115	76.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

*Contd. p. 132*

<b>Years of working</b>			
1	0-5 years	30	20.0
2	5-10 years	48	32.0
3	10-15 years	37	24.7
4	More than 15 years	35	23.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Type of vending</b>			
1	Vegetable vendor	28	18.7
2	Fruit vendor	36	24.0
3	Garment vendor	33	22.0
4	Cocked food vendor	31	20.7
5	Any other	22	14.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

The work profile of the street vendors is presented in Table 2. Majority of the respondents (40.0%) earns Rs. 500-1000 per day, and only 8.0% earns Rs. 1000-1500 per day whereas 15.3% earns more than Rs. 1500. The data also shows that majority (36.7%) of them works for 7-10 to 10-12 hours, while only 20.7% of the respondents works for more than 12 hours. Most of them (76.7%) works all seven days of the week, whereas only 22.7% works for six days. The largest group of the respondents (32.0%) has job experience of 5-10 years, while only 20.0% has work experience of 0-5 years and 23.3% has job experience of more than 15 years. Most of the street vendors (24.0%) work as fruit vendors, just only 18.7% as vegetable vendors.

**Table 3. Health Profile of the respondents**

<b>Health profile</b>	<b>Frequency (N=150)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Health related problems faced by respondent</b>		
1 Dust allergies	44	29.3
2 Cough and fever	29	19.3

*Contd. p. 133*

3 Hypertension	22	14.7
4 Urinary infection	1	.7
5 No problem	54	36.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Alcohol consumption by the respondent</b>	<b>Frequency (N=150)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
1 Never	99	66.0
2 Sometimes	50	33.3
3 Quite often	1	.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in the above table portrays that 29.3% of the respondents are prone to dust allergies, followed by persistent cough & fever (19.3%) and hypertension (14.7%). It can also be observed from the data that majority (66.6%) of them do not consume alcohol.

**Table 4. Assessment of noise level across various areas**

Sl.No.	Area	Category	Code	Noise level (dB)
1	Residential area	Rajnikhand	R1	71.28
		Krishna nagar	R2	78.2
2	Market area	South city	M1	81.2
		Uthrathia	M2	86.6
		Bangla bazaar	M3	83
		Telibagh	M4	80.35
3	Area adjacent to railway station	Charbagh	R1	98.4
		Transport nagar	R2	91.6

Noise level was assessed using noise level meter in various areas. In the present research the areas were classified based on the kind of locality — i.e. residential area, market area and area adjacent to railway station. The noise level recorded (dB) in various areas all presented in Table 4. The noise levels recorded in residential area coded as R1

(71.28), R2 (78.2). The noise levels recorded in market area coded from M1 to M4 ranging from 80-90 dB. Highest noise levels i.e. above 90 dB were recorded in the areas adjacent to railway stations where there is continuous movement of passenger as well goods trains.

Measurement of noise level was taken in three different times/day from every selected zone. Exposure of noise was found continuous in all the three areas.

**Table 5. Noise level measurement on quality of life of street vendors**

Sl. No.	Items	Noise level and its impact on quality of life of the street vendors			F value	P value
		Less than 80 dB Mean±S.D	80-90 dB Mean±S.D	More than 90 dB Mean±S.D		
1	Physical health	26.61±2.915	26.12±1.746	24.94±3.415	2.166	.118
2	Psychological Health	22.94±6.932	23.36±7.592	21.00±1.265	1.760	.176
3	Social relationships	10.45±1.622	10.92±1.188	11.18±1.328	.138	.871
4	Environmental Health	26.58±3.345	25.92±3.353	26.06±1.982	2.763	0.66
5	Overall quality of life	86.39±6.062	83.92±3.933	81.50±6.044	4.336	.15

The impact of noise level on the quality of life was assessed across all the five parameters – physical health, psychological health, social relationships, environmental health and overall quality of life. Though no significant differences were found in the effect on various parameters, the mean values depict that there are differences due to increase in noise levels. The physical health ( $\mu=26.61$ ,  $\mu=26.12$  and  $\mu=24.94$ ) at less than 80 dB, 80-90 dB and more than 90 dB respectively. Unresistingly the values on most of the parameters depict less impact on highest noise level (>90 dB) and this may be due to the reason that

continuous moving and constant heaving lead to a limitation to the noise and hence has less impact. Environmental health measurements at lowest noise level (<80 dB) was found to be good in comparison to the 80-90 dB. Significant impact at 90% level was found on overall quality of life of the vendors due to noise level.

### **Major Findings**

The current investigation found that the study participants were in working age groups and had hearing impairments as well as noise-related health issues. Other research has also corroborated this fact. Earlier researches have reported that psychological and psychosomatic symptoms manifest themselves in the form of mental illness. Exposure to road noise can cause stress, irritability, loss of attention, exhaustion, and headaches.

### **Conclusion**

Noise is emerging as a major environmental problem in many of the cities of the world. The study concludes that noise levels have a major impact on the total quality of life of street vendors, whether it is physical health, psychological health, or any other aspect of their lives. Street vendors spend most of their time on the side of the road; they are at risk of hearing loss as a result of the sound of passing vehicles, loudspeakers, or any other source. There is an emergent need to create awareness among street vendors and suggest suitable measures to avoid high noise levels while performing their work.

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*Journal of a Trip undertaken to explore the Glaciers of the Kanchun-  
jingah Group in the Sikkim Himalaya, in November 1861.—By  
Major J. L. SHERWILL, Revenue Surveyor.*

The rains had been protracted to a later date than usual. On the 2nd November, 1861, after a week of fair weather, on the morning of one of those balmy days for which, at this season of the year, Darjeeling is so famous, our party, consisting of Dr. B. Simpson, Bengal Army, Captain E. Macpherson, 93rd Highlanders, W. Kemble, Bengal Civil Service, and myself, left "The Bright Spot" with the view, if practicable, of reaching and ascending any one of the perpetually snow-clad spurs of the great Kanchunjingah group of mountains, and examining the glaciers of this hitherto unexplored portion of the great Himalaya range. From Dr. Hooker's published map of Sikkim we were led to hope our object would have been attained by following the course of the Ratong river to its source. Accordingly we decided upon following this route, being strengthened in our resolution, by knowing that Captain W. S. Sherwill, in 1852, had failed in reaching *The Big Mountain* by continuing along the crest of the Singaleelah Range, his further progress having been stopped by a deep and precipitous valley.

Leaving Darjeeling at 7.45 A. M. on our hill ponies, we passed the Little Rungeet at 10 A. M. over a good bridge made of bamboos lashed together with slips of cane, forming an arch supporting a pendent roadway which was constructed in one night by Murray's sappers for the late Lady Canning. Reached the frontier outpost of Goke, at

10.30 A. M. It is situated on the summit of a narrow range which separates the Little Rungeet from the Rummàn, which river here forms the boundary between British and Independent Sikkim.

We parted with our ponies at Goke and proceeding on foot in an easterly direction, reached the Rummàn at noon, which river we crossed, not very far from its junction with the Great Rungeet, by a well constructed bridge of bamboos. The luxuriance of the vegetation along the northern slopes of the Goke spur is beyond all description beautiful. Near Goke are groups of stately saul trees, elegantly covered with clusters of ferns—one kind in particular encircles the saul, forming coronet-like bunches one above the other, the broad leaves of the fern resembling the feathers of a shuttlecock. On one tree we counted eleven of these coronets rising one above another. Towards the Rummàn, at a lower elevation, we passed through a grove of gigantic bamboos about a mile in extent. These bamboos are commonly used by the hill people for carrying water. Mica schist exists in considerable quantity along the spur, and the soil is rich and deep. Proceeding onwards and taking a northerly direction, we doubled round the Chakoong hill, and reached the Ruttoo at 3 P. M. which we mistook for the Rishee. Crossing the Ruttoo by a couple of stout saplings thrown across this wild and very pretty torrent, we commenced the ascent of the Rishee spur of the Hee mountain. Here one of our party became quite knocked up by the long and fatiguing walk, but after despatching the best part of a tin of marmalade, was sufficiently recovered to proceed and mount the remainder of the steep acclivity and descend the other side as far as the Rishee cultivation, where we arrived at 6 P. M. after a harassing march of twenty-seven miles, and encamped at an elevation of about 1000 feet above the bed of the river. We found all our things, which had been sent on ahead two days previously, were up and tent pitched. The road which was marked out last year by the sappers, during the temporary occupation of this part of Sikkim, was in pretty good order. It is called by the natives the lower and level road, to distinguish it from that viâ Siriong and upper Rishee, which has many long ascents and descents.

Early next morning the villagers brought us supplies and oranges from Mixidong, for which we paid. After an early breakfast, left Bishee at 8 A. M. and descended to the Rishee river, which was cross-



1862.] *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.* 459

ed by a bridge made of saplings ; hence we ascended the Rinchingpoong hill, the lower part of which is rocky and steep, but the upper portion is less so, and the road a made one and good. Passed a good deal of millet cultivation, and stopped with a view to procure some of the well known beverage made from the millet seed, called "Murwa," but the villagers all ran away. We reached Rinchingpoong about 12.45 P. M. and pitched our tent immediately above the site of the field entrenchment occupied last year by Dr. Campbell and Captain Murray's party of sappers. A few trenches, broken planks, pieces of posts strewed about, and the skull of a Bhootia pierced by a bullet, alone mark the spot, where our countrymen, the year previous, withstood the treacherous attack of twenty times their own number. If this portion of Sikkim should ever become British territory, this hill is deserving of particular attention, as possessing great capabilities for the formation of a winter sanitarium. The southern extremity of the hill is about 7000 feet, but the northern, where the village site exists, is not more than 5,600 feet, and the temperature is much milder than that of Darjeeling. The soil is deep and rich, mica schist entering largely into the composition of the hill. It has several good perennial streams, a large pool of water, and broad terraces on all sides. Carriage roads might easily be constructed. The distance from Darjeeling by the lower road is about thirty-five miles. Wheat, millet, rice, buck wheat, &c., are cultivated. Crabb apples, raspberries and cherry trees were observed, the latter in full blossom, whilst most of the other trees were shedding their leaves. The daphne or paper-tree also grows here, likewise oak, magnolia, birch, chesnut, walnut and many other forest trees.

