



## **ORIGIN OF GOND STATE IN EASTERN NARMADANCHAL REGION: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS**

**ABHILASHA GOUR**

Associate Professor of History  
Dayanand Girls PG College  
Kanpur India

### **Abstract:**

By Eastern Narmadanchal, we mean the area which is to the east of the Narmada river. We also know Narmada as 'Reva', it is a very important river of central India. It is the third place among the rivers of South India flowing in the interior of India after Krishna and Godavari. This river has contributed immensely in making the state of Madhya Pradesh fertile, hence it is also called 'Lifeline of Madhya Pradesh'. Its origin is from a place called Amarkantak in the Maikal hill range whose height is 3500 feet above sea level. It is presently in Pushprajgarh Tehsil of Shahdol District. Maikal mountain, it connects Vindhya and Satpura together like two halves of a tongs and from here all three flow Son, Johila and Narmada. Narmada in its 1312 km long course flows for 1077 km in Shahdol, Mandla, Jabalpur, Narsinghpur, Hoshangabad, Khandwa and Khargone districts of Madhya Pradesh, after which it flows for 74 km touching the Maharashtra border, of which 34 km is in Madhya Pradesh. Along and for 40 km forms the border of Maharashtra with Gujarat. The flow length in Gujarat is 161 km and then it drains into the Gulf of Khambhat. The total water storage area of Narmada is 98,799 sq. km, in which 88.2% area is in Madhya Pradesh, 3.31% in Maharashtra and 8.67% area is in Gujarat. Forty one big and small rivers meet in Narmada. Out of which 19 tributaries join the Narmada from the right bank and 22 rivers from the left bank. It is also interesting that only 2 rivers join the

Narmada in Gujarat. And the major 39 rivers are of Madhya Pradesh which provide water to Narmada.<sup>1</sup>

**Geographical Back ground:**

Its alluvium is a narrow and long basin and the Narmada valley is a rift valley. It flows in west and north-west direction for 83 km from its origin, then near Dindori, the course of the river becomes circular and the river bed is generally 2 to 3 meters below the upper surface of the ground. And in some parts the depth is up to 12 meters. After 140 km from its point of origin, the Narmada suddenly turns to the south where the Barnar river joins it, the Narmada forms a coil around the city of Mandla, the tributary of the Narmada flowing from the Behar plateau near the city is barren. Meets. Further, the river falls about 15 meters down on Dhumadhar Pratap situated near Jabalpur city, till entering the alluvial valley from Dhuadhar Falls, Narmada flows through a valley of narrow marble rocks, here is Bhedaghat. After crossing this valley, the river enters the fertile alluvial valley and turns towards the west. Here the stream of the river is relatively wide and the depth of the valley is 15 meters. The river level difference between Jabalpur and Hoshangabad cities is 104 m. The Sher, Shakkar and Dudhi rivers are important in Narsinghpur district. The Tawa is the largest of the tributaries of Hoshangabad district. Further from Handia, Nemavar, Omkareshwar, Khandwa district, the Narmada river enters the Mandleshwar plain. After Vadodara, Bharuch district, it merges into the Arabian Sea forming a basin extending up to 21 km at the mouth of the Gulf of Khambhat. There are 30 dams on this river with bountiful flow, of which Sardar Sarovar and Maheshwar are big dam schemes. Bargi Dam, Indira Sagar Project, Omkareshwar Multipurpose Project are the major ones.

Its eastern Narmadanchal region is that fertile plain area which is situated in the mountain ranges of Vindhyachal and Satpura, here there is very dense forest, natural diversity, richness, horror and tenderness are spread in this zone in its best form<sup>2</sup>. Narmada and its tributaries provided water to this fertile plain with great kindness, due to which natural prosperity and fertility developed in abundance. The history of any region is greatly influenced by its geography. This vast area spread in the middle of India has always been influenced by its geographical location. If calculated from the beginning, then this deep forest province gave its natural richness on the one hand and problems on the other hand to the Gond kingdom of about 175 years.

---

<sup>1</sup> Misra, Suresa (2007). Tribal Ascendancy in Central India: The Gond Kingdom of Garha. Manak Publications

<sup>2</sup> James Princep F.R.S., ed. (1837). The journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. 6 part 2, Calcutta :Bishop's College Press,1832-1936. Russell, Robert Vane (1916). The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India. Gutenberg.

The wide area in which this state was spread can be divided into the following geographical heads:-

1. Narmada Son Valley
2. Region of Vindhya
3. Malwa Plateau
4. Mahanadi Basin
5. Plateau region of Baghelkhand
6. Nagpur Ground
7. Maikal's Plateau

1. Narmada Son Valley- This is the second largest geographical region of Madhya Pradesh, it is in the form of rift valley, it is spread from north-east to west from 86,000 sq.km. Narmada Son, which is spread from west to north-east, has narrow fertile valleys, in which Son valley is small and narrow, this valley is 27.30% part of Madhya Pradesh in total. Narmada Valley is a very large rift valley. Its extension is from 220.30' North latitude to 230.45' North latitude and 740.0' East longitude to 810.30' East longitude. In the north of these valleys are Vindhya, Bhandar and Kaimur and in the south are the high reaches of Satpura Maikal. The width of these valleys ranges from about 20 km to 120 km. Its western part is made up of igneous rocks of the Deccan trap and its eastern part is made up of Vindhya and Dharwad rocks. Here the maximum average daily temperature is in the month of May and the minimum is in the month of December. The average rainfall ranges from 142 cm to 125 cm, which comes from both the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal branches, apart from Narmada and Son, the major rivers of this region are Tawa, Dudhi and Shakkar. Due to the pleasant climate, this land always attracts mankind. This area with deep black soil is extremely fertile. The sown area is fertile, 50% or more. Narmada valley is a major area of wheat production. Apart from rice, groundnut, jowar, gram, tur, Zaid crops are also produced. In this area rich in forest wealth, there are forests like Sagon, Sal, Tendupatta, Semal Bija which are called tropical deciduous forests.

This is the central most important part of our study area. Jabalpur, Narsinghpur, Hoshangabad, Harda districts of present Madhya Pradesh are included in this.

Two capitals of our study area i.e. Eastern Narmadanchal are located in this region. Garha and Chauragarh. While on the one hand the Garha was situated on the plains of the northern bank of the Narmada river, on the other hand it was established on a high mountain range of Satpura in the southern bank of the Chauragarh river. Chauragarh being high and relatively inaccessible was its specialty, which not only served as a shelter in times of crisis. Rather, the treasury was also protected here. The area around both the Garha and Chauragarh areas was fertile, making these areas self-sufficient.

2. Region of Vindhya- Eastern part of North East of Narmadanchal state which includes Rewa, Satna, Sidhi, Shahdol, Anuppur, Singrauli, Panna, Chhatarpur,

Tikamgarh, Datia, eastern part of Umaria, Katni and Damoh of present Madhya Pradesh. It is spread in the central north of Madhya Pradesh from 23°10' North Latitude and 78°04' to 82°18' East Longitude. Its total area is 10.37% of Madhya Pradesh. The word Vindhya is derived from the root 'Vidha' (to pierce), in fact this mountain range is that broken chain of hills which is the eastern boundary of the Deccan Trap going south-west which passes through Sagar Panna.

This mountain range divides north and south India. The Greek geographer Ptolemy also called it the boundary between northern and peninsular India, it blocks the strong winds coming from the south. Its mountains are basically made of limestone, even precious diamond is found in these ranges. Their average height is 752 m and the extent is up to 1086 km. Geographers have determined the age of some parts of this range up to 172 million years, while the Himalayas are only 4-5 million years old. The Sonar, Tons, and Bayerma tributaries of the Ken river flow in this area. The average rainfall is around 125 cm. The forests are dry deciduous in which teak, sal, bamboo are found. According to Dr. Pramila Kumar, 15 to 20 percent of the land is covered with forests and there is abundance of bamboo in it. Among the wild animals are bison, wild buffalo, spotted deer, leopard, black buck and sambar, the white lion here is world famous. In flat plateaus, the sown area ranges from 45 to 56 percent, but in hilly and sloping regions, this average falls down to 25 percent. Wheat, gram, rice (in areas with high rainfall), tur and jowar are the main crops.

