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## *Genes as a Guide to Human History and Culture\**

Partha P. Majumder

This article is divided in two parts. The first part of the story spans about five million years and the second part of the story spans about one hundred and fifty thousand years.

### I

About 5 million years ago, a population of African apes split into two distinct lines of descent. One of these led to the evolution of the gorilla, chimpanzee and bonobo, and the other line of descent led to the human (Figure 1). More than 4 million years ago, one of the species on the evolutionary path to humans began spending most of

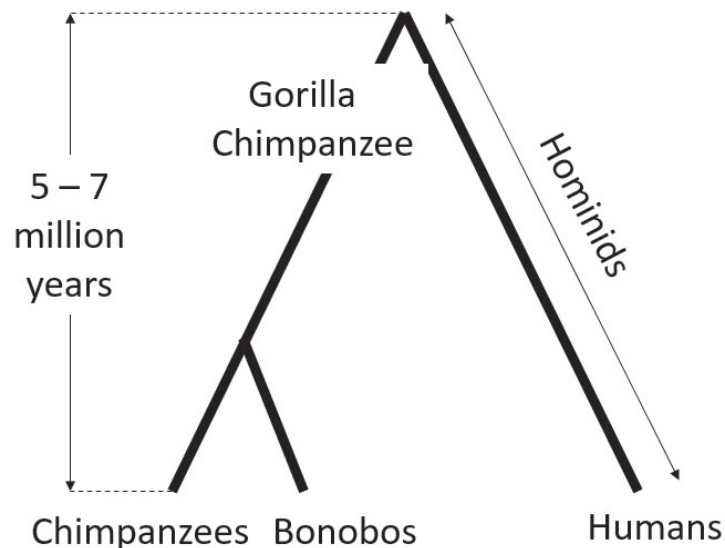


Figure 1. Lines of evolutionary descent that separated about five million years ago leading to the arrival of modern humans.

\* 238th Foundation Day Oration delivered on 15th January 2021 at the Vidyasagar Hall, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata.

its time on two feet. This was the genus *Australopithecus*; the most famous species in this genus being the *afarensis*. Remains of *Australopithecus afarensis* in the fossilized form were found in Hadar, Ethiopia, in 1991. This fossil has been famously called "Lucy." Lucy walked upright on the earth about 3.2 million years ago. How do we know that Lucy walked upright? Footprints of an individual that were testimony to an upright gait were found on a volcanic ash bed, which was dated to approximately the same period of time when *Australopithecus afarensis* roamed in that region of Africa.

This upright stance seems to have set in motion a profound evolutionary trend. It resulted in greater visibility over higher underbrush of the forests in Africa. This meant that predators could be spotted when they were at a distance. Hands became free to use for manipulation. For example, Lucy and her relatives could throw stones to ward off predators and thereby save their own lives. Freeing of hands resulted in the ability to make tools. There was simultaneous increase in their brain size. Whether larger brain size resulted in novel abilities or whether exploration to carry out new activities resulted in larger brain size, we will never know for certain. The most important upshot of bipedality is that our ancestors were able to survive longer.

The genus *Homo* evolved a little over 2 million years ago. Once the first species in the genus *Homo* appeared, it began to spin off new varieties of *Homo*. Between the appearance of the first species of *Homo* to the appearance of *Homo sapiens* – that is us, the modern man – there were many other species that arose and evolved into newer species. These included *Homo robustus*, *habilis*, *ergaster*, *erectus*, *heidelbergensis* and *neanderthalensis*. *Homo neanderthalensis* is famously called the Neanderthal man. There was a lot of speculation about how the Neanderthal man disappeared.

Modern man, *Homo sapiens*, evolved shortly after the appearance of the Neanderthal man. Modern man and the Neanderthal man lived together for a long time, many thousands of years. It was speculated that the modern human, with larger brain size and greater abilities, killed the Neanderthal man in large numbers that resulted in their



disappearance. Today, we know through some extraordinary genetic studies that this speculation is false. *Homo sapiens* interbred with *Homo neanderthalensis* and absorbed them; simply put, the children that resulted from a mating between modern man and a neanderthal became a part of the family of modern man. Over a period of time, the size of the neanderthal group declined, but their genes became a part of the genetic constitution of modern man. All this took place about 100,000 years ago. I must parenthetically state that when we cite these dates, we need to remember that these are estimates and can actually be off by some thousands of years; the estimates have large standard deviations.

## II

Part two of my story begins now. But before I start my story, let me briefly mention that modern methods of genetics have provided fantastic tools for the study of human history. Palaeontologists, scientists who study fossils and draw scientific inferences by systematically studying them, often have to base their inferences using fragmentary evidence – one broken bone, a skull or a jaw. Geneticists on the other hand are able to gather vast amounts of heritable information – information that is passed on from parents to their offspring nearly intact – by analyzing DNA contained in the cells. The DNA is passed on from one generation to another, largely unchanged. Sometimes random changes occur due to, for example, exposure to ultraviolet radiation or some chemicals. When a change occurs, that change is passed on to the next generations. We roughly know how often such changes in the DNA take place during a fixed length of time. This enables us to also estimate times of acquisition of changes and track the evolution of DNA over time. More about this later.

Anatomically modern humans arose in Africa about 130,000 years ago. May be 150,000 or 110,000 years ago; the date is a little uncertain. We, modern humans, are less heavily built and have higher cognitive flexibility than the ancestral species from which we evolved. We are also unusual animals. We have a wide geographical distribution. We have adapted ourselves to a wide range of environmental conditions. We now occupy every nook and corner of the world.

We also started organizing ourselves into groups. Resulting from this organization, our 'mating structure' also underwent reorganization. Instead of being one large inter-mating group, we started to choose mates from within "our own group." This in turn resulted in genetic distinctions between groups. As a result of humans tending to mate within their own groups, genetic variations that arose in individuals within a group tended to remain within the group, since these variations had little chance to cross group-boundaries. This is because individuals carrying these variants did not generally mate with individuals of a different group. Genes, as we know, move with people. Therefore, if movement of individuals was restricted because they tended to remain within their own group, then genes also tended to have restricted movement. An individual usually avoids mating with another who does not share her or his own cultural and linguistic attributes. In other words, cultural and linguistic differences are barriers to admixture. In addition, geographical barriers also act as barriers to admixture.

Since genetic changes appear in individuals within a group and these changes accumulate over time within a group, one expects that a contemporary group that has a lot of genetic diversity is an "old" genetic group, i.e., has evolved for a long period of time. If we consider the overall human genetic diversity at the continental level, we find that Africa has the highest genetic diversity followed by Asia (Figure 2). This

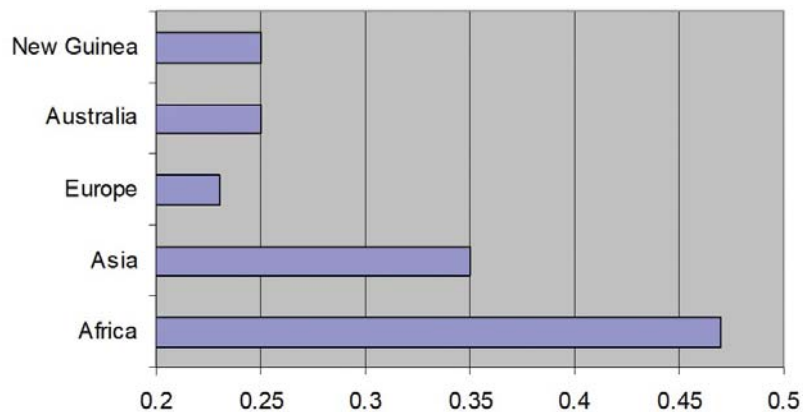


Figure 2. Extent of genetic diversity among human populations of different continental regions.

is consistent with the claim that Africa is the cradle of humankind. Indeed, genetic diversity of both Y-chromosomal genetic variants that are passed on along the male lineage, and mitochondrial genetic variants that are passed on by a mother to all her children with no contribution from their father, are the highest in Africa and also decay with increasing geographical distance from Africa through Asia to the new World. These facts are consistent with the evolution of humankind in Africa and their subsequent dispersal from Africa to other parts of the world. Asia – in particular, India – was one of the earliest regions that modern humans occupied after moving out-of-Africa.

India has served as a major corridor for the migration of modern humans who started to disperse out-of-Africa about 100,000 (perhaps, sometime between 110,000 and 60,000) years ago. Nevertheless, the date of entry of modern humans into India remains uncertain. It is quite certain, based on human remains, that by the middle of the Paleolithic period (50,000–20,000 years before present) humans had spread to many parts of the Indian subcontinent. Thus, India has been peopled by contemporary humans at least for the past 55,000 years. Genetic evidence indicates that a major population expansion of modern humans took place within India.

A little over ten years ago, some of us interested in understanding “where do we come from?” initiated a project to estimate the genetic diversity and decipher the genetic structures of ethnic populations of Asia by interrogating for each individual the presence or absence of a very large number of genetic variants. We noted a high degree of genetic diversity in populations of India, and indeed their antiquities estimated from the genomic data turned out to be the deepest compared to other Asian populations. Overall, Asia seemed to have been founded by seven or eight genetically distinct ancestral populations.

We wished to estimate, using genetic data, how many genetically distinct ancestral populations may have contributed to the pool of genes that comprise the diversity of ethnic groups – tribal, caste and migrant – of India. Contemporary India is a rich tapestry of largely

intra-marrying ethnic groups. As estimated by nationwide surveys conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India, there are about 400 tribal groups in India, about 4000 caste and sub-caste groups, and about 150 migrant and religious groups. The tribal groups have a simple social organization and carry out simple occupations, primarily slash-and-burn agriculture. The caste and the migrant populations have a complex, often hierarchical, social organization and are engaged in a variety of occupations. Linguistically, all groups in the northern region of India speak Indo-European languages; in the southern region, Dravidian languages; and, in north-east India Tibeto-Burman languages. The tribal groups of central India, such as the Munda, speak dialects that belong to the Austro-Asiatic linguistic family. None of the non-tribal groups speak Austro-Asiatic languages. I underscore that there is confounding of geography and language in India. We sampled individuals, with informed consent, from a large number of ethnic groups – tribal, caste, religious and migrant – from throughout the country and obtained a blood sample from each. We then analysed the DNA of each individual, either by interrogating a large number of genetic variants or by DNA sequencing. By use of a variety of statistical analyses, we estimated that four ancestral populations contributed to the gene-pool of mainland India (i.e., excluding the island populations). These ancestral populations cannot be identified with any of the contemporary ethnic groups. However, it is evident (Figure 3) that each of the four distinct ancestral populations has contributed to the overall gene-pool; with one ancestral population contributing largely to populations that speak languages belonging to one of the four distinct linguistic families. This evidence can also be interpreted as – in view of the confounding of geography and language in India – that distinct ancestral populations have contributed to the gene pools of contemporary ethnic groups occupying northern, southern, central and north-eastern regions. Thus, in spite of the diverse tapestry that is ethnic India, there is a discernible genetic unity as revealed by genetic contributions

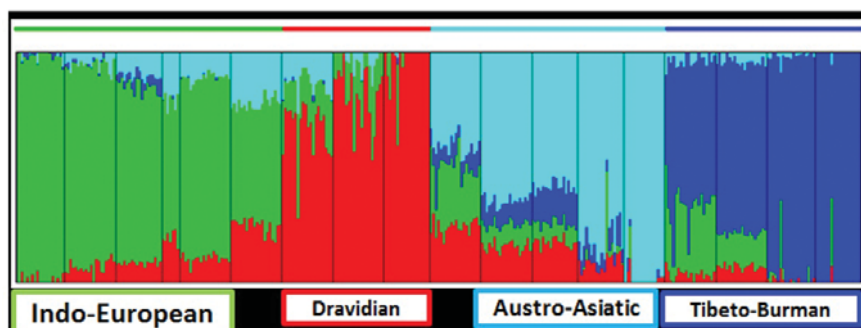


Figure 3. Genetic analysis of admixture in individuals belonging to different ethnic groups of India, who speak languages of different linguistic families or resident in different regions of India reveal that (a) four distinct ancestral populations (indicated by different colours) have contributed to the gene pool of contemporary Indians, and (b) only one ancestral population has predominantly contributed to the gene pool of populations of each geographical region or equivalently among populations who speak a similar language.

of only four ancestral populations to the large numbers of ethnic groups.

Genes can also provide evidence of major human cultural innovations and their spread. Arguably, farming was a major innovation of modern humans. Organized farming arose in the Fertile Crescent region – the region where Syria, Lebanon, Turkey are located. Subsequently, it spread to many places fairly rapidly and eventually to all parts of the world. Was the spread of farming by word of mouth or did farmers take the technology and culture of farming physically to distant lands? This was an enigma until about two decades ago when genetic studies provided evidence consistent with human dispersal to be associated with the spread of agriculture. Just to be sure, even at the risk of being repetitive, that no one thinks that the practice of agriculture is in the genes, I would like to point out that the spread of agriculture was associated with the movement of people; agriculturists took the practice of farming to new regions and taught it to the locals in the new region. Movement of people implies movement of genes. Some migrants ‘export’ their genes to a new region by taking spouses from the new region and producing children with them who stay in

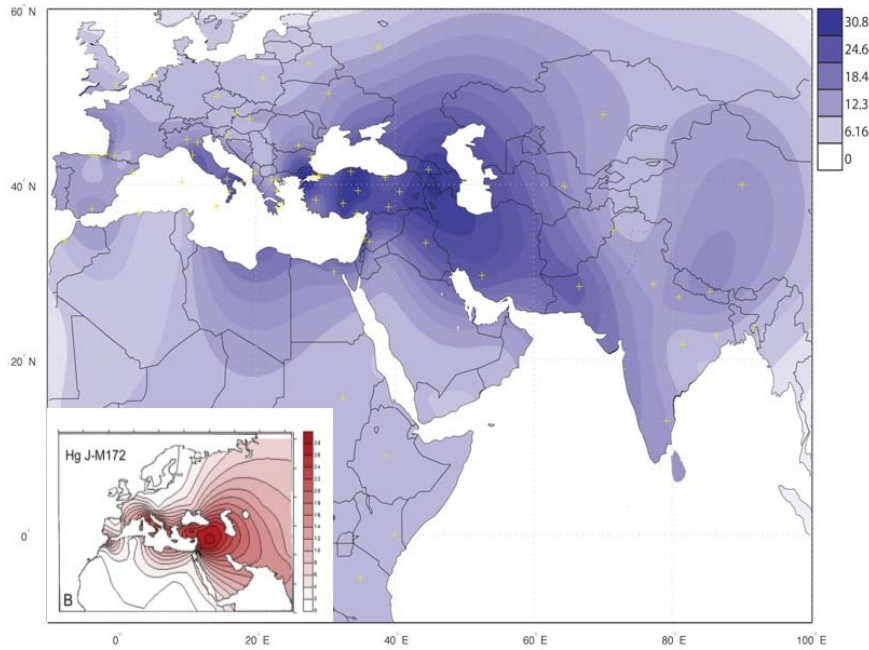


Figure 4. The frequency of the male genetic signature, haplogroup J, is the highest (darkest in colour) in the Fertile Crescent region where modern farming was invented. The frequency of this signature declines with increase in distance from the Fertile Crescent region and is associated with the global spread of farming through human dispersal.

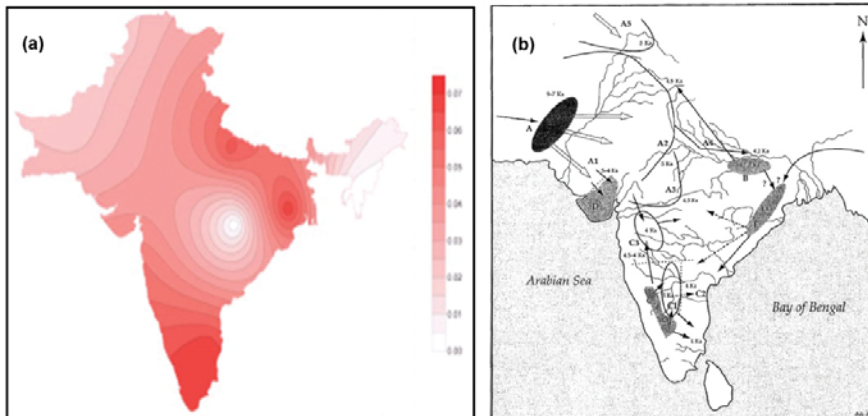


Figure 5. The frequency of a male genetic signature, haplogroup J2b2, that arose before the invention of modern farming has (a) multiple epicentres within India that nearly coincide with (b) the locations where ancient agriculture was invented in India and spread locally, but not far and wide.

the new region. We can never be sure that the attribution of agriculture having been introduced to the Indian subcontinent by migrants is fully true. However, genetic data do support this model, especially of the spread of modern, organized agriculture. A male genetic (Y-chromosomal) signature, called haplogroup J, was shown to be associated with the spread of modern agriculture. This signature has its highest frequency in the Fertile Crescent region where the technology of modern agriculture was invented about 7,000–10,000 years ago. This signature associated with individuals who invented agriculture. The frequency of this signature diminishes as one moves away from the Fertile Crescent region, consistent with the paradigm that farmers actually dispersed from the Fertile Crescent region and carried the culture and technology of farming to new areas. As they went far and wide, the strength of the original band of migrating farmers diminished and the genetic signature they carried with them diluted (Figure 3). Collection of deeper data showed that this signature is quite heterogeneous and is composed of sub-signatures, one of which – haplogroup J2b2 – is confined to the India-Pakistan region (Figure 4). This sub-signature arose over 13000 years ago and hence its introduction into India could not have been by migrants who introduced modern agriculture into India. The haplogroup J2b2 possibly arose in India, because the highest frequency of this haplogroup is found in India. We discovered multiple epicentres of this haplogroup in India and interestingly these epicentres nearly coincided with the seats of invention of early forms of agriculture in India (as evidenced by the study of fossilized pollen grains by palynologists). Rudimentary forms of agriculture may have been invented independently in multiple geographical regions within India. However, it is notable that these early forms of agriculture did not spread far and wide, and remained largely confined to India and Pakistan region.

Through our studies of ethnic groups of India and elsewhere, I have learnt that there is genomic unity in the midst of all the cultural and linguistic diversity that is ethnic India. The number of ancestral

populations to which we can trace ourselves back is only four. We must celebrate our diversity keeping our unity in focus. We must join our voices with the African-American poet, Maya Angelou :

“It is time for the preachers, the rabbis, the priests and pundits, and the professors to believe in the awesome wonder of diversity so that they can teach those who follow them. It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength. We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter their color; equal in importance no matter their texture.”

Remembering that all of us are rooted in Africa, we must also recognize that there is a *fundamental* genomic unity of all humankind, bolstering UNESCO’s call to “*respect and promote the practice of solidarity towards individuals, families and population groups...*” [Article 17 of The Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, (UNESCO, 2000)].



*Rajendralala Mitra - A Time Traveller in the Twentieth Century: A Possible Scenario\**

Malavika Karlekar

As is well known, Rajendralala Mitra<sup>1</sup> was known for his outstanding contributions to Indology; what is less known is another very important aspect of his work, namely his interest and commitment to photography. Born in 1822 to Janamejaya, grandson of Raja Pitambar Mitra, who had distinguished himself at the court of Delhi, the young Rajendralala grew up in a cultured and literary environment. His varied interests, deep commitment to scholarship, and Rajendralala's working life reflect an enterprising young man's



Picture - 1 : Rajendralala Mitra

Courtesy : Dilip Kumar Mitra, Kolkata

*Here he is in a formal studio pose, looking into the middle distance, very common with such compositions of the time.*

---

\* 3rd Raja Rajendralala Mitra Memorial Lecture delivered at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. on 14th October, 2020.

initiative and drive in taking advantage of the new opportunities that were increasingly available in the city of Calcutta.

In 1846, his interest in Indology took him to the Asiatic Society where he was appointed Assistant Secretary and Librarian. He worked there till 1856 and was the first Indian to join the tradition of scholarly work at the Society established by Nathaniel Halhed, Henry Thomas Colebrooke, William Carey and James Prinsep. While his duties as an official were diverse, Rajendralala wasted little time in acquiring the methodological and research skills required for antiquarian research and published regularly in the Society's journal. The prevailing intellectual atmosphere of scientific inquiry and the privileging of reason led him to argue for objectivity in approaches to Indian history, interrogating thereby some of the reigning canons and discursive methods. It was this mind set that led Rajendralala to the newly arrived photographic enterprise.

In 1851, soon after the illustrated magazine had made its appearance in Europe, Rajendralala started the illustrated monthly magazine *Bibidhartha Samgraha* in a large format (8.5"x10.5") and it consisted of an interesting *mélange* of articles in the natural sciences, art and literature (P. Chatterjee 1996b). Interspersed with reproductions of lithographs and paintings, the magazine, that reflected the editor's early interest in visualisation, was perhaps among the first illustrated publications in this genre. The reader could be assured of information and analyses on a wide range of subjects within a few pages – a significant contribution for an increasingly literate and aware population, eager for new knowledge of the world beyond.<sup>2</sup>

Had he been born a quarter of a century later, a man of Rajendralala's vision and interest might well have taken on the role of a visual documenter, one who would have used the photograph to document his life and times. His commitment to photography and its promotion put him quite ahead of his times.

When the British brought photography to India in 1840, their primary aim of using it as a tool for recording ethnographic types, surveillance and research was soon rivalled by the demands of the

popular imagination. Though the colonials started using commercial studios by the end of that decade, it was by the 1860s, as photo studios mushroomed in the three Presidencies, that the Indian urban upper and middle-classes responded enthusiastically to the new medium. Soon, like the western-style English-medium school, the railways, postal services and modern medicine, photography and the photographic establishment came to occupy a growing space in the middle-class consciousness.

The photo studio acquired a special significance, providing an enclosed space where often a fantasy world could be played out: backdrops painted on canvas were unfurled and displayed as were selected props such as impressive tomes, elaborately carved furniture, pediments, exotic indoor plants and so on. With the invention of the box camera by George Eastman in 1888, photography entered the world of the amateur and of on location shots. It also became a medium for recording and documenting, and in time, a powerful mnemonic device. Aware of the power of the medium, Indians started using the photographic studio from the middle of the 1850s. In fact, interestingly, the first images of family compositions seem to have been taken around 1857.

It was at this exciting time that Rajendralala Mitra got interested in photography and started using it extensively both in his scholarly work as well as in *Bibidhartha Samgraha*. He was a founding member of the Photographic Society of Bengal established in 1856 and within months of its establishment and the starting of its *Journal*, had written five articles in the first three issues, including translations of French essays from *Le Pays* and *La Lumiere*. He also provided a succinct account of photographic information gleaned from a number of European art journals (G.Thomas 1984). He was among the handful of Indians to join this predominantly European group of professional photographers, interested amateurs and Army officers and in 1857, Rajendralala became its Treasurer. Soon, however, he became embroiled in a controversy with the British members over his outspoken views on colonial rule. I have dealt with this imbroglio

elsewhere (M. Karlekar 2005) – but what is interesting here is that he had enough influence to be able to start a rival organization, with two Englishmen (Mr. James Breuer) as President and Vice President (Major Thuillier) and himself as Secretary. In addition, the issue was kept alive through the columns of the *Hindu Patriot* (Rajendralala was its Editor between 1884-91), the *Bengal Hurkaru* and of course *The Englishman* and *The Friend of India* (see S. Ghosh 1988a and A. Ray for comprehensive accounts of the controversy).

A few years later, one Mr. Grote started protracted negotiations with Rajendralala regarding his return to the parent Society. It was clearly to the advantage of the European-dominated Photographic Society of Bengal to have Rajendralala back, by now a figure recognized as one of unquestionable eminence in both official and photographic circles. He re-joined in 1868. Apart from informed discussions on experiments, innovations and experiences of the Society's members, a number were photographers themselves. While it is a matter of some speculation whether Rajendralala's photographic skills went beyond those of a talented amateur, he clearly had substantial technical knowledge and interest in the area, organizing successful exhibitions of photographs with both Indian and foreign participants.

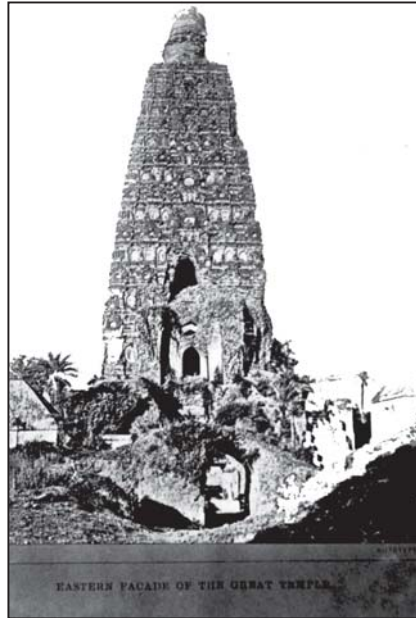
However, as is well known, it is in the field of Indological research that Rajendralala's contributions are most significant and between 1870 and 1888, he discovered many valuable manuscripts, and information about them was published in nine volumes of *Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts* that used a process of systematic cataloguing, the first of its kind for old manuscripts. In his archeological research – where he built upon the work of Captains M. Kittoe, the Cunningham brothers and others – Rajendralala introduced the visual element with great skill and dexterity. He was soon cited as an authority on the interpretation of photographs of sculptures. In 1878 was published his richly illustrated *Buddha Gaya – The Hermitage of Sakya Muni* with 51 plates that were collotypes of photographs (based on a process of lithography) of the monuments as well as sketches of floor plans and structures (Karlekar 2005).



Picture - 2 : Views of Buddha Gaya as reproduced in *Buddha Gaya*  
– *The Hermitage of Sakya Muni*



Picture - 3 : Views of Buddha Gaya as reproduced in *Buddha Gaya*  
– *The Hermitage of Sakya Muni*



Picture - 4 : Views of Buddha Gaya as reproduced in *Buddha Gaya*  
– *The Hermitage of Sakya Muni*



Picture - 5 : Tripura princess



Picture - 6 : Rajendralala's widowed sister-in-law  
The photograph of his sister-in-law is particularly interesting as women alone were not usual subjects. Dressed in widow's weeds, she poses with religious beads in hand.

As would be expected from someone so committed to photography, Rajendralala possessed a number of cameras and several photographs such as these two are supposed to have been taken by him and a part of family albums in the possession of his grandson, Dilip Kumar Mitra.

Had Rajendralala been born half a century later, his life and work commitments might have included another aspect, that of photography. As a time traveller, he would have used the camera very imaginatively, going well beyond the ambit of archaeology and Indology. He would recorded people as well as places, and added his wisdom to the course that photography took in the early 20th century. In addition, he would surely have recognised the emergence of the iconic persona in the public space and the role of the photograph in recording if not promoting such personalities. Second, Rajendralala understood the need to build and nurture institutions and organisations, the Photographic Society of Bengal being a case in point. After a brief

digression into the democratization of the photograph, I focus on the life and times of Rabindranath Tagore: Rajendralala as a time traveller, would not only have supported Tagore's endeavours but also ensured a systematic photographic documentation of them.

By the final years of the 19th century, the arrival of the Brownie camera presented the opportunity of democratizing the photographic space; it not only fractured the divide between the public and the private but also introduced the possibility of the camera being everywhere and available to a far larger number of users. Though the paparazzi era was not to assail people's lives and sensibilities till well into the middle of the twentieth century, by its early years, photo journalism was beginning to find many takers. As is clear from his introduction of the illustrated article in *Bibidhartha Samgraha* and extensive use of images in his scholarly work, Rajendralala Mitra would have been at the forefront of those promoting the use of the photograph to record changing lives and times. As one involved in this process, Rajendralala would have wanted detailed explanatory captions: a true scholar, an image without a context would have little meaning for him. He would have surely understood the importance of celebrity lives being documented through visuals with supporting text - and might even have been a willing subject! But for that, he needed to have lived and worked not in the 1850s but in the 20th century, a time when the camera was perceptively moving into people's lives.

What began in the last century, assumed even greater salience in the 21st. The world of today valorises icons; 'elder statesmen', 'women achievers', revolutionary leaders, film and television stars, sports heroes, leading composers, musicians, artists — all qualify for distilled attention of various kinds. Biographies — empathetic, critical or carping — keep them alive in the literate universe. Re-telling the lives of such figures is never easy; most often, the hagiographic mode is the usual, though not always acceptable, way out. In the present world, for wider transmission of iconic status, the visual, be it a garish multi-coloured poster, a calendar image or a classy studio

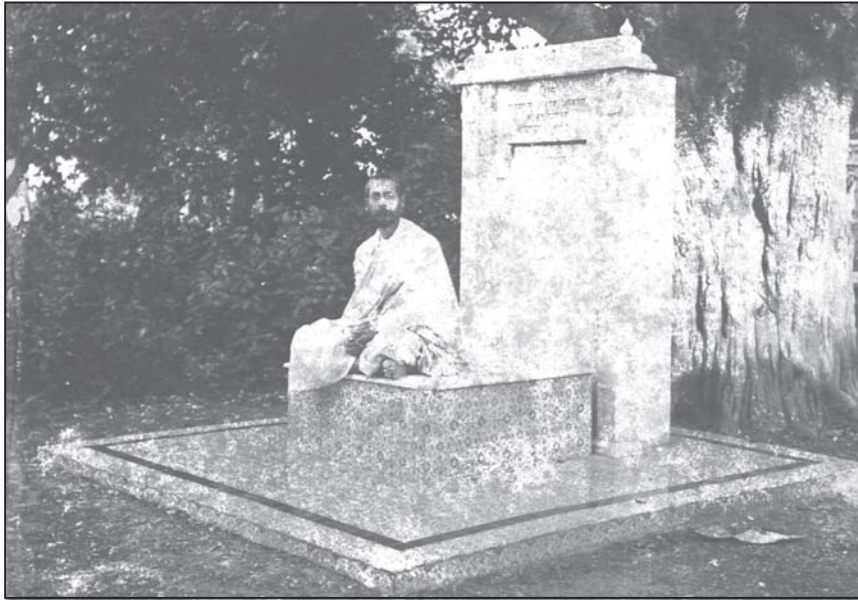


portrait, a quick shot taken by a digital camera, a mobile phone or even a fuzzy, out of focus grab from a television image, is taken for granted. A visual reconstruction of some of these persons, their work and the times they lived in is helped by the setting up of photographic archives dedicated to them.

A subtle subject-photographer engagement that may even meld into more active participation by the individual being photographed was not unusual, a case in point being Rabindranath Tagore, the establishment of Santiniketan and his trips abroad to finance Visva-Bharati. The camera became a vital aid and though Tagore's life and times have been widely photographed, there has been little informed analysis of how photography was used to record the growth and development of this unique personality or indeed, his passion, Visva-Bharati. And yet, as I try to show in this article, focussed 'reading' of a selection of photographic images in the Rabindra Bhavana archives introduces a new perspective into known history.

In part, the idea and growth of photographic archives in the 20<sup>th</sup> century fulfilled Mitra's commitment to the visual. In the 1950s, the poet's son, Rathindranath, started the photo archives section in Visva-Bharati's Rabindra Bhavana. He needed to find an appropriate home for the many loose photographs and albums that visually mapped his father's life, that of his illustrious family, the establishment of Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan and so on. In 2014, the Rabindra Bhavana holdings consisted of almost 17,000 images, the largest single collection of photographs, most in fairly reasonable condition, of Tagore, his family and of Santiniketan.<sup>3</sup> Some files and albums were annotated regarding the provenance, origin and so on of images. Others were silent. While, as is the case with much of photographic practice, quite often, photographers remained anonymous and details of provenance and even persona are tantalizingly absent.<sup>4</sup>

As we shall see, Tagore was prescient enough to anticipate the expanding role of the camera and invited more than one photographer to Santiniketan. The photographic recording of Tagore's life and works is also a competent example of the history of photography and



Picture - 7 : Rabindranath Tagore at what was to later become Chhatimtala. It is a carefully composed, posed image taken in 1905.

changing discourses around it. It was in 1901, a decade after Rajendralala passed on in Calcutta 1891, that, in not so far away Bolepur, Rabindranath Tagore started his school with 5 students and the same number of teachers. His father, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, had bought some land there and built a small guest house meant for Brahma householders to spend some time in meditation and prayer. It is not as though the educational experiment was received enthusiastically by the Bengali *bhadralok*. As Tagore's biographers, Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson write, many would have 'a patronizing smile at a poet's impractical fantasy' of: living in huts, learning under trees, at the mercy of the seasons, bad food and water shortage. Santiniketan was no place for those with worldly ambitions' (p. 136).

Whatever may have been people's views, Rabindranath was satisfied enough with his school that, on a trip to the US in October 1916, he wrote to his son Rathindranath that 'I have it in mind to make Santiniketan the connecting thread between India and the world.



Picture - 8 : A view of what Santiniketan must have looked like in 1901. From a private album, this photograph of a hut amidst trees conveys the rustic atmosphere of the place.



Picture - 9 : Rabindranath Tagore, Salt Lake City Temple, Utah, USA. Even though the poet looks away from the camera, this is a carefully composed photograph where the pose and position must surely have been discussed between the photographer and the subject.

I have to found a world centre for the study of humanity there' (quoted on p. 205 of Dutta and Robinson). On December 22, 1918, the foundation stone of Visva-Bharati was laid and it was inaugurated three years later. Between 1919 and 1921, Rabindranath Tagore concentrated on fund-raising in India, and through lectures in Europe and the USA. Audience halls were filled to over-flowing and during his 1920 trip to the America, he had hoped to raise as much as 5 million dollars. However, in the post-war world, this was a gross miscalculation, and he wrote to an English friend 'I am suffering from an utter disgust for raising funds' (quoted on p. 454 of Stephen Hay).