There is a Goompa at this place well worth seeing, the Llama belonging to which died nine months ago.

The Llama's widow and relatives brought us a present of four bamboo tubes of hot "Murwa," and later in the evening eggs, rice, milk and fowls ; and in the morning more rice for sale, also eggs, milk and millet seed. Our encampment, which was in the midst of very high wormwood, swarmed with hairy caterpillars, which crawled over our beds and up the sides of the tent, and were very troublesome.

The morning was very fine, and having breakfasted early, we were ready for a start, but delayed on account of the coolies who had no rice till this morning's supply arrived.

Left Rinchingpoong at 9 A. M.; passed Soomtong at 9.30; and after two hours of steep descent reached the broad and rapid stream of the Kullait, close to where the Rongsong stream falls into it. Here we had a refreshing bathe and washed clothes. The Kullait is here divided into two streams. The first and smaller was crossed by a slender bridge made of bamboos, having a pendent roadway formed of a single bamboo. Across the second the fishermen have constructed a very ingenious weir of bamboos tied together with cane. During the night, when the fish descend the rapids, they are driven by the force of the water on to an open frame-work of bamboos where they are easily captured. The fishermen cooked some fish by baking or stewing them in a bamboo, a device which succeeded admirably and occupied only a few minutes. We boiled water and made murwa; and having scrambled across the second stream by the aid of the fisherman's weir, by 1 P. M. were wending our way up the very steep Pemionchee hill on the north side of the valley, and at 3.45 P. M. reached Gazing, and the coolies an hour later. We put up in the house of a villager, and were shortly afterwards treated to murwa and plantains by a sturdy Llama with a peculiar drooping eyelid. All our beds were placed in a row, and dinner was served up on an extempore table formed of a plank taken from the flooring. In front was a flaring fire, surrounded by a dozen people of all ages and both sexes, principally the members of our host's family, besides some of our own coolies, including the cook and his deputy. All the members of the family had their heads shaved on account of the recent death of an old servant. After dinner we had singing, but it was not without some difficulty that we persuaded the Bhooteas to favour us. The Llama, who was in grief, sat apart in one corner of the spacious apartment constantly mumbling his prayers, but after partaking of two cups of tea and a cheroot, he was induced to join the social party round the fire. A Dowager Llama was very seriously engaged in her devotions with a praying cylinder the whole time. On breaking up festivities we went to bed, exposed to the gaze of all the fair inmates, who after seeing us comfortably settled for the night modestly retired. But I may as well mention that we had by this time relinquished the vulgar fashion of undressing before retiring to rest. Our slumbers were frequently disturbed by the barking of dogs, squeaking of pigs, and squalling of children. The latter we found in the

1862.]            *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.*            461

morning were without clothing, which may account for their restlessness.

Breakfast over, and after attempting to eat some hard cakes made of crushed Indian corn, cemented with some farinaceous matter, we left for Pemionchee at 8 A. M. ; and after a steep ascent reached the Rajah of Sikkim's unfinished durbar at 9 A. M. This durbar was only begun last year, and during the troubles in Sikkim remained untouched, and is now in abeyance until the Pemionchee Monastery is renovated. At present only two stories have been built. As far as it goes, it is a very substantially constructed mansion, 36 × 46 feet. The walls are 5 feet in thickness and of solid masonry, and the floor of the upper story is supported on massive beams and upright posts. It will be a fine building, when completed.

A further steep ascent of half an hour brought us to the Goompa at Pemionchee. This once extensive monastery is now a mass of ruins. It was accidentally burnt in October last year. The full complement of Llamas is 108. Of this number only twelve were present. The remainder were absent in all parts of the country, collecting money and materials for the rebuilding of their temple. Some of the latter, such as pigments and brushes for the painting of the figures of their gods and embellishment of the walls, are to come from China, the artists from Thibet, and other materials from Calcutta. We saw the villagers bringing in half wrought logs of wood from the surrounding forests.

It will take two years to rebuild, and probably as many more to embellish. The Llamas are very anxious to get it completed, as in its present state their occupation is gone. They complained that nobody visited them, a state of things very detrimental to their finances. Formerly they received a subsidy of Rs. 3000 annually from the Rajah of Sikkim, but since the Terai lands and the Darjeeling hills were annexed to British territory, this bounty has been discontinued. The Llamas are consequently poor, but like the monks of old are a fat and jovial race, their sleek faces indicating any thing but a poor larder. We put up in a house belonging to one of the absent Llamas. The head Llama, who is a perfect type of his holy order, treated us to murwa which was very refreshing. He and several other Llamas were sociable and talkative. They informed us that they had two days previously received instructions from the Dewan

462                    *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.*                    [No. 5,

at Darjeeling to lay in a supply of rice for us, but had not been able to do so, as very little rice had been cultivated, in consequence of the flight across the Rungeet of the majority of the cultivators during the recent disturbances. They could only supply one maund of rice, and three or four of Indian corn. But I soon found out that this was not the case, and that plenty of rice was forthcoming on making money advances for it, which I accordingly did, and had it sent after us, some as far as Jongli, and some placed in Caches at intermediate stations.

From Pemionchee, which is 7000 feet high, a fine view of the snow is obtained, also of the valley of the Ratong. The monastery of Chanacheeling is perched upon a high peak of the Pemionchee range to the westward, and at present is made the repository of all the books and other relics saved when the Pemionchee Goompa was burnt. Sinchul and Darjeeling are visible over the Kulloo Mendong twenty miles in direct distance.

This morning the weather was again very fine; the thermometer at sunrise stood 48°. Dr. Simpson photographed the snow, the Goompa and one of the Llama's houses. Left Pemionchee at 8.45 A. M.; and after a steep descent and rapid walk of 45 minutes reached the village of Chonpoong, consisting of about fifteen well built houses very pleasantly situated at the foot of a tree forest, on a rather flat terrace on a spur of the Pemionchee hill. It commands good views on three sides to the north. Eksum is seen in the foreground, looking very flat and having a quantity of cultivation round it. The deep and thickly wooded valley of the Ratong is conspicuous winding to the west, across which are plainly visible the fine waterfalls of Lemgong, dashing headlong down perpendicular walls of gneiss rock, over which a near view of the Nursing and Junnoo mountains is obtained, but Kanchungingah is depressed behind the Baraborony hill. To the east a high mountain in Sikkim is striking, and the monasteries of Raking and Tassiding, the latter perched upon a conical hill standing apart from all others. To the west, the distant view of the Singaleelah range, seen across the valley of the Ringbi, is very grand. Altogether the view from Chonpoong is striking and beautiful, but that of the snow is limited, and far less grand than that obtained from Darjeeling.

It was our intention to proceed direct to Eksum, which is the shortest road by several miles; but understanding from the villagers

1862.]      *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.*      463

that the bridges across the Ringbi and Ratong were broken, we were compelled to proceed by the long route via Tingling. So after partaking of murwa presented to us by the mundul or headman, and having made purchases of rice, fowls, eggs and butter, at 10.30 A. M. we resumed our march in a westerly direction. Having crossed through the Liebong cultivation and clearance, and making a rapid and very steep descent, we crossed the Ringbi by a bamboo bridge thrown across a deep narrow gorge, through which the whole body of the stream rushed with impetuosity, rolling and boiling over large blocks of gneiss rock. The Ringbi at this spot is very narrow, confined between steep rocky sides, the bed of which is full of deep pools of clear water. The ridge was not more than twenty feet in length, and the view of the river from it very wild. After a steep ascent and a slight descent we reached the Ringbi, here we bathed, washed clothes and had tiffin. Air 70°; water 56°.

Left the river at  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 2 P. M. and after a steep ascent of 40 minutes reached our halting-place at Tingling, altogether a distance of about eight miles. We put up in the house of the headman of the village, who very politely offered us his apartment on the floor of which our dinner was cooked. We turned in early, but what with the coughing and loud talking of our host's family, some of us did not get to sleep until near morning. There was an ill-natured cur at this place, who several times snarled and snapped at our heels.

We had not been in bed very long before a rumbling noise, not unlike the devotional murmurings of a Llama, was heard, which shortly increased in earnestness and became louder and louder. At last it was indistinctly heard to say, "that beast of a dog has got hold of my hand and won't let go, he has bitten my hand right through now;" and then the same voice was very distinctly heard to say, "I'll eat no more dinner, I was in a mortal funk, and could get no one to take the beast off, though I tried hard to do so." This was our friend Kemble who had evidently partaken freely of dinner, and was labouring under the effects of nightmare.

The Molee Goompa is immediately above Tingling on the summit of the Molee mountain. The Chanacheeling, Pemionchee, Tassiding, Rubolong, Gyratong, Doobdee and Kaichoopeenee Goompas are all visible from this place.

After having purchased some fowls and partaken of an early breakfast, we started at 8.30 A. M. and after fifteen minutes' steep descent passed the small village of Kasuppyah, consisting of two houses and some clearance for cultivation. The headman was waiting for us with presents of sugar-cane, murwa, eggs, plantains and milk.

Another quarter of an hour of steep descent brought us to Linchoogong, a small village of three houses. At 9.30, after a very steep, stony and difficult descent, we arrived at the Ratong, which is here a wild, foaming and boiling torrent, dashing over large blocks of gneiss rock. We halted till 11.30 bathed and washed clothes. The temperature of the water was 48°.