Due to its connection with the Ganges-Jamuna plain, the Mughal armies could easily reach here from Kada-Manikpur. The important fort on the top of Vindhya mountain was Singorgarh. The forest area and hilly region of Vindhya provided security to this fort and Damoh, Bustarkheda, Hindoria, Bandakpur areas which were fertile areas ensured food security of Singorgarh.

3. Malwa Plateau- A triangular plateau forms the north-western boundary of the eastern Narmadanchal state, its position in the western part from 20°17' North latitude to 25°08' North latitude and 74°02' East longitude to 79°02' East longitude. Bhopal, Raisen, Vidisha and Sagar districts are related to the study area. It has Vindhya range on one side and Mandasaur in the north and Sagar district on the eastern side. In the northern part of the Narmada, it is a mild sloping plateau with a maximum height of 500-600 meters. The southern boundary of this plateau is more sloping. This entire plateau is a layered structure made of basalt stone on top of it, it is also called Deccan Tape. Its thickness ranges from 600 to 1500 meters. This black soil is very fertile. Chambal, Kshipra, Betwa, Sonar, Kali Sindh, Parvati, Gambhir Newaj, Tendoni are the major rivers of this region. The average rainfall is up to 125 cm. Teak, bamboo forests are found and jowar, wheat, gram, oilseeds are the main produce. Cotton is also grown in the black flaky soil made of lava, which is about 28 percent of the geographical area of Madhya Pradesh. This part has always been described in the

history of North India, but the Garha Empire could not rule for long on this land beyond Vindhya<sup>3</sup>.

4. Mahanadi Basin- This basin is similar to the shape of the wing, it is also known as the plateau of Chhattisgarh. The eastern part of the eastern Narmadanchal state comprising the present day Rajnand village district Kawardha and the north western part of Bilaspur district belong to this basin. It extends from 24° 5' North Latitude to 17° 46' North Latitude and 80° 15' East Longitude to 84° 24' East Longitude. The Cuddapah rock group is abundant in this area. In ancient times this region was called Dakshin Kosala. The Mahanadi is its lifeline and the drainage system of the Narmada river is only 744 square kilometers, the Maikal mountain range separates the Narmada and the Mahanadi. This area, rich in forests, is not rich in the form of agricultural land, rice is the main crop in the plains of the plateau.

5. The Plateau of Bechekhand - It is part of an ancient land, a small part of the eastern Narmadanchal state, which is called Katni. As it is, it extends from 23° 40' North latitude to 24° 35' North latitude and from 80° 5' East longitude to 82° 35' East longitude. To its west are Mandla and Jabalpur districts. Mainly Gondwana rock groups are found here but Vindhya rock groups from Son valley are also found here. This is the area between the Son river and the Maikal mountain range. There are dense forests, due to the abundance of forests, wildlife is the identity of here, Son-Hans are two major rivers.

Wheat, gram, maize, rice, tur crops are grown in this area with uneven land.

6. Nagpur Plain- This area was related to the valley of Kanhan and Bainganga. Bainganga is the main river here, it is its tributary Kanhan. Bainganga joins the Godavari River and the basins of both the river systems are diverse. Rainfall is high around Bainganga which is suitable for paddy crop, while in Kanhan valley cotton and groundnut are cultivated due to less rainfall. The northern parts of Nagpur and Bhandara districts of this region come under the study area. The Bhansle rulers of Nagpur continued to attack the Garha kingdom and finally annexed it.

7. Satpura-Maikal Plateau- This entire area is made up of Deccan Tape and Gondwana rock group. The Satpura region includes the entire south-west part of the eastern Narmadanchal state, which includes Betul, Chhindwara and Seoni districts, and the southern region of the state in the Maikal plateau which is named as Balaghat, Mandla and Dindori. The Satpura range extends from 21° North latitude to 23° North latitude and 74° 30' East longitude to 81° 0' East longitude. In this, mixed rocks of Deccan Tap, Archean, Dharwad, Cretaceous are found. Its altitude ranges from 600 meters to 1200 meters above sea level.

---

<sup>3</sup> Sil, Jogendra Nath (1917). History of the Central Provinces and Berar

The Satpura range is like a triangle surrounded by the Narmada and Tapi rivers, whose base is the Maikal range. The region of Satpura is also called the great divider. Narmada, Tapi, Wainganga, Sugar, Chhoti Tawa and Wardha rivers are prominent here. Very good teak wood is found in this area rich in forest wealth. Teak tree is a boon here because its ash-bark makes the land fertile. Jowar, wheat, gram, maize are the main crops here and in tribal areas, kodon, kutki are sown. The plateau of Maikal is situated between the plains of Chhattisgarh on one side and the valley of Satpura-Narmada on the other. Johila is the main river. The soil here is red sandy and loamy soil is also found at some places. Teak and Sal are the main forest resources and due to less rainfall, Kodon, Kutki, Linseed and Mustard are the main crops. Ramnagar and Mandla are situated in this plateau.

After knowing the detailed description of the geographical location, climate, forest, forest wealth and crops of this state, it is clear that it was a rich natural state. While the forest-covered areas and high and low ranges protected this state by making it inaccessible, the fertile area provided a strong economic base to the state by growing crops, not only elephants were found here. This area, full of deep, inaccessible forests and mountain ranges, has been given by nature in abundance of all resources such as forests, mountains, forest animals, forest produce, rivers, rain, fertile soil, water and good crops from the sum of all these. Above all, the depth and inaccessibility of the forests gave the natives here an impenetrable shield that protected them from the outside world and protected their own secluded, comfortable, nature-connected lifestyle. This original resident was Bhumi Putra Gond, it is described in Akbarnama that "Gonds live in this area. Their number is very high." Clearly, there has been a majority of Gond tribes in this area from ancient times to modern times and the main caste of the study area even the ruling class belonged to this caste, so it is very necessary to do a thorough analysis about them. Is.

Those native communities of extremely inaccessible, inaccessible areas, such as rugged forests, deserts, high mountains, infernal plateau, who live their lives in relation to coexistence with nature encompassing their own distinctive language, culture, social and economic system, their own ancient story, song. In Hindi, the words "Adivasi", "Adivasi" and "Tribe" have been used, while in English "Native", "Aboriginal" and "Tribes". words are used. Sociologists, politicians, anthropologists have chosen the word according to their need. In India "Scheduled Tribe" has been considered as the standard word, which translates to Scheduled Tribe in Hindi. (As per Article 342 Clause (1) of the Constitution of India)

On the basis of species classification, only two tribal caste groups are outlined in Madhya Pradesh - Dravid and Kol → The main caste of these Dravidians is Gond. The Dravidian languages are today strong in terms of spoken language because the dominance of the Gond kings gave them vitality. In the classification of

Dravidian languages, Kurukh, Malto, Gondi, Kui, Kolabhi, Bhariya have been placed together in the category of 'intermediate languages'.

There are different dialects of Gondi language which are prevalent in different places, among which Gondi dialect is the most prominent, it is mainly prevalent in Madhya Pradesh but is also found in Orissa, Berar, Andhra and Central India. It is mainly spoken in Mandla, Balaghat, Chhindwara, Betul Durg area. Other dialects of Gondi language like-

Kurukh - Bihar, Orissa

Malto - Rajmahal Hill Area

Kui - Orissa (although the dialect is related to Telugu)

It is spoken in. The interesting fact is that this language has only masculine and neuter gender and seven is the highest number.

