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Socio-Economic Condition of Craftspeople: A Case Study of Western Rajasthan (17th-18th Century)

Shabir Ahmad Punzoo

Abstract

The study of crafts and craftspeople provides an insight into the medieval society and culture. In the medieval era, urban craftsmen were portrayed as a unique social class. Their caste influenced their moral standards, behaviour, and psychological characteristics. The archival records (*bahis*, preserved in the Rajasthan State Archives Bikaner, Rajasthan) and travelogues furnish profuse information about the socio-economic conditions of craftsmen during the period under review. In this paper, an attempt has been made to cover the social environment, level of living, pay, benefits, mobility, education, and organisation of artisans.

Keywords: Craftsmen, Wages, Organisation, Mobility, Guilds.

Clothing and Housing

While going through the accounts of travellers and the works of some modern scholars, we see that the condition of artisans was not good in terms of clothing, housing, wages, etc.[1] The life of an artisan was unattractive, as Bernier noticed.[2] Pelsaert mentions that the artisans lived in mud huts with thatched roofs.[3] John Olafson writes that the artisan houses were without walls.[4] In order to cover their bodies, insufficient clothes were worn by men and women as mentioned by Babur.[5] About the clothing of artisans, N.S. Gupta writes that the clothing of the working class was poor and insufficient.[6] The housing condition was not good and the standard of living was just hand to mouth as observed by Moreland.[7]

Generally, the dresses of workers were a short *jama*, a short pair of trousers and a turban.[8] Turbans were most commonly used by artisans like *Kumbhar* and *Mochi*. The dress was very simple and plain. Labourers tied *patka* with waist and sometimes they are depicted half-naked.[9] We find reference to differences in the clothing of workers as the dress of some workers like goldsmiths, precious stone-workers and damascening workers was better as compared to other workers like water carriers, washermen, and potters.[10] Full length *jama*s with full sleeves and yellow turbans were worn by gold thread makers. Dresses like the *kurta*, *langoti* and turban were very common. We also find that the tight-fitting kurtas with full sleeves, *langota*s and turbans are worn by *julaha*s.[11] *Abkash* (water carrier) used to wear a short *jama* (blue colour) with full sleeves and short trousers. *Kumbhar* (potter) is depicted half-naked and used to wear a dhoti and turban.[12] *Darji* (tailor) is depicted in a short *jama* (white colour), short trousers and turban (red colour). White printed *jama* and a pink turban were worn by block printers.[13] Yellow turban and tight fitted *kurta-payjama* (with red stripes) were worn by *lakhera. Maali* is depicted with a tight kurta, a turban (pink) and *langota* (loin clothes).

Tashrih-ul-Aqwam provides us information about the general image of artisans.[14] *Chhinpa* is depicted in *nafeesposhak* (good clothes).[15] Printer (*chhinpa*), painter (*chitera*) and ironsmith (*luhar*) are portrayed as cheater (*dagawaz)*, selfish and poor (*miskeen)* in nature and behaviour.[16] The urban craftsmen and traders resided in *mohallas* (localities). The occupation of craftsmen determined the *mohalla* name like *Chhinpa ka Mohalla*, *Julaha ka Mohalla*, etc.[17] This proved helpful to organise every type of craft by the state and also proved fruitful for revenue collection.[18] The people living in particular localities belonged to one caste or profession. For instance, in Nagaur, we find *Luharu ka Mohalla*, *Churiwallu ka Mohalla*, etc.

Hereditary Occupation, Caste, Sub-caste and Mobility

The craftsmen adopted their forefathers´ occupation (hereditary occupation) and were grouped in castes.[19] In the formation of socio-

psychological features of artisans, caste played a significant part. It regulated the lives of craftsmen. Their family life, values, behaviour, and religious and cultural needs were regulated by caste.[20] The urban society represented both Hindu and Muslim castes like *julahas, kumbhars, mochis,* etc. The artisans often used the caste organisation to struggle against the exploitation of officials, merchants, etc.[21]

With the emergence of new professions, labour divisions and technical improvements, new castes developed. We find the emergence of industrial castes due to the development of new cities as centres of professional commodity production and trade.[22] We have reference to more than sixty castes and sub-castes of artisans like ink makers, book binders, silk weavers, soap makers, thatchers, etc.[23] Due to the market situation, sometimes the whole caste would change its profession. In the cities, the caste system was more flexible. We have evidence of artisans changing their professions. The *Chhinpa* caste was associated with wool-dying. But it is significant to note that they did not confine themselves to wool-dying but engaged themselves in trade, later on, which is an indication of social mobility.[24] For instance, a bow-maker turned to wood printing, tailors turned to dying and indigo-dying and *chamars* switched to cotton carding.[25] They moved from one place to another for better employment. In Rajasthan, we find mobility among craftsmen and hired labour. For instance, *kamthana bahis* of Bikaner provide us information about artisans who came from far and wide areas.[26] For instance, craftsmen who came from Agra, Multan, Delhi, Gujarat, etc. settled down in Rajasthan, which speaks of the migration of artisans.

Guilds

We know that guild organisations have been in India since ancient times.[27] They were organised socially and economically and were called *antvaja* as mentioned by Alberuni.[28] In South India, they were known as *srenis, nagaram* and *sangha*. Artisans' work, working conditions and interests were regulated and ensured by them. In pre-colonial Indian cities, they had several administrative, judicial, and economic favours.[29]

The guilds offered loans to craftsmen according to their paying capacities. They were crucial for the sustenance of a medieval institution of Indian economy as observed by Birdwood and Hopkins.[30] We find guilds of weavers in South India during the seventeenth century and good donations were offered by them along with other professional classes like merchant guilds.[31] In Rajasthan, we do not find guilds to organise the traders and artisans. No doubt, *kothiwal*s, *bohra*s, *mahajan*s, *sah*s, *charan*s and *bhat*s offered loans to the artisans, petty merchants, and peasants but they did not act as guilds like in South India.[32] The guilds appear to have existed in India at least as late as the early medieval period. However, the existence of guilds during the Mughal period has been contested as mentioned by Rezavi.[33]

The medieval Indian artisans did not organise the trade unions and never expressed their protest in the meetings as mentioned by Vanina.[34] But Ramaswamy writes that in seventeenth century South India, trade and business were organised by well-known *julaha*s.[35] Some master *julaha*s associated themselves with the word *citti* (merchant).[36] The rich artisans also employed their poor brethren as workers and exploited them. In the Mughal period, there is little evidence of such development since there were only a few independent master-craftsmen of any subsistence as observed by Irfan Habib.[37] Jagdish Narayan Sarkar writes that the superior class could not develop and grow in India during medieval times.[38]

Social Protest

The middlemen and moneylenders used to exploit the individual artisans as they (the artisans) were dependent on the middlemen for raw materials in order to prepare the various kinds of articles. Interest rate was charged on them by *sah*s and artisans had to sell their articles at very low prices to the *sah*s in order to repay the loans. Their goods were purchased by middlemen at very low prices. Their economic condition also worsened due to heavy taxation imposed on them.[39] But it is significant to note that the *karkhana* workers were economically

better off as compared to the individual workers. They were promoted from time to time, given regular salaries and rewards in state workshops.[40] They achieved a higher status as compared to individual artisans who were fully dependent on middlemen. So, indebted artisans moved to other places as noticed by Vanina.[41] Indebtedness increased due to *dadni* (advance money) given to artisans by middlemen.[42] But K.N. Chaudhuri mentions that *dadni* was not a sign of artisans' poverty; rather, it was like a commercial contract with legal obligations for both parties.[43]

While going through the archival records like *Sanad Parwana Bahi*s of Jodhpur, we find that the craftsmen were given protection against the harassment. They were provided various facilities like tax exemption, etc. For instance, the Jodhpur Darbar issued *parwana*s to the officers of Jalor in which it was mentioned that the bangle-makers named Gulammuddin and Imamuddin should not be harassed and taxed.[44]

Tod writes that a decree was issued by Raja Jagat Singh that forbade the forcible seizure of cots and quilts from the *chhinpa*s by the state officials.[45] We see that, in opposing the states' interference, industrial castes were active in many cases. In the struggle for their rights, the craftsmen used their caste organisation. The *jagirdar*s, governors, contractors and sometimes local administrators exploited the artisans and traders.[46] As a mark of protest against officials of Baroda, the *julaha*s left the city and settled in Ahmadabad because they were forced to sell the cloth below the market rate.[47] In protest against the loom tax, the South Indian *julaha*s flocked to their native places.[48] In South India, the tax on *julaha*s was fairly heavy.[49]

Regulations

In *karkhana*s, we find that the officials used to fix the regulations for artisans. *Bahi*s show us the number of days fixed for work, raw materials and tools offered to artisans (by officials). They were paid according to their work and given rewards for their artistic dexterity. The superintendent of workshops was instructed to treat the craftsmen

in a better way.[50] He used to attest and maintain the attendance rolls.[51] Similarly, *darogha* used to take an undertaking from artisans in order to prevent theft and furnish security of raw material and tools (given to them in *karkhana*s). Skilled artisans were recruited in workshops as they had to deal with expensive raw materials and tools.[52] *Bahi*s offer us the names of artisans, their fathers and grandfathers, caste, and domicile.[53] Raw materials and tools were distributed to craftsmen by *daroga* who took them from *tehvildar*. After finishing the work, the craftsmen submitted the tools and raw material to the officials. We also see that the transaction of money was made daily for raw materials and wages.[54]

Wage Structure of Artisans and Labourers

While dealing with the economic condition of artisans, it is necessary to go through their wages. Travelers say that the wages of artisans were low and that no uniformity was maintained in Mughal domains. Pelsaert writes that in Agra forty days were often counted as one month. Five to six *taka*s (per day) were given to carpenters, masons and ironsmiths as observed by Pelsaert.[55] He mentions that workmen, small shopkeepers, and servants used to get low wages. Goldsmiths, painters, embroiderers, carpet-makers and weavers earn only five to six *taka*s per day or about one-fifth of a rupee per day.[56] He writes that Prince Khurram used to give high wages to artisans. Gardeners, potters, and washermen earn three to ten rupees per month as observed by Hawkins.[57] The bearers of *palkhi* and umbrellas got two rupees per month.[58] The lives of artisans were not good and the majority of the labourers had bad conditions as they earned only a bare subsistence as noticed by Bernier and Moreland.[59] The low standard and uneconomic position of artisans is also highlighted by De Laet.[60]

In *karkhana*s (workshops) we see a different picture as wages were paid according to the work of artisans and they felt safe here.[61] They were paid regularly in *karkhana*s in the form of cash/*naqd* (like *dam*,[62] *taka*, etc.), kind/*jnisi* and advance/*hawalgi* was also provided to them.

For buying material from market, an amount was given to workers. The skilled artisans in *karkhana*s hired labourers for their help.[63] Hired workers were paid in the form of *taka* (see Table 1).

Table 1: Wages of Hired Labour (*majur*)[64]

Number of *majur* (hired labour)	Rate per unit	Wages in *taka*
30 *nafar* (men)	2	60
18	2	36
22	2	44
8	1.25	10
20	2	40
4	1.25	5

This table shows us that thirty workers (employed for making weapons) were given sixty *taka*s according to 2 *dar* (rate per unit). Similarly, forty-four *taka*s were given to twenty-two workers for making weapons. In *karkhana*s, we find that the artisans were employed for a fixed period of time like carpenter Rahman of Jodhpur for four months and Hakim for six months (Rs. 6 was his monthly income).[65] In *topkhana*, we find seven ironsmiths were given Rs. 40 for nine days. Similarly, ten ironsmiths who were working in *topkhana* were given Rs. 22 for twenty-five days. Carpenter Govardhan Das was given Rs. 4 for twenty-five days and Rs. 34 and *anna*s 4 were given to twenty-three carpenters for twenty-five days. It shows us a difference in wages, but it was basically specialisation as already mentioned, workers were paid according to their work and skill.

Carpenters and ironsmiths were also hired by private party and their wages ranged from 3 ½ to 4 *taka*s daily.[66]A group of *sangtarash*s were called for construction purposes at Jodhpur from Nagaur. Skilled stone-cutters were given Rs. 7 and unskilled workers (who helped them) Rs. 3 monthly.[67] They were hired by a private party and paid on a daily basis. For example, twelve *silawat*s were hired for 48 *taka*s.[68] It means each one of them received 4 *taka*s. In 1669, the wages of skilled and unskilled ironsmiths were *dham* 25 and *dham* 6 respectively.[69] The wages of skilled and unskilled carpenters were

dham 37.50 and *dham* 6 (per day) in 1669.[70] Similarly, the wages (per day) of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled construction workers were *taka* 2, *taka* 1 *dam* 12.50 and *dam* 6 respectively.[71] Unskilled labourers were given less wages as compared to the artisans and their wages ranged between Rs. 2 and Rs. 3 per month.[72]

Sometimes, they were paid in kind. For example, the labourers employed for construction purposes in the palace at Kota, were given 200 grams of jawar daily.[73] Workers were also paid in advance (*hawalgi*). For instance, in 1737 A.D., Nathuram got Rs.1 and *taka* 5 for eight days and Niryamu got Rs. 2 and *taka* 2 for eight days. Similarly, carpenter Hakim was given Rs. 36 for six months' rent in advance to meet the marriage expenses of his daughter.[74] It seems that artisans were employed for a certain fixed period of time as carpenter Rupa of *Topkhana* was employed for four months on the occasion of his son's marriage.[75] On the occasion of his daughter's marriage, he was employed for ten months.[76] Likewise, tailors named Dulo and Asa were recruited in the *khema-khana* (tent workshop) and were given Rs. 10 (each) for the marriage of their son and daughter respectively.[77] But it should be kept in mind that in the eighteenth century, the importance of ironsmiths increased to a great extent due to intense warfare and they were employed on a large scale in *karkhana*s for making weapons, so their wages increased. In the eighteenth century, ironsmiths were receiving Rs. 5.50 to Rs. 6 per month.[78]

So far as the building construction work is concerned, the actual work was done by *Mi'mar.*[79]A number of artisans were working under him like *gilkar* (clay-worker), *silawat/sangtarash* (stone-cutter), *khati/durudgar* (carpenter),[80] *khishtmalan* (bricklayer), *beldar* (used to dig foundations and ditches), *khishtpuzan* (brick-burners) and *ahakpuzan* (lime-burners). We get plenty of information about construction workers from various sources.[81] Their daily wages ranged from 2 *dam*s to 7 *dam*s (except for the *Mi'mar* whose salary was high), see Table 2.

Table 2: Wages of Artisans Associated with Construction Work[82]

Category of Artisans	Wages
Silawat/*Sangtarash*/stone-cutter (*sadahkar* or plain stone-cutter)	5 *dam*s per *gaz* of stone
Silawat/*Sangtarash* (*naqqash*/carver)	6 *dam*s per *gaz*
Arah-kash/sawyer of *sisum* wood	2½ *dam*s per *gaz*
Arah-kash of *nazhu* wood	2 *dam*s per *gaz*
Helper of *Arah-kash*	2 *dam*s (daily wage)
Khishtmalan/Bricklayer	3 to 3½ *dam*s for common work and 4 *dam*s if worked for construction of walls of fortresses. For all other walls, 2 *dam*s per *gaz*
Beldar (spademan)	2½ *dam*s per *gaz* for digging foundation. ½ dam for digging ditches
Mi'mar	12 to 26.60 *dam*s per day

Mi'mar was paid a salary between 12 and 26.60 *dam*s per day during the reign of Aurangzeb.[83] The highest daily wage received by an artisan performing building construction work was 7 *dam*s and the lowest was 2 *dam*s.[84] On the other hand, the piece wages varied between 100 *dam*s to ½ *dam* per *gaz*. So, it is clear that in *karkhana*s, the artisans were receiving wages according to their work, specialisation and working days. For the value of currency see Table 3.

Table 3: Value of Currency[85]

S.No.	Currency	Value (equal to)
1.	1 *Kauri*	3 *broker*
2.	1 *Dam*	3 *kauri*s
3.	1 *Damri*	10 *kauri*s/3 *dam*s
4.	1 *Chhadam*	6 *dam*s
5.	1 *Dhela*	4 *damri*s/12 *dam*s
6.	1 *Paisa*	25 *dam*s/64 *kauri*s/2 *dhela*s
7.	1 *Takka*	50 *dam*s/2 *paisa*
8.	1 *Anna*	2 *taka*s/4 *paisa*
9.	4 *Anna*	8 *taka*s/16 *paisa*
10.	1 *Rupee*[86]	16 *anna*s/64 *paisa*
11.	1 *Gold Mohr*	15 *rupee*s

While examining the *Bahi*s of Bikaner, we find that the rulers contributed to the construction activity by employing and engaging numerous artisans and labourers. Mention has been made of alterations, renovations, and repairs to different apartments like Badal Mahal, Phool Mahal, Karan Mahal, Anup Mahal, etc. In *kamthana bahi*s, the original figures are mentioned in the form of *taka* and *dam*. They have been calculated in rupees, *anna*s and *paise*.[87] But it is important to note that the value of the *taka* in rupees varied between 16, 17 and sometimes 18.[88] In eastern Rajasthan, the value varied between 14, 17.50 and 18.50.[89] So, it is hard to find out the wages of professional groups.

Generally, the wages of artisans and labourers (engaged in construction work) between 1650-1750 were fixed at *anna*s 4 to *anna* 1 and 2 *paise* (for artisans) and *anna*s 2 to *anna* 1 and 6 *paise* (for labourers). Lime-workers received wages from *anna*s 3 to *anna*s 2 and 6 *paise*. Low wages seem due to an abundance of labour (high birth rate or population influx).[90] During 1761, the wages of labourers increased (*anna*s 4 for superior labourers and *anna*s 3 for ordinary ones).[91] *Luhar*s also received *anna*s 4. We also find references to female labourers who were getting 2 to 3 *paise* as daily wages. Generally, they were given grains from 2 to 4 *chhataka*s.[92] Skilled artisans who had specialisation in specific jobs were given high wages. For instance, well-known artisans from Jaipur and the Deccan were provided *anna*s 10 per day whereas local artisans were given *anna*s 4 in Bikaner. The *Bahi*s of Bikaner (*Lekha* and *Jama Kharch*) dated 1670 and 1757 subscribe to the fact that superior labourers received *anna*s 3 and ordinary ones received *anna*s 2 daily.[93] In Kota and Jaipur, superior artisans earned *anna*s 8 to 6 per day while ordinary artisans received *anna*s 2 to *anna* 1.[94] We can compare the purchasing power of wages by showing the prices of some essential commodities like *gur*, oil, clothes, *bajra* and *moth*. See Table 4.

Table 4: Prices of basic articles[95]

Name of Articles	Price
Gur (per *seer*)	*anna*s 4
Moth (per *maund*)	Rs.1
Oil (per *seer*)	*anna*s 3 to 4
Bajra (per *maund*)	Rs.1 and *anna*s 2
Coarse Cloth (per ten yards)	Rs. 2 to 3

By this price structure we assume that it was hard for minimum wage earners to earn their own subsistence in terms of the consumption of staple diet. To meet the food and other necessities of their family, their earnings could not be sufficient. But supplementary payment to labourers in kind met their requirements to some extent.

Training and Organisation of Artisans

In Rajasthan, there were various types of urban industries/crafts and craftsmen like textile workers, leather workers, metal workers, ivory, bangles, ornaments, armaments workers etc. It is significant to note that there were no factories in the modern sense; rather, industries were essentially in the nature of handicrafts. The production was organised in different ways. The basic unit of production was the artisan family. Craftsmen were mostly independent producers with their families and apprentices (who received training under them) acting as helpers. Generally, artisans used tools and implements of their own in the production process. Even they were expected to bring their own tools in state *karkhana*s also. Hereditary training of artisans and caste played a significant role as it regulated the professional activities, family life, religious and cultural needs of the artisans. Under the patriarchal care of his father, the artisan learned the craft with curiosity.[96] Bernier writes that, "the embroiderer brings his son to be an embroiderer, a goldsmith's son becomes a goldsmith; and the physician educates his son to be a physician."[97] Pelsaert also writes that, "the workers' children can follow no occupation other than that of their father, nor can they marry with any other caste."[98] Similarly, Babur and De Laet say that the artisans follow hereditary

occupations.[99] But we also find social mobility during medieval period. Due to the introduction of new crafts and techniques, the caste profession was changed by artisans. Daswant, the well-known miniature painter of Akbar's Court, was the son of a *palki*-bearer and an apprentice of Khawaja Abdus Samad (Muslim painter).[100]

The production was also organised by the state by employing artisans as wage labour for specific jobs. Besides the state, artisans were also hired for a fixed daily wage by any other person (merchants) who needed their services or they were given raw materials by merchants to manufacture industrial goods. Their working hours were fixed at four *pahar.*[101] It seems that they had to work from dawn until dusk.

Production was also organised in *karkhana*s, but here, it was confined to meeting the specific and fastidious needs of the state/ aristocracy. Skilled and more expert artisans were employed in *karkhana*s. Both local and outsider (who were invited by the state) artisans were working in *karkhana*s and quality goods were produced by them. They were rewarded from time to time and were given protection by the state. So, we find that artisans came from various parts of the country and settled in Rajasthan.

During the Mughal period, *karkhana*s (workshops) were maintained to a great extent. *Karkhana*s played a significant role in the organisation and training of artisans. The excellence of art and craft was kept alive by workshops.[102] The arts and crafts flourished under the *karkhana*s.[103] Master craftsmen were providing training to artisans in the *karkhana*s.[104]The state appointed different officials for the functioning of workshops like *daroga, tahvildar, desh-diwan, khan-i-saman*, etc.[105] In each workshop, there was a *daroga* who used to deal with the artisans in his branch. Raw materials and unfinished articles were taken by him from *tahvildar* for distribution among artisans. *Tahvildar* was in charge of the cash and materials required for the *karkhana*. He also used to fix the cost of articles and the wages of artisans for the manufacturing of particular articles. The job of fixing the rewards for artisans for decent work and presenting them to the court was also performed by him. *Desh-diwan* was another official who had the

authority to take initiative in terms of the appointment, dismissal of officers like *daroga, tahvildar*, treasurer and money-lenders. Transactions of *karkhana* were dealt by him. For the maintenance of *karkhana*s, he used to give money to the officials. We have another official i.e., *Khan-i-Saman/Mir Saman* whose responsibility was to check all official appointments in workshops. He used to enjoy equal status with the *diwan* in terms of appointments, dismissals, and postings of *daroga*s, *tahvildar*s, *amin*s and *mushrif*s of different workshops.[106] The rules for the work of *karkhana*s and treasuries were laid down by him. He also used to keep records of hired and waged labour.[107]

As already mentioned, artisans were largely organised and trained by experts and master craftsman. The workshop's success depended upon the experience and skill of master craftsmen as referred to by *Ain*.[108] For the training of artisans, master (*ustad*)[109] was appointed in *karkhana*s.[110] The master craftsmen was well-skilled and a perfectionist in his field/craft.[111] Master craftsman used to arrange materials and tools for artisans.[112] We find references to master craftsmen managing their own workshops under the Mughals and employing skilled craftspeople and apprentices who worked from dawn to dusk.[113] He was the administrator, manager and supervisor of his establishment. Gujarati merchants had their own workshops where craftsmen like dyers, weavers, embroiderers, and silk twisters were employed.[114]

Raw material was not bought by artisans from the market rather, it was provided to them by the state in *karkhana*s. There is no doubt that we have evidence of master craftsmen purchasing raw materials from the market but money was given to them by the state. The master craftsmen supervised the work of artisans, guided them in a better way and their wages were high as compared to artisans.[115] We find that artisans like smiths, carpenters, jewellers, weavers, etc. employed hired labour.[116] In our sources, the term for hired labour is *majur* and they were paid in the form of *taka*.[117]

Merchants were also attached to the workshops. They played a significant role in facilitating the workshops in a proper manner. Raw material was provided by them regularly and on a monthly basis. They brought raw material in stocks (in the form of *jinsi*/kind, *tola*/

weight, *jodi*/pairs, and *kata*) and were paid in kind and cash for the said. For instance, seventy-five *mohar* and Rs. 25 were paid to Bhikharidas in V.S.1792.[118] We find references to different terms for commercial groups like,'*vyopari*' or '*byopari*, *bichayati* and *mahajan*' in our sources.[119] They operated at every level and played a crucial part in the functioning of the *karkhana*s.[120]

The buying of finished items from craftsmen was the earliest form of bond between the merchant capital and crafts. Later, traders brought semi-processed items and sold them to artisans. Putting out system of raw material was another connection. The merchants interfered directly in manufacturing process as mentioned by K.N. Chaudhuri.[121] Similarly, in the context of South India, the standards of cloth received from the *julaha* (weaver), the main technological operations, the size of fabrics and the number of warp threads were decided by traders.[122]

Thus, artisans achieved excellence in their craft as we see that besides hereditary training, they were also trained and guided in *karkhana*s by master craftsmen. The raw material was provided to them regularly by merchants on time and at the time of work, it was distributed to them by an official.

Honours/Rewards

Skilled craftspeople who were known for their work were rewarded by the state[123] in the form of cash, clothes and *siropao*s.[124]For a reference to the number of craftsmen who were rewarded for their artistic dexterity, see Table 5.

Table 5: Name, Profession and Rewards of Artisans[125]

Name	**Profession**	**Rewards**
Lala[126]	*Shorgar*	*Pag* (turban)
Pema	*Khati*	Rs. 20 in cash and cloth worth Rs. 6
Gopal	Mason	Rs. 400
Bhu Dhar[127]	*Sangtarash*	Cloth worth Rs. 13
Fateh Muhammad[128]	*Luhar*	*Siropao* worth Rs. 6.2 *anna*s
Sahajram	*Minakar*	*Siropao* worth Rs. 22.4 *anna*s
Deepa	*Chhinpa*	*Thirma Butadar* (cloth) *than* 1 worth Rs. 6 and *anna*s 8

Mansaram	*Patwas/ Tarkash*	*White cheera cloth*
Muhammad Sadiq	*Chhinpa*	*Siropao* worth Rs. 31
Thamman Das	*Karigar*	*Siropao than 3* worth Rs. 22 and *anna*s 4
Khema Chetan	*Khati*	*Thirma Butadar* worth Rs. 7 and *anna*s 8
Uda	*Sunar*	Golden bracelet (pair) worth Rs. 50
Gangaram	*Silawat*	*Thirma Butadar* worth Rs. 6
Nizami	Embroi-derer	*Angrakha*[129] worth Rs. 5

Thus, it makes us clear that the skilled craft-persons were honoured and promoted by the state from time to time for their decent work. *Siropao*s which were tailored by *darji*s were also presented to the nobles.

Notes

[1] Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie,* (ed.), and (tr.), Moreland and P. Geyl, *Jahangir's India*, Delhi, reprint, 1972, pp. 61-63; Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, (ed.), and (tr.), A. Constable and V.A. Smith, Oxford, 1916, pp. 228-29; John Olafson, *The Life of the Icelander John Olafson, Traveller to India*, Vol. II, London, 1923; See also W.H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, *An Economic Study*, London,1920, pp. 175-188; W.H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb: A Study in Indian Economic History*, London, 1923, p. 203; N.S. Gupta, *Industrial Structure of India During Medieval Period*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 137.

[2] Bernier, op. cit., pp. 228-19.

[3] Pelsaert, op. cit., pp. 61-63.

[4] John Olafson, *The Life of the Icelander John Olafson, Traveller to India*, Vol. II, cf. Farhat Kamal, 'Artisans and Craftsmen in 18th Century Jaipur', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, CAS, Department of History, AMU, 2016, pp. 31-32.

[5] Zahiruddin Babur, *Babur Nama*, (tr.), A.S. Beveridge, London, 1921, (rpt. 1989), p. 293.

[6] N.S. Gupta, op. cit., p. 137.

[7] W.H. Moreland, op. cit., p. 203.

[8] Physical Survey of Mehrangarh Fort by me during the month of March, 2021.

[9] Ibid; S.P. Verma, *Art and Material Culture in the Paintings of Akbar's Court*, Delhi, 1986, p. 117.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Farhat Kamal, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

[14] James Skinner, *Tashrih-ul-Aqwam*, 1825 A.D., Rotograph preserved at C.A.S., Department of History, A.M.U., Aligarh, No. 206, Part C.