Dr. Simpson took two photographs of this wild spot, which unfortunately were afterwards destroyed. We crossed the torrent by a temporary bridge constructed by the inhabitants of the village of Labeeong, who also brought us presents of rice, murwa and eggs. After a steep scramble of a quarter of an hour, we met the inhabitants of the village of Paranting, who brought us hot murwa, and had prepared a place to sit down. They were particularly polite; the women were highly decorated with coral, amber and silver ornaments; both sexes wore flowers of a pretty blue hydraugea in their ears. Three of the women had jackets made of European long-cloth, dyed blue, but the children, as usual, were quite naked. After a further steep ascent we reached our halting-place at Eksum at 1 P. M. This is the frontier village, prettily situated on a broad plateau surrounded by high commanding mountains, most of which have their summits capped with fir trees, and their slopes richly clothed with deep verdure and stately forest trees. A few hundred feet above the village, to the east, the monastery of Doobdee is seen perched on the summit and at the extremity of a separate spur, in a very picturesque position. It is probably of very ancient origin, built by the first Buddhist priests who settled in Sikkim. Eksum derives its name from Ek or Yeuk which means a "labourer" or "workman," and "soom" three, from the first three Buddhist ministers who came into Sikkim from Thibet, having commenced their spiritual labours at this place.

We put up for the night in the house of a villager, the female members of which, on their return from the toils of the field, seemed not at all pleased at finding their house in the possession of strang-

1862.] *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.* 465

ers, however, they soon became reconciled and appeared to take considerable interest in our culinary operations.

Our host had been a cripple for twenty-two years from the effects of a hatchet cut, but this did not deter him from soliciting medicine to cure him. The females all left before we turned in for the night, but mine host remained and drank whiskey toddy which made him very restless all night. We had most of us become very bad sleepers, and very little disturbed us, so what with mine host passing in and out and the fighting and incessant squeaking of young pigs under the floor, we got very little sleep.

As this is the last village towards the snow, the coolies wanted a halt which was not conceded. Before starting we purchased three maunds of rice, four fowls and some eggs, and distributed some glass beads and buttons amongst the members of our host's family, and presented a metallic snuff box to the Doobdee Llama, from whom we bought a yâk for 12 Rupees. We left Eksum at 9.30. The first part of the road was good, but it soon became very bad. It lay along the side of an almost precipitous hill, where a false step would often have precipitated the traveller many feet headlong down the kudd towards the Ratong, the roaring of whose waters below was very audible. At 11 A. M., we passed the beautiful water-falls of Barabarong, dashing headlong down a precipice over immense blocks of gneiss in situ. The water was clear as crystal.

The ascent on the opposite side was very difficult: we were sometimes obliged to scramble upon all fours, at others to mount by steps cut in upright posts, or along saplings slung over precipitous parts. In a few places the yak herdsmen have cut foot-steps in the solid rock for the convenience of travellers, who would often find it difficult to proceed without such assistance. The hills are very precipitous, as is the case in all the back ranges near the snow in Sikkim. The range on which we were, was thickly covered with forest trees and underwood, it was only occasionally we obtained a peep at the noble capped mountain across the Ratong. We encamped in a very jungly place in the midst of forest, at a spot called Joaboo, near a small mountain torrent. We wished to go on a little further to Neebee, but were prevented, for want of water at that place. Although the whole distance was not more than seven miles, the march was a fatiguing one for the baggage coolies who arrived late in the evening. We all

assisted in cooking dinner. Cooking has become quite a pastime with us. We are now at an elevation for that troublesome and loathsome parasite, the Himalaya tick, which we have found rather abundant.

Started at 8.46 ; and after going over five or six miles of difficult road, reached the Ratong which is here the same foaming, boiling torrent. We crossed immediately above a water-fall, over three very primitive constructions which served for bridges. The bed of the river at this spot has an elevation of 7,790 feet, and we found the temperature of the water to be  $42^{\circ}$ , too cold for bathing. After a very steep and fatiguing ascent of four or five miles, we reached our halting-place at Chockachaine at  $\frac{1}{4}$  before 2 P. M. There is a pool of indifferent water here, and a hut erected by the yàk herdsmen who often reside here during winter. The height of the encampment, as ascertained by boiling water, was 10,300 feet. The hill sides were perfectly covered with forest trees and tangled underwood, the same as yesterday. As we ascended, the changes in the flora were very remarkable. We were now in the region of rhododendrons, of which we observed several kinds ; also of oaks, whose acorns were scattered along our path in great profusion, holly ; walnut, chesnut, long and short-leaved scarlet barberry ; many beautiful varieties of ferns ; mosses pendent from trees, besides other kinds, including the stag moss so well known at Darjeeling ; creepers of all kinds and sizes, epiphytical and parasitical plants of various kinds ; and towards the end of our day's journey we were well amongst tall firs. We saw a few leeches, but found the ticks most abundant and voracious.

Thermometer at sunrise  $28^{\circ}$ , but not so cold to the feeling. We ascertained that all the yàks had left Jongli and were in the vicinity of Chockachaine. We sent a man to drive the yàks to our camp for inspection, but we quitted before his return. Left at 8 o'clock and after a steep ascent reached Mon Lepcha at 11.15 A. M. and Jongli at 1 P. M. From Mon Lepcha the road is easy, but we found the first part of the road very trying, all of us suffering more or less from shortness of breath and headache. There are no huts at Mon Lepcha : it is the name given to the locality, which is a feeding ground for yaks at an elevation of about 14,000 feet. Dr. Simpson took some photographic views of the snow which is very imposing from the spot. Between this and Jongli we passed several frozen rivulets.



1862.] *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.* 467

Jongli is the name given to an extensive tract of yàk pasture land, situated at the foot of Gubroo, on the southernmost spur of that mountain, including all the land to the south of Gubroo, contained between the Ratong and Chuckchurong rivers, of which Mon Lepcha is an integral part. The elevation of the pasture land averages from 12,000 to 16,000 feet, the latter being the greatest height at which yàks are grazed during the summer months. The spur is broad and undulating like a swelling table-land devoid of forest. It is richly covered with good grass, intermixed with a low and scrubby rhododendron and the dwarf and an aromatic kind. It is the grazing ground of about eighty yàks belonging to parties in Nepal and Sikkim, and is capable of affording pasturage to many hundreds more. The yàk herdsmen have erected three substantial huts of stone with shingle roofs. They reside at Jongli during the summer and rains, but when the cold sets in in November, they descend to winter quarters in lower and warmer elevations. The entire pasture ground is well watered by numerous perennial streams, most of which were frozen up at night during our stay at Jongli. It is situated above the region of tree rhododendrons and firs. During our ascent we passed through all the flora met with at Sinchul and Tonglo. At 12,000 feet we lost the ferns. Having passed through firs, birch, rhododendrons, junipers and a kind of heather, dwarf and aromatic rhododendrons, barberry, primrose, &c., we entered the undulating and grassy flats of Jongli. On the road, not far from our last halting place, we met a wild looking man of the woods, whom our servants introduced to us as the Llama of Jongli. He stated himself to be eighty years of age. He looked more like a Gorilla than a human being. A more comical weather-beaten and hale old gentleman I have never seen. He had a very hoarse voice and a large goitre to boot. He had just left Jongli for his winter quarters, which he had taken up under an over-hanging piece of gneiss rock in a fir forest.

After tiffin at 2.30 P. M., MacPherson and I set off for the summit of what we considered to be the highest of the Jongli mountains. After two hours of very fatiguing climbing and suffering from shortness of breath, headache and nausea, we reached the top and found it to be 15,120 feet.\* Thick clouds setting in, we were disap-

\* This hill affords capital pasture for the yàks, being covered with good grass and juniper bushes. The latter all assume the same inclination as the slope

468 *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.* [No. 5,

pointed in the principal object of our trip, which was to endeavour to trace a practicable route by which to reach the snow peaks in that direction. The surrounding hills were totally obscured, and in commencing our descent, the guide wanted to take us down the wrong side of the hill; but preferring to trust to our compass we were not misled.

With splitting headache and quite knocked up, we reached our hut at 5 P. M.

The night was very cold, but being well provided with warm clothing, we were all right; but the coolies, although well-housed, suffered a good deal.

The thermometer at sunrise stood at 18°. The small streams were all frozen. At this early hour the snow appeared so close that it seemed to tower above us. The sky was cloudless and the cold very keen. After breakfast we went on a reconnoitring expedition to the summit of Thonja, a hill immediately to our front, at the foot of Gubroo, in the direction of Kanchunjingah. It is a fine grassy mountain affording excellent pasturage, about 14,500 feet high. Dr. Simpson took some beautiful photographs of this wild region.

When on the crest of the hill, which is precipitous to the north side, we witnessed a very beautiful and perfect sun bow. It was seen in a mist a few feet down the precipice and remained visible for a long time. We reached our hut at 2 P. M., some of us feeling very queer from the rarified state of the atmosphere, having headache and nausea. On our return we flushed two covies of birds at from 12,000 to 13,000 feet, closely resembling Ptamagan, probably the "*Tetra gallus Himalayensis*" of which I have since seen some specimens in the Society's Museum. I shot one with a bullet which immediately concealed itself under the rocks, and occupied us a long time getting it out. In the evening the men who had been sent down in the morning to bring up the yak purchased from the Doobdee Llama returned, bringing a fine black animal with an uncommonly bushy tail, about the size of a Highland bull.

The morning was very fine, but the night had been intensely cold. Shortly after sunrise the thermometer stood at 17°.

The first object of the hill side caused apparently by the strong blasts of wind which constantly blow up the hill.

1862.]      *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.*      469

that attracted my attention was our black friend the yàk, who had turned white during the night, his long shaggy flanks being entirely covered with a coating of ice.

After taking an early cup of cocoa, some of the party started on another exploring expedition.