Be that as it may, between 1872 and 1932, Tagore had made 30 trips abroad, the later ones at which he gave lectures as fund-raisers. On a number of his trips, Rabindranath was usually accompanied by his son, Rathindranath and daughter-in-law Protima. Many photographs were taken on such trips, often in formal though very carefully thought-out poses such as this one of Rathindranath and Protima with the poet. In December 1930, at a formal banquet at Hotel Biltmore

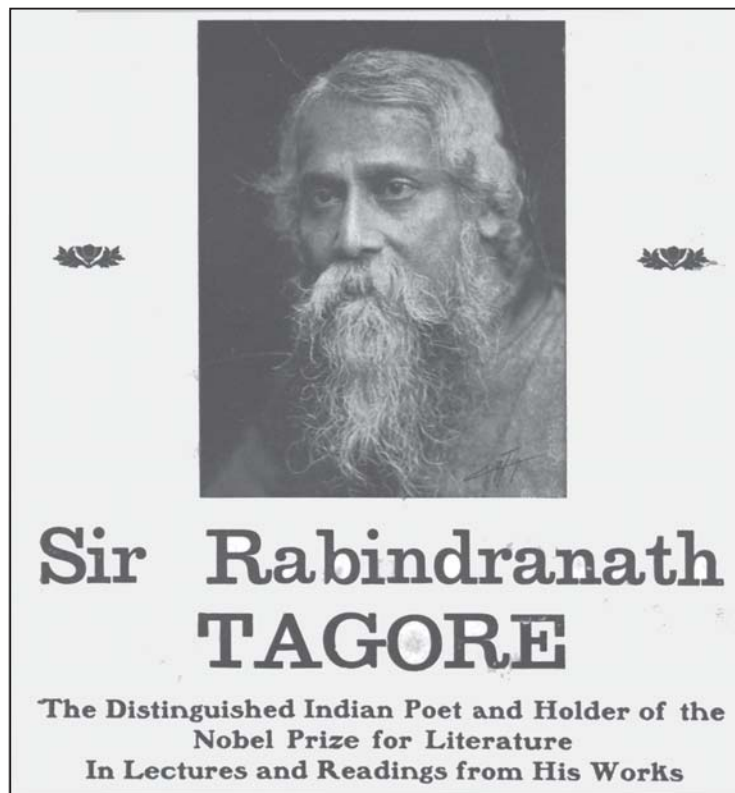


Picture - 10 : With son Rathindranath and daughter-in-law, Protima.

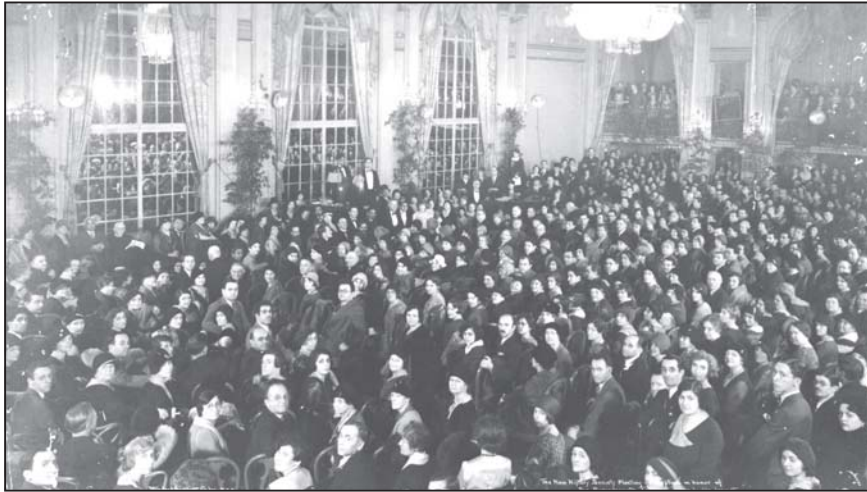
for 500 dignitaries including the Governor of New York who was then Franklin D. Roosevelt, every seat was occupied 'and hundreds lined the walls to hear him speak' (ibid. p. 454). *The New York Times* December 2 reported that 'about 4000 people were in the hall and thousands were turned away'.

There is a photograph of the poster advertising another one of his talks. On a long view of the jam-packed hall there is a handwritten inscription : 'The new history Society Meeting Reception in honor of Sir Rabindranath Tagore; 2000 people present. Grand Ballroom, Ritz Carlton Hotel, December 7, 1930'.

By the time a somewhat travel-weary Tagore returned to Santiniketan, his university had opened its doors to many foreign visitors – though it was twenty years since his friend Okakura Tenshin



Picture - 11 : Poster advertising one of his talks.



Picture - 12 : Jam-packed hall

had passed on, the Orient had a fascination for him. In 1937, Cheena Bhavana was set up for Sino-Indian studies and scholar Tan Yun-Shan was invited to chair the department. By now, increasingly aware of the power of the image, Rabindranath thought it prudent to invite established photographers to record life at the university and in Santiniketan. In 1932, Raymond Burnier, and the Frenchman, Alain Daniélou — musicologist, artist, writer and, of course, traveller and photographer found their way to Santiniketan, where they spent four years at the invitation of Rabindranath Tagore. They soon became an integral part of the syncretist vision of the institution; Burnier's Leica framed the poet, unique buildings of the educational complex, its students and general ambience that subtly merged the lushness of rural Bengal with understated structures, while Daniélou actively collaborated in a musical enterprise.

From 1935 till Tagore's death in 1941, photographer Shambhu Shaha (1905-1988) made frequent visits to Santiniketan and tirelessly photographed the poet, everyday life at the university, students and persons who worked with Tagore, his images, two of which follow are amazingly fluid and alive. Here the poet is photographed with his secretary, Anil Kumar Chanda and his wife, Rani. She was to become

an accomplished artist trained by Nandalal Bose and others, and a noted author. This image was probably taken in 1936 or 1937.



Picture - 13 : Anil and Rani Chanda, c. 1936.



Picture - 14 : Gaura Pande with a friend

A number of young women and men who were to become famous in later life spent formative years at Viswa Bharati, among them was Gaura Pande (later Pant), who was later to become the noted Hindi author known by her pen name Shivani. Here she is (back to the camera) with a friend. As public adulation continued to grow, the camera was there to memorialise events, iconic as well as quotidian. This photograph of Rabindranath's 70th birthday celebration at Calcutta Town Hall captures the crowds as well as Tagore addressing them. Quite often, a few of the more interesting and possibly intriguing images are those taken perhaps unbeknownst to the subject, such as



Picture - 15 : Town Hall.

the one of the elderly Rabindranath listening intently to the readings of an astrologer. The comment with the image is 'showing his hand to a palmist; Suren Kar and Nandalal Bose and a few others are anxiously listening'. Some of the more poignant images of his final days are from private albums maintained by members of the ashram, such as the one of Rabindranath reciting a poem at Amrakunja.



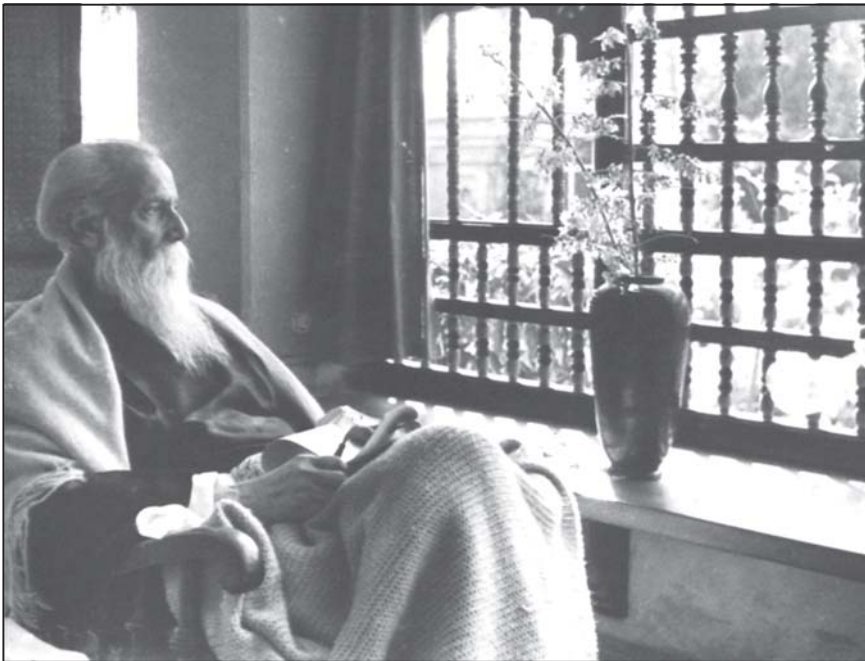


Picture - 16 : With palmist



Picture - 17 : At Amrakunja

In what is perhaps among the last photographs to be taken of the poet in May 1941, he is seated by a window at Udayan, looking out to the verdant beyond. As by then he was quite unwell, it became necessary to keep his hair and beard trimmed and groomed; here, the shawl and blanket are neatly arranged as is the vase with a few flowering branches carefully positioned. It is a finely crafted photographic tribute to a man who valued aesthetics and the natural world so deeply.



Picture - 18 : Last photograph, 1941.

By touching upon select aspects of the life of Rabindranath through photography I have indicated how the camera was complicit, in a manner of speaking, in the fashioning of an icon. I would like to end today's lecture by leaving you with the thought that though Raja Rajendralala Mitra's major contributions were to Indology, had he lived half a century later, I am convinced that passionate involvement in his work would have been enhanced by extensive use of

photography. The camera would not only have recorded his scholarly achievements but also different aspects of his life; together with Rabindranath, with whom he might well have worked, Rajendralala would have been among the first to be iconized by the camera; that would have been the natural progression of the new invention.

The somewhat fanciful use of the literary image of Rajendralala as a time traveller describes what might well have happened: the seasoned Indologist would have combined his commitment to the ancient with the modern and carried forward his use of the camera to newer pastures. Rajendralala's experience of photography as well as understanding and interpretation of images was way beyond that of most of his contemporaries. He was truly an experimenter, a quintessential time traveller whose knowledge of Indology was well-matched by his far-reaching knowledge of science and scientific discoveries, the camera being among his foremost interests.

#### Photo Credits

Nos. 1-6 : Dilip Kumar Mitra, Kolkata.

Nos. 7-12: Rabindra Bhavana Photo Archives, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan.

No. 13: Abhik Kumar Chanda, Paris.

No. 14: The late Gaura Pant.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> In English, his name has been spelt as Rajendrololl, Rajendralala as well as the more conventional Rajendralal. I use Rajendralala as it is the way he spelt it.

<sup>2</sup> We are fortunate that the archives of Centre for the Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata, has Volumes 1-6 (1773-1781 *Sakhya* corresponding to 1851-59) as well as Volume 7 of 1783 (1861) on microfilm.

<sup>3</sup> In December 2013, as Visiting Professor at Visva-Bharati, I spent many pleasurable and productive days delving into this collection.

<sup>4</sup> In this context, see Indira Chowdhury, 'Santiniketan: The Making of a New Indian Pilgrimage', *The Public Historian*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 99-103 May 2013, on the lack of a curatorial vision in present-day Santiniketan.

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## *Why Is Understanding Gender Important Today ?\**

Nirmala Banerjee

This paper is to examine the nature of gender norms in our society and economy and its implications for the nature of our economic development and public policies. Although analysis of gender and gendering process has been an important theme in feminist studies, implications of their specific norms in our society for our current situation have so far not been sufficiently spelt out. This anomaly however is becoming increasingly important in the growing crisis in our society and economy. This paper intends to spell out some aspects of that on-going scenario and tentatively suggest some areas where policy makers need to rethink their ideas.

### **Women are not born but made**

What then do we understand by the terms gender and gendering? Much has already been written about this starting from De Beauvoir's Book *Second Sex* from which we get the above quotation. More recently V. Geetha has written a very lucid and detailed exposition of different aspects of gender (Geetha 2006). Therefore I will not go into too many details about the theme as such. Briefly, in human societies reproduction implies not just biological activities of giving birth and breast feeding a child; it also includes activities of *social reproduction* i.e. of rearing a child till it becomes an adult and in that process socialising it into its gendering role. In other words, gender comprises the social construct which indicates how in any society persons of either sex<sup>1</sup> are expected to behave, dress, speak, work and even think

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\* *Abha Maity Annual Memorial Lecture 2019*, delivered at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata on 31st January 2021.

of themselves. Gendering is the process through which a new-born child is gradually moulded into accepting these norms as given and practising those throughout her life. This process of turning a child into a girl or a boy is done mainly by its family; but the norms and practices the family follows for doing so are set by multiple social agencies — religious authorities, extended families, caste leaders, the social media as well as political and economic bosses. And custom — *this is how it is always done* - socially accepted norms - *what will the neighbours say?*- religious texts quoting Manu - *Na Stree Swatantryamarhati* etc. are all used to make the sex-based division of roles and norms. For most social authorities and social scientists the accepted scenario is that of men and women playing *complementary* roles under a 'natural' order in which men have decisive powers because of their God-given and socially sanctioned mental and physical superiority. Even analytical scientists with faith only in well-researched evidence still entertain some unease about women's innate mental or physical capabilities for understanding and contributing to high level theorisation in subjects like Mathematics or Physics; these after all have long been the sole prerogative of males.<sup>2</sup>

The set pattern of gender in any society is neither eternal nor universal: as we see around us, there are many changes in it over time; for example, neither of my grandmothers had ever gone to school, each was married before she had barely reached her teens - one to an alcoholic and the other to become a widow in her early twenties when her husband, older than her by more than forty years and a multi-times widower, died. Both struggled to bring up their several children against all odds. My mother on the other hand gone to college, chose her own life partner, was a teacher most of her life and brought up us, her three daughters to take up different careers. Our daughters and daughters-in-law have carried on those trends further. Nevertheless two facts stand out: these success stories are still limited to a very small section of urban middle class, leaving the vast majority of Indian women far behind. And, even those successful few often face a glass ceiling in their careers which can only be fought by many sacrifices of their domestic happiness.

### How does gender work?

In all known societies, all tasks, whether in the market or as housework are known to have been done sometime somewhere by both men and women. The only exception is of giving birth and breast-feeding a child - tasks that nature itself has assigned solely to women. Nevertheless, gender is still a fact; societies and economies do make a difference in the way they view women and men - their work and their comfort. Therefore feminists argue that, it is because a society has already accepted an unequal structure of power between the two sexes, it makes it imperative for one sex, the weaker one to accept the norms set for it by the other, stronger set. *One sex- usually of the males - has powers over all aspects of life of their females - their bodies, their sexuality and their labouring capacity.* Everywhere there are tacit norms about the way women of a particular social group are to dress, in what section of familial or social milieu and on the specific occasions they are to expose even their faces and also about the way their labour is to be used in the economy.

Controls on these three aspects of women's lives- their bodies, their labour and their sexuality - are inter-dependent, i.e. controlling one aspect implies putting some controls on other aspects as well; and it is possible that controls on one aspect are meant basically to fortify controls on other aspects. For example controls on women's bodies and their sexuality also put control on their choices of work. These limits can be physical, implying controls on where and when they can be working. Or as in Iran, women can work in any sphere but only if they cover their bodies in a *burkha* when in presence of men outside their family. In other words, although gendering commonly implies superior authority of men over women regarding the latter's bodies, sexuality and labour, the logic behind those control and their outcomes for women and for the society can be widely different. Naila Kabir in her lecture on "Marriage, Motherhood and Masculinity in the Global Economy" (Kabir 2007) showed that economic liberalisation policies adopted by countries as diverse as Taiwan, Bangladesh, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam or Guatemala

lead to sharp feminisation of jobs especially in the manufacturing sector there; nevertheless the impact of that feminisation of work on women's position in families and society differed significantly from country to country. In the same vein, I want to show how India too has followed its own distinct path of gendering with very different outcomes for its women in society and economy.

### **Guarding women's chastity - goal or instrument?**

In our society gendering works mainly through emphasis on the sanctity of women's chastity; in other words, containing women's sexuality strictly within marriage is the main instrument through which families socialise women. In emphasizing chastity, patriarchal authorities not just impose controls on a woman's sexuality but also get powers to manipulate her into accepting an overall behavioural pattern that suits their expectations. Women are drilled from childhood to accept that chastity is their most precious endowment. For managing this manipulation, families use both men and women as their agents. It is mothers that ingrain this concept into their daughters and it is mothers and sisters-in-law who are often more vociferous in protesting against any transgressions of it by the daughters-in-law of the family. We also have experienced how bodies like "khap panchayats" or even state governments can be active in imposing norms for women's sexual choices (witness the on-going controversies about state laws against what is being called love jihad). In fact in the current social and political outcry in India against several incidents of brutal gang rapes and murders of young women, it is not always clear whether the state and society are appalled more by the rape than by the violence and murder of the victim. It is the sexual contact between their women and men of unknown and unacceptable backgrounds that has generated demands for harsher and harsher punishments against rapists. At the same time little attempt is being made to help the victim to regain her social position; she is condemned for life to live as a soiled article.

Overtly, this emphasis on chastity is supposed to guard the family's caste, race and to a large extent its class status from being mixed



with blood of other inferior or alien groups. But in practice it justifies the control of familial and social authorities over not just the sexuality but also all other aspects of the lives of their women. There are many well-researched instances of how gendering is used to establish, maintain and raise social position of the family and community and in the process tighten their controls on all aspects of their women's lives. Pocock's interesting study, *Kanbis and Patidars* (Pocock 1972) has shown vividly how women of the cultivator Kanbi caste of Anand area in Gujarat went through a transition with increasing wealth of the community. Those women had traditionally been very much a part of the family's labour force and therefore used to command a bride price at times of marriage. But when the community prospered through trade with the African coast, women were withdrawn from labouring in public space and marriages of daughters became hypergamous with practices of *Kanyadan* and dowry. Similar instances are available from many communities in different regions in the country; even in poorer classes where the concept of social status has little material basis, a family's acceptance in its community and neighbourhood is related to closely monitoring any transgressions against the norms of chastity by their women.

Nevertheless, for the vast majority of poorer households in India as elsewhere, women's labouring capacity is too valuable a resource for the family to be wasted on this count. How do they get round this difficulty of maintaining their controls on women and at the same time get them to do whatever work that is necessary for the household's survival?

In all societies a married woman is expected to bear the unpaid burden of work of cooking, cleaning and child-rearing as a wife and a mother and debates regarding payment for housework have once again been revived by a few scholars<sup>3</sup>. However I want to argue that the terms housework, housewives and even the currently fashionable term care-workers are once again tainted with concepts of a nature-given sexual division of labour that makes women the *natural* nurturers and the work they do to be integral to their being born as women.

The sexual division of labour that results from the emphasis on guarding women's sexuality within marriage not just divides work between men and women: it also generates its own norms about the way women do any work that is assigned to them. It also gives males the power to determine how that work is to be acknowledged and evaluated. Even when men and women are doing the same job, the work can and often is valued and regarded differently. This process creates an additional category of work and workers that comprises women and their work. This category differs significantly from usual work contracts in the labour market. Women in the family may or may not be working in the labour market; but as workers working for and within their households, they assume a somewhat special character.

#### **What then is this social construct of a woman worker?**

I have deliberately used the preposition *what* rather than *who* because a woman doing such work is not so much a person as a social construct that is designed and moulded into that shape by our gender norms. These characteristics are as follows;

1. This woman worker has little choice or control about what work and how much of it is to be done by her; while many tasks accrue to her automatically on marriage, many more can be loaded on her if family circumstances make it necessary.
2. Because women, especially poor women, are constantly multi-tasking – i.e. simultaneously managing housework as well as other tasks such as collecting firewood, tending vegetable gardens or tending the family business, their labour has to be infinitely *flexible*.
3. Since families tend to place the load of any extra responsibility on the woman, her work hours have to be *elastic* so that they can accommodate whatever extra work is generated by family circumstances.
4. Women are moulded by their natal and marital families in ways that makes them accept all such work as a part of their being a daughter, a daughter-in-law, a wife or a mother. *Therefore they*

*neither require supervision for doing so nor expect it to be recognised as work that has costs for her.*

5. A woman's participation in her family's productive work remains *unpaid* even when the product is sold in the market. On the other hand if she does get an income from her work in the labour market, she is socialised to accept that her family rather than herself have a prior claim on it.

With my group *Sachetana*, I had made an attempt in 2003-04 to capture and highlight this category of women's work (*Sachetana* 2004, unpublished) through a survey in West Bengal. I briefly describe the methodology and findings of that survey below.

#### **Employment and livelihoods**

It is a special feature noted of Indian economy that women's officially measured employment or statistically measured women's participation in the labour force is remarkably low compared to the situation in most countries of the world. And in recent years these rates have been further going down alarmingly. There has long been a claim made by feminists that the official definition of employment is incapable of realistically measuring women's work load and contribution to the real incomes of families. To a certain extent, it has also been acknowledged by NSSO experts (Bhattacharya 1985) that it is because of the way women's work is organised that official measurements such as by the National Sample Survey Organisation fail to capture its actual extent in their surveys. Our argument is that for most Indian families, earnings from officially measured employment fall significantly short of their total livelihoods or real incomes.

In order to test this hypothesis, that official employment does not fully account for livelihoods of households, our organisation *Sachetana* had undertaken a survey of 500 West Bengal households of which 310 were rural and 190 had been urban<sup>1</sup> (*Sachetana* 2005, unpublished). The areas included in the survey had been selected to represent diverse developments that, according to reliable information, had recently

taken place in economies of different parts of West Bengal. Share of sample allotted to each selected region had been equal to its share in total population of the selected areas. Within selected areas, sampled households had been randomly selected from *panchayat* or municipal records.

The main purpose of the survey had been to uncover the livelihood strategies of rural and urban West Bengal households, instead of the number of workers and non-workers and their occupational distribution as official surveys had been doing. In order to do so, our methodology was to capture for each adult member of the household all her activities (barring standard three Cs of housework) that had added to the household's real income. The tasks included in our list included both activities that actually brought in money income for the household as well as those that did not but had a market for them in that area. For example we left out fetching water because there was no market rate found for that in the area; but we included collecting and processing fuel because that activity did. The listed activities could have been done sporadically and had consumed only a few minutes of a person's time or were routinely done for several hours a day. Each adult member was asked to recall which, if any, of the activities in a list of thirteen such had she done in the last six months, if so how frequently and for how long each time and whether she had been paid for it and if so how much.

Our findings clearly brought out two major points: one, that the usual method of identifying workers and their occupations did little towards explaining how households made a living. Those estimates left out most workers, especially women workers and the many kinds of their activities that were all essential for the household's survival. In reality, around two thirds of rural women and a half of urban adult women were working on an average for more than four hours a day on those kinds of activities. These figures were significantly higher than what Census or NSSO survey results had consistently been showing for West Bengal for a long period. Survey results highlighted the enormous degree of flexibility showed mainly by women in

switching from one task to another at different times and on different occasions. It also showed how elastic were women's working hours; any time it becomes necessary or when some remunerative work became available, women would extend their working time.

Interestingly, Samita Sen and Anindita Ghosh (Sen and Ghosh 2021) in their recently published paper have described their findings from a survey conducted in the period 2016-18 of marriages in West Bengal. Their findings closely corroborate this character of women's work. They have shown how marriage acts as a portal through which girls pass into their husbands' families to become wives with a tacit understanding on the part of all concerned that they have become workers of the kind I have described above.

However, even in 2004, it had been clear from the *Sachetana* survey that these arduous efforts mainly of women were not always able to lift households from poverty. Especially women's work could contribute little since they had neither skills nor capital to invest in their activities and their load of housework limited their mobility. Therefore, in the decade after our survey work was finished, reports showed that men and women were resorting to new strategies for their survival. Of these the most important seemed to be that of rural workers migrating or commuting for non-agricultural work or self-employment in cities. In the two rounds of NSSO Employment Surveys early in this century, there was a significant increase in urban women's employment mainly in services, especially domestic service. Even married women with children were migrating singly to work in distant cities.

### **In the Labour Market**

Our gender norms contributed in one more way to our officially recorded low employment rates. In an earlier paper (Banerjee 1992), I had brought out how the female age-wise work force participation pattern in India has persistently been on a distinctly different trajectory than the standard pattern world over. In almost all countries of developed or developing world, girls take up some job when they finish education and/or reach their teens and continue working till

they get married and have children when they tend to drop out. Some of them may return to the labour market when their children start schooling. So the curve indicating women workers' age-wise distribution generally tends to peak at a high level in women's teens or early twenties and then starts to go down from the age of 25 onwards. It may rise again when women reach their late thirties. Indian girls however, are supposed to get married soon after puberty and till they get married their families prefer them not to take up work anywhere outside except under close supervision by some family members. This often means that girls drop out halfway through their schooling and seldom get a chance to learn any market skill. On the other hand in their twenties women, especially those from poorer households, find it increasingly imperative to take up wage work. But by then, women are encumbered with child care and housework and prefer to take up work that they can do at home simultaneously with their housework. Therefore Indian women's age-wise work force participation rates start rising at later ages – in their mid-twenties onwards and peak in their mid-thirties. They stay high till their mid-forties and then start declining slowly. In their study quoted before, Sen and Ghosh (op cit) also found a similar age-wise work pattern amongst the sampled women.

#### **Secondary workers?**

For women who do enter the labour market, experience of employment is no less subject to discrimination on gender grounds and for that often it is their own trade unions that are responsible. A common complaint of women workers is how trade union leaders believe in the myth of men being the chief earners of families and often sacrifice women's interest in favour of male workers. For example, in West Bengal of 1960s, wages in the engineering industry were rationalised under a tripartite agreement between workers' union, the state government and their employees: rates of pay for the task of winding fan circuits which is regarded as a skilled job in the industry, were settled at a level higher than the average unskilled wage.

Traditionally this had been regarded as a women's job; but, with pay rationalisation, male dominated unions persuaded employers to make it a male-dominated category (source: personal interview of Vidya Munshi, a trade union activist). Similarly, when the Indian coal industry was nationalised and its workers joined the country's organised sector with its superior working conditions, trade unions persuaded women to surrender their jobs in favour of some male, even by arranging marriages of older widows to aspiring younger males (Ghosh 1984). This meant that from 1973 onwards women's employment in the organised coal industry shrank rapidly; it fell from 20% of the workforce in 1973 to 9.7% in 1980 and went on falling further in the following years (Lahiri Dutt - Table 1, p. 6 n. d.).

But by far the worst offenders in this matter are the official policy makers of India. At present the largest group of women in public employment is of the nearly ten million women working on numerous state and central schemes employing workers in Anganwadis, ASHAs, Community Health Workers, mid-day meal workers and probably many more working on similar schemes in different regions. They are all part of the government machinery that is to reach health, nutrition and basic education to the poor at village levels; it has been acknowledged by experts that it is the efforts of these workers that have been mainly responsible for getting rid of the menace of Polio and have reduced child and maternal mortality rates in the country. The West Bengal Government has acknowledged the heroic efforts of ASHA workers in helping the poor during the recent pandemic and has made an ad hoc increase in their allowances.

Nevertheless, at no level have the policy makers acknowledged that these millions of workers, almost all of them women, are regular public employees. What they get as pay is supposed to be ad hoc allowances with no regular increments, grades etc. Their hours are not fixed as part-time or full-time; but particularly the ASHA workers have had to be on duty for almost twenty-four hours in this period of Covid pandemic. Although recently a section of these workers

have been promised a one-time lump-sum gratuity at retirement, this provision does not apply to all. Worst off are the mid-day meal workers who only get paid on days they work and have been pauperised since schools have been closed. It is indeed the worst example of gender bias of our policy makers as well as of the country's trade union movement that this situation has been allowed to go on for more than a quarter century<sup>5</sup>.

### **Gender and Development**

Much has been written about impact on women of economic development especially in our country. Esther Boserup in her book, *Women and development* (1970) based on her field work in Western Africa initiated the thesis that economic development has a negative impact on women workers. The Report of the Status of Women in India Committee (GOI 1974) supported this thesis by highlighting the trend in India of women's consistently falling overall workforce participation rates since the beginning of 20th century.

However, I want to turn the thesis on its head and ask the other question; what impact has Indian pattern of gendering had on its economic development? Are there any reasons to believe that because of its gender norms, India's economic development has been on a somewhat different trajectory than that in most other late developing countries? I feel there are indeed some indications to support this fact; I discuss that hypothesis next.

### **Industrial organisation in India**

My first instance is of the garment industry which has been the main channel of growth of several countries of Asia and Latin America; from 1991 onwards when India launched on policies of trade liberalisation, it was expected that India too would be a major participant in those global industries that gave preference to women workers and that would give a major boost to women's manufacturing employment in the country. This expectation however, did not fructify;



there was no 'feminisation' of the country's manufacturing employment as had happened in many of those late developing countries of Asia and South America. On the other hand, official figures of women's manufacturing employment showed a steady decline throughout the 1990s and in this century, it has probably declined further. The garment industry promoted globally by multinationals prefers to employ young girls and women who can work almost non-stop for several hours (these hours are usually ten to twelve per day) on a manufacturing chain-line. As the discussion earlier has shown, this did not match the perceived pattern of India's women workers.

#### **Metiabruz garment industry**

However, this is not to say that India does not have a fast burgeoning garment industry or that women play no role in it. It is just that at least in its oldest and one of the fastest growing location which is Kolkata and its periphery, it is organised in a way distinctly different from the typical export-oriented industry in most developing countries. This industrial cluster around Metiabruz, located on a fifteen-odd miles stretch of the banks of the Hoogly river south of Kolkata, comprises numerous small or increasingly large workshops each owned individually by an expert tailor and his family. It specialises in children's wear, work-wear and also to certain extent men and women's casual wear. The Ustaad or the master tailor closely follows the fashion trends prevalent in the country and designs and cuts the garments accordingly. He also ensures their finishing, packing and sale at wholesale rates in the several markets around Metiabruz where buyers come from all over India. Earlier when I did my survey in 1992, (Banerjee 1995) Ustaads also used to get the stitching done in their homes by younger men in the family as well as by several apprentices who lived with the family. Women cooked and fed all the workers and also did hand-stitching in their spare time as part of

their unpaid housework. However, a 2016 report on the cluster done by the Export Council of India shows that, due to its fast growth over the last 20 years, the industry has developed a new layer in the organisation of the production process. This layer is of jobbers who take away the cut garments to get the machine stitching work done in their own workshops by male hired labour. Hand stitching work is put out probably to home-based women workers.

I found some of these home-based women workers at Basirhat, near the border with Bangladesh; in 2009-10 we in *Sachetana* had held a meeting there with local women regarding the functioning of women in Panchayats. It came out that many of them were home-based workers working on hand-stitching jobs put out to them by agents of those jobbers. Earlier in 1975, as part of my study of women workers in the un-organised sector of Calcutta (Banerjee 1985) I had interviewed a group of women doing similar put-out work in bustees around Kolkata city. I was shocked to hear that the piece-rates paid by the jobbers to the Basirhat women in 2009-10 were almost the same as the ones we had found in Calcutta in the 1975 study! This level of exploitation was possible because as volume of work increased and local women begin to ask for better rates, jobs could easily be moved further and further out to cheaper locations. It is highly probable that this growing manufacturing work of women is not being captured by official measures of manufacturing employment.

The Metiabruz industry draws ever-growing number of buyers from all over India mainly because for the quality of their goods, this is by far the cheapest source of ready-made garments in the country. And the industry achieves that not by modernising its technology or organisation, but by finding ever cheaper supply of labour, especially labour of poor women tied to their homes. It is interesting that the Metiabruz industry has resisted all temptation and incentives to join the export trade in a big way because that will require standardisation and quality control levels that are not possible with its kind of industrial organisation.

### **Gender and choice of technologies**

Equally interesting is how gender affects technological choices in production. Irfan Habib in section III of his paper "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India" (Habib 1980 pp. 32-79) had shown that in Mughal India, in spite of plentiful availability of financial capital and skilled workers as well as a ready export market, the region did not experience any shift towards technological modernisation over a period of more than two hundred years. This was because continuous exploitation by the court nobles and the emperor had so impoverished the region's cultivators and artisans that they were readily available for work on the most exploitative terms. Habib argues that because India had that plentiful supply of such impoverished workers, decision makers in manufacturing did not feel any need to explore the potential of better technologies using more efficient, metal-based tools. He said that "change can be delayed in a particular situation for no other reason than that a tool of lower efficiency can be used in manufacture of same commodities by use of cheap skilled labour" (p. 63).

It can be shown that in modern India gendered patterns of work can similarly work against producers seeking improvements in their techniques of production since they can use unpaid women's labour in place of available improved and potentially more profitable techniques. This bypasses the need for investing capital and taking entrepreneurial risks.

The sericulture industry of West Bengal provides a dramatic example of this fact: the industry involves rearing silk cocoons, spinning silk yarn from those cocoons, and weaving it into piece-goods often mixing it with other yarns. The Bengal silk industry has a recorded history of over 500 years and like the cotton piece goods industry, a significant part of its produce was also meant for exports chiefly through the East India Company till the middle of nineteenth century. After that, a silkworm disease and competition from French and Italian superior silk products finished off that export trade.

Domestic production and use of native silk products however, continue till date: but over this entire period, the only technical change was when a ready export market the East India Company introduced in early in 18th century filature winding in place of the traditional *takli* or *charkha*.

The central government in independent India set up the Khadi and Village Industries Corporation (KVIC) to support and revive these industries mainly through subsidizing their products, but did little to improve their technologies. Therefore, in early 1990s Government of India and the World Bank together took up a project of upgrading technology in all centres of the silk industry in India. It proposed to introduce the superior Chinese Bivoltin silkworm in place of local Indian silkworm varieties. In each region the government set up auction markets for the products to be sold directly by producers to buyers against ready payment. However, the Bivoltin worm was highly susceptible to Indian infections and therefore required a more capital-intensive production process using trained and paid workers. Also, because the worms were highly susceptible to infections, it was essential not to carry on cultivation continuously throughout the season but to leave the breeding trays empty for several days in-between crops.