[15] Ibid., Part B, f. no. 59, p. 261.
[16] Ibid., f. 49, p. 239, f. no. 58, p. 259.
[17] Eugenia Vanina, *Urban Crafts and Craftsmen in Medieval India (Thirteenth-Eighteenth Centuries)*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 2004, p. 126.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Babur, *Babar Nama*, (tr.), John Leyden and William Erskine, London, 1920, Vol. II, p. 520; Joanes De Laet, *Empire of the Great Mogul*, (tr.), J.S. Hoyland and S.N. Banerjee, Bombay,1928, pp. 88-89; Bernier, op. cit., pp. 238-251; J.S. Stavorinous, *Voyage to the East Indies*, Vol. I, London, 1798, pp. 474; Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 60; E. Ives, *A Voyage from England to India in the Year 1754*, London, 1773, p. 52. See also, A.I. Tchitcherow, *Changing Economic Structure in the 16th-18th Centuries*: *Outline History of Crafts and Trade*, Manohar, Delhi, 1998, p. 83; B.L. Gupta, *Trade and Commerce in Rajasthan*, Jaipur Publishing House, Jaipur, 1987, p. 54.
[20] Eugenia Vanina, op. cit., pp. 133-43.
[21] Tripta Verma, *Karkhanas Under the Mughals*: *A Study in Economic Development*, Delhi, 1994, p. 127.
[22] Eugenia Vanina, op. cit., p. 123.
[23] Banarasidas, *Ardhakathanak*, (ed.), and (tr.), Mukund Lath, *Half a Tale*, Jaipur, 1981, p. 226; *Sabha Sringara*, (ed.), S.A. Nahta, Kashi, 1962, p. 148; Abdur Rahim Khankhanan, *Rahim Ratnavali*, Banaras, 1952, pp. 28-37; Mukundaram Chakrabarti, *Chandimangal*, Russian (tr.), I.A. Tovstykh, Moscow, 1980, pp. 50-152, cf. Vanina, op. cit., p. 122.
[24] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, no. 17, V.S. 1833/A.D. 1776, mitiasadsudi 5, p. 41, f. b.
[25] F. Buchanan, *An Account of the District of Shahabad (1812-13)*, Patna, 1934, p. 403; Hiroshi Fukazawa, *The Medieval Deccan: Peasants, Social Systems and States (Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)*, Delhi, 1991, pp. 100-102; F. Buchanan, *An Account of the District of Bihar and Patna, (1811-12)*, Patna, 1934, p. 408, cf. Irfan Habib, 'Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India', in *Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception*, (ed.), Irfan Habib, Delhi, 1995, p. 127. This article was first published in *Enquiry*, Vol. III, No. 3, 1971.
[26] *Kamthana Bahi*, V.S. 1808/A.D. 1751, No. 2, pp. 4-6; *Lekha Bahi*, Bikaner, V.S. 1727/A.D. 1670, p. 311; *Jama Kharch Bahi*, Bikaner, 1757 A.D., p. 240.
[27] In ancient India, guilds were a unique and multifaceted form of organisation, which combined the functions of a democratic government, a trade union, a court of justice, and a technological institution. Syed Ali Nadeem, Rezavi, 'Mughal Artisans at Work and at Home', in *In Search of Vishwakarma: Mapping Indian Craft Histories*, (ed.), Vijaya Ramaswamy, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2019, pp. 171-172.
[28] Alberuni, *Kitab-ul Hind*, (tr.), Noor Nabi Abbasi, National Book Trust, New Delhi, p. 41.
[29] Eugenia Vanina, op. cit., p. 131.
[30] N.S. Gupta, op. cit., p. 49.
[31] Ibid., pp. 158-59.
[32] B.L. Gupta, op. cit., p. 14-30.

[33] Rezavi, 'Mughal Artisans at Work and at Home', in *In Search of Vishwakarma: Mapping Indian Craft Histories,* p. 172.
[34] Eugenia Vanina, op. cit., p. 154.
[35] Vijaya Ramaswamy, *Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India*, Delhi, 1985, p. 84.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Irfan Habib, 'Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India', p. 219.
[38] Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, *Mughal Economy: Organization and Working*, Calcutta, 1987, p. 88.
[39] Ibid., p. 30.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Eugenia Vanina, op. cit., p. 93.
[42] N.S. Gupta, op. cit., p. 75.
[43] K.N. Chaudhuri, *Asia Before : Europe, Economy, and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 321.
[44] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 15, V.S. 1832/A.D. 1775, p. 250.
[45] James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. I, Humphrey Milford, Oxford, 1920, rpt., New Delhi, 2001, pp. 239-40.
[46] Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, pp. 129, 255; Harbans Mukhia, 'Illegal Extortions from Peasants, Artisans and Menials in the Eighteenth Century Rajasthan', *IESHR*, Vol. I, 1977, pp. 230-39.
[47] A.I. Tchitcherow, op. cit., p. 96.
[48] Vijaya Ramaswamy, op. cit., p. 148.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Eugenia Vanina, op. cit., p. 97.
[51] James Tod, op. cit., p. 239.
[52] Sumbul Halim Khan, *Art and Craft Workshops Under the Mughals,* Primus Books, Delhi, 2015, p. 7.
[53] *Kamthana Bahis* of Bikaner.
[54] Sumbul Halim Khan, op. cit., p. 9.
[55] Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie,* pp. 55-61.
[56] Ibid., p. 60.
[57] Hawkins, *Voyages*, (ed.), C.R. Markham, London, 1878, p. 420.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Bernier, op. cit., pp. 228-29; W.H. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 187-88.
[60] Joanes De Laet, *Empire of the Great Mogul*, pp. 87-90.
[61] Tripta Verma, op. cit., p. 123.
[62] Forty *dam*s were equivalent to Rs. 1. Syed Ali Nadeem, Rezavi, 'Mughal Artisans at Work and at Home', in *In Search of Vishwakarma, Mapping Indian Craft Histories*, pp. 162-185.
[63] *Kamthana Bahi*, Bikaner, No. 4, A.D. 1755; See also K.N. Chaudhuri, 'The Structure of Indian Textile Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *IESHR*, Vol. XI, 1974, p. 181; Tek Chand Bhar, *Bahar-i Ajam*, *1739-40*, Vol. II, Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow, 1916, p. 54.
[64] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 9, 1772 A.D., p.12, f. b; *Kamthana Bahi*, Bikaner, No. 4, A.D.1755.

[65] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 1, V.S. 1821/A.D. 1764; *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, no. 11, 1771 A.D., p. 14.
[66] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 9, 1772 A.D., p. 12, f. b.
[67] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 19,1707 A.D., p. 47.
[68] *Kamthana Bahi*, Bikaner, No. 4, A.D. 1755.
[69] M.T. Sethia, *Rajput Polity, Warriors, Peasants, and Merchants (1700-1800)*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2003, pp. 252-53.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] B.L. Gupta, op. cit., p. 29.
[73] Ibid.
[74] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 11, 1771 A.D., p. 14.
[75] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 9, 1769 A.D., p. 42, f. b.
[76] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 13, 1773 A.D., p. 64, f. b.
[77] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 9, 1769 A.D., p. 82, f. b.
[78] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 11, V.S. 1828/A.D. 1771, p. 14.
[79] *Mi'mar/Muhandis* used to prepare the *tarhi* (drawing of plan). See Abul Qasim Namakin, *Munshaati-i Namakin*, MS, Aligarh Collection, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, fol.133(b), cf. Syed Ali Nadeem, Rezavi, 'Mughal Artisans at Work and at Home', in *In Search of Vishwakarma: Mapping Indian Craft Histories*, pp. 162-85.
[80] For carpenter, Abul Fazl uses the term *durudgar*. See Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbar*, (ed.), Nawal Kishore, Vol. I, Lucknow, 1882, p. 117. Muhnot Nainsi uses the term *khati* for carpenter. See Muhnot Nainsi, *Marwar-ra-pargana-ri-Vigat* (henceforth *Vigat)* (ed.), N.S. Bhati, Rajasthan Prachyavidya Pratishthan, Jodhpur, 1968, Vol. I, pp. 391, 496-97; Vol. II, (1969), pp. 9, 83-86, 223-24 and 310-11.
[81] Muhnot Nainsi, *Vigat*, Vol. I, pp. 391, 496-97; Vol. II, pp. 9, 83-86, 223-24 and 310-11; Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbar*, (ed.), Nawal Kishore, Vol. I., pp. 117-18; Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur, *Babur Nama*, (tr.), John Leyden and William Erskine, Vol. II, p. 243 and p. 520; Abul Qasim Namakin, *Munshaati-i Namakin*, fol. 133(b); Shaikh Zain Khan Khawafi, *Tabaqat-i Baburi*, (tr.), S. Hasan Askari, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi, 1982, p. 134; Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Badshah Nama*, (ed.), K. Ahmad and A. Rahim, Vol. II, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1868, p. 324, cf. Syed Ali Nadeem, Rezavi, 'Mughal Artisans at Work and at Home', in *In Search of Vishwakarma: Mapping Indian Craft Histories*, pp. 162-85. See also Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, p. 34; Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, p. 398; John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia in Eight Letters: Being Nine Years Travels, Begun 1672 and Finished 1681*, Periodical Experts Book Agency, Delhi, 1985, p. 92; A.J. Qaisar, *Building Construction in Mughal India*, OUP, Delhi, 1988, p. 11.
[82] Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, pp.117-18; Syed Ali Nadeem, Rezavi, 'Mughal Artisans at Work and at Home', in *In Search of Vishwakarma: Mapping Indian Craft Histories*, pp. 162-85. See also, Nishat Manzar, *Urban Wage Earners in Seventeenth Century India: Artisans, Labourers, Service Providers and Entertainers*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2021, pp. 301-352.
[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Jibraeil, *The Revenue Manual of Rajasthan (Seventeenth-Nineteenth Centuries)*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2021, pp. 423-429; Nishat Manzar, *Urban Wage Earners in Seventeenth Century India: Artisans, Labourers, Service Providers and Entertainers*, pp. 397-402.

[86] One Rupee consisted of forty *dams* as mentioned by Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, 'Mughal Artisans at Work and at Home', in *In Search of Vishwakarma: Mapping Indian Craft Histories*, p. 165.

[87] Amount has been calculated in old currency (16 annas = 1 Rupee).

[88] Anjali Chatterjee, 'Wage Structure of Artisans and Labourers Engaged in Constructional Work in Medieval Rajasthan (A.D. 1670-1761), A Case Study of Bikaner State', *PIHC*, 1985, Vol. 46, pp. 316-325.

[89] S.P. Gupta and Shireen Moosvi, 'Weighted Price and Revenue Rate Indices of Eastern Rajasthan (1665-1750)', *IESHR*, 1975; S. Nurul Hasan and S.P. Gupta, 'Prices of Food Grains in the Territories of Amber (1650-1750)', *PIHC*, 1967, p. 366.

[90] Anjali Chatterjee, 'Wage Structure of Artisans and Labourers Engaged in Constructional Work in Medieval Rajasthan', pp. 316-25.

[91] Probably, it was due to shortage of labour caused by Maratha inroads in neighbouring states or due to famine in Bikaner.

[92] For females, a lower wage rate can possibly be explained by the fact that a female worker generally belongs to a family group with at least one male earner as its head as observed by Anjali Chatterjee.

[93] *Lekha Bahi*, Bikaner, V.S. 1727/A.D. 1670, p. 311; *Jama Kharch Bahi*, Bikaner, 1757 A.D., p. 240.

[94] *Bhandar* No.1, *Basta* No. 47, V.S. 1815/A.D. 1758, File No. 11, V.S. 1750/A.D. 1693, cf. Anjali Chatterjee, 'Wage Structure of Artisans and Labourers Engaged in Constructional Work in Medieval Rajasthan', pp. 316-25.

[95] *Lekha Bahi*, V.S.1727/A.D.1670, p. 56; *Kamthana Bahi*, V.S.1808/A.D.1751, No. 2, pp.4-6. See also B.L. Gupta, op. cit., pp.184-97; Anjali Chatterjee, 'Wage Structure of Artisans and Labourers Engaged in Constructional Work in Medieval Rajasthan', pp. 316-25.

[96] N.S. Gupta, op. cit., p. 117.

[97] Bernier, op. cit., *1656-68*, pp. 238-251.

[98] Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 60.

[99] Babur, *Babur Nama,* Vol. II, p. 520; Joanes De Laet, *Empire of the Great Mogul*, pp. 88-89.

[100] Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, (ed.), Syed Ahmad Khan, Sir Syed Academy, Aligarh, p. 83.

[101] One *pahar* consisted of three hours.

[102] Bernier, op. cit., *1656-68*, pp. 254-259; N.S. Gupta, op. cit., p. 116-19.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, (ed.), Nawal Kishore, Vol. I, pp. 65-66; J.N. Sarkar, *The Mughal Administration,* Calcutta, 1924, pp. 168-169.

[105] J.N. Sarkar, *The Mughal Administration*, pp. 41-46.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid., pp. 42-44.
[108] Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, (ed.), Syed Ahmad Khan, p. 13.
[109] *Ustad* was an honorific title.
[110] James Skinner, *Tashrih-ul-Aqwam*, p. 259; K.N. Chaudhuri, 'The Structure of Indian Textile Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *IESHR*, Vol. XI, 1974, pp. 76-78.
[111] N.S. Gupta, op. cit., p. 118.
[112] Ibid., pp. 118-120.
[113] Tripta Verma, *Karkhanas Under the Mughals*, p. 130.
[114] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, (ed.), Syed Nawab Ali, Vol. II, Baroda, 1927, p. 139.
[115] N.S. Gupta, op. cit., p. 118.
[116] *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 1, V.S. 1821/A.D. 1764, p. 17; *Sanad Parwana Bahi*, Jodhpur, No. 11, V.S. 1828/A.D. 1771, p. 14; Tek Chand Bahar, *Bahar-i Ajam*, Vol. II, p. 54; K.N. Chaudhuri, 'The Structure of Indian Textile Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', p. 181.
[117] Ibid.
[118] S.P. Gupta, *Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan (1650-1750)*, Manohar, Delhi, 1980, p. 212.
[119] *Sanad Parwana Bahis* of Jodhpur.
[120] S.P. Gupta, op. cit., p. 105.
[121] K.N. Chaudhuri, op. cit., p. 303.
[122] Vijaya Ramaswamy, *Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India*, p. 315.
[123] Tripta Verma, op. cit., pp. 42-43.
[124] *Siropao* was a special honour showed by the ruler by presenting robe of honour.
[125] *Kotwali-Chabutara-Jamabandi-Bahi*, Jodhpur, no. 754, Pargana Jalor, V.S.1834/A.D.1777. See also B.L. Gupta, op. cit., p.27; Athar Husain, 'Craft and Trade in Eighteenth Century Rajasthan', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, C.A.S., Department of History, A.M.U., Aligarh, 2008; Sumbul Halim Khan, *Art and Craft Workshops Under the Mughals*; Farhat Kamal, 'Artisans and Craftsmen in 18th century Jaipur', pp. 30-54.
[126] Lala was a famous *shorgar* (gunpowder maker) of *qasba* Jalor who was given a turban by the Jodhpur Darbar as a mark of honour.
[127] Bhu Dhar was a noted stone-cutter who constructed a cenotaph of the late Maharaja Jai Singh in 1755.
[128] He was expert in making cannons.
[129] *Angrakha* remained the preferred dress of the Marwar rulers throughout the eighteenth century. A thin cotton garment with long fitted sleeves, the *Angrakha* gave the wearer an arresting aristocratic profile. It was accompanied by a fitted *paijama*, a regal *pag*, *patka* and the rare jewels. Physical Survey of Mehrangarh Fort.

Food Movement of 1959: Emergence of a United Alternative Politics in West Bengal

Kakali Mukherjee

Abstract

Bengal witnessed a horrible famine during 1943 on the backdrop of the Second World War. Even after the independence, the new Congress Government failed to resolve this problem of food crisis. After the partition, jute mills were situated in West Bengal while the jute producing lands remained in East Pakistan. To save jute industries rice producing lands were carved out for jute production. It had an adverse effect on agricultural production system. From 1950s influx of refugees accentuated this disaster. From 1950s West Bengal felt tremendous food shortage. This ultimately culminated into the food movement of 1959. In combating this crisis, the role of Krishak Sabha, P.I.F.R.C. and Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti would be explained in this article.

Keywords: Food Movement, P.I.F.R.C. Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti (MARS), Krishak Sabha, Hoarders, Black Marketeers.

Introduction

A dreadful famine took place in Bengal as a harmful effect of the anti-Japanese policy of the British Government during 1943 on the backdrop of the Second World War. Bengal could not find any permanent solution to food crisis after the famine of 1943. Even after the independence, the new Congress Government failed to formulate specific policies regarding procurement, distribution and fixing the price of food crops. Since the Partition of 1947, price hike which was perhaps the outcome of poor of planning to increase food production

aggravated the food crisis where decreasing purchasing power of the common people added a sinister dimension. As the result of the partition, the fertile paddy producing fields remained with East Pakistan while the population increased multiple folds in the western part of Bengal. Jute Industries, which was once considered to be an asset of Bengal's economy, was severely affected as the mills were situated in West Bengal while the jute producing lands remained in East Pakistan. In this situation, fertile rice-producing lands in West Bengal had been curved out to save the jute industries which mounted a huge pressure on land. From 1950's influx of refugees accentuated this disaster. From 1950s West Bengal felt tremendous crisis of food shortage. This problem could not be resolved without any specific plan in the field of agriculture. This ultimately culminated into the food movement of 1959. In combating this crisis, the role of Krishak Sabha, P.I.F.R.C. and Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti would be explained here as the most formidable force of the Food Movement directed against the food policy of the State Government.

Partition of Bengal and Food Shortage

As per the record, Hindu-dominated West Bengal had a population of 2 crores while the Muslim majority East Pakistan had near about 4 crores of people just after the partition.[1] During this period West Bengal produced 8 crore maunds of rice while the East Pakistan produced 19 crore maunds of rice in an average, in a year.[2] On the basis of this data, the annual per head consumption of rice in West Bengal was 4 maunds while in East Pakistan it was 4.40 maunds.[3] For survival, at least 5 maunds rice was necessary for a person. From the 40's, united Bengal used to produce 27 crore maunds rice in an average every year.[4] 46% of this produced rice had been sold in the urban markets along with the industrial areas of several districts in Bengal where only 54% remained with the actual producers.[5] The amount of purchasable rice was only 12 crore maunds.[6] From 1944 onwards Bengal had to import rice to maintain the balance of demand and supply. Based on 46% sellable rice from 8 crore maunds belonged to West Bengal, 3 crore maunds was accumulated in market. At least 2

crore maunds of rice was required for the survival of the urban people of Calcutta and its adjacent suburbs. We might infer that in absence of proper surveillance a substantive portion of the 2 crore maunds of rice, could often disappear from the market.

Continuous influx of the refugees after the partition and specifically after 50s, aggravated this crisis.[7] Between 1941 – 51 the rate of population increase in Bengal was 1.32% and this rate of increase was 3.29% during the period of 1951 – 1961[8]. During 1951 total population of West Bengal was 26.30 million. Out of this number 21.73 million people belonged to West Bengal. From the rest of the people 0.51 million people came from East Pakistan, 1.85 million folks came from different neighbouring states and remaining 0.12 million were from abroad.[9] Since the colonial period as one of the major commercial and industrial sectors of the Country, Calcutta has attracted the attention of the labouring population of various states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and even Punjab. This trend was initiated from the time when Calcutta was the capital of India but the tradition continued even after the post independent era. As the major part of this population were labourers and used to live in urban areas, they had no connection with the rural economy of West Bengal. Agriculture sector of West Bengal had to arrange food for a large section of urban people who had no contribution to the rural economy. A huge pressure was mounted on the agricultural economy due to this. We can get an idea of the numbers of migrant workers and their profession from the following two tables.[10]

1) (State wise representation of migrant people from 1951-61)

State	Number
Bihar	1,83,000
Uttar Pradesh	71,000
Orissa	33,000
West India	24,000
South India	16,000
Assam	5,000
Other Provinces	42,000
Total	3,74,000

2) (Position of non-Bengali people involved in different profession from 1957-58)

Ministerial work	15%
Executive rank	30%
Artisan	21.5%
Business	59%
Skilled workers	50.5%
Unskilled workers	7.4%

It had an adverse effect on the agricultural economy of Bengal. It was impossible to overcome this predicament without specific plan in the agricultural sector. Another significant factor should be remembered. During the partition almost three and half lakh acres of paddy producing lands turned into wasteland due to an exodus of large number of Muslim peasants from the districts of Nadia, Murshidabad and Malda.[11] It had an adverse effect on rice production. Even after the coming of the refugees, the Rehabilitation Department could distribute only 6 lakh bighas land among them.[12] It made the situation worse. It was impossible to overcome this predicament without specific plan in the agricultural sector.

Condition of the Peasants and Agricultural Field

During this time land-man ratio of West Bengal was completely against the interest of the peasantry. 75 lakh families of rural Bengal were completely depended on agriculture for survival. Most of them were plunged into extreme impoverishment due to an adverse effect of zamindary system. Zamindars, *jotedar*s or big peasants appropriated 14.3% of the total 46.51% cultivable land of rural Bengal.[13] At least 5 acres of land was necessary for survival of a peasant family. Among the 75 lakhs peasant families in West Bengal only 20 lakh families owned 5 to 3 acres land. Most of the peasants had to maintain their livelihood with 2 acres of land or less than that. Existence of share croppers and landless labourers in rural society should be reckoned here. This kind of discriminating land system contributed in food

shortage of West Bengal. The only solution to this discrimination was land reformation which had been prescribed by the Famine commission (Floud Commission) of Bengal in 1940. From a wider perspective it could be argued that equality is the key factor behind the success of land reformation.[14] To probe into the matter Land Reformation Committee was established by the initiative of Congress President Rajendra Prasad, after independence. President of this committee was J.C. Kumarappa. Ceiling of land was recommended by this committee.[15] However, it was not accepted by the big landholders. For the first 5 years, Planning Commission fixed the ceiling of land. But in villages, in fear of losing surplus lands to the actual tillers, it accelerated the eviction of the small peasants and sharecroppers from the land. Escalation in land reformation was recommended by the Prime Minister Nehru in the Agra session of Congress during 6-7 July in 1953.[16] In practice it was impossible to implement this recommendation caused by the impediments coming from the leaders of the Congress party. Agricultural Minister Panjab Rao Deshmukh himself was against the implementation of land reformation system.[17] It was not easy for the Congress to implement land reformation brushing aside the interests of the rural elites within and outside the party as they formed the main support base of the Congress Party since the period before independence.

In India pressure on agricultural economy gradually mounted as the colonial rule embedded its root firmly. Except middle and big peasants or the *jotedar*s the position of the small peasants, sharecroppers and landless labourers was worst. Among the sharecroppers 20% were either land less or nearly landless. Large sections of the families of the landless labourers were indebted. It manifests that a large section of rural marginal people was deprived of individual cultivable land despite being engaged in production system overtly. During 1951 a self-depended cultivator family had land about 3.2 acres per head in comparison to his counterpart in India having 5 acres of land per head.[18] The development of agriculture was paralysed due to this kind of

disparities. Dearth of technological devices aggravated the crisis. Peasants were denied from the basic requirements of fertilizers and irrigation system, necessary for the improvement of agriculture. Only 13.1% land of total agricultural field was under the purview of irrigation system.[19] It has clearly indicated that 87% land remained under the mercy of rainfall. Under this circumstances, introduction of advanced quality seeds, fertilizers and scientific cultivation was beyond question. Although a deficit in food supply was not a new phenomenon in Bengal, the period between 1956 and 61 recorded a huge shortfall of food crop ranging between 4 to 5 lakh tons.[20]

Crop	1951-52 (Kg. per hectare)	1956-57 (Kg. per hectare)	1961-62 (Kg. per hectare)
Rice	920	1080	1085
Whole wheat	783	317	751
Potato	10668	6584	12723

Following the table, it could be argued that ratio of rice production was not increased on equal terms. Food crisis in regular basis was the result of this deficit in crop production system. In an average, 3.75 lakh tons of whole wheat and 0.93 lakh tons of rice was imported in West Bengal in 1953.[21] From 1956 to 1961 this deficit increased up to 4/5 lakh tons.[22] Inefficiency in the State level administration and indifferent mentality of the Central Government was manifested in dealing with this disaster. The Central Government failed to supply the specific quota of food grains. On the other hand, state administration failed to supply the required quantity of crops to the districts due to lack of efficiency and empathy to the cause of the suffering people.

I) The amount of food the State should have received up to July 1957[23]

1) Rice - 10,23,635 maunds

2) Whole wheat- 7,62,107 maunds

II) The amount of food was received by the State Government up to June 1957[24]

1) Rice- 7,86, 121 maunds
2) Whole wheat- 6,80,881 maunds

III) The quantity of despatched food to the districts from the State Government except the industrial area of Kolkata up to 29th June[25]

1) Rice- 6,33,599 maunds
2) Whole wheat- 6,29, 981 maunds

It denotes that deficient food condition was not an astonishing issue. To change this situation, land reformation was seen as the only solution, which, on the other end, could be proved heavy against the class interest of the zamindars and *jotedar*s, the main support base of Congress Party since the period before independence and thus might have changed the existing production relation in the rural sector.

Crisis in food supply was very much visible from 1950s. During the period between April and May, after the end of the storage from personal granaries of peasants, tremendous scarcity of food became visible in rural Bengal. Malda district which had not been affected during the Bengal Famine of 1943 was badly depreciated during this phase.[26] Starved and half-starved famine stricken people of Jiagunge and other adjacent areas of Murshidabad started having seeds of jack fruit, *kalmishak* (water spinach) and *kachu* (arum) for survival.[27] Badkulla in the district of Nadia was also affected by this famine like situation.[28] During 1951 price of rice shot up to 80 Rupees per maunds in Cooch Bihar.[29] A hunger march was organised demanding the reduction of price and introduction of proper rationing system which was confronted by police firing.[30] Famine like condition was manifested in every area of 24 Parganas from 1952 onwards.[31] Manikuntala Sen of Communist Party of India, tried to mobilise the attention of the women regarding decreasing low consumption power of the people and gradual price rise of the food crops. Under the umbrella of the Communist Party of India, mass rallies were organised at Haroa, Sandeshkhali and Sundarban areas in the district of 24 Parganas by

the Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti (MARS) to make people and administration aware of this famine-stricken condition.[32]

Agitation Over Food Situation and the role of Women

With their previous experiences, members of MARS became conscious of food shortage. This time with the assistance of other women organisations like Jatiya Mahila Sanghati, Nikhil Banga Mahila Sangha, Women's Cultural Association, Mahila Sanskriti Sammelan, Mothers Committee, Park Circus Mahila Club, Aloke Sangha, Pragati Mahila Sangha and a new organisation was formed which was came to be known as Sanjukta Mahila Samiti.[33] To resist the food crisis this committee placed their 8-fold demands to the Government. They asked for the opening of ration shops in Calcutta and its adjacent industrial areas for distribution of rice. Their political consciousness was very much evident with their demand of import of food crop from foreign countries with respectful provisions. They demanded for introduction of ration system and test relief in rural areas. They urged to the Government for the supply of food at free of cost for the old, infant, and pregnant women. Members of Sanjukta Mahila Samiti identified the connection between hunger and crime and they urged to the Government to ensure job in the shortage areas through introduction of small-scale industries. Before the next provincial conference of MARS in 1952 members and organisers issued leaflets urging the women to mobilise against the food crisis which, they apprehended might take the shape of a large-scale famine.

Levy system and Food Policy of the State Government

To defend this abnormal situation a new policy was introduced by the Government during 1952. It was decided that two and half lakh tons of rice would be accumulated by the Government by imposing levy on the peasants having 10 acres of land or more than that.[34] Patrol guards were empowered to collect the levy by entering anybody's house. Small tillers were badly affected by this decision of the Government. Local police and administration proved incapable against the interest of the big peasants and zamindars who constituted

the main support base of the ruling party in the villages. To keep the target of collection of two and half lakh tons of rice, marginal tillers were harassed by the police force violating the law and order of the Government. Sack of rice of economically and socially marginal peasants of Kurmun village in Burdwan district was seized by the police following this policy.[35] Meanwhile Khudiram Mondal, a farmer of Sekenderpur village of Beldanga in Murshidabad district died in a scuffle with police when he tried to prevent police from seizing his rice.[36] Another plight was brought in with this levy system. Smuggling of rice from surplus areas to deficit areas was initiated by some miscreants through appointing unemployed lower middle class and poor young people from the villages and cities. This system not only proved harmful against the economic interest of the small land holders, also introduced the new scheme of moral degeneration following these new black marketeers. With utter disbelief it was observed that in budgetary allocation 14 lakh Rupees was reduced in this year in agricultural sector.[37] A famine like condition appeared in the districts like Hooghly, Howrah, 24 Parganas, Midnapore, Burdwan, Murshidabad, Malda and West Dinajpur. In demand of sufficient food supply and opposing the levy policy of the Government a 'Protest Day' was called by the Bengal Provincial Trade Union Congress (B.P.T.U.C) on 12th July.[38] Retrenchment, lock down, low wage rate of the labouring poor of the various factories and industries became a prominent feature of West Bengal after independence. Retrenchment became a regular feature in both of Public and private sectors. Companies under private ownership like Lipton, Khidirpore Still Products, Lansdown Jute Mill in Dakshindari, Jute Mill in Alambazar retrenched their workers in most of the cases illegally. Not only in private concerns retrenchment also took place in public sectors like Food Department and Government run State Transport Department of West Bengal.[39] Though cost of living of working classes in Howrah, Calcutta has risen three times over the prices of 1938 and food prices rose four times.[40] Workers from the private and public sectors joined hands with the rural marginals against the food policy of the

Government. In a joint meeting led by Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha with the peasant leaders from 9 districts of West Bengal, peasant leader Abdullah Rasul held the Congress Government responsible for this food crisis.