After proceeding about three miles, sometimes along yak tracks, and at others along the grassy slopes of the mountains and over dwarf rhododendron, we found ourselves on the verge of a deep precipice which entirely cut us off from a snow spur which we desired to reach on the other side of the gorge. It would have taken us hours to reach the bottom of this valley and the remainder of the day to ascend the opposite side; so we relinquished the object we had in view at starting, and decided upon ascending the perpetual snow clad peak of Gubroo instead. After partaking of breakfast near the Gubroo lake, a fine clear and deep sheet of water 130 paces square, situated in a picturesque spot at the foot of the mountain to the south-east, we commenced the ascent of Gubroo which we found very trying from its steepness, and the great elevation causing shortness of breath, nausea, and violent headache. We reached about 16,500 feet, when I found it impossible to proceed any further, in consequence of an oppression in the head and a feeling like that of seasickness. The Gubroo range, as seen from Darjeeling, presents a black, rocky and precipitous foreground to Kanchunjingah. It is formed of a finely laminated dark colored gneiss and hornblende, which exist in immense angular masses, rising in steps with perpendicular walls. The snow lies very thick on the summit of these flat masses and in the cavities, though scarcely visible at a distance.

The snow was very bright and dazzling; our attendants being unable to stand the glare and cold, remained behind. We commenced the descent at 1 P. M., and reached camp at 3.30 P. M. The droppings of deer were everywhere visible, but we only sighted one musk deer which rose close to us in scrubby rhododendron forest. A fine covey of *Tetragalus* and two solitary snipes were also seen, but we were disappointed at the absence of game along the eastern slopes of the Jongli plateau which is well watered by numerous small streams, some of which spreading out with marshes and small lakes afford excellent cover for pheasants and jungle fowl. During our absence our headman had shot the yàk and prepared a savoury

stew of yàk's heart and kidneys which we discussed with a hunter's keen appetite.

Another superb morning : the night was intensely cold, and the thermometer a little after sunrise stood at  $11\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ . Having made all the necessary arrangements for an absence of four days, and leaving all heavy baggage behind, at 10.30 A. M. we started for a place situated near the base of the Pundeem mountain, on the left bank of the Ratong river, several miles further up the valley, called Aluhtong, where there is a yàk-grazing post. After proceeding about three miles along yàk tracks over grass and low rhododendrons, we commenced a steep descent through rhododendron forest, and afterwards through firs, and reached the banks of the Ratong about noon. The river here is broad and rapid, but as we ascended the valley, it became less rapid and of smaller dimensions. It was not without difficulty that we found our way along the broad valley, over masses of loose stone and broken ground, by following the course indicated by small piles of stones erected by the yak herdsmen. We increased the number and size of these useful guides for the benefit of our friends in the rear, and after two or three times losing our way, reached our destination at 2.30 P. M., and some of the party an hour later ; and the baggage coolies late in the evening, looking half frozen. We brought on a tent for the latter ; and before turning into our own hovel, we satisfied ourselves that these were well supplied with fuel, yàk's flesh, and rice for their evening's repast. The grandeur of the surrounding snow-clad mountains, and the wildness of the scenery of the valley of the Ratong, surpasses any thing of the kind I have elsewhere witnessed in the Himalayas. On looking directly north up the valley, Kanchunjingah rose majestically above everything else. Between us and it, thrown completely across the valley, and only two miles distant, was seen a stupendous morain a thousand feet in height, which forms the conspicuous object seen from Darjeeling. Immediately on our right, out of a long range of perpetually snow-clad mountains running parallel with the valley, rose the formidable peak of Pundeem, 22,015 feet in height, at the base of which rests the glacier above alluded to, and many other masses of debris washed down from above in wild confusion. To our rear, winding its course down the broad valley, the hills on either side being covered with dense fir forest often down to

1862.] *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.* 471

the water's edge, was seen the noisy, foaming Ratong. On our left a dark range of bare, bold and craggy mountains 16,000 or 17,000 feet high, capped with snow, having the appearance of basaltic formation, but formed of gneiss mixed with hornblende and syenite, rose abruptly. We were the first European travellers to gaze upon this truly grand scene. Any one desirous of witnessing grandeur of scenery should visit Alutong. However toilsome and comparatively uninteresting he may find the intermediate travelling as far as Jongli, he will be well repaid by the wild scenery of this locality.

Another cold night, and clear, crisp morning; thermometer at sunrise  $5\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ ; and at sunset, the valley having been in the shade since 4 P. M., it stood at  $21^{\circ}$ . At 10 o'clock we all started to explore the morains. We proceeded at times along the bed and banks of the river, at others over rough, stony ground, deeply intersected by small running streams coming from the snow. The main stream flows gently over a gravel bed of moderate incline. The valley is nearly a mile broad, and covered with dwarf rhododendron and grass wherever soil occurs.

A little before reaching the morain we passed a series of Mendongs, having numerous slabs of well carved prayers and images of the gods in the side walls, extending the entire length. These slabs of chlorite slate are carved by Llamas from the Sikkim monasteries who periodically visit this place on pilgrimage during the rains.

Having ascended the immense mass of debris forming the morain, probably to an elevation of 15,000 feet, we found ourselves, to our great surprise, standing on the top of a stupendous glacier. This huge mass of ice and debris descending from the Pundeem mountain extends nearly across the valley, where it is met by, and abuts upon another glacier, equally vast in its dimensions, and formed at the base of the snow-clad mountains on the other, or western side of the valley, the two together forming a complete barrier across the valley and choking it up to the height of a thousand feet or more. The morain forms the retaining wall to this mass of moving ice and debris, and is composed of rounded and angular blocks of *highly contorted gneiss*, intermixed with pieces of syenite, micaceous schist, coarse granite, quartz with tourmaline crystals, white and pink quartz, often containing veins of crystalized felspar and coarse gravel and debris. Towards the summit the fragments were all

angular, and free from gravel. The loose manner in which these were massed together, rendered walking both difficult and dangerous, particularly to parties in the rear, from the tendency of the stones to roll down the steep sides. Proceeding onwards, the glacier presented a perfect wilderness of blocks of ice invariably covered with the stones and debris brought down from the mountain above by avalanches, with deep crevasses through which the sound of running water was heard, the whole presenting a stony and undulating mass about one and a half miles long and a half to one quarter of a mile broad. In order to ascertain as nearly as possible what might be the thickness of the glacier, we ascended by a separate spur of Pundeem to a level with the top of the glacier, and measuring the height by boiling water found it to be 16,060 feet, and again measuring the height at the foot found it 13,760 feet, thus giving a difference between the summit and the base of 2,300 feet. I was able to make a rapid sketch of a vertical section of a precipice on the western shoulder of Pundeem, shewing its formation to be of gneiss, similar to that found on the glacier of which I brought away some good specimens. Although the surrounding hills were literally covered with glaciers of sizes, and the valleys overhung with masses of ice and snow, we observed only one avalanche, but frequent loud cracking of the ice during the hottest part of the day.

A little way up the valley, beyond where the glaciers meet, we observed a small lake. Only one small stream falls into it, and this must be considered the source of the Ratong during the winter months. Dr. Simpson here took some interesting photographic views. We returned to our hut late in the evening. To-day our Lepcha cook whom we brought from Darjeeling failing to give satisfaction was removed from office. Thus the cooking operations devolved upon ourselves; but this was not felt to be irksome, as we had from the beginning taken turn about to look after the messing for the day, knead the flour for making chupattees, or unleavened cakes, assist in cooking, &c., our *ci-devant* cook knowing nothing of the mysteries of his profession beyond lighting a fire, boiling water, washing plates and so forth. In fact he was an impostor.

Another cloudless morning after an intensely cold night. Thermometer at sunrise 11°. The coolies having laid in a good store of wood over night, next day we were enabled to cook an early breakfast

1862.]

*Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.*

473

and resume our explorations in the direction of Kanchunjingah. Mounting over the two glaciers of yesterday, and proceeding by the lake, which we found to be about 500 yards long by 100 broad, we ascended another immense morain which confined a third glacier on the west side of the valley. This one appeared to begin nearly on a level with the top of the mountain range, at probably 20,000 feet, then descending by the mountain side came sweeping along the valley in a curve about a mile in length, the more elevated portion being formed of masses of ice covered with snow, rising in steppes one above the other, and the lower portion presenting a sea of broken masses of ice, covered with snow and debris. A more stupendous mass of ice and snow it is scarcely possible to conceive. Dr. S. took a photograph of it. On our right at the foot of Pundeem we saw another lake partially frozen, and a little further on a third one. Descending from the glacier we proceeded for a mile, occasionally along the dry, smooth bed of the Ratong, and over frozen snow, when we arrived at the fourth and last glacier, equal in extent to the others. With great difficulty we scrambled up the steep sides of its retaining morain, over frozen snow. When near to top, Kemble was nearly precipitated to the bottom by his foot giving way and only saved by rapidly digging his alpine stick into the snow, which pulled him up.

On reaching the northern extremity of this glacier, at the head of the Ratong valley, we found ourselves standing on the water shed between Kanchunjingah, and the Pundeem, Kubra, and Junnoo ranges to the south and west. We were at an elevation of about 18,500 feet, and had we proceeded further, we should have had to descend into what appeared to us a perpetually snow covered valley. Although we were unable to look down into the bottom of the valley, we could see the clouds rise out of it from the east and west and ascend the sides of Kanchunjingah, of which we obtained a near and good view through a narrow gorge which terminates the Ratong valley. Kanchunjingah stood apart, unconnected with any of the high mountain ranges to the south. The nearest spot not covered with snow in its southernmost spur was probably not more than a mile and a half or two miles distant, the stratification of which was clearly visible. Its formation is probably of gneiss, not of a contorted type, and which has a dip of 20 to 25° to the east. Others may determine the interesting point of its geological structure, but this

474 *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.* [No. 5,

important fact was elicited, namely, that Kanchunjingah is detached from the other mountains forming the Kanchunjingah group, and that none of its waters find their way into the Great Rungeet, either by the Ratong or any other tributary.