The project was largely successful in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu as well as in Kashmir where the quality and quantity of saleable silk improved considerably. Cocoon rearing workers also benefitted from these new arrangements because they got regular wages for days that they worked at breeding centres and the producers got an assured market for their cocoons. However, a team from the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences that was set up to monitor the project in West Bengal found that, in Malda district, which was and still is the centre of the industry in this state, local cocoon producers were unresponsive to these policies and auction markets did not operate there for long.

On probing for reasons, we found that most families engaged in cocoon production were of marginal cultivators; their traditional

production methods involved no capital or labour costs. Cocoons were bred in locally made trays located inside their cottages and the entire work for rearing the worms was done by unpaid labour of family women. This meant that the worms were exposed to all household infections from family members, household animals and poultry that wandered around. Also, in the breeding season, there was no respite between crops and no time given to let remaining infections die out. Thus, while the correct procedure was to have no more than three or four cycles of silkworm breeding in one season, the Malda growers tried to accommodate as many as six crops in the same period. With the hardy local 'nistari' variety of worms, they still managed to get three or four successful crops per season. They therefore did not think it worth their while to invest in separate sheds and get expensive worms requiring paid care. They were also unwilling to offend the middlemen who had traditionally bought their cocoons at low prices but obliged the marginal farmers with loans whenever needed.

Breeding silkworms involved many hours of labour for the women; when the worms approached maturity, the work of feeding and cleaning the trays could require an extra ten to twelve hours of work in addition to women's household work. Producers nevertheless resisted introducing the improved techniques because in their eyes, production with traditional techniques was costless. The long hours of work of their women and their problems of coping with multiple demands of housework and cocoon work was not a cost that had any place in their calculations of costs and returns.

#### **Ultimate resource of the family**

Official employment records have been showing a steady decline in women's rural employment in West Bengal. Earlier, the main venue of work for rural women (mostly from tribal areas) had been of agricultural labour. However, agriculture has become increasingly unrewarding for cultivators with growing costs and further

fragmentation of plots; therefore there is little demand for wage labour in agriculture. Instead, cultivators are using the unpaid and unacknowledged labour of their family women to help them in fields. Earlier traditions of Bengali women from most social groups not being allowed to work in fields have been abandoned; and now that men from most poor households migrate for work for a major part of the year, cultivation on small family holdings has become the work of women. The land remains in male names and women who do the work in fields in between their other traditional duties, do not get counted in official measurements of employment.

We had noted a similar tendency of breaking long-held traditions regarding women's work whenever families' livelihood strategies require it. In West Bengal's handloom weaving families such a need arose in the 1990s when, with the new economic policies, the industry had to forego its earlier government subsidies. A sudden increase in international demand for India's yarn pushed up local yarn prices by as much as 500%. Reports of distress in the handloom industry had prompted the Central Ministry of Commerce to invite our organisation *Sachetana* to do a small study of the industry in Dhanekhali village in Hoogly district of West Bengal. We found that male handloom workers had moved out to work as paid labour in power-loom industry; but instead of leaving their family looms idle, they had got their family women to start weaving cheaper saris in their spare time. The long held traditional taboo against women touching weaving looms had been unceremoniously discarded. However, the membership of weavers' cooperatives still remained in men's names. Therefore women neither got paid nor recognised as workers in the industry. Women's flexible and elastic labour thus can be put to work in any capacity when required by the family; cultural taboos are as malleable in such crisis situations as the flexible labour of women.

Question naturally arises — how then have these gender norms been performing during the current crisis of a raging pandemic and an economy heading towards depression? How are women being

treated and what work are they doing? Official reports have been showing that in India all over, employment of rural women had been falling and this trend was particularly marked in West Bengal; furthermore, this last year has been particularly hard for the region: the cyclone *Amphan* ran havoc in vast tracts of riverine south West Bengal; the crisis deepened further with the sudden lockdown declared by the Central government. It destroyed jobs of migrant and commuter workers who were forced to make their way back. In recent years it had been their incomes that had increasingly sustained poor households in these areas. For these returnees, locally there are few job opportunities except for limited days under NREGA. There is apparently increased use of alcohol and drugs by men who, as usual, are taking out their frustrations through increased domestic violence. So how are these households surviving? Are women really sitting idle?

Relief workers and local organisations have all been amazed by the Herculean efforts that women are making to ensure the survival of their families; stories of their multiple activities against all odds are truly awe-inspiring. In Namkhana in coastal areas, women are going out to sea in crude boats to catch fish. They tie the fish in nylon nets that save the catch even when the boats turn over and the women are in constant danger of drowning in waves created by larger boats and ships passing by. They then are forced to sell that catch for a pittance to local middlemen. Many stand in waist-deep water for hours to catch fish and prawn spawns, again to sell those to local middlemen. Many of them are running from pillar to post to collect any relief material that is being distributed or to get the necessary cards and official papers that can bring some help to the family. A group of women I know have been haunting district officials to prevent the sale of their land to prawn cultivators because that will ruin the land forever for further cultivation. Children too have lost much; with schools closed, many have been put to work,

incidence of underage marriages has gone up and trafficking of women and children is reportedly rampant from these areas.

So what explains this acceptance by women of this grossly unfair distribution of responsibilities in our families? Why is it that women go on struggling to make a viable livelihood no matter what calamities fall on the household? It is not that they do not complain or protest: but ultimately they opt for keeping the household together, whatever the cost to them. Presumably the explanation lies in what Amartya Sen (1980 p. 131) had called social technology i.e. the social arrangements which lay down rules about who does what in that society and what are the legitimate shares of different members in the household's welfare. Women's bargaining strength in intra-family conflicts is severely limited by their handicapped fall-back position in case they lose out. Majority of women in our society are still being married too early for them to have acquired qualifications to compete with men on par in the labour market. And once married they are soon burdened with child care and other household responsibilities. Their natal families are conventionally not willing and usually not capable of supporting them against the oppressions they face in marital homes. Moreover, there is tacit social sanction for domestic violence against women and women themselves are socialised to be ashamed to complain to outsiders about the unfair bargains they face within family. It is also true that, women in households without at least a nominal male head are considered fair game for sexual violence by other males. This, the threat to their chastity, acts as the ultimate deterrent to women's protests against exploitation within family.

I strongly suspect that the State in India is aware of this role of women as the ultimate resource that keeps families together and strives to provide for its weak, sick, old or unemployed members. That is why there is little public provision for providing help to individual citizens suffering such deprivations. It is indeed a triumph of Indian patriarchy and its gendering norms that even in this critical situation, the family and its women are still the best, in fact the only, source of social security that is available at least for men!



### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Admittedly, society also prescribes behavioural patterns for persons of other sexual tendencies such as gays or lesbians. But for this paper, I will confine the discussion only to persons who adhere to their socially declared sexuality.
- <sup>2</sup> Rosalind Franklin got little credit for her pioneering contribution to analysis of DNA mainly because her work was ignored on grounds of her being a woman.
- <sup>3</sup> Perhaps the current proponents of this idea are not aware of the fact that the issue had been raised and thoroughly debated in the 1980s. The idea had been abandoned because of difficulties in finding appropriate methods of measuring and evaluating the category housework.
- <sup>4</sup> Unfortunately we could not finish tabulating and analysing the entire data from the survey since UNIFEM which funded it, underwent a change in their research priorities and could not provide further assistance to us. We did finish work on livelihood strategies that is being used here.
- <sup>5</sup> I got these details about these workers from a letter by Shri Ashok Ghosh, Secretary EUTUC to Ananda Bazar Patrika of 13th January 2021.

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## *Remnants of Dharmadam Fort - The Unwritten History of the British Trading Posts of Thalassery in Kerala*

M. S. Mahendrakumar

### **Introduction**

The Dharmadam Fort was the earliest British Trading Post in the Thalassery region of Kannur District in Kerala. Thalassery was known as Tellicherry earlier, which was a world-famous city for the trade of spices through the British East India Company predominantly. The British have left many material objects in and around the region and many of such artefacts and cultures are not studied and analysed properly so far. This paper is an attempt to provide the unwritten story of the British Trading Posts with special reference to the Dharmadam Trading Post, which was not studied so far. In the Dharmadam Fort, there is only two walls of the fort and the other sides are in the destructed condition. The Dharmadam Fort is also known as the fort of the Cheraman Perumal King and the present study rejects this view with ample evidences.

The Thalassery Fort was constructed 311 years ago by the British East India Company as a Trading Post to export spices from the Malabar region. The fort was built by the British in 1708 to establish a strong presence on the Malabar Coast and it is kept intact by the Archaeological Survey of India. In the erstwhile Malabar, during the four decades from 1660 to 1700, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British were in extreme competition to trade spices of Malabar to European countries. Thalassery was an important city of the erstwhile Kottayam Taluk. In the 16th century, Thalassery was an important port city and the British East India Company and the

Kingdoms of Chirakkal, Kottayam and Kadathanad worked together in the growth of Thalassery. The Europeans use the term Kolattirito denote the Chirakkal Rajas, who ruled over North Malabar and the country was known as Kolattunad.<sup>1</sup>

Thalassery was also the headquarters of the British Malabar. Thalassery became an important European trading hub of Kerala during the 17th and 18th centuries for the trade of spices and timber, the Malabar teak. Thalassery was first visited by the French for trade. They were functioning from Mahe, 5 KMs south of Thalassery. Mahe is situated in Puducherry, which is at present one of the union territories of India. The dawn of the 17th century saw a severe competition among the Europeans in Kerala for establishing settlements and enforcing a monopoly of trade in spices.<sup>2</sup> By the 17th century, the British East India Company had started operations in the north of Thalassery, which was from the Dharmadam island.

#### **Dharmadam Fort- A Trading Post (1668-1677)**

Almost everyone is aware of the fact that the British established a factory in the north of Thalassery and most of them consider the first occupation of the Company was in Kottakunnu in Valapattanam. Of course, in 1669 an old fort of Kolattiri King situated at Cota Cunna (Kottakunnu) (a hill with a fort) in Valapattanam (in Kannur District) was given to the British for starting a Trading Post. Then, due to the opposition from the Dutch in Kannur, the British withdrew the factory of Kottakunnu. The withdrawal of the British factory was permitted by Gerald Aungier, Governor of Bombay, and his council at Surat on 20 March 1675.

At the same time, in 1666, Aungier called for Petit's opinion on the proposal to establish a trading centre at Dharmapatam and given a memorandum to the Company at Surat. Aungier explained the difficulties that they have faced in Calicut and Baliapatam (the present Valapattanam). Although, no orders were passed on the question during the year (1666), but the situation enabled the factory at Calicut to make a great investments as ever at Dharmapatam.<sup>3</sup> In 1668, after

the month of July, Alexander Grigby, the Chief of the British factory at Calicut and his team were building a large factory a league to the southward of Dhannapatam against their will. They were, however, in want of money, which kept them 'dormant for a while'.<sup>4</sup> The death of Alexander Grigby in June 1673 also became a great loss for the Company. Later, the French at Dhannapatam were also alarmed, and the building of their new factory was hindered until the Prince sent them fifteen Nairs. In 1674 also, Petit thought that Dharmapatam, 2½ leagues to the south of Cannanore was a better place for the factory as it would be less expensive and they would be among Mohammedans, from whom they got more respect than they did from the Nairs of Baliapatam.<sup>5</sup> That is, the British occupied two places in Kannur and Thalassery area almost in the same period. But they found Dharmapatam as more suitable for a factory than the Baliapatam and constructed their first factory in Dharmapatam.

Dhannadam is the present spelling of the old Dhannapatam, which was a unique place in the north of Thalassery. The Muslim travellers called this place as Dhaffathan. The Portuguese called this place as Darmapattavo, the French called it as Threnthapattanam, the British called this place as Dharmapatam and the local called this place as Dharmadam. Although, the Dharmapatam had become a natural harbour by the 12th Century, it had become famous and popular among the foreign countries by 14th Century.

It is believed that in the first half of the 12th century, the King Dharma Raja of Kolathunadu made Dharmadam as a port and named it Dharmapattanam. Ibn Battuta, a scholar and traveller of the Moroccan country of North West Africa, visited Kerala in the 14th century and explained the things that he could see from Dharmapattanam. Ibn Battuta said that Dharmapattanam had a large port and several coconut groves were there on its outskirts where the people cultivated coconut trees, areca nut palm, pepper, colocasia, betel leaf plants, etc. He said that he saw that the people cook meat with colocasia in Dharmapattanam. He also opined that he has never seen such a place with a lot of banana cultivation.<sup>6</sup>

It was in the 17th Century, the British East India Company established a "Trading Post" in Dharmapatam, which was a place 5 KMs away from the Thalassery Town. Today, there is one such ancient structure existing in Dharmadam area at the top of the hill in the compound of the Government Brennan College. For the centuries, this ancient construction of a fort is getting ruined without any steps of preservation. The British found Dharmapatam as a safe place for their Trading Centre or Post because of the abundance of pepper in the Dharmapatam island, it was an island with a hill from where they could see all sides of the island, and also a natural port was there in the island.

In Malabar, the British East India Company possessed estates and islands which the Company have acquired from time to time either by gift or by treaty. The islands are situated not in the sea but in the rivers, or else are detached pieces of land washed over by the sea and rivers.<sup>7</sup> This was the special characteristics of Dharmadam island explained in the old literature.

The British East India Company was formed with the issue of the charter on 31 December, 1600 to the Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading with the East Indies.<sup>8</sup> When the company prospered, it was extending its enterprise to India in 1608. The first Trading Post was established in India in 1619 at Surat. The history of Trading Posts reveals that by 1647, the British East India Company had established 23 Trading Posts throughout India. The Trading Posts were established in Surat in 1619, in Madras during 1639, in Bombay during 1668 and at Calcutta in 1690.

The famine in Gujarat in 1630 caused a major setback in the trade with Surat. Other sources of supplies of cotton clothes were found on the Coromandel coast and these soon surpassed the Gujarati cottons in popularity in England. Then, the factors (mercantile agents) of the East India Company secured a strip of land at Madras where they constructed the Fort St. George in 1639 and it was upgraded as a Presidency in 1662.<sup>9</sup> Within its first fifty years, the East India Company had laid solid foundations for profitable trade, namely, cotton goods

from Gujarat and Coromandel; silks from Persia and Bengal; indigo from Lahore; pepper from the Malabar ports.<sup>10</sup>

In Kerala, the first Trading Post was established at Vizhinjam (in the present Thiruvananthapuram District) in 1644. During the same year, the British started a Trading Post in Calicut and then after obtaining permission from the Kolattiri King the British started a small Trading Post in Dharmapatam (Dharmadam).

In 1684, with the permission of the Princes of Attingal, the British started another trading post in Anchuthengu near Varkala (in the present Thiruvananthapuram District) and later they started a trading post in Kovalam. The trading post of Anchuthengu is a fort, which is preserved by the State Archaeological Department. In the first phase of fortification, the British constructed only small forts, but in the final phase they constructed large forts due to various threats to the British East India Company.

The Dharmadam trading post is also very similar to the Fort of Anchuthengu. The British started a trading post in Dharmadam, which was quite before the establishment of a trading post in Anchuthengu. It is clear that the Dharmadam Trading Post, which is situated on the hill inside the Government Brennen College Campus, was established in 1668 as per the present study. All the Trading Posts are constructed in the pattern of forts. In 1682, the British East India Company had restarted the Trading Post in Tellicherry not in Dharmapatam. Therefore, the remnants of the Dharmadam Fort available in the present compound of Brennen College are of the Dharmapatam Trading Post of the British East India Company, which was established during 1668. It is evident that the British conducted trade from the Dharmapattam Trading Centre only for nine years in between 1668 to 1677.

For British, although Dutch competition had to be faced in the first instance, the East India Company's main rival in India was to be the French Company.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the Kolattiri Kingdom and the Arakkal Kingdoms have conducted several battles to defeat the British at Dharmadam and to take over the Dharmadam Fort. The



Eastern wall of the Dharmadam Fort



Eastern Wall of the Dharmadam Fort





Southern Wall of the Dharmadam Fort

old people of the present Dhannadam village still remember the story of the battle and they remember that the Dhannadam Fort was broken with the cannon bullets fired from the warships. The bullets were fired from the sea and from the west side of Dhannadam and not from the land. The warships of the late 17th century had light weight compact cannons. The bullets were of different sizes. At present, a 74 years old man residing near to the Dhannadam Fort said that he and his friends, during 1940s and 1950s, had played with bullets of different sizes, which was collected by his friend's grandfather from the Dharmadam fort. At present, that family does not possess the bullets. The aerial distance from the west port of the present Dharmadam village to the British Trading Post is one kilometre. Even today, the natural port is visible from the place of Dharmadam Fort.

In 1667 January and February, "the Kotta pirates became worse than ever. They seized an Englishman, Isaac Watts, from a Damaun vessel, and either because they could not get ransom for him or he refused to turn Mohammedan, 'basely set him up against a tree and



The Natural Harbour of Dharmadam in the west side



Dharmadam Hill – A view from the Natural Harbour of Dharmadam

lanced him to death'. They also surprised Chase and Meriton as they were going by land to Dharmapatam, and kept them prisoners for some time. Previous to that they had made an attack on the "Happy Rose" (Aungier's vessel), as she lay quietly at anchor in the Dharmapatam road (the present Railway Station Road to the College), which was only repelled after three hours sharp dispute, the pirates being beaten back with the loss of a great many men. It was believed that Ali Raja had instigated this gross affront and aided it with his

men and ammunition. Then, the Surat Council ordered the factory to cease all further commerce and communication with the town of Dharmapatam and Ali Raja and it put an end to any idea of settling a factory at Dharmapatam or elsewhere in the territory of Ali Raja (in 1677)."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the death of Gerald Aungier, Governor of Bombay, on 30 June 1677 at Surat was also a critical problem for the factory to continue. Then, the British stopped the trading from the Dharmapatam and Tellicherry area and concentrated to Calicut and Tanur for around five years from 1677 to 1681.

In the continuous battles, the walls in the western side and the northern side of the fort were broken and the British then realised that it is difficult to continue in Dharmadam for their trading and shifted their activities to Calicut. Finally, they started a new Trading Post in Thalassery in 1682 when the French abandoned their factory and where they constructed a fort in 1708, which is the present fort of Thalassery. Around five years from 1677 to 1681, the British were actually shifting their trade from Dharmapatam to Calicut and Tanur. Till recent times, some of the families of the present Dharmadam village had kept the bullets of the old cannons used during the British period. There are chances to have more bullets of the cannons within the site of the Dharmadam Fort and so far, no excavations took place in this place.

#### **Trees and shrubs grown inside the remnants of Dharmadam Fort**

The British Fort situated inside the compound of the Government Brennen College, Dharmadam, retains only two walls on the east side and south side. However, the southern wall is getting ruined every day whereas the eastern wall is stronger and retains the strength up to some extent. The walls of the fort are made of laterite bricks and the bricks are fixed with lime and sand, which is a typical style of construction of the forts of that period. The pieces of the shells of the bivalves are still preserved in the lime of the fort. From the style of making of the forts of the British period, it can be easily stated that the Dharmadam Fort was not the fort of either Cheraman Perurnal



Trees and shrubs grown inside the remnants of Dharmadam Fort

King or of any local kingdoms because the style of construction is similar to the Anchuthengu Trading Post of the British, which was established in 1684. The British exported spices from the Dharmadam Trading Post almost for nine years.

Further, the Cera kingdom towards the close of the 12th century, the political authority of this region was divided among many kingdoms. But sovereignty was enjoyed by only four principal rulers, viz., King of Travancore or Venad in south, the King of Cochin, the King Zamorin of Calicut, and the Kolattiri in the north.<sup>13</sup> The Dharmapatanam island was under the Kolattiri Kings from the 13th century and it has also been mentioned by Marco Polo in his travelogue. Darmfatan (Darmapatam) were ruled by the Kolattiri in the 16th century.<sup>14</sup>

It is stated that the fort in Tellicherry was built under the personal supervision of Adams who imported necessary materials from Calicut free of customs with the special permission of the Zamorin.<sup>15</sup> Robert Adams was for a long time Chief of Tellicherry, and directed the affairs of the Company on the Malabar coast. He was born and brought up in the country, and knowing the language perfectly well, he wielded

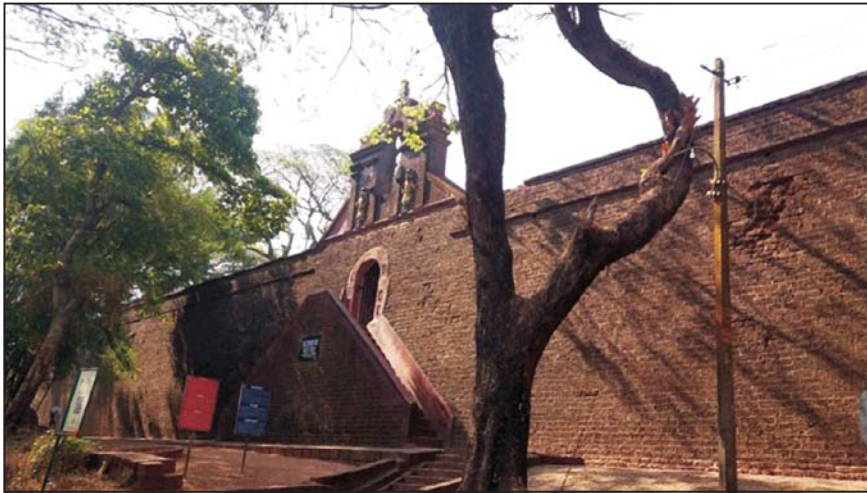
considerable influence with the various local chieftains ... Adam continued to be the Chief of Tellicherry till the 10th March 1728.<sup>16</sup> From the style of building, the Dharmapatam Fort was also similar. But some local people say that for the construction of the Dharmadam Fort as well as Brennen College, they had taken laterite stones from the surrounding regions of the hill. According to the British, "During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a factory in India was not safe without fortification."<sup>17</sup> In the words of William Forbes, a sum of Rs. 4,02,444 had been lying dead in forts and stores at Tellicherry.<sup>18</sup> During 1937, for preventing the French attempts in trade at Edakkad (it is 6 KMs away from Dharmadam) the English immediately erected a fortress there sending 15 men for its defence.<sup>19</sup> From these examples, it can be stated that the British were constructing Forts for their Trading Posts and the Dharmadam Fort is also belonging to the same series.

They exported pepper, coffee and spices to European countries. The Dharmapatam Trading Post was not shifted to Tellicherry but they started a new Trading Post in the Tiruvalappankunnu (hill) of Thalassery in 1682. It was in 1670, the French started a spices trading factory at Baliapatam, but they shifted the factory to Tellicherry in 1671.<sup>20</sup> But by 1682, the French officials at Tellicherry had 'fled with bag and baggage' on their ship leaving the factory unoccupied by anybody. Chase and Mitchell, the English factors at Dharmapatam, when they heard this news approached the King of Kolattunad and with his consent occupied the vacated factory of the French and promised to pay the customs as done by the French at the rate of one sequin (about Rs. 4) per candy or cardamom and half a sequin per candy on pepper.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Thalassery Fort**

In 1682, the British set up a factory in Thalassery with the permission of Kolattiri King. The British Trading Post of Dharmapatam had abandoned in 1677. Then, the British was restarting a factory at the Tiruvalappan Hill of Thalassery in 1682. It was not directly shifting a

factory from Dharmapatam to Tellicherry. The construction of the present fort was started in 1702 and completed in 1708. The Thalassery Fort was constructed in a rectangular pattern. In most of the forts, there would be only one entrance and that too would be constructed in the ground level of the forts. But, in the case of the Thalassery Fort, it has two doors in the front side and backside. The backside door is in the direction of sea and it is constructed in the ground level. Through that door or gate, vehicles can enter into the fort whereas in the front side of the fort, the door is fixed at the top side of the fort and two ladders with 15 steps were constructed with laterite stones to enter into the fort. At present, this door is open for tourists to visit the fort. There is a history behind this particular construction.



The British East India Company approached the Vadakkumkur King for a permission

The British East India Company approached the Vadakkumkur King for a permission to construct a fort in the Tiruvalappan hill situated at the heart of Thalassery town. The Tiruvalappan hill was also known as Tiruvalakunnu. Then the King gave permission and also laid the foundation stone of the fort. In 1708, the British completed the construction of the fort and thus a hill was totally converted into a fort with laterite stones.

During 1704-05 period, the British Trading Post of Thalassery (the present Fort) was attacked by the descendants of the Udayamangalam Kingdom with the help of a Nair Chieftain and the Kurangot Nair of the locality as they disliked the establishment of the Trading Post of the British. The British Trading Post had faced local threats and the fort was attacked several times. Therefore, the British fortified the walls of the Thalassery Fort and the front entrance is elevated and the easy entering of enemies have been restricted. The Tiruvalappan hill was under the ownership of Ponattil Poduval.

The East India Company bought a house site of one Ponnatil Poduval and a hill name "Tiruvalappankunnu" of the Vallura Tangal for building the fort and fort house.<sup>22</sup> The height of the fort is above 10 metres. The walls of the fort were plastered with lime, jaggery and sand. The laterite stones are packed with a mixture of sand and lime. In the Dharmadam Fort also, the stones are packed with the mixture of lime and sand. Even today, the shells in the lime of the Dharmadam Fort is visible. In the Thalassery Fort, there are two large tunnel chambers, which were used to store pepper and other spices. It was possible for them to store spices in those chambers even during rainy season.

In 1730, the Canarese King Somasekhara Nayak II invaded into Kolathunad and this invasion made far-reaching impact in Tellicherry and Cannanore area. The Canarese wanted to station their army at Dharmapatam. Then on the basis of discussions, the Beebi of Arakkal Kingdom permitted the English to occupy Dharmapatam over which she had already lost her authority on account of the aggression by the prince regent and the King of Kottayam ... But, by February 1735 the Canarese army had settled their camp at Dharmapatam.<sup>23</sup> The British evicted the Canarese (Kannada people) from Dharmapatam and the possession of the Dharmapatam Island found as an important thing as Dharmapatam Island has become the centre of pepper growing area surrounded with rivers, which helped the British for conveyance of spices in boats. When further encounters occurred in Tellicherry, the British sought the permission (to construct a fort in Dharmapatam)

from the Court of Directors and they ordered that “the main policy of the Company was to minimise the expenditure of the factory and the Company was against any increase in its expenditure in Malabar and they neglected the request for the fortification of Dharmapatnam and they held that we cannot bear to bury our money in stone walls”.<sup>24</sup>

It has been identified that the English factory at Tellicherry, with its outwork on Dharmapatnam Island was selected with the express purpose of securing the pepper trade of the locality, which was extensive.<sup>25</sup> This is the history of the Dharmapatnam and Tellicherry Trading Posts of the British East India Company. However, they continued their activities in various sectors.

#### **Cinnamon Plantation**

In 1767, the British East India Company established a spices plantation in Anjarakandy, 10 KMs away from the Thalassery Town. They cultivated cinnamon, coffee, nutmeg and pepper. In terms of the area under plantation, this was the second largest Cinnamon Plantation in the world and first largest Cinnamon Plantation in Asia. This was locally known as “Karuppa Thottam”. In 1800, the army of the Pazhassi Raja fought with the British and taken the plantation under the custody of Pazhassi Raja. In 1803, the British fought with the Pazhassi Raja at Kadirur and regained the plantation from Pazhassi Raja. The British exported the cinnamon from this plantation to many countries of the world.

Besides the trade, the British made some significant contributions in the development of sea port, construction of roads in the Malabar region, light house, making of copper coins, etc., and therefore the Thalassery Fort was the pivot of all such developments.

#### **Copper Coins**

The British also manufactured small copper coins from the Thalassery Fort. In a copper coin of the year 1818 with the value of Two Anna, they have provided the picture of Lord Sree Rama with bow and arrow, Seetha Devi and Lakshmana, all the three are in the standing posture, and Hanuman in the sitting posture in front of the



Sree Rama shows the affinity of the British to depict the importance of the deities of the Sree Rama Swami Temple of Thalassery. The copper coin might be made from the Thalassery fort during the year 1818. It is also written in the front side that it is of East India Company of UK.

### **Light House**

The first light house of Kerala was built in Thalassery Fort in 1835 and it is still maintained in the fort under the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships of Cochin under the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India. This had helped many ships and yachts to come to Thalassery.

### **Sea Bridge**

The British also constructed a sea bridge in Thalassery in 1910. This was constructed to help the ships and boats to come to Thalassery harbour. A lot of cranes were also used in this port and after the British period, this sea bridge was abandoned by the small ships and boats. At present, the sea bridge is ruined and entry into this bridge is prohibited by the Government of Kerala and a wall is also constructed to stop the entry of people including tourists to this bridge.

The British East India Company had a ship in the name of "Tellicherry" with a Tonnage of 465 and with which the British conducted four voyages in between Thalassery and Britain during 1795 and 1801.<sup>26</sup> This shows the extreme interest of the British to the place of Thalassery.

Between early September and April (1750), thousands of ships plied between the Malabar coast (Tellicherry and Calicut) and ports to the west ward.<sup>27</sup> In the last years of 18th century, as the French wars caused increasing pressure on the already dwindling reserves of English oak, the East India Company's fleet received a fresh infusion of quality with the introduction into the European trade of ships built in India of teak-the oak of Hindostan. The owners and builders of company ships on the Thames had good grounds for fearing the competition of the Indian-built ships, for they were the product of

superb craftsmanship combined with superior materials. By 1775, Bombay's dockyard rivalled any in Europe and the Parsee builders were turning out ships of unsurpassed quality.<sup>28</sup> Teak grows in profusion in many parts of India and Burma, but the finest is that of the Malabar coast.<sup>29</sup>

### **Water Ballast Road Roller**

In Thalassery and also in many places of south India, the roads were constructed with the road rollers brought from England. Through the sea bridge of Thalassery, it was possible to bring eight to twelve tons goods and the first road rollers were brought through this bridge alone. At present, there are two such evidences kept in the Thalassery Fort, namely, a ratchet wheel, of a Water Ballast Road Roller, made of cast iron and a Thackry-Barford patent scarifier.

### **Ratchet Wheel**

This ratchet wheel was found while cleaning the ground inside the fort and this material remain is a part of the steam road roller and it has so far not been identified by any scholar. It is the ratchet wheel fixed to the back wheels of a steam road roller.



Ratchet Wheel of Steam Road Roller kept in Thalassery Fort

The British had brought steam road rollers to Malabar through Thalassery port and one of the steam engines had repaired inside the fort and left the damaged ratchet inside the fort and it is still kept in the Thalassery Fort along with the Scarifier. This ratchet has no connection with the Scarifier. From this evidence, it can undoubtedly be stated that the early roads of Thalassery were constructed with the steam road rollers brought from England.



Ratchet wheel fixed to the back wheel of steam road roller (Left)  
Steam Road Roller's picture published in Hindu Daily (Right)

Recently, the Hindu Daily (27-4-2015) has brought a story of a steam engine. "A steam road roller which was instrumental in laying roads in the city and had been the centre of attraction during 1930s is now on the verge of destruction. Manufactured by John Fowler and Company Leeds Limited in United Kingdom in 1929, the steam-powered road roller was brought to Salem by the British for laying roads in Yercaud Hills and in the then Salem Municipality ... Today, the roller with many of its parts missing has been dumped at Sri Krishna Rajendra Chattiram on the premises of corporation office in Arisipalayam." In the Thalassery Fort, a ratchet wheel is kept along with the scarifier and it has been kept unidentified so far.

#### **Thackry-Barford Patent Scarifier**

The Scarifier kept in the Thalassery Fort is often misunderstood as a part of war equipment. Actually, this is a machine used to break up the surface of roads for concreting and also black topping. The old roads constructed during the British period was of reinforced cement concrete (R.C.C.) type. This Scarifier was made of Barford

and Perkins Ltd., in Peterborough during 1920s and it has been exported to many countries across the world along with steam (water ballast) road rollers. The Scarifier had four blades to crack the land or roads. The Scarifier has to be fixed to the steam road roller for breaking the ground. It has no engine to move itself. There is only limited number of Scarifiers are available today. The Scarifier of Thalassery Fort is such a rare piece of machinery available in the world.



Barford Scarifier kept in the Thalassery Fort

In Thalassery, a road is named after William Logan, which is called as Logan's Road. William Logan (1841-1914), a Scottish citizen, has worked in 1875 as the Acting District and Sessions Judge at Thalassery Court. In 1875, he became the Collector of Malabar and later on he continued as Judge as well as Special Commissioner. The long connection of Logan to Thalassery is still remembered. This instance commemorates the long presence of Logan and the British made roads.

The Thalassery Fort was declared as a National Monument in 1921 by the Archaeological Survey of India. The remnants of Dharmadam Fort were kept unidentified for centuries and with this article, it is

identified as the first Trading Post of the British existed between 1668 and 1677. The Dharmapatam trading post was not directly shifting to Tellicherry but after a gap of five years, the British was starting a new factory at Tellicherry in 1682. The Dharmadam fort was not the fort of the Cheraman Perumal King.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Menon, K.P. Padmanabha, *History of Kerala*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1924, 1982, p.332.
- <sup>2</sup> Kurup K.K.N., *History of the Tellicherry Factory*, 1985, p. 18.
- <sup>3</sup> *The English Factories in India 1670-1677*, p. 354.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 290
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 334.
- <sup>6</sup> Panikkassery Velayudhan, *Keralam Arunnooru Kollam Munpu*, p. 53.
- <sup>7</sup> Menon, K.P. Padmanabha, *History of Kerala*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1924, 1982, p. 31.
- <sup>8</sup> Sutton, Jean. *Lords of the East-The East India Company and its Ships*, 1981, p. 9.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p.13.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.
- <sup>12</sup> *The English Factories in India 1670-1677*, p. 357, 358.
- <sup>13</sup> Kurup, K.K.N. *History of the Tellicherry Factory*, p. 11.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.13
- <sup>15</sup> Kurup K.K.N. *History of the Tellicherry Factory*, p. 49.
- <sup>16</sup> Menon, K. P. Padmanabha, *History of Kerala*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1924, 1982, p. 356.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid* P 48.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, quoted in Kurup, the quotation of Holden Furber, Bombay Presidency in the Mid-Eighteenth Century of William Forbes, p 57.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 88.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42,43.
- <sup>22</sup> Kurup, K.K.N. *History of the Tellicherry Factory*, 1985, p. 49.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 85.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 90
- <sup>25</sup> Menon, K.P. Padmanabha. *History of Kerala*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1924, 1982, p. 77.
- <sup>26</sup> Sutton, Jean. *Lords of the East-The East India Company and its Ships*, 1981, p. 168.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 115.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49.