Resistance of the Lefts and Role of Price Rice and Famine Resistance Committee

Initially from the first half of 1950's two different left organisations took the leading role in mobilising the food movement. These two were known as C.P.I. led Khadyo Abhijan (Food Expedition) Committee and Sanjukta Durbhikkho Pratirodh (United Famine Resistance) Committee under the umbrella of several left parties like F.B.M. (Forward Block (Marxist)), R.C.P.I., (Revolutionary Communist Party of India) S.U.C.I., (Socialist Unity Centre of India), P.S.P. (Praja Socialist Party) and others. During 1956 both the organisations started working jointly under the banner of Drabya Mulya Briddhi o Durbhikskha Pratirodh Committee (Price Increase and Famine Resistance).[41] Gradually the food movement gathered a momentum under this organisation. From oppressed peasants, poor workers of the industrial sectors, lower middle class, and middle-class urban people to severely hard-hit refugees from East Pakistan constituted the most formidable force of social component of food movement during this time. Krishak Sabha played a crucial role in mobilising rural marginal people. But without the participation of the women the food movement would not have become a formidable mass upheaval. In assistance with the Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha, members of MARS organised rallies demanding food in villages and urban areas. Deputations were placed before the District Magistrates of several districts demanding proper supply of food.[42] Members of MARS collected food through door-to-door campaign to help the peasants of the districts of 24 Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly who came to Calcutta in 1953 to participate in a food rally organised by the Krishak Sabha against the Levy and Cordon policy of the Congress Government. A mass agitation programme was organised by the Sanjukta Durbhikskha Pratirodh

Committee on 28th September before Writers Building. Twelve representatives from the agitators allowed to meet the Chief Minister after their demonstration and were successful in achieving some of the demands they raised. The Chief Minister promised that 1) Government would supply standard quality of rice in rate of 7 *anna* (44% of 1 Rupee) per *seer* (standard of weight, 933 Gram), 2) rice would be supplied at Rupees 15 instead of 17 and half in per maund in sectional rationing zones, 3) Wheat would be supplied at Rupees 14 per maund during the time of Durga Puja (Autumn festival).[43] It could be argued following this, though yield of food crops was far better during 1953-54 in comparison to its previous and subsequent years, the situation of food market remained same or worsened.[44]

As Government paid no heed in controlling black marketeers despite of good yield during 1953-54 price of rice increased further.[45]

Year	Price of rice in Rupees
1947	12.25
1955	16.44
1956	21.91
1957	23.01
1958 (July)	26.50
1958 (December)	31.00

In protest of this unresponsive attitude of the Government a huge rally was organised by the peasants from the districts of 24 Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly under the Krishak Sabha led by C.P.I. In this way food crisis was taking a shape of collective force of ensuing mass movement.

There was an exorbitant increase in the price of rice from 16/17 Rupees per maund to 21/24 Rupees per maund during 1956. Meeting, rallies, and deputations had been organised in demand of food and test relief regularly from this period. The districts of Burdwan, Hooghly, Howrah, 24 Parganas, Nadia, Murshidabad, Malda, Bankura and some regions of Birbhum were affected by heavy rain fall during 1956 which aggravated the crisis. Movements began in Cooch Bihar, Malda and

Tamluk region of Midnapore in demand of proper food supply. On 10 July 1956 a central rally was organised by the Price Rise and Famine Resistance Committee for an expedition towards Assembly House where 3000 peasants consisting of men and women from the districts of Midnapur, Howrah and 24 Parganas participated.[46] Due to the movement, under compulsion Government was agreed to increase per head consumption of rice in ration shops. The Government promised to help the half-starved people by introducing test relief and grant agricultural loan for cultivation. But from May – June in 1957, particularly after the termination of the stock of rice from the houses of peasants, price of rice went exorbitantly high. With thirteen sets of demands the Price Increase and Famine Resistance Committee (P.I.F.R.C.) invoked a movement on 1 June. Small peasants, sharecroppers, middle peasants, and land less labourers, all participated in the food movement with an active association of educated middle class intelligentsia. With their assistance a large rally consisting of distressed and tormented peasants and suffering urban people with thirteen demands organised a march to the Assembly House. Though the Chief Minister discussed the situation of food crisis with the representatives of this rally after one week, nothing proved beneficial.

Scarcity of food was manifested in a more grievous way following the natural disaster which culminated into the less production of Aman rice during 1958. Amidst this catastrophe, the Government issued certificates to realise loan amounts from the peasants. Following this order property of the defaulters had been confiscated.[47] It clearly manifested the indifferent attitude of the Congress led Government towards the actual producers. The Krishak Sabha organised street meetings, rallies to mobilise the peasants against this unjust and called for a march to the Assembly House in demand of food. Hunger march had been organised in several districts under the banner of the Krishak Sabha. Approximately 15000 people consisting peasants and urban poor, lower middle class and middle-class people joined the rally on 18th March.[48] The battle of political alternative was initiated with the

food movement from this period. Law and Jurisdictional Minister Siddhartha Sankar Ray resigned from the ministry upholding the problem of food crisis legitimising the demands of the people. He charged an allegation against the food minister for hobnobbing with the black marketeers and hoarders.[49] The way he accused the Government for corruption in food supply, it created a tumult throughout the State. On the other hand, food movement received an impetus from this incident. In a mass meeting organised by the C.P.I., at Hazra, Siddhartha Shankar Ray said that he has hurled stone at the hive of wasp, that would try to damage him but he will resist the situation with the public support.[50] Food rallies started in various districts following this incident.

The P.I.F.R.C. called for an expansion of the food movement on 31 August in 1958. Through the resolutions of this meeting "Direct Action" was proposed on 15 September.[51] P.I.F.R.C. and Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha jointly organised a civil disobedience movement in the cities and suburb regions. With the increasing force and expansion of the movement compelled the Chief Minister and the Food Minister to arrange a meeting with the leadership of the P.I.F.R.C. Ultimately the Government accepted some of the demands prescribed by the P.I.F.R.C. in resistance to food crisis. After this programme of 'Direct Action' was revoked for the time being which halted the food movement for some time.

Scarcity of Food and the beginning of mass upheaval

During the last phase of 1958 food crisis intensified. Small and middle peasants along with the sharecroppers were badly affected by the exploitation of the big peasants and zamindars. In double rate of interest poor small peasants and sharecroppers were granted loans during the period of July to mid-October from the big peasants, money lenders and zamindars. During the time of harvest from the month of November to mid-January, amount of loan was collected from them with the above-mentioned interest. By hoarding the new stock of food grains, big peasants (*jotedars)* prompted the black marketeers as an

institution of corruption. Scarcity of food became acute in the rural sectors. Poor peasants from the area of Sundarban were compelled to earn their livelihood in search of food by begging in railway stations and pavements of Calcutta. Amidst this grave situation despite the plight of the poor and marginal peasants, the Government issued certificate to realise loan amount and started confiscating their lands in case of failure. West Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha (BPKS) organised a food convention at Muslim Institute Hall to discuss this grave situation and they placed some demands before the State Government which they believed would be beneficial to mitigate this crisis.[52] The BPKS placed 8-fold demands including 1. The Union Government should take entire responsibility to fulfil the deficit of food and it must meet at least 4 lakh maunds of rice out of total deficit of 7 lakh maunds of rice, 2. The state government must borrow 4 crores of Rupees from banks to buy 4 lakh maunds of rice from mill owners, market, *jotedar*s and hoarders to keep enough rice in every district, 3. Modified ration system should be implemented and expanded throughout the province, 4. Rupees 5 crore should be granted for State relief and dole, 5. Another 5 crore Rupees should be granted for agricultural loan, 6. Issuing certificates should be halted to extract arrears of loan and revenue, 7. Appropriate steps should be taken to increase the food production. But none of the demands were taken seriously by the Government. In protest West Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha called for a march to the Assembly House demanding food. A big rally was organised by the Krishak Sabha on 18 March where 15000 people consisting of peasants and distressed urban people participated.[53] This migration of the poor people from the villages to no producing cities and begging in search of food was an indication for impending famine. On this backdrop the food movement culminated into an overwhelming momentum.

Initiated as a socio-economic movement food movement turned into a battle of alternative political hegemony in West Bengal. Victory of the left supported independent candidate, Siddhartha Shankar Ray in Chowrangee constituency by defeating the Congress candidate in

a by election, was enough to understand the mood of the people of Calcutta during this phase. It was no more remained easy for the Government to ignore this situation any more. Being pressurised by the continuous campaign of the left opposition and recent election result, the "Price Control Ordinance of West Bengal 1958" was issued by the Government in the month of October 1958.[54] This ordinance empowered the Government to fix the maximum price of the essential commodities and to penalise any person or institution whoever violets the law. Price of nine types of essential commodities like wheat, products made of paddy, rice, wheat, pulses, spices, baby food, paper and medicine were included under this ordinance.[55] There was an apprehension of immediate price hike of these above said products as maximum price of these products was yet to be declared. Following this anxiety prices of these products increased 5 to 6 folds. Watching the growing discontent among the masses following various agitation programme under the P.I.F.R.C., the State Government issued a press note that the anti-profit ordinance would be effective in the State from 1st January 1959.[56] Rice mill owners were instructed to sell 25% from their hoarded rice and 25% from their newly produced rice to the Government.[57] But in absence of proper infrastructure and serious effort from the Government the whole strategy failed. With the issuance of the Price Control Act, rice was completely vanished from the retail market overnight.[58] There was no provision of proper punitive measure against any violation of law. People were compelled to buy rice at Rupees 18/- per maund from ration shops which they used to buy at Rupees 17 before the implementation of this Act. Supply of rice in the retail markets was decreasing. Though the food minister assured both the retail traders and common people of supplying rice from districts but reality was completely different.

Allegation was raised against the hoarders and black marketeers that they were involved in smuggling of rice to Bihar from West Bengal and at the same time selling the low-quality rice in high quality price ignoring the Price Control Act.[59] To resolve the imminent crisis Krishak Sabha placed some proposals before the Government.

1. The Government should collect paddy to the extent which would procure at least 5 lakh tons of rice. The Government must purchase rice directly either from the peasants or from the *mahajan*s (grain traders and rural money lenders) and should impose 50% levy on the production of the rice mills. Advance from the Banks should be used by the Government to buy rice from the peasants instead of allowing the mill owners to get that advance for their economic benefit. 2. The minimum and maximum price of paddy should be fixed at 13/12 Rupees per maund and for rice it should be 22/20 Rupees per maund. 3. Food should be supplied in subsidised rate from the Government food store and rice should be sold from ration shops at Rupees 17 per maund. If possible, poor people be exempted. 4. After the yield the Government should let the people know about the deficiency and should raise their voice to fulfil this deficit to the Central Government. 5. Assistance of the people should be assured in regard of food procurement, supply, and rescue work. There should be an All-Party Advisory Committee which would offer its advice to the Government.[60] Unfortunately it did not receive any attention of the Government. But on 5 February in the session of the Assembly, the Food Minister Prafulla Sen admitted that rice had been sold in high prices.[61]

Food crisis turned into debacle. Starvation of the poor people could be saved if the Government would have supplied enough food to the ration shops to control the market. The Government did not pay any heed to accumulate rice directly from the peasants which would have saved both the cultivators and urban poor, lower middle class, and middle-class people. Instead, the Government again reinforced cordoning system which only encouraged hoarding and black marketeers. Later cordon was withdrawn and only 25% levy was imposed over the produced rice of the mill owners. It helped them to sell most of their production in open market in exorbitant rate.[62] Dreadful situation prevailed in districts. Death of the starved and half-starved people reported in the newspapers. In Hooghly district incident of infant selling was informed. Rallies demanding food were organised by the P.I.F.R.C. and Krishak Sabha in the districts of 24

Parganas, Burdwan, Hooghly, Nadia, Midnapore and other areas. People started living villages in search of food by arousing the memories of horrible Bengal famine of 1943. The food minister refused the proposal of formation of a committee of common people to rescue hoarded rice. Proposal of rescue programme under the Government initiative was also denied. Agitation, allegation and demands of the common people did not get any attention from the Government instead it was busy in securing the interest of the rural gentries, hoarders, and black marketeers. This complete indifference to the justified demands of masses gradually alienated the Congress during the fag end of the 50's.

From the middle of the 1959 city scape was changing rapidly in Calcutta. Left with no other alternative hungry rural people from various districts of West Bengal came to the city in search of food security which indicated an ensuing famine like condition.[63] Roughly 3000 people were coming daily in search of food.[64] Scarcity of food and soaring price hike inflicted a blow on the workers in the industrial area both in Calcutta and its adjacent areas. They faced curtailment in their fixed quota of ration. At the same time working class people were perturbed with low wage, wage cut and lock down which had an adverse effect in reducing the capacity of their purchasing power. It propelled the trade union workers to join hands with the Krishak Sabha against the terrible food policy of the Government. This collective force culminated into a strike jointly invoked by trade unions and the Krishak Sabha on 25 June 1959.[65] The amount of reserved rice in the Government warehouses reached such a catastrophic position that rationing system was completely collapsed in West Bengal except Calcutta, Nadia, 24 Parganas and Murshidabad from the middle of the month of June. Spontaneously people participated in several rallies, meetings, conferences, mass deputation organised by the Famine Resistance Committee on 15th June which was observed as 'Protest Day'[66]. Seven-point demands were raised from a meeting organised jointly by the P.I.F.R.C. and 10 left parties including C.P.I., F.B., F.B.M., S.U.C.I., R.S.P., R.C.P.I., B.P.I. and others. It was proposed by them

that an all-party Food Committee should be formed.[67] But the Chief Minister Dr. Roy apprehended that any endeavour to realise levy from the mill owners and distribution amongst the people could lead to armed revolution.[68] Amidst this fiery situation State Government admitted failure in proper implementation of the Price control ordinance and withdrew it on 22 June 1959.[69] The Chief Minister expressed his view that price control policy and state trading cannot be succeeded in a deficit state.[70] This announcement almost decided the fate of the proposed strike on 25 June. On the scheduled date strike was spontaneously and peacefully observed in every city, suburbs, villages, and industrial areas of the state. Without any picketing transport system, school, colleges, offices, markets, shops, court remained closed from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.[71]

Price of rice increased almost 3 to 4 Rupees in some areas and elsewhere even 6 to 7 Rupees after withdrawal of the Price control ordinance. In this juncture C.P.I. took the proposal of a wider struggle regarding the food crisis. Various slogans were raised from their state council conference which were directed against the food policy of the Congress led State Government. Slogans like 'Khadya chai' (we want food), 'Dar kamao' (reduce the price), 'Majoot dharo' (chase food stocks), 'Sakalke angshik ration e niyamita khadya dao' (everyone should get food regularly from moderate rationing), 'Dabi puran kara natuba gadi chara' (either fulfil the demands or renounce power) were raised. Slogans indicated how people were suffering from the food crisis and how they became agitated with the indifferent and arrogant attitude of the Government. The P.I.F.R.C. decided to launch a mass movement against the food policy of the Government. On 8 August a conference was summoned by the P.I.F.R.C. It was proposed that a march towards Writers Building would be organised and there would be mass civil disobedience movement at end of the month of August.[72] All opposition members resigned from the Food Advisory Committee on 13 August.

Meanwhile many people died in starvation in the districts of West Dinajpur, Hooghly and Midnapur. Following this an intense civil

disobedience movement started in many districts. Faith of common people over the Government was completely lost. Slogans, raised during this time witnessed that how mass was inclined towards an alternative hegemony of power. During mass demonstration and agitation programme many volunteers were arrested. Government really felt threatened which reflected through police raids at all the offices of the opposition parties except P.S.P. on 15 August.[73] Police arrested 66 left leaders and 16 MLAs on 19 August. Over 500 students organised a rally before the houses of the Defence Minister and the Chief Minister and demanded improvement of the food situation.[74] A rally consisted of twenty thousand people marched towards the home of the Food Minister Prafulla Sen on 20 August. Police obstructed this procession by issuing 144 Cr P.C. Five thousand people, containing working class along with the middle-class people organised rally which went through the main thoroughfare of Howrah district.

Under the banner of P.I.F.R.C. and Krishak Sabha peasants, workers, students, and women led by MARS initiated the groundwork programme for organising a march towards Writers Buildings with a slogan 'Kolkata Chalo' (lets march to Calcutta) on 31 August. West Bengal Hawkers Federation, United Central Rehabilitation Council and other Refugee organisation supported this march. Refugees received an inconspicuous intimidation from the Government of losing all the benefit they enjoy if they would extend their support and for the rally.[75] A gathering of three lakh people organised on 31 August at Monument Maidan with demands for adequate supply of food resignation of the Food Minister and in protest of the Government repression. To retaliate this peaceful rally Police was prepared with lathi (stick), rifle and tear gas. A gathering of 5000 police along with the mounted police were present to resist the march. After the end of the meeting a large section of gathering marched towards Writers Buildings. Being obstructed by the police near the east gate of the Raj Bhavan (Governor's House) agitators began their peaceful demonstration. Another group started peaceful civil disobedience movement by breaking the police cordon near Curzon Park. Suddenly

they faced tremendous lathicharge from the police and mounted police. Ruthless and unprecedented brutal attack inflicted on rural and urban masses caused injury of 2000 people and death of 80 people.[76] Almost 100 people were reported absconded. Students' agitation and protest meetings were organised on 1st September against this brutal action of the Government. When students were passing near the house of the Chief Minister suddenly police inflicted tear gas and opened fire. Many students were wounded and seven died.[77] On 2 September an extreme students agitation was observed in every district of West Bengal. In protest of barbaric police attack on hungry people and killing of the students a spontaneous strike was observed on 3 September. To negate the spirit of this movement the Chief Minister castigated the movement as activities of the miscreants. The obstinacy to establish the law and order, being indifferent of the demands of the common people alienated the Congress-led Government from the mass. The Government was never been ashamed of their brutal repressive measures on mass.

Conclusion

In the September session of the Assembly when the opposition wanted to observe one minute silence for the martyrs of food movement, the proposal was denied by the Government. On the other hand the Government stated that, sudden rise in population due to refugee infiltration, decrease of paddy lands and increase of jute cultivation, inflation followed by various development work by the Government, increasing power of the surplus producing solvent peasants to hold back paddy and eating rice instead of wheat by the non-Bengalis were the reasons for the acute food crisis.[78] In this way the Government completely denied the responsibility of the administration and its indifferent attitude towards the nexus of black marketeers and hoarders. This movement was temporarily withdrawn after this. Despite that it would not be accurate to mark this movement as a complete failure. A formidable force of peasants, workers, women, students along with the refugees under the leadership of P.I.F.R.C. and several left parties developed an alternative hegemony in this

movement against the existing Government. This movement propelled all the left oppositions of the province to form an alternative formidable political front for the first time in the politics of West Bengal. Demands raised by the Krishak Sabha regarding abolition of zamindari system and land reformation came into forefront with this tremendous food crisis. With their miserable condition due to starvation, peasantry understood the necessity of land reformation. Common people lost their faith on the Government due to exuberant price hike of essential commodities along with the rice. The way black marketeers and hoarders were allowed to increase their profit without any hindrance, neglecting the interest of the poor, lower middle class and middle - class people, it completely broke the confidence of the masses over the ruling regime. Refugees realised the connection between their demand of rehabilitation and land reformation abolishing the zamindary system. Struggle of various segments of people had been turned the food movement into a mass movement. Food movement of 1959 paved the way to develop the food movement of 1966 with the displaced, starved, exploited people from poor and lower middle class and middle class, driven by a hope of establishment of an alternative hegemony of politics in West Bengal.

Notes

[1] *Banglar Communist Andolan : Dalil o Prasongik Tathya*, Vol. 2, N.B.A, Kolkata, 2003, p. 223.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] *Report of Flout Commission*, 1940.

[5] Suranjan Das and Premangshu Bandyopadhyay, ed., *Food Movement of 1959 Documenting A Turning Point in The History of West Bengal*, K. P. Bagchi & Company, Kolkata, 2004, p. 24.

[6] *Report of Flout Commission*, 1940.

[7] Hiranmay Bandyopadhyay, *Udbastu*, Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1970, p. 68.

[8] *Techno Economic Survey of West Bengal*, National Council of Applied Economic Research, 1962, p. 60.

[9] Ibid.

[10] *West Bengal – An Analytical Study*, The Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Calcutta, 1971, pp. vi, vii.

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English Company Merchants in the Suba of Multan: 1640-50 A.D.

Umar Nazir

Abstract

Regional studies of the European Company merchants continue to feature in scholarly works on several Mughal *suba*s, including Lahore, Agra, Gujarat, Thatta, Bengal, etc. However, the *suba* of Multan has remained comparatively unexplored in historical studies of this sort. This study is a continuation of the thread of mercantile studies, a highly sought-after trend that has gained a prominent position in the modern academic world. With the dawn of seventeenth century, the English and Dutch merchants arrived at the shores of Indian waters. The influx of the European merchant companies, along with silver, had created a demand for manufactured products throughout Mughal India. As a result, during the seventeenth century, an essential river-borne trade developed in the *suba* of Multan, notably through the agency of the English Company merchants who exported Multan textiles to Europe, Turkey, and Persia via Sind ports. The connection between the production sector and trade, which grew and strengthened during this period, drew the *suba* into a vast network of the trading world. Hence, the questions that would be addressed are: Why the English Company merchants were lured to the markets of the *suba*? Did the broker class of the *suba* play any role for the English Company merchants? What were the circumstances that hampered the English trade and prevented them from considering other trading ventures beyond the Bhakkar *sarkar*?

Keywords*:* Multan, Bhakkar, *suba*, Sind, English Company merchants, *sarkar*, trade.

Introduction

The English and Dutch merchants came to the coasts of India around the commencement of the seventeenth century. These

merchants first established themselves at significant seaports.[1] These locations served them as launching points for their exploration of trade possibilities in the mainland towns.[2] For instance, Sind became an important market for the English merchants.[3] After they firmly secured their presence, they went to the upper reaches of Sind i.e., Bhakkar *sarkar*, as a part of their commercial venture.

Sind, during the seventeenth century, was an important commercial region.[4] From its chief port, Lahari Bandar, goods were sent down from Lahore and Multan and transported to Persian Gulf and other foreign markets.[5] Though at first, the Dutch and English East India companies did not inroad into the Sind for trade due to the presence of the Portuguese.[6] Given the control of Portuguese over the Sind ports, it required the English and Dutch merchants to wipe off the upper hand of the Portuguese over Sind trade.[7] The textiles exported from Sind had already acquired a considerable name in the foreign market. As Sind ports were the only outlets for these commodities, the European merchants showed keen interest in searching the possibilities of commercial ties with Sind. The Dutch merchants sailed their ships repeatedly to Sind.[8] The director of the Dutch factory in Surat, Piter Van den Brocks, in 1619, noticed the possibility of Dutch trade with the towns of north western where 'a great abundance of beautiful textiles are produced', following the Indus route from Lahore to Thatta via Multan.[9]

However, the English merchants, in contrast to the Dutch merchants, showed much inclination in exploiting the textile markets of the *suba* of Multan.[10] After the establishment of the Surat factory, the English Company sent the agents to explore other trade centres.[11] Thomas Roe, who came to India to acquire royal *farman* for the Company, wrote about the possibilities of trade with Sind, "The discovery of Syndu, which the company much desire and is very requisite."[12] In 1615, he writes, "... the River of Syndu were most comodi us of all others, to which from Lahor any thing may passé by water; besides the country is more healthy and plentifull in indico and comodytyes fitt for England. ..."[13]

In 1630, after a severe famine in Gujarat, the prospects of searching other markets in India became a serious question for the English merchants.[14] In 1635, The English company established a factory[15] at Thatta after a successful negotiation with the Portuguese by Methwold, an English factor. This led to an end of Portuguese trade monopoly in Sind.[16] Sind, therefore, provided an alternative market to keep the supply of goods regular for their home market.

The English factory in Sind, as H. T. Sorley points out, had three objectives to keep up the supply of cotton clothes for the home markets, to obtain Indigo and to carry trade to the Persian Gulf and the western coasts of India.[17]

Textile Centres and the English Company Merchanats

With the establishment of the factory, the trade of Sind with the foreign lands especially of Iran came in their hands. Hence, textiles centres of Bhakkar (a *sarkar* of Multan *suba*) begun to be mentioned in the company records.[18] The English merchants devoted much attention to the manufacturing towns of the *suba* of Multan, which is quite understandable for their interest in the textile trade of Multan. This gave an impetus to the local trade and the Multani merchants came forward in this network of foreign trade, which ultimately brought to them great financial benefits.[19]

The first trade mission of the English company arrived on December 3, 1635. They were well-received by the local merchants and the officials.[20] Fremlen, an English factor, also dispatched a letter by land route to Surat. In this letter, he had given a hopeful report of the possibility of trade and the additional advantage of transporting goods from Agra to Sind by way of Multan.[21] The items obtained were diverse, with cotton pieces being the most common. The English merchants were involved in barter trade as well.[22] William Fremlen reports:

> About the latter end of February (and seldome sooner) very great flatt-bottomd boates, of loo tonnes burthen and upwards, come downe from Lahoare, laden with sugar, sugar-candy, nowshodder, ginger dry and conservd, and the like comodities; and those they comonly barter away for pepper, tinn, lead, spices, broadcloath, dates, cokernutts, and the

> like, or whatsoever elce vendible up in the country.... Neyther is the gaines contemptible which they get by their boates, for by them they usually make 50 per cent, proffitt. [23]

The English merchants were active in Bhakkar,[24] Kandiaro,[25] Darbella,[26] and Gambit[27] textile producing centres of the *suba*. These centres produced varied kinds of piece goods which were exported to foreign markets both by sea route as well as by overland route. The importance of textile industry of these centres is well brought out in the European accounts. During this time, piece goods were popular and catered much demand for external market. In 1636, Fremlem an English factor reports, 'The country yields all sorts of commodities vendible in England, Persia, and Turkey; more espetiallie the latter, whether the cheifest parte of goods procureable in Synda are yeerelie laden. Those, seasonably invested, doe doubtlesse retorne their owners good proffitt; for of all sorts of Indian goods none are in such request as those of Synda nor finde more reddie vend, as being in reguarde of their substance and coullers most requireable.'[28]

Bhakkar produced excellent quality of *bafta*s.[29] The English merchants were much involved in its trade and it constituted one of the exported items to European market. The *bafta* of Bhakkar was equal in breadth and length with that of Sehwan but shorter than *Joorie* (a kind of *bafta*) of Nasarpur.[30]

Already there were mindful of suggestions regarding the Indus route as a cheap way of transporting commodities. In 1639, Henry Bornford made a visit to Lahore and Multan route instead of Jaisalmir-Thatta route as directed by the council of Surat. It was a commercial journey to examine the possibilities of trade route through Multan.[31]In his account, Henry Bornford gives a vivid description of Multan's active trade connections with the urban centres of Agra, Lahore and Thatta.[32]

Another important textile centre of *suba* Multan where the English merchants were highly involved was Darbella.[33] Here the weavers manufactured good quantity of cloth called 'narrow *joorie*s' or *bafta*s. In length, Darbella's narrow *joorrie* was similar to that of Nasarpur *joorie* i.e., 16 and 17 gaz,[34]but in breadth it was not so broad when

compared to Nasarpuri *joorie*. In market, it fetched the price of 17 and 18 rupees per corge.[35]

From the 1640's onwards, demand of the textiles from the *suba* of Multan increased considerably. One main reason was the low quality of the Sind cloth. The English factors reported the deteriorating quality of Sehwan and Nasarpur textiles during this time.[36] Even this caused the weavers of these textile centres to change their looms.[37] Complaints began to be surfaced regarding the inferior quality of Sind textiles. Several letters addressed this issue:

> The Sind calicoes were also disappointing in quality and factors there should be charged to look carefully into the matter and not to trust their brokers. The washers too should be warned not to tatter the cloth or put so much starch into it. Of Sehwan joories 200 pieces may be forwarded every year while those from Nasarpur will sell to advantage.[38]

> Cannot recommend the Nursapoore joories from Sind; they are thin cloths 'onlie made fayre to the eye by overmuch starching, slicking, and beating. . . . They are neither good cloth or full size.[39] However, they were not contented with it, and at once' caused the weavers to alter thcire loonies and weave cloth one-sixth part better, for before the warp was of 600 threds and now have made it 700; the breadth the same as formerly, which is a Guzzeratt covet.[40]

Thus the weavers, washers and dryers of Sind could not remain content on quality, hence the attention of the English merchants turned towards the *suba* of Multan as a substitute cloth market.[41] The inadequate faith on Nasarpur weavers was another rationale mentioned in factory records for continuing to invest in the *suba* of Multan.[42] The English factor John Spiller at Thatta, writes to the council at Surat on September 30, 1647:

> As regards the future provision of piece-goods, it will not do to trust much to Nasarpur, for it is too near Tatta. Besides, those weavers are a company of base rougues, for, notwithstanding wee give them mony aforehand [ ] part of the yeare, and that in the time of there greatest want, yet, if any pedling cloth merchant comes to buy, they leave us