There is a dispute regarding the origin of the Gonds, most scholars express the opinion that the word Gond is a form of 'Konda'. Stephen Hislop describes them as the Khond of Andhra Pradesh. Gairson, based on linguistics, says that in Telugu language, Khond is also called Gond. The Gondi dialect is the dialect of the same Dravidian family that has Tamil, Kannada and Telugu. The coins of Sangramshah, the ruler of the region we are studying, also bear the inscription in the Telugu script. According to the scholars, these people came from Godavari river to Chanda, Indravati, Chhattisgarh and Satpura area through Bainganga river. Contrary to this, there is also a view that the Gonds are residents of this area. Scholar Mazumdar has said that "the exact determination of the racial status of man in ancient India is not easy." This statement is also true for the Gonds. The rock shelters and weapons found in Madhya Pradesh have been determined by radio carbon method, but it does not determine the immediate species. Possibly "Dravidians are a new species or subspecies developed in India." More scientific research studies of human groups are still needed to reach a final decision.

Gond society-

The main feature of the tribes is their primitive culture, dependence on the environment and traditional work efficiency and they have less urge for development, but the Gond society has been the pioneer tribe in adopting change and making its new cultural political identity.

These (Gonds) use the word 'koytor' for themselves. The word Gond is used by the non-tribal class. The word Kond means mountain in Telugu, it can also mean that the Kond → Gond living on the mountain. It is divided into Dhurwa, Agaria, Rajgond-classes.

The ruling society of eastern Narmadanchal is called Rajgond, it is a branch of Gonds who have refined and modified their basic social organization and culture with the influence of Hindus and Rajputs. Fuchs clearly says, "Due to the cultural influence of the Hindus, Rajgond and Kharelia Khatolia joined the upper class, but the general or strong Gonds were recognized only in the lower strata of Hindu

society." The rulers of Garha were ambitious as well as social. He was also aware and receptive to the historical environment. Fuchs found four classes of Gonds in Mandala which are clearly influenced by the Hindu varna system<sup>4</sup>.

1. Devgond: These Gonds eat very pleasant food.
2. Suryavanshi Rajgond: They trace their origin to the Sun. (It is worth noting that the Rajput Kshatriyas have all the old clans, 'Suryavanshi' and 'Chandravanshi').
3. Suryavanshi Devgarhi Gond: These are Suryavanshi Gonds only, but their place of origin is considered to be Devgarh.
4. Ravanavanshi Gonds: Ravana dynasty Gonds consume beef and sacrifice pigs and drink alcohol.

It is clear from the above classification of Fuchs that the Raj Gonds were a branch of the Gonds who were following the Hindu Kshatriya society to attain a high social status and declared themselves to be nobles from the other Gonds. Wills clearly states that "the Gonds of the Garha Mandla region came under the influence of Brahmanical-Hinduism and adopted many of its points."

The conclusion is very clear that these kings, emerging from the tribal society, adopted every contemporary practice which they thought was superior in order to legitimize the nature of the royal society and make themselves acceptable to the common class. Gierson also agrees with this argument. In fact, in social and political life, instead of opposing sanskritisation and assimilation, this tribal group adopted it and declared itself as superior. G.S. Ghurye gave this fact even more logical form, "From studying the conditions of many tribes it is known that the tendency of attaining higher status has increased in them than before. In attaining high status in the caste system, even if they have suffered inconvenience and loss related to their ancient customs, they have endured it." A similar example is the Bauri (depressed Adivasis of West Bengal who consider themselves to be Brahmins).

The Rajgondos made themselves politically empowered by using foresight, valor and sharp intellect and adopted Hindu mythological culture to gain public approval (which was essential for a smooth, smooth running of the state). Even taking this yagyaopavit, worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses and giving up beef, Hislap says that the Rajgonds first sprinkle water on them to purify the wood with which they cook food. There must have been a double pressure on this ruling class, firstly to prove its superiority in front of the general public and secondly to make Hindu religious people allies in the governance, both these tasks were difficult. The governance was not possible without Hindu allies and hence they had to change and refine themselves. If on the one hand the rate of change

---

<sup>4</sup> Gupta, Archana Garodia (2019). *The Women Who Ruled India: Leaders. Warriors. Icons.* Hachette India



among the Rajgonds was very fast, then on the other hand there is a sense of stability of tribal culture among the Madiya and Mudia people of Bastar. The rest are found between the two levels. This inter-variation of development levels, the geographical isolation of regional groups, the state of exchange of civilizations and the resources of the environment. It is based on. Shri Ram and Bhadrakali are mentioned in the sanads and prashastis of these rulers, not only this, the noble Brahmins performed Hindu rituals for them and also accepted Dakshina, which is a symbol of their social acceptance.

**Domicile:-** The construction of a house among the Gonds is related to omen and bad omen, after choosing a suitable place to build a house, a festival is celebrated, ducks and chickens are also sacrificed there. For house construction, local materials are used soil-grass, straw, wood, bamboo, cow dung. Chicken dung is also made at home. The walls are made straight and smooth, paintings of birds, elephants, bulls are also found on the walls. His art is unique.

**Earning livelihood:-** This is a self-supporting system, but there are many complications in their life, there are only two means of earning livelihood, farming and collecting forest produce, on the basis of time cycle, they grow two crops. Paddy, kodon, kutki, oilseeds, rice, maize are ciari crops while wheat, gram, rye, lentil, linseed are their crops.

Agricultural work is basically for subsistence, economic profit and loss, not for buying and selling. Shifted agriculture was also practiced but in 1867 it was banned. Despite this, shifting cultivation continued in Surguja, Jaspur, Shahdol, Mandla, Betul, Chhindwara, Coorg, Rejan. Surguja, Jaspur, Bastar continued to cultivate this system for a long time. They have empirical knowledge of climate.

Collection of forest produce is also the source of their livelihood, grass, various useful leaves, Harra, Bahera, Amla, honey, gum, Sal seeds, Mohline leaf, Mahua, Chironji, Lakh, Tendu, are collected and sold by women. And in return, at present these people buy oil, salt, jaggery, cloth. Women also make bamboo articles. Ropes are also made from many types of grass. Traditionally, animals were raised for transportation and meat, they made the necessary tools themselves. Every village had an agariya (blacksmith).

**Clothing-Jewelry:-** They wear cotton clothes, men wear dhoti in the lower part, bandi on top, a headband is tied on the head. And the Gamchha which is called Pichora is kept on the shoulder. They also get wool from animals. Gond women are artistic, wear bangles, sari up to the knee, put on the shoulder and get tattooed on the body, not only have religious and social importance of the ankles, it is also believed that they also contribute to keeping the body healthy. Their hairstyle is also very interesting, they make buns in an artistic way with utmost cleanliness and use the shoulders. They also collect combs with great interest.

**Culture Religions and Traditions :-**

More or less in every society man first creates culture, then gradually culture starts creating it, culture not only constitutes the emotions but also affects the body composition. Culture is both static and dynamic, every human group has a culture, but its specificity, variation and expression is different in every group, according to Shyamacharan Dubey, human needs can be divided into three categories - primary, dependent and organization-balance related requirements. For their fulfillment, various institutions and organizations are formed and "in order to understand the composition and formation of culture it is very necessary to understand the various aspects of these institutions and the complex relations of ideas and behavior types". , and is created from natural resources provided by nature, with an emphasis on liberty and equality. D.N. Mazumdar also says, "The characteristic of primitive culture was that it gave great importance to social equality." In these tribal organizations, members are bound by mutual tradition, their political, social structure is based on mutual trust and participation. Is. "It is necessary to develop relations of interdependence among the members of the group. It is necessary to have a healthy body so that they can easily face the forces of the environment and it is necessary to have a proper organization of the group. was adopting new tradition, new culture, new rites, while on the other hand its original tribal life and culture was getting disintegrated, its basic structure got weakened or in other words its vikbilization (Kmjatpinsprnjavad) started. The truth is that in order to maintain the cultural continuity of the tribes, like every society, the need of the hour is to maintain the cultural continuity, so even after the full utility of the tribal studies of Warriar Elwin, it cannot be agreed that their ancient The lifestyle should be maintained, which he says in his article "Do We Really Want to Keep Them in a Zoo".