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*German Military Aid to the Indian Revolutionary Parties  
for anti-British Armed Uprising in India 1914-15*

Premansu Kumar Bandyopadhyay

Immediately after the declaration of the First World War (1914-18) both the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin and the German Secret Service, a unit of the German Defence Department, had envisaged and implemented a secret plan to raise an anti-British armed struggle in India and similar revolutionary uprising in the neutral countries of South East Asia by supplying arms, ammunition and funding support to the revolutionary political parties in British India. The present paper is intended to explore this secret plan using the detailed confession submitted to the British Intelligence by the Secret Agents of the German Secret Service arrested by the British Police at Singapore in 1915. Birendranath Chattopadhyay, the principal leader of the *Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin* and Lala Hardayal of the *Ghadar Party*, as well as another leader of the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin had been constantly appealing and advising the German Secret Service for transporting arms, ammunition and money to the leaders of the Indian revolutionary parties like *Anusilan Samity* and the *Jugantar Party*. The German Government promptly responded to the appeal and advice of the Indian Revolutionary Society not only to help raise an anti-British armed uprising in India but to distract and divert the strategic attention of the Anglo-French Allied Powers from the Western Front to their colonial and monopolized trading and commercial empire in South-East Asia. The whole episode is undoubtedly a significant part of the history of the freedom movement in India with special reference to the overseas support of the armed struggle in India.

But the entire story has yet to be brought to light because of the fact that volumes of the relevant documents had been preserved in the National Archives of the United Kingdom for one hundred years, 1915-2015, now opened to the public since 2016.<sup>1</sup> The present paper, for the first time is based on these public documents in an attempt to highlight the episode, its plans and programme, funding support, organization and structure of its branches spread over in three continents, Europe, USA and Asia, the activities of its secret agents and the response of the Indian revolutionary leaders who were actively involved in the proposed armed struggle. The work seeks to assess and analyse the nature and character of the German interest in the freedom movement of India.

The Indian National Congress was established in 1885 but by 1905 people were totally disillusioned at the lamentable lack of any positive policy of the Congress for the genuine welfare of the common people. During the second half of the 19th century famine in Bengal and Orissa, South, Central and Western India completely devastated the rural life of the masses with heavy mortality of over 20 million which totally exposed the inaction and half hearted action of the government not only in mitigating the immediate distress of the people but in taking protective measures to prevent the recurrence of such calamities in future.<sup>2</sup> National leaders, highly critical of the activities of the Congress, resented the destitute condition of the Indian people under British Rule. Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobinda Ghosh of Bengal, Lala Lajpat Rai of Punjab and Bala Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra constantly pressurized the Congress for comprehensive and positive measures to ensure economic, political and social justice for the impoverished masses. While in England Dadabhai Naoroji characterised the British Indian Government as the "un-British Rule in India"<sup>3</sup> and Aurobinda Ghosh ascribed Congress as "Un-national Congress".<sup>4</sup>

Virtually most of the resolutions adopted in the Congress sessions from 1885 to 1906 were confined to appeals and prayers to the British Indian authority for the establishment of a Constitutional Government



with “lofty expectation of increasing association” of the educated and landed aristocratic Indians in the administration of the country. But the immediate and burning issues like famine relief and famine preventive measures, comprehensive land reform so that the agrarian masses could be freed from the oppressive landlords, money lenders and the government tax collectors, provision of the primary education, basic health care facilities, development of crafts and industries which could provide employment to the rural and urban land less non agricultural masses, all were left out of the agenda of the Congress deliberations. This prolonged situation led to the split up of the Indian National Congress in its Surat session of 1907 into two rival factions, “extremists” and the “moderates”. While the former was committed to the ideology of armed struggle in India as the only means to attain freedom from the alien rule, the latter keenly inclined to cooperate and collaborate with the British Indian government in order to sustain and promote their class interests. Disgruntled youth joined the rank and file of the secret revolutionary parties like the *Anusilan Samity* and the *Jugantar Party* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Besides *Hindusthan Republican Socialist Association of North India* and the *Ghadar Party* of the Punjab were also formed with the object of inspiring and regimenting the young people to resort to armed struggle as the only means for the freedom and independence of India.<sup>5</sup> Apart from the above revolutionary groups there were other comparatively small supporting organizations all over Bengal. These were *Atmonnoti Samity* of Calcutta (Estd. 1897), *Suhrid Samity* of Mymensing (1901), *Bandhab Sammilani* of Gondolpara (1905), *Mukti Sangha* of Dacca (1905), *Brati Samity* of Faridpur (1906) and *Santi Sena* of Madaripur.<sup>6</sup> Militant young people belonging to the *Bhadralok* Community with indomitable courage and undying spirit of dedication and self-sacrifice were ready to call for action in raising anti British armed uprising for the country’s freedom. There was crying need of arms and ammunition and funding support to carry forward their aims and objectives. Hand made bombs and foreign made and indigenous firearms, daggers etc. were used in raiding government treasuries, post offices, houses of rich and wealthy

landlords, money lenders and big business houses to loot funds in cash and valuables. Apart from the sporadic dacoities committed in the countryside frequent attempts were made on the lives of the government officials ranging from the Governors, judges and magistrates to the police officials and informers British and Indian etc. for inflicting most inhuman, insulting, torturous and extremely cruel punishment on the members of the revolutionary parties convicted of sedition activities. Among many of such attempts on individuals at least two, may be mentioned here. One at Muzzaffarpur in Bihar in 1908 where two members of the revolutionary groups, Kshudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki were assigned to assassinate Kingsford, Chief Presidency Magistrate at Calcutta, who, while at Alipore Court, gave a very cruel and unkind verdict of flogging in public a sixteen year old boy (Susil Sen) for hitting a British police sergeant. The first attempts on the life of Kingsford having been failed in Calcutta he was transferred to Muzzaffarpur as District and Session judge. On a dark night at the appointed date Kingsford was supposed to get home from the Muzzaffarpur European Night Club on a horse drawn carriage when two powerful bombs were thrown on it. But it missed the target. The occupants of the carriage were two English ladies and both were killed on the spot. Kshudiram was arrested next morning and put on prolonged trial and hanged ultimately. During the whole night Prafulla ran along the railway track and reached Mokamah Ghat station next morning where he was identified by a plain-clothed policeman and before being arrested committed suicide from his own revolver.<sup>7</sup>

The second attempt was made on the life of Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India on the 12th December 1912, when he was leading a ceremonial procession on the entry of New Delhi sitting on a decorated *howdah* on an elephant. A powerful bomb was hurled on the *howdah* severely injuring the Viceroy. One of his native body guards was killed instantaneously. It took long time for the Viceroy to recover from the dangerous shock and injury. The Punjab revolutionary group led by Rashbehari Bose and others was behind the incident. It was

immediately followed by the Delhi Conspiracy Case and four members of the group, Master Amir Chand, Abodh Bihari, Bal Mukunda and Basanta Biswas were convicted and hanged in 1913. Rash Behari Bose went underground.<sup>8</sup> All these incidents had rocked the very pride of the British Intelligence Service in India and in the wake of the First World War these were but the prelude to the countrywide anti British armed uprising in India expected to be launched by the revolutionary parties in India waiting for the military and funding aid from Germany.

The war broke out in August 1914 and following the tradition of the despatch of Indian sepoy for the British Imperial War beyond the borders of India since the second half of the 18th century<sup>9</sup> in the First World War as well over 800000 sepoy including followers were deployed in the war fronts of the Anglo - French Allied powers in the East Africa, Europe and Middle East detailed as under:

**Table I**  
**Indian Troops in the First World War 1914-18.<sup>10</sup>**

Sl. No.	War Fronts	Sepoys including followers
1	Mesopotamia	588,717
2	Egypt	116,159
3	France	131,496
4	East Africa	46,936
5	Galiopoli	4,428
6	Salonica	4,938
7	Aden	20,243
8	Persian Gulf	29,457

In Germany both the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin and the German Secret Service found the war as an opportunity to give a jolt to the Eastern Empire of the Anglo-French Allied powers. As per the advice and suggestions of the Indian leaders in Berlin the German Secret Service thought that this objective could be accomplished only by raising an anti British armed uprising in India with German military aid and funding support direct to the Indian



Indian Troops in the Trenches : Winter 1914

revolutionary parties like *Anusilan Samity*, *Jugantar Party* and the *Ghadar Party*. Hence the German Secret Service envisaged plans and programme for sending arms, ammunition and money in cash to the leaders of the Indian revolutionary parties through the German Consuls General of Bangkok, Batavia and Shanghai. Here in India in view of the changes in the military and strategic situation in India and South and East Asia created by the declaration of the First World War the leaders of the Indian revolutionary parties abandoned the policy of individual political assassinations and were determined to resort to armed anti British united struggle in India by inspiring the sepoys left over in various cantonments in India. Rash Behari Bose of the *Anusilan Samity* of Chandannagar (a French Colonial town near Calcutta) employed in the Forest Department of the Government of India at Dehra Dun secretly began to organize and mobilize the Indian Sepoys to rise in rebellion like that of 1857. With great skill and secrecy

he went round the cantonments of Allahabad, Benares, Ramnagar, Jubbalpur, Secrole, Lahore, Ambala, Ferozpur, Rawalpindi and Meerut etc. and urged them to join the movement to free India from the British. Everywhere he was assured of their active support when any call for action would come up.<sup>11</sup> It was planned that first armed uprising would take place in the Meerut Cantonment on the 21 February 1915. But unfortunately it was leaked to the military authority by one sepoy (Kripal Singh) and all the ring leaders were arrested in the Meerut Cantonment that led to the trial of the Meerut conspiracy. Rash Behari Bose went underground and on 15 May 1915 he left Calcutta for Japan with the hope of exploring ways and means for the importation of arms and ammunition into India from Germany. In the Bengal Sector the plan for armed uprising was chalked out by Jatindranath Mukherjee of the *Jugantar Party*. He was popularly known as *Bagha Jatin* as he killed a tiger in his encounter with the animal. A leader of strong will and spirit of undying dedication and self sacrifice for the freedom of India, Jatindra Nath was inducted to the philosophy of armed rebellion by Aurobinda and like Rash Bihari he was also determined to organize armed revolution along with his trusted comrades Manoranjan Sengupta, Chittapriya Roy Chowdhury, Narendranath Bhattacharyya alias Martin later on M. N. Roy, Niren Das Gupta and Nalini Kanta Kar. Their plan of action was also to organize and inspire the sepoy in the Fort William and then to wait for the landing of the shiploads of arms and ammunition at Balasore from Germany.<sup>12</sup>

**The Revelation of Kothavala, Indian Intelligence Officer : The  
German Secret Plan for arms and money to the Indian  
revolutionaries**

The detailed plans and programme of the German Secret Service for helping the Indian Revolutionary parties like *Anusilan Samity*, *Jugantar Party* and the *Gadhar Party*, with the German arms and money would not be fully revealed to the British Intelligence without the adventurous skill and tactics of Mr. Kothavala, an Indian Intelligence

officer who in 1914 accompanied the Indian sepoy in the allied War fronts near the Franco-German borders. While strolling on duty near the trenches of the Indian sepoy in the French city of Lille Kothavala was caught by a German spy, was arrested and brought before the Commander of the German camp. He was given the option either to face death before a German firing squad or to serve the German Secret Service as one of its agents. Kothavala obviously chose the second and was then sent to Berlin Headquarter of the Secret Service. As being an experienced and clever Intelligence Officer within a few months he became conversant with each and every details of the Secret Service he was entrusted with and quickly became acquainted with the principal agents of German, Dutch and Indian origin all of whom were involved in the work of management, control and operation of the collection and distribution of the arms, ammunition and money in cash to the leaders of the Indian revolutionary parties through the German Consul, General of Thailand (Siam), Indonesia and China based in Bangkok, Batavia and Sanghai respectively. Kothavala then approached the authority of the German Secret Service that he preferred to work in the South East Asia region and the German authority approved his choice and they considered that his service would be more useful there. Kothavala was then sent to the German Consul General at Bangkok via Switzerland and he was assigned to work under his direction. After coming in Bangkok Kothavala had conceived of a personal ambitious plan. Since by that time he was in possession of considerable military intelligence of the German Secret Service he thought of selling the data to the British Intelligence authority at a good price of 500,000 guilders on condition that he was to be assisted with safe passage to and settle in Brazil. Buying and selling of vital military information to and from the belligerent powers was the unwritten convention practiced during the war. On that understanding while at Bangkok under the authority of the German Consul there Kothavala wrote an anonymous letter to the British Intelligence authority at Singapore. Afterwards as a Secret Agent of the German Secret Service one day Kothavala in his own

official capacity visited Singapore and was arrested by the Singapore police and was sent to the British Commander in Chief of the Government of the Straits Settlement. In his first interrogation with Kothavala, the commander first question was whether he (Kothavala) supported the allied power and then Kothavala's answer was "No." But he stated that he hated the German Government more than the British authority in India. At this Kothavala was immediately arrested and the British Commander declared him as Prisoner of War (POW). Kothavala then appealed to the British Commander for a confidential personal audience with him, which was readily granted. In his statement Kothavala related his past experience in the assignment with the India troops in France and the circumstances that led to his sojourn in Berlin under the German Secret Service and lastly said that he was very eager to sell his German military intelligence data to the British Intelligence authority at a price of 300,000 guilders plus his safe passage to and settlement in Brazil with his newly married wife. In reply the British Commander said that the price he quoted for his German military intelligence data would be determined on the basis of its authenticity. But he assured Kothavala that he would consider the price accordingly. The Commander kept Kothavala in his personal custody for four days; by this time the British Commander must have reviewed and verified the data provided by Kothavala and was convinced of their significance from the British point of view. On the fifth day Kothavala was released from personal custody of the Commander and was reinstated in the British Intelligence service at Singapore. With two British officers Kothavala was sent to the British Consul General at Shanghai for further interrogation if desired by the Consul General.<sup>13</sup>

Within a short period Kothavala proved to be one of the trustworthy and efficient Intelligence Officers and on the basis of his information four highly experienced Agents of the German Secret Service working in the region of South East Asia were arrested one after another by the Singapore police. They were:

- 1) George Frederick Vincent Kraft, German national born in 1888 at Sumantra, educated in Germany up to the age of 21, served one

year in the German military service, joined the German Secret Service at Berlin in recommendation of the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin. He was sent to Batavia in Indonesia and engaged in a responsible position with the German Consul General.<sup>14</sup>

- 2) George Paul Bohm, German national aged 41, educated in Germany having German military service for 21 months. Initially worked in an American firm in Germany. At the beginning of the First World War he came to Chicago and on recommendation of the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin and the *Ghadar Party* he joined the German Secret Service having been assigned to give military training to the young Indian revolutionary member in the Indo-Burma border where arms and ammunition from Mexico was to be deposited.<sup>15</sup>
- 3) Jodha Sing (alias Hassan Judah), born in 1884 at Rawalpindi, India, educated at Mission School where he completed the Secondary School Certificate, then joined the Technical School at Amritsar and on its completion, in search of a job, traveled to Lahore, Calcutta, Assam and Chittagong. From here he sailed to London via Canada. In London Jodha Sing met the *Ghadar Party* leader Lala Hardayal for the first time. From London Jodha Sing went to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where he received a letter from Madam Cama of Paris advising him to join her *Bande Mataram Society*. But he wrote to Madam Cama that he was interested in the Home Rule Movement in India. At Rio de Janeiro Jodha Sing was much moved at the suffering of the Indian immigrant workers as they had no work permit from the Government. Jodha Sing soon joined the movement where another Indian doctor from Calcutta Dr. Niranjana Singh arrived at Rio de Janeiro and also became an active member of the movement. Jodha Singh kept in touch with the *Ghadar Party* in San Francisco and donated \$25 to the Party Fund and became a loyal member of the party. Soon Ajit Singh (alias Mirza Hassan Khan) a leader of the *Ghadar Party* in Rio de Janeiro contacted Jodha Singh. Ajit Singh got the name and address of Jodha Singh from Madam Cama of Paris. Ajit



Singh requested Jodha Singh to get in touch with the German Consul General of Genoa for an urgent business. One day Ajit Singh took Jodha Singh to the German Consul General of Rio de Janeiro and got a new passport for Jodha Singh and paid him the passage money to Genoa and thence to Berlin as a tourist after two days left for Berlin. On reaching Berlin he put up at the address of the Ghadar Party leader Lala Hardyal Sing at 42 Leinitz Strasse. Jodha Singh met there with both Lala Hardyal and Birendranath Chattopadhyay, two prominent leaders of the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin and both were very impressed with Jodha Singh. It was reported that Birendranath Chattopadhyay had made an arrangement for Jodha Singh's personal courtesy audience with the German monarch Kaiser William. From this time on Jodha Singh enrolled as an active member of the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin and simultaneously joined as an active Agent of the German Secret Service in the new name of Hassan Zadah.<sup>16</sup> Sukumar Chatterjee, son of Rajendranath Chatterjee of Jabbalpur, Central India, on born in 1891, completed school education then wanderes about in search of an employment. He came in contact with one Satyadev, a disciple of the Aryya Samaj who advised him to leave for the USA. After selling his mother's jewellerys which she offered him to cover his passage money, Sukumar left Calcutta for San Francisco in 1913, where as an agent of the German Secret Service, he was introduced to the German Consul General at San Francisco. Since that time Sukumar had been an active agent of the German Secret Service having been engaged in varied urgent and secret responsibilities both in the USA and in the South East Asia until his arrest by the British police at Singapore in 1915.<sup>17</sup>

Kothavala was the prime and only informer of those four selected experienced and committed agents of the German Secret Service and all through the prolonged proceedings of their confession before the British Intelligence Officer days in and days out Kothavala not only



Lala Hardayal (Secretary)



Birendranath Chattopadhyay

did assist in the process of interrogation but helped in recording each and every details of their deposition; Kothavala's skill and expertise in this responsibility was highly acclaimed by the British Commander in Chief of Singapore in his report to the War Office in London.

**Organisational structure, aims and objective of the German Secret Service in aid of the anti British armed struggle in India**

Of the four Agents the deposition of Frederick Vincent Kraft was both extensive and insightful spread over in quite a number of sessions. According to the first statement of Kraft in the wake of the First World War Germany established an extensive organization of Secret Service, as a separate wing of the military department for stirring up anti British uprising in East Asia in General and India in particular. Headquarter of this secret service was in Berlin named "Hellverthetender Grosser Generalstab", there was an India Committee at the disposal of the General Staff which consisted of (a) Birendranath Chattopadhyay, (b) Dr. Prabhakar, (c) Dr. Haiz, (d) Dr. Pillay and three to four other members like Barkatullah, Mansur, Lala Hardyal etc.

They were the principal leaders of the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin. The avowed object of the society was to launch an armed anti British revolution in India with the help of Germany and to attain freedom from the British rule in order to establish a republican form of Government in India. The society held regular meetings attended by some of the principal German officials and other Germans who had been in India in various capacities as professors, academics and intellectuals. At these meetings, plans and ways and means of furthering their objectives were meticulously discussed and the German government was advised as to the line of action to be adopted. The deliberations of these meetings were of secret nature and the leaders most trusted only were admitted. Leaders like Birendranath Chattopadhyay and Lala Hardyal had considerable influence on the German government and were the only two leaders privileged to take part in the deliberation of the German Foreign office. The transaction of the Foreign office were kept secret from other members.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from the Indian Revolutionary Society in Berlin two other foreign societies were also formed in Berlin named (a) *Persian Society* and (b) *Turkish Society*. Their objective was to assist Germany so that India could be freed from the British and a republican form of government established in India.

The Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin also established an Oriental Translation Bureau in order to translate German news and other literatures selected by the society in various oriental languages and its distribution among the Indian Prisoners of War (POW). At that time there were about 400 Indian prisoners of war in Germany. Birendranath used to travel all over Europe under the name and passport of Belloff for the purpose of spreading revolutionary propaganda. He travelled extensively in Italy through Switzerland and was the Chief of the Indian revolutions living in Switzerland, Germany and Italy. It was decided that either Dr. Prabhakar or Dr. Pillay was to proceed to Batavia in Indonesia in charge of the Secret Service department there. They would travel on a Dutch Eurasian

passport procured by Douwes Dekker who was a Dutchman and the Chief of the Indian Party in the Dutch colonies in the South East Asia. He was expelled from Holland in about 1912 for his revolutionary views by the Dutch government. Dr. Haffiz, one of the prominent leaders of Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin and an active agent of the German Secret Service was first sent to accompany the Indian sepoys in the trenches in the Franco-German borders. He was a Punjabi Pathan, close to the family of the Ameer of Afghanistan, who was pleased with Haffiz for his sympathy with and support for the Indian revolutionary leaders to free India. The Ameer gave him a scholarship for his higher studies in Germany. Haffiz was first graduated in Mechanical Engineering, then continued further higher studies and on its completion contacted Mansoor and Barkatullah, the two prominent leaders of the Indian Revolutionary Society and the German Secret Service and ultimately Haffiz was permanently involved in the activities of the two organizations.<sup>19</sup>

**Organisation of transshipment and distribution of arms,  
ammunition and money to the Indian leaders**

Internationally, the centre of communication and provision of arms and money was at Washington and its Chief was the German Ambassador to the USA. He was assisted by two Bengalee Indian leaders of the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin and the German Secret Service. They were Rakshit and Chakravarty. Rakshit was expected to be sent to Batavia and be placed under the German Consul General of Batavia to help stir up revolutionary upsurge in India. For British India the German Secret Service had three departments to operate. One in Persia, the second in Bangkok and the third in Batavia. Shanghai in China was the Headquarter of these three departments. The coordination of the work of these three departments was controlled by the German Consul General of Shanghai. Kraft said that arms were to be sent to India through the Persian department. The consignment of arms would either be landed at Karachi or at a

place near it. But Kraft observed that arms could safely be imported to India through Afghanistan as he knew that some Afghan nobles and princes had joined the revolutionary movement in India. Sometime in June or July 1915 one such prince was arrested near Lahore by the Intelligence Officer of the Government of India. Before that he had an interview with an agent of the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin who was then living in Batavia under the name of Leilar-la-Illah working in the firm of Chottomal (Indian). According to Kraft this firm was merely a cloak for carrying communication, just to avoid the notice of the British Intelligence Officer.<sup>20</sup>

The jurisdiction of the Bangkok department was Siam (Thailand) and Burma. In his confession Kraft said that Burma was then almost ready for armed revolution as 8000 rifles had already been shipped in from the USA and deposited there. Besides quite a number of German military officers were waiting there to lead the revolution as and when it would break out. Three more German military officers were expected to arrive at Bangkok from Batavia on false passport for this purpose. The department of Batavia was conducted jointly by two German brothers, Hefferich and Kraft was with them deputed by the Berlin Headquarter of the German Secret Service. Apart from the consular duties the two German brothers also ran a business firm named Behn Meyer. The jurisdiction of the Batavia department was Calcutta and Bombay. Its main responsibility was to assist the leaders of the Indian revolutionary parties by supplying arms, ammunition and money. The Headquarter of the Calcutta and Bombay region was Calcutta and all the members were simultaneously the agents of the German Secret Service and the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin. Their main function was to organize and encourage the young members of the Indian revolutionary parties for anti British uprising with military and funding aid from Germany. They were also to act as go between the leaders of the revolutionary parties in the exchange of secret news and information. The main leader of the Calcutta group was a Bengali Indian named Martin (or Father Martin) alias Narendranath

Bhattacharyya (who later on known as M. N. Roy). Despite the country-wide surveillance of the Intelligence Department of the Government of India Martin could not be arrested. He was running “bogus” firms for the purpose of facilitating communication and despatch of money.<sup>21</sup>

Kraft concluded his first statement saying that he was sent out to the East Indies by the “Generalstab” with letters of introduction from the General Staff and from Dowes Dekhar of Zurich, to the German Consul from the former and to the Dutch Indian Party from the latter. Kraft left Berlin on the 17th May 1915 and arrived at Batavia via Genoa on the 14th June 1915 by *Princess Juliana*. He had ordered to provide bases for the transshipment of arms at Deli, Sumatra with the help of the Indian Party and “Saricat Islam” (Indian Association). On arrival at Batavia Kraft met the leaders of the Indian Party there (a) Dr. Tjipto (of Solo), (b) Darna Koessama (of Solo) and (c) F W Van der Kastellen (Dutchman). The first two were Javanese nobles. All of them expressed their eagerness to assist in all respects for stirring armed anti British uprising in India but requested in return for arms ammunition and money for the purpose of raising anti-Dutch revolution in Java. Kraft could not agree with their request but “put them off without actually telling them that I could not agree”.<sup>22</sup>

With regard to the funding provision for the purchase of arms ammunition, cost of transport and the transshipment of arms and ammunition and the cash fund for the expenses of the agents engaged in three continents, specially the necessary funds for the expenses of the leaders of the Indian revolutionary parties, Kraft was heavily pressed by the British Intelligence Officers and ultimately he had to disclose that at the beginning of the war the German Government had allocated 500,000,000 German Mark for the Indian revolutionary purpose. But according to the information received from the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin not one third of this fund had been spent so far (1915). Hence the Indian leaders of Berlin had practically given up all ideas of doing anything in the region of Bombay and Southern India as they were rightly informed that the people of these

provinces were not suitable for any armed revolution. Accordingly it was decided by the Indian leaders of Berlin that the active operation was to be principally confined to Burma and Bengal.<sup>23</sup>

#### **Initial action plan for the armed revolution in India**

In the first place the official Scheme of the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin and the General Staff of Germany was to occupy the Andaman Islands prior to raising a revolt in Burma or in India. For this purpose an Indian agent was to go to the Andamans as a merchant and to land a quantity of arms there supplied by Germany. Then the Indian agent was to get in touch with the released prisoners working on their own ground and with their help to get the British Wireless Station destroyed on the night of an appointed date. As per information from a lately escaped prisoner, a native of Bengal, named Dr. Haidar who later came to Berlin in order to give full information, it was reported that at that time there were nine German and one Austrian steamers lying at Sabang. From Sabang an expedition on the Andamans could be effected consisting of one German and one Austrian steamer taking the fittest crews from other vessels along with as many as good German officers from Deli taking on board should proceed to the spot on an island of Nicobars nearest to Sumatra to the south of the Andamans. From there the steamer was to pick up quick fires, guns and other arms and ammunition already deposited there by a Swedish or American ship. It was expected that more than one ship would start from Sabang on this expedition if the agent on the Andaman islands was of opinion that the number of men willing to join the uprising and eager to proceed to Burma or India to take part in the General revolution was large. The ship was then to proceed to the Andamans and arrive there on the day appointed for dismantling the British Wireless Station. Then the crews of the ship were to be divided into two and landing would be effected on both sides of the islands, east and west and then the island would be assaulted with the help of the local people there. It was generally

known that the Andamans were not well-fortified and had only a small number guns of small caliber. Actually earlier the German warship *Emden* while exploring the Bay of Bengal region wirelessed to attack the island but the message not did reach her. The administrative structure of the Andamans was very limited. There were only 107 administrative staff half of them were European and the rest were the released convicted prisoners. The military force, officers and men were also small, one third being European and the majority were Indians. There was only one Government sailing vessel with 14 members of crews and the entire Island had 519 policemen to maintain general law and order. According to Dr. Haidar and the German Secret Service at that time there were 13 prominent Indian revolutionary leaders interned in the Aberdan Gaol of the Ross Island. They were : Savarkar Brothers; Hatilal Varma; Pulin Das; Barindra Ghosh; Bhupesh Nag; Dasgupta; Ramesh Acharyya; Hem Chandra Das; Abinash Chakraborty; Bibhuti Bhusan Sarkar; Sengupta; Subhramanyam Swami and Ram Hari.

The Europeans used to live in Port Blair. The tribal people of the islands were reported to be aggressive towards the European and Indians. The distance between the Andamans and Rangoon is 380 nautical miles.<sup>24</sup>

On the basis of the above information it was decided by the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin and the German Secret Service that after the occupation of the Andamans people of the island specially released prisoners of the gaol eager to participate in this scheme were to be encouraged and organized and a German ship with German military officers and men was to proceed to Rangoon taking all these men on board. Then after landing at a place near Rangoon people were to be marched to Rangoon led by the Germans. If these undertakings proved promising all the Germans of military age within the region, namely the Dutch Indies, Siam etc. would be ordered to join the revolutionary forces. For the deposit of arms and ammunition in the Andaman Island it was suggested that a Swedish ship was to leave Sweden with an ordinary cargo standing for a British port in



the East with all her papers in order that she was to meet a German vessel carrying arms and exchange cargo on the high seas. Kraft was provided with three photograph maps of the island of the Andamans and the arms were intended to be delivered on the islands east of the Andamans viz, Barren Island and Narkanda for transshipment by junks and sailing vessels to India.<sup>25</sup>

The great problem experienced by the German Secret Service, Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin was to maintain the communication among the Washington Headquarter, Persian Department and the German Consuls General of Bangkok, Batavia and Shanghai and the revolutionary leaders of the Indian parties. This channel of communication was very important for the timely supply of arms, ammunition and money to the Indian leaders in Calcutta. At that time there was no German Wireless Station in any country of the South East Asia nor was there any such installation in the Dutch Borneo either. The exchange of messages was done through telegram by code. Code messages were also sent by post or by messengers and generally the Chinese or the Arabs were engaged to do this job. Messages by code, however, could only be deciphered by the senders and the addressees. But the great difficulty in the process of the exchange of messages is that it was kept under strict surveillance of the British Intelligence Services. The following is a code message intercepted by the British Intelligence at Singapore: "Tel. (secret) No. – 581. From General Officer Commanding, Straits Settlements, Singapore to War Office, London, 30 October 1915; re: Selection of Island for transshipment of arms, German Scheme:

"Kraft's marked chart taken to Shanghai by our Chinese Agent was duly delivered to German Consul who seemed greatly pleased. As act of acknowledgement he gave our Agent the following cipher message to Kraft. This was delivered to them on the 29th October 1915. Message is as follows:

"91, 523, 20, (one group undecipherable), 986 full stop."

"27, 9, 68 (three undecipherable)".<sup>26</sup>

In view of the problem of sending and receiving secret news and information the German Consul General of Batavia used to maintain five to six different addresses. Among them were (a) Agent Hills Menke & Co. (Birmingham), Batavia; (b) a chemist shop named Apothecary Hall/Dispensary; national who simultaneously acted as the Vice-Consul of Turkey. At the time Kraft left Berlin for Batavia the Turkish Ambassador of Germany at Berlin provided Kraft with a letter of introduction addressed to Haffid Bey to help Kraft in the discharge of his duty for raising anti-British armed rising in India and in the countries of South East Asia.

By that time Haffid Bey had circulated quite a number of *fatawas* addressed to the Muslims of Batavia so that they could organize an anti-British Holy War. Kraft was very eager to go through the text of those documents. But despite his repeated request to Haffid Bey Kraft was not favoured with copies of those *fatawas*. The German Consul General of Batavia had complained to Kraft that Haffid Bey had no active role in raising anti-British armed revolution in India or in the regions of South East Asia and that he was very "timid" with regard to revolution. That was why the German Consul General of Batavia used to employ the Arab messenger for sending and receiving secret news and information. While sending secret information about the transaction of money to the revolutionary leaders of Calcutta through the Eastern Trading Association/Company and it was written as so many bags of sugar were being sent each bag costing Indian rupee ten etc.<sup>27</sup> Kraft further said that apart from Indonesia efforts were also made to organize anti-British popular uprising in Sumatra and Malay states which is testified by a letter intercepted by the British Intelligence at Singapore from the Hindu Sabha of Deli at Sumatra addressed to the Vice-President of the Muslim League of Singapore which runs as follows: "Your No. C12 to hand. Glad to note contents. Our S. going on as usual. There is further secret collection, 500 Guilders given by Sicks, Muslims and Indian Brothers, further GS 1000 expected soon. What about general rising? Try induce the leaders.