> and worke for him, though hee gives noe money aforehande; beeing the ordinary base make is more facill and easy to weave then ours, with which they must take some paines.' It is absolutely necessary, therefore, to continue the investment in Kandiaro, in order to keep the Nasarpur weavers up to the mark.[43]

Thus, despite the advances given to the Nasarpur weavers, the English merchants had little faith in their ability to ensure textiles on time. The English merchants were wary of the Nasarpur weavers, believing them to be a shady organisation. As a result, the English merchants felt compelled to maintain their investment in the *suba* of Multan. What the English merchants used to do in Thatta was now done at Darbella and Kandiaro textile centres. They bought the cloth, packed it, and shipped it down to Lahori Bandar via the Indus river to be exported.[44]

Following the bad experience of the English merchants in Sind, Darbella, Kandiaro, and Gambat were the next textile centres to be pursued by the English factors. These textile centres provided an alternative cloth market to the English merchants as they were located in close proximity to Sehwan and Nasarpur. In 1644, John Spiller was sent to Bhakkar *sarkar* to find out how far the best quality of cloth could be procured. After getting acquainted with how Darbella and Kandiaro made their clothes, Spiller planned to set up an English residency here.[45] To procure large amounts of piece goods at an early period of the season, arrangements had been made whereby an English factor was to be appointed at Bhakkar *sarkar*.[46] The careful approach on the part of English merchants was because of local merchants' involvement in the cloth trade. During this year, large quantities of Kandiaro cloth were purchased by the company merchants and were then exported to Europe. In one of the English letters it is mentioned that "Derbella and Ckandara are not far distant from thence, where we intend a residence; and if they can procure the cloth to be well made, we have given directions for the buying of 10,000 peeces against the next year."[47]

The English merchants found textiles from Darbella town much preferable than Nasarpur *joorie*. It appears that narrow *joorie*s or *bafta*s of Darbella were liked most, as of these four to five thousands piece goods were purchased this time by the English merchants.[48] Kandiaro town was another important textile produced centre in Bhakkar *sarkar*.[49] It manufactured a good quality of cloth. Kandiaro together with Darbella in the year 1644 furnished an extraordinary supply of 'narrow *Joorie*s' to the English merchants. These *bafta*s were produced excellent in goodness and also were at reasonable price.[50] Textiles of Kandiaro were much better now to come up with the expectations of the English merchants. The English factors Spiller and Nicholas Screvener reported about Kandiaro cloth:

> The cloth of those parts aft'oardeth much better encouragement especially that of Kandara which we are confident will by you be approved for excellent good cloth and very cheap. Of this sort (if a man be purposely emploed in the place) they say four or five hundred corge may be acquired yearly, wherof we very careful shalbe.[51]

The demand of cloth increased considerably as the company officials at Surat were satisfied with the work of Kandiaro weavers.[52] They appreciated the piece goods because of its proper dimensions (though its breadth was much declined) and affordable price as compared to other textile centres in lower Sind. Despite producing satisfactory products, Kandiaro centre could not fullfill demands of the company merchants due to its low volume production during this time. Hence, it required the English merchants to buy the textiles from other centres as well. This becomes explicit in one of the letters of John Spiller, Henry Garry, and Gilbert Harrison at Thatta to the President and Council at Surat, February 21, 1646:

> Note the criticisms passed at Surat on their recent purchases. As regards the 'Khandearah' [Kandiaro] cloth, they took pains to secure that it was of proper dimensions, 'for its breadth was much declined'. This year they cannot expect more than 300 corge, 'for the place is very small' and so to make good the deficiency they have instructed Nicholas Scrivener to purchase a quantity of Nasarpur cloth.[53]

On January 4, 1646, the English merchants dispatched a ship known by the name of 'Eagle' from Surat to England which carried narrow *bafta*s of Kandiaro as well.[54] These piece goods were well-received because they provided the best content in terms of both quality and price. As a result, Surat council directed its English factor Spiller to purchase as many narrow *bafta*s of Kandiaro as possible while maintaining a constant residence there. Additionally, he was also ordered to increase Kandiaro textiles' investment.[55] The importance of the Kandiaro cloth may be demonstrated by the fact that the English merchants did not delay their Kandiaro investment despite the fact that money was scarce at the time.[56] They managed somehow to remit one thousand rupees by exchange to their broker.[57]

The textile centres of Bhakkar *sarkar* had seen several peaks and troughs. Fluctuating figures given in the factory records suggest that the English merchants were unable to procure a constant supply of goods. For instance, previously, the English merchants obtained 5,000 pieces of textiles alone at Kandiaro, whereas in 1646, only 300 corge were procured.[58] This, however, would also be possible because the English merchants were not the only participants in this trade. There were other local and foreign merchants involved in the exportation of textiles.[59]

From the year 1647, the prospects for cloth investment had improved as the chief factor John Spiller anticipated receiving 600 (corge) alone at Kandiaro centre. The immediate reason for this improvement was provided by the English merchants' loss of large quantity of cloth at Nasarpur centre due to some odd occurrences. It is stated in factory records that 'on the other hand at Nasarpur, by reason of the sickness in that place (scarce a weaver well) wee have lost many corge of cloth'.[60] But the Persian king's siege of Qandahar followed by its surrender had actually obstructed the overland trade between India and Persia, resulting in a significant increase in the overseas trade. In the English records it is mentioned that "the trade with Persia is at present very profitable, owing to the hindrance of land traffic by the wars round Kandahar. They have now ordered a large investment for

Gombroon, and trust to make 40% profit."[61] Taking the full advantage of prosperous and profitable trade during this time, the English factor John Spiller at Basra ordered 6000 pieces of Sind *bafta*s, the greater quantity to be of Nasarpuri and Kandiaro centres.[62] Due to its somewhat shorter length, the Nasarpuri *bafta* was omitted from the list of potential acquisitions. The length of the fabric purchased in Kandiaro was 15 yards, however in Nasarpur it was only 14 5/8 yards.[63] As a result, Spiller had ordered the provision of Kandiaro cloth instead of Nasarpuri one.[64]

Besides the English merchants, there were local purchasers, particularly the Multani and Thatta merchants, engaged in the export of cotton textiles to Basra, where Sind cloth was in high demand.[65] The presence of large number of buyers had sometimes caused the price of cotton items to rise and difficulty to the English merchants in procuring sufficient amount of cotton goods. For instance, it is reported that 'On March 9 the factors set out again, and on the 24th they arrived at the Gate of Darbellah where their broker met them. He reported that cloth had been extraordinarily dear for some time, owing to purchases made by a Bukkur merchant, but prices had now fallen again. The factors continued in the town some time, but could get but little cloth—about two corge a day, at which rate our buzzare (market) continues.'[66]

A large quantity of these clothes was sent to the port of Congo and Basra by the merchants of Thatta.[67] It is reported in factory records when the Basra news circulated throughout the region, the cloth became 2½ rupees per corge more expensive than it had been.[68]

As we know that Kandiaro centre primarily produced white *bafta* for the market. However, they also dealt in dyed *bafta* as well. The features of the dyed bafta is given in factory records as; "made up several fashions, some the common and usual way as white baftas are; others in cowls".[69] However, the production of white *bafta*s appears to have taken up significant amount when compared to coloured one. The market for white *bafta* was very brisk and the merchants invested heavenly in its acquisition. Reasons for the low market of coloured *bafta* are not far to seek. Two reasons are listed in the English factory

records that caused merchants to purchase white cloth of Kandiaro over coloured one.

To begin with, there was the matter of cost. The price of coloured *bafta* was higher than the price of white cloth. English factor at Kandiaro, John Spiller reports:

> The sample cloths which he gave out to be dyed have been done to his satisfaction; but the dyers will not take less than eight rupees per corge, they saying that, after they are dyed, it will stand them in two rupees in beating, slicking, &c. The latter is the way in which the cloths prepared for the Portuguese were done, but probably the Company would be satisfied if they were beaten only.[70]

Furthermore, the difficulties of the company merchants' in obtaining dyed cloth of sufficient length. While the English factors at Surat desired a 15-yard long cloth, John Spiller at Kandiaro didn't find anything longer than 12½ yards. In this instance, John Slipper reported that these 'cussumba dyers [Kusumbha, or safflower, the flowers of which yield a red dye.] (whose work it is) insist on cutting in half, alleging that whole pieces consume too much dye and that the coullors will nor cannot bee soe good this way'.[71] In addition to this, the English merchants found good stuffs of dyed baftas very scarce and its manufacturing "being much decayed, slight ones being here generally bought up by these merchants, most of whom now cannot buy of either for want of money; which these weavers perceiving, and also what losses they had received, left the ciety to try their fortunes abroad."[72] Keeping in view the dyed cloth of kandiaro centre, the Surat council directed its factor to go for white cloth only.[73] In the company records it is reported that the English merchants were asked to buy 'soe much whyte cloth, which will take coullour better then browne, the rice stiffing being washt out; only here it will cost somewhat dearer'.[74]

Kandiaro (Multan *suba*) and Nasarpur (Thatta *suba*) were the key textile centres during this time. The significance of these two centres can be seen in the suggestion given by the English merchants to designate all Sindhi cloth as Kandiaro or Nasarpuri.[75] Similar expressions have been made in other way. Like it is reported in the

factory records that "for Sind baftas, the Company desire in future only 10,000 pieces, and the factors have been instructed accordingly. Rather more than double that number are now sent, partly of Nusserpore and partly of ckandiara cloth."[76]However, the chief factor, John Spiller, thought it undesirable to divide Sind cloth into two distinct categories, given the various numbers of other production centres.[77]

However, in spite of the efficient and well-organised factory system, the English factors could not work satisfactorily and were compelled to close the trading activities. To bring out the possible reasons, it appears that challenges in the way of trade faced by the English merchants in these places, were far greater than in Thatta and its surrounding centres. Following evidence makes it clear:

> Nasarpur lies very convenient for us to supply it uppon all occations; whereas unto Khandierah wee must carry as much as wee intend to invest with us, the wayes being so obnoxious to dainger; and that to be in new rupees, which many times are not heere to be gott; which, allthough so, when come there will not pass untill translated into pice, which last yeare much hindered us.[78]

In Bhakkar *sarkar*, the company's trading activities showed indicators of a downward trend. To begin with, the routes to Bhakkar were not suitable for transporting funds for trade investments.[79] The traders were always on the lookout for nomad attacks or falling victim to inter-rivalries between tribal groups and settled communities. The threat of tribal attacks was always there, as tribal people regarded 'the raids' as a right granted by the proximity of caravan road.[80]

The English merchants found difficulties in the investment process due to a lack of mint coins. The English merchants were constantly complaining about the scarcity of mint currency and the difficulty of obtaining even newly issued rupees. Most of the mint coins were reserved for the *Diwan* (state treasury), therefore, making investment difficult for the English company at the required time. [81]

In one his letters dated 1646, the English factor John Spiller describes the condition of mint coins at Kandiaro centre. He writes, 'that to be in new rupees, which many times are not heere to be gott; which,

although so, when come there will not pass untill translated into pice, which last yeare much hindered us.'[82]

The shortage of issued money and the problems faced by the company factors in the investments of trade in Bhakkar *sarkar* is well documented in a report of John Spiller, Henry Garry, Nicholas Scrivener and Gilbert Harrison to the President and Council at Surat, January 21, 1647:

> Trade has been very dead; though, now that a ship has arrived richly laden, some of the merchants have commenced to invest. There being no demand for baftas, prices at Nasarpur are two rupees per corge lower than last year; would be glad, therefore, to receive early instructions if any purchases he intended. Forwarded 500 rupees to Kandiaro at the beginning of the month, and would have sent more, had new rupees been obtainable. As fast, however, as money is coined, the merchants here pay it to the King's diwan in satisfaction of advances made by him. The result is 'such a scarcity that merchants that trade up in the country are faine to runne all over the towne for a 100 rupees, and then perchance not gett them neither, as wee had experience off, though we payd one per cento for exchange of old for new.' Probably before long the rate will be higher, besides the loss of time in getting the rupees; and all this will be a hindrance to the investment. Cannot get any money by exchange; so have written to Ahmadabad for a remittance.[83]

In another report of Spiller, Henry Garry, Nicholas Scrivener and Gilbert Harrison dated February 3, 1647, it says 'Are still detained here by the scarcity of new rupees. Heere is but one day in a weeke that rupees are stampt, and most of them fall into the hands of the Diwan. They tried to get a supply of last year's rupees instead, but found that these also were very scarce.'[84]

Due to the paucity of money and higher rate of currency exchange from old to new one, the English merchants resorted to the remittances from Gujarat.[85] These remittances generally took the form of *hundi*s and were drawn from Ahmadabad.[86] Money collected from the remittance was then invested in textile purchases and clearance of goods from custom duties.[87] In one of the letters, the English factor

John Spiller writes 'On August 14, he received a letter from Ahmadābād with bills of exchange for 7,000 rupees. Part of the money was obtained before it was actually due and was sent up country by boat on the 20th. The boat expected from Kandiāro has not yet arrived. It seems that Scrivener was waiting for the return of the other one from this place, in order to clear them both together 'at that troublesome Ghaat'.[88] Another letter of John Spiller reports that 'besides the loss of time in getting the rupees; and all this will be a hindrance to the investment. Cannot get any money by exchange; so have written to Ahmadabad for a remittance. As soon as they can collect six or seven thousand rupees, Spiller and other factors will proceed to Kandiāro'.[89]

In addition to these, a letter of John Spiller dated July 1647 reports that 'Bills of exchange received from Ahmadabad. Goods expected from Kandiāro. The merchants here began to buy goods again'.[90] From these letters, it appears that *hundi*s during this period became the lifeline for the English merchants.

In the absence of quantifiable information, it is impossible to provide estimates of the volume or value of commodities related with the *suba* of Multan at any one point of time. Even the price notations in our sources are few. Most of the available information relates to the English East India Company's procurement of cotton textiles.[91]

The table given below illustrates the nature of information found in English Company records.

S. No	Date	Place of purchase	Quantity/ valueof goods	References
01.	27 Nov. 1643	Darbella	Total purchase of 4000 to 5000 pieces intended.	*E.F.I.*,[92] *1642, 45*, p. 123.
02.	28 Nov. 1644	Darbella and Kandiaro	Total purchase of 10,000 pieces intended.	*E.F.I., 1642, 45*, p. 203.
03.	1646	Kandiaro	Total purchase of 400 to 500 corge intended.	*E.F.I., 1646-50*, p. 13.

04.	21 Feb. 1646	Kandiaro	300 corge bought	*E.F.I., 1646-50*, p. 28.
05.	21 Jan. 1647	Kandiaro	Total purchases worth at Rs. 7500.	*E.F.I., 1646-50*, p. 72.
06.	3 Feb. 1647	Kandiaro	Total purchases worth at Rs. 1000.	*E.F.I., 1646-50*, p. 101.
07.	9 March, 1647	Darbella	Total purchases intended to get only two corge a day owing to the purchases made by Bhakkar merchants.	*E.F.I., 1646-50*, p. 117.
08.	21 June, 1647	Darbella	Total purchase 27 bales[92] of cloth.	*E.F.I., 1646-50*, p. 113.
09.	Sep., 1647	Kandiaro	Total purchase of 600 corge intended.	*E.F.I., 1646-50*, p. 153.
10	Nov., 1647	Kandiaro	330 corge of cloth purchased.	*E.F.I., 1646-50*, p. 171.
11.	6 Jan., 1648.	Nasarpur and Kandiaro	Total purchases of 10000 pieces of partly Nasarpur and partly of Kandiaro intended.	*E.F.I., 1646-50*, p.188.

English Company Merchants and the Local Brokers

The English merchants didn't purchase goods from local producers directly. Rather there existed a well-knit class of intermediary in the *suba* of Multan, who facilitated purchase and sale of a commodity. The Foreign merchants enlisted the assistance of a local broker who worked as an agent between a producer and a merchant.[93] These brokers, who were mostly from the *Baniya* community, were paid 2% on all bargains.[94]

These brokers were stationed at every important trading centre. In fact, no market transaction could take place without his presence.

This broker class was actually one of the sub-occupational groups within the *Baniya* community. They worked as 'middle men' who facilitated 'the purchaser to the merchandize and the seller to the price.'[95] This broker class appears to have been an important part of English trade, particularly for their commercial establishments, as foreign merchants' business transactions were carried out in a sort of cooperation with the Indian moneyed traders who shared in the profits. In one of his letters, English factor John Spiller writes, 'However, the Kandiāro investment is not being much delayed, for they have managed to remit 1,000 rupees by exchange to the broker there, and this will find him employment until they arrive.'[96] Writing in the early 1690's, Ovington says 'for the Buying and more advantageous disposing of the Company's goods, there are Brokers appointed, who are of the Bannian Caste, skilled in the Rates and value of all the commodities in India.'[97] While giving advises to his fellowmen regarding a broker, Tavernier says 'who should be a native of the country, an idolator and not a Musalman, because all the workmen with whom he will have to do are idolators'.[98] Later on, Thevenot too noticed that 'everyone hath his baniya in the indies' as a broker. Hence it was a well-established institution of conducting trade through the broker class who were primarily baniyas.[99]

There were many important Hindu traders in Multan on whom the East India Company's agents relied, and their names are causally mentioned in passing in the East India Company records. Such merchants were Bumbamal, who was required to make a large payment to the Mughal officers out of his wealth, and Navaldas, who is quoted as an example of a reliable businessman capable of financing trade between Sind, Multan, and Lahore. He had to be one of the Multani merchants who gave their name to a successful banking firm.[100]

The reasons for the traders' dependence on the broker class for the business transactions are not far to seek. According to Tavernier, in Mughal India it was 'the custom throughout Asia that nothing is sold except in the presence of a broker and each class of goods has its own separate one.'[101] However, the communication barrier and the non-

familiarity of the local markets on part of the foreign merchants restricted them to act independently, hence, assumed the importance of intermediary class.[102]

English Company Merchants and the Declining Trade Prospect

When the year 1646 rang in, there was much unsettlement in the *suba* of Multan owing to the Shah Jahan's obsession of conquering Central Asian homeland. Shah Jahan dispatched his Son Murad Bakhsh who was then Governor of Multan as the head of sixty thousand troops.[103] In his place, Said Kahn took over the command of the *suba* on the 27th of August 1646.[104] Said Khan delegated authority of the Bhakkar to his three sons.[105] *Sarkar* found herself in a perilous situation as a result of a schism between these sons over the distribution of authority. They eventually reached an agreement; for a while, places like Kandiaro, Darbella and Gambit had been given to the eldest son, Khanahzad Khan.[106] The authority of custom duty (Chahilyak or one-fortieth i.e., 2½%) was allotted to another son.[107] Due to this unsettlement in Bhakkar *sarkar* complaints began to surface in the English factory records about the uncertainty of the transport dues of 2½ percent on the commodities with which the English merchants dealt. The English factors in Bhakkar *sarkar* reports in 1647:

> Seyhed Ckawne [Said Khan], who sent three of [his so]nnes to Buker to take care and charge of that place, having given them [it?] with all the depending [tow]nes, which together are devided into three purgaines [i.e. parganas] for there maintanance by theire father; about the shareing of which theire was some time spent before they could agree. But that being ended, this place [i.e., Kandiāro], Derbellah, and Gumbutt fell to the eldest sonne, Canahzaut Ckawne [Khānahzād Khan]; the only places of cloath or that we have any thinge to doe in. Yet that unreasonable dutie of Cheheleaheeck was alloted the second sonne. Soe here tis hard to judge who is governour; for Seyed Ckawn, beinge by the Kinge (who againe is on his journey for Black [i.e., Balkh] called unto him, sent for his eldest sonne to governe Multan in his absence; who in his place hath left soe many governours that hitherto we cannot learne each's authority.[108]

Here the events appear to be of Shah Jahan's departure on a military campaign against Nazr Muhammad, the Ashtarkhanid Balk king, and the grant of *suba*'s authority of all forms to the Said Khan. The *subedar* assigned the charge of Bhakkar *sarkar* to his sons which resulted in the multiplicity of tax collectors at the local level. The presence of a large number of tax collectors in the Bhakkar *sarkar* made it difficult for the English merchants to determine true authority, particularly when it came to tax payment. It also did not go well for the local chiefs, *arbab*s, and *zamindar*s, causing confusion among them and eventually leading to a rebellion. In the company records it is reported as, 'These came to receive in theire rents the same day we came to Derbellah, but durst not [go ?] noe further then Khandearah, the arbaubs and cheife men being all fledd, standing out as rebbells, and soe they saide they would continue, untill the governours aforesaid would condiscend to theire demands; ...'.[109] These circumstances hampered the English trade and prevented them from considering any other trading ventures beyond the Bhakkar *sarkar*.

Furthermore, another feature of the local administration that caused great concern among the company merchants was Kotwāl's attempt to levy a new duty known as 'laggath'[110] on textiles sold by local weavers to the Company merchants.[111] John Spiller and Nicholas Scrivener report:

> On their departure the factors sent their servants to all the neighbouring villages to hasten in the cloth, 'for from these places comes in the halfe of what wee buy'. The Kotwāl, discovering this, one day laid hold of some of those who had sold cloth to the English, demanding 'laggath' on the money they had received and threatening to make them pay duties on the cloth they had brought to sell, notwithstanding that such a tax had never been levied before, and that the factors had already paid two duties on the money, one in Darbēlo and the other in this place at the Chowtralls.[112]

When the weavers of Darbella *pargana* refused to pay any amount, Kotwal seized some of the weavers from neighbouring village of Darbella and confiscated the money from cloth sold to the Company

merchants.[113] English merchants were much disappointed as such a demand had never been imposed before. The English merchants' trade in Darbella was considerably affected. In his letters, the English factor John Spiller at Darbella recounted a series of such episodes in which the weavers were mistreated by local authority.[114]

The same problems were being reported by the English merchants at Kandiāro centre as well. The Company merchants narrated that the investments in Kandiaro was much hindered due to the extortions made by the local officials. The trade in this town was hampered by the fact that the English merchants were barred from buying clothes, notwithstanding the privileges granted by the Mughal king many years ago.[115] Local officials' exactions prompted the English merchants to file a complaint. The Company merchants aspired to secure a *parwana* from the relevant authority which would free them from such unlawful exactions.[116] Otherwise, the English factor thought it pointless to maintain a factory here.[117] The English factor Richard Davidge's efforts in this direction finally paid off when he obtained a *farman* from the Mughal state which instructed its officials to remove the current restrictions on free trade, particularly to refrain from interfering with the English in the hiring of carts and not to levy any extra tax on merchants.[118] Other aspects of the Mughal administration which were looked with disfavour by the English merchants was the inconvenience related to the renewal of company's *dastak*s or letters of authority after the death of a king or a governor, a process which meant 'delay and the payment of a bribe.'[119]

Furthermore, the Company merchants also raised complaints about the recurrent tribal raids. The Samejah tribe is described in the company records as a source of danger to traders due to their proclivity for robbery, so the country is not passable without a strong guard. The Samejah tribes' pillaging was a constant threat to boats travelling down the river from Bhakkar *sarkar*.[120]

Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that the Indus river became more difficult for large boats to navigate.[121] Multan's prosperity was heavily reliant on the riverine routes.[122] Much of the *suba*'s well-

being and success hinged on its central location in the transportation of commodities to the port of Thatta along the Indus River and Persia via the Qandahar route.[123] This commercial significance of the *suba* appears to have waned in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The available evidence shows a decline in the riverine trade which adversely affected not only the city of Multan but also the hinterlands attached to it. For instance, Thevenot records:

> Multan was heretofore a place of very great Trade, because it is not far from the River Indus; but seeing at present, Vessels cannot go up so far, because the Chanel of that River is spoilt in some places, and the Mouth of it full of shelves, the Traffick (Trade) is much lessened, by reason that the charge of land-carriage is too great.[124]

Tavernier also noticed this development.

> Multan is a town where quantities of calicoes are made and they used to be all carried to Thatta before the sand had obstructed the mouth of the river; but since the passage has been closed for the large vessels they are taken to Agra and from Agra to Surat, as are also some of the goods which are made at Lahore.[125]

This obstruction of the Indus River, however, was not a permanent characteristic, contrary to what Chetan Singh has argued. If it had been a persistent problem, Sujan Rai Bandari, the author of *Khulasatu-ut-Tawarikh*, who has given an extensive description of Punjab rivers and their courses, and Hamilton, who had sailed over the Indus river towards the close of the 17th century, would have been aware of it.[126] However, the stumbling block might have continued for long enough to cause significant discomfort to those impacted, leading them to seek alternate solutions.[127] Aurangzeb's plan to construct a new port named *Aurangabander*, on the Indus mouth might have been a bid to establish a more accessible harbour.[128] The creation of a new port itself signifies the condition of the time. It is well brought out in the tenth letter of *Adab-i Alamgiri*.[129]

The letter reads as:

> "An order obtained the nobility of issue, that this *murīd* should set out in writing (*ma'rūz dārad*) a true statement of the income of the port,

> which he has founded (*ahdāṣ karda*) in [the province of] Tattah.
> Hail to the *gibla* of the inhabitants of the world! The income of ports *(banādir*) depends upon (*munḥaṣir*) two things; the duty of ten per cent upon trade-goods, (*'ushr-i-māl-i-tujjār*) and on passengers' fares (*naul*) and freight (*kirāya*). The ten per cent on goods has invariably (*hargāh*) been remitted, as a gesture of charity on the part of your Majesty; (*ba taṣadduq-i-farq-i-mubārak*) and one ship, (*yak manzil-i-jahāz*) belonging to this *murīd*, which had been in Sūrat, was brought to this [new] port this year, but has made no voyage so far. The ship *'Bād-āwurd'*, which belongs to the Imperial government (*az sarkār-i-khāliṣa-i-sharīf girifta*) is not yet fit to sail (*mukammal nīst*). Moreover, ships from other ports have not yet begun to visit (*āmad-u-raft...wā nagashta*) this port; nor have merchants from other places begun to throng (*taraddud*) there. How then can a true account of its income be given?"

It further reads as:

> The things necessary for regulating a newly established port, such as building a fort, and constructing a harbour (*ta'mīr-i-furẓat*) and so on have been suitably completed. Almighty God willing, it will soon become flourishing; (*raunaq khwāhad girift*) and with the passage of time it will become a source of income (*ba dā khilkhwāha dāmad*).
> The true purpose (*maṭlab-i-aṣlī*) of this *murīd* in establishing this port was, that some curiosities and rare objects (*tuḥf wa nawādir*), worthy to be offered at Court, will most probably come to hand;...[130]

Aurangzeb's effort proved ineffective since the new port appeared to have been utilised solely by a ship belonging to the prince himself.[131] It probably sank into insignificance as soon as Aurangzeb's special interest was withdrawn. The following letter explicitly clarifies:

> A letter of 1655, written by Munshi Abu'l Fath to Muhammad Sultan (then at Court) to represent certain matters to the Emperor, suggests that the new port had already been abandoned. After denying a suggestion that he had a ship built at Strat for his private trade, the Munshi says, that a ship being built at Tatta Had been carried off by a robber - 'the Zamindar of Kakrala' of Letter 2. Had Aurangzeb's port been even a partial success, would he not have had his ship constructed there?"[132]

The same is recorded in English factory records as well. In a letter dated March 8, 1651, it is mentioned that "the Prince Oran Zeab had

deserted making of a seaport because hee had found it inaccessiable for shippinge of any reasonable burthen."[133]

As a result, merchandise had to be conveyed overland, resulting in a significant rise in transportation costs and, ultimately, a reduction in the amount of merchandise that could be carried. Thevenot reports:

> "The Traffick is much lessened, by reason that the charge of End-carriage is too great... but whereas the Commodities went heretofore down the Indus at small Charges, to Tatta, where the Merchants of several Countries came and bought them up, they must now be carried by Land as far as Surrat, if they expect a considerable price for them.[134]

Tavernier also opined that due to this adversity, the commodities of Multan were transported to Lahore than to Surat.[135]The transportation of goods from Multan to Surat, which was a greater distance than the Thatta, might be explained by the fact that Surat had grown into a significant business centre, drawing more merchants.[136]

Multan suffered a serious setback. Few merchants ventured in commodities produced in *suba* Multan due to the high expense of land transportation.[137] The ramifications of the merchants' virtual desertion from the *suba* Multan were so severe that even artisans began to flee to more prosperous locations. Tavernier makes it clear:

> As this carriage is very expensive but few merchants go to make investments either at Multan or Lahore. And indeed many of the artisans have deserted; thus has much diminished the revenues of the Emperor in these provinces.[138]

Thus the company's business, had been severely harmed by the prevailing upheaval by this time, and the head factors in Surat were seriously considering shutting down a business whose profits were becoming uncertain. Though the English factor Scrivener had previously been advised to improve trade, but it appears that the country's unrest made this difficult.