The family is the only institution among the Gonds that introduces the future generations to their traditions, culture, environment, the society is patriarchal but women are also given importance. Gotra (Bsand) is also given importance in Gond society. Gotra is an exogamous group, that is, there is no marriage relationship in a gotra. Furthermore, a gotra has only one hypothetical ancestor, a ganmark, and membership of the gotra is innate. The most popular gotras among the Gonds are Markam, Maravi, Netam, Tekam. Totemism is also found in the Gonds i.e. these people also believe in totem.

This aspect of kinship system also It maintains effective control over the members of the society. Lineage, succession and authority are determined by kinship. Marriage system is very important in rhinoceros too, in these also some prohibitions related to marriage are found, such as marriages are not solemnized. But the children of maternal uncle and aunt get married. "In the Gond tribe, marriage is considered the best and necessary amongst brothers and sisters, which is called 'dood lutana' (milk return). In marriage, the will of the parents is given utmost importance.

The marriages of Gonds are decided on the basis of physical stamina and ability to work hard. The marriage of Rajgonds takes place according to the Hindu system, but among the Gonds, the Baiga, or Guniya, performs this function. Widow marriage is also prevalent, generally widow sister-in-law is married to brother-in-law. But if a widow marries someone other than her brother-in-law, her relationship with the former husband's house is broken.

In the Gonds, naturally the dead person is burnt and after ten days 'Dashmani' is practiced.

Religious behavior- Religion is one of those elements of culture which is found everywhere in the Gond society, it is found in its simple form, they have many deities like- Dulhadev, Narayan Dev, Suraj Dev, Mata Mai, Thakur Dev, Well the mother is Ghanshyam Dev and Bagheshwar. They also believe in Hindu deities. Badadeva is their chief deity. Baiga are their priests to whom they provide wine, eggs, chicken, cloth as dakshina. Bhariya i.e. the priest gets the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses done and they have prestige among the Rajgonds. Among the Gonds, those who work as exorcists are Pardhan Antyaj. Trishul is offered on Bade Mahadev situated in Panchmarhi. Khanderdev has a special place in Chhindwara district.

In the form of a mass festival, Madai (a wide form of Haat) is of paramount importance, here along with the purchase of goods, there is also a youth-girl introduction. Madai is organized from January to April at many places from Mandla to Bastar. The most popular is the Madai of Narayanpur in Bastar district. In this, buying and selling of goods, worshiping the goddess with drums and playing cards and Abalator dance (at night) is done. Women are respected in tribal society. She is considered valuable because she cooperates financially with men, so her social value automatically increases, child marriage or widows are not included in this. Although the place of men is prominent in the Panchayat or social organization, but in the religious field, the position of women remains lower than that of men.

Art- Nature and environment have influenced and developed the art of Gonds. They make pictures of elephant, horse, human, their art also has aesthetic decoration and religious, magical side. Music and dance are also important in the life of Gonds. In Songs of the Forest, which is a composition by Alvin and Hivale, Gond poems have been described as transparent and sentimental.

In fact, on social and religious occasions, these people enjoy group dance and music. For a long time the outside society was not familiar with these arts, but the desire to truly recognize tribal life and the constant contact changed the situation and the warriors Alvin, Hivale (Songs of the Forest - Alvin and Hivale) and Arthur (The Blue Grove - W.G. Arthur, a composition based on the songs of the Oraon tribe) introduced these arts to the outside world. In their simple life, along with music and dance entertainment, men and women develop the feelings of

equality, discipline, organization and collective unity. Dance training is given in youth houses among the Gonds. Karma dance is very popular.

Both men and women take part in this, this dance is not performed in the rainy season, Timki, Thali, Mandar are musical instruments. Saila is also a form of dance in which only men participate.

Legends and fables, plays, proverbs, riddles, folk tales, dental tales are also a part of his life.

Pardhans sing story-songs for the Gonds and it is a ritual. His literature is completely oral and prose, poetry, stories, lectures are remembered, this unwritten literature has been transferred only through experience, intellect and experience. The basic plot has always been the same; the language flexibility has always existed. Songs composed in verse are generally songs of dances. Similarly, many types of puzzles are also prevalent among the tribes.

It is necessary to get this detailed information about the Gonds so that the history of this zonal state, which came in the process of becoming a state from a tribal clan, can be understood in the right perspective. There are many complications in the process of becoming a state from this clan, which on one hand is bound by Gondi traditions and customs, on the other hand it has also been a challenge to get public approval. In finding solutions for these, many myths clearly leaned towards Hindu society and active cooperation of Hindu religious people (eg - Brahmins, Lodhis, Kurmis, Pansaris etc. were given importance), even the basic population structure changed.

The rise of the Gond kingdom in eastern Narmadanchal (up to 1700 AD)

The rise of this Gond state in Narmadanchal is a unique event. This state has got its name and identity not by the name of the state of Gonds, but by taking the place-specific ie Garha city as the basis. Sanskrit sources call it the Garha state, Akbarnama- refers to Gadha-Katanga (Katan Ga is a small village near Gadha) and English and Marathi sources refer to it as Gadha-Mandla.

The Sanskrit inscription of Ramnagar is the most important source in knowing the overall genealogy of the rulers of Garha-Mandla. It is situated on the banks of river Narmada, 20 km from Mandla city (which is present day Madhya Pradesh). In this Sanskrit article, starting from Yadavrai, Hridayshah has been described as the last ruler and a total of 54 rulers have been given. Its shortcoming is that it does not give the date of accession of any ruler. Its first English translation was done in 1825 by A.D. Fail.



## **THE MALGUZARS : THE UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS**

**DR. NANDITA BANERJEE**

Associate Professor  
Department of History  
Sidho Kanho birsha University  
Purulia West bengal India

In the 1830s Sleeman had spoken of a class of men who would rise "above the grade of a peasant" and might contribute to the formation of the middle and higher classes of the society"

<sup>1</sup> Such men could also served as a class of collaborators among the subjects according to colonel J.Low, member of the council of the Governor General in 1854. "There shall be numbers of men in every large district" he emphasized in a Minute while the annexation of the Nagpur Province was being debated on the death of its Rajah, "So prosperous and wealthy and so thoroughly satisfied with their conditions, that they shall be sincerely attached to our Government and be both able and willing for their own interests to afford important aid to us, by the exertion of their influence in the event of our Indian possessions being invaded by powerful foreign foes or endangered by any internal insurrection or want a fidelity in our native army."<sup>2</sup>

The outbreak of the Mutiny in 1857 further demonstrated the wisdom of such arguments. The course of the Mutiny showed that the local

---

<sup>1</sup> W. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian official*, P 61-64.