Why do you delay any more if you can fix the same time the same. Penang and Federated Malay States will rise in rebellion.”<sup>28</sup>

**First revised plan for the supply of German arms and  
funding aid to India**

From the second statement of Kraft given to the British Intelligence at Singapore it was revealed that Mr. Deninzer, a Dutch military commissioned officer had proposed an alternative plan for storing German arms and ammunition from Germany and then dispatching them on to the Indian revolutionaries. He suggested that instead of the Andamans, the region of which had been under strict surveillance of the British Intelligence, two small islands close to the Padang of Sumatra could be safe for this purpose. The proposal was accepted both by the German Secret Service and the Indian Revolutionary leaders of Berlin. Before Deninzer left for Batavia he learnt that quite a number of American cargo ships with German arms and ammunition on board sailed towards Indian and South East Asian ports. And when Deninzer landed at Batavia also learnt that a vessel named *S.S. Maverick* was coming to Batavia with a consignment of 7000 rifles and 2000 revolvers and he found a sailing vessel owned by the German Consul General was lying at the port of Batavia when he landed there. Deninzer then left Batavia for Deli in Sumatra and stayed there for a few days and back in Batavia on the 26th July 1915 he noticed the cargo ship *S. S. Maverick* but not the Consul General's personal sailing ship. Deninzer, rightly assumed that the arms and ammunition were transferred from the *S. S. Maverick* to the Consul General's sailing vessel which afterwards was sent to an unknown island on the Java seas. Lastly Deninzer considered that for sending arms and ammunition and money to the Indian revolutionary leaders three small islands in the South East Asia should be selected wherefrom the military hardware could be shipped in small Chinese country ship to the secret Indian ports of destination. These islands were (a) two small islands very close to Pedang of Sumatra (b) the Barren

island very close to the South Andamans and the Nicobar islands and (c) a small island quite adjacent to Timor.<sup>29</sup> In another statement of Kraft to the British Intelligence officer it was revealed that Mr. Grudner, a German national living at Bali, an island east to Java, had long been engaged in a German Topographical service. At the start of the First World War he appealed to the German Foreign Office in Berlin that he was prepared to act as an Agent of the German Secret Service staying at Bali and his only request was that he was to be relieved of his national service in the German military department. According to Grudner there were many small islands east of the Bali Island where the German arms and ammunition could safely be stored and despatched to India in Chinese junk ship as and when found safe.<sup>30</sup>

When he left Europe for Java Deninzer also learnt that the strict instruction of the German Secret Service was that no German and Indian national should be allowed to travel as passenger in any German ship laden with arms and ammunition. Secondly all the ship laden with arms while landing at a port or near the coast should flash three flash lights in a row so that the agents of the port or coast could recognize her and the agents at port or the coast were to respond by displaying two red lights. In the day time at the port the ships carrying cargo of arms and ammunition must fly flag marked with two letters, MW. For sending any secret letter from the ship to the waiting secret agents a liquid chemical of 5 per cent of Ferro Cyankalium should be used on the tracing paper so that the written matter would be absolutely illegible. If the paper then washed with water mixed with 2 per cent Iron Chloride and dried then the written matter would be perfectly legible. Kraft also disclosed in his statement to the British intelligence Officer that Deninzer was provided with a map photograph of the mouth of the Hooghly river by the Consul General of Batavia. The map was marked with three dots, one for Hooghly Madlilan (this should be River *Mafia*), second for Raimdum (this should be *Rai Mangal*) and the third for Calcutta. It was mentioned that once the military stores were deposited in those three centres the arms, ammunition and cash money would reach direct in the hands

of the revolutionary Indian leaders.<sup>31</sup> As a result both the German Secret Service and the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin had to slightly change the above plan for the transshipment of arms and it was decided that instead of the *Mafia* river in the Sundarban *Sandyk island* (this should be Sandip) island and in another record it was mentioned as *Sandwich Island* south east of the *Matla* river. Mr. Martin the head of the Calcutta headquarter of the secret revolutionary parties in Bengal came to Batavia. They also learnt that by the 24 December 1915 the German arms and ammunition in small steamer would be shipped into the *Sandip Island*. Besides four times the quantity of arms to be deposited in the *Sandip island* was to proceed in two steamers navigated by the Japanese Captains towards the Nicobar, then one was to sail towards Rangoon and the other to Balasore in Orissa. They were also informed that 12 German military officers were expected to reach Nicobar by the end of November 1915.<sup>32</sup> It was thus revealed to the British Intelligence at Singapore that quite a number of cargo vessels laden with German arms and ammunition had already set sail from Europe, America and the Philippines islands towards Bangkok, Batavia and Shanghai. The British Intelligence at Singapore further received the news that on the 18 November 1915 a German cargo ship named *S. S. Kohsierang* left Bangkok towards an unknown destination and on the 30 October 1915 another American ship *S. S. Rio Psing* was heading towards the Indian coast and on her way she was expected to meet a ship load of the Indian passengers at the Sandakan port. Further the British Consul General at Shanghai had informed by telegraph the British Intelligence of Singapore that huge consignment of arms mainly revolvers in the Chinese country ship had left the Philippines islands towards the port of Sandakan and Bangkok and their destination was some ports on the east coast of India in the Bay of Bengal. On the 13 November 1915 another Dutch steamer *S. S. Sultan Von Langkat* was reported to have left Shanghai towards Singapore. In this way the British Intelligence was well informed that the German Secret Service, despite their very critical pressure in the war fronts in East Africa, Middle East and the

Franco German sector were fairly equally prompt and active in aiding and abetting the anti-British armed revolution in the region of South East Asia in general and India in particular. It was also reported that the German Government had purchased 15000 rifles on the 18 November 1915 to send them on to the Indian revolutionary leaders which first was to be towed in junk to *Tsung Ming Island* in China and meet a steamer chartered by one business enterprise Katz & Co. Besides 9000 second hand repaired revolvers were expected to be sent to Colombo from India in the country ship or the Japanese vessel *Atsusani Maru* by the end of August 1915.<sup>33</sup> In view of this high frequency in the transshipment of general arms and ammunition, the custom official in the port of Singapore had to face severe problem in issuing custom clearance certificate to the incoming ships. In the case of the cargo ship *Henry S. S.* the custom officials experienced difficulties in issuing the clearance certificates. This vessel was a 100 ton oil fired two mast cargo ship owned by the Manila Import Company. But one German American national *F. K. Schnitzler* alone was the sole share holder of the company. Two German-American nationals were associated with the management of the company. They were *H. Wehde* and *George Boch*. One of them was a passenger of the ship. Before the ship was granted the clearance certificate it was discovered that the ship, before entering into jurisdiction of the Port of Singapore she met two German ships *Sachen* and *Su evia* in the high seas when the entire cargo of those two German ships was transferred to the ship *S. S. Henry* and that after the ship was issued the clearance certificate 39 German national were expected to join on board the ship. But before the ship entered into the jurisdiction of the port all the contraband arms and ammunition and the goods were removed and transferred to other vessel just to avoid the search of the custom officials. The ship *S. S. Henry* left Singapore on the 14 July 1915 for Potianak of Dutch Borneo. The suspicious feature of this ship was that after further searching the papers of the ship it was discovered that the Quarter Master of the ship was a highly educated Indian engineer, Jan Mohammad alias Birendranath Sen and the Master was

Julius O'Henning, a German national highly specialized in connecting and disconnecting submarine cable and that he was known as a famous engineer in that kind of risky job in the high seas.<sup>34</sup>

**Representatives of the Indian Parties sent to the Far East to expedite the process of arms aid to India**

Here in India the Indian revolutionary leaders were desperate in taking full advantage of the massive despatch of sepoys from India to the Anglo-French-Allied war fronts in Europe, Middle East, Africa but they were unable to go ahead with their plan because of the paucity of arms and ammunition and funding support. This kept them waiting for arms and funding support from Germany of which they were reported to have been promised by the Indian revolutionary leaders of Berlin and the German Secret Service. As mentioned earlier the great Revolutionary leader Rashbehari Bose already left Calcutta for Japan so that he could, in collaboration with the leaders of the *Ghadar Party*, persuade the other anti-British foreign powers to enlist their support for the arms aid to the Indian leaders. So desperate were the Indian revolutionary leaders that they sent their representatives to Japan in order to help expedite the process of arrangement for the receipt of the arms aid in secret and safe places in India. Mr. Abaninath Mukherjee was an important representative of the revolutionary party in India who was sent to Japan, had been living there with Bhagaban Sing, a leader of the *Ghadar Party* and P. N. Thakur alias Rashbehari Bose. Mukherjee was the son of Mr. Trailakhya Mahopadhyay (should be Mukhopadhyay), a pensioner of the Government P. W. Department residing at 27, Sukia Street, Calcutta. Sometime in October 1915 Abaninath on his way back from Japan to India, was arrested by the British Intelligence at Singapore and while searching his personal belongings the British officers discovered a list of two names of the Bengal revolutionary leaders. They were Motilal Roy and Manindra Nath Nayak. After prolonged interrogation by the British officials he disclosed that he had been instructed by

Bhagaban Sing and Rashbehari Bose to meet an Indian revolutionary leader Mr. Abinas Chandra Roy at Shanghai on his way back to Calcutta and was to get from him the names and addresses of the revolutionary leaders of Chandannagar, Dacca and Comilla and pass the following message on to them: "Germany was prepared to supply India with any amount of funds and arms, some arms being on the way and that more men are necessary to introduce the arms and to do fighting. Also Bhagaban Sing and Roy are anxious to return to India to do further its plan and ask Indian leaders to devise means of getting the arms in Consignment of arms intended for Punjab said to be on the way through Afghanistan but no people there to receive them."<sup>35</sup>

In the second session of the interrogation of Abaninath the British Intelligence officers gathered a written instruction of Abinas Chandra Roy of Shanghai which runs as follows: "Go to Motilal Roy of Chandannagar, if possible, if not then see either Monindra Chandra Naik or Nolin Chandra Dutta or Jatish Chandra Sainlai (Sanyal?) all residing in Channadannagar. Failing them go to see Jotindra Mohan Rakshit, New Market, Calcutta where he keeps a stamp and stationary shop. Failing them go to Dr. Suresh Chandra Dasgupta, Alok Chandra Homeopathy Hall, Potuatola, Dacca and ask for Girija Babu or Chandra Chud Babu failing them go to Girendra Chandra Sen, Kandipor, Comilla and ask for some two persons as last resort go to Kulan Chandra Roy Sina, National College, Calcutta."<sup>36</sup>

The main problem was that the Government maintained a strict vigilance on the movement of the agents of the German Secret Service. The Governor General of India informed the General officer commanding the Straits Settlements by telegram that on June 1914 a Turkish Jew Ainech Meyer alias Moses Gerschens was arrested in Peshwar and was sent to Bombay for interrogation. In his confession before the Intelligence official he said that he was deputed by the German Consul General of Shanghai as a spy of the German Secret Service. Referring the news of the arrest of Abaninath Mukherjee at Singapore the Governor General informed that there was no existence



of any person in the name of Abinash Chandra Roy at Shanghai and that the letter containing the list of name of the revolutionary leaders was written not by Abinash Chandra but by Rashbehari Bose himself in his own hand writing. Besides the British Indian Intelligence officers had rightly guessed that the Chinese Government had the full support of the German arms aid to India of which both Rashbehari Bose and Bhagaban Sing were fully aware.<sup>37</sup>

Another Indian revolutionary leader in Calcutta named Kumud Nath Mukherjee belonging to either *Anusilan Samity* or *Jugantar party* was also sent to Bangkok to enquire into the time and place in India to receive the arms and funding aid from Germany. On his return voyage from Bangkok to India Kumudnath Mukherjee was also arrested by the British police at Singapore on the 14 October 1915. In the same year in 15 February the sepoy mutiny at Singapore took place and therefore the Government of the Straits Settlements clamped very strict watch on the Indian passengers. Kumudnath was heavily interrogated by the British Intelligence officers for two consecutive days. On the first day Kumudnath stated that for the first time he came to Bangkok in 1912 and visited second time in 1914 when the war broke out. At that time he came to know of two persons, Mr. Bholanath Chatterjee and Mr. Kotonu Ghosh both were the members of some secret society in Calcutta. Towards the end of October 1914 Bholanath Chatterjee left Bangkok for Calcutta taking with him another person Birendranath Mukherjee, an employee of a cosmetic shop. One day some time in the end of March 1915, a Punjabi youth named Atmaram knowing about the visit of Kumudnath, from Bholanath Chatterjee, met Kumudnath. Atmaram said to Kumudnath that he was sent by the "Calcutta Party" to the German Consul at Bangkok to enquire when they could expect to receive the arms, ammunition and money as promised by Germany. Atmaram thought that Kumudnath knew about this information. In reply Kumudnath said that he had no idea about it. But Atmaram continued to meet Kumudnath with the hope of getting some news in this matter. In his last meeting with Kumudnath, Atmaram said that he had already

seen the German Consul and learnt that a large amount of arms, ammunition and money was on the way from Shanghai through the German Consul General of Batavia by the ship *Maverick* and to reach the Sandwich Island (this should be Sandip) by the 13 July 1915. Atmaram said that the most urgent job was to unload the huge consignment and pass it on to the interior of the island and hand it over to the members of the revolutionary parties. Atmaram then requested Kumudnath if he agreed to take this urgent message to the principal leader of the revolutionary party in Calcutta, he would be provided with all the expenses of his passage from Bangkok to Calcutta. Kumudnath agreed to take this job as he said that he had run out of funds for his personal expenses and with the money that he would get for this important job he could pay off part of his debt. On the 17 June Atmaram came to Kumudnath together with a Punjabi young man, named Kapoor who had with him 2200 tuckle (Bangkok currency) which he gave to Kumudnath. From this fund Kumudnath first paid off part of his loan and the rest he got converted into Indian rupee drafts from the local branch of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank. After encashing one draft he got RS. 342 (Indian currency) and on the 18 June left Bangkok for Calcutta and arrived Calcutta on 3 July 1915. Kumudnath put up at the Adarsha Nibas Hotel, Sealdah, the address provided by Atmaram along with another name and address, "Mukherjee", 62, Beniatola Street, Calcutta. Mukherjee was called a "leader" of the party. Kumudnath Mukherjee called at the address on the 4 July 1915 and saw "Mukherjee" along with another person who was a doctor named "B. Chatterjee". Kumudnath delivered the full message to both Mukherjee and doctor B. Chatterjee regarding the arms, ammunition and money and the news that the *Maverick* with the cargo of arms and ammunition would be expected at the Sandwich (Sandip) Island by the stipulated time. Kumudnath then moved to a different address, a boarding house No.1, Chunapukur Lane, Calcutta where doctor B. Chatterjee turned up and they discussed the plans and organization for the armed uprising.<sup>38</sup>

With regard to the structure and organizational network of the secret revolutionary party in Bengal, Kumudnath disclosed in his deposition that there were 45 districts in Bengal each district had a leader with a number of young men under him and that at that time there were 10,000 in all. There was only one Chief leader and six deputy chiefs some of whom were served with police warrants and they worked under ground. The district leader and the men in one district were unknown to other in order to guard against betrayal. Bholanath Chatterjee then escorted Kumudnath to see the Chief leader of the Secret Party in a "house of bad repair" near Kidderpore. In his first interview the Chief leader congratulated Kumudnath on having joined the society. In reply Kumudnath said that he was not so fortunate to be of any service for this organization and he would be delighted if he could do anything for this mission. On that day there was no other discussion and the Chief asked Kumud to come on another appointed date Kumudnath then met the Chief leader accordingly. That day Kumudnath saw the two other leaders, Martin and Payne with the Chief who asked Mukherjee to go to Java, Batavia on his way back to Bangkok to take a message to a man whose name was Salim, who would take Kumud to the German Consul General at Batavia to tell the following messages :

- 1) That the arms, ammunition and money promised by the Germans were not sufficient and he (Chief) wanted more according to promise made previously.
- 2) That the Chief or his representative would come to Batavia to make further arrangements.
- 3) That the German Consul at Batavia should try to fix the early dates of despatch of at least 500 trained men to the fixed points in India and to expedite sending Rupees 300,000 (three lakhs) for expenses and two months advance pay to native troops who had promised to join the revolution. That the 50,000 rifles were more than they wanted in Bengal only 15000 should go there and the remainder to other points.

- 4) That five ships with arms etc. were to arrive simultaneously on some fixed day at the following points: (a) head of Gulf of Cambay (b) points near Mangalore, in accordance with arrangements arrived at between "Germans" and Marharatta; (c) points near Balasore; (d) points near Madras.<sup>39</sup>

Kumudnath agreed to take the message on to the German Consul at Batavia on payment of full expenses. On the 15 July 1915 B. Chatterjee brought Rs. 400 (Rs. Four Hundred) for Kumudnath who was keen to leave Calcutta for Batavia via Singapore. To save time B. Chatterjee bought a railway ticket from Calcutta to Madras and Kumudnath left Calcutta for Madras on the 20 July and caught a boat for Singapore where he reached 2 August and arrived Batavia on the 8th August and put up at the Hotel Burdhraf. Next day Kumudnath met the German Consul General of Batavia and delivered in full the message detailed above. That day Kumudnath found two Europeans with the Consul General who asked Kumudnath if he were certain of names of the landing places. Kumudnath produced a map showing the five places in the map and the German Consul General and the two Europeans saw the map and the names of the places and all of them were confirmed what had been previously arranged. Kumudnath then saw Salim in the Choturmal shop and as per instruction of the Chief leader of Calcutta he enquired about the despatch of the money to Calcutta. Salim said that the German Consul General of Batavia had already referred the matter to the German Consul General at Shanghai and that the arrangement would be made on receipt of the information from Shanghai. Afterwards for a few days Kumudnath went to the outskirts of Batavia and back in Batavia he met the German Consul General of Batavia and learnt that Martin had arrived at Batavia and living in the Grand Hotel, Batavia in room No. 66. Kumudnath went to the Hotel same night and met Martin together with Payne both of whom were introduced in the house of the Chief leader at Khidderpore, Calcutta. Martin said that he had come to take the money but he seemed very worried as it was a huge amount Rupees two and half lakh (250,000) as letter of credit on the Bank of England

and he found it was "too dangerous". He requested Kumud to take it to Calcutta and pressed for it and told the details. But Kumud refused and Martin was a bit annoyed. Afterwards it was decided that the German Consul General of Shanghai would send the money through a Chinese Agent who, on arrival at Calcutta, would hand over to two Calcutta Bengali students for the leaders of the revolutionary parties. Their names and addresses would be provided later. Then Kumudnath enquired whether Shanghai had sanctioned the money, he was told that help in the shape of money and arms would be forthcoming soon. Martin further said that arrangements were being made by which five ships would arrive at different points in India, simultaneously on 25 December 1915. Ships would contain men and arms and ammunition and Martin and Payne would return to India on one of them. Martin then asked Kumudnath to leave Batavia for Colombo without touching at Singapore by the ship *Rotterdam Lloyds*. Before leaving Batavia Kumudnath must see the German Consul General and request him to make arrangement so that the ball-ammunition allotted for each rifle was increased from 200 to 1500.<sup>40</sup>

In the meantime the Government of the Straits Settlements at Singapore received a news by secret telegram that a Chinese agent named Seng Kwie of the German Consul General at Batavia was on the way to Singapore on 23 October 1915 and that he had with him about 100,000, Indian rupee. On the 25 October that Chinese Agent was arrested by the British police at Singapore, he had with him a draft of 10,000 dollars and a bank account of 105,000 Dutch Guilders. But no confidential note or letter was found. That Chinese agent was supposed to go towards Calcutta. The names and addresses of two persons was found in his pocket book. They were Mr. Harish Chandra Sinha, 10 Badurbagan Lane, Calcutta and Mr. Bijay Kumar Chaudhury of Sarkar Bagan Lane, Chore Bagan, Calcutta. In his statement before the British Intelligence officer the Chinese agent said that he was on his own business trip to Penang, Rangoon, Saigon (possibly Chittagong), Calcutta, Madras and Colombo. But to the British police

his statement seemed to be suspicious. Hence further investigation on his statement was under way.<sup>41</sup>

There is no evidence in the British records available and retrieved so far that in the seagoing transport of the German Vessel or the vessel of other neutral countries laden with the cargo of German arms and ammunition had to face any confrontation with any Anglo-French men of wars nor there any evidence of destruction or capturing any German cargo vessel or vessel of any neutral country by the Anglo-French Navy. But in India and in the countries of South East Asia the massive surveillance network of British Intelligence severely obstructed the distribution of arms and ammunition among the Indian revolutionary leaders. In order to secure the free and unobstructed navigation of the German vessels laden with the cargo of arms and ammunition the cruising of the German men of war *SS Emden* was extremely helpful. Starting from the Tsingtao port of China *SS Emden* on the 5 August 1914 sailed and extensively cruized across the China Sea, sea of Japan, all the sea routes round the South East Asia, Java seas, Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and in her voyage she had sunk 16 British cargo ships, destroyed the Russian Man of War *Zemchug* and the French man of war *Mousquet* near the harbour of Penang was sunk. Besides *Emden* forcibly captured the Russian ship and converted her into an auxiliary vessel of *Emden* which was used accordingly during her voyage. While cruising in the Bay of Bengal near the coast of Madras *Emden* nearly destroyed by her canon shot the huge oil depots of Madras owned by the British Burma Oil Company.<sup>42</sup> It is rightly assumed that the main objective of *S S Emden* was to siege Singapore and the 800 strong 5th Light infantry Regiment of sepoy (Sikhs, Pathans, Baloochies) in the Fort Canning of Singapore interned in the cantonment of Alexander and Tanglin Barracks would head towards the coast of Bengal and Balasore where the Indian revolutionaries were supposed to be waiting for starting their most coveted anti-British armed struggle in India. As mentioned earlier that at that time there were nine German and one Austrian supporting ships kept ready in the Northern coast of Sumatra for this expedition.

Just before the sepoy mutiny at Singapore 15 February 1915 the rumour was abound that shiploads of German arms ammunition together with the marine force was going to siege Singapore and help rescue the German prisoner of war and take the sepoy battalion on board the German Man of War and head for India to join the revolutionary forces.<sup>43</sup>

But unfortunately the *S S Emden* in her last leg of her expedition was not successful in her purpose. In the Indian Ocean south west of Java *Emden* heavily confronted with the Australian Man of War *S S Sydney* near the beach of the Cocos island and was seriously damaged and went aground in the shallow water. In this battle nearly half of the naval forces of the *Emden* was killed in action. Some heavily injured German soldiers were evacuated from the *Emden* and transferred to the small auxiliary ship of *Emden* which sailed speedily towards north west of the Indian Ocean, Arab Sea and the Persian Gulf and to the middle East. From the *Emden* all the German soldiers were arrested by the Allied army and brought to Tanglin, British Cantonment of Singapore and interned there as prisoner of War.<sup>44</sup>

According to the assessment of the Captain of the German War Ship *S S Emden* and the German Naval Department the war ship had sailed 30 thousand nautical miles, refuelled eleven times in the high seas using 6000 tons of coal during her voyage between 5 August 1914 and 19 November 1915. As per British official estimate the total loss due to the destruction of ship and cargo by the German *S S Emden* amounted to over £2 million pounds. This figure however does not include the loss due to destruction of the oil-depots of the Indo-Burma Oil Company at the Madras coast. But according to the official German estimate the total comprehensive loss of the destruction of the *S S Emden* is £5 million which is roughly 15 times of the cost of the construction of the Man of War ship *Emden*.<sup>45</sup>

### Epilogue

The loss of the *S S Emden* was a serious set back to the distribution of arms and ammunition to the revolutionary leaders of the Indian parties at Balasore and Calcutta which completely disrupted the plan

of the Indian revolution in Bengal and Orissa. In the Bengal sector the revolutionary parties led by Jatindranath Mukherjee together with his trusted comrades had already rushed to Balasore to receive the German arms and kept waiting there. In the Fort William at Calcutta the leader of the rebel sepoy, Mansa Sing also was waiting for the signal when they would be provided with the German arms in order to rise in rebellion and hoist Indian national flag. But the whole plan was leaked to the British Intelligence and the landing of arms could not take place. At Balasore Jatindranath and his fellow comrades were chased by the British force and on 9th September a violent encounter took place with the British force on the bank of the river Buribalam. Chittapriya Roy Chaudhury was killed by the British bullet on the spot. Niren and Manoranjan were severely wounded, arrested by the British police later on tried and hanged. Jyotish was also wounded and arrested but sentenced to life and sent to Berhampore jail and due to inhuman torture there Jyotish went mad and died in 1924. Jatindranath fought to the last single handed, severely wounded on 9 September and died 10 September 1915. Just before the final encounter with the British force Jatindranath's last word to his fellow comrades : "We will die, but our death will wake up our countrymen."<sup>46</sup>

Now if we consider the loss of *Emden* as the Swan Song of the German military aid to Indian armed revolution, the martyrdom of Jatindranath and his fellow comrades was a clarion call to the whole nation which was transformed into the revolutionary song of the Indian mass till the country became free in 1947.

In totality the role of the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin and the German Secret Service along with the commendable service of hundreds of their agents of various nationalities, deserves a place in the history of the freedom movement in India. The policy of the German Secret Service and its allocation of a huge fund for the supply of arms, ammunition and funding, support for the revolutionary leaders of the Indian parties like *Anusilan Samity* and *Jugantar party* had the full and active support of the neutral powers like the USA, Switzerland, Sweden, China, Indonesia, Siam etc which in fact



manifested the international solidarity in favour of anti-British armed struggle in India as the only means to end the oppressive British rule in India. The Indian leaders of Berlin like Birendranath Chattopadhyay and Lala Hardayal whose constant appeals and persuasion to the German Government as well as Birendranath's all Europe propaganda work had mobilized the European and world public opinion exposing the futility of the extreme right wing policy of the Indian National Congress had established the urgent need of an armed revolution by the Indian revolutionary parties with German support. But unfortunately despite the genuine effort of the German Secret Service on no obligation whatsoever, and the commitment and successful involvement of all the agents working in three continents, Europe, USA, Asia, ultimately the scheme could not attain its objectives. Its contributing factors may be detailed as under:

First, the extensive and intensive organisational network of the British Intelligence service in the region of South East Asia in general and India in particular totally prevented the free movement of the agents of the German Secret Service and the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin as well as the members of the Indian Revolutionary Parties in the distribution of arms, ammunition and cash fund and exchange of communication etc. All these are absolutely necessary for active operation in any armed uprising.

Secondly, although some sepoy leaders, mainly the Sikhs and the Jats whatever left over in the Indian Cantonments were secretly convinced by the revolutionary parties, their plan could not materialize because of strict military surveillance and the betrayal by their fellow sepoys.

Thirdly, the young and enthusiastic members of the Indian revolutionary parties like *Anusilan Samity* and *Jugantar Party* despite their spirit of undying dedication and self sacrifice, numerically they were not only microscopic minority compared to the vastness of the country but militarily not well-trained either in handling the foreign made arms and the proper combat tactics necessary for any active operation.

Fourthly, though the German Secret Service had deployed experienced German military officers and men to train the Indian young men living in the region of the South East Asian countries including China so that after the training they could be regimented to join the revolutionary expedition from Burma to Bengal, this plan was not successful because of the absolute dearth of such young and willing persons eager to get themselves involved in this sort of work which is testified by the confessionary statements of two agents arrested by the Singapore police, Hassan Zada (alias Jodha Sing) and Sukumar Chatterjee.

In spite of all the above factors the Indian Revolutionary Parties like *Anusilan Samity*, *Jugantar Party* and the *Ghadar Party* during the First World War and afterwards were periodically benefited by the German arms, ammunition and funding support to sustain their existence as political party committed to the policy of armed revolution as the only means to free India from the British rule.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Singapore Mutiny, 1915*, C.O. 273/435, NA (UK).

<sup>2</sup> See for details: Bhatia, B. M. *Famines in India, 1860-1940; A Study in some Aspects of Economic History of India*, New York, 1963; see also: Digby. W., *Famine Campaign in Southern India*, 2 Vols., London 1878; Bandyopadhyay, P. *Indian Famines and Agrarian Problem*, Calcutta 1987, Dutt., R.C., *Indian Famines their causes and prevention*, London, 1901, Bengal and Orissa famine 1866, Parliamentary Paper (P.P.) House of Commons, Vol. 21, 1867; Report of the Indian Famine Commission 1880, P.P. (H of C) L II, 1880; Report of the Indian Famine 1898, 1899, P.P. Vol. XXXI, 1899; Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1901, P.P. (H of C), 1902, Vol. LXX 1902.

<sup>3</sup> Naoroji, D. *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, London 1901.

<sup>4</sup> "Our Hope in Future", *Induprakas* (Bombay) 27 August, 1894, quoted in Tripathy, A., *The Extremist Challenge*, Calcutta, 1964.

<sup>5</sup> For details see: Ray, Asok Kumar, *Party of the Fire brand Revolutionaries: The Dacca Anusilan Samity 1906-1918*, Calcutta 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Sen, Nikunja, *Bharate Sasastra Biplab 'O' Suryya Sen*, Revolutionary Suryya Sen Memorial Lecture series, Calcutta University, 1989, p. 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> Dasgupta, S., *Swadhinata Sangrame Sasastra Biplabider Bhumika*, NBA, Kolkata, 7th Ed. 2007, pp. 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 11-12.

- <sup>9</sup> For details see: Bandyopadhyay, P., *Sepoys in the British Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol. I, 1762-1826, Kolkata, 2011.
- <sup>10</sup> Tharoor, S., *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*, London 2016, p. 74.
- <sup>11</sup> Ghosh, Ganes. *Mukti Tirtha Andamans*, NBA, Calcutta, 1977, pp. 53-55.
- <sup>12</sup> Dasgupta, S. *Swadhinata Sangrame Sasatra Biplabider Bhumika*, NBA, Calcutta, 8th edition, 2007, pp.5-16); see also: Bhaduri, S., *History of Indian Independence, A Leftist Perspective*, London 2018, pp. 171-72.
- <sup>13</sup> Statement of Kothavala, encl. Telegram Secret No. 413, General Officer Commanding Strait Settlements, Singapore to War Office, London, 10 August, 1915-1 : 55 a.m., National Archives (NA) UK, CO, 273/435, p. 272.
- <sup>14</sup> Statement of George Frederick Vincent Kraft No.1, NA9UK), CO, 273/435, 467- 167/2, No.2, pp. 468, 468/2, No.3 Pp. 469, Encl: Brigadier General CMG, Commanding Troops, Straits Settlements, Singapore to War Office, London, 3 September 1915, NA(UK) CO 273/435, p. 466.
- <sup>15</sup> Statement of George Paul Boehm, NA(UK) CO 273/435, p. 447, 447/2, 448, 448/2, 449.
- <sup>16</sup> Statement of Jodha Sing, alias Hassan Zada, NA(UK) CO 273/435, pp. 451-453.
- <sup>17</sup> Statement of Sukumar Chatterjee, NA(UK) CO 273/435, pp. 435 (1-14).
- <sup>18</sup> Statement of Kraft, No.1, NA(UK) CO 273/435, pp. 467-467a, encl: Despatch Brigadier General Dudley Ridout, CMG, Commanding Troops, Straits Settlements, Singapore to Secretary to War Office, London, 3 September 1915, p. 466.
- <sup>19</sup> Statement of Jodha Sing, alias Hassan Zada, encl: *op. cit.*, pp. 450-52/2, NA(UK) CO 273/435.
- <sup>20</sup> Statement of Kraft, encl: *op. cit.*, NA(UK) CO 273/435 pp. 467-467/2.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, see also: Telegram, Viceroy of India to GO, Straits Settlements, 1 August, 1915, NA(UK) CO, 273-435, p. 471.
- <sup>22</sup> Statement of Kraft, *op. cit.*, *ibid*, NA(UK) CO, 273/435, pp. 467, 467/2.
- <sup>23</sup> Kraft, Further Information and Notes, 8 August 1915, NA(UK) CO, 273/435, pp. 467, 472.
- <sup>24</sup> Statement of Kraft No.3, The Andamans, encl: *ibid*, p. 472.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>26</sup> Telegram, Secret No. 581, From General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore, to War Office, London, 30 October, 1915, 10.25 a.m. NA(UK) 273-/435, p. 470.
- <sup>27</sup> Kraft, Statement No.4, General Matters, NA(UK), CO, 273/435, p. 470.
- <sup>28</sup> Letter from M R Sarma, Deli Hindu Sabha, Medan, Sumatra to Vice-President. Moslem League, Singapore, 26 October 1915, *op. cit.*, Telegram Secret, No. 579, (Cipher) General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore to War Office, London, 28 October, 1915, NA(UK) CO, 273-435, p. 401.
- <sup>29</sup> Kraft, Statement No.2 (Deninzer) encl: Despatch, Brigadier General Dudley Ridout, General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore to

Secretary to War Office, London 3 September 1915, NA(UK), CO, 273/435, p. 468/1.

- <sup>30</sup> Kraft, Further Information, 8 August 1915, encl: Despatch Dudley Ridout, to Secretary to War Office, London 3 September 1915, NA(UK), CO, 273/435, p. 471.
- <sup>31</sup> Kraft, Statement No. 2, encl: Despatch, *op. cit.*, NA(UK), CO, 273/435, p. 468/1.
- <sup>32</sup> Telegram, Secret, General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore, to War Office, London, 16 October, 1915, NA(UK) 273/435, p. 337.
- <sup>33</sup> Telegram, Secret, General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore, to War Office, London, 21 November 1915, NA(UK) 273-435, p. 423.
- <sup>34</sup> Hindu Sedition, Schooner, *Henry S*, NA(UK) CO, 273/435, p. 366.
- <sup>35</sup> Telegram, Secret No. 517, Cipher, from General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore, to War Office, London, 5 October, 1915, NA(UK), CO, 273/435, p. 360.
- <sup>36</sup> Telegram, Secret No. 538, Cipher, General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore, to War Office, London, 12 October, 1915, NA(UK) 273/435, p. 364.
- <sup>37</sup> Telegram, Foreign Secret from Viceroy of India to General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore, to War Office, London, 27 October, 1915, 4.12 p.m., NA(UK) 273/435, p. 376.
- <sup>38</sup> Statement of Kumudnath Mukherjee, Part I, encl: Telegram Secret from General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore, to War Office, London, 25 October, 1915, 2.15 p.m. NA(UK) CO, 273/435, p. 379.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> Statement of Kumudnath Mukherjee, Part II, encl: Telegram Secret No. 564 (Cipher) from General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore, to War Office, London, 26 October, 1915, NA(UK) CO, 273/435, pp. 386-87.
- <sup>41</sup> Telegram Secret NO. 566 from General Officer Commanding Straits Settlements, Singapore, to War Office, London, 25 October, 1915, 8.15 p.m., NA(UK) CO, 273/435, p. 381.
- <sup>42</sup> Dan Van der Vat, *The Last Corsair. The Story of the Emden*, London, 1984, p. 166.
- <sup>43</sup> Evidence of 2 Secret Agents, Report of the Singapore Mutiny, 15 February 1915, Report, Section 9, 2 10R /L/MIL/7/7191, p. 325.
- <sup>44</sup> Dan Van der Vat, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-67.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> Dasgupta, S. *Swadhinata Sangrame Sasastra Biplobider Bhumika*, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-18.
- <sup>47</sup> For details see: Ross, R. G. *Removal of Indian Troops to Malta*, London 1878. In the Berlin Congress in 1878 on the question of the political future of the Christian States of the Ottoman Empire the three European powers, the British, French and the Russians were struggling for establishing their respective political influence over the Christian states of Rumania and

Bulgaria. But Germany then kept herself aloof of this scramble for power. Similarly in the partition of Africa in 1884 amongst the European powers it was the Anglo-French power that had appropriated the lion's share of the cake. Germany, the grace of European Imperial courtesy, was offered East Africa (and there was no repercussion from her in this apportionment.)