There is no doubt that the local merchants and the state officials flourished in the presence of the English merchants, but there is no evidence that common people would have improved their condition.[139]

The basic weakness was in the social and political system of the period under study. Though the European merchants brought a great change in the economic structure through exportation of goods, but no attempt was made by the Mughal state to encourage the textile industry in order to meet the demands of the foreign merchants. In fact, the administrative setup in Bhakkar *sarkar* further contributed to the failure by levying illegal taxes as we have already discussed. The administration of the customs houses was dilatory which only created problems for the foreign merchants.[140] To counter these problems, the Company always tried to get the royal *farman*s from the Mughal court and the local governors regarding the concessions in local taxes and customs duties.

Conclusion

From these and other contemporary sources, it appears that trade in Multan was very well organised, both in terms of land and water travel; the commerce was well-established. The challenges that Company merchants faced were those that were usual in India at that time, such as vexations, imposts, and delays, as well as dangers from pirates and robbers and poor road conditions. The actual handling of products was done by brokers, *dalal*s and agents who were largely Hindus and undoubtedly amassed significant fortune, though it was fatal to flaunt any form of richness lest the local officials' fickle covetousness develop some manner of taking it or imposing a disproportionate punishment.

Notes

[1] Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sindh*, Fiction House, Lahore, 2005, p. 1.

[2] Ibid. Mubarak Ali writes that when the English arrived in India, their chief concern, like other European nations, was to get trade concessions and royal permission from the Mughal Emperor to establish their factories at the coastal towns and in the important commercial cities.

[3] Amita Paliwal, 'Sind in the Mughal Empire (1591-1740): A Study of its Administration Society, Economy and Culture', Unpublished Thesis, CAS, Department of History, AMU, Aligarh, 2010, pp. 192-227; Mubarak Ali, *Historical Studies*, Lahore, 1992, pp. 128-33.

[4] The goods which were exported to Sind were cotton, taffetas of yarn and silk, ornamental desks, writing cases, indigo, and saltpetre. The Sind merchants, in

the absence of their own ships, were forced to send their goods by the then only available Portuguese ships. Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sindh*, p. 6.

[5] Ibid.

[6] For a detailed study on the Portuguese's trading activities in Sind, see Mubarak Ali, *Historical Studies*, pp. 125-36.

[7] The influence of the Portuguese over the Sind trade was such that every ship required to have a pass from the Portuguese for sailing. William Foster, (ed.), *The English Factories In India, 1618-1621*, (henceforth *E.F.I.*) Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1906, p. 14. It is mentioned that 'Syndu you may freely goe too, lade and relade; but it is inhabited by the Portugall; lies noe way well for your stock (except you scatter it); it vents only your teeth/invory/and affords good cloth and many toyes'. William Floor, *The Dutch East India Company (vol), and Diewel Sind (Pakistan) in the 17th and 18th century* Islamabad, 1993, p. 10.

[8] Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sindh*, p. 35.

[9] Ibid., p. 9.

[10] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Portuguese, Thatta and the External Trade of Sind, 1515-1635,' *Revista de Cultura*, (Macau), Nos. 13/14, 1991, p. 09.

[11] Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sindh*, p. 5.

[12] Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India (1615-19)*, (ed.), William Foster, Hakluyt Society, Oxford, 1926, p. 148.

[13] Ibid., pp. 75, 76.

[14] The Company's servants were divided into three classes: merchants, factors and writes. See Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sindh*, p. 2.

[15] A factory was actually warehouse for storing trade goods and merchandize. It was the practise of the foreign merchants to buy at the time of harvest when goods were available on cheap rates and to store them in the factory till the ship came. We have a description of the factory bulfing at Surat which gives us an excellent idea of the factory. For the reasons which led to the establishment of a factory at Thatta, see Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sindh*, pp. 2, 9-10.

[16] W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, London, 1923, pp. 41, 42. According to Mubarak Ali, "the Portuguese lost their position and monopoly of the Cape of Good Hope, in the Red Sea and in the Persian Gulf after the fall of Ormuz in 1635. Consequently, they lost their influence in the Eastern coasts due to the Dutch and in the western coast due to the English. In Sind, the Portuguese were replaced by the English who, with short intervals, continued commercial and political relations with Sind." Mubarak Ali, *Historical Studies*, pp. 132-33.

[17] Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sindh*, pp. 10-11; H. T. Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*, Karachi, 1966, p. 34.

[18] *E.F.I., 1634-1636*, p. 129; *E.F.I., 1642-1645*, p. 163; *E.F.I., 1637-1641*, p. xx; *E.F.I., 1655-1660*, p. 129.

[19] Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sindh*, p. 11. The company employed the local merchants and brokers who visited different manufacturing centers to make cloth according to their requirements.

[20] *E.F.I., 1634-1636*, p. xvii. They were well received by the officials and merchants, who were in hopes that by sending their goods to Gombroon in English vessels they would be able to escape the payment of the duty levied by the Portuguese on ships navigating those waters.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 244.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p. 129.

[25] Ibid., *1642-1645*, p. 163.

[26] Ibid., *1637-1641*, p. xx.

[27] Ibid., *1655-1660*, p. 129. The Gambit cloth was about 12½ yards long but two or three inches wider than of kandiaro.

[28] Ibid., *1634-1636*, pp. 191, 192. He further reports the cheapness of calicos as compared to Gujarati textiles.

[29] Ibid., p. 129. *The word bafta means woven. It was the kind of high-quality calico that was usually white or a single color.* The *bafta* of Bhakkar was equal in breadth and length with that of Sehwan but shorter than the *Joorie* (a kind of bafta) of Nasarpur.

[30] For Nasarpuri *bafta*, see William Foster, (ed.), *The English Factories In India, 1634-1636*, p. 129.

[31] Ibid., *1637-1641*, p. xx.

[32] Ibid., p. 134.

[33] However Henry Bornford places Darbella next to Multan not after Bhakkar which is not correct. See *E.F.I., 1637-1641*, p. 135.

[34] For details regarding Nasarpuri joorie, see *E.F.I., 1634-1636*, p. 129.

[35] Ibid., *1637-1641*, p. 135. Corge is a mercantile term for a score: in Madras one corge was equivalent to 22 pieces. Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sind*, p. 75.

[36] Sehwan and Nasarpur were two *pargana*s of Thatta *suba*.

[37] *E.F.I., 1646-1650*, p. 117.

[38] Ibid., *1637-1641*, p. 312.

[39] Ibid., *1642-1645*, p. 123.

[40] Ibid., *1646-1650*, p. 117.

[41] Both the Shewan and Nasarpur textile producing centres of Sind were in close proximity to the Bhakkar *sarkar* (also called Upper Sind or North Sind) of *suba* Multan. As a result, Bhakkar Sarkar naturally provided an

immediate market to English merchants who were experiencing difficulties in lower Sind.

[42] Ibid., p. 159.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., p. 172. River Indus was the cheapest and convenient means of transportation.

[45] Ibid., *1642-1645*, p. 203.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., p. 123

[49] Ibid., p. 163.

[50] Ibid. However the textile industry of Darbella, Kandiaro fluctuated during this due to the large investment for Basra. Mr. Spiller reported besides having low quality of piece goods, price rose at 5 and 6 rupees per corge. See *E.F.I., 1642-1645*, p. 203.

[51] Ibid., *1646-1650*, p. 13.

[52] Ibid., p. 28.

[53] Ibid., *1646-1650*, p. 28.

[54] Ibid., pp. 34, 101.

[55] Ibid., p. 34.

[56] Ibid., pp. 13, 28. This deficiency of money is well-written in factory records. It is reported "Heere is but one day in a weeke that rupees are stampt, and most of them fall into the hands of the Diwan. They tried to get a supply of last year's rupees instead, but found that these also were very scarce."

[57] Ibid., p. 101.

[58] Ibid., pp. 13, 28.

[59] *Jahangir's India*: *The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, (tr.), From the Dutch by Moreland and P. Geyl, Delhi, 2011, pp. 30-31; Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, James MacLehose and Sons, Glasgow, 1906, Vol. III, p. 88; Robert Coverte, 'A True and Almost Incredible Report of an Englishman', in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*, (ed.), Thomas Osberne, London, Vol. II, 1745, p. 257; *E.F.I., 1646-1650*, p. 117.

[60] *E.F.I., 1646-1650*, p. 153.

[61] Ibid., p. 280.

[62] During this time there was great demand for cotton goods at Basra. Not only were English merchants involved in this trade but so were local merchants.

[63] *E.F.I., 1646-1650*, p. 129. Nasarpuri cloth otherwise used to be longer than the Kandiaro cloth.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., *1646-1650*, p. 117.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., *1655-60*, p. 80.

[68] Ibid. It is mentioned that "Nor is it any better heere in Kanderah, the Bussorah news haveing spred itself all over the Scind, and it help the matter heere is not full 45 pice to the rupee; which makes the cloth 2½ rupees in a corge dearer then otherwise it would bee."

[69] Ibid., *1646-1650*, p. 154

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., p. 153.

[74] Ibid., p. 153.

[75] Ibid., p. 277.

[76] Ibid., *1646-1650*, p. 188.

[77] Ibid., p. 277.

[78] Ibid., p. 28.

[79] Ibid., p. 29.

[80] It was in the same spirit that the Afghan tribes accepted gifts from local officials, and toll tax from caravans, who were charged for each row of animals for 'overseeing' the royal highway (*shahrah*). *Khulasatu-t Tavarikh*, p. 87.

[81] Ibid., *1646-1650*, p. 101.

[82] Ibid., p. 29.

[83] Ibid., p. 72.

[84] Ibid., p. 101.

[85] The English merchants generally took loans on interest from *carrafs* to avoid cash shortage of cash during peak season.

[86] Ibid., *1646-1650*, p. 142.

[87] Ibid., pp.150, 151.

[88] Ibid., pp. 150,151.

[89] Ibid., p. 72.

[90] Ibid., p. 142.

[91] However, Chetan Singh is of the opinion that there is virtually no direct reference to cotton goods being procured from Multan except of incidental reference to calicoes. He further says that the cotton textiles of Multan were obtained by the English East India Company either from Agra or from Thatta in Sind and would thus come under the head of cloth procured at these places. See Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Panjab in the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991, p. 219. These statements are untrue since, as I have given in the table, the majority of the textiles of the s*uba* of Multan were acquired by English merchants from their location of manufacture.

[92] 1 bale = c. 98 kgs. See Najaf Haider, 'Global Networks of Exchange, the India trade and the Mercantile Economy of Safavid Iran', in *A Shared Heritage: The Growth of Civilization in India and Iran,* (ed.) Irfan Habib, Aligarh Historians Society, 2002, p. 194.

[93] Ibid., pp. 12, 101. On March 9, the factors set out again, and on the 24th they arrived at the Gate of Derbellah, where their broker met them.

[94] Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sindh*, p. 4.

[95] A. Jan Qaisar, 'The Role of Brokers in Medieval India', *Indian Historical Review*, New Delhi, 1974, Vol.1, No. 2, 220-46.

[96] *E.F.I., 1646-1650*, p. 101.

[97] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, (ed.) H.C. Rawlinson, London, 1929, p. 233.

[98] Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India, 1640-1667*, (ed.), William Crook (tr.), V. Ball, New Delhi, 1977, Vol. I, pp. 30-31, 144.

[99] Jean de Thevenot, *The Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, (ed.), Surendranath Sen, New Delhi, 1949, p. 78; See also K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760*, Cambridge, 1978, p. 307.

[100] H. T. Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit,* Karachi, 1966, p. 104; William Floor, *The Dutch East India Company (VOC) and, Diewel Sind (Pakistan),* p. 39.

[101] Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Vol. I, pp. 155-56.

[102] *E.F.I., 1646-50*, p. 117. On March 9, the factors set out again, and on the 24th they arrived at the Gate of Darbella where their broker met them. He reported that cloth had been extraordinarily dear for some time, owing to purchases made by a Bhakkar merchant, but prices had now fallen again.

[103] Inayat Khan, *Shahjahannama*, (tr.), A. R. Fuller, (ed.), W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai, Delhi, 1990, p. 335; Salih Kanbu Lahorl, *Amal-i Salih*, (ed.), Ghulam Yazdani, Lahore, 1967, Vol. II, p. 355. Prince Murad remained in Multan as governor for the period of 2 years (1642-1646).

[104] Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Padshahnama*, (eds.), Kabir Al-Din Ahmad & Abd Al Rahim, Bib. Ind. Calcutta, 1867-68, Vol. II, p. 557; Salih Kanbu Lahorl, *Amal-i Salih*, Vol. II, p. 421; Shah Nawaz Khan, *Maasir-ul Umara,* (eds.), Maulvi Abdur Rahim and Ashraf Ali, Bib Ind. Calcutta, 1889-91, Vol. II, p. 438.

[105] *E.F.I., 1646-1650*, p. 118.

[106] Ibid; Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sind*, p. 83.

[107] *E.F.I., 1646-1650*, p. 118.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Mr. Tate states that this word in Sindhi means a Kick; the sense here is evident a fine imposed by way of punishment; Laggath also means customs duty. William Foster, (ed.), *The English Factories In India, 1646-1650*, p. 118;

Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sindh*, p. 84.

[111] *E.F.I., 1646-1650,* p. 118.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid., p. 133-34. However after much insistence from the local weaver class and the English factors, Kotwal released the weavers and the money he had seized. These weavers were induced to work again. The English merchants could not procure enough cloth during this time as it is mentioned that only twenty seven bales of cloth were purchased. On 21 June 1647, John Spiller reports "These were put into a boat and sent to Tugghen, the place where all boates are cleared; where after [waiting?] a good three daies we got the cheheleaheeck officers to goe to the waters side, and at last customed our cloth and freed our boate."

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid., p. 302.

[116] Ibid., p. 78. The English factor in his letter dated 24 April 1656, shows the inconveniences faced by traders in Kandiaro due to the arbitrary actions of the Mughal officials. To secure the english trade, he reports 'the new governour being now arrived within few miles from this place, my stay here is onely to meet him and gett some writeings confirmed by him for the gaahts etc., as alsoe his recommendatory letters for Kanderah which will not bee amiss, the basenesse of those officers considered.

[117] Ibid., p. 277.

[118] Ibid, p. 302; *E.F.I., 1651-1654*, p. iii.

[119] *E.F.I., 1646-1650*, pp. 119, 120.

[120] Ibid., *1655-1660*, p. 79.

[121] Earlier it was John Spiller who described the shallow nature of the Indus in 1646. *E.F.I., 1646-1650*, p. 60. It is mentioned that "In maine places were forced where was not a foote water, to drawe the boates by mere strength upon poles into deep water, one after another, untill we came into the tides way."

[122] *Jahangir's India*: *The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, p. 31. Palsaert observed that due to services of three rivers, the Ravi, the Behat and the Sind, the Persian trade was extensive. Fray Sebastien Manrique, *Travels, 1629-43*, (tr.), C.E Luard, assisted by H. Hosten, London, 1927, Vol. II, p. 257.

[123] *E.F.I., 1637-1641*, p. 137. It is mentioned in the factory records, "From Lahoare to Tutta the usuall transport of goods is downe the river in flatt bottom boates of a thousand and 2,000 maens; first by Multan, 150 course; 11 dayesjorney by land, and in soe much tyme we accomplished it by water. Heere is paid custome of all goods that either goe for Candahar or else downe the river to Sinda, at 2½ per cent., besides some other charges at the Gaut [ghat] or passage, which will amount [to] ¼ per cent more." Manucci,

Vol. I, p. 58. The prominence of the Indus trade even during Manucci's time is proved by him. He writes, "Many Arabian and Persian vessals' at a place which was on Indus at a distance of twelve hours journey from the sea."

[124] Jean de Thevenot, *The Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, p. 77.

[125] Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Vol. I, p. 73.

[126] None of these informants mentioned this phenomenon of Indus. Sujan Ra'i Bhaṇḍari, *Khulasatu-ut-Tawarikh*, (ed.), Zafar Hasan, Delhi, 1918; Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of The East Indies from the Year 1688-1723*, London, 1739, rep., Delhi, 1995.

[127] Jean de Thevenot, op. cit., p. 77; Jean Baptiste Tavernier, op. cit., pp. 73-74; William Floor, *The Dutch East India Company (VOC) and Deiwel Sind (Pakistan) in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Islamabad, 1993-94, pp. 23-4. It is mentioned that "During the Aurangzeb's governorship of Thatta and Multan, some hydrological changes at the delta made the Indus river desert Laribander and it became an unimportant place." Even those sailing the Indus in the nineteenth century mentioned the impact of silting. See also Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara and a Voyage on the Indus*, Karachi, 1973, vol. III, pp. 255-6; Alexander Burnes, *Cabool: A Personal Narrative of a Journey to, and Residence in that City*, London, 1843, p. 2; M. R. Haig, *The Indus Delta Country*, Gurgaon, 1974, p. 115.

[128] William Floor, op. cit., p. 23; Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, New Delhi, 1973, Vol. I, p. 68. Some information is also given in English Factory records. *E.F.I., 1651-1654*, p. 4.

[129] *Adab-i Alamgiri*, (tr.), Vincent John Adams Flynn, Australian National University, 1972, p. 27. In this letter it is stated "the principal interest of this letter is in Aurangzeb's spirited defence of his management of a new port which he had set up in his province. Its name is not stated; its future is uncertain; and it probably sank into insignificance as soon as Aurangzeb's special interest was withdrawn. Thatta's earlier prosperity had vanished; the new port might have been nearer the sea, to allow ships to reach it more readily. It is clear that 1651 must have been the first year of the port's operation, for Aurangzeb defends himself against an allegation that he has furnished no account of its revenues by explaining that so far there have been none."

[130] Ibid., p. 27.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid.

[133] *E.F.I., 1651-1654*, p. 52.

[134] Jean de Thevenot, op. cit., p. 77.

[135] Jean Baptiste Tavernier, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 74.

[136] The difficulties in transporting commodities to Thatta via the Indus river

are obvious from a letter written by John Spiller and Nicholas Scrivener on March 31, 1652, to the Surat council. It mentions, "dare not bring the vessel over the bar for fear she would not be able to pass it again, but unless the weather improves, it will be difficult for her to embark her cargo."*E.F.I., 1651-1654*, p. 118.

[137] Jean Baptiste Tavernier, op. cit., p. 74.

[138] Ibid; Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'Middle Classes in Mughal Empire', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1976, p. 42. Iqtidar Alam Khan says, "By the end of the seventeenth century, a large number of Khatri families had settled in the commercial centres of Gujarat."

[139] Mubarak Ali, *The English Factory in Sind*, p. 12.

[140] Ibid., p. 12.

Sacred Suicide: Revisiting Brahmanical Perspectives through Texts and Epigraphs

Rituparna Chattopadhyay

Abstract

Self-torture or self – sacrifice was part of almost every Indian religious philosophy, Brahmanism was no exception. Brahmanical philosophy was not unanimous regarding religious suicide. Various thoughts regarding religious suicide were emerged in the divergent arena of Brahmanical philosophy. This article tried to delve with various conflicting ideas regarding religious suicide in Brahmanism and ever evolving notion concerning this from the time of composition of the Vedic texts to the early modern phase. The present essay not only consults the relevant textual sources but also investigates the matter through the epigraphic lenses.

Death and life after death occupy a huge portion in Brāhmaṇical philosophy. In the Brāhmaṇical viewpoint death is of two kinds – *Svābhābika* (natural) and *Yatnasādhya* (self-made). *Yatnasādhya* death is of several kinds such as suicide, self-immolation, euthanasia etc. According to Durkheim self – killing cannot be considered as suicide always. From scientific stand point every self –killing is suicide, but from philosophical aspect self-killings have differences[1]. The nature of self-killing differs with all the social and individual perspectives. Every kind of suicide is not negative. In some societies the defeated people in a war have to commit suicide for self-respect. Rajput women used to perform *Jawahar Vrata* (self – immolation in fire) to protect their honour. Even there are instances of suicide of the sick people to escape the sufferings.

Keywords: Prāyopaveśana, Agnipraveśa, Jalapraveśa, Mahāprasthāna. Akṣayavaṭa, Satī, Tīrtha.

Religious Suicide in Vedic Literature

There is no reference of suicide in the *Ṛgveda*. Here repeated prayer has been made for achieving long life (RV – 3/3/7)[2] and fire has been praised as immortal (RV – 3/9/1)[3]. Perhaps in the Ṛgvedic time war was a regular occurrence and death rate was quite high, therefore prayer for longer life and immortality were quite natural. The famous *Puruṣa Sūkta* hymn of *Ṛgveda* (10/90)[4] hints to the self-immolation of the primordial man (*Puruṣa Prajāpati*) in a sacrifice and from his limbs emerged people of several *Varṇas* and animals. This hymn was mythical basis of the Vedic *puruṣamedha* sacrifice, where a man self-sacrificed him. In the later *Brāhmaṇas* this sacrifice got more emphasis and self-sacrifice had been regarded as a virtuous deed. In the *Upaniṣads* there is no direct reference to suicide but these texts hint that the desire of long life was gradually decreasing. In *Iśopaniṣada*[5] the desire of a hundred years life has been made but it is further stated that one can live hundred years through his action. This *Upaniṣada* further states that the killer of the self enters in the world of darkness[6]. In a verse of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*[7] apathy to the rebirth has been expressed. According to *Kauśitakī Upaniṣad* mundane life is meaningless, so it is quite unusual to make it lengthy. Soul is eternal, so attaining salvation should have been the primary goal of a man's life[8]. This *Upaniṣadic* idealism helped to lead the foundation of social basis of suicide in Brāhmaṇism.

Religious Suicide in the Epics

Statements regarding suicide in *Mahābhārata* are quite contradictory. There are lot of references of suicide in *Mahābhārata* and on the other hand suicide has been condemned in several occasions. In a verse of *Ādiparva* of *Mahābhārata* (179/20)[9] it is referred that a man who commits suicide cannot be liberated. In *Strī Parva* remorseful Dhṛtarāṣṭra wished to commit suicide after the death of his sons, but Vidura dissuaded him[10]. In *Anugītā* Kṛṣṇa did not approve the suicide. In the dialogue between Umā and Maheśvara the *Anuśāsana Parva* (13/142 - 143) *of Mahābhārata*, five righteous ways of committing suicide

have been stated. Through these ways men can attain liberation. These ways are respectively – *Mahāprasthāna*, *Prāyopaveśana, Agnipraveśa*, *Jalapraveśa* and *Ātmatyāga*.

When a man realises that his inevitability in the earth has come to an end he begins a journey unto death to Himalayas, this is known as *Mahāprasthāna*. The concerned man will never return from this journey. He will wear new dress and belt of *kuśa*. He will fast during his journey and will not stop it until he dies. In *Strīparva* (11/1) of *Mahābhārata Dhṛtarāṣṭra* planned to go out for *Mahāprasthāna*[11]. In *Mahāprasthānika Parva* (18/1 - 4) Pāṇḍavas went out for *Mahāprasthāna*. Before their journey Pāṇḍavas gave oblation of water to the seniors, performed *śrāddha* of the ancestors, offered dine to the seers, made donations to the Brāhmaṇas. Then they arranged rites for the success of their journey and wore bark. During their journey Draupadī, Sahadeva, Nakula, Arjuna and Bhīma died respectively. Yudhiṣṭhira reached heaven alive. The description of this *Mahāprasthāna* tells us that the concerned man has to complete his all the mundane duties before commencing the journey. In *Rāmāyaṇa* Rāma along with Bharata and Śatrughṇa and his associates performed *Mahāprasthāna* in the advice of sage Vaśiṣṭha[12]. Although, the modes of Mahāprasthāna, in *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* are different, but Mahāprasthāna, actually signifies to a voyage until death.

Prāyopaveśana is the second way of suicide. If a person is unable to perform *Mahāprasthāna* he will commit suicide by performing *Prāyopaveśana*. *Prāyopaveśana* is actually fasting unto death. Mauryan emperor Candragupta Maurya performed *Prāyopaveśana* at Śrāvanabelagola. Jains used to perform *Sallekhaṇa* through *Prāyopaveśana*. There are several mentions about *Prāyopaveśana* in *Mahābhārata*. In 'Droṇa Parva' (7/143) Bhūriśravā, injured by Arjuna began to perform *Prāyopaveśana*[13]. In *Āśramavāsika Parva* Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī and Kuntī resumed *Prāyopaveśana* but at the end they died of bushfire (15/49/9-38). In this *parva* (26) when Pāṇḍavas went to meet Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī and Kuntī in forest they saw Vidura was wandering naked in the forest. When Yudhiṣṭhira met him Vidura transferred his vision, life breathe

and senses to Yudhiṣṭhira and died immediately. Vidura performed euthanasia through fasting. In the *Mauṣala Parva* Balarāma committed suicide by *Prāyopaveśana* (16/4/13). In the *Rāmāyaṇa* Aṅgad and Hanumān promised to commit *Prāyopaveśana*, failing to find Sītā[14]. In *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (1/19/17) Parīkṣita and in *Vāyu Purāṇa* (95/37-48) Sukarma performed *Prāyopaveśana*.

The third way of committing suicide is *Agni Praveśa*. In these cases concerned man burns himself in a wooden pyre. Usually a repented or an unsuccessful person or widows took this way of suicide. In the 'Ādi Parva' both Mādrī and Kuntī wished to perform self-immolation in the pyre of dead Pāṇḍu[15]. In 'Droṇa Parva' (7/73) of *Mahābhārata* Arjuna promised to perform *Agni Praveśa* if he failed to kill Sindhu king Jayadratha[16]. In 'Mauṣala Parva'[17] (7) four wives of Vasudeva, Devakī, Bhadrā, Rohiṇī and Madīya self-immolated them in the pyre of Vasudeva. After being robbed by Ābhīras Rukmiṇī, Jāmbavatī, Śaivyā, Haimavatī and few other wives of Kṛṣṇa performed agnipraveśa (*Mahābhārata* – 16/7). There are very few references to suicide or self-immolation in *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the 'Araṇya Kāṇḍa' (3/74) Śabarī performed self-immolation in the burning pyre[18]. Sītā's *Agni Parīkṣa* (6/117; 7/97) was another form of *Agni Praveśa*. In the 'Uttara Kāṇḍa' (7/17-19)[19] Vedavatī, the daughter of sage Kuśadhvaja said to Rāvaṇa that when her father was killed by Śumbha, the king of the demons, her mother committed suicide in the same pyre of Kuṣadhvaja. Rāvaṇa forced Vedavatī to marry him and she became angry and immediately committed suicide in burning pyre. In *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* (7/77 -105) it is referred that when Śaṅkar met Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, he was burning himself in the husk fire[20]. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa took this way because he insulted his preceptor. The widows who performed *Satī* also adopted *Agnipraveśa*.

The fourth way of committing suicide is *Jalapraveśa*. Generally old and physically challenged people adopted this process of suicide. In *Mahābhārata* (16/8) 16000 wives of Śrīkṛṣṇa drowned themselves in the river of Sarasvatī. In *Putradarśanaparvādhyāya* of 'Āśramavāsika Parva' (36/37) widows of died heroes in the battle of Kurukṣetra committed

suicide by drowning themselves in the stream of Bhāgirathī. In *Rāmāyaṇa* (7/116) when Rāma disowned Lakṣmaṇa, he went to the bank of the river Sarayū and committed suicide by drowning himself at the water[21]. Later *Triveṇī Saṅgam* emerged as the best place for performing *jalapraveśa*.

The last process of suicide is *Ātmatyāga*. According to Śivā it is the best way of committing suicide[22]. Later Smṛtikāras and Dharmaśāstrakāras also praised this form of suicide. According to them the men who committed suicide in this way attain the highest heaven. These persons do not need any kind of *śrāddha* or *tarpaṇa*. If a celibate commits suicide in the order of his preceptor he attains salvation. If a man self-sacrifices to save women, children and Brāhmaṇas he attains more merits. For the Kṣatriyas giving life in the battlefield is best way of self-sacrifice. In *Śrīmadbhābavadgītā* Śrikṛṣṇa says battlefield is the gateway of heaven (*Śrīmadbhābavadgītā* – 2/32).[23] In *Mahābhārata* (15/20) it is referred that Kekaya king Sahasrachitya sacrificed himself to save a Brāhmaṇa and attained the highest heaven. In 'Śānti Parva' of *Mahābhārata* (12/98) Sudeva beheaded himself when he realized his defeat was unavoidable and attained place in the heaven. Here it is said that when a solider performs self-immolation in battlefield after battling hard that will be considered as a sacrifice of highest level. The *icchāmṛtyu* of Bhīṣma was also a form of self-sacrifice. In *Raghuvaṁśaṁ* of Kālidāsa king Dilīpa sacrificed himself to a lion in order of his preceptor Vaśiṣṭha to save Kāmadhenu Nandinī (*Raghuvaṁśaṁ* - 2/45)[24].

It is referred in the *Mahābhārata* that one who completed his reading of the four Vedas and the Dvijas are eligible to commit suicide by performing *Prāyopaveśana* (13/25/63-64)[25]. On the other hand *Śrīmadbhābavadgītā* does not approve the custom of *Prāyopaveśana*. *Śrīmadbhābavadgītā* (17/6) says one who commits suicide by fasting creates demonic force within himself[26]. According to *Mahābhārata* one who commits suicide in Pṛthuḍaka (3/83/146) and Kurukṣetra (9//39/33-34) attains liberation.