<sup>2</sup> Minute by Col. J. Low, 28 June 1854, Para 8 in Report on the *Administration of the Nagpur Province* by M.G. Plowden Commissioner (1859)

administration of the British was not very effective and in times of trouble people looked up to their tribe, caste or clan leaders as the only saviour. In the villages of central India, "the *Patel* was the head of the little republic".<sup>3</sup> Settlement officers in Wurdah and Narsinghpur spoke of the leaders like functions of the *Patel* amongst his cultivators. "He is, pointed out Rivett -Carnac, the settlement officers of Wurdah, what would be called in Bengal, the *maneeb* or protector and patron, in an agricultural sense, of the dwellers in his estate ; and upon him the tenants depend, in multitude of matter of every day life, for encouragement, for assistance and support."<sup>4</sup> As the landholder would command the entire resources of the village, it would be easy for him to "supply and maintain his cultivators in bad seasons, to dig wells and tanks for the convenience of the village and generally to carry out expenditure which a large proprietary body could not or a large absentee holder, would not undertake."<sup>5</sup>

During the conferment of proprietary rights those who were in possession of *malgoozarship* were preferred. In the words of Sir George Campbell, a peasant enthusiast who later became the Chief Commissioner "where there was the smallest shadow of claim on the ground of holding, a farmer or *Patel*, for any considerable time, and in many other cases where, failing such a claim, the descendant of some old *Patel*, long out of possession, was dug up and rehabilitated as *Malgoozar*" and the Malgoozaree system came into being in the Central Provinces.

The *malgoozars* who had received proprietary rights were a heterogeneous body. Most districts contained quite a number of Maratha Brahmins and families connected with the Maratha Court as survivals of Maratha rule. These were mostly absentees residing in cities and combined a money lending business along with their connection with the land. In Nagpur, Bhandara and Chanda there were many such families who had held for generations while some others had acquired their estates by money lending in the recent past. In Nagpur they included by names like those of the Bhonsla Rajas, Ghatate, the Buti family in its various ramifications, the two Chitnavis Antoba Kolar and coming here to Bhandra, G.R. Bande and the Subheder family. These men resided in Nagpur like the *Zamindres* and managed through agents or *Karindas*, who collected the rents and debts of their principals.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Extract from the report by Capt. A.K. Ternan, D.C. First Class, Nursinghpore on the Sagar and Narmada Territories, 7 Oct 1854 in *Selections Relating to Sagar and Narmada Territories*.

<sup>4</sup> S.R., Wurdah ( 1867) Para 220

<sup>5</sup> S.R. Nursinghpore (1866) Paral 70.

<sup>6</sup> S. R. Bhundara 1894 -99, Para 72

In the Chanda district the Maratha Brahmins had farmed the villages immediately before the district became British territory. They were composed of the Deshmukhs and Deshpandes and a few Brahmins of minor importance at the Maratha court. These men preferred large villages near their head quarters. Some of them held their villages on privileged tenure as part of their remuneration and contend to do so. They were not good landlords as they had little in common with their tenants. As a rule they were pure rent collectors who seldom visited their villages. However, there were exceptions and Kalikar, who owned Brahmapuri and other neighboring villages was good malagoozar. The Deshmukhs and the Deshpandes controlled about a dozen villages were formerly in their charge as *malgoozars* and they were so valuable because of their position that they had not deteriorated much in spite of the comparative neglect which these estates had to suffer.<sup>7</sup>

In Sagar and Hutta too there were many Maratha Brahmin families who had been associated with the Maratha rules of them, those headed by Rao Ramchandra Rao, holding the Jaisingnagar pargana, by Raghunath Rao in the Etawa Pargana, by Shrimant Krishan Rao in the Pithoria *pargana*, by Venkat Rao, subhdar of Sanda and by Rao Ramchandra Rao in Kellai desire mention. The brothers Ramgulam and Bhayalal Debe hold large estates. That of the latter in somewhat involved in debt and in managed by Rai Bahadur Nandkishore, *gomashta*. The estates of the late Rago bai of Dhana and her relative Hiralalof Dhana were large and solvent.<sup>8</sup>

In Hoshunga, too, the Maratha Brahmin *malagoozars* took up their residence in Harda and Timarni. They had little sympathy with their tenants and were heard to be rack renting them. Hoshunga had some other kind of Brahmins too among its list of Brahmin *malgoozars* like the Jagatoas Naramdeos, Palliwals and Kherawals who were most numbers. But while the Maratha Brahmins, the Jagatias and Narmadeos lived in the villages any the agriculturists and were good loandlords, attached to their estates.<sup>9</sup>

The palliwalas and kherawal Brahmins in Hoshangabad, like some branches of Maratha Brahmin *malgoozars* were money lender pure and simple. They looked upon their villages merely as an open zone for money lending and peasant debts were found to be heaviest in the areas where such *malgoozars* operated. Closely allied to them were the Banias, who had acquired many villages in semi during the disasters of the quinquennial settlement. These *malgoozars* not only valued a village for the profits made out of it as a property, but for the

---

<sup>7</sup> S. R. Chanda (1897 -06) Para 36

<sup>8</sup> S. R. Saugor (1887 - 1897) Para 87

<sup>9</sup> S. R. Hoshungabad (1891-98), Chapter 6, Para 69

advantages that it offers as a field for the extension of their grain and money lending business.

In the Nagpur region, the home farm of these money lending *malgoozars* was often sublet and they tried to collect all the dues that were permissible under the *wajib-ul-urz*. Their agents were often ill-paid and they tried to make the most of the estates on behalf of their masters. Thus although the *malgoozars* themselves were not necessarily oppressive, their ignorance and apathy towards what was going on in their estates made the cultivators suffer.<sup>10</sup>

In Chanda there were a few *malgoozars* who were neither petty officials of the Marathas nor cultivating *patels*. Some of them were Muhammadans whom the Gonds had employed to administer the distant and difficult parts of their Kingdom. There were some Brahmins from up country who had taken up contracts for villages as a real investment. Some local men how could carry the famous of the *Deshpandia* had also taken in some villages chiefly with a view to making profit from their outturn. Such *malgoozars* were found even in the most distant tracts. Some of them took good care of their villages, amongst whom must be mentioned Tai Bahadur Chandi Prasad and Mir Yakub Alui. But some *malgoozars* who were themselves financially hard pressed, could not look after their estates properly and allowed them to deteriorate. Estates in Chanda were neither large nor compact. Chandi Prasad owned over 30 villages in *haveli*, close to Chanda and easy to manage. Yakub Ali had about the same numbers of villages in wairagarh but the property was very scattered. But Anand Eao of Dhaba had 20 villages within reach of his home.<sup>11</sup>

In Sagar and Damoh districts the Parwar Bamias as Saraogi caste were very influential. They had acquired a lot of property in the Khurai Tahsil New para in the Sagar district.<sup>12</sup>

Their properties were suddenly enhanced in value with the opening of up of communications for the first time and the consequent rise in the value of its staple produce. Formerly, these districts were landlord and whatever produce they had to send, they could send them only on pack bullocks which took two months to reach Bombay from Jabulpore. But the opening of the East Indian Railway line between Allahabad and Jabulpore in 1867 and the linking of Jabulpore with Bombay by the Great Indian Peninsula Railway in 1871, gave a great stimulus to the export trade of district.<sup>13</sup> The East Indian Railway to

---

<sup>10</sup> Settlement Report Bhundara (1916-1921) Para 72

<sup>11</sup> S. R. Chanda (1897-1906) Para 36

<sup>12</sup> S. R. Damoh (1888-1891) Para 27; S. R. Saugar (1887-1897) Para 87

<sup>13</sup> S. R. Jabulpore (1886-1894) Para 15



Jubbulpore brought a railway line communication with Calcutta within 60 miles of the Sonar valley and 25 miles of the frontier of the Damoh district.<sup>14</sup>

Side by side with the railway there was also a great improvement in the condition of roads. The North-West road running from Nagpur through Betul and Hoshungabad connected the district to Itarsi Junction. Some 58 miles of it approaching the Itarsi Railway Junction were metalled. 25 miles between Betul and Multai were morumed. 14 miles from Muftai to Chhindwara was a III B road, that is, only morumed and bridges in bad places. As the northern roads were good, all goods not required for local consumption in the Amraoti and Ellichpur districts of Berars went to the Narmada Valley.<sup>15</sup>