### Appendix

List of Agents of the German Secret Service and the Indian Revolutionary Society of Berlin engaged in the work of the distribution of arms, ammunition and the funds to the leaders of the Indian revolutionary parties in raising anti-British armed revolution in India during the First World War 1914-15. Both Birendranath Chattopadhyay and Lala Hardyal were the real architects of the German Secret Service for German military aid to the Indian revolutionary leaders for raising anti-British armed revolution in India [Retrieved so far from the British records, the Singapore Mutiny 1915, CO 273/435, NA (UK)].

1. Atmaram (Punjabi) Indian.
2. Bholanath Chatterjee (Indian).
3. Rakshit (Indian Bengali) - Chief advisor to the German Ambassador to US International head of the German Secret Service.
4. Sannyal (Indian).
5. Dr. Pillay (Indian Madrasi).
6. Chatterjee Sukumar (Indian Bengali) - deputed from USA to Bangkok to recruit Indians living in China & South Asia to be trained for revolution from Burma to Bengal.
7. Jodha Sing (alias Hassan Zadah) (Punjabi Indian) – deputed from Berlin to Bangkok, Manila, China to recruit Indians to be trained for revolution in India.
8. Dr. Haidar (Indian).
9. Dr. Probhakar (Indian).
10. Chakraborty (Indian Bengali) - Deputy Chief Advisor to the German Ambassador to US International head of the German Secret Service.
11. Dr. Hafiz (Indian Pathan).
12. Ajit Sing (alias Mirza Hasan Khan), Ghadar Party. Punjabi.
13. Birendranath Sen, Engineer, Indian Bengali, (alias Jan Mohammad) - Second officer of the German Ship *S S Henry* laden with arms and ammunition.
14. Kothavala, Indian Police Intelligence Officer, assigned to do espionage work with the Indian sepoys in France, 1914-15.
15. Dr. Niranjana Sing, a medical graduate from Calcutta.
16. Barkatullah (Indian Revolutionary leader of Berlin).
17. Mansoor (Indian Revolutionary leader of Berlin).
18. Ram Chandra (Indian).
19. H. L. Gupta (Indian).
20. S. P. Gupta (Indian).
21. Bhagaban Sing (Punjabi Ghadar Party), Japan.

22. Rash Bihari Bose (alias P M Thakur) Indian Revolutionary leader of Japan.
23. Thakur sing (Indian Punjabi).
24. Pritam Singh (Indian).
25. S. D. Kapoor (Indian).
26. Haroon (Indian).
27. Wedhe (Danish American Jew) financier - occasional visitor to Calcutta posing as a Diamond merchant secretly engaged in carrying money from Batavia, Shanghai and Berlin to the Indian leaders in Calcutta.
28. George Frederick Vincent Kraft (German) - one of the most responsible agents direct from Berlin and based in Batavia.
29. George Paul Bohem, German ex-military officer assigned to train Indians for armed revolution in India from Burma.
30. Mr. Denham (German).
31. Deninzer, Naval officer (Dutch).
32. Starneck (Hollander American).
33. Jacobsen, German/Danish.
34. Martin (Indian Bengali alias Father Martin, Narendranath Bhattacharyya) later the communist M N Roy.
35. Payne (Indian Bengali).
36. Doves Dekhar (Swiss)
37. Dr. Tjipto (Indonesia of Sola) an Indonesian noble.
38. Darna Koessama (Indonesia of Sola) an Indonesian noble.
39. Mr. Grudner, a German living in Bali, Indonesia.
40. Julius O'Henning, German master of the German ship *S S Henry* specialized in the shipment of arms and ammunition to India.
41. Ainech Meyer (alias Moses Gerschens) a Turkish Jew sent to Peswar by the German Consul General of Shanghai as German spy arrested at Peshwa in India.
42. Mukherjee Kumudnath, representative of an Indian revolutionary party arrested at Singapore.
43. Mukherjee Abaninath, representative of an Indian revolutionary party, arrested at Singapore.
44. Salim (Indian).
45. Seng Kwie (Chinese) arrested at Singapore. Sent by the German Consul General of Shanghai on way to Calcutta to deliver money to the Indian leader. F. W.
46. Van der Kastellen (Dutchman) leader of ant-Dutch and anti-British revolution in the Dutch East Indies and India.

## *Instant Triple Talaq : A Curse on Muslim Women in India*

Nurul Islam

World Economic Forum's study measuring gender equality around the world has placed India 113th out of 130 countries in 2008, and 108th out of 144 countries in 2017.<sup>1</sup> This international study clearly shows that gender inequality is still a dominant feature in the male-dominated society of India; and the concept of women's equality and empowerment is still elusive in the country. In this backdrop the raging debate over the Muslim practice of instant triple *talaq* or divorce throughout the country in the recent past has added a new dimension. Instant triple *talaq*, also known as *talaq-e-biddat*, is a form of Islamic divorce which has been practiced by Muslims in India, especially adherents of Hanafi Sunni Islamic schools of jurisprudence. Nowadays the main controversial areas of Muslim personal law are instant triple *talaq*, polygamy, maintenance after divorce and inheritance that not only deny gender justice and equality to Muslim women, but also glorify the male chauvinism and dominance even in the 21st century. But we shall confine our discussion only to one main controversial area, i.e., instant triple *talaq* and shall examine the controversy on triple *talaq* and its implications in this paper in the light of exegetical as well as historical experience. Let us first look into the verses of the Quran on triple *talaq*.

### **Triple *Talaq* and the Quran**

Instant triple *talaq* is the common practice of divorce among the Muslim community. Without recourse to the court a Muslim man can divorce his wife whenever he desires by pronouncing *talaq* three times

in one sitting. This is opposed to the Quranic pronouncements on divorce. Marriage is considered a civil contract in Islam and can be dissolved if conditions stipulated in the Quran are fulfilled. Nevertheless, *talaq* has not been encouraged in the Quran. The Quran emphasizes the peaceful settlement of any quarrel between the husband and wife through the mediators. Hence the verse no.35 in the fourth chapter of the Quran declares, "If you fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; If they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation. For Allah has full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things."<sup>2</sup>

The Quranic way of divorce is a lengthy and complex process. In the Quran the husband has been asked to wait for four months to make divorce effective, because this intervening period can be utilized as an opportunity to settle the disputes between the couple. During this intervening period the Koran has ordered the husband to pronounce *talaq* only twice so that it can be revoked. So the verse no. 226 in the second chapter of the Quran declares, "For those who take an oath for abstention from their wives, a waiting for four months is ordained; if then they return, Allah is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."<sup>3</sup> The verse no. 229 in the second chapter also says, "Divorce is only permissible twice: after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness."<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the divorced women have been ordered to wait for three monthly periods, because in this intervening period it will be known whether they are pregnant or not and it will also provide an opportunity of reconciliation with their husbands. Hence the verse no. 228 in the second chapter of the Quran declares, "Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods. Nor is it lawful for them to hide what Allah has created in their wombs, if they have faith in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have the better right to take them in that period, if they wish for reconciliation."<sup>5</sup> The verse no. 2 in the sixty fifth chapter of The Quran says that when all efforts for reconciliation between the husband



and wife have become ineffective, they should be separated on equitable terms in the presence of two witnesses.<sup>6</sup>

### Origin of Triple *Talaq*

When the husband exercises the right of pronouncing divorce on his wife, this is technically known as *talaq* (the Arabic word for divorce). The Hanafi law recognizes two kinds of *talaq*, namely, (1) *talaq-us-sunnat*, that is, *talaq* according to the rules laid down in the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet; and (2) *talaq-e-biddat*, (irrevocable or innovative divorce). *Talaq-us-sunnat* is of two kinds, namely, (1) *ahsan talaq* and (2) *hasan talaq*. The *ahsan talaq* consists of a single pronouncement of *talaq* made during a *tuhr* (period of wife's purity between two menstruations) followed by abstinence from sexual intercourse during the *iddat* period (three monthly periods). After this single pronouncement, the wife has to observe the *iddat* period. There is possibility of revoking the *talaq* before the expiry of the *iddat* period, thereby paving the way for reconciliation between the husband and wife. When the *iddat* period expires and the husband does not revoke the *talaq*, the *talaq* in the *ahsan* mode becomes irrevocable and final. The *hasan talaq* consists of three pronouncements of *talaq* made during three successive *tuhurs*. In this form too, there is a provision for revocation. The first and second pronouncements of *talaq* may be revoked by the husband and then *talaq* becomes ineffective. If no such revocation is made, then the husband has to make the third pronouncement of *talaq* in the third *tuhr*. When the third pronouncement is made, *talaq* becomes irrevocable and the wife has to observe the required *iddat*. Only the *Talaq-us-sunnat* was in practice during the life of the Prophet. This form of *talaq* is recognized both by the Sunnis as well as the Shias.

The *talaq-e-biddat* has two forms: (1) the husband may make three pronouncements of *talaq* during a single *tuhr* saying "I divorce thee, I divorce thee, and I divorce thee" or he may do it even in one sentence saying "I divorce thee thrice" and (2) the husband may make a single

pronouncement of *talaq* during a *tuhr* clearly indicating an intention to dissolve the marriage irrevocably saying "I divorce thee irrevocably" or "I divorce thee in *Bain*." A *talaq* in the *biddat* mode becomes irrevocable immediately it is pronounced irrespective of *iddat*. As the *talaq* becomes irrevocable at once, it is called *talaq-i-bain*, that is, irrevocable *talaq*.<sup>7</sup>

In the case of *ahsan talaq* and *hasan talaq* the husband has an opportunity to revoke *talaq* at any time before the completion of the *iddat* period. Thus hasty, thoughtless divorces can be prevented. Besides, resumption of sexual intercourse before the completion of the *iddat* period also results in the revocation of divorce. In the case of *talaq-e-biddat* the husband can divorce his wife by uttering the word *talaq* three times in oral, written or, more recently, electronic form. In this case the husband has no opportunity to revoke *talaq* later. Thus the basic difference between the *talaq-us-sunnat* and *talak-e-biddat* is that in the former case the pronouncement of *talaq* is revocable while in the latter, it is irrevocable. This is the reason probably why the *talaq-us-sunnat* is considered to be approved divorce and *talaq-e-biddat* as unapproved divorce. The *talaq-e-biddat* in any of its forms is not recognized by the Shias.<sup>8</sup>

It is to be noted that during the Prophet Muhammad's life-time (570-632 A.D.) and during the first *Khalifa* (Caliph) Abu Bakkar's reign (632-634 A.D.) and in the first two years of the second *Khalifa* Omar's reign (634-643 A.D.), there was no practice of pronouncing *talaq* thrice in one sitting. Even if someone pronounced *talaq* thrice in one sitting, it was treated as one *talaq*. Prophet Muhammad showed his dislike to divorce in unambiguous terms. He is reported to have said that 'with Allah, the most detestable of all things permitted is divorce'.<sup>9</sup> According to a *Hadith*, when the Prophet Muhammad was told of a person who had divorced his wife by pronouncing three *talaq* in one sitting, the Prophet stood up in anger and said, "You make fun of Allah's book and I am still there among you."<sup>10</sup> Thus the Prophet never approved a *talaq* in which there was no opportunity for reconciliation between husband and wife.

It is the second *Khalifa* Omar who enforced triple *talaq* in one sitting in the later part of his reign and it was done in view of extraordinary conditions prevailing at that time. During wars of conquest many fair-complexioned and beautiful women from Syria, Egypt and other places were captured and brought to Medina. Many Arabs were tempted to marry them. But these women were not used to living with co-wives and often made a condition that the men must divorce their former wives thrice so that they could not be taken back. But they knew little that according to the Quran and the *sunnah* three divorces were treated as one *talaq* or divorce. The Arabs would pronounce *talaq* thrice to satisfy those Syrian and other women, but later took their former wives back, which gave rise to innumerable disputes. In this situation, the *Khalifa* Omar 'thought it fit to enforce three divorces in one sitting as an irrevocable divorce' to punish those dishonest Arabs. Thus Omar has altered the rules of divorce under the pressure of events. It was in the nature of an ordinance by a ruler to meet an abnormal situation rather than a divine injunction.<sup>11</sup>

The practice of pronouncing *talaq* thrice in one sitting (*talaq-e-biddat*) has been widely in practice among the Sunni Muslims and it has also legal validity behind it. This form of *talaq* came into vogue during the second century of the Mohammedan era. According to Ameer Ali (1849-1928), an Islamic scholar and jurist, triple *talaq* in one sitting was introduced by the Omayyad kings because they found the checks in the Prophet's formula of *talaq* inconvenient to them.<sup>12</sup> From the beginning there were differences of opinion among the four prominent jurists, i.e., Abu Hanifa (699-767 A.D.), Malik bin Anas (711-795 A.D.), Idris-al Shaffi (767-820 A.D.) and Ahmad bin Hanbal (767-820 A.D.) over the legal validity of triple *talaq* in one sitting. Abu Hanifa and Malik bin Anas maintain that triple *talaq* in one sitting is *bid'ah* (an innovation) and this form of *talaq* is not permissible. Ahmad bin Hanbal agrees with this view. But Idris-al Shaffi thinks that this form of *talaq* is legitimate and is the husband's right. Thus it is evident that except for Shaffi no other jurists consider three divorces in one

sitting as legitimate and in accordance with the intention of the Quran. Yet Abu Hanifa and Malik feel that permissible or not, a divorce, once pronounced thrice in one sitting, would be valid and would result in *talaq-i-battah* (irrevocable divorce). However, Ahmad bin Hanbal maintains that there is no place for three divorces in one sitting in the Quran and it permits only *talaq-i-raj'i* (revocable divorce). According to him, one cannot permit three divorces in one sitting or *tolao-i-battah* and even if three divorces are pronounced, they should be treated as one. The husband will have the right to revoke the divorce and marry the wife once again. Ibn Tamiyyah, a prominent jurist of the 14th century, concurs with this view and maintains that three divorces in one sitting will have no legal validity.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Impact of Instant Triple *Talaq* on Women**

Three divorces in one sitting is the most arbitrary and non-Quranic form of divorce. It has made the lives of thousands of women most miserable as they have been left in the past with no legal redress against this form of divorce in India. It has always been a man's prerogative to divorce his wife when he desires, the women having no say in the matter. Commenting on the instant triple *talaq*, an eminent Islamic scholar and theologian Asghar Ali Engineer has rightly said, "... this is not the Quranic way of divorce; it is an unfortunate innovation."<sup>14</sup>

In a patriarchal society like ours, the *talaq-e-biddat* or triple *talaq* in the Hanafi law has been declared as "good in law, though bad in theology." In accordance with the ethos of patriarchy then prevailing in the society, some jurists legalized this arbitrary rule of divorce which, no doubt, undermined the women's position in the Muslim society. This triple *talaq* is the most common and prevalent mode of divorce in India.<sup>15</sup> In the recent past it is learnt from several studies that the number of instant triple *talaq* has been increasing rapidly in India. The study of *Awaz-e-Niswaan* (Voice of Women), a non-governmental Muslim women's organization of Mumbai, shows that

the rate of *talaq* in 1989-1990 was 2.37%, but it rose to 8.19% within next ten years. This organisation has also revealed that 65% of divorce cases was the result of arbitrary, unilateral *talaq*.<sup>16</sup> It is also learnt from the census report of 2011 that the ratio of divorced Muslim women is much higher than that of national average. According to this report, the number of divorced women is 3.1 per one thousand married women at the national level whereas the number of divorced women is 5.6 among every one thousand married Muslim women.<sup>17</sup>

Khadija Banu, the Secretary of *Rokeya Nari Unnayan Samiti* of West Bengal, has worked for a long time in the villages of Muslim-dominant district of Murshidabad and expressed her own experience thus (December, 2016): 'We have seen the divorced Muslim women in every village ranging from the minimum ten to the maximum seventy in number. The total number of Muslim divorced women of the district is nearly one lakh. Being the victims of instant triple *talaq* these women are passing through untold sufferings mentally and economically.' Khadija Banu also felt that 'Murshidabad has been at the top position with regard to illegal trafficking of women in West Bengal and there is a close link between this event and the innumerable presence of divorced women there.'<sup>18</sup> Hence it is clear that a sizable section of divorced Muslim women is compelled eventually to accept the profession of sex workers. It has been pointed out that 75 percent of Muslim prostitutes in Calcutta are those who have been divorced by their husbands arbitrarily.<sup>19</sup> Rahima Khatun, the Convener, West Bengal State Branch of *Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan* made a similar study on divorced Muslim women in seven districts of West Bengal and this study has also revealed the same pathetic conditions of these women (September, 2015).<sup>20</sup>

We read the sensational news of instant triple *talaq* by means of modern technology like WhatsApp, E-mail, Fax, SMS, phone etc. It is, no doubt, that a sizable section of Muslim women are immensely suffering on account of the practice of instant triple *talaq*. In 2005 A.D. the All India Muslim Personal Law Board in its Bhopal session

has already published a model *Nikahnama* where the practice of pronouncing *talaq* thrice in one sitting has not been supported. Instead, it has been stated in the *Nikahnama* that only one *talaq* should be pronounced so that it can be revoked after three months. But this model *Nikahnama* has had little impact on the Muslim community and the practice of instant triple *talaq* is continued unabated as before. In this matter Muslim women social activists like Miratun Nahar have expressed their doubts over the sincerity of the Muslim Personal Law Board controlled by the orthodox Muslims.<sup>21</sup> The eminent historian and Islamic scholar Rafiq Zakaria wrote, "Triple *talaq* has been condemned by the Ulema but such is their aversion to reforms that they have refused to disown and discard it."<sup>22</sup>

A mass petition was prepared in 2017 by the *Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan*, another Muslim Women's organization, demanding a ban on triple *talaq*. It was signed by more than 50,000 Muslim women and men. The petition also sought the National Commission for Women's intervention to end this 'un-Quranic practice'. *The Mahila Andolan* collected signatures from across the country and according to this Association, 92 per cent of Muslim women want an end to instant *triple talaq*.<sup>23</sup>

It is true that in some cases Muslim women have been given the right to repudiate the marriage with the consent of their husbands. Although the right to give divorce belongs primarily to the husband, he may delegate the right to divorce to his wife at the time of marriage. This form of divorce is called *talaq-e-tafweez* in which the right to divorce is exercised by the wife on behalf of the husband who had delegated it to her. A wife can also exercise the right to divorce after the wife returns the dower in part or full as agreed upon between the married couple. This form of divorce is called *Khula*. The married couple can also enforce divorce by their mutual consent and such divorce is known as '*Mubaraat*' or 'Mutual Divorce'. These forms of divorce can be effective without the intervention of the court. But the wife has to wait for the '*iddat*' period (three monthly periods) even if

the divorce is enforced by means of *Khula* or *Mubaraat*.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Muslim women can approach the court with the appeal seeking divorce with their husbands on the reasonable grounds as specified in 'the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act' of 1939. But the aforesaid forms of divorce among the Indian Muslims are rare.<sup>25</sup> Thus as per Muslim personal law as administered in India, while a husband can dissolve the marriage at any time without any reason, a wife cannot do this unilaterally.

The empirical study conducted by Dr. Kauser Edappagath shows that the common form of divorce prevalent among the Muslim population is *talaq-e-biddat*, popularly known as triple *talaq* in India. The study shows that in 88 per cent of cases, divorce took place through the pronouncement of *talaq*. Out of these, 84.7 per cent were through triple *talaq* or instant divorce. In 92.5 per cent of the cases, the divorced women reported that their divorce was arbitrary and without any reason, and they had been divorced against their wishes.<sup>26</sup> In this backdrop, the Supreme Court's judgment of 22nd August, 2017 on triple *talaq* was, no doubt, epoch-making.

### **The Supreme Court's Historic Judgment**

Some Muslim women as well as activists and the organizations like 'Muslim Women's Quest for Equality' filed the writ petitions before the Supreme Court of India with an appeal seeking a ban on the practice of instant triple *talaq* as it has been discriminatory to women. Later the Central Government submitted an affidavit to the Apex Court which sought similar ban on triple *talaq* (7th October, 2016). The Government also stated in its affidavit that the practices of triple *talaq*, *nikah halala*<sup>27</sup> and polygamy do not constitute the integral or essential part of religion and these practices violate the fundamental rights of Muslim women. Hence these practices, according to the affidavit, cannot be claimed to be protected under the constitutional right to religious freedom.<sup>28</sup>

The Supreme Court decided to form a five-judge Constitution Bench to hear the petitions challenging the constitutional validity of these Muslim practices (30 March, 2017). The Constitution Bench said that it would examine first whether the practice of the triple *talaq* is fundamental to Islam. It also said that it would not consider polygamy and *nikah halala* for the time being but later would take them up. After hearing the arguments of the concerned parties, the Supreme Court finally in a landmark judgment struck down the instant triple *talaq* on 22nd August, 2017 upholding the Muslim women's equality and empowerment rights. A five-judge Constitution Bench, by a majority of 3:2 have ruled that the practice of divorce through instant triple *talaq* among Muslims is void, illegal and unconstitutional as this practice of "triple *talaq* is against the basic tenets of the Holy Quran and consequently, it violates Shariat." Moreover, "this form of *talaq* must, therefore, be held to be violative of the fundamental right contained under Article 14 ('Right to Equality') of the Constitution of India," the Court said.<sup>29</sup>

Dealing with the Muslim Personal Law Board's claim that triple *talaq* is integral to Islam as it was in practice for 1,400 years, the Supreme Court said, "Merely because a practice has continued for long, that by itself cannot make it valid if it has been expressly declared to be impermissible." The Apex Court in its historic judgment on triple *talaq* further said, "this form of *talaq* is manifestly arbitrary", and "What is held to be bad in the Holy Quran cannot be good in Shariat and, in that sense, what is bad in theology is bad in law as well."<sup>30</sup> The Court also gave injunction against instant triple *talaq* for six months, asking the Central Government to come out with a law in this regard by this time.<sup>31</sup>

The Apex Court's verdict was hailed by the petitioners comprising several affected women including Shayara Bano, Gulshan Parween, Ishrat Jahan, Afreen Rehman and Atiya Sabri who were given instant triple *talaq* by their husbands through speed post or over telephone as well as Zakia Soman, the co-founder of the organization called the



*Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan* and other Muslim organizations like the 'All India Muslim Women Personal Law Board', *Rokeya Nari Unnayan Samiti*, 'the Shia Waqf Board' etc. Muslim women activists like Zakia Soman, Nurjahan Safia Niyaz, Khadija Banu also welcomed the verdict and affirmed that they would now continue their struggle against polygamy, *nikah halala* and other discriminatory Muslim practices. The Court's judgment on instant triple *talaq* was also welcomed by the various political parties including the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, the Congress, the CPI(M) and other Left parties.<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, the orthodox Muslim leaders and their organizations severely criticized the Supreme Court's above judgment. From the beginning they were vehemently opposed to all efforts for abrogation of triple *talaq*. 'All India Muslim Personal Law Board', the most influential organization of orthodox Muslims, had submitted an affidavit to the Supreme Court saying that 'triple *talaq* is undesirable, but it is permissible in the Muslim personal law.' Hence the Muslim Personal Law Board has always been opposed to the abolition of triple *talaq*. The Board had also opposed the Apex Court's adjudication of triple *talaq*, *Nikah halala* and polygamy, maintaining that these practices have stemmed from the Holy Quran and are not justiciable (27th March, 2017).<sup>33</sup>

However, the Supreme Court of India rejected the Muslim Personal Law Board's such pleas. The Court had also taken in the recent past the commendable stand against triple *talaq* in *Shamim Ara v State of UP* (2002), *Ikbal Bano v State of UP* (2007) and other cases. In these cases the apex court ruled that unless the husband proves to the satisfaction of the Court that he followed step by step the procedure for divorce (including efforts at reconciliation) as laid down in the Quran, his claim of having divorced the wife in the past cannot be accepted. Later on this-ruling of the Apex Court has also been affirmed in several High Court decisions.<sup>34</sup>

As regards the constitutional status of the Muslim personal law, Dr. Tahir Mahmood, an eminent Muslim law scholar, observes, "In

India Muslim personal law is applied as a part of the country's civil law, and not as part of the Muslim religion. It does not enjoy any special status so as to be protected by the religious-liberty provisions of the Indian Constitution. Like any other law it is within the legislative competence of the State for the purpose of amendment and reform, and within the courts' powers of ascertainment, interpretation and application of laws."<sup>35</sup> Instant triple *talaq*, as has been mentioned earlier, is a major controversial area of the Muslim personal law in India. It is significant to note that now instant triple *talaq* or *talaq-e-biddat* has either been regulated or banned by legislation in almost all Muslim-majority countries including Pakistan and Bangladesh.<sup>36</sup> Thus the courts can also bring about such desirable change in India as has already been done in many Muslim countries. Emphasizing the urgent necessity for reform of Muslim personal law, Rafiq Zakaria thus wrote in 2004, "I failed, therefore, to understand why Indian Muslims are now making such a hue and cry about carrying out certain necessary reforms in their Personal Law, when several Muslim countries have already enacted them."<sup>37</sup>

### Conclusion

Muslims are the second largest religious community of India, next to the Hindus. Even after 70 years of India's independence, no tangible measure has yet been taken to codify and reform the Muslim personal law here in conformity with contemporary social needs and modern thought. A Muslim man can even now marry up to four wives at his whim at the same time; despite the Supreme Court's recent historic judgment, he can divorce his wife arbitrarily outside the court in the *ahsan* and *hasan* mode; he has generally to provide maintenance to his divorced wife for the *iddat* period (three months) only; and a Muslim woman even now cannot get equal share in inheritance. It is reasonably argued that these areas of Muslim personal law have made Muslim women the second class citizens in India as compared with men.

Marriage, divorce, maintenance and inheritance are staple issues that constitute personal laws unique to different religious communities of India. Personal laws as fraught with age-old practices and customs sanctioned by religious beliefs are by and large patriarchal and anachronistic. It is, therefore, imperative to introduce for all citizens a uniform civil code in place of those personal laws to ensure equality before law as well as gender justice in accordance with provisions of the Constitution. In the advanced Muslim countries like Turkey and Egypt no personal law of each minority has been recognized and a uniform civil code has been enacted. The same case is also followed in the European countries.<sup>38</sup> Some Islamic scholars like Asghar Ali Engineer and Asaf A. A. Fyzee emphasized the importance of formulating a uniform civil code for all communities of India.<sup>39</sup> It may be observed that article 44 of the Constitution (under the Directive Principles of the State Policy) says clearly that "The State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India."<sup>40</sup>

Many years ago the Islamic law had completely been abrogated in Turkey (1926) and later it was also codified and reformed in other Muslim-majority countries. Islamic criminal law totally and Islamic civil law substantially had been abolished in India during the British rule. Then the Indian Muslims accepted these changes. As our new consciousness led to the abolition of the obnoxious practice of slavery, which has even been sanctioned in the Quran as well as in the Shariat law, so to uphold the modern principles of equality and empowerment of Muslim women and also to remove their sufferings and miseries for which they are not responsible at all, there is no justification in opposing the abrogation of the discriminatory practices like triple *talaq*, *nikah halala* and polygamy. Muslim women have already been raising their voice against these pernicious and derogatory practices. Hence the stance taken by the Muslim Personal Law Board that these practices as sanctioned in the Quran as well as in the Shariat law are immutable and therefore unjustifiable, is not tenable in the light of

modern thought and historical experience as well. As the noted Islamic scholar Asaf A. A. Fyzee rightly observes, "... it is futile to argue that where a certain rule of law, as applied by the courts in India, needs a change, we are interfering with an immutable rule of Divine Law. Such an argument is generally used for personal, polemical, or political ends, and not with any 'spiritual' motives."<sup>41</sup>

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *The Times of India*, English Daily, Kolkata, November 19, 2008, p. 18 (Editorial: 'No Woman: No Power'); Atanu Biswas, 'Nari-Prush Samata...?' (an article), *Ei Samay*, A Bengali Daily, Kolkata, 12 March, 2018.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Quran*, 4 :35, translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Goodwords Books, First Published: 1934, Reprinted: 2013, New Delhi, p. 53.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Quran*, 2: 226, op. cit., p. 22.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Quran*, 2 :229, op.cit., p. 23.
- <sup>5</sup> *The Quran*, 2:228, op. cit., p. 22-23.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Quran*, 65:2, op. cit., p. 399.
- <sup>7</sup> Mulla's *Principles of Mahomedan Law*, edited by M. Hidayatullah and Arshad Hidayatullah, N. M.Tripathi Private Ltd., Bombay, 18th Edition, 1977, pp.330-331.
- <sup>8</sup> Diwan, Dr. Paras: *Muslim Law in Modern India*, Allahabad Law Agency, Allahabad, First Edition, 1977, p. 73-74.
- <sup>9</sup> Quoted in Fyzee, Asaf A. A., *Outlines of Muhammadan Law*, New Delhi, Fourth Edition, Ninth Impression, 2005. p. 146.
- <sup>10</sup> Cited in Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Rights of Women in Islam*, Sterling Paperback, New Delhi, Second Impression, 1996, p. 124.
- <sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 124, 125-126.
- <sup>12</sup> [dnaindia.com/india/report-three types of talaq](http://dnaindia.com/india/report-three-types-of-talaq).
- <sup>13</sup> Engineer, Asghar Ali, op. cit., pp. 124-125.
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 127.
- <sup>15</sup> Mulla's *Principles of Mahomedan Law*, op. cit., p. 330.
- <sup>16</sup> Khatun, Roshenara : 'Muslim Nari O Ain;' in *Muslim Samaj Ebang Ei Samay*, Vol.1, (in Bengali), edited by Moinul Hassan, National Book Agency Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata, First Published: 2002, Reprint, 2005, p. 110.
- <sup>17</sup> Ghosh, Saswati : 'Ekkalin Tin Talak Nishiddhe Apatti Keno?' *Ei Samay*, Kolkata, 21 October, 2016, p. 8.
- <sup>18</sup> Banu, Khadija : 'Shudhu Muslim narider Kshetrei Aini Baisamyo?' *Ei Samay* Kolkata, 13 December, 2016, p. 8.
- <sup>19</sup> Edappagath, Dr. Kauser: *Divorce and Gender Equity in Muslim Personal Law of India*, Lexis-Nexis, Gurgaon (Haryana), 2014, p. 125.
- <sup>20</sup> Datta, Milan: 'Pakistano Egote Pare, Bharat Nishchal,' *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Kolkata, 29 September, 2015, p. 14.

- <sup>21</sup> Nahar, Miratun : 'Talak Tatvake Tatkshanic Talak Kara Baidha Nay.' *Ei Samay*, Kolkata, 20 December, 2016, p. 8.
- <sup>22</sup> Zakaria, Rafiq : *Indian Muslims: Where have they gone wrong?*, Popular Prakashan and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, First and Second Editions, 2004, p. xxxix (Introduction).
- <sup>23</sup> Gupta, Sunil: 'A blessing for Muslim women', *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 23 August, 2017, p. 7
- <sup>24</sup> Mulla's *Principles of Mahomedan Law*, op. cit., pp.332, 337; Diwan, Dr. Paras: op. cit., pp. 75-76, 80, 82.
- <sup>25</sup> Alam, Chandreyi : 'Nari o Ain', *Prasango : Manabibidya*, edited by Rajashri Basu and Basabi Chakraborti, Urbi Prakashan, Kolkata, First Published, 2008, Second Reprint, 2011, pp, 280-281.
- <sup>26</sup> Edappagath, Dr. Kauser: op. cit., p. 96.
- <sup>27</sup> A divorced woman could not be taken back even if her husband and she want to live together once again unless she marries someone else who would divorce her after the conjugal relationship. On the completion of the *iddat* period (three monthly periods), she could remarry her former husband. This practice is called *nikah halala*.
- <sup>28</sup> *The Statesman*, English Daily, Kolkata, 16 October, 2016, p. 7; *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 30 October, 2016, p. 8; *Ei Samay*, Kolkata, 23 August, 2017, p. 3.
- <sup>29</sup> *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 31 March, 2017, p. 01; *The Statesman*, 23 August, 2017, pp. 01, 05.
- <sup>30</sup> *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 23 August, 2017, p. 05.
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 01. Despite the failure of initial attempts, the Central Government finally got passed the *Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill*, 2019, in the parliament on 30th July, 2019 that seeks to make instant *talaq* not only illegal and void but also a criminal and non-bailable offence. Pronouncement of instant *talaq*, as per the Bill, will attract a jail-term of three years and also a fine for the husband. The aggrieved woman is also entitled to demand maintenance for her dependent children (*The Statesman*, Kolkata, 29 December, 2017, p. 01 and 31 July, 2019, p. 01). But from the very beginning the Congress-led Opposition parties and some Women Rights Groups have strongly objected to the Bill as they argue that an offence like divorcing or abandoning wives committed by a non-Muslim is considered as a civil offence, not a criminal offence. Why then will instant *talaq* be considered as a criminal offence? (*The Statesman*, Kolkata, 28 December, 2018, pp. 01, 03 and 01 January, 2019, p. 01 and 31 July, 2019, p. 01).
- <sup>32</sup> *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 23 December, 2017, pp. 01, 05; *Ei Samay*, A Bengali Daily, Kolkata, 23 August, 2017, p. 03; *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 29 December, 2017, p. 02 and also see Sanjeev Sirohi, 'Only Half the Battle Won', *The Statesman*, 11 January, 2018, p. 16; *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Kolkata, 24 August, 2017, pp. 01, 11 and [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com)
- <sup>33</sup> *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 31 March, 2017, p. 01; *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 29 December, 2017, p. 02.