Suicide in the *Smṛti*s and *Sūtra*s

Manu condemns premature suicide and says every man should wait for his death, but he further states that the ascetics can commit suicide. Ascetics should begin a journey towards north-east and continue until death. During this journey ascetics should not consume anything without water. Ascetics who commit suicide in this way converge with Brahmā at *Brahmaloka* (*Manu Saṁhitā* – 6/49). So both the statements of Manu are quite contradictory. In one hand he asks the liberated or *Jīvanamukta* people to wait for their death and on the other hand he thinks that ascetics can attain salvation through suicide. Manu also prescribes that the people suffering from incurable diseases may commit suicide by performing *Mahāprasthāna*. This is one of the earliest provisions of euthanasia in Indian literature (*Manu Saṁhitā* – 6/31). Kautilya on the other hand condemns self-killing in *Arthaśástra* (4/7). He prescribes that if someone commits suicide out of anger, greed and sexual lust, his corpse should be hanged in the crossroad. His cremation and funeral should not be performed.

Patañjali in his *Yogasūtra* (3/21) confers that a man can commit suicide through *Sopakarma* and *Nirūpakarma*. According to him death is acquiring *Aparānta* knowledge. Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary of *Śrīmadbhāgavadgīta* (4/31) opines that a man should live his whole lifetime and experience the fruits of his actions. The Smṛtikāras are not unanimous about the suicide. Most of them condemn suicide and count this as a crime. Parāśara says that if a man commits suicide out of pride, anger, fear or greed then he has to stay at hell for 60000 years (*Parāśarsmṛti* – 4/1-2). Vaśiṣṭha and Gautama provide some separate prescriptions for those who commit suicide. Vaśiṣṭha opines that suicide is one kind of *Aviśasta* or sin and *śrāddha* cannot be performed for a suicide (*Vāśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* – 23/14-16). If a Brāhmaṇa performs *śrāddha* for a suicide then he must perform *Taptakṛccha* penance with *Cāndrāyaṇa*. If a man commits suicide by hanging himself then his corpse should be burnt among the garbage. If a man tries to commit suicide but fails, he must give a fine of 200 *paṇas* (*Vāśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* – 23/18)[27]. Vaśiṣṭha identifies suicide as

heinous crime and prescribes that relatives of the person who committed suicide should not arrange *śrāddha* for him. He (*Vāśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* – 23/14-19) identifies killing oneself by use of club, water, poison or rope as a sin. If a Brāhmaṇa performs *śrāddha* for a person who committed suicide has to perform penance by *cāndrāyaṇa* and *taptakṛccha*. Someone who decides to commit religious suicide should perform three days of fast before committing it. If someone fails to commit suicide, he should also perform *taptakṛccha* for twelve days[28]. Gautama prescribes that if a man commits suicide by performing *Giripatana*, *Prāyopaveśana*, *Agnipraveśa* or *Jalapraveśa*, it does not require performing *śrāddha* for him (*Gautama Dharmasūtra* - 15/17-19)[29]. Perhaps Gautama views the above-mentioned ways of committing suicide as crime rather than religious euthanasia.

On the other hand, Atri thinks if a man more than 70 years of age cannot perform penances due to physical inability or incurable diseases, he may commit suicide by jumping from hill-top or performing *Agnipraveśa* or *Jalapraveśa*. In these cases the *śrāddha* of the concerned man will be performed three days after death (218/219). Aparārka quotes Brahmagarbha, Vivasvata and Gārgya that a man suffering from incurable diseases, old by age or devoid of any greed can perform *Mahāprasthāna*, *Agnipraveśa*, *Jalapraveśa* etc. Aparārka also quotes from *Ādipurāṇa* that if a man commits suicide by above-mentioned ways or spends his whole life at *Akṣayavaṭa* in Prayāga, he wanes of the sins of his present and past lives and also get a holier new life[30].

Suicide in Later *Smṛtis*

After tenth century CE the Smṛtikāras began to deal with the subject little bit differently. There are mentions of some restricted things in the *Kaliyuga* or the *Kalivarjyas* in the contemporary texts. Among the *Kalivarjyas* there are mentions of suicide[31]. It is quite interesting to notice the endeavour of these texts in banning suicide in the society. Even the provisions of suicide of the diseased and old man have been curbed. According to *Śuddhitattva*[32] in the *Kaliyuga* only the Śūdras would have the right to commit suicide. In his commentary of

Mahābhārata (1/126) Nīlakaṇṭha puts stresses on natural death rather than self-immolation. *Tīrthaprakāśa*[33] says that under any circumstances Brāhmaṇa cannot perform suicide. *Tristhalīsetu*[34] prescribes that a man who has parents, spouse and children alive and a pregnant woman cannot commit suicide[35], but suicide at Prayāga was never been forbidden.

Religious Suicide in the *Purāṇa*s

*Purāṇa*s especially the *Sthalapurāṇa*s identify some places as the perfect for committing suicide. *Kūrma Purāṇa* (1/37/16/39)[36] refers that one can attain more merit by committing suicide in the convergence of Gaṅgā Yamunā than performing meditation. It further records that one who commits suicide here attains *Brahmaloka*. *Śabdakalpadruma* quotes a particular verse of *Kūrma Purāṇa* which states one who drowns himself in the water of Gaṅgā gets salvation[37] (1/36/38-41). *Padma Purāṇa* (*Sṛṣṭi Khaṇḍa* - 60/65) states that if a man knowingly or unknowingly commits suicide in Gaṅgā then he gets liberation and heaven[38]. *Brahma Purāṇa* (177/25) prescribes that *Dvijas* i.e. Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas should commit suicide at any *tīrtha* to attain salvation[39]. *Liṅga Purāṇa* (*Pūrvārdha* – 92/168-169) says if a Brāhmaṇa self-immolates in Śrīśailam attains the merit of dying at Vārāṇasī[40]. This reference leads us to infer that both Vārāṇasī and Śrīśailam yield similar degree of merit. *Matsya Purāṇa* (105/8-12) confers that if a person recalls the name of Prayāga while committing suicide, he will attain salvation. *Kūrma Purāṇa* (1/38/3-4) further states that if a person burns himself in the cow dung fire at Prayāga, he also attains salvation.

From the mentions of the *Purāṇa*s one may assume that at that point of time Prayāga and Vārāṇasī have been manifested as the holiest *tīrthas*. The merits of rivers like Gaṇgā, Yamunā, Tuṅgabhadrā and Godāvarī also have been proclaimed as divine and Holy River. The *Sthalapurāṇas* also played a vital role in manifestation of these *tīrthas*. The main purpose of this proclamation of *tīrtha* culture was to ensure economic interest of certain class of people who were associated with

these *tīrthas*. Thus in the later time along with Prayāga and Vārāṇasī, *Badrikāśrama*, *Gaṅgāsāgara*, *Jāmbavama*, *Gokarṇa*, *Jagannāthakṣetra* are prescribed as holy and perfect for committing suicide[41]. *Varāha Purāṇa* (141/35-64) states that *Meruvara*, *Pañcaśiras*, *Somagiri*, *Urvaśīkuṇḍa* are the ideal places for committing suicide and attaining salvation. According to *Kūrma Purāṇa* (1/37) a man who commits suicide in water, land or sky at *Gaṅgādvāra* or *Gaṅgāsāgara* attains liberation. *Nāradīya Purāṇa* (*Uttarakāṇḍa* – 74/35-40) prescribes of donating precious gifts to the Brāhmaṇas and oblation of water to the ancestors before committing suicide at Gokarṇa. *Skanda Purāṇa* (*Kāśī Khaṇḍa* – 22/76) and *Padma Purāṇa* (*Sṛṣṭi Khaṇḍa* – 60/65) both view that suicide at Kāśī would take one directly to heaven. *Matsya Purāṇa* says one who commits suicide at Prayāga will never take a birth again (180/71-74). In later period some other sub-*tīrthas* were modelled imitating Prayāga or Kāśī. In *Agni Purāṇa* it is stated that any person commits suicide in front of any banyan tree attains the fruit of committing suicide in the *Akṣayavaṭa* at Prayāga (111/13). *Matsya Purāṇa* further states that a man commits suicide at any place in the world remembering Prayāga attains the salvation (105/8-12). There are several other *tīrthas* enlisted in the *Purāṇas* which yield the same degree of merits as Prayāga yields. Some of these *tīrthas* are *Pratiṣṭhāna*, *Sandhyāvaṭa*, *Haṁsapatana*, *Koṭitīrtha*, *Bhogavatī*, *Daśāśvamedhakā*, *Ūrvaśīpulina*, *Ṛṇapramocana*, *Mānasa*, *Agnitīrtha*, *Virāja*, *Anāraka*[42] etc. Interestingly most of these *tīrthas* were moulded around an auspicious tree.

Emergence of Prayāga as the Ideal Place for Religious Suicide

Xuang Xang mentioned that a lots of people committed suicide jumping from the *Akṣayavaṭa* at the *Triveṇī Saṅgam*[43]. Xuang Xang saw numerous skulls and bones there.[44] Jinadatta Suri in his account and Udyotana Suri in his *Kuvalayamāla Kathā* mention about the famous *Akṣayavaṭa*. A character of *Kubalayamālakathā*[45] condemns this kind of suicide and satirically comments that this can lead only one to become handicapped. Another character replies that if one commits

suicide from *Akṣayavaṭa,* he is freed from the sin of slaying parents and finds his place at the feet of Bhairava. Alberuni in eleventh century visited India and in his account he mentions that many Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas commit suicide from a banyan tree at Prayāga. Undoubtedly, this banyan tree is the famous *Akṣayavaṭa*. It may be inferred that *Akṣayavaṭa* emerged as the Brāhmaṇical parallel of Śravaṇabelagolā, the Jain centre of committing suicide. According to a story of Bhaviṣya Purāṇa (3/50/8-11) a celibate named Mukunda lived at Prayāga. Once, Mughal emperor Babur plotted a conspiracy against him. Babur made Mukunda and his disciples to eat cow hair with milk. He repented and thought he made sin of slaying a cow. He consulted with his preceptor and some other knowledgeable persons and committed suicide at Prayāga. In his next birth he was born as Akbar.[46] A slight different version of this story has been narrated in Hadīqa Al Aqālim of Mūrtazā Hussain. According to his version Mukunda used to live near the bank of the river Yamunā and he had the desire to be reborn as a king. Therefore he and his three disciples cut themselves with a saw, which was placed at Prayāga Saṅgam. Mukunda was reborn as Akbar and his disciples were born as Tansen, Birbal and Todarmal.

Ideal Places for Performing Religious Suicide

In some later period *Puruṣottam Kṣetra* and Narmadā gained similar degree of popularity as Prayāga achieved. *Brahma Purāṇa* (*Uttarārdha* – 52/25-26) says that if person commits suicide at *Puruṣottam Kṣetra* near the abode of Jagannātha or in sea he will never be reborn. Similarly in *Matsya Purāṇa (194/29-30)* it is stated that if a person dies in Narmadā river or in *Amarakaṇṭaka* by performing *Agnipraveśa*, *Jalapraveśa* or *Prāyopaveśana* he will be liberated.

Custom of *Satī* and Inscribed *Satī* stones

The first indication to the custom of *satī* may be found in the *Ṛgveda*. The 7th and 8th *ṛka*s of the 18th hymn of the tenth maṇḍala of *Ṛgveda*, hint at widow remarriage and symbolical performance of burning of the widow in her husband's pyre (which later came to be

known as *satī* custom). It is stated in the 7th *ṛka*, that after husband's death, the widow may choose her new husband according to her choice, as wife's duty comes to an end after her husband's death. The next verse states that wife should lie beside the pyre of her dead husband and then her brother-in-law would call her up and leads her to new life[48]. A similar kind of verse is also available in the *Atharva Veda*. The first verse of the third *anuvāka*[49] begins with the context of self-immolation of a widow on her dead husband's pyre[50] (18/3/1/1). Although this verse does not emphasise on this custom, but on the contrary, it suggests that the custom was merely symbolical, symbol of ending all ties with the deceased before beginning a new life. Here it is stated that after lying down beside the husband's pyre she should rise up[51] (18/3/1/3), as her husband will now proceed to a new world. The widow should now live the mundane life. It may be assumed that the custom of self-immolation was completely arbitrary. There are several other customs prescribed for the widows in the *Atharva Veda*, but the custom of *satī* was purely voluntary in the Vedic world. *Viṣṇu Smṛti* was the first text to glorify the custom of *satī*. A certain verse (20/39) of this *Smṛti* states that only wife can follow her dead husband in the path of Yama.[52] Later in *Garuḍa Purāṇa* one may notice the shameless glorification of this custom. In this *Purāṇa* (2/4/90-100) it is prescribed that a chaste wife must ascend the pyre of her husband for attaining heaven for innumerable number of years. Thus the wife also helps her husband to get freed from heinous sins. On the other hand, if a wife does not perform this rite, her husband will never attain the salvation. *Garuḍa Purāṇa* played a pivotal role in making *satī* custom obligatory for the widows. Alberuni also mentions to the *satī* custom but it had not quite enormous effect on society.[53] But Vijñāneśvara in his commentary of *Yājñvalkya Saṁhitā*, *Mitākṣarā* (3/76) emphasises on *satī* custom. He opines that it would be ideal for a widow to commit *satī*, but it is not mandatory to perform *satī* custom for the Brāhmaṇa widows.[54] Vijñāneśvara states that when a widow performs *samārohaṇa* or enters the burring pyre by embracing the corpse of his husband,[55] she is raised to the status of Arundhatī and

attains a place in heaven along with her husband. It is prescribed by Vijñāneśvara that if a Brāhmaṇa widow performs this rite of *samārohaṇa* or *Anugamana,* she and her husband will attain hell because performing self-immolation is a heinous crime for the Brāhmaṇas. Widows of other varṇas may perform *anugamana* out of the love to their husbands.[56] Interestingly in the *Kalivarjya* restrictions to the *Satī* custom has not been included. In this context it will be relevant to discuss a little about the inscribed satī stones. From the textual sources it is evident that the custom of *satī* became popular in later phase of early historic period and gained more popularity in the early medieval period. Archaeological findings of large numbers of *satī* stones ascribed to the early medieval period also support this view. *Satī* stones are a typical category of memorial stones which usually bear a symbol of hand with bangles emerging like a pillar. Symbols of sun and moon or *liṅga* and *yonī* are also represented on these memorials. *Satī* stones have been unearthed in almost every part of India, but most of the *Satī* stones have been found from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Here we will mainly deal with several inscribed satī stones found from various parts of India.

Eran pillar inscription[57] of time of Bhānugupta is perhaps the earliest inscription which is associated with the custom of *satī*. The inscription is dated in the Gupta era 191, i.e. 510 CE. The inscription was originally engraved on a pillar which was later converted into a *Śivaliṅga*. The inscription mentions to Bhānugupta, a Gupta ruler who has been described as a great ruler. During his rule Goparāja died during a battle against Maitras. Goparāja's wife performed self-immolation in the burning pyre of Goparāja. So this inscription is a hero stone in one hand and a *Satī* stone on the other, and it serves the both purposes.

Sangsi inscription[58] from Kolhapur is one of the earliest references to the performance of *satī*. This inscription has been dated in the sixth century CE. The inscription was engraved on a stele which has been worshipped by the local people. The sculptural representation in this inscription is quite unusual. It depicts at least six female figures by

the side of central *satī* figure. Some of these figures are mutilated. The central figure of *satī* is lying inclining towards her right and resting her head on her right hand. She is wearing a *sari* in *vikaccha* fashion which is covering the whole of her body. This is the fashion in which a dead body is generally covered. She is wearing a necklace, ear rings, anklet and bangles. There is a female figure in the immediately left of the *satī* figure that is standing in *añjalimudrā*. There is another female figure in the back side of *satī* figure which is completely naked and with her arms upwards she is showing the feeling of astonishment.[59] The inscribed portion is mostly effaced but from the remaining portion it has been deciphered that a woman named Hālīdevī who died was favourite of her husband, who was either a soldier or a king and she secured a place in the heaven. The inscription further states that the sculptured stele was installed within a temple in the memory of her, by the king himself.[60] P.B. Desai opines that this inscription does not indicate to performance of satī by Hālīdevī, but rather it was a mere funeral memorial which was installed by king himself to commemorate his dead wife.[61] On the other hand, H.D. Sankalia and M.G. Dikshit on the basis of the appearance of the stele argued that it was a memorial for satī.[62] The sculptural representation of the stele already has been discussed. It is showing the central figure of *satī* is lying on a bed made of fire or pyre. As there is no direct mention to the custom of satī in the inscription, therefore we cannot definitely reach to any inference whether it was actually a memorial of satī, but sculptural representation is certainly indicating towards that.

An interesting record of the time of Rājendra Deva of 1078 CE comes from Belaturu,[63] although it is from south India, still we have taken it into consideration it for its uniqueness. It is an exceptional record of self-immolation by a widow. It informs that a person named Echa, who was headman of Pervayal and chief of Navalenāḍu and belonged to Kuruvanda family killed by the king. When his wife Dekabbe of Raviga family came to know about the news that her husband has been pierced of by the men of king, she went into a pit full of fire, for committing self-immolation. Before committing self-

immolation she donated gold, land, cow, clothes and money and walked into the blazing fire. It is one of the rarest examples of performance of self-immolation by a woman of Śūdra family.[64] The depiction of the self-immolation in this inscription is not quite identical with the usual process of performing satī in Brāhmaṇical culture, rather it reminds us more about the *agnipraveśa* of Sīta in *Rāmayaṇa*. It is also interesting to note that in *Mitākṣarā* (3/76) it is prescribed that for a Śūdra woman it is perfect to perform *aṇugamana* or performing self-immolation only after the cremation of her husband is completed. The reference of Belaturu inscription may be considered as an example of *aṅugamana*.

Four Govardhana memorials unearthed form Nagaur district of Rajasthan of 686, 688, 692 and 770 CE respectively provide references to the performance of *satī* by four women. Similarly a record from Puskar of 1130 CE mentions about Thākurānī Hīrādevī who committed suicide for her deceased husband Thākura Kolhava. Lohari inscription of 1179 CE mentions about performance of *satī* by nine wives of Jalasala.[65] Paldi inscription from Ajmer was originally engraved on satī stone[66], but it mentions about erection of a Śiva temple. It may be conjectured that the Śiva temple[67] was established in the memory of someone who committed *satī*.[68] Bassi inscription of Chāhamān ruler Ajaypāladeva informs that three wives of Ajaypāladeva, Somaladevī, Oṣṭhaladā and Śrīdevī committed satī after death of Ajaypāladeva. This inscription has been dated to 1132 CE.[69]

Kalacuri inscriptions record some examples of the custom of *satī*. Khaira[70] and Jabbalpur[71] copperplates of Kalacuri king Yaśakarṇadeva indicates that when Kalacuri scion Gāṅgeyadeva performed ritualistic suicide his hundred wives also died with him. From this evidence one can assume that the wives of Gāṅgeyadeva performed *satī*.[72] The more direct reference to the custom of *satī* comes from Sheorinarayan stone inscription of Jājalladeva II.[73] This inscription is dated 1167 – 68 CE. This inscription informs us about the son of Rājadeva, perhaps whose name was Ulhaṇadeva who waged a fierce battle against the king of

Cedī. When he saw his army was reducing into corpses, he personally went out in the battle and died. His three queens out of grief committed *satī*.[74]

There are few instances of existence of custom of *satī* in few inscriptions of the Cāndellas. All of these inscriptions are incised *satī* stones. First one is of time of Vīravarmaṇ, which has been dated in 1286 CE. It is found from Gurha[75]. The next record is of time of Bhojavarmaṇ, which has been found from the famous fort of Ajaygadh[76]. The date of this inscription is 1288 CE. The inscription has several names and most of them are undecipherable. From this inscription we can reach to only a conclusion that someone form *kāyastha* family performed the vow of *satī*. Two more *satī* stones have been found during the rule of Cāndella king Hāmmiravarmadeva. The first of these was found from Bāmhni dated 1309 CE[77]. This *satī* stone was erected in the memory of wife of Bhūmipāla (putra ?) Palhaṇa, Malhai (Palhaṇa's wife) who performed *satī*. The *satī* stone was actually installed by their son Jāme.[78] The second one is of the same year and was found from Ajaygadh[79]. It was erected in the memory of wife of Bālasubhamma.

Religious Suicide by Kings and Members of Royal Family

There are several references of self-immolation of the kings. Varāhamihira in his *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*[80] opines that if a king drowns himself in a river at a *tīrtha*, he attains never-ending merit[81] (68/19). Bāṇabhamma in his *Harṣacarita* (fifth ucchāsa) provides a detailed description of the self-immolation by Yaśovatī, the mother of Harṣa. Yaśovatī committed self-immolation before the death of his husband Prabhākaravarddhana. Assuming his death is inevitable Yaśovatī renounced all of her mundane possessions and wore a white cloth. Harṣa tried to impede her, but failed. She went to the bank of river Sarasvatī and immolated herself in a burning pyre[82]. Vihlan in his *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*[83] refers that Cālukyan king Someśvara I committed suicide at Kurubhatti in Tuṅgabhadrā River, the Gaṅgā of south India, after defeated by Chola king Vīra Rājendra. Vihlan further

writes before drowning himself in Tuṅgabhadrā, Someśvara Āhavamalla informed his ministers about his decision and they praised his decision. Then Someśvara donated lot of gold and precious gifts to the Brāhmaṇas and drowned himself attaining *paramayoga* (*Vikramāṅkadevacarita* – 4/59-68). According to *Prabhākaracarita* king of Kānyakubja Nāgāvalāka (probably Pratihara king Nāgabhaṭa II), who was grandfather of Bhoja, drowned himself in the Gaṅgā[84]. Kalhana in his *Rājataraṅginī* depicts how the king Kalasa becoming certain about his death went to a *tīrtha* and created a golden image of a deity and then committed suicide by drowning himself (*Rājataraṅginī* – 6/14)/[85]. According to Sandhyākara Nandī's *Rāmacarita* (4/10) Rāmapāla committed self-sacrificed in the Gaṅgā[86]. *Advūtasāgara* states that before completion of composition of this book Ballālasena bestowed the responsibility of the kingdom to Lakṣmaṇasena and drowned himself with his wives in the Gaṅgā to attain *Nirjarapura* or the heaven[87]. It may be assumed that Ballālasena self-sacrificed at the Triveṇī Saṅgam. According to *Ballālacarita* (27) of Ānandabhaṭṭa, Ballālasena performed self-immolation in a burning pyre.[88]

Epigraphic References of Religious Suicide

There are several mentions of committing suicide following Brāhmaṇical aphorism in the early medieval epigraphs. In the early medieval period with the gradual development of *Purāṇic* Brāhmaṇical religion the tradition of ritualistic suicide gained popularity. The tradition of ritualistic suicide was quite prevalent in Jainism and Ājivīkism. *Niṣidhis* were dedicated to the Jains who used to pursue ritualistic death.

In the Gaya inscription of Vigrahapāla III the mention of *Vaṭeśa* has been made in the 29th line. According to Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay this *Vaṭeśa* is the famous *Akṣayavavaṭa* of Prayāga[89]. The Khaira plate of Kalacuri Yaśakarṇadeva informs that Gāṅgeyadeva with his 100 wives committed suicide at *Akṣayavaṭa* of Prayāga[90]. The same verse has been repeated in the Jabbalpur plate of Yaśakarṇadeva[91]. The Afsad plate of later Gupta king Ādityasenagupta mentions that

Kumāragupta who was grandson of Harṣagupta and son of Jīvitagupta and defeated Maukhari king Iśāṇavarmaṇa committed suicide at Prayāga[92]. He donated many precious gifts to Brāhmaṇas and went to Prayāga. There he burnt himself at a pyre made by cow dung. Perhaps he chose the way of committing suicide because of his defeat against the Maukharis[93].

The Khajuraho temple inscription of Chandella king Jayavarmaṇa IV mentions about the suicide by Chandella king Dhaṅga. When Dhaṅga reigned over whole world and completed his hundred years of age, he concentrated his mind on Rudra and committed suicide at the convergence of Gaṅga and Yamunā[94]. The Mau plate of Chandella king Madanavarmaṇa refers that his minister Ananta committed suicide at Gaṅgā-Yamunā convergence[95].

James Princep interprets the Baroda plate of Karka Suvarṇavarṣa and states that Raṣtrakūṭa scion Dhruvavarṣa committed suicide at the convergence of Gaṅgā and Yamunā[96]. The Sarkho copper plate (1128 CE) of Chedi king Ratnadeva II informs that the grandfather of Padmanābha committed fast for fifty continuous days and died at *Jāmbavaṭatīrtha*[97]. This *Jāmbavaṭa* is undoubtedly the famous Jambabanteswar near Sabarmati River at Gujarat. It may be assumed that in later period many *tīrthas* were established near a banyan tree, emulating the *Akṣayavaṭa* at Prayāga. *Jāmbavaṭa* was such a *tīrtha*. Ajaygarh inscription of the time of Chandella king Vīravarmaṇa tells us that his wife Kalyāṇdevī erected a well within the fort of Ajaygarh[98]. This well was known as *Nirjarakūpa* and was filled by the water of sacred rivers. The term *Nirjara* denotes to heaven and it may be assumed that this well was made for the women of the fort to commit suicide and to attain heaven. An inscription from Laos tells us about the suicide of king Devanika at Kurukṣetra[99]. The Rākṣaskhāli copperplate of Ḍommaṇpāla informs us that he created his own land of salvation (*svīyamuktibhūmi*) at *Dvārahāṭaka*. D.C. Sircar opines that the *Svīya Muktibhūmi* in this copper plate implies the place of committing suicide by Ḍommaṇpāla. Similarly D.C. Sircar thinks that

Gāṅgeyadeva or Dhaṅga took Prayāga as their land of salvation. It is further to state that Dvārahāṭaka where the *Muktibhūmi* of Ḍommaṇpāla was situated was also near Gaṅgā.[100]

Mary Storm attracted our attention to some unusual hero stones found from south India which record self-immolation by soldiers to some Brāhmaṇical divinities.[101] An inscription of the time of Kampavarmaṇ of 889 CE refers that a soldier self-sacrificed himself and offered his head to goddess Bhaṭārī[102], who was considered as a form of Durgā. Similar inscriptions are found from Karnataka of tenth century. One of these inscriptions of 944 CE refers to a man named Buciga[103], who severed and offered his head. Another inscription of 991 CE mentions to a man Kaṭega who promised to offer his head to goddess Guṇḍadabbe[104]. Storm also mentions about some hero stones from Andhra region which indicate self-sacrifice by the soldiers to Bhairava. She thinks the tradition of head-offering to Brāhmaṇa divinities was quite old in south India.[105]

Religious Suicide in Late Medieval and Recent Times

In the late medieval and even in the colonial period committing suicide at Gaṅgā was quite a popular custom. Mughal emperor Akbar restored the ghats of Gaṅgā for the people who wanted to commit suicide. Mughal emperor Aurangzeb issued the order of destroying the Kāśi Viśvanātha temple at Benares, but never banned the ritualistic suicide here[106]. The account of Thomas says that ritualistic suicide at Benares was quite popular. Old and incapable people from many places came to Benares and waited at bank of Gaṅgā[107]. When their death became certain, their relatives immersed them in the water. Abbe Dubois condemned this custom and wrote that very often these dying men were preyed by crocodiles and other ferocious aquatic beasts and flooded by the stream of river[108]. Some contemporary newspapers also hinted towards the popularity of this kind of ritualistic suicide[109]. T. Colebrook informs that these dying men used to donate many gifts to the Brāhmaṇas before their death[110]. Jonthan Parry shows that how far this custom was economically driven and many

Brāhmaṇas of Benares were associated with this death business[111]. Kamal Kumar Majumdar in his famous novel *Antarjalī Yātrā* depicts the severity of this custom[112].

In early and early-medieval India the perspectives regarding suicide and euthanasia had been changed over the time. During *Ṛgvedic* period war was a regular occurrence and significance of a man's life was relatively high. That was why during the early Vedic period the reference of suicide was quite a few. Gradually, the emergence of sedentary society and Brāhmaṇical idealism led to advent of the concept of suicide. The idealism made people to believe that everything in the world is impermanent and life is full of sorrows and failures. One only could overcome the sufferings of life by attaining death. So the later *Purāṇas* and the epics put stress on the committing suicide. The deprived and the needless class of the society are thus encouraged to commit ritualistic suicide. But after a certain period when the prevalence of suicide was increased then Smṛtikāras realised the necessity of curbing the opportunity of ritualistic suicide. In many cases the compulsion of committing suicide made an unwilling man to commit suicide. Therefore the later Brāhmaṇical texts tried to put some restrictions over committing suicide, but these restrictions were principally applicable to the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas. On the other hand, some later texts put emphasis on performing Satī for the women and that led to forfeiting the rights of women.