The large profits induced the *malgozars* to sink wells and in a few years the area under sugarcane largely increased. There was a special demand in the market for a variety of wheat known as *pissi*. The haveli tract between Narmada and Hiran, rich in black soil was very fertile and particularly suited for wheat cultivation.<sup>16</sup> Wheat was far more important for export than any other crop and covered 45% of the cropped area in Damoh district and two thirds of the cropped area in the Hoshangabad district.<sup>17</sup>

In Jabbalpur cultivation increased 35% in respect to the rise in wholesale prices of chief staples from 100% to 200%.<sup>18</sup> Since 1862 prices started rising which lasted up to 1868 from that years till 1886 prices gradually fell. But even then in 1888 prices were 40% above that of 1863.<sup>19</sup>

The cultivation of sugarcane, wheat, rice and linseed was so profitable that there was a great demand among *malgozars* for the cultivation of their home farms. In Damoh the area under home farm (*sir*) increased 22% while the total cultivation registered an increase of 19%. Three fourths of it was held in *sir* right and leased to tenants - at- will while one third of it was cultivated as Khud Kasht in Jabbalpore the *malgozars'* home farm increased 29%. In good soil villages, where the proprietors were agriculturists by profession, the percentage of home farm to the total occupied area stand at a larger figure.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> S. R. Damoh (1888-1891) Para 24

<sup>15</sup> S.R. Betul (1894-1899) para 96

<sup>16</sup> S.R. Jabbalpore ( 1886-1894) R.H. Gaddock, offig com of Settlements to Agriculture Central Provinces, to Second Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Rev Dept. C.P. 10 Nov 1899

<sup>17</sup> S.R. Damoh 1889-91 para 14 20a, S.R. Hoshangabad ( 1891-98) Para 31

<sup>18</sup> S.R. Jabbalpore 1886- 1894 Gaddock to second sec to C.C para 9

<sup>19</sup> S.R. Damoh ( 1888- 91) Gaddock chief Sec to C.C ,C .P to Sec t GOI 8 April 1901, Para 3

<sup>20</sup> S.R. Jabbalpore ( 1886- 1894) para 28

Ordinary cultivating *malgoozars* who were called 'land grabbers' were always inclined to expand their home farm by dispossessing tenants of their land, either by inducing them to give up fields on promise of making a reduction in their rents, as by ejecting them on account of arrears of rent. In Hoshangabad, purely agricultural, castes like Kurmis, Rajputs and Gujars absorbed a great proportion of the increased cultivation than the cultivators. Some of this sir land were taken away from them by leaseholding cultivators. They thus tightened their control on land newly broken up from waste. They held 23% of the total cultivation which was very large for a small community of *malgoozars*. Even those who were not agriculturists among the *malgoozars* coveted land. In fact the difference in the behaviour of agriculturists and non-agriculturists among the moneylenders gradually got blurred. While *malgoozars* of the non-agriculturist classes took an interest in cultivation for the profits its produce would fetch in the market, *malgoozars* of the agriculturist castes took to money lending to be able to grab their land. As the settlement officers of Hoshangabad remarked and remembered "the money lender of an agricultural caste is often a greater curse to a village than a Bania, for with his past training he is able to screw more out of his tenants."<sup>21</sup>

In Jubbulpore, the mahajans were always trying to enhance rents, so, that the entire produce of the cultivators' land was brought to them at harvest in satisfaction of the of the grain loan they had advanced as seed.<sup>22</sup> In Sconce too, the *malgoozars* were trying to get hold of as much land in their home farm as was possible. 23% of total cultivation in Sconce was included in the home farm of *malgoozars* and more was expected be concerted into home farm as mahajan money lenders held a lot of land in mortgages in the district.<sup>23</sup> While agriculturist *malgoozars* took the land of defaulting cultivators for their own cultivation, the mahajan *malgoozars* tried to involve cultivators in their web of seed-lending transactions on *deodi-barhi* or one and a half times (50%) interest and lease out the land of defaulting debtors at an enhanced rent to other cultivators.<sup>24</sup>

In Betul all solvent *malgoozars* had a small money and grain lending business with their tenants for which they used to make some profit. They engaged premia for valuable holding which fell vacant. Sometimes they spread their money lending business outside their villages and make considerable profits. Some of the estates like those of the Shukul family of Shaphur and the Korkus of Chanda covered a large area although lying in jungle tracts they were not of much

---

<sup>21</sup> S.R. Hoshangabad ( 1891-98) Para 68, 69

<sup>22</sup> S.R. Jabbalpore ( 1886-1894) Para 29

<sup>23</sup> S.R. Seoni ( 1894-1898) Para 33

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Para 36

value. Estates lying in the fertile open villages usually consisted of light or nine villages.<sup>25</sup>

The first thirty years of British rule ruined a member of *Wattunder Patels* in Betul and brought many outsiders to the villages as *malgoozars*. Of them the Telis and Kalars had become rich by trading in jungle produce, selling liquor and money lending at the expense of patels and cultivators. The Hindustani Kurmis also came from Unao and Lucknow, the leaders as *Patels* and the followers as cultivators, at the beginning of the century and settled in the best villages. They were granted proprietary rights in 1861 and made malgoozars. The Tenancy Act of 1883 had laid down that even if they forfeited their proprietary right through extravagance, they would still retain a right in their home-farm.

Agriculturist *malgoozars* in the Betul district belonged to the Kunbi, Kurmi, Rajput, Bhoir, Kiras, Gond, Raj Gond, Korku, Maharata, Chhattri, Raghubansi, Mali, Gooli, Arak, Katia and Thatia castes and a few Muhammadans. Such malgoozars even if they lent at all, their purpose was merely to help their tenants to sow their land as buy bullocks. However some Kurbi, Bhoir as other agricultural castes had a large money lending business as well as extensive cultivation. Such were Sitaram Bhoir of Aaria and the Kunbi Patels of Bagharia and Bakur. They lent from the funds that they acquired from profitable agriculture and landed thereafter they succeeded in expanding their cultivation when property came to them in satisfaction of debts.

Certain other malgoozars were non-agriculturist, who had acquired their estates in cause of their money lending transactions with their farmers owners during the thirty years' settlement. The Marwaris, Dhusar Baniyas, Sonars, Carpenters, Kayasths and many Brahmins were among such professional money lenders. Those money lenders were gradually replacing the Kalars and Tilis who had formerly acted as malgozars in these districts.<sup>26</sup>

In Bhandra too there were malgoozars owing two or more villages, who were descendants of old patels. The difference between cultivators' payments and government revenue was the main source of their income. They invariably stayed in villages and held the best land as their home farm. They sometimes lent a little money but often they were themselves in debt. The Settlement officers of Bhandara called them 'the backbone of the proprietary body of the district. He owned a good stock of cattle and cultivated a substantial and always supervisor home-farm.'<sup>27</sup> Such villages declined only when too many shares cropped up and village lands had to be subdivided.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> S.R. Betul ( 1894-99) Para 125

<sup>26</sup> Para 127. Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> S.R. Bhundara ( 1916-1921) Para 74

<sup>28</sup> S.R. Chanda ( 1897-06) para 38.