<sup>34</sup> Mahmood, Tahir and Mahmood, Saif: *Muslim Personal Law in India and Abroad*, Universal Publishing Co., New Delhi, 2012, pp. 92-93.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>37</sup> Zakaria, Rafiq, *op. cit.*, p. xxxix (Introduction).

<sup>38</sup> Raina, Dinanath : *Uniform Civil Code and Gender Justice*, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, First Published, 1996, p. 30.

<sup>39</sup> Engineer, Asghar Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 170 and Fyzee, Asaf A. A., *The Reform of Muslim Personal Law in India*, Nachiketa Publications Limited, Bombay, 1971, p. 33.

<sup>40</sup> Cited in Dinanath Raina, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>41</sup> Fyzee, Asaf A. A., *The Reform of Muslim Personal Law in India*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

*A Vedic Riddle (Prašnottarī)*

H. S. Ananthanarayana

*Taittirīya Samhitā* has, in its seventh Kāṇḍa, fourth Prapāṭhaka, 18th Anuvāka, the following text. And I have attempted here to present a literary exposition of the riddle utilising the traditional commentaries of both Sāyaṇa and Bhaṭṭabhāskara.

<i>kim svid</i>	<i>āsīt</i>	<i>pūrvacittiḥ</i>
What ever	was	the first knowledge?
<i>kim svid</i>	<i>āsīd</i>	<i>bṛhadvayaḥ</i>
What ever	was	the much desired-thing?
<i>kim svid</i>	<i>āsīt</i>	<i>piśaygilā</i>
What ever	was	(of) the mixed colour?
<i>kim svid</i>	<i>āsīt</i>	<i>pilippilā</i>
What ever	was	the slippery one?
<i>dyaur</i>	<i>āsīt</i>	<i>pūrvacittiḥ</i>
Sky	was	the first knowledge.
<i>aśva</i>	<i>āsīd</i>	<i>bṛhadvayaḥ</i>
Horse	was	the much desired-thing.
<i>rātrir</i>	<i>āsīt</i>	<i>piśaygilā</i>
Night	was	(of) mixed colour.
<i>āvir</i>	<i>āsīt</i>	<i>pilippilā</i>
Earth	was	the slippery one.
<i>kas svid</i>	<i>ekākī</i>	<i>carati</i>
Who ever	alone	moves?

<i>ka u svij</i>	<i>jāyate</i>	<i>punaḥ</i>		
Who ever also	is born	again?		
<i>kim svid</i>	<i>himasya</i>	<i>bheṣajam</i>		
What ever	for the cold	(is) a remedy?		
<i>kim svid</i>	<i>āvapanam</i>	<i>mahat</i>		
What ever	(is) sowing place	the great?		
<i>sūrya</i>	<i>ekākī</i>	<i>carati</i>		
The Sun	alone	moves.		
<i>candramā</i>	<i>jāyate</i>	<i>punaḥ</i>		
The moon	is born	again.		
<i>agnir</i>	<i>himasya</i>	<i>bheṣajam</i>		
Fire	for cold	(is) the remedy.		
<i>bhūmir</i>	<i>āvapanam</i>	<i>mahat</i>		
Earth	(is) sowing place	the great.		
<i>ṛcchāmi</i>	<i>tvā</i>	<i>param</i>	<i>antam</i>	<i>ṛthivyāḥ</i>
I ask	you	for the furthest	end	of the earth.
<i>ṛcchāmi</i>	<i>tvā</i>	<i>bhuvanasya</i>	<i>nābhim</i>	
I ask	you	of the world	the navel.	
<i>ṛcchāmi</i>	<i>tvā</i>	<i>vṛṣṇo</i>	<i>aśvasya</i>	<i>retaḥ</i>
I ask	you	of the strong	horse	the seed.
<i>ṛcchāmi</i>	<i>vācaḥ</i>	<i>paramam</i>	<i>vyōma</i>	
I ask (you)	for the speech's		highest	realm.
<i>vedim</i>	<i>āhuḥ</i>	<i>param</i>	<i>antam</i>	<i>ṛthivyāḥ</i>
The altar-ground they say	(is) the furthest	end of the earth.		
<i>yajñam</i>	<i>āhur</i>	<i>bhuvanasya</i>	<i>nābhim</i>	
The sacrifice	they say	of the world (is)	the navel.	
<i>somam</i>	<i>āhur</i>	<i>vṛṣṇoḥ</i>	<i>aśvasya</i>	<i>retaḥ</i>
Soma	they say	of the strong horse (is)	the seed.	
<i>brahmaiva</i>	<i>vācaḥ</i>	<i>paramam</i>	<i>vyōma</i>	
The Brahman indeed (they say)	of speech	(is) the highest	realm.	



The text is found again in *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* (TB) (III.9.5.21-24) with a few differences. For *āvīḥ* (line 8), TB has *śrīḥ*, for *sūryaḥ* (line 13), it has *ādityaḥ* and for *bhūmiḥ* (line 16), it has *lokaḥ*. There is an extra word *vr̥ṣṭiḥ* in TB in the answer to the first question.

This is a brahmodya 'riddle' in the form of a *prašnottarī* 'questions and answers', during the performance of *Aśvamedha* sacrifice. Here, hotā poses questions on theological matters and brahmā answers them. The questions proceed from the most secular to the most spiritual. Method of questioning also changes when we come to the third verse. The interrogative pronoun is dropped. The verb immediately follows the question word as well as the answer in the first set. In the second set, it is once in the final position, once in the middle and not used in the remaining. They are nominal sentences, and the copula, i.e. the verb 'to be' is understood. The verb is drawn to the first position in the third set to focus on the importance of the questions and the answering nouns are similarly put in the first position. The last line of the riddle is again a nominal construction. The answering word brahma is emphasized by the use of the word *eva* 'indeed'.

*Hotā* will be seated to the north and *brahmā* to the south of the *Agniṣṭha* 'a sacrificial post' (*abhito'gniṣṭham brahmodyāya paryupaviṣete dakṣiṇo brahmā uttaro hotā – Āp. Śr. 20.186-7*), placed at the centre of twentyone such sacrificial posts erected for *paśvaikādaśinī* in this sacrifice. *Agniṣṭha* will be exactly in front of āhavanīya fire (*ekavimśati yūpeṣu madhyavartī yūpaḥ agniṣṭhaḥ*).

*Aśvamedha* is one of the most ancient but major sacrifices mentioned in the Vedic literature (*yathāśvamedhaḥ kraturāṭ sarvapāpāpanodanaḥ – Manu XI. 260*). Only emperors and very powerful kings who desired sovereignty could afford to perform it. It belongs to *ahīna* group of Soma sacrifices. Here, *aśva* 'horse' is the *medha* animal for immolation. A person is cleansed from sins like *brahmahatyā* also by performing

*Aśvamedha* sacrifice. Indra had performed it when he got *brahmahatyā doṣa* for killing Vṛtra. In the *Ramayana*, Lakshmana narrates this story to Rama and encourages him to perform similarly as he had killed Ravana, a brahmin (*aśvamedho mahāyajñāḥ pāvanaḥ sarvapāpamanām/ pāvanastava durdharṣo rocatām raghunandana/ 7.84.2*).

*Hotā* is the Ṛgvedic priest in the sacrifice. He is the one who by his prayers invokes the particular god to come to the sacrifice for receiving the oblation poured into the fire. It is thus appropriate that the riddle is like a *sūkta* with three verses in the middle of the otherwise prose material of *Yajurveda*. Of the three verses, two are in *anuṣṭubh* metre and the third is in *triṣṭubh*. The *anuṣṭubh* consists of four lines of eight syllables each and the *triṣṭubh* consists of four lines each of eleven syllables. *Brahmā* is the priest who will be supervising the entire sacrificial proceedings. He is supposed to know all the Vedas and in particular the *Atharvaveda*. He will prescribe the proper atonement for any wrong performance during the sacrifice.

In our text, there are three sets of four questions in each set; the answers follow the questions after each set. The *Samhitā* as well as *Brāhmaṇa* are commented upon by two persons, Sāyaṇa and Bhaṭṭabhāskara who differ in minor ways in interpreting the words of the first set. An English translation by A. B. Keith is available in the *Sacred Books of the East* series. It does not appear to follow the tradition in translating the first set.

Set 1. Sāyaṇa interprets *cittiḥ* in *pūrvacittiḥ* as *jñāna* 'knowledge' and *pūrva* is explained as the knowledge which is inherent in the creatures (*prāṇinaḥ*) from their very birth (*janmaprabhṛti*). Bhaṭṭa interprets it as *prathamā* 'the first' knowledge; alternately, as *śreṣṭha* 'the best'. And the best were the gods who are verily the energisers (*cittayaḥ = cetayitārah*). In answering this question, *brahmā* says that the sky was the first conception as it was known by the gods (*devair*

*jñātaavyatoāt*). It may be recalled here that *Puruṣasūkta* says that the sky was born of the *Puruṣa's* head (*śīrṣṇo dyaus samavartata*). It is the *uttamāṅga*.

*Vayaḥ* means 'highly desired thing' (*atyantam kamanīyam vastu*) for Sāyaṇa and Bhaṭṭa thinks it is food (*annamayam*) and *br̥hat* for him is *mahat* since after obtaining this food there will not be need for searching any other food (*yal labdhvā punar anyad annam na mṛgyam bhavati*). Brahmā answers this by stating that, 'horse is the highly desired thing' as it is acquired by kings with great effort (*rājānaḥ sarvaprayatnenāpyaśvān sampādayanti*).

*Piśaṅgilā* is commented as 'of mixed colour' (*miśravarnā*) by Sāyaṇa and the night is characterised as being of 'mixed colour' because of darkness and light alternating in the presence of stars and the moon (*andhakārasya nakṣatracandraprakāśasya ca vidyamānatvāt*). For Bhaṭṭa, *piśa* is *rūpa* 'form' (*piśa avayave*); the actual shape, etc. of a person or a thing is covered (*girati*) during the night. Alternately, *piśaṅga* means 'different colours' (*nānāvarṇāḥ*) and what is characterised by such a situation is *piśaṅgilā*, i.e. *ahaḥ* 'day' (*nānāvarṇatā cāhar miśratvāt*). Thus for Bhaṭṭa, *piśaṅgilā* is *vyāmiśrarūpā* and both night and day are the two *piśaṅgilā*.

*Pilippilā* is 'slippery' as applying to earth after rains (perhaps from lip 'to smear'). Sāyaṇa equates it with 'very much pleasing' (*atyartham prīṇayitrī*). Bhaṭṭa takes it to mean *vṛṣṭiḥ* 'rain' since it protects (*avati*) the world (*viśvam*). Alternately, it is 'wealth' for him (*śrīḥ*) as it pleases (*prīṇayati*) everyone very much. Reading *āviḥ* as *aviḥ*, Keith translates it as 'sheep' and notes a contrast probably with *aśva* 'horse'. He also translates *vayaḥ* in *br̥hadvayaḥ* as 'age'.

*Svid* is an enclitic particle emphasizing the first word of a sentence, usually an interrogative pronoun or adverb; makes it indefinite. *u* is also an enclitic particle meaning 'and, also'.

Set 2. Bhaṭṭa explains this set as follows: Though anyone might be seen moving alone, sometime or other, the Sun because of his own prowess (*sāmarthyāt*) can always move without other's help (*asahāyah*). As he is the producer of rains, it is necessary that he moves about alone (*vr̥ṣṭeḥ pravartayitā ekākī carati*). Similarly, though everyone who dies is born again (*mṛtvā punar jāyate*), the moon is born again and again from the Sun (*ādityāt*). He is known to wane during the dark half and slowly wax during the bright half. This is probably alluded to in his being born again. Fire is the remedy for the cold formed of moon (*candramasotpāditasya*) and the earth is the sowing place (*āvāpsthānam*) for the medicinal plants created by the moon (*tat sṛṣṭānām oṣadhyādīnām*).

Sāyaṇa explains it thus: The Sun moves always (*sarvadā*) without indolence (*ālasjarahitaḥ*) and the moon is born again and again in the bright half of the month (*śuklapakṣe*). Fire is the remedy for the distress caused by the cold (*śaitya*) of moon and earth is the wide (*viśālam*) ground for sowing (*āvāpāya*) many kinds of seeds. Thus there is not much difference between the two commentators in explaining the second set. There seems to be a chain action here. The Sun being the cause for the rebirth of the Moon and because of the coldness of the moon, fire is needed to warm up and that creates the need for sowing the seeds in the earth again. The Earth acts as the point of departure for the next set of queries. Since the dialogue takes place during the sacrifice, it must be for the praise of the sacrifice and that is what happens in the next set (*adhunā bhumerārabhya praśnāḥ kriyante* - Bhaṭṭa).

Set 3. Sāyaṇa explains *param antam* as *utkr̥ṣṭa pradeśa* 'superior place'; *nābhim* as the 'central part' of the world as the hub of a wheel (*cakrasya nābhiriva*). *Vṛṣṇaḥ* for him means 'greater masculinity'

(*pumstvoādhikyam*), and *paramam vyōma* is *viśeṣeṇa rakṣakam* 'extraordinary protection'.

What is the best place on earth? What is the central point of the world? What is the essence (*sāram*) like the semen of the greatly masculine horse and what is the specially protecting part of speech?

Bhaṭṭa takes *nābhim* as the place where at everyone lives tied up (*yatra pratibaddham sarvam jīvati*). *vṛṣṇoḥ* is taken as *varṣituḥ* 'bestower' by Bhaṭṭa. What is that *retaḥ* 'semen' by which everything is born? *vācaḥ* is interpreted as the Veda consisting of Rk. etc. (*vedātmikāyāḥ ṛgādeḥ*). And *paramam vyōma* is *prakṛṣṭam rakṣāsthānam* 'superior place of protection' of the creator (*vidhātryāḥ*) who is bound in creation and dissolution (*sarga pratisarga nibandhanam*).

In answering the above questions, Sāyaṇa says that the altar-ground is the superior place on earth where sacrifice is performed. He quotes TB (3.2.9) which hails *Vedī* as, *etāvati vai pṛthivī yāvati vedīḥ*. As the wheel turns around controlled by the central part, so is the movement (*sañcāraḥ*) of beings between here and the other world is controlled by the sacrifice (*yajñādhīnaḥ*). In the same way, he says that the soma is the greatest essence (*atyantam sārabhūtam*) like the semen of the horse (*aśvasya retovat*) and removes the great sins such as *brahmahatyā* 'murder of a brahmin' at the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice being performed for three days. And the Vedas (*brahma*) in the form of the collection of the mantras 'incantations' (*mantrasaṅghātarūpam*) are the highest realm of speech consisting of *vargas* 'sounds' (*akṣarātmikāyāḥ*). The human beings will be specially protected by repeating these incantations (*mantrajapena*).

Bhaṭṭa takes the whole world as *vedī* 'altar-ground' and quotes *Taittirīya Samhitā* (6.2.4) *sā vā iyam sarvaiva vedīḥ*. He takes the sacrifice being performed there as the *nābhi* 'central part' of the entire beings (*sarvasya bhūtajātasya*) of the world. Soma used in the sacrifice, he takes as the seed (*bījam*) of everything since rains are caused only

through the sacrifice (*vr̥ṣṭyādyutpattihetuḥ*). Alternately, the semen of the bestower horse itself is like soma which acts as *sādhana* 'means' for securing the water necessary for the entire mankind (*sarvaloka jīvanodakahetuḥ*) and the result (*phalam*) or goal of speech is realisation of *paramātmā* 'supreme soul' itself.

This is only a literary exposition. I am however unaware of any spiritual or esoteric explanation of these mantras. I also do not know the relevance or importance of this *praśnottarī* in the middle of the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice. I would be greatly obliged if any of the readers of this paper enlighten me on this.

*Sukumar Sen : The Man behind the Screen of Indian  
Parliamentary Democracy*

Nilay Kumar Saha

Indian parliamentary democracy is an output of a gamble which started on 25th October, 1951 and ended on 21st February, 1952. The Constitution of the independent India came into operation on 26th January, 1950 but according to the provisions of the Constitution relating to citizenship (Articles 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) and Article 324 regarding the setting up of the Election Commission of India came into force on 26th November, 1949 and its door was opened on 25th January, 1950. I.C.S. Sukumar Sen, the then Chief Secretary of West Bengal, took the charge of the Chief Election Commissioner of India on 21st March, 1950 on deputation.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that within one and a half years after assuming the charge, Sukumar Sen, the first election commissioner of India, shouldered the responsibility for conducting India's first General Election to elect 489 members of Parliament and 3,283 members of Legislative Assemblies. 17,500 contestants of fourteen national and sixty-three regional and local political parties took part in that battle. 176 million Indians having age limit above twenty-one, eighty-five per cent of whom were illiterate, elected the members of Parliament and Legislative Assemblies to run the wheel of Indian parliamentary democracy. Finally, Sukumar Sen won the gamble and the largest democratic governance all over the world started to act.

Sukumar Sen was born on 2nd January, 1898. His father Akshoy Kumar Sen was a District Judge and mother Gouri Sen was the daughter of the District Judge Jagadish Chandra Sen.<sup>2</sup> Sukumar Sen was the eldest of the three sons of Akshoy Kumar Sen and Gouri Sen.

Renowned medical practitioner Amiyo Kumar Sen, the last attending doctor of Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore, and renowned barrister Ashoke Kumar Sen, the former cabinet minister of India, were the two younger brothers of Sukumar Sen. After completion of schooling from Municipal School of Burdwan, Sukumar Sen was admitted to Presidency College of Kolkata and was finally awarded the Bachelor Degree from the University of London and won a gold medal in Mathematics. Sukumar Sen passed the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) Examination in the year 1921 and joined the service in 1922. He served as S.D.O. of Chuadanga in the district of Nadia and Serajgunj in the district of Pabna from 1928 to 1947.<sup>3</sup> He was the Chief Secretary of the Government of West Bengal from August 1947 to March 1950. He served the Election Commission of India from 21st March of 1950 to 19th December of 1958 as the first Chief Election Commissioner and under his leadership the Election Commission of India successfully conducted the independent India's first two general elections in 1951-52 and in 1957 respectively. Sudan Government invited Sukumar Sen to conduct first general election of Sudan and he also served successfully as the first Chief Election Commissioner of Sudan.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of the nominated Government of independent India, reported in the Parliament on 19th April, 1950, the progress of the work of conducting the first general election of the country and observed that - "It is expected that the election is to be conducted in the spring of 1951".<sup>4</sup> About the electoral rolls, the then Law Minister of India, Dr B. R. Ambedkar stated in the Parliament on 21st March, 1950 that "The final electoral roll will be prepared within January or February of the coming year".<sup>5</sup> In the same statement he also added that, "preparation of the electoral roll took different shapes in different states. Election Commission has been appointed and probably the Commissioner took the charge".<sup>6</sup> In that session Sri Kamanath, an M.P., raised a question and wanted to know "when the election will be conducted - before or after the census"<sup>7</sup>. In response to the question, Ambedkar replied that "It is not possible for



me to mention any definite date but the exact number of population which we will get after the census will be more helpful for determining the number of seats and also for conducting election".<sup>8</sup> At the same breath he also added that "a bill titled 'Representation of the People Act 1950' will be placed in the present session of the Parliament and probably all the problems relating to election will be solved by this Act".<sup>9</sup> On 20th April, 1950 the bill was passed in the Parliament and on 17th July, 1951 another bill titled 'The Representation of the People Act, 1951' was enacted for conducting corruption free elections to the Houses of Parliament and to the House or Houses of the Legislatures of each state.

On 20th April, 1950 a bill was passed in the Parliament which disclosed "the allocation of seats in, and the delimitation of constituencies for the purpose of election to, the House of the People and the Legislatures of States, the qualifications of the voters at such elections, the preparation of electoral rolls, the manner of filling seats in the Council of States to be filled by representations of Union Territories, and matters connected there with".<sup>10</sup> On the eve of the third session of the Parliament in November, 1950, the Election Commission again reviewed the progress towards the preparation for holding the general election and stated that "as there was delay in the issue of the President's Orders specifying the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and determining the population of these Castes and Tribes in the different states and the autonomous districts of Assam, not much progress could be made in the work of delimitation of constituencies. In fact, the Scheduled Castes Order was not issued until 10th August, 1950 and the Scheduled Tribes Order, until 6th September, 1950".<sup>11</sup>

The Representation of the People act, 1951 was enacted as late as 17th July, 1951 for conducting elections to the Houses of Parliament as well as to the House or Houses of the Legislatures of each state. This Act discloses the qualifications and disqualifications for membership of these Houses, it also resolves the corrupt practices and other offences in connection with such elections and directs to take decision in case of raised doubts and disputes relating to such

elections. In view of unavoidable delays, the prospect of holding the elections in the spring of 1951, as originally hoped for, gradually receded. To expedite the election process all over the country, Sukumar Sen started to visit every state to evaluate the preparedness of the respective state for holding the elections. During these tours, Mr. Sen made it a point to meet the representatives of all the political parties and also the press for ensuring their fullest cooperation to make the public at large election conscious and to create the environment necessary for ensuring free and fair election in all respects. A few remarkable innovative steps deserve to be mentioned here which were initiated and executed by Sukumar Sen under the purview of the Constitution of India, The Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the Representation of People Act, 1951 to create a history in the world of Parliamentary Democracy.

#### **Demarcation of constituencies**

The Representation of the People Act, 1950 distributed the total 497 Parliamentary seats grouped under A, B, C. Part A States were allotted 374 seats, Part B States 90 seats, Part C States 25 seats. Along with 489, 8 seats were allotted to Jammu and Kashmir, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Part B Tribal areas of Assam were to be filled by persons nominated by the President. The President would also nominate two more members under article 331 of the Constitution to ensure representation of the Anglo-Indian community to the House of the People, thus raising the strength of the House to 499. The total number of seats in the Legislative Assemblies all over the country was 3283. Out of 3283 seats, 2294 seats were allotted to Part A States, 761 seats to Part B States, and 228 seats to Part C States. Finally, the Election Commission of India was empowered to conduct election of 489 seats to the House of the People and 3283 seats in the Legislative Assemblies of the States. There were 2124 single-member constituencies, 578 two-member constituencies, and 1 three-member constituency in the Legislative Assemblies. In the year 1960, the concept of multi-member constituency was abolished. The state-wise

allotment of seats both in Parliamentary Constituencies and Legislative Assemblies are listed below.<sup>12</sup>

Sl. No.	Name of the State	Category	Parliamentary Constituencies	Legislative Assemblies
01	Assam	A	12	108
02	Bihar	A	55	330
03	Bombay	A	44	315
04	Madhya Pradesh	A	29	232
05	Madras	A	75	375
06	Orissa	A	20	140
07	Punjab	A	18	126
08	Uttar Pradesh	A	86	430
09	West Bengal	A	34	238
10	Hyderabad	B	25	175
11	Madhya Bharat	B	11	99
12	Mysore	B	11	99
13	Patiala & East Punjab State Union	B	05	60
14	Rajasthan	B	20	160
15	Saurashtra	B	06	60
16	Travancore Cochin	B	12	108
17	Ajmer	C	02	30
18	Bhopal	C	02	30
19	Bilaspur	C	01	00
20	Coorg	C	01	24
21	Delhi	C	04	48
22	Himachal Pradesh	C	03	36
23	Vindhya Pradesh	C	06	60
24	Bilaspur	C	00	00
25	Kutch	C	02	00
26	Manipur	C	02	00
27	Tripura	C	02	00
Total seats which should be filled up through election			489	
Total seats which should be filled up through nomination			08 <sup>a</sup> 02 <sup>b</sup>	
Total seats			499	3283

<sup>a</sup> 8 seats were allotted to Jammu and Kashmir, 2 seats were allotted to Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Part B Tribal areas of Assam. All these seats were to be filled by persons nominated by the President.

<sup>b</sup> The President of India nominated two members under article 331 of the Constitution to represent the Anglo-Indian community in the House.

### **Determination of reserved seats**

To determine the number of seats to be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in a state, the proportion of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes out of the total population of the respective state is to be calculated first. Thereafter, the proportion so worked out is to be multiplied separately by the total number of seats to the House of the People and the Legislative Assemblies allotted to that state to determine the number of seats to be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the respective houses. Following this rule, the Election Commission reserved 72 seats and 26 seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively to the House of the People comprising 489 seats. The total number of seats to the Legislative Assemblies of the states was 3283. Out of these, 477 seats were reserved for the Scheduled Castes and 192 for the Scheduled Tribes.

### **Rectification of electoral rolls**

According to the Representation of the People Act, 1950 initially an individual, aged at least 21 years as on 1st January, 1949, was to be included in the electoral roll of any constituency where that individual resided 180 days or more during the year ending on 31st March, 1948. By an amendment of this Act the date 1st January, 1949 was changed to 1st March, 1950 and the period of stay was extended from 1st April, 1947 to 31st March, 1949 instead of from 1st April, 1947 to 31st March, 1948. This amendment widened the scope of entering an individual in the electoral roll of any constituency. The amendment stated that, the qualifying date with reference to which the age of an elector is to be ascertained has been changed from 1st January, 1949 to 1st March, 1950 and the qualifying period during which an elector has to be an ordinary resident in a constituency for not less than 180 days was changed to the period from 1st April, 1947 to 31st December, 1949 instead of the period originally intended, namely, 1st April, 1947 to 31st March, 1948. The Commission initiated to rectify the electoral rolls all over the country.

It came to the notice of the Election Commission at the time of preparation of electoral rolls in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, Rajasthan and Vindhya Pradesh that a large number of women voters had been enrolled not in their own names but by the relationship they have to their nearest male relations viz., Ram's mother, Rahim's wife etc. With an object to rectify the rolls when the Commission appeared before these women, most of them refused to be enrolled in their own names and finally 2.8 million women voters were struck off the electoral rolls. Sukumar Sen personally met most of these women voters and convinced them and finally eighty-five per cent of 2.8 million women voters were enrolled in the electoral rolls in their own names before the second general election of the country.

By November, 1950 all the states except Punjab and West Bengal under 'Part A' category published preliminary electoral rolls. West Bengal published the rolls between 22nd December, 1950, and 6th January, 1951. The Election Commission recommended for thorough revision of the entire electoral rolls of Punjab with a view to eliminating large number of duplicate entries therein which had resulted from large scale movement of displaced persons within the state during the years of preparation of the rolls due to quasi-permanent allotments of land to them. The rolls for the Bombay city, which had been prepared and published only in the Devanagri scripts, were directed to be published in English also. Proper directions were also issued for the publication of rolls of a number of small bilingual areas in Bihar, Madras and Orissa in languages other than those in which they had originally been enrolled.

#### **Finalization of electoral rolls**

The Commission directed all the State Governments to take steps for the preliminary publication of electoral rolls by the first week of November, 1950, for inviting claims and objections. The Commission declared some time bound programmes for the preliminary publication of the electoral rolls - printing of supplementary lists by 15th October, 1950, preliminary publications of rolls by 31st October,

1950, claims and objections about the electoral roll by 21st November, 1950. The claims and objections which were filed after the preliminary publication of the electoral rolls were disposed of in the different states during the period from 31st October, 1950 to 2nd October, 1951. It is interesting to note that the Election Commission managed to resolve 13,93,526 claims and 7,12,802 objections out of filed 16,58,428 claims and 7,31,750 objections throughout the country. Finally, the Election Commission published the electoral rolls on the 15th November, 1951.

According to the census of 1951, the total population of the country excluding Jammu and Kashmir was 35,66,91,760. Out of this population 17,32,13,635 were enrolled as voters excluding Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, 49 per cent of the total population was enrolled as voters. The census of 1951 revealed that out of the total population, 50.55 per cent was adult population between the age of 21 years and above. Only 3.9 per cent of the eligible population was left out of the rolls. So, out of the total adult population of 18,03,07,684, the electoral rolls included 17,32,13,635, meaning only 70,94,049 adult population was left out of the rolls. In the light of these figures it may be concluded that the Election Commission successfully prepared the electoral rolls for the First General Election of the country.

#### **Distribution of symbols to the political parties**

The Election Commission realised that it would be very difficult for the enrolled voters, 85 per cent of whom were illiterate, to cast their votes on the ballot papers against the name of his or her preferred candidate. Considering the reality the Election Commission decided to devise a suitable system for the majority of illiterate voters which would help them to cast their votes in secret in favour of the candidates of their choice. The easiest method appeared to be to assign a separate ballot box for each candidate and to place a different mark on each such box so that the distinctive features of such marks might help a voter in distinguishing between the boxes of the different candidates and in casting his or her vote correctly by dropping his or her ballot paper inside the box assigned to the candidate of his or her choice,

the ballot paper being a mere token not requiring any marking by the voter. The Commission initiated the choice lay between having each ballot box been painted with a separate colour or marked with a distinguishing symbol pasted on it. After a thorough analysis, the Election Commission decided in favour of the symbol system and allotted symbols to the fourteen national political parties in three different phases as under :<sup>13</sup>

On the 2nd August, 1951 Standing Lion, Human Hand, Horse and Rider, Hut, Rising Sun, and Elephant were allotted to All India Forward Block (Marxist Group), All India Forward Block (Ruikar Group), Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha, Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, Akhil Bharatiya Ram Rajya Parishad, All-India Scheduled Castes' Federation respectively. Indian National Congress, Socialist Party, Communist Party of India, Revolutionary Socialist Party, Revolutionary Communist Party of India were allotted Two bulls with yoke on, Tree, Spade and Stoker (In Assam, Bihar, Madras, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Travancore Cochin and Delhi), Flaming torch (Mashal) (In Bombay, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal) on the 17th August, 1951. A further list of symbols consisting A Star, A cultivator winnowing grain and Lamp (Deepa) were allotted to Bolshevik Party of India, Krishikar Lok Party, and All India Bharatiya Jan Sangh respectively on the 7th September, 1951. Finally, the Election Commission published twenty-six approved symbols on the 8th September, 1951 be used at the elections.

#### **Arrangement of mock election**

With an object to maintain uniformity for conducting election all over the country, the Election Commission decided to hold mock elections on a wide scale throughout the country so that the officers could acquire sufficient familiarity with the relevant provisions of the law, and receive necessary training for conducting election. Rajasthan was selected for the first polling rehearsal which was held at Udaipur on 5th August, 1951. The Chief Election Commissioner personally supervised the arrangements and all the legal formalities

were gone through during the demonstration of the polling procedure. He also attended at least one polling rehearsal almost in every state in order to ensure that the procedure followed all over India was uniform. The rehearsals ensured that a significant number of trained officers would be available for polling duties.

#### **Introduction of indelible ink to check false votes**

According to Rule 22 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the Election Commission introduced indelible ink to mark voters who would cast their votes. At the time of issuing ballot paper to the voter, the forefinger of the voter should be marked by the Presiding Officer or by the Polling Officer with indelible ink. It should be applied on the finger with a small glass rod. The mark made with this ink should last one week or more. Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research manufactured the indelible ink at the request of the Election Commission to ensure fair election.

#### **Arrangement of materials for polling and polling stations**

The Commission eventually undertook the responsibility of supplying ballot boxes, paper seals for ballot boxes, ballot papers, and indelible ink to all the states. All other election materials had to be arranged by the concerned State Governments itself. The Commission supplied 24,73,850 steel ballot boxes and 1,11,095 wooden ballot boxes to different states of the country according to the number of contestants of the respective states. Altogether 180 tons of paper was used for printing six hundred million ballot papers and a total of 3,89,816 phials of indelible ink were supplied by the Commission to the states. The Election Commission consulted the Master, Indian Security Press, Nasik, and approved a suitable design for paper seal to be used for each type of ballot box. The words 'Election Commission of India' were closely printed on the seals in pink colour to form the background on one face of the seal.

#### **Appointment of personnel for conducting election**

To carry out the entire work of election properly, the State Governments were requested by the Election Commission to examine



their requirements of Presiding Officers, Polling Officers, and policemen for carrying out polling duties in 1,32,560 polling stations in 1,96,084 booths. According to Sections 20, 21, and 22 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, administrative officers of the status of Commissioners, Collectors, and Sub-divisional Officers etc. were appointed Returning Officer for Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies. Assistant Returning Officers were also appointed for assisting the Returning Officers in their work. In all 1,253 and 1,962 persons were appointed as Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers respectively. For maintaining law and order at the polling stations, ensuring security in the custody and transport of polling materials including ballot boxes and ballot papers before and after the polling a total number of 3,38,854 police personnel were employed all over the country.

#### **Finalisation of the list of contestants**

The Election Commission finalised the number of contestants on the basis of valid nomination papers. The Commission directed that the nomination paper of every candidate is required to be accompanied by a declaration in writing appointing an election agent, a receipt showing that the necessary deposit has been made for the candidature, and a declaration making the choice of a symbol. For the House of the People, 2,833 persons filed 5,155 nomination papers out of which the nomination papers of 133 persons were rejected, 826 candidates withdrew their nomination papers and finally 1,874 contestants remained in the fray. For Legislative Assemblies of States, 23,287 persons filed 42,244 nomination papers out of which the nomination papers submitted by 1,405 persons were rejected, 6,521 candidates withdrew their candidature and finally 15,361 contestants remained in the contest.