There are provisions for suicide in every society and these Occur due to various reasons, such as psychological distress, surroundings problems, incurable diseases, religious customs etc. In early and early medieval India ritualistic suicide gained support from social aspect. Mainly Brāhmaṇical philosophy led a lot of people to commit suicide to attain happiness in life after death, but later it became associated with the economic interest of a particular class of society.

Notes

[1] E. Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., New York, 1952, p. 42.

[2] Rameshchandra Dutta, *Ṛgvedasaṁhitā* (Vol. I), (in Bengali), Haraf Prakashani, Kolkata, 1976, p. 245.
[3] Ibid, p. 265.
[4] Rameshchandra Dutta, *Ṛgvedasaṁhitā* (Vol. II), (in Bengali), Haraf Prakashani, Kolkata, 1978, p. 365.
[5] *Kurbanneveha karmāṇi jījiviṣet śataṁ samā (Iśopaniṣada* - 2).
[6] Asūryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasāvṛtaḥ/ tāṁs te pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātma – hano janaḥ (*Iśopaniṣada* - 3)
[7] *Śyetamadat vamadatakaṁ śyetaṁ lindu mābhigāṁ lindu mābhigāṁ (Chāndogya Upaniṣada* – 8/14).
[8] *Svayanāsya prajā purākālād pramīyate (Kauśitakī Upaniṣada* – 4/13).
[9] 'Haridās Siddhāntavāgīś', *Mahābhārataṁ*, Vol.1, Bishwabani Prakashani, Kolkata, 1931, p. 418.
[10] Rajshekhar Basu, *Mahabharat* (in Bengali), M.C. Sarkar and Sons' Private Limited, Kolkata, 2013, p. 547.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Panchanan Tarkaratna, *Rāmāyaṇam*, Bangabasi Press, Kolkata, 1908, pp. 1462-1466.
[13] Ibid, p. 430.
[14] Ibid, p. 678.
[15] 'Haridas Siddhāntavāgīś', *Mahābhārataṁ*, Vol. 3, Bishwabani Prakashani, Kolkata, 1931, pp. 1330-1334.
[16] Rajshekhar Basu, op. cit., p. 441.
[17] 'Haridas Siddhāntavāgīś' *Mahābhārataṁ*, Vol. 43, p. 323.
[18] *anujñātā tu rāmeṇa hutātmānāṁ hutāśane.*
[19] Panchanan, op. cit., pp. 1276-1286.
[20] Swami Tapasyananda, *Sankar Digvijaya: The Traditional Life of Sri Sankaracharya*, Sri Ramkrishna Math, Madras, p. 77.
[21] In *Mahābhārata* Balarām and in *Rāmāyaṇa* Lakṣamaṇa both are considered as the incarnations of Śeṣanāga and both of them committed suicide in almost similar fashion.
[22] Trinath Mishra, *The Hindu Book of the Dead*, Vitasta Publishing Ltd., New Delhi, 2012, p. 72.
[23] *yadṛcchayā copapannaṁ svargadvāramapāvṛtam/ sukhinaḥ kṣatriyaḥ pārtha labhante yudhamīdṛśam.*
[24] *Sa tvaṁ madīyena śarīravṛttiṁ dehena nirvartayituṁ prasīda.*
[25] *adhruvaṁ jīvitaṁ jñātvā yo vai vedāntago dvija.*
[26] *karṣayanataḥ śarīra sthaṁ bhūta grāmam acetasaḥ/ māṁ caivāntaḥ śarīra sthaṁ tān viddhyāsura niścayaṁ.*
[27] P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. II, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1974, p. 924.
[28] Pattrick Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras : The Law Codes of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana and Vaśiṣṭha*, Motilal Banarasidass Publishing House, Delhi, 2000, p. 445.

[29] Ibid, p. 159.
[30] Ibid, p. 926.
[31] Ibid, p. 609.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Katherine K. Young, 'Euthanasia: Traditional Hindu Views and the Contemporary Debate', *Hindu Ethics: Purity, Abortion and Euthanasia*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1989, p. 111.
[36] *Yā gatiryogayuktasya saṁnyastosya manīṣinaḥ/ sā gatistyajataḥ prāṇātra gaṅgayamunā saṅgame.*
[37] *gaṅgāyāṁ jñātata mṛtvā muktiṁ mānabāḥ/ ajñānād brahmalokān ca yāti nasti atra saṁśayaḥ/ gaṅgāyāṁ ca jale mokṣa vārāṇasyāṁ jale sthale/ antarikṣe ca gaṅgāyāṁ gaṅgāsāgara saṅgame.*
[38] *Jñānajñānato vāpi kāmātokāmāto pi vā/ gaṅgāyām ca sṛto martyaḥ svargam mokṣam ca vindati.*
[39] *Tasmātsurva prayatnena tasmin kṣetre dvijottamāḥ/ dehatyāgo naraiḥ karyaḥ samyagamokṣābhiḥ.*
[40] *Śrīśaile saṁtyājeta dehaṁ brāhmaṇo dagdha kilaviṣaḥ/ mucyate nātra sandeho hyāvimukte yathā śubham.*
[41] Samarendra Narayan Arya, *History of Pilgrimage in Ancient India* 300-1200, Munshiram Manoharlal Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2004, p. 84.
[42] P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmashastra*, Vol – IV, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1974, p. 614.
[43] In *Mahābhārta* (13/88) mention has been made of *Akṣayavaṭa* in Gaya. It may be assumed that there were many of such auspicious *Vaṭa* or banyan trees in all over India, but later the *Akṣayavaṭa* at Prayāga became the most popular one and others are lost in the oblivion.
[44] A. Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*, Trubner & Co., London, 1871, p. 328.
[45] L.B. Gandhi, *Gaekwad's Oriental Research Series*, Vol. XXXVII, Baroda, 1927, p. 109.
[46] Paramatmananda Bhairav, *Bhaviṣyapurāṇam*, Bishwabani Prakashani, Kolkata, 2013, pp. 704-705.
[47] H. Beveridge, 'The Garden of Climes', *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record*, The Oriental University Institute, 1900, pp. 158-159.
[48] Rameshchandra, op. cit., pp. 462-463.
[49] Bijanbihari Goswami, *Atharvaveda Saṁhitā*, Haraf Prakashani, Kolkata, 2000, pp. 355-356.
[50] *iyaṁ nārī patilokaṁ bṛṇānā ni padyat upa tvā martya pretaṁ.*
[51] *apaśyāṁ yuvatīṁ nīyamānāṁ jīvāṁ mṛtebhyaḥ pariṁīyamānāṁ.*
[52] *Jayābajjaṁ hi sarvasya yāmyaḥ panthā viruddhate.*

[53] Edward C Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, Adamant Media Corporation, New York, 1971, pp. 170-171.

[54] Kathenine K. Young, op. cit., pp. 111-112.

[55] This reference certainly reminds us about Mādrī's death embracing her husband's corpse as mentioned in *Mahābhārata* (1/126).

[56] Rai Bahadur Sris Chandra Vidyarṇava, 'Yājñavalkya Smṛti with Mitākṣara and Balambhaṭṭa', *The Sacred Books of the Hindus , Vol. XXI*, The Panini Office, Allahabad, 1918, pp. 167-168.

[57] B.Chhabra, G.S. Gai,(Ed.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum Vol-III,* Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 352-354.

[58] H. D. Sankalia, M.G. Dikshit, 'A Unique VI Century Inscribed Satī Stele: From Sangsi, Kolhapur State', *Bulletin of Deccan College,* Vol -9, No – 1, Poona, 1948, pp. 161-166.

[59] Ibid, pp. 163-164.

[60] Ibid, p. 162.

[61] P.B. Desai, 'Sangsi Memorial Inscription' *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXVIII, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 132-133.

[62] H. D. Sankalia, M. G. Dikshit, op. cit, p. 163.

[63] F. Kittel, 'Belaturu Plates of the Time of Rajendra Deva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VI, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 213-219.

[64] Ibid, p. 215.

[65] B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of the Early Medieval India,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012, pp. 126-128.

[66] A.K. Vyas, 'Paldi Inscription of Guhila Arisimha' *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXX, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 8-11.

[67] Romila Thapar refers to a story according to which Rāṇaka Devī, daughter of a Rajput chief was promised to be married by Chalukyan king Jayasiṁha Siddharāja. But she was actually married with a Chalukyan feudal ruler Ra Navaghana II. Jayasiṁha defeated Navaghana and captured Rāṇaka Devī. She refused to marry Jayasiṁha and committed satī at a place named Vadhavan. A temple was later erected at Vadhavan in memory of Rāṇaka Devī. (Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of History*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 26-27.)

[68] Mention should be made of Rajim Telin temple of Chhattisgarh in this context. The temple was named after an oil-seller woman who performed *satī*. There is a *satī* stone within the *garbha gṛha* of the temple, which also hints to the profession of Rajim Telin. The present author has visited the place himself.

[69] B. D. Chattopadhyaya, op. cit, p. 127.

[70] Raibahadur Hiralal., 'Khaira Plates of Yaśakarṇadeva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1985, p. 215.

[71] F. Kielhorne, 'Jabalpur Copperplate Inscriptions of Yashakarnadeva' *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. II, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 1-5.

[72] V.V. Mirashi, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* Vol. IV, Part–I, Archaeological Survey of India, Ootacamund, 1955, p. clxix.

[73] V.V. Mirashi, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* Vol. IV, Part–II, Archaeological Survey of India, Ootacamund, 1955, pp. 519-527.

[74] *upabhoktu miba svarggānbhogyān bhartyāḥ samaṁ divi.*

[75] F. Kielhorne, 'Inscriptions of North India', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. V, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1981, p. 35.

[76] Raibahadur Hiralal, 'Four Chandella Copper Plate Inscriptions' *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XX, New Delhi, Archaeological Survey of India, 1983, p. 135.

[77] Raibahadur Hiralal, 'Mahoba Plates of Paramardi Deva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVI, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1983, p. 10.

[78] Harihar Vitthal Trivedi, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. VII, Part –III*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 192-193.

[79] Raibahadur Hiralal, 'Four Chandella Copper Plate Inscriptions' *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XX, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1983, p. 36.

[80] Subrahmaniyam V. Shastri, '*Varahamihira's Brihat Samhita*', Govt. of Mysore, Bangalore, 1946, p. 572.

[81] *bhuktā saṁy/oga basudhāṁ śauryeṇa pājitām aśilya abdaḥ/ tīrtha prāṇāṁsa tyaktā bhadro deva ālayaṁ yāti,*

[82] Prabodhendunath Thakur, *Harṣacarita*, Ranjan Publication House, Kolkata, 1952, pp. 185-195.

[83] Biswanath Shastri Bharadwaj, *The Vikramāṅkadeva Carita Mahākāvya*, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 1958, p. 247.

[84] P.K. God, *Sushil Kumar Dey Felicitation Volume*, Deccan College, Poona, 1960, p. 356.

[85] Jogesh Chandra Dutta, *Rājataraṅginī* (Vol. I), I.C. Bose & Co, Stanhop Press, Kolkata, 1867, p. 169.

[86] *Janajāte rūdati śucāsāravamagāhya tajjalaṁ puṇyaṁ/ virahasaha parijanairdurvviṣahaṁ rāmo jagām sa svabhuvam.*

[87] D.C. Sircar, *Pal Sen Juger Bangshanucharit*, Sahityalok, Kolkata, 2009, p. 109. (*nānā dānacita ambu saṁcalonataḥ sūrya ātmajā saṁgamaṁ gaṅgāyāṁ vīrachayā nirjara puram bhāryāto gataḥ*)

[88] Dinanath Dhar, *Ballālcariter Baṅgānubād,* Hare Press, Calcutta, 1904, p. 111.

[89] Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay, *The Pālas of Bengal*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1915, p. 80.

[90] Raibahadur Hiralal., 'Khaira Plates of Yaśakarṇadeva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1985, p. 215. (*prāpte prayāgavaṭemūlaniveśavandhī sārdha śatena gṛhiṇībhirmutramuktiṁ*)

[91] F. Kielhorne, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 1-5.

[92] D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscription*, Vol. II, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1983, p. 44. (*śauryasatyavratadharo prayāgagato dhane/ abhabhasīva karīṣāgnau magnaḥ sa puṣpapūjitaḥ*)

[93] Self-immolation in the pyre made of cow dung was considered as a way to extinguish humiliation or heinous sin. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa also pursued this way of committing suicide.

[94] F. Kielhorne, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1985, p. 146. (*rakṣitvā kṣitimamburāśi raśanametāmanyātiṁ/jīvitva śaradāṁ śataṁ samadhikaṁ śrīdhaṅga pṛthvīpatiḥ/ rudraṁ mudritalocanaḥ sa hṛdaye dhyayan japan jāhṇavī/kāliṁddoḥ salile kalevara parityāgādgānnirvṛtim*)

[95] F. Kielhorne, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, op. cit. p. 201. (*hitvā deha nidaśa … bhānukanyājalāntuḥ ślāghyeanante paramabrahmasāyujymāpte*)

[96] James Princep, 'Baroda Plate of Karka Suvarṇavarṣa', *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1839, p. 340. (*yo gaṅgāyamune taraṅgasubhage gṛhṛṇ parebhyaṁ samam/ sākṣāccihṇanibhena cottamapadaṁ tatprāptabhavānīśvaraṁ*).

[97] V.V. Mirashi, 'Sarkho Copper Plate of Cedī Ratnadeva II', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXII, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1985, p. 281. (*jāmbavaṭa tīrthe pranavimuktimaṇ nipuṇe*)

[98] F., Kielhorne,'Ajaygarh Inscription of the Time of Cāndella king Vīravarmaṇa', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1985, p. 388.

[99] Samarendra Narayan Arya, op. cit. p. 184.

[100] D.C. Sircar, 'Rakshaskhali (Sundarban) Plate', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXX, op. cit. 1987, p. 43.

[101] Mary Storm, 'An Unusual Group of Hero Stones,*' Ars Orientalis,* Vol . 44, 2014, pp. 44-61.

[102] Ibid, pp. 63-64.

[103] Ibid, p. 64.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid, p. 65.

[106] Jonathan P. Parry, *Death In Banaras*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1994, pp. 38-39.

[107] P. Thomas, *Hindu Religion Customs and Manners*, D.B. Tarapoorwala, Bombay, 1979, p. 93.

[108] A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners Customs and Ceremonies*, Routledge Press, New York, 2007, p. 606.

[109] B. N. Banerjee, *Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha*, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Kolkata, 1937, pp. 250-266.

[110] Thomas Colebrook, *Miscellaneous Essays* (Vol. I), Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1837, p. 155.

[111] Jonathan P. Parry, op. cit, pp. 119-139.

[112] Kamal Kumar Majumdar, *Upanyas Samagra,* Ananda, Kolkata, 2015, pp. 1-115.

Exploration of African Culture and Tradition in the Select Works of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Grace Ogot: A Critical Review

Khan Mahlaqa Afzal and Tahseen Mohammed Zahir

Abstract

The present research paper explores the themes of rich African cultures and traditions as portrayed in the literary works of the two prominent East African writers, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Grace Ogot. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is known for his commitment to decolonising African literature from colonial influences. Whereas, Grace Ogot, a pioneering figure and prolific storyteller, contributes with her unique perspective on the fusion of tradition with colonial and modern influences. In *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child* Thiong'o continues to explore about the cultural and traditional elements, demonstrating the customs, traditions, beliefs, and conflicts of the Gikũyũ people. The characters and their interactions present a perspective through which readers can grasp the complexities of African culture and the struggles come across during the colonial period. The search also examines the two books of Kenyan writer Grace Ogot. She, like Thiong'o, is known for her strong opinions in writing and a significant role in East African literature. Her literary works *The Promised Land* and *Land Without Thunder* vividly depict cultural refinement. The research paper focuses on examining and reviewing how Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Grace Ogot represent culture and tradition in their works. In her notable works, *Land Without Thunder*, Grace Ogot goes into the exploration of cultural and traditional elements. Her stories portray the customs, traditions, and conflicts of Luo people. Both authors, through dynamic descriptions and touching stories emphasised the enduring importance of cultural practices during colonial era. The study aims to explore

and critically analyse the various representations of culture and tradition in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Grace Ogot's select works.
Keywords: Conflict, Culture, Customs, Folktales, Gikũyũ, Indigenous, Luo, Ritual, and Tradition.

Introduction

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a prominent figure in Kenyan literature, emerged from the generation of writers who experienced colonialism but continued to contribute to literature of post-independence. Like Grace Ogot, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's writing is deeply influenced by Kenya's culture and traditional rituals. Both the writers often incorporate cultural ceremonies into their works to explore traditions and customs. Thiong'o mostly writes about Gikũyũ tribe and their beliefs and culture in his novels. In Gikũyũ culture, Circumcision was considered as a very important cultural practice. The novel *The River Between* (2015) depicts the initiation ceremonies undergone by people in the community. The novel explores the ritual aspect of circumcision and its importance as it marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. The individuals of the ethnic group considered that one who wanted to show his courage and manly spirit must go through this initiation rite. Waiyaki, the protagonist of the novel undergoes this ritual, and it becomes a crucial moment in his personal development and his eventual role as a leader within the community. The cultural practices with this ritual including the gathering of elders, the symbolic cutting of the foreskin, and the celebration, depicts that circumcision is not only a physical act but a spiritual and social one, marking the individual's entry into manhood and his assumption of adult responsibilities. The circumcision ceremony holds special spiritual importance. It connects the participants to their ancestors and confirms their identity as a member of the Gikũyũ community.

The way people see circumcision, whether they think it is just a superstition or a sacred ceremony, depends on how strongly they believe in it. Thiong'o talks about the importance of these rituals as,

> Circumcision was an important ritual to the tribe. It kept people together, bound the tribe. It was at the core of the social structure, and a something that gave meaning to a man's life.[1]

Similarly, Grace Ogot provides insights into the traditional life and culture of people of the Luo community, showcasing the challenges they faced amidst the clash of traditional, colonial, and modern influences. As circumcision ceremony was an important ritual in Gikũyũ community, cleansing ceremony holds significant cultural importance within the Luo community. The cleansing ceremony is a traditional ritual performed to purify individuals or communities from spiritual impurities or misfortunes. In *The Promised Land*, the ceremony serves as a crucial moment that highlights traditional beliefs and practices, shaping the characters' perceptions and actions. Nyapol gave birth to twins but the cleansing ceremony was not performed after the birth because Nyapol and her husband Ochola were leaving at distant from their homeland. Some of their friends were Moslems, and others were Christians and they did not have any belief in such rituals. Nyapol got scared because they did not do a certain ceremony. She thought that if she did not clean herself properly, her babies might die. She started complaining about small things, often mentioning hardship of living far from her people. Sometimes she cried a lot. She felt really bad about not doing the traditional custom. Eventually, Ochola wrote urgently to his brother, Abiero, asking him to bring some of Nyapol's in-laws to perform necessary rituals and relieve her from distress. The cleansing rite reflects how Luo tribe's cultural customs are strong and evident even in foreign land. It also shows that these cultural practices are necessary to keep the communities together and traditional knowledge and rituals alive.

Grace Ogot was highly regarded as a cultural leader not just in her Luo community but throughout Kenya. Besides her roles in nursing and journalism, Ogot is best known for her groundbreaking achievements as an author of short stories and novels, and her storytelling of Luo folktales. Oral tradition plays a significant role in Luo as well as Gikũyũ culture, with storytelling serving as a tool for transmitting history, wisdom, traditional and cultural values from one age group to the next. In her literary works Grace Ogot tries to connect vibrant and rich traditions of Luo history and folktales with the new and young generation of Kenya. Ogot first heard the ancient folktale

from her grandmother during their evening storytelling sessions in the elder's hut. The tale was about a chief's daughter named Oganda, whom a medicine man said that she had to be sacrificed to make rain fall. Grace Ogot once told Oladele Taiwo, who evaluates her writing in *Female Novelists of Modern Africa* that,

> If one day I can write, I shall write the story of Oganda so that other people can know she was sacrificed for the welfare of her people.[2]

By taking the inspiration from her grandmother's folktales Ogot wrote a short story 'The Rain Came' in her book *The Land Without Thunder*. The chief Lobong'o's willingness to send Oganda to sacrifice herself pacifying the ancestors reflects the deeply rooted customs and religious beliefs of the village. The people have a rich spiritual tradition characterised by beliefs in ancestral spirits, supernatural forces, and the interconnectedness of the natural world. Traditional practices such as prayers, sacrifices, and rituals are performed to appease the ancestors, seek blessings, and maintain harmony with the spiritual realm. Ogot's story reflects the oral tradition's role in preserving cultural practices and beliefs among the Luo people. For example, when the village faces a severe drought, the elders recall ancient rituals and prophecies passed down through generations to appease the gods and bring rain. This story, rooted in traditional customs and oral heritage, focuses on the plight of a young woman in a male-dominated society, depicting intense life-and-death circumstances. 'The Rain Came' stands as one of Ogot's best literary works, well-known for its exploration of cultural norms and its captivating story. Similar to Grace Ogot's style, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses traditional African storytelling techniques in his novels. In his books, characters frequently share stories verbally, passing on important knowledge and wisdom from one generation to the next. In *Weep Not, Child*, Nyokabi tells her son Njoroge tales about their ancestors and the history of their community. This helps Njoroge develop a strong sense of who he is and pride in his cultural heritage. Africans used storytelling as one of the most common form of preserving their history, traditional culture and ritual ceremonies.

It highlights how storytelling is important for motivating, and supporting the values of a community. Ogot was powerfully influenced by the rich oral traditions of Luo culture. This tradition is also evident in 'The Bamboo Hut, a short story from *Land Without Thunder*. The story of Mboga, the tribe's chief, who wished for a son, for more than 12 years to be the heir to the Kadibo peoples. The Bamboo Hut denotes the importance of religious beliefs, showcasing the community's social traditions and cultural heritage. Mboga, despite having sixteen daughters, desired a son to support him in his old age. With nine wives and the potential for more, this indicates a patriarchal society.

Ogot skillfully interweaves old and new elements in her stories, exploring traditional ways of living amidst modern urban landscapes. The majority of the stories in *Land Without Thunder* vividly depict the lives and customs of Kenyan locals, including indigenous elements like tribal names, religious practices, and traditional and cultural rituals. Evidently, Ogot's most important goal was to record, preserve, and pass on her ancestors' cultural legacy to future generations. Moreover, the short story 'The Green Leaves', present in the book *Land Without Thunder*, offers a view into the early Luo culture of pre-colonial East Africa. It explores the struggle between the traditional customs of the Luo society and the laws enforced by colonial authorities. The intervention of European rulers challenges the power of the clan's leader and this lead to growing disbelief among community members. Through this story, Ogot explores various themes including ethnic customs, cultural beliefs, sexual roles, greediness, notions of justice, and dynamics within families and relationships. The methods used by white-settlers to investigate crimes confuse the clan members, who are amazed by their seemingly magical abilities. The idea of conducting post-mortem examinations on deceased persons is viewed as strange or sacred by the tribes, and they believe it should remain uninterrupted. Clan elder Olielo highlights the difference between the legal systems of the prehistoric Luo society and those imposed by the white rulers. As Olielo said,

> Although our laws prohibit any wanton killing, thieves and adulterers we regard as animals. If anyone kills one of them he is not guilty of

> murder. But the white man's laws are different. According to his laws, if you kill a person because you find him stealing your cattle or sleeping in your wife's hut, you are guilty of murder—and therefore you must also be killed. Because he thinks his laws are superior to ours, we should handle him carefully. We have ancestors—the white man has none.[3]

Ancestor worship, rituals, ceremonies and conventional treatment methods are very important in African culture and spirituality. They help people stay connected to their traditions and show respect to their ancestors. Grace Ogot, as a nurse expressed her interest in the ongoing practice of using traditional cures for medical treatment in Kenya. While talking to Bernth Lindfors, Ogot said,

> Stories of African traditional medicine and of the medicine man against the background of modern science and medicine fascinated me.[4]

This interest inspired Ogot to write the novel *The Promised Land* along with other short stories 'The Old White Witch', 'The Hero', and 'Night Sister', all compiled in the volume *Land Without Thunder.* In *The Promised Land* the protagonist Ochola afflicted with a strange illness that cannot be treated by conventional medical treatment. As his condition worsens he decides to seek help from a traditional medicine practitioner. When Ogot talks about the Nyamwezi medicine man, she shows how they connect with spirits and witchcraft. She also explains that witchcraft is a way for people in African communities to gain power and respect. Normally, people visit a witch doctor or medicine man to find a cure for physical or mental problems. These healers are both feared and respected because they can control spirits and use their power to do harmful things if they want to. Ogot interprets these actions as symbolic fusion of traditional and modern perceptions, illustrating the complex interplay between traditional beliefs and modern healthcare practices. As Ogot says,

> Many of the stories I have told are based on day-to-day life… And in the final analysis, when the Church fails and the hospital fails, these people will always slip into something they trust, something within their own cultural background. It may appear to us mere superstition, but those who do believe in it do get healed. In day-to-day life in some communities in Kenya, both the modern and the traditional cures coexist.[5]

Similarly, such traditional cure, instance can be seen in *The River Between* when Muthoni suffers from worsening health after undergoing circumcision. Her aunt, Njeri, attempts to cure her using traditional herbs, but Muthoni's condition continues to deteriorate despite the treatment. Recognising that traditional medicine may not be effective for Muthoni, Waiyaki decides to seek modern medical help. He consults with Nyambura and together they make the decision to take Muthoni to the hospital for proper medical treatment. This narrative highlights the limitations of traditional medicine in treating certain ailments and the importance of seeking alternative solutions when conventional methods fail to provide relief. This description highlights the coexistence of modern and traditional healing practices in Kenyan communities.

The Promised Land, is not just about the argument between a traditional healer and a modern doctor, it is also about marriage and what wives are supposed to do for their husbands. The novel explores the complexities within marital relationships and the traditional ceremonies associated with marriage. The significant ritual related with marriage highlighted in the novel is the payment of bride price, symbolising the groom's appreciation to the bride's family and his commitment to the marriage. This custom is illustrated when Ochola and his family visited Nyapol's house three times, bringing four cows and five goats as gifts each time. However, during the third visit, when they brought extra cows, the women at Nyapol's house insulted Ochola's family. They said Ochola is not good-looking enough to marry their daughter, so, he must therefore pay compensation for his ugliness, extra cows on top of the usual dowry.[6]

Polygamy is another custom in Kenyan society. It is common for men to have more than one wife. In this society, women are often seen as belonging to their husbands and do not have the freedom to object to this custom. In the novel *Weep Not, Child,* Ngotho, one of the characters, has two wives who do not speak out against polygamy because they believe it is just how things are supposed to be and they accept it as a social custom. Another conflict between social customs and traditional value depicted in *The River Between* when Waiyaki and Nyambura's love faces opposition from their community due to

cultural and religious differences. Waiyaki, a leader and advocate for traditional beliefs, falls in love with Nyambura, the daughter of a Christian missionary, Joshua. The community views their relationship as a threat to tradition and Christianity, leading to tension and opposition. For example, when Waiyaki and Nyambura's relationship becomes known, it sparks controversy, with Kabonyi accusing Waiyaki of undermining tradition by pursuing Nyambura. Through the portrayal of marriage rituals, both the writers highlight the enduring influence of tradition on interpersonal relationships.

To conclude, the analysis of African cultural and traditional explorations in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Grace Ogot's select works reveal the depth and richness of African literary heritage. Through their stories, both authors skillfully depict various aspects of indigenous practices, rituals, and societal norms, offering insights into the complexities of African traditions. While Thiong'o's works often critique the impact of colonialism on traditional societies, Ogot's narratives explore themes of cultural heritage and familial traditions, with a particular focus on gender dynamics. Despite their differences in thematic emphasis and narrative style, both authors contribute significantly to the portrayal and preservation of African cultures in literature. The research paper highlights the importance of African culture and tradition and show how important their cultural history is and how difficult it is to keep their traditions alive when colonial forces try to change them.

Notes

[1] Wa Thiong'o Ngũgĩ, *The River Between,* Penguin Classics, New York, 2015. p. 66.

[2] Cengage Gale, *A Study Guide for Grace Ogot's 'The Rain Came'*, Cenegage Learning. Web. 27 July 2016. https://www.everand.com/book/385749941/A-Study-Guide-for-Grace-Ogot-s-The-Rain-Came.

[3] Grace Ogot, *Land Without Thunder*, East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi, 1988. p. 95.

[4] Bernth Lindfors, *Interview with Grace Ogot by World Literature Written in English*, Volume 18, 1979 - Issue1.https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17449857908588584

[5] Ibid.

[6] Grace Ogot, *The Promised Land*, East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi, 1966. p. 9.

North Indian Folk-Lore about Thieves and Robbers.—*By* Çarat Candra Mitra, *Corresponding Member of the Anthropological Society of Bombay.*

[Read July 1894.]