Our half frozen coolies, unable to proceed so far over the snow, dropped to the rear unobserved by us, but we picked them up on our return, and Dr. S. managed to get three good photographs, one of which was "Pundeem *from the north.*" It being too late in the day to attempt any further exploration, we commenced our return at 2 P. M., and after several stoppages and very brisk walking we reached Aluhtong by moonlight, at about 6.45 P. M., having undergone a very laborious and fatiguing day's work, during nine and a half hours. We found a Bhooteah lad had prepared us some yàk soup and chupattees which we fell upon with ravenous appetites.

We all rose with heated and sore eyes, and scorched faces, the effects of the cold wind, the sun and the glare from off the snow. Thermometer at sunrise 11°. At 9.30 A. M. we quitted our hut and very reluctantly turned our backs upon the wild scenery of the upper Ratong and our faces homewards. Arrived at Jongli at 2.30, but not so our coolies, who had suffered so much from the cold at night, and from the cold blasts of wind during the day, which incessantly blew up the valley during our stay at Aluhtong. We retraced our steps, guided by the heaps of stones, and after going about four miles commenced to ascend by the steep pathway through the firs and rhododendrons. The road was rendered very difficult and slippery by the recent fall of dead leaves. Passing under Gubroo, and near the lake, we reached our old quarters at Jongli at 2.30 P. M., and the coolies two hours later.

Rose early, packed up for a start homewards. Left our homestead at Jongli at 8.30 A. M. with twenty-four coolies, four of whom carried guns, four bedding, two minerals, two photographic apparatus, one the tent, ten stores, cooking utensils, &c., and two were sick. The coolies were badly clothed, some had sore legs and chapped hands and feet, and all looked more than half frozen and incapable of carrying loads at this early hour of the morning, but not a murmur escaped them; they left with heavy loads, but light hearts, our cook boy remaining a few minutes behind to blow a parting blast upon a horn or Llama's thigh bone, or some such harmonious instrument. We had



1862.] *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.* 475

seen Jongli to disadvantage clothed in its autumnal garb, and totally deserted, being too cold and bleak at this season of the year for a residence ; but in the spring and summer months it is no doubt a bright and cheerful spot. During our descent through the firs, we saw our Gorilla Llama engaged in cutting timber near his winter dwelling, and we turned aside to salute him. The largest fir met with by the road side measured 21 feet in girth, and may have been 80 or 90 feet high. Reached Chuckachaine at 1 P. M. and found a small herd of twelve yàk bulls, cows and calves, on the feeding ground at this place. Their colours were black, black and white, and slate coloured. We purchased yàk milk, and drank it mixed with brandy. After half an hour's rest we resumed our march, and descending very rapidly, re-crossed the foaming Ratong by the three crazy bridges, and arrived at Jongoo 2.30 P. M., a distance of about fifteen miles. During the short interval since our upward passage the dead leaves of the rhododendrons and other forest trees had fallen in such abundance as to render the steep descent very slippery and difficult. Having descended nearly 5000 feet, we found the change in the atmosphere most agreeable, and the ticks as numerous and loathsome as before. Mon Lepcha spur is composed of fine gneiss, intermixed with beautiful white quartz and mica schist. From Mon Lepcha I made a series of magnetic observations to fixed points, which enabled me to fix its exact position.

Left Jongoo at 8.30 A. M. and after an hour's brisk walk crossed the Barabarong by a very frail bridge formed by throwing a sapling across the main stream between two large boulders. The bed is full of large angular blocks of gneiss, the same as exists in situ. When within a mile of Eksum, we met Mr. Long and Lieut. Bartley, of the Queen's Bays, proceeding to Jongli on a similar visit. They were scarcely prepared for the extreme cold they were about to encounter. We assisted them with some spare rice and clothing. We have since heard that they experienced very severe weather and were compelled to return. Reached Eksum at noon and proceeded to the house of our former host, who at our request made us baked cakes of the flour of millet seed and buck wheat mixed. The flour is quite white, but harsh to the touch. The cake is baked on a heated slab of stone, and when cooked becomes quite black, but is not disagreeable to the taste. It must, however, become very unsavoury when eaten as the sole

article of food, as is the practice with the hospitable inhabitants of this wild and sequestered spot. After purchasing fowls, murwa, eggs and milk, and presenting the members of the family with some articles of warm clothing, we resumed our journey at 2.30 P. M., much against the wishes of our coolies, some of whose families reside here, and all of whom wanted to remain for the night. After a long descent along the Eksum stream, at 3.30 P. M. we passed the Parmarong stream a little below the water-falls, where some of the party had a refreshing bathe in its crystal-like waters amidst blocks of beautifully stratified gneiss. Continuing our course without either much ascent or descent, at 4.30 P. M. we reached Ribbing or Bootong, a small clearance consisting of one Limboo and one Lepcha family, the members of which appeared very poor and destitute of clothing. We put up in the hut of the former, and our Bhooteea cook boy professed not to understand a word of their language, and made signs for any thing he required.

Thermometer at 7 A. M. 50 . Left Ribbing at 9.30, and after a steep and rugged descent reached the Ratong and crossed by an old bridge constructed of bamboos and trees, which had just been repaired for our use ; about a mile further on, we crossed the Ringbi by a very dilapidated suspension bridge made of bamboos. The jungle creepers forming the suspenders of the roadway were all rotten, and the whole fabric bore the appearance of great insecurity. The scenery here and also at the Ratong is very wild and picturesque, and it was matter of regret that "our artist" was not prepared for taking photographs. Observed mica schist in large quantities in situ, and in the beds of both the rivers. From the Ringbi we made a steep ascent to Chongpoong, passing through tree forest and ferns. Our Chongpoong friends did not come out to meet us on this occasion, so we sent to the headman, and purchased some murwa, fowls and eggs, and after an hour's rest started again at 1 P. M., and passing through the umbrageous tree forest below Pemionchee, we reached the Goompa at 2.10 P. M.

The Llamas were not so civil as on our first visit, and on this occasion the head Llama did not make his appearance. On being questioned as to our despatches and stores, they informed us that none had arrived from Darjeeling. This we knew to be false. On closely questioning one of them, he indicated the place where I could find

1862.] *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.* 477

them. Dr. S. had inadvertently left behind a portion of his photographic apparatus, this had been picked up by one of the monks who declined to restore it, unless he received a remuneration of 2 Rs. Under the circumstances this demand was refused, and the man of holy orders peremptorily ordered to give it up, which he did, and never shewed his face again. This avariciousness was probably caused by seeing us pay liberally for every thing we required, a policy we strictly adopted from the commencement, and which secured us a ready and ample supply of every thing. The prices paid were—rice 12 seers per rupee, fowls 8 annas each, milk 4 annas per bottle, eggs 2 for an anna.

Pemionchee is about 7000 feet high. The thermometer at sunrise stood at 45°. The weather was close and cloudy. Left at 9.30 A. M. and after a very rapid descent passed Gazing at 10.15, stopping a short time to photograph "the Great Mendong" at that place. Reached the Kullait river at noon. After a long, rapid and fatiguing descent, we found the villagers and fishermen had erected a substantial bridge of bamboos about a mile below the weir since our former visit. Here we enjoyed a refreshing bathe in the clear cold waters of the Kullait, and washed clothes, and at 1 P. M. continued our journey up the northern spur of the Rinchingpoong hill, which has a much milder gradient than we had been accustomed to for some time past. At 2.15. halted for a quarter of an hour for luncheon at Soomtong, and reached Rinchingpoong at 4 P. M.; but the coolies did not arrive until after dark, the march being fifteen or sixteen miles, and very fatiguing—the descent from Pemionchee to the Kullait being not less than 5,000 feet, and the ascent to Rinchingpoong about 3,600 feet. We put up in the Llama's house on the ridge of the hill, situated in the midst of barley cultivation. The dwelling consists of one spacious room, in which was a miscellaneous family of men, women, maidens and children, none of whom were at all put out by our presence, but sat round a large fire drinking tea, &c. Some sugar given to a man was handed round the family circle for each to taste, and some hot brandy and water given to another man in the palm of his hand was in like manner handed round to each member to take a sip, after they had retired to rest. The hill tribes are particularly liberal and friendly towards each other, always sharing with their friends anything they may become possessed of.

478 *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.* [No. 5,

Simpson and Macpherson left long before daybreak with the intention of walking into Darjeeling, a distance of about thirty-six miles, which they duly accomplished, stopping only to bathe in the Rummàn.

Mine host the Llama was very early engaged in his matutinal devotions, but stopped short in the midst of his prayers and ringing of bells to drink a cup of cocoa, which he seemed to relish with great gusto. A young mother, with an infant at the breast and a deficiency of milk, came in the morning to the Llama, who by a prolonged blowing of short puffs of breath on the naked breasts, was supposed to have administered an effectual remedy. Such is the deception practised on the minds of these simple people by their spiritual guides.

Kemble and I, not being in a hurry, left Rínchingpoong at 8.30. A. M., crossed the Rishee at 10 A. M., and the Rishee cultivation where our first camp was at 10.45 A. M., and at 2 P. M. put up in a hut by the road side near a very small stream about 1000 feet above the Ruttoo. At Rishee we observed a very large flock of Hornbills.

23rd November, 1861.—Left our hut at 7 A. M. and reached the Rummàn at 9.30, crossing by a good substantial bridge just completed by the sappers. Reached Goke Guard house at 10.30, halted 15 minutes. Reached Little Rungeet river at noon, where we found our ponies in waiting. Reached Darjeeling at 2.30 P. M. Observed many clearances being made for the cultivation of tea along Tugoor spur, &c.