#### **Determination of the dates of polling**

The Election Commission considered the climatic and geographical conditions in the various states of the country for finalizing the dates

of polling. The Chini and Pangi Assembly Constituencies of the hilly state of Himachal Pradesh were the first to go to the polls, as it was necessary to complete the polling in these areas before snowfall which is usual there in the early November. The polling took place on 25th, 27th, 29th, 31st October, and 2nd November, 1951, in these two constituencies. On account of the difficulties arising from the geographical conditions of the states and the poor means of transport and communication, polling had to be conducted over a period of 37 days, commencing from 25th October, 1951 and ending on 21st February, 1952.

#### **Counting of votes and declaration of results**

There was no provision for counting of votes in the Representation of the People Act, 1951. The Chief Election Commissioner of the states issued directives for counting votes and that was ratified by the Election Commission of India with an object to maintain uniformity in this respect. Some difficulties appeared at the time of counting and all these were addressed properly by the competent intervention of the commission. At the time of counting the most unwanted situation raised due to carelessness of some Presiding Officers at time of polling. There was an interchange of Parliamentary and Assembly ballot boxes or ballot papers at some polling stations. In all, there were 181 of interchange of ballot boxes and 692 cases of interchange of ballot papers.

All these cases were reported to the Commission for orders and the Commission ordered re-poll for 43 cases. There were in all 93 cases in which polling had to be adjourned under section 57 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Polling was resumed on a later date after issuance of due notice to the voters. In addition, fresh poll had to be ordered at 107 polling stations on account of damages to ballot boxes discovered at the time of counting. A snap of the results of the first General Election both for the House of the people and for the Legislative Assemblies in different states of India depicted the strength of each political party as under :<sup>14</sup>

Sl. No.	Seats won by political parties	Status of the political parties	Abbrevia-	House of the People	legislative Assemblies
01	Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha	National	HMS	04	20
02	Akhil Bharatiya Ram Rajya Parishad	National	RRP	03	33
03	All Indian Bharatiya Jana Sangh	National	BJS	03	35
04	Bolshevik Party of India	National	BPI	00	00
05	Communist Party of India	National	CPI	16	120
06	Forward Bloc (Marxist Group)	National	FB (MG)	01	17
07	Forward Bloc (Ruiker Group)	National	FB(RG)	00	02
08	Indian National Congress	National	INC	364	2246
09	Krishikar Lok Party	National	KLP	01	23
10	Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party	National	KMPP	08	77
11	Revolutionary Communist Party of India	National	RCPI	00	00
12	Revolutionary Socialist Party	National	RSP	03	06
13	All Indian Scheduled Caste Federation	National	SCF	02	11
14	Socialist Party	National	SP	12	139
15	All India Republican Party	Regional	REP	00	00
16	All India Republican Party	Regional	RPP	00	00
17	All India United Kisan Sabha	Regional	UKS	00	00
18	All Manipur National Union	Regional	AMN	00	00
19	All Peoples Party	Regional	APP	00	01
20	Chota Nagpur Santhal Parganas Janata Party	Regional	CNSPJP	01	11
21	Cochin Party	Regional	CP	00	01
22	Common Weal Party	Regional	CWL	03	06
23	All India Ganatantra Parishad	Regional	GP	06	32
24	Gandhi Sevak Seva	Regional	GSS	00	00
25	Hill Peoples Party	Regional	HPP	00	00
26	Historical Research	Regional	HR	00	00
27	Hyderabad State Praja Party	Regional	HSPP	00	00
28	Jharkhand Party	Regional	JHP	03	32
29	Justice Party	Regional	JUSP	00	01
30	Kamgar Kisan Paksha	Regional	KKP	00	03
31	Kerala Socialist Party	Regional	KSP	00	01
32	Khasi-Jaintia Durbar	Regional	KJD	00	01

Sl. No.	Seats won by political parties	Status of the political parties	Abbrevia-	House of the People	legislative Assemblies
33	Kisan Janata Sanyukta Party	Regional	KJSP	00	00
34	Kisan Mazdoor Mandal	Regional	KMM	00	00
35	Kuki National Association	Regional	KNA	00	00
36	Lok Sevak Sangh	Regional	LSS	02	07
37	Madras State Muslim League Party	Regional	ML	01	05
38	National Party of India	Regional	NAT	00	00
39	Peasants and Workers Party of India	Regional	PWP	02	24
40	Peoples Democratic Front	Regional	PDF	07	42
41	Praja Party	Regional	PP	00	00
42	Punjab Depressed Class League	Regional	DCI	00	00
43	Pursharathi Panchayat	Regional	PURP	00	03
44	Revolutionary Socialist Party (Uttar Pradesh)	Regional	RSP(UP)	00	01
45	Shiromani Akali Dal	Regional	SAD	04	13
46	S.K. Paksha	Regional	SKP	00	02
47	Saurashtra Khedut Sangh	Regional	SKS	00	01
48	The Tamil Nad Toilers Party	Regional	TNT	04	19
49	Tamil Nad Congress Party	Regional	TP	00	00
50	Tribal Sangha	Regional	TS	00	00
51	Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress Party	Regional	HC	01	08
52	Praja Party Uttar Pradesh	Regional	UPPP	00	01
53	Zamindar Party	Regional	ZP	00	02
54	Independent	Regional	IND	38	309
55	Lal Communist Party Hindu Union	Regional		00	02
56	Garo National Council	Regional		00	03
57	Mizo Union	Regional		00	03
58	Khasi Jaintia National Federation State Conference	Regional		00	01
59	Akali Dal	Regional		00	19
Total				489	3283

Indian National Congress won 368 seats out of 489 seats in the House of the people and under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian National Congress formed the ministry of Parliament

in a democratic way. The Communist Party of India secured second position winning 16 seats and 37 seats were won by the independent candidates. Election was also conducted successfully in 3,283 Assembly seats in the then twenty-two states of the country and Indian National Congress won 2243 seats in different State Assemblies. Out of twenty-two states, the Indian National Congress got absolute majority in eighteen states to form ministry. The contestant political parties failed to reach the magic figure for enjoying absolute majority only for the states of Madras, Orissa, Patiala & East Punjab State Union and Travancore Cochin. Except Patiala & East Punjab State Union, Indian National Congress formed the Government in Madras, Orissa, and Travancore Cochin with the support of different local political parties and independents. Gain Singh Rarewala, a winning independent candidate, formed the Government of Patiala & East Punjab State Union with the support of Akali Dal, Communist Party of India, Lal Communist Party Hindu Union, Kishan Mazdoor Praja Party and independents on 22 April, 1952. The coalition was named United Democratic Front. Thus, Patiala & East Punjab State Union became the first non-Congress administered state in independent India.

The Lok Sabha of India was duly constituted for the first time on 17th April of 1952 after the successful completion of the First General Election. The above resume of the First General Election of India would help the world to know how the impossible was made possible, how a gamble was won, under the outstanding leadership of Sri Sukumar Sen, which earned India the identity of a Sovereign Democratic Republic which was declared on 26th January, 1950. The then Government of India honoured Sri Sukumar Sen by the award of Padma Bhusan in 1954. He was the first Padma Bhusan in India but it may be claimed that Sri Sukumar Sen was not properly recognized by the nations as well as the Government of India.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *The Gazette of India*, New Delhi, Saturday, March 25, 1950.
- <sup>2</sup> Reed, Sir Stanley, *The Indian and Pakistan Year Book and Who's Who 1950*, Volume XXXVI, Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> *Anondabazar Patrika*, Thursday, 20.04.1950.
- <sup>5</sup> *Anondabazar Patrika*, Wednesday, 22.03.1951.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Report on the First General Elections in India, 1951-52, vol-1*, Election Commission of India.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> [http://en. Wikipedia.Org/wiki/State\\_Assembly\\_Election\\_inIndia](http://en. Wikipedia.Org/wiki/State_Assembly_Election_inIndia)

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THE ASIATIC SOCIETY, KOLKATA

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

We are meeting this afternoon at the 187th Annual General Meeting of the Asiatic Society. Our Society was founded in 1784 by the illustrious Sir William Jones, and for all these years it has been continuing the good work which it started from the time of its foundation. Sir William Jones declared, almost in the form of an aphorism, that the intended objects of the Society's enquiries was "Man and Nature : whatever has been performed by the one or produced by the other". and the geographical limit of these enquiries at that time was declared to be the bounds of Asia. We have been seeking to follow this great objective, and it has become a sort of a great ideal for us. This Society of ours as you know is the second oldest "Asiatic Society" which is still functioning. It was in its inception a learned association founded by some British scholars residing in Calcutta who were interested in the history, languages, literatures and culture of India and Asia, as well as in the study of Nature and the natural sciences relating to Asia—to study them objectively and scientifically, for the enlargement of the mind and culture of Europe. The results of these studies, both humanistic and scientific, were of immediate value for the peoples of Asia also, and the Indian intelligentsia at once sought to become co-partners with European scholars in this endeavour. Long before the foundation of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta by the English under the lead of Sir William Jones, it is said that the Tsar of Russia opened in 1632 a department in the Russian Foreign Ministry to compile documents relating to India ; and in 1714 a Scientific Circle in the library of Tsar Peter the Great was established to study the life and culture of the Eastern peoples. But these early movements did not take root, and Russian Oriental Studies began with the

foundation of the Lazarov Oriental Institute for oriental languages, which was established in St. Petersburg (Leningrad) in 1820. But the first "Asiatic Society" in the true sense of the term came into being six years before our Society was established in Calcutta, when the Dutch Government in Batavia (now Jakarta) founded in 1778 the Royal Batavian Society of Art and Science (*Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van, Kunst en Wetenschap*). But unfortunately it has virtually ceased to exist some years ago, after the Independence of Indonesia in 1945. And Dutch and French and German and other Eupropean languages (excepting English) have now been replaced by the Indonesian National Language—the *Bahasa Indonesia*, which is only the Malay speech of Sumatra, Malaya and Borneo using the Roman script in place of the Arabic. In this way, the Batavian Society has lost its international character, and its valuable Journal (*Tijdschrift*) appears to have ceased to exist.

But in India, inspite of some widespread changes after our Independence, we have continued the tradition, and the Society is still functioning. Thanks to the genuine love of Science and Letter in their international set-up by Indian scholars, and also to a continued international co-operation, the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, the Mother of all the similar Asiatic Societies within the British orbit, and the precursor also of similar Societies in France, Germany, Italy, Russia and other lands as well, still lives on and holds its banner high. We are trying our best to continue our Journal and to preserve its international character, which to a large extent is supported by the English language which we still find invaluable in our work. We receive articles in both Science and Letters from scholars all over India as well as from abroad. We continue to honour eminent Scientific workers abroad by making them our Honorary Members, an honour which is still received with pleasure by scholars of the world, as much as our medals and prizes still maintain their international value. One can speak quite at length



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about the service rendered to science and letters by the Asiatic Society ever since its inception, and in India it has been the Mother of so many Scientific Associations of outstanding importance which have made such great contributions in the development of the various Physical Sciences as well as of Indology and Indian Letters.

Before taking up other matters, I have at the outset to report the passing away in the course of the year of some of our most distinguished members. We mourn the loss both to the Society and to the world of Science at large through the death of the following members :

1. The late Chief Justice Himansu Kumar Bose ;
2. Dr. Kalipada Biswas, eminent authority on Botany ;
3. Dr. A. C. Ukil, distinguished physician and researcher ;
4. Shri Patit Paban Chatterjee ;
5. Dr. Biman Behari Majumdar, authority on Bengal Vaishnavism, and writer ;
6. Apurba Ratan Bhaduri, writers of the Temples of India ;
7. The Rev. Father H. Santapau, authority on Botany; and
8. Dr. C. V. Raman, Nobel Laureate, one of our Honorary Fellows, who was long connected with the Society, and was of one time its Treasurer. He was also a recipient of the Society's Rabindranath Tagore Birth Centenary Plaque.

The Society has its melancholy duty in recording its profound sense of loss and sorrow at their death, and it conveys to the bereaved families its sincere condolences. It is not necessary for me to describe in detail the scientific as well as literary activities of these illustrious persons. These have found a place in our Journal and our Reports.

During this year, 1970-1971, when I was made President of the Society for a third term (I was first elected

in the year 1953, and again re-elected for a second term in 1954), I have tried to serve the Society with which I have been connected ever since my early days when I was a Lecturer in the University of Calcutta, almost half a century ago. The Society is an Institution which I love from the very bottom of my heart. I have also received signal honours from the Society; and the Society has published some of my papers and monographs, and in this way has enabled me to serve Science and Letters.

This one year that I have worked in the Society as its President, 1970-1971, I am afraid has not been a very fruitful year for scholarly activities. This was due particularly to the political situation in India. The political scene in this country has unfortunately been split up by a large number of parties, big and small, which have their own special ideologies and which are trying their very best to establish themselves, generally by any means that seems to them to be convenient. The war of ideologies is distracting ordinary peace-loving citizens in the country, and the body politic has also been broken up into opposing camps, which in some cases have started within the country a sort of a total war amongst themselves. A situation like this is hardly conducive to any serious scholarly work. But nevertheless, we are trying to carry on as best as we can. The Annual Report will show that our monthly meetings are being held according to our schedule, and every month, if not every fortnight or week, we have had some interesting paper or other, which generally throws new light on some particular problem relating to either the Human Sciences like History and Archaeology, Linguistics and Anthropology and Sociology, Philosophy and Religion and Economics or to the Physical Sciences like Zoology or Botany, Geology or Medicine. Some important papers on various subjects have been published, and the society is taking its share in some new plans for the archaeological and historical study of Civilization in Asia, particularly in Central Asia, in an international set up with

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the co-operation of the UNESCO on the one hand and of learned and scientific associations in several countries outside India like the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey, and Pakistan. With the financial assistance from the UNESCO in this matter, and in collaboration with participants from other countries, the Asiatic Society of Calcutta has taken up these two topics for investigation : (i) Documents available in India relating to Central Asian History and Civilisation, and (ii) Trends in Literature in Central Asia. Our General Secretary has taken up the pre-Mongol and Mongol periods in this literature. Co-operation has been promised by Iran, but so far there has not been any effective response.

Members of the Asiatic Society have taken part in International Scientific Congresses broad, and have in general maintained the Society's prestige and reputation for serious scholarship.

You have the General Secretary's Report in your hands, and you will see from it that as in previous years we have had the privilege of receiving eminent scholars, both Indian and foreign, who came to visit the Society. Lectures were delivered by some of these distinguished visitors as well as by some of our own scholars.

A mass of new historical and archaeological materials has come to light from places like Pāndu-Rājār Dhibi and Rāj-bāḍi-dāngā and other sites in Bengal. We can mention in this connexion the valuable researches of Dr. Sudhir Ranjan Das of the Department of Archaeology, Calcutta University, one of our additional Secretaries. Interesting original work has also been presented on the Kushāna problem by the General Secretary, Dr. Bratindra Nath Mukherjee ; and the Society has published noteworthy monographs by these scholars on their respective subjects.

The editing and publishing of old texts in Persian and Sanskrit is proceeding, as also of monographs. The Secretary's

Report has given full indication of the work that has been done during the year under review.

This year our medals and prizes have been awarded, internationally or nationally, to the following scholars :

- (1) Rabindranath Tagore Birth-Centenary Plaque : to Professor Sir Ralph Lilley Turner, late of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, for his work of outstanding value in Indian Linguistics.
- (2) Sarat Chandra Roy Memorial Medal to Dr. A. Aiyappan, Vice-Chancellor, Trivandrum University, for very important contributions to Sociology and Cultural Anthropology.
- (3) Durga Prasad Khaitan Gold Medal to Shri J. M. B. Tata, noted Industrialist.
- (4) Professor Nirmal Nath Chatterjee Medal to Dr. Subimal Sinha Roy, Senior Geologist, Geological Survey of India.
- (5) Professor Surhid Chandra Mitra Memorial Plaque (offered from this year through an endowment by the Calcutta University Psychology Department Alumni Association) to Professor B. S. Bloom of Chicago University, U. S. A., for his very important researches in experimental Psychology, particularly in the field of motivation.

I cannot refrain at this meeting from drawing the attention of the public to the very unsatisfactory condition of our finances. The General Secretary has brought all this to your notice. His Report will give you an adequate idea about the present situation in this matter. One hopeful thing is that the Central and State Governments both have taken a sympathetic view of the situation and have agreed in principle to meet between them our basic deficits as far as possible. We hope that the negotiations between the Society and the Governments will be finalised early, and we can then

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hope to have our finances on a sounder basis. Our needs are many, and among other things we require urgently the where withal for the following matters :

- (1) Preservation of our manuscripts. Our immediate need is the air-conditioning of the Manuscript Room.
- (2) Printing of our old texts. Available fund for this are not adequate. For printing again some of our previously published texts which still have a value, we are taking recourse to off-set printing, as being quicker and cheaper.

There is also urgent necessity to give proper Dearness Allowances to the members of our Staff at par with the West Bengal State Government rates, and this has been a very great headache on our part. We are hoping to solve this matter as soon as our finances are set in order with Government support as promised and envisaged.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Asiatic Society of Calcutta is one of the premier scholarly institutions of India and the world, and it came to us a very great gift from the scholarship and culture of Europe through England. We have reason to be grateful to the scholarly activities of the Society, for it has enabled us to know ourselves properly at a time when our historical consciousness had become faint and moribund, and when we were running the risk of losing our soul at the impact of England and Europe upon the culture of India. It was the historical and scholarly work of the Asiatic Society which to a very large extent enabled us to know ourselves, and to have a correct estimate of our position in the World of Culture. The study of Sanskrit in Europe also helped us in this, and Sanskrit helped to restore to us our sense of national self-respect and confidence. At the same time, the English language brought to us the message of the mind of Europe and helped us to modernise our mind also and to free it from obscurantism and from a kind of blind medie-

valism which were stifling our mental powers. We have tried to preserve our Indian Way of Thinking and Indian Way of Living, in full agreement with the highest trends of a Modern and a World Civilisation as a great heritage for Man, and the work that has been done by our Society and its successors and fellow-institutions all over the country and the world outside has been something very precious for Humanity also, during the present Age.

The Government and our Intelligentsia are both fully aware of the importance of it all. But we would request once again, and request urgently, both the Body Politic and the State, whether in the Provinces or at the Centre, to be a little more alive to the situation and use both imagination and promptitude.

I can only terminate my address with a fervent appeal, not only to the State and Central Government but also to our benefactors in the country, who have been quite enlightened in their patronage of our Society in various ways, and the names of such benefactors we hold in the highest esteem and in gratitude.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta as its President, I thank you all for your kind interest, and for your attendance at our anniversary gathering and I hope and trust you will continue to take the same interest and feel a sort of identification with and pride in the service which the Society has been doing to India and to the World of Science for near about 200 years.

## NOTES ON GLEANINGS

### *Acharya Suniti Kumar Chatterji's Reflections on the Founder of the Asiatic Society*

Satyabrata Chakrabarti

Acharya Suniti Kumar Chatterji's association with the Asiatic Society was deeply rooted from his early academic life. He served the Society in various capacities since then and till almost the end of his life. He became President of the Society during three terms in 1953, 1954 and 1970. His Presidential Address of 1970 which has been reprinted here was delivered on February 1, 1971 and was recorded in the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, 1971, when he was already eighty years old.

Professor Chatterji made an emphatic reference to the historical contributions of the founder of the Society, Sir William Jones (20.09.1746 – 27.04.1794), at a critical juncture in our nation's life which virtually became oblivious of the huge treasures of knowledge embedded in its classical roots of excellence. He then elaborated and explained how the genius par excellence, the founder, made the wonder possible over the next 10/11 years, since its inception in 1784, by establishing a rich academic tradition of researching into the society and culture of the East as well as by making the result available to the scholars of the West through valuable publications of the Society. The oriental intellectual enquiry proposed by the founder got precipitated from the mandate primarily based on MAN-NATURE interface. It was persuaded with great initiatives at individual and collective levels of interested scholars over the decades. Finally, the heritage left by the founder of the Society was earnestly followed through by its subsequent successors and ultimately descended on

the shoulders of the scholars of independent India. This is how not only it has survived with distinction for such long period, it has been also the mother of almost all major institutions in the country.

Professor Chatterji in his 1970s Presidential Address was reminiscing that long history of the academic tradition built up at the Asiatic Society. Similar attempt was made by him, and rather at length, in an earlier presentation. Professor Chatterji delivered an Address on 7.1.1946 on the occasion of Bicentenary of Sir William Jones at the Asiatic Society. The proceedings were published by the Society in 1948 (reprinted in 2002). Here he tried to situate, by and large, Sir William Jones and his contributions in the context of the studies broadly on Asian Civilization with a focus on India and other neighboring countries. In a happy coincidence, by default, Professor Chatterji's Presidential Address of 1970 and his Bicentenary Address on Sir William Jones in 1946 may be marked to have passed 50 years (Golden Jubilee) and 75 years (Platinum Jubilee) respectively. Therefore, in fitness of thing, this will be an ideal occasion to remember Acharya Suniti Kumar Chatterji also and his versatile scholarship in brief.

Professor Chatterji consistently maintained a position when he mentioned in his Address of 1970, "the Asiatic Society of Calcutta is one of the premier scholarly institutions of India and the world, and it came to us a very great gift from the scholarship and culture of Europe through England. We have reason to be grateful to the scholarly activities of the Society, for it has enabled us to know ourselves properly at a time when our historical consciousness had become faint and moribund, and when we were running the risk of losing our soul at the impact of England and Europe upon the culture of India. It was the historical and scholarly work of the Asiatic Society which to a very large extent enabled us to know ourselves, and to have a correct estimate of our position in the world of culture" (p15). He further emphasized the importance of the work done at the Society in the following line. "We have tried to preserve our Indian Way of thinking and Indian Way of Living, in full agreement with the highest trends of a Modern and World civilization as a great heritage of Man,



and the work that has been done by our society and its successors and fellow institutions all over the country and the world outside has been something very precious for Humanity also, during the present Age" (p16). He concluded his Address by making an appeal to the members "to take the same interest and feel a sort of identification with and pride in the service which the Society has been doing to India and to the World of Science for near about 200 years" (p16).

In the context of the preceding paragraphs it may be reiterated here how Professor Chatterji viewed the pioneering contributions of the founder of this ancient and long enduring institution of the country. In his Bicentenary Address of 1946 (mentioned earlier) he observed, "Among those rare spirits in Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century who, nurtured as they were in the humanism of ancient Greece and Rome, felt irresistibly drawn towards the culture and religion and the languages and literatures of the East, was Sir William Jones... Thus in the extension of the horizon of Europe from the purely material to the intellectual, in matters concerning the East, Sir William Jones took a leading part ... Sir William Jones was not only an incarnation of the intellectual curiosity of the highly cultivated and humanistic eighteenth century Europe – he was something more : his work has meant more for us Indians than what he himself or any compatriot of his was conscious of" (p84-85).

Professor Chatterji elaborated at length in his essay on the cardinal issues or aspects or agenda of studies which were taken up for India and other Asian countries at the initiative of Sir William Jones. These were well reflected in his Annual Discourses and letters spread over his tenure in Calcutta for about a decade. He also discussed in brief about brilliant academic and professional career and achievements of William Jones and concluded the paper by reproducing his 'Desiderata' – a list of future projects set for himself and "written out in his own hand (which was found in his papers after his death)" (p94). Professor Chatterji further mentioned, "He did not spare himself in preparing for this series of great projects : his premature death at 48 was no doubt hastened by so much continuous and arduous labour. But the

light he had kindled with his genius has never grown dim, and it is becoming brighter and brighter with the passing of years, decades and centuries" (P95).

It will be perhaps not out of place here to remember the author of the two Addresses mentioned in this brief note. These are his versatility of scholarship, the range of valuable publications, the extent of academic tours made throughout the length and breadth of both the hemispheres on the globe, the laurels and appreciations accumulated in his cap from every nook and corner of the world, the humane overtone in the conduct of his life, the wide responsibilities of teaching, researching, guiding scholars, and ever indicating newer angles of intellectual enquiries, a polyglot in true senses of the term and on the top of everything not confined only to his own academic domain but spread across all apparent divides and so on and so forth. *Bhashacharya* Suniti Kumar Chatterji, D. Lit (1921), *Padma Bhusan* (1963), *National Professor* (1964), *Deshikottam* (1966), lived a very active life of 87 years (26.11.1890 – 29.05.1977) and placed the Asiatic Society in high esteem by his deep academic involvement in various capacities. If the Asiatic Society, Calcutta (now Kolkata) was privileged to have one intellectual giant in the person of Sir William Jones in the late eighteenth century, it was equally gifted to have another such in the mid-twentieth century in the inclusion of Acharya Suniti Kumar Chatterji.

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Sun that Shines Supreme : Essays on Ideology and Revolutionary Activities of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*, Edited by Mamata Desai and Manis Kumar Raha, K. P. Bagchi & Company, Kolkata, 2010.

Nineteen authors, twenty-two articles and two hundred and twenty six pages make the form of a book that has been revived for discussion as a tribute to the memory of a great icon in Indian history — Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Almost all the articles available in the book, writes Professor Suranjan Das, Director, Netaji Institute of Asian Studies, were published in the *Asian Studies*, the biannual journal of the Institute. They have been collected in the format of a book because they have diverse views and viewpoints regarding the life and achievement of Netaji. All reveal specific standpoints with regard to a patriot who had been much maligned in life and sabotaged in history. The main purpose of the book, therefore, is to revive some unsung aspects of a hero who shines supreme even in the mist of calculated obliviousness of generations who held power in Independent India.

To start with Atis Dasgupta's essay 'Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: Through the eyes of a Japanese interpreter' reveals some unknown aspects of Bose's travels in south-east Asia. His stamina to work almost round the clock, his indomitable patriotism, his dedication to the cause of India's freedom, his remarkable concern for organizing scattered and stray military mankind were some major things that captivated the Japanese interpreter, Lt. Kuzonori Kunizoka, who left his vivid impressions about an itinerant hero whom he accompanied in all his efforts to organize the Indian National Army in south-east Asia.

When Subhas was acclaimed as a hero in south-east Asia he was condemned in India by those who were responsible for his expulsion from the Congress. R.K. Dasgupta recollects this with a sense of pathos. He writes: "Today when the Congress has gone to pieces and

its splinters too have no standing in our public life I have to ask a plain question. Mahatma Gandhi called Subhas a spoilt child of the family. I believe that by 'family' the Mahatma meant the Congress and what I ask now what was the state of the Congress at the time when Subhas was dismissed as its prodigal son. ... Writing in the *Harijan* of 27 May 1939, that is barely a month after Subhas's resignation Mahatma Gandhi said: 'I would go the length of giving the whole Congress organization a decent burial, rather than put up with the corruption that is rampant.' So Subhas the rebel was not the only Congressman who defied Congress discipline. Perhaps the corrupt were not accused of indiscipline because of their genuflection." (pp.9-10) Subhas Bose's expulsion from the Congress was a political scandal that was never redeemed any time thereafter. Gandhi's role that was considered as dubious even at the time was challenged in bold terms, then and now. Readers will recollect on this occasion how Durlab Singh analyzed threadbare Gandhi's role in his famous book *Rebel President of Indian National Congress* (1041 Lahore). Although mildly R.K. Dasgupta is squarely in line with Durlab Singh, the critic of Gandhi, and he shows that the fire of anguish that burnt in the Indian soul at that time still remains unextinguished.

Was Subhas a socialist? This question seems pertinent because Subhas's predilection for the axis powers made him a suspect before many eyes since the time of his stay in India. To this question many writers of the book have addressed themselves. For example Ashok Mukhopadhyay writes in his essay "Subhas Chandra on Socialism": "Bose analysed the socio-economic problems of India's reconstruction with the insight of an active mass leader having some deep feelings for the suffering millions. He was not a theorist in the strict sense of the term, he had no time and scope for elaborate academic discussion on socialism and its possible adoption in India. But he frequently

showed his awareness and eagerness in regard to the inescapable need of establishing socialism in India in order to get out of the wretched socio-economic morass into which Indian people found themselves—thanks to repression and exploitation under the British imperialism.”(p.16) These views find their echoes in the writing of Pradip Bose (“Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s Social Philosophy and Socio-Economic Ideas”) where he quotes extensively from Bose’s speeches to show how socialism was ingrained in his concept of India’s post-independence social construction. Thus writing from Berlin in 1930 to Barin Ghosh Subhas said: “The principal aim of our freedom struggle is to build a free and classless society.” Such a society could emerge only on five major principles: Justice, Equality, Freedom, Discipline and Love. Bose was not a stereotyped socialist.”His approach”, writes Pradip Bose, “was pragmatic and result-oriented. However, his firm commitments were for certain basic socialist values and principles...”Chitra Ghosh gives additional support to the extolling view that Subhas was a socialist. In her essay “Subhas Chandra Bose – His Ideas in Building Modern India” she writes: “As early as 1931, Subhas Bose had said that ‘the salvation of India and the world depended on Socialism’.” She adds: “In his famous thesis ‘Forward Bloc and its Justification’ he had written, “Leftism means Socialism, the theory on which the reconstruction of national life has to be based.”

These observations give us a frame of mind in which his alliance with the axis powers seems only to be a strategic military attachment for the cause of India’s struggle for freedom. Indian Marxists, however, had little confidence in appreciating this. They showed themselves sceptic vis-à-vis Subhas. Hiren Mukherjee, the Communist leader of India, for example, wrote once that Bose “preferred to think of socialism much too eclectically.” (Mukherjee, *Bow of Burning Goild* :

*A Study of Subhas Chandra Bose*, p.9). Subhas was never a doctrinaire and eclecticism was certainly in the core of his social thinking.

These discussions evoke a memory of a hero. They revive the legacy of Subhas. Madhuri Bose in her essay "Towards a Revival of the Bose Legacy" situates this legacy-revival in its legitimate position. Subhas's legacy consisted of two different sets of things. First it aimed at the removal of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy while on the other it strove for communal harmony. In his Presidential speech at the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Indian National Congress at Haripura in 1938 'he launched the very first Planning Commission for India'. Much of this legacy was created in a solitary effort. Even Nehru was not on his side. Madhuri Ghosh writes: "Historians have noted that Nehru had always perceived Subhas as his main rival, and his own statements bear evidence to that fact. Subhas himself had once written that 'nobody has done more harm to me personally and to our cause in this crisis than Pandit Nehru.'" (Letter to his nephew Amiya Nath Bose 17 April, 1939, p.75) Subhas was solitary in the Congress because he was a revolutionary. No Indian leader from Gandhi to Nehru had favoured revolution. Subhas did and for this Chitra Ghosh could firmly say : "Subhas was in every sense a revolutionary" ("Subhas Chandra Bose : Modernism in His Vision of the Future", p. 79). Bose himself said: "I would remind you that a revolutionary is one who believes in the justice of the cause and who believes that the cause is bound to prevail in the long run."

Subhas spoke his voice in confidence and this confidence made up the essence of his glamour. This confidence manifested itself in its utmost in his military strategies. Kaushik Roy says in his essay "Netaji's Military Strategy" that when Bose's political fortune in India 'in the late 1930s registered a continuous decline' 'Bose hit upon the ideas of launching an armed struggle with the aid of a country, which

was an enemy of the Commonwealth.' This was an out of normal idea that showed that Subhas was different from every one of his kind. 'From politics to military' as Kaushik Roy terms it, was a switch that verged on revolution. In this there was nothing which may be called a terrorist vainglory. "Bose's strategy," writes Kaushik Roy, "was different from that of the 'terrorist' outfits like the Bengal Volunteers. While the latter aimed to wage a low intensity conflict against the Raj with foreign arms, Bose visualized a full scale campaign through a professional army trained by a foreign power." (p.102). This required a self confidence the kind of which no other Indian leader did possess. Girish Chandra Maiti in his essay "Decisive Role of the INA in India's Freedom" says that of all 'the front-rank national leaders of the time' Bose was the only one 'who stressed the need of taking full advantage of the international war crisis for the attainment of independence.'(p.108) This attempt to internationalize India's struggle for independence needed a courage and confidence that were rare in history. Vis-à-vis Gandhi's passive resistance and the non-violence of the Congress this was an outstanding feat of achievement which no one could contest. Girish Chandra Maiti's article in the book is certainly a very well-researched article on Subhas Chandra Bose and his INA. It provides information with regard to the INA which is not available elsewhere.

On the whole the book is a laudable effort to organise the memory of Netaji on lines that normally do not appear in history text books. The book has a double merit. On the one hand it is a very readable account of many known and unknown aspects of India's freedom movement with Subhas Chandra Bose in the centre. It is on the other hand a perspective building exercise in which Indian valour has been juxtaposed with Indian passivity in all forms of Indian resistance to the British Empire. Many untold sides of our front-ranking national

leaders have come to light in the book. Uninhibited interpretations of events and statements have on many occasions matched with unedited versions of historical developments. In reading such books I find pleasure for they enrich my knowledge, sharpens my outlook and give me the kind of insight which normally I miss in my routine study of historical literature. I strongly feel that this book will be of immense help to students, researchers as well as lay readers. I recommend them to all concerned.

Ranjit Sen



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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 Francoise Mallison, eds, *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature, Research Papers, 1988-1991*, New Delhi/Paris, 1994, 278-84.

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

## SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

### SANSKRIT

आ = ā	ई = ī
ऊ = ū	ऋ = ṛ
ऌ = ṝ	च = ca
छ = cha	ज = ja
ट = ṭa	ठ = ṭha
ड = ḍa	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/sba	ས = sa
ཧ = ha	ཨ = a		

ARABIC (both Cap & Small)			
ا	—	A	a
آ (long)	—	Ā	ā
ب	—	B	b
ت	—	T	t
ث	—	Th	th
ج	—	J	j
ح	—	H	h
خ	—	Kh	kh
د	—	D	d
ذ	—	Dh	
ر	—	R	
ز	—	Z	
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It will flourish, if naturalists, chemists, antiquaries, philologers 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