During the period of our study, these district of the Central provinces witnessed two parallel agricultural booms. The wheat boom in the Narmada valley continued till the end of the period of our study. The cotton boom took place mainly in the Nagpur country, in a certain kind of soil (black loam) suited for the production of cotton. The mid 1860s saw an increase in the demand for Hingunghat cotton (Because the cotton produced in the Nagpur country was exported in the cotton mart at Hingunghat therefore the cotton produced in these areas went under the name of Hingunghat cotton) as the supply of cotton to the cotton mills of England stopped due to the onset of the American civil war and the intervention of the cotton production and supply from the southern states of America. Cotton prices rose quickly in response to the soaring demand. More areas were sown with cotton, most moneylenders were willing to lend money for cotton cultivation and most cultivators thought it wise to sow their fields with cotton in expectation of a large profit. But the short staple cotton which the Nagpur fields produced were not to the liking of the English Mills. They had taken recourse to Indian cotton only as a stop gap solution to the crunch in the supply of American Cotton. As the civil war ended, American cotton hit the markets once again and the demand for Indian Cotton suddenly fell to the despair of all who had invested money and labour in its production. Big money lending houses lost money, the malgoozars were surely disappointed in the investment decisions and the cultivators were at their wits' end to provide themselves with alternative means of subsistence.

But although the cotton boom in the Nagpur region ended by the end of the 1860s, the wheat boom was yet to run its course. The Narmada valley malgoozars had made a lot of profits in wheat trade. In Sagar and Damoh the money lenders malgoozars celebrated their good fortunes in spending money on their caste fetes called 'rath'. They were salted in big constructed for the purpose along with their families and were drawn round a platform specially constructed for the occasion seven times by two elephants. It often cost Rs. One Lakh to celebrate such fetes and enabled a person to rise in the social scale. The first *rath* gave him the status of singhai, the second *rath* made him singhai sawai and the third one made him Seth.<sup>29</sup> The settlement reports of three districts-Saugor, Domon and Jabulpore-count an reference to celebration of such *raths* by Parwar Baniyas of the Saraogi caste. The firm of Raja Seth Gokuldass had also spread its tentacles in the wheat boom region in search of profits, Shrimant Seth Mohanlal, Seth Khet Singh of Khurai in Saugor, Seth Karakmal of Ajmere, Seth Mohandas of Rancha Rai Bahadur Nand Rishare Gomastha, Bhawani Prasad, the diwan of Bijaur and Seth Birdichand of Rahatgarh were also some of the Malgoozars of

---

<sup>29</sup> S. R. Saugor (1887-1897) Para 82

this district who had made big fortunes from the wheat boom of the times in the Narmada Valley.

When the grant of proprietary rights to malgoozars had been proposed for the first time in the sagor and Narmada territories, Captain Ternan m Deputy commissioner of Narsinghpur had warned that all these Malgoozars were already heavily indebted to the money lenders and the grant of proprietary right would be immediately followed by the transfer of such rights to money lenders in satisfaction of decrees of the civil court.<sup>30</sup> Small land owners had long been uneasy under the British dispensation of rigid collection on a fixed date. They were used to staying away from villages and doing nothing useful. Thus as the numbers of cosharers increased, they got indebted and ultimately this estates came under the hammer.<sup>31</sup> The rate of such transfers was quite high. The Betul district alone registered transfer of 120 villages to money lenders which meant a 10% of the total number of village in Betul.<sup>32</sup>

Malgoozars sometimes attributed their plight to the heaviness of the assessment. 20% of the villages have already changed hands and 20% of the malgoozars one more than they can pay. But closer examination found that they were more indebted where they were most lightly taxed. "Their very prosperity "as the settlement officers of Hoshangabad remarked, "Has been the cause of the ruin of many". As communication improved, prices rose and law became profitable for what it produced, professional money lenders started involving the malgoozars in the web of their debt and began to assume control of land for what it could produce.<sup>33</sup>

Mismanagement and extravagance were two reasons which drove the malgoozars to indebtedness - "their expenditure increased by leaps and bounds and there seemed to them no limit to their resources. If money was not available in the house there was the money lender, ever ready to advance it and the large profits in a good year gave every hope that the loan could easily be repaid. Expenditure thus began to be based upon the income of good years and was not contracted to meet the exigencies of bad years, whereas in old times, with no rights of transfer, the absence of credit would have forcibly reduced expenditure in bad years. Marriage and death ceremonies become more elaborate; there were more frequent occasions for borrowing and more facilities for selling. Litigation become general

---

<sup>30</sup> Extract from a report made by Capt Ternan, D. C. 1st Class, Narsinghpur, on the Sagar and Narmada Territories, 7 Oct 1854 in Selections Relating to the Revision of the Revenue settlement in the Sagar and Narmada-Territories, 1850-62 40

<sup>31</sup> S. R. Saugor (1887 -1897) Section 5 Para 82

<sup>32</sup> S.R. Betul (1894-99) Para 127

<sup>33</sup> S. R. Hoshangabad (1891-98) Chapter VI para 73

about this valuable property, and it was and is carried on at great expense. The majority of the large malgoozars employ a permanent agent or mukhtiyar whose principal duty is to appear in the civil cases, which are always proceeding".

Some malgoozars could be cushioned against bad times by the possession of many privilege tenure and low rates at their command by virtue of this past connection with the Maratha rulers. The cultivating *Patel* could keep himself solvent by means of his income from money lending and the related advantages that they conferred. Survivors since Gond days were, however, not viewed with favour and their *jama* was enhanced whenever the opportunity presented itself. If he was an uninfluential and small speculator he was made to pay highly for his villages. The worst off is the small cultivating share holder. In the words of the settlement officer of chanda –

"If the village is small or his share in the profit of a large village consists of the produce of a few acres of sir land. A series of bad years ruins him completely. He is not a person of substance in the beginning ; if he loses cattle from disease, or his seed stocks are eaten up in famine times, he loses heavily on the village, however low the assessment; he has generally to borrow money, and when once a simple person has borrowed money on land and is not actually anxious to repay within a year, the debt rapidly accumulates until it swallows all his profits and more."<sup>34</sup>

The settlement offices of Jabulpore attributed the indebtedness any malgoozars to old debts when the assessments had been pitched high partly out of miscomprehension partly from a suspicion that the people might try to take advantage of the ignorance of the Europeans about local assets and understate their assets. They demanded 85% as state share which was later toward to 65% and thereafter to 50%. They did not understand that allowance must be made for bad seasons, crop failures and price fluctuation and they simply tried to extract the surplus from land at the maximum rate.<sup>35</sup> This resulted in repeated famines in 1833-34 and again in 1868 followed by the very serious famine of 1896.

More malguzari estates would have been transferred had not the government taken the indebted malguzaree estates under the court of wards Management. The, malguzar of Murwara, ubaridar of Bhandara, Beohar Nirpat singh of Burhagarh and the Gond family of Kunda Mardangarh were all taken under the custody to the government.<sup>36</sup>

Proprietary right had been conferred on the malgoozars with the hope of having a person who could mediate between the government and the vast mass of cultivators. "The whole advantage of the proprietary system, we have introduced",

---

<sup>34</sup> S. R. Chanda (1897-06) Para 41

<sup>35</sup> S. R. Jabulpore (1886-1894) Para 32

<sup>36</sup> S. R. Jabulpore (1886-1894) para 32

remarked Mr. Grant, commissioner of Jabalpur Division, "rests upon the representative influence and means of proprietors."<sup>37</sup> But the entire purpose was frustrated as malgoozars began to default in large numbers under the pressure of a high revenue burden and moneyed capitalists, bankers and merchants began to buy land" as they would any other commodity simply because they think it pays". As the old avenues of internal commerce closed, traders and capitalists had no option but to turn on land. As the chief commissioner of the Central Provinces remarked in 1874, "owing to increasing competition in trade, the old capitalist classes are beginning to find land on the whole the best investment for their money and thus the inducements to lend and therefore to borrow on land received an unhealthy stimulus"<sup>38</sup>

Landholders were compelled to borrow very often due to the pressure of the revenue burden. Even in the famine year of 1868-69 there was no remission in revenue and the Administration Report for 1868-69 reported that "the land revenue has been collected with surprising ease and completeness."<sup>39</sup> The rise in the price of grain brought no gain for this category of landholders since they were already enmeshed in debt.