The coolies who accompanied us consisted of two Lepchas, two Limboos and twenty-one Sikkim Bhooteas, almost all of whom, as well as their Sirdar named Tinley, were inhabitants of that portion of Sikkim to the west of the Great Rungeet traversed by us. No men could behave better than they did, the words "burra dikh" and "tukleef," so common in the mouths of Hindustanis and Bengalis never escaped theirs, neither did complaints of any kind. Even in sickness, or when suffering from extreme cold, or sore legs, or chapped hands and feet, there was no grumbling. They were always ready to perform their work with a cheerfulness and light-heartedness quite refreshing to witness, after being accustomed to deal with the unmanly and discontented inhabitants of the plains, particularly of Bengal. They all readily and gladly partook of any remnants of food we were able to spare them, as did all the villagers in whose houses we put up.

1862.]      *Journal of a trip in the Sikkim Himalaya.*      479

In the valleys, where Lepidoptera exist in countless myriads during the rains, very few were seen by us, and no Coleoptera at all. *Pyra-meis Callirhoe* was common at great elevations. I observed it on the snow, and on the glaciers at 13,000 to 16,000 feet, but it was *the sole inhabitant* of these cold and dreary regions. It is difficult to understand how an insect so delicately formed as a butterfly, could exist at an elevation where the thermometer must have stood at zero at night time. We saw a few small birds resembling larks at Aluh-tong, and an occasional eagle, but the absence of all wild animals and game was remarkable. None of the lakes or pools of water, as far as we could ascertain, contained any fish, or any living creature.

From the time we left Darjeeling to the date of our return, a period of twenty-two days, we experienced delightful weather. When in the vicinity of Jongli, the clouds would generally ascend the valleys from the plains between 2 or 3 in the afternoon and obscure the snow peaks for a time, but after an hour or two they would disappear and leave us to enjoy cloudless evenings and nights, and the rare, but truly magnificent spectacle presented by the moonlit snowy masses around us. The great enjoyment and advantages of fine weather, the absence of leeches, pipsas, sand-flies, mosquitoes and other such like torments experienced by former Sikkim Himalayan travellers, also the absence of extreme heat, deadly miasma in the valleys, and fear of contracting jungli fever, all point to *November* as the most desirable month of the year for travelling in these still unexplored regions. The third day after our return, the weather suddenly became raw and cold. At Darjeeling we had rain and hail, and the military stations of Jellapahar and Sinchul were covered with hail and snow. At the latter place the fall was  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick, and remained for several days on the ground.

*Camp ; March, 1862.*





## NOTES ON GLEANINGS

*Interrogating Transit through an Imperial Lens:  
Major J. L. Sherwill's "Journal of a Trip undertaken to  
explore the Glaciers of the Kanchunjingah Group in the  
Sikkim Himalaya, in November 1861."*

Saptarshi Mallick

Travel is an intimate part of human life which involves an individual's attempt to document the temporal and spatial progress that one experiences in the course of a journey undertaken by her/him. This process, dependent on an empirical portrayal of contingent phenomenon, involves in the construction of our self by means of continuous detours into communal comments and public conventions, determining the development of counter-balancing stratagems related to our identity, other's identity through our perspectives and our identity determined due to the presence of the other. Locke, the Enlightenment philosopher believed that travelogues can be considered as unavoidable data of anthropological diversity.<sup>1</sup> These data, in due time, began to be used to "actively generate and shape knowledge – creating effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility, which are central to the different ways the world is understood in the writing of history or philosophy or science, or in painting, or in everyday talk"<sup>2</sup>, thereby "encompass[ing] a bewildering diversity of forms, modes and itineraries".<sup>3</sup> The Elizabethan travellers, the first great English explorers initiated the colonial encounters, a process which necessarily recreated the narrative with the data<sup>4</sup> available, besides the travel involved a narrow encounter with the other[ness], with only so much space to occupy. Though travel involved an experience but often this experience emerged to be "engag[ing] with the coloniser's terms", augmenting the "anti-conquest" point of view of

the imperial “seeing man” who detachedly observes from a distance.<sup>5</sup> Their perspective towards the other is based on the container theory of cultures interrogating the need to dissolve differences through “encounter, exchange and dialogue”.<sup>6</sup> Imperial travel writing involved the inevitable method of the Europeans mapping the world over the world mapping them. It involved the use of advanced transportation facilities along with “a strong historical impulse”<sup>7</sup> towards exploration which was associated with the occupation of the explored land and the subsequent exploitation of its resources, rendering most of these maritime endeavours to be imperial. This venturing into the non-European ‘foreign’ space also involved a desire to convert the unexplored other into the familiar, at par with an anxiety that the individual self will be associated, debased, absorbed and unable to dissociate itself from the impact of the observed other. Its existing consciousness will be trapped in the body space that has become the other after exploring the unexplored other. This peremptory anxiety, a result of an overweening outlook, fails to acknowledge the “in between space” where travel writing grafts the “distinct, even disjunct” with one another in the spirit of a “right to difference in equality”.<sup>8</sup> Travel writing of the empire vindicates the exercise of the colonial power and it is represented in the documents in one way or the other. Dorothy Carrington said,

“if English travel literature tells how Englishmen have looked upon the world, inevitably it tells how they have acted in it. That is the story of the empire. The motive that caused Englishmen to venture out of their small cloudy island was always the same: it was their desire for wealth, for luxury, for fine possessions – in short – for a higher standard of civilisation. While many travelled to acquire taste and learning, others – and they have been more honoured by popular opinion – sought wealth in its cruder and material form. Their object was trade, and if necessary, conquest”.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the imperial travel memoirs bear this “historical taintedness”<sup>10</sup> being examples of the execution of the colonial power in its politics of representation through an invasive violence. Along



with “imaginary utopias, moral voyages, and scientific reporting”, travel writing has contributed towards sharpening and extending the position of the Orient and,

“if Orientalism is indebted principally to the fruitful Eastern discoveries of Anquetil and Jones during the latter third of the century, these must be seen in the wider context created by Cook and Bougainville, the voyages of Tournefort and Adanson, by the President de Brosses’s *Histoire des navigations aux terres australes*, by French traders in the Pacific, by Jesuit missionaries in China and the Americas, by William Dampier’s explorations and reports, by innumerable speculations on giants, Patagonians, savages, natives, and monsters supposedly residing to the far east, west, south, and north of Europe. But all such widening horizons had Europe firmly in the privileged center, as main observer (or mainly observed, as in Goldsmith’s *Citizen of the World*). For even as Europe moved itself outwards, its sense of cultural strength was fortified”.<sup>11</sup>

“Journal of a Trip undertaken to explore the Glaciers of the Kanchunjingah Group in the Sikkim Himalaya, in November 1861” documents the travel experience of Major J. L. Sherwill, Revenue Surveyor, along with his party, consisting of Dr. B. Simpson, Bengal Army, Captain E. Macpherson, 93rd Highlanders and W. Kemble, Bengal Civil Service. The trip spanned from 2nd November to 23rd November 1861 and the journal details their encounter of the unexplored other i.e. the Glaciers of the Kanchunjingah Group in the Sikkim Himalaya, as mentioned in the title of the memoir. Barring the brief introductory information regarding the route and the map they would be following for their trip, this travelogue is Europe’s special ways of representing the observed details of the flora and the fauna – the active ideology of geographical discovery in the latter phase of European imperialism. It displays the propensity of the European subjects towards an “obsessive need to present and represent its peripheries and its others continually to itself”.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, a close postcolonial reading of this travel essay is not only a necessity but will also collectively reveal the various signifiers of Euroimperialism

embedded within the text,<sup>13</sup> producing knowledge regarding the unknown through a process of ethnic stereotyping and cultural condescension, thereby welcoming a Foucauldian interrogation.

With the departure from Darjeeling at 7.45 am, the journal provides intricate details regarding the passage and the mode of travel associated with it. The references to locations in the course of the journey beginning from the outpost of Goke to the hail and snow in military stations of Jellapahar and Sinchul towards the end of the essay show the meticulous effort of the author to document the entire journey – a discourse of man, animals and nature. The references to “the luxuriance of vegetation” and the picturesque nature, like, saul trees, cluster of ferns, gigantic bamboos, the snow, the valleys and glaciers, the lakes, the view of the Kanchunjingah, Lepidoptera, *Pyrameis Callirhoe*, oaks, barberry etc. are “beyond all description beautiful”.<sup>14</sup> This is followed by a documentation of minerals available, like mica schist, gneiss, quartz, felspar, along the journey, in addition to the observation of the people and the animals they encountered along their trip.

This exhaustive documentation, in the context of the trip undertaken, is a common European phenomenon since colonial times, bearing an economic importance. It has often been a part of the imperial endeavour where the “Edenic search [documentation] as a knowledge of the natural world began to be seen as a respectable path to seeking knowledge of God”<sup>15</sup> and it was best appropriated in the colonized lands [British India] or paradises. The rising tide of European territorial expansion opened avenues for undertaking the search for Eden and pointing the dyadic ‘other’ only to get it thoroughly expanded as an objective of the imperial project and associate it with the other more obviously economic schemes of early colonial aggression.<sup>16</sup> Such a process contributed to the evolution of an awareness of facts related to vulnerable, unexplored spaces which gets conserved through the documentation after exploration. The huge variety of plants, the wild landscape, the animals and birds, the inhabitants, all are subjected to this colonial gaze in this travelogue,

assimilating it within the ever-expanding, ambitious, metaphorical and symbolic gyre of colonialism. This endeavour brings the wild into the “midst of the domestic space, in the form of writing and photographic or television images [or sketches]” and encourages acquainting it to “dispersing its aura, releasing it as a floating signifier which promiscuously acquires numerous meanings”.<sup>17</sup> This gyre is ‘the white man’s burden’ to bring in science and knowledge for economic gain in these colonies. As a unique combination of colonial expansion and intellectual transformation, this process not only ignored indigenous knowledge but also took recourse to the Western mode of constructing information about natural history and ethnology of these unexplored spaces. The latter is evident when the author of this journal refers to the boundary between British [instead of British occupied India] and Independent Sikkim, the annexation of the Terai lands and the Darjeeling hills by the British, the skull of a Bhootia pierced by a bullet marking the imperial victory, and the desire to control the part of Sikkim explored by them– “if this portion of Sikkim should ever become British territory, this hill is deserving of particular attention, as possessing great capabilities for the formation of a winter sanitarium”.<sup>18</sup>