Every profession, not excepting even that of the light-fingered gentry, has its gods and goddesses, to whom the persons following that profession pay their homage for success. The vegetable-sellers of Bihār have their gods. The Kahārs (कहार) or palankeen-bearers, and the Mallāhs (मल्लाह), or boatmen of Bihār, also worship particular deities who, they believe, watch over their welfare and safety. Indian thieves and robbers, and the rest of the marauding fraternity, have also particular goddesses whom they worship in the belief that success or otherwise in their pilfering expeditions depends on the favors or frowns of those female deities. To this end, they take care to propitiate the said goddesses by offering up *pūjā* in the shape of sweets, cereals, and, sometimes even animal sacrifices, before starting on their expeditions. Curiously enough, a female deity is invariably found to be the tutelary patroness of the Indian robbers and thieves. She is known in different parts of Northern India, as the goddess Dēvī or Kālī in her various forms and under various names. In Bengal, thieves and robbers are supposed to enjoy the special protection of Kālī. In the North-Western Provinces and the Pañjāb, she is also worshipped by the light-fingered gentry under the name of Dēvī, or Mātā. The Ṭhags, who raised the profession of robbery by throttling and strangulation into a semi-religious cult, also worshipped this Dēvī or Mātā, to whom they invariably paid their devotions before starting on their marauding expeditions, and from whom they drew omens portending the success or otherwise of their undertaking. Colonel Sleeman, well-known as the Superintendent of the operations for the Suppression of Ṭhagī and Ḍakaitī in India, has given detailed information of the various rites practised by the Ṭhags, and of their superstitions, in his work entitled "*Ramaseeana, or the Secret Language of the Thugs.*" The curious enquirer may also find additional information on the

subject, and gain peeps into the inner mysteries of a Ṭhag's daily life in a work of fiction entitled "*The Confessions of a Thug*," by that well-known Anglo-Indian novelist, Colonel Meadows Taylor.

In Bengal, thieves and robbers are believed to enjoy the special protection of the goddess Kālī. Up to the time that the British rule was established on a firm footing in Bengal, ḍakaitī and robbery were rife in that part of the country. Before the ḍakāits started on their expeditions they used to offer up *pūjā* to the goddess to ensure their success, and, after returning from a foray, used to make her an offering of part of the booty by way of thanksgiving. It is said that, in those days, the temple of the goddess Kālī at Kālīghāṭ, south of Calcutta, and the temple[1] of the goddess Citreçvarī —a form of Kālī—at Chitpore in the Northern Suburbs of Calcutta, were much resorted to by ḍakāits and robbers who used to worship their patron-deity there.

The shrine of the deity Tāraknāth—an incarnation of Çiva—at Tārakēçvar (Tarkessur) in the Huglī District, has from time immemorial been regarded as a very important place of pilgrimage by the Hindūs of Bengal. At the present time, a branch line of the East Indian Railway has been opened from the Sheoraphulī station of that railway to Tārakēçvar, which conveys the pilgrims safely to that shrine. But, in the pre-railway days, when the *Pax Britannica* had not been firmly established, almost all the pilgrims had to travel thither on foot or by bullock-carts. These pilgrims, in many cases, used to take with them rich and costly articles for offerings to the lord Tāraknāth. These excited the cupidity of the marauding fraternity; and a colony of ḍakāits had accordingly established itself near a village named Singur —now a station on the Tārakēçvar Branch Railway—which was situated close to the highway which led to the shrine of Tārakēçvar. These freebooters ostensibly led the lives of peaceful agriculturists by day time, but during the night, they would sally forth from their homes, armed with *lāṭhīs*, and prowling about the highway, would rob belated travellers of their belongings, and often murder them in order to get at their valuables. A place named *Kaikālār māṭ* (the maidān of Kaikālā—a village in that neighbourhood) was the scene of many of these atrocities; and, in those days, the very mention of the name of that place was enough to send a thrill of horror through the hearts of the pilgrims and wayfarers. These ḍakāits are said to have enjoyed the protection of a goddess Kālī whose temple is situated in the aforesaid village of Singur, and exists there to this day. They used to worship here before starting on their plundering expeditions

[1] In this shrine, human sacrifices, it is said, used to be offered to this goddess in days gone by.

and, on their return, used to make valuable offerings out of the rich booty secured. This goddess was and is still known as *ḍākātē Kālī* or the goddess Kālī of the ḍakāits, and enjoys the reputation of having been the favorite deity of those marauders of Singur.

It is said that 'there is honour even among thieves,' and the *Ḍakāits* of Bengal were not wanting in this respect. Before they committed ḍakaitī in a person's house, they used to send an anonymous letter to the good man thereof informing him of their intention to do so. One night, they would gather together in armed bands, and, with lighted torches, invade the house. After reaching the place, they used to indulge in sword-play which they called *ḍhālī pāk khēlā* yelling loudly all the time. Thereafter they attacked the house. If they saw any danger of being captured, or if any of them got killed, they used to bawl out *māchī paṛechē* 'a fly has got caught,' and then cleared out of the place as fast as their heels could carry them.

In the Pañjāb also, the thieves and robbers used to sacrifice goats or sheep before, or made offerings of sweetmeats to, their Dēvī or goddess, in order to propitiate her and obtain the boon from her that they might be successful throughout the year in their plundering expeditions. On the occasions of such worship fairs were held. One such fair is held even at the present day at the village of Mansā Dēvī, four miles from Caṇḍīgaṛh, on the way to Kālkā, in the Ambālā District. The following account of this fair appeared in the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore, and was quoted in the Calcutta *Statesman* of Wednesday, the 18th April 1894.

'*An Ancient Thieves' Fair.*—Another Fair has been held in the Ambālā district at Mansā Dēvī, four miles from Caṇḍīgaṛh on the way to Kālkā. Owing to the zemindars being engaged in cutting their harvests, and the Hardwār and Amritsar Baisākhī Fairs being on at the same time, the gathering was unusually small. For all that, however, there were some 20,000 people present. *This was in days gone by essentially a Thieves' Fair, in which the robbers made their offerings of goats, sheep, or sweetmeats at the shrine of their* dēvī *or goddess, and prayed that they might be successful throughout the year in their various plundering expeditions.* At the present time the ceremony is a novel and pleasing sight. The men and women are all dressed in their gorgeous holiday attire, and, having made their offerings, they gather together in lots and sing, dance, and make merry, generally for a couple of days when they leave for their homes after a dip in the well-known Gaggar, a stream which appears to be sacred to the hill people.'

In Bengal, it is popularly believed that in many cases thieves elude detection and capture because the goddess Kālī has granted them the

boon of protection from all danger *cōr'dēr upar Kālīr bar āchē.* Thieves almost always commit thefts during the dark half of the moon —the worship of the goddess Kālī taking place on the 15th day of the waning period of the moon. There is a popular superstition amongst the Bengalis that if a male child be born on the *amāvasyā*, or the 15th day of the dark half of the moon, the child will become a thief, as that day is consecrated to Kālī—the goddess of thieves and robbers.

Bengali and Bihārī burglars (*sindhēl cōr*) are said to get their iron hooks (*sindh-kāṭī*)—instruments with which they make holes in the walls of buildings for the purpose of effecting their entrance therein, and which are the prototypes of the 'jemmy' of European burglars—manufactured in the following way. A burglar secretly goes to an iron-smith's (*lohār* of Bihār and *kāmār* of Bengal) shop during the night, and there deposits a piece of iron, and some pice by way of wages. In the morning, the iron-smith, finding the iron and the pice, understands that they had been left there by some thief with a view to have the same turned into a 'jemmy.' The ironsmith manufactures it accordingly and, during the night, deposits it at the exact spot where the iron had been left by the thief. The thief comes thither secretly during the night and takes it away. Hence is the origin of the Bengali saying *cōrē kāmārē dyăkhā nāi* or *cōrē kāmārē sākṣāt nāi* (there is no interview between a thief and a blacksmith). This saying is often cited when speaking of a person who gains his object or performs a certain act without having a personal interview with the person who has the power to grant that object, or to whom he is in duty bound to perform that act. Hence it is popularly believed that thieves and burglars never commit thefts in ironsmiths' houses, out of gratitude to the latter. It is another instance of 'honour among thieves.'

Thieves play an important part in the proverbial philosophy of the Bengali people. When one person of bad character is likened to another of the same description, we say *cōrē cōrē mās'tuta bhāi* or thieves are cousins (mother's sister's sons) to one another. When one person defrauds another of his ill-gotten gains, the former is said to practise *cōrēr upar baṭ'pāṛī* or fraud on a thief. *Cōr palālē buddhī bāṛhē* or 'shutting the stable door after the steed is stolen,' is applied to persons who become wise after the event. Thieves, when caught red-handed, are often thrashed within an inch of their very lives. Hence *cōrēr mār* or 'a beating administered to thieves,' is proverbially synonymous with a severe thrashing. If a person is severely thrashed, it is said of him *tā kē cōrēr mār merechē* or that he has been thrashed like a thief. A child possessed of mischievous habits is often dubbed with the pet sobriquet of *ḍākāt* or dacoit. If a person seeks for an opportunity

of doing a certain act and gets it at last, it is said of him *cōr cāy bhāṅgā bēṛā* 'a thief seeks for a broken fencing.' A thief may elude detection for some time, but he is sure to be caught one day. This has given rise to the popular saying *cōrēr pā̃c din, sādhēr ek din*, or a thief may escape scot-free for five days, but the good man of the house will catch him one day. Thieves are always artful dodgers, and, in allusion to their artfulness, the Bengalis say *cōr bidyā baṛa bidyā, jadi nā paṛē dharā* or that the profession of stealing is a paying one, so long as the thief is not caught. A person who steals trifles is spoken of as being a *chiñc'kē cōr*. If sound advice is given to a person, but he does not act up to it, the proverb *cōrā nā çunē dharmmēr kāhinī* (preach the gospel to the devil, and he will not hear you) is applied to him. A thief cannot be detected except with the assistance of a thief. Hence the proverb *cōrēr sandhān jāsu*, or 'set a thief to catch a thief.' A servant or any other menial, who is notorious for his thievish propensities, is often spoken of as being a *cōrēr sardār*, or 'chief among thieves' or 'arch-thief.' If a person, without making any attempt at concealment, deprives another of a thing or otherwise defrauds him, the former is said to commit *dinē ḍākātī*, or 'robbery by broad daylight.' A Bengali bridegroom is often likened to a thief *bar nā cōr* because the former has to put up patiently with all sorts of liberties which the female members of the bride's family take with him on the day of his marriage, just as a thief, when caught, patiently suffers the maltreatment which he receives at the hands of his captors. Or this saying may refer to the form of marriage by capture prevailing in primitive communities, whereby a person has *to steal or carry away by force* a woman before he can marry her. The saying *cōr kē balē curī kar'tē, gṛhastha kē balē sābadhān hatē* is often applied to a person who blows hot and cold in the same breath, that is to say, who tells a person to do a certain act with respect to another person, and, at the same time, tells the latter to beware of the former.

A Note on Sarat Chandra Mitra's 'North Indian Folk-Lore about Thieves and Robbers'

Ranjana Ray

Sarat Chandra Mitra was a renowned folklorist and was the first to chair the newly formed separate department of Anthropology in Calcutta University in 1921. This was the first department of Anthropology in India and Asia. The department was started by the then Vice Chancellor Sir Asutosh Mookerjee in 1918 as a part of the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture in Calcutta University. In the year 1920 a separate department was formed for Anthropology.

Sarat Chandra Mitra was born in 1863 at a place known as Hogulkuria, a village in the present day Southern Kolkata. Since the area was managed by the East India Company as a leaseholder, Sarat Chandra Mitra had all the facility for contemporary urban education and employment. His father, Narasingha Chandra Mitra, was in legal profession and was legal adviser to Hathwa Raj principality in Bihar. The professional activities of the family induced in Sarat Chandra Mitra deep interest for education and contemporary culture in India. Sarat Chandra Mitra took English literature for his Bachelor and Master's degree and later took Bachelor in Law degree. However, S. C. Mitra's literary interest covered subjects like history, ethnography, anthropology, archaeology and above all, oral tradition of rural India, the folklore. He introduced folklore in Socio-Cultural part of Anthropology. He had done intensive fieldwork in Bengal, Bihar and other rural areas in India. His travel for his profession as a lawyer in Chapra bar and as manager of Hathwa state in Bihar took him to close contact with rural people and

he utilised the opportunity for his study of folk culture. More than four hundred articles were written by S. C. Mitra. Out of these Bengal's folklores, maxims and riddles still serve as examples of pioneering field based work.

Present gleaning is taken from S. C. Mitra's article, 'North Indian Folk-Lore about Thieves and Robbers' which he presented orally in the meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in July 1894 and published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Vol. LXIV (1), 1895, pp. 25-29). He collected the folk sayings and maxims about thieves and robbers in North India. I supposed he referred to areas in India located north of peninsular part of India. However, areas mentioned in the article are Northwestern provinces, Punjab, Bihar and Bengal. The article is written in a very enjoyable language. No doubt English was his favourite mode of expression. Mitra used an endearing term for the thieves and robbers as the 'light fingered gentry'. He begins by mentioning about the Gods and Goddesses who are the protectors of various professions. In case of the pilfering creeds there are mainly Goddesses who protect them and bring success or failure to their profession of stealing and robbery. He pointed out that the tutelary Goddesses for thieves and robbers are female in gender, *Kali* in Bengal and *Devi* or *Mata* in Punjab and Northwestern provinces. Though Mitra had not mentioned but could it be a case of gender discrimination even among the celestial beings in case patronage to certain specific chosen career? These deities are worshipped in various forms at different places by their devotees. Mention is made of Colonel Sleeman, who played a great role in suppressing the 'Thuggees'. He wrote on various beliefs and practices of Thuggees in his book on secret languages of Thuggees, the robbers, who strangulated the victims. Similarly mention is made of the novel on the daily life of the Thuggees, written by Colonel Meadows Taylor. Mitra mentioned that in Bengal, Kali at Kalighat, southern Kolkata and at Chitpur in northern Kolkata were the patron deities of the contemporary thieves and robbers. He had also mentioned about the pilgrims and their plight on their journey to the temple of Tarakeswar in the pre-railway days. Mitra mentioned of the Kali temple at the village

Singur, located near to Tarakeswar which was patronised by the dacoits, who robbed the pilgrims travelling to Tarakeswar with valuable offerings for Lord Shiva after the God had fulfilled their prayers. The dacoits said to have offered human sacrifice to the 'dacaite' Kali at Singur for success in robbery. Goddess Kali is still worshipped at Kalighat, Chitpur and Singur with pomp and grandeur by general public, if not by the thieves and robbers only. At present a few of the erstwhile 'dacaite' Kali are kept chained inside the temple.

As an example for honour among the thieves and robbers, Mitra mentioned that the targeted household was warned before raid by letters or messages. This may sound romantic in the writings of famous novelist Bankim Chandra's *Devi Choudhurani* but in reality is quite fearsome. I remember of an incident related to one of my former Ph. D. lady students in Anthropology. In early 1980s, she went for fieldwork in a forested area and was staying at one of her informant's house. One evening she found the members of the house were hiding valuable items of their house. They informed her that there was a warning that the house will be raided by dacoits that night. My scholar was from the most posh area of South Calcutta and was frightened, although the householders assured her that the robbers will not harm her. Mobile phone was not in access to her. However, the house was spared that night. The concept of honour among the robbers seems to be still present in isolated corners of Bengal.

Mitra gave example of 'Ancient thieves' fair. He mentioned about fairs held at the village of Manasa Devi, near Kalka, Chandigarh, and Punjab. The thieves and robbers offered sacrifice to the Devi and the fair was held on the occasion. Recently, I came to know about a ritualistic worship and fair among the Bhil tribes living in a remote area in Rajasthan. The Bhils, similar to many other tribes in India, were designated as a criminal tribe by the British Colonials' Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. This was because of their armed resistance against British rule, raiding the tax-collectors and such other activities. Before going to any action the Bhils often appeased *Ban Mata*, the Goddess, who is the local representation of Amba Mata/ Devi Durga/ Kali. One of my

informants was taken to a small Bhil temple in the middle of the night of Navratri, last year by Ghasiram, an important member of Bhil tribe from the village Kelwara, located at the foot of Kumbhalgarh fort, to see a ritual, which the tribe usually performed in earlier days before an operation. Even now a day, only members of Bhil tribe take part in it. However, the informant was allowed to watch the ritual, may be because of the fact that he went from the far eastern state of West Bengal to study their customs. They offered goods to the deity and performed dances with ancient weapons taken out of an ancient stone-chest. At the end, fair and feast were held. There was no invasion carried out afterward by the Bhil. It is a ritual remembering of the past only.

The proverbs and maxims of Bengal mentioned by S. C. Mitra in the article is still in use in the state, may be with a twist in the original connotation. Thieves and robbers were rascals who had some soft space in the heart of common people of Bengal. In conclusion, it may be said that Sarat Chandra Mitra graced the chair of the department of Anthropology with a deep understanding of Society and Culture of India vis-a-vis Bengal.

Feminist Methodologies for International Relations, by Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern, Jacqui True, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Methods are the epitome to define and justify the theory and structural design of the research. International Relations (IR) as the formal discipline, considering its existence since antiquity, is relatively new. Feminist perspective in International Relations has not established the mainstream epoch in the field of dominant theories. This book is one of the few attempts at theorising and designing methods to study feminism in International Relations. The book begins with the description of contributors and acknowledgement. Journey to the book is found in its acknowledgement note. This is divided into three parts; First, methodological conversations between feminist and non-feminist in IR, second, Methods for feminist International Relations and third, Methodologies for Feminist International Relations. All three parts have been categorised in themes and accordingly authors have made their tremendous contributions towards the course of defining feminist methodologies in International Relations. First part has been contributed by J. Ann Tickner, Marysia Zalewski and S. Laurel Weldon; Second part has methods defined by Carol Cohn, Annica Kronsell, Bina D'Costa, Tami Jacoby and Maria Stern; Third part has Christine Sylvester, Fiona Robinson and Brooke A. Ackerly and Jacqui True with concluding remarks by the Editors. Common to all three sections is the urge of contributors to discuss aspects and interrelatedness in the understanding of ontology, methodology, epistemology, and method to understand feminist approaches in International Relations. Scholarly engagements are based on qualitative study which runs parallel with traditional ontology of IR concepts like state, military, conflict and international institutions. They, through their methods also address, persisting inequalities in global politics with agendas

like race, class, ethnicity etc. This publication has intended to cover fundamental theoretical concepts like defining ontology, epistemology, methods and methodologies which becomes the theory categorisation of upcoming parts of the book.

Part One of Cambridge University Press Publication has justified its introductory chapters by deliberating upon the existing dominant IR conversations surrounding Feminism in the discipline of International Relations. It finely depicted the unaccepted need to define or construct a different feminist method in the discipline of IR, considering the existing sufficient empirical dominant methods. The question that triggered Tickner is why need a different method? Why do not you use mainstream methodologies? One part of the book clarifies feminists ask questions which are neither appropriated nor asked by mainstream thinkers. Which has somehow disregarded mere use of positivist methods and brought a post positivist approach to understand feminist research questions. Methods used by feminists are so diverse to have been accommodated by social scientific approach. How can the question so embedded against the mainstream understanding be understood using one framework of methodological design? Zalewski has followed upon the same by using the idea of 'Haunting and the Sociological Imagination' by Derrida and Gordon, and 'methodology getting lost' by Lather, also borrowed some from French feminist Luce Irigaray. It depicts the refusal of feminist approaches in IR which is considered as the most underrated and most tested concept. It has taken into consideration how feminist methods have been asked to be fit in the lens of accepted academic frameworks. Even if feminist methods are taken seriously, what exactly could it contribute to the discipline? Conversations between feminists and non-feminists scholars is the stage of realisation that it is the time for feminist methodology of its own.

Here Cynthia Enloe (2001) is cited with "Conclusions should not sound too satisfied, all the edges rounded off".

Concepts of understanding gender in International Relations is understood by non-feminists as mere normative discourse whereas feminists define a legit social, political and ethical dilemma. Feminists, through this book, try to deconstruct the power and hierarchy of mainstream methods in the discipline of International Relations. S. Laurel Weldon has spoken in her chapter 'Inclusion and Understanding' that feminists in the field of International Relations have to take gendered perspectives seriously. This is said on the account of not merely adding a new perspective to the discipline but this somehow diminishes the marginalised perspective of the theorisation. Weldon has propounded a collective feminist account of science, which is developed in the backdrop of criticising feminists on merely critiquing the mainstream and not developing anything on the constructivist account. Weldon has tried to have theorised it by adding pragmatist approach to theorising scientific collective using John Dewey's work and also listing its drawbacks on how and why it could be used in developing a feminist approach in International Relations and why not. This is a very unique analysis and comparison that remains insightful to the developing feminist framework of knowledge. Her work in this book lists feminist methods of inclusion that is seen to have defined features of how a comprehensive method on inclusive feminist approach could be charted out.

Book *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*, has addressed that feminist methods are used to evaluate questions of state, security, wars etc. before formalisation of the discipline. Methods used by scholars in part two of this book is the deconstruction of the methods used by scholars like Carol Cohn, Annica Kronsell, Bina D'Costa,

Tami Jacoby and Maria Stern in their research. Chapters in this section of the book have tried to decode the research journey to develop and design a qualitative framework on feminist research in the discipline of International Relations. The space that a researcher occupies in the field is only about her thirst for intellectual inquiry and it is beyond political, ontological, epistemological and other preconceptions. This is to define that setting mainstream methods in the subjective understanding like gender is difficult when asked to have followed mainstream set of methods. Otherwise they are not seen as valid to produce authentic research. To which C. Cohn has shared her research journey in the US military camps, cold war and Gulf war fieldwork gendered analysis with tremendous outcome-benefit that gave a new perspective to the general understanding.

Set methods are put to question by feminists in each and every form of knowledge as status-quo. Examples produced remain insightful like A. Kronsell's in the chapter 'Methods for studying silences: gender analysis in institutions of hegemonic masculinity' has questioned how a researcher studies an inherent form of silences on gender in the discipline of International Relations. One has to opt for deconstructing the routine, patterns and format to build upon the feminist knowledge by deconstructing hidden and explicit hierarchies embedded and institutionalised. This has been explained by D'Costa's methods in research study on security in Bangladesh and partition and Tami Jacoby work in Israel. Scholars like Stern, Costa and Jacoby have pointed out towards deducing research and methods to have produced a sense of 'self-reflection' in research methodologies when studying silences and politicised agenda of margins.

Feminists have been foundationally very clear on the concept to build upon the narrative of how they perceive IR. Normativity is an

alliance rather than the curse as has been posed upon by scholars of mainstream IR. In the chapter 'Methods of Feminist normative theory: a political ethic of care for international relations' by F. Robinson, C. Sylvester (2002) has been quoted in the beginning like "All forms of feminist theorizing are normative, in the sense that they help us to question certain meanings and interpretations in IR theory, because many are concerned, says Jane Flax (1987) with 'Gender relations' …how we think or do not think…about them" (or avoid thinking about gender). Respective research design has been presented by feminists as has been followed, evolved and deconstructed through their course of academic journey. The 'how question' has been defined by part three of the book. This can be deduced by the methods implied and evolved in the processes of their research like Sylvester when researching art and IR.

International Relations as an academic discipline has reshaped and reconstructed its boundaries by questioning and deconstructing its meanings and horizons. This can be understood by security-insecurity discourse, normative-descriptive discourse etc. with Sylvester reading International Relations through the prism of art is another deviant to the 'war-state-security' dominated discipline. Gendering International Relations is a thriving movement redefining traditional and constrained parameters of gender. Contributors of the book have done their best to have accommodated gender in the discipline and did not try to redefine it by constructing a new framework. The subtle and underlying multi-sited, multi-dimensional and multi-method approach to study gender stated in each chapter of the book. There is a constant reminder on 'moving beyond the established mainstream agendas' and the need to develop feminist methodologies in the discipline of International Relations. The best part about the book and authors is the acceptance

to the undefined, decoded, deconstructed and evolving feminist methodologies in International Relations. This is a piece of relief and courage to the existing and early researches in the discipline. As a researcher, I might not be able to find a definite model in this book, but will be able to know that the process is an ongoing and self-reflective project. Where methods could be undertaken from many frames but adding the feminist approach is important for the subject and the concept.

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Jammu and Kashmir

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

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

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

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.

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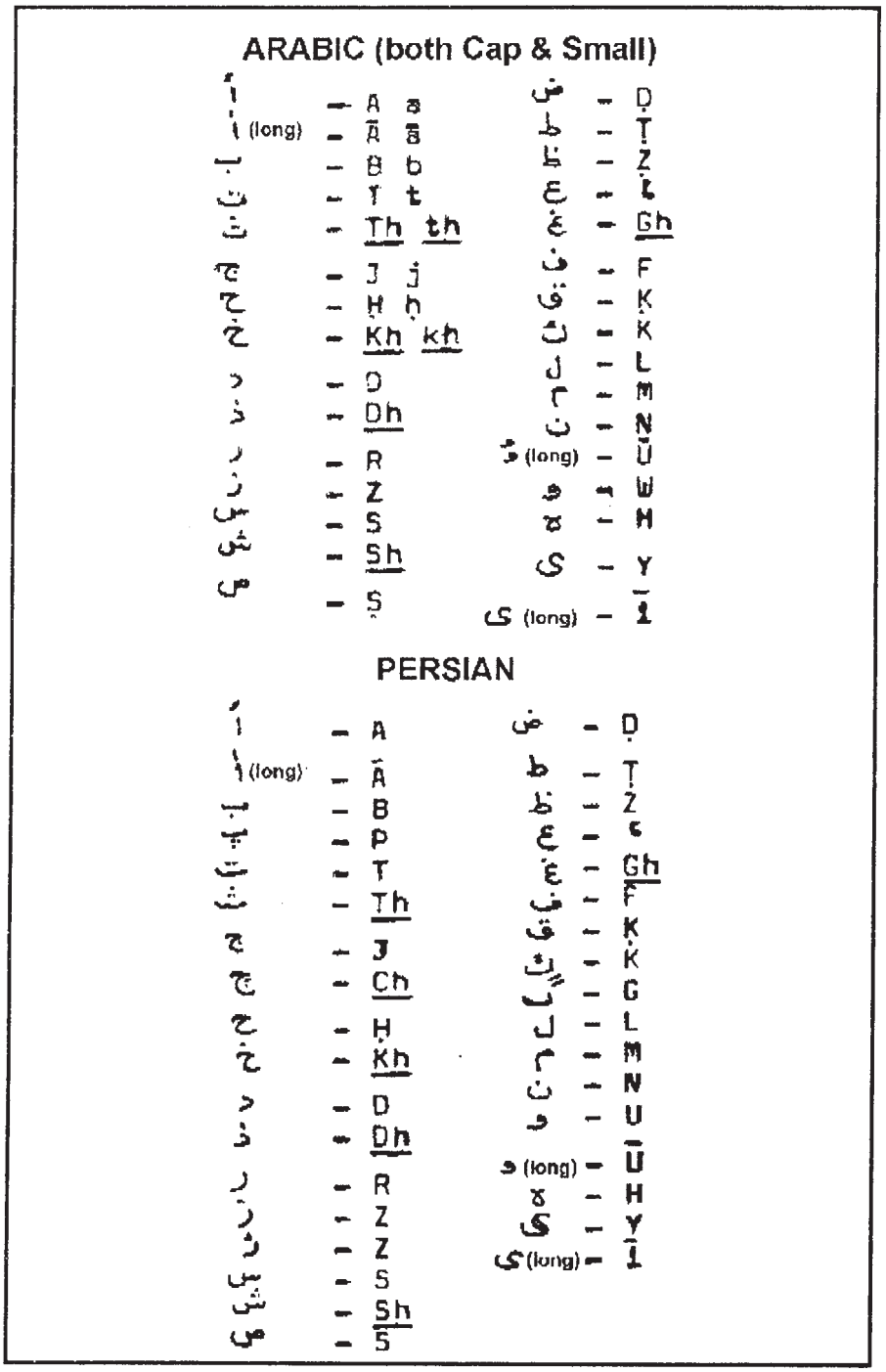
SANSKRIT

आ = ā	ई = ī
ऊ = ū	ऋ = ṛ
ङ = ṅa	च = ca
छ = cha	ञ = ña
ट = ṭa	ठ = ṭha
ड = ḍa	ढ = ḍha
ण = ṇa	श = śa
ष = ṣa	ं = ṁ

TIBETAN

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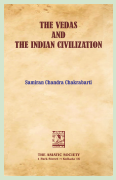

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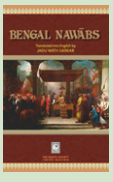

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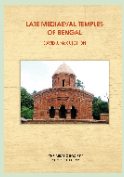

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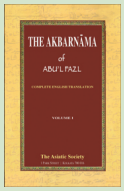

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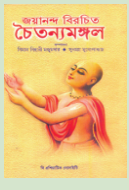

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It will flourish, if naturalists, chemists, antiquaries, philologers and men of science, in different parts of Asia, will commit their observations to writing, and send them to the Asiatick Society at Calcutta; it will languish, if such communications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

Sir William Jones
on the publication of The Asiatic Society