Through an “interventionist colonial paternalism” Major J. L. Sherwill’s journal entry is a sincere passion for addressing the gap in the detailed map of the place, like Richard Burton’s travel documents, which contributes to “increasingly contemptuous and rigid racial stereotypes”.<sup>19</sup> The travel memoir refers to a Goompa, ethnographic comments regarding the Llamas and the other people, the objects purchased by the author and his comrades from them, Gubroo range, the scenic descriptions of snow, valleys, glaciers and ranges, series of Mendongs and the predicament of the coolies carrying their load [things of necessity] along with them. Though we read considerable information regarding the life of the Llamas and their family but the absence of a humane note regarding the coolies helping them draws our critical attention. For Said, travel is “always a source of knowledge and power”<sup>20</sup> and the imperial process of documentation is never

innocent. The author of the discussed travelogue states, “we were the first European travellers to gaze upon this truly grand scene”<sup>21</sup> which is a debatable statement. The author does not substantiate his statement with any references, advocating the anxiety that lurks in the colonizer’s eye (traveller) who act in a certain stereotyped manner, due to the difference between cultures, with the pre-conceived idea that certain things are absent in the land they are travelling or viewing, and in some situations, they take up the responsibility to define, classify and introduce important ideas of life in those unexplored spaces, like, “I was able to make a rapid sketch of a vertical section of a precipice on the western shoulder of Pundeem, shewing its formation to be of gneiss, similar to that found on the glacier of which I brought away some good specimens”.<sup>22</sup> This not only separates them but also prepares the foundation for the “West to control, contain, and otherwise govern (through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other”.<sup>23</sup> The “larger search for liberation”<sup>24</sup> is generally absent, and grafting “new experiences within comfortable systems of belief”<sup>25</sup> is undertaken. This travel document subscribes liberally to the colonial project of representing the ‘other’ through terms which were familiar to the West which are degrading as well as stereotyping, like the ‘noble savage’ Llama of Jongli whose unkempt appearance immediately rendered him to be considered as an individual who “looked more like a Gorilla than a human being”.<sup>26</sup> Imperial travel writing contends ethnocentrically superior attitudes upon the ‘other’,<sup>27</sup> which enables the latter to be considered as a textual interpretation which requires to be internally studied from intertextual perspectives. This attitude is also associated with a fascination, often derogatory and hope as the other’s space is crossed. This space has been interpreted from various perspectives by Freud, Kristeva and Bakhtin.<sup>28</sup>

The study of orientalism interrogates this aspect of ‘other’ing which involves representation of other cultures through a Western lens. Major J. L. Sherwill’s “Journal of a Trip undertaken to explore the Glaciers of the Kanchunjingah Group in the Sikkim Himalaya, in November 1861” fails as a cultural decoder, like several other imperial travel

documents, adhere to the empire where extensive differences, perhaps out of proportion, between cultural systems tend to dominate the psyche of future travellers who tend to view a place through the previously constructed signifiers, an “orientalist denigration”,<sup>29</sup> instead of observing the places independently. Though travel books by colonisers emerge as “vehicles whose main purpose is to introduce [the reader] to the other, and...dramatiz[e] an engagement between self and world”,<sup>30</sup> thereby creating avenues for postcolonial explorations. Postcolonial travel writing aims towards identifying “culture[s] as [a] homogenizing, unifying force[s]” in order to justify it as “an integrated, open, expanding code”<sup>31</sup> of life where “Bewusstsein kosmopolitischer Zwangssolidarisierung”<sup>32</sup> i.e. global solidarity amidst differences is an imperative principle of existence.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Arneil, *John Locke on America: The Defence of English Colonialism*, Oxford, 1996, 21-44.

<sup>2</sup> John Frow, *Genre*, London, 2006, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing*, London, 2011, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> By recording their observations of other lands and peoples, the European travellers essentially contributed to the development of a new empirically informed discourse about man and nature. Joan Pau Rubiés, “Travel writing and ethnography”, in Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Cambridge, 2013, 257.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London and New York, 2008, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Gerard Delanty, “The idea of critical cosmopolitanism”, in Gerard Delanty, ed, *Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies*, Oxon and New York, 2012, 42.

<sup>7</sup> Steve Clark, “Introduction”, in Steve Clark, ed, *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, London and New York, 1999, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, 2019, xx, 56.

<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Carrington, *The Traveler's Eye*, New York, 1947, 2.

<sup>10</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, 1997, 39.

<sup>11</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, 1979, 117.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London and New York, 2008, 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Major J. L. Sherwill, “Journal of a Trip undertaken to explore the Glaciers of the Kanchunjingah Group in the Sikkim Himalaya, in November 1861”,

*Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXXI (V), 1862, 458.

- <sup>15</sup> Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*, Cambridge, 1995, 4.
- <sup>16</sup> J. Prest, *The Garden of Eden: The Botanic Garden and the Re-creation of Paradise*, Connecticut, 1981.
- <sup>17</sup> Richard Kerridge, "Ecologies of Desire: Travel Writing and Nature Writing as Travelogue", in Steve Clark, ed, *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, London and New York, 1999, 174.
- <sup>18</sup> Major J. L. Sherwill, "Journal of a Trip undertaken to explore the Glaciers of the Kanchunjingah Group in the Sikkim Himalaya, in November 1861", *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXXI (V), 1862, 458, 459, 461.
- <sup>19</sup> Joan Pau Rubiés, "Travel writing and ethnography", in Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Cambridge, 2013, 250.
- <sup>20</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, 1979, 32.
- <sup>21</sup> Major J. L. Sherwill, "Journal of a Trip undertaken to explore the Glaciers of the Kanchunjingah Group in the Sikkim Himalaya, in November 1861", *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXXI (V), 1862, 471.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 472.
- <sup>23</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, 1979, 47-48.
- <sup>24</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London, 1994, 280.
- <sup>25</sup> Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716 – 1818*, Cambridge, 1995, 18,
- <sup>26</sup> Major J. L. Sherwill, "Journal of a Trip undertaken to explore the Glaciers of the Kanchunjingah Group in the Sikkim Himalaya, in November 1861", *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXXI (V), 1862, 467.
- <sup>27</sup> Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*, Ann Arbor, 1998, viii.
- <sup>28</sup> For Freud this space is the unconscious, unreachable but also able to send messages and phantom emissaries. For Kristeva the pre-Oedipal semiotic continues to erupt into the domain of the symbolic. For Bakhtin, the carnivalesque is potentially revolutionary because its licensed forms of riot may carry the crowd towards an irrevocable crossing of social boundaries. In all the cases, excitement grows as thresholds approach. Liminality is a source of intensity. Richard Kerridge, "Ecologies of Desire: Travel Writing and Nature Writing as Travelogue", in Steve Clark, ed, *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, London and New York, 1999, 174.
- <sup>29</sup> Joan Pau Rubiés, "Travel writing and ethnography", in Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Cambridge, 2013, 256.
- <sup>30</sup> Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World*, New York, 1997, xi.
- <sup>31</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, 2019, 54.
- <sup>32</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, Boston and Cambridge, 1998, 168.

## BOOK REVIEW

*Military Strategy and Diplomatic Institutions in Ancient India*, Anu Malick, Shubhi Publications, Gurgaon, 2014, Price : 995/-

It is no doubt that this aforesaid title is a highly ambitious idea to treat all possible angles specially geography, sociology, anthropology and other relevant issues. The subject matter itself is a complex and vast one.

To begin with, a civilisation may be known by its ideals and the means by which these are sought to be realised. No observer of the complicated picture of ancient Indian polity can fail to note the ideals which were affirmed. He will find them voiced in adages and maxims as numerous as their companies, the witty formulae that embody the essence of statecrafts. The ideals were common to all regions and were shared by learned and illiterate alike. Our treatises on the law and politics contain principles popularised through the epics and the Puranas. The essence of good manners and good policy reached the uneducated by such means, while the worldly wisdom of these texts fed the compilers of fables. The great popularity of *Chanakya-niti*, that great pool of wise saying on 'good policy', proves that techniques of managing any social or political questions were not the perquisite of courtiers. (pp. 45-84)

Traditional Indian values must be viewed both from the angle of the individual and from that of the geographically delimited agglomeration of people or groups enjoying a common system of leadership which we call the 'state'. The Indian states' special feature is the peaceful coexistence of social groups of various histories, provenances which mutually adhere in a geographical, economic and political sense, without ever assimilating to each other in social terms, in ways of thinking. (pp. 85-140)

Part of the explanations for India's special social quality, its manifest virtues and compensating shortcomings, lies not in any prudent decisions by any men or groups of men, but in the traditional concept of the society in which *praja* and *raja* were the two principal elements, one might say, polarities; and part again lies in the fact that, though

the ruler was a guardian of morals, the 'cause', as it was put, 'out of the age', the power of penance was immeasurably more vigorous than any service the state could perform – even granted the fact that the prerogative of corporal or capital punishment (*danda*) served also as a penance for the guilty, and granted, too, that it was in theory one of the king's tasks to see to it that penances were actually performed. Ideals expressed in terms of ethics, and are related, some to people in general, and some, more specialised, to the principal classes, in particular the brahmans, whose inherited religious and magical powers, and responsibility for the spiritual and even material welfare of the state, marked them out for respectful treatment, financial patronage and, if they were suitably conscientious, cramping taboos. Special ideals were naturally developed for the *raja*, the key figure in leadership, whether he was a head of a clan, or an emperor.

No Indian ideal could be inconsistent with *dharma*, 'righteousness'. This word tends to bring cosmology down into touch with the mundane details of private law. One who follows his *dharma* is in harmony, and attains bliss, though it remains doubtful how far his contemporaries' behaviour should guide him in his understanding of his *dharma*. Without *dharma*, in however etiolated a form, fertility, peace, civilised life are considered to be imperiled. *Dharma* is in one sense natural, in that it is not created or determined, and in another it is always to be striven for. *Dharma* is unnatural in that to achieve it one must put forth uncongenial efforts of self control, irrespective of popular reactions. If *dharma* as contrasted with positive legislation, only in part resembles natural law, it is nevertheless a code of brahmanical learning, cannot attain. *Dharma* indeed, means duty (*Kartavyata*), and the study of *Dharma* involves a discovery of the duties of individual, groups, and among them, their political leaders. (C.F. The Character of the Maurya Empire – B.N.Mukherjee, Chap.IV, Pg.106ff).

In our pre-classical times he led in war and administered criminal justice; the *danda* was wielded to repel invaders, to acquire territory, and to execute or mutilate criminals. The notion that he was the fountain of all human justice that came later, and until modern times



the distinction persisted between the military and the police power on the one hand and jurisprudence and the sastric learning of the Brahmans on the other. Regulations, therefore, proposing to coerce an erring father would rely upon what corresponded to public opinion. If a compromise was impossible an eccentric could be brought under the ban of the village, the district, and eventually the state, which, slow to awaken and usually keen to delegate responsibility to local officials, was dreadful when aroused.

The machinery of government was well suited to its limited aim. The *raja* rested immune from unseen harm and his enemies' attacks if his subjects' welfare was secure, if castes kept to their functions, sages practiced austerities, sacrifices were properly performed, nobles and leisured people roamed about gaily clad, merchants accumulated infinite wealth, and the toiling multitudes abstained from protest at the inequalities of life. An army of spies informed him of maladjustments and plots. Which of the three conventional 'powers' of the king was the most essential, his strength of counsel, his material resources, or his personal energy? We have seen in the Mahabharata (xii, 78) what were his conventional 'faults'. He needed each of these powers to perform his functions. The petty *raja* needed neither elaborate espionage nor bureaucracy. He had his *parishad* or council, as later more extensive kingdoms relied on their *sabha* or *samiti*, the assembly that represented local populations.

Keeping with the foregoing observations made by the reviewer, the reader of this book may take note that the diplomatic institutions and military strategy are two different subjects, but they are very closely related to one common subject i.e., war. The strategy comes into operation during the event of war and on the other hand, diplomacy plays their role before the occurrence of war. The book contains ten chapters with two appendices. It does not contain any glossary of the technical terms used in this monograph, and also without index.

About the subject, it can at least be said, that the author has incorporated all the known and unknown sources, but it needs more

analytical discussions from her own point of view. However, following standard citation practices, names of all recently published books in different chapters are praiseworthy. The subject matter of this book is a complex and vast one, that could have edited some portions for appendices, since these are also available in other books and add some rare pictures of war. The cover design is quite attractive; it would have been convenient for the readers, if the publishers left more margins in page layout.

Overall the production of the book is quite good, but the author should be particular about the wrong page marking. One way to judge the value of a book is in terms of the questions it raises and the possibility of debates it may give rise to. By that criterion, this book is a valuable reading and also will be helpful to the academic world for further research.

Somnath Mukherjee

*Bangla Panjikay Puroho Kolkata*, Nilay Kumar Saha (Compiled and edited), Setu Prakashani, Kolkata, 2022, ISBN: 978-81-950222-7-4, Price : 500

*Almanac*, alias mean *Panjika* in Bengali, whereas Calendar is used for annual register. Infact, in ancient times Almanac was also alike the *Panjika* mentioned weather forecasts, time of sowing, time of high and low tides, time of rise and set of the sun and the moon, position of stars, eclipses and religious activities to be held annually.

The journey of *Panjika* started from the era of *Punthi*, the hand written manuscripts. Days (*Bār*), lunar days (*Tithi*), the merging of moments (*Yog*), and the execution (*karon*) — these five basics constitute the *Panjika* and so it is also termed as *Panchango*. In Bengali and Assamese it is pronounced *Panjika* or *Panji*, in Hindi *Panchang*, in Sanskrit and Tamil *Panchangam*, in Manipuri *Subikā*, and in English it is called *Almanac*.

This has been a sine-qua-non of Bengali and Hindu culture and inheritance. One of the major sources of the treasury of knowledge in Bengalis had been this *Panjika*. From the Beginning of Bengali printing, the printing and publication of *Panjika* began. The Hindu Padre, James Long has given the account of 'its' sell in 1857 A.D. From the Governmental records, the sell of *Panjika* in the then Calcutta market itself was one lac and thirty five thousand, whereas James Long claimed it not to be less than two lacs and fifty thousand. Overall *Panjika* constituted of all the applied rituals and occasions related to diurnal existence of the common people from their Birth to death, printed as a book. Later on, the practical subject of livelihood were added to it.

The solar counting based system that started from 1580 A.D. evolved into *Natun Panjika* in printed form in the 19th century. In

the history of publication of *Panjika* in India, the 19th century holds a special significance. In this very century itself, the first printing and publication came into existence. Owing to this printing technology the first handwriting *Panjika* transformed itself to the printed form. From then onwards, the publication of *Panjika* has been unrestrained. Various adversities could not thwart its printing and publication.

After 128 years of the establishment of Kolkata (24 August 1690), holding the hands of Durgaprasad Bidyabhusan, a resident of Jorasanko, in 1818 the first printed Bengali *Panjika* made its mark. It contains the 200 years long chronical of Bengal, as well as Kolkata's history with its old houses, alleys and social life mingled and rooted in its origin and development. How and how much of this history can be extracted from the *Panjika*, has been portrayed in Sri Nirmal Kumar Sahas wrok, *Bangla Panjikay Purono Kolkātā* (compilation and editing). This book comprehensively includes in 16 chapters the vast journey of *Panjika* from 1818, along with the then Kolkata's education, health, transport, post and telegraph service, taxation and other details. The Bengali publishers and publication houses of *Panjika*, throughout a long passage of time silently accounted and summed up the information of gradual development related to Kolkata, but they never thought of reviewing or introspecting the history of Kolkata as reflected in it, for research or other purposes. May be the reason could have been the lack of conservation of *Panjika*. Yet inspite of distracted, of disorderly preserved printed *Panjikas*, the author has decided to bring out this book.

In the first chapter, a short history of the publication of Bengali *Panjikas* in Kolkata has been depicted. And then onwards the second

to the sixteenth chapter deals with the education, health service, transport, post and telegraph, registration rules and sites, the centres of trade and commerce and their rules, bank and insurance, customary taxation, printings and circulated dailies, different governmental offices, associations and places of visit, names and addresses of the then zamindars, municipal and police administration, and judiciary. In addition there are contemporary pictures depicting Kolkata, the old units of exchange conventional in India, and the Bengali *Panjika* published in Kolkata.

However, we discuss things keeping at per with the modernistic – scientific perspective in this era of industrialisation, in itself in silently ladened the wish and fulfillment of society and personal identities of individual and layers among essentials and non essentials. It has been reflected in the dependency on *Paonjikā* of a large mass of Bengalis, though today people need not abide by the instructions of *Panjika* in matters of eating, moments in aspect of planetary positions, atonement from diseases, lending and repaying, yet in aspects of worship and festivity, marriage, first food intake ceremony, house building and first entry to a new house, funeral ceremony, the Bengalis still owe to the *Panjika*. In urban life though the usefulness of it has declined, yet among the rural masses its vast importance as still observed, irrespective of rich and poor.

From the ancient, to the middle modern and the post modern — in all ages, centering the publication of *Panjika* there has been high pitched controversies regarding its rational and irrational pros and cons; on the other hand, based on the guidance of *Panjika*, the ever passing Bengali politics, economy and state policy have been carried out from which one can understand the importance of *Panjikas* in these matters in fact.

Starting its journey from the grasp of soothsayer's hand written manuscripts, revived in printing press as printed directory form to pocket editions, today in microform entered and emancipated in mobile phones. In it is hidden a long history of over thousand years; and its transformation includes many untold metamorphoses, reconstructions and new additions which ultimately makes up the latest contemporary *Panjika*. It ever lives in the household of Bengalis unvanquished by time's play.

Nirmal Bandyopadhyay

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5. Concise Oxford Dictionary or Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (latest edn.) should be followed in spelling, punctuation and hyphenation. Where two spellings exist, use the British style not the American; for example, 'programme', not 'program' and 'colour', not 'color'.
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).
7. a. Quotation is expected to be identical *verbatim et litteratum* with the original; b. To indicate ellipsis three single space dots are to be used; c. Long quotations consisting of five or more lines do not need inverted commas but are to be indicated by indenting the extract three spaces from the left margin; d. Shorter quotations should be

within double inverted commas, while quotations within quotations should be within single inverted commas.

8. For all copyright materials the writer should seek and have the permission from appropriate authorities.
9. All references and notes should be numbered consecutively throughout the article and typed on a separate sheet at the end. All references are to be given generally in the following order : the name or initials of the author followed by surname, the title of the work (in italics), the publisher, the place of publication and the page no/s (vide examples below).

**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.

**Articles in Journals :**

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.

**Articles in Edited Volumes**

P. Gaeffke, "Alexander and the Bengal Sufis", in Alan W. Entwistle and Françoise 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 = ṝa	च = ca
छ = cha	ज = ja
ट = ṭa	ठ = ṭha
ड = ḍa	ड = 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	ང = dza	ཤ = wa
ཞ = zha	ཟ = za	འ = 'a	ཡ = ya
ར = ra	ལ = la	ཤ = śa/sha	ས = sa
ཧ = ha	ཨ = a	6	

ARABIC (both Cap & Small)		
ا	A	a
آ (long)	Ā	ā
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ج	J	j
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خ	Kh	kh
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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