By 1873-74 sales or mortgages of proprietary rights had reached on all time high so that administrators began to contemplate a restriction of the right of alienation of land. The maximum number of sales were recorded in the Nagpur and Jabalpur Divisions.<sup>40</sup> Rising prices of wheat and cotton made proprietary holdings in these areas very lucrative investments for the city capitalists and many unwise malgoozars fell easy prey to the credit boom which the rising demand for the produce of their land had brought in its wake.<sup>41</sup> The large number of sales and mortgages brought British officers to lament the state of affairs –

"The state would be injured as well as the community, not only indirectly from the suscitation of political discontent but directly by want of a representative village hear through whom to communicate with the people..... If crimes are to be detected, information to be procured, supplies to be got together, education to be encouraged, or any other object of public utility to be promoted, in which

---

<sup>37</sup> Note by Mr. C. Grant, Com. Jabalpur Division on Mr. Raynold West's Pamphlet on the "Land and Law in India and on some questions arising out of it in the Revenue Dept Proceedings No. 237, 1870-88 MPSAB

<sup>38</sup> Minute by the Chief commissioner on Proprietary Transfers in the Central Provinces Rev Dept No. 237 1870-88 MPSAB

<sup>39</sup> Administration Report 1868-69 Introduction

<sup>40</sup> Report on the Administration of the land Revenue Dept. of the C.P. for 1874-75, Para 13

<sup>41</sup> Administration Report for 1866-67, Para 101

the concurrence of the people is required, the district administration is reduced to depend upon an unpopular manager or sullen tenantry."<sup>42</sup>

The imposition of the malgoozars as proprietors on the agrarian community of the central provinces was partly an ideological and partly a practical decision. From the beginning of their rule in these territories in 1818 they wanted to wring the maximum surplus that the social could yield. They could never be certain if they had obtained the maximum as they suspected the natural tendencies of concealment. Thus putting the estates upto lease to the highest bidders was the only option left to them. They based their assessments on the jummas of the preceding regime which had been functioning rather abnormally during its dying years to make a last bid to survive. The assessments were thus more than the country could bear. It was impossible to collect such assessments from agriculturists who had any concern for the welfare of the agrarian community or any knowledge of their assets. The British therefore preferred to rely on the agency of the *mahajans* and *soucars* to conduct the whole business of making advances to the cultivators to make them carry on the agricultural operations and then siphon off the entire agricultural surplus in the form of interest on the funds advanced, the repayment of the principal amount and the rent of the land. The *mahajan* accepted the leases not only for the margin between government revenue and the collection from the cultivators but for the unrestrained opportunity of spreading their moneylending business in the countryside. Successful agriculturist malagoozars also learnt the same tricks from them and soon the line of distinction between a money lender malagoozar and an agricultural malagoozar was wiped out. They continued to suck the resource of the countryside in the form of rent and interest on capital invested and sent it to the port cities by means of the improved transport network for export to England to feed the laboring mill hands. As "the new 'propertied' classes grew outwards from inside "and" with subversion coming from inside".<sup>43</sup> It was impossible to turn the tide of collapse of the right and privileges of the agrarian community.

---

<sup>42</sup> Note by Mr. C. Grant, Rev Dept. Civil Secretariat No. 237, 1870-88, MPSAB

<sup>43</sup> D.A. Washbrook, 'Progress and Problems : South Asian Economic and social History 1720-1860 in Modern Asian Studies 22, 1 (1988) pp 57-96.





**REFLECTIONS ON MUGHAL SOCIETY IN A *BRAJ*  
HAGIOGRAPHIC TEXT OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY  
NORTH INDIA**

**DR. REYAZ AHMAD KHAN**

Associate Professor  
CAS Department of History  
Aligarh Muslim University  
Aligarh India

**Keywords-** Goswami Gokulnath, Vallabhacharya, Thakurji, Damodardas, Varta, Achrya, Harivansha-Purana, Tanka, Mandar Parvat, Akbar, Purusottamadas, Parvati, Surdas, Kumbhan Das Raja Maan Singh

Hagiography manages the lives of holy people and the 'fantasies' and fables related to them, alongside the happenings in their everyday life. For a historian, especially dealing in Medieval Indian history, hagiography contains much more than just the saint's life. The hagiographical accounts are a very important source for studying Medieval India's social, cultural, and intellectual history. A closer look at these texts could reveal the nature of everyday life of different social groups, the customs and traditions associated with them, and their religious beliefs and intellectual understanding of the physical and meta-physical world. These works could also provide crucial information to analyze the lives of the 'subalterns,' especially women, peasants, the urban proletariat, which is otherwise opaque in the traditional historical sources. These accounts can also give us a better view of local history, especially about popular cults, customs, and traditions prevalent in those areas. This paper attempts to highlight social history from a seventeenth-century hagiographical account known as *Chaurasi Vaishnav ki Varta*.

<sup>1</sup> The effort is to provide an alternative to conventional political history, both in terms of its objects of interest and its belief in deep-rooted economic and social factors as historical change agents.

*Chaurasi Vaishnav ki Varta* was compiled in *Brajbhasha* by Goswami Gokulnath<sup>2</sup>, a popular saint of the *Vallabha* sect. *Chaurasi Vaishnav ki Varta* contains the stories of the disciples of a community named *Pushti Marg*, a sub-sect of *Vaishnavism*, founded by Mahaprabhu Vallabhacharya. Its idea of devotion is centered on Krishna Bhakti expressed through selfless service (*seva*) of Shri Krishna. Further, *Puhsti Marg* rejected discrimination based on caste, creed, race, colour, sex, and age. They also rejected ascetic life and preferred a household life. Thus, through a study of the stories and narratives given in the text, one could peep into the period's contemporary socio-cultural life.

One such story depicts reasoning to assert a particular belief, which was contradictory when applied on different occasions. Yet the element of faith was so strong that it was accepted without much critical thinking. The story is associated with a disciple of Mahaprabhu Vallabhacharya named Damodar Das. His daily devotional chores included bathing the idol of his diety, *Thakurji* (Lord Krishna). He carried water from a nearby source for that purpose. One day, his father-in-law visited his house and observed his son-in-law's daily ritual in which he brought water and washed the idol. He remarked that 'it is shameful to see you carry water yourself. You must be accompanied by your wife in this act of devotion'. Damodar Das accepted his advice and started taking his wife along with him to fetch water. But when his father-in-law visited him the next time, contrary to his previous remark, he now advised Damodar Das to fetch water alone as he was going to get the benefit of his devotion to *Thakurji* entirely to himself. Damodar submissively accepted this advice of his father in law without any objection or questioning.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, ed. Kamleshvar Tripathi, Uttar Pradesh Hindi Samsthan, Lucknow, 2008; the oldest copy of *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, belong to 1640 AD which is kept in Vidhya Vibhag Kakarauli (Rajasthan) which was first published by Surdas Thakurdas in 1890 AD; for more detail *sampadkiya* by Kamleshvar Tripathi; see also, Shandip Saha, "Muslim as Devotees and Outsiders: Attitudes towards Muslims in the Varta Literature of the Vallabha Sampradaya" in *Religious Interactions in Mughal India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 319-337; Vasudha Dalmia, "Hagiography and the 'Other' in the Vallabha Sampradaya", in *Religious Interactions in Mughal India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 264-284.

<sup>2</sup> Swami Gokulnath, the son of Vitthalanath born in Adela (Allahabad) in 1608 AD. He learnt various branches of religious sciences from his father. He travelled across the country and had a number of disciples. See introduction by Kamleshvar Tripathi.

<sup>3</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, pp. 12-13.

Another remarkable incident related to Damodar Das is narrated in the *Varta*, which shows people have blind faith and belief in their *gurus'* virtues in contemporary society. Once Damodar Das's *guru Acharya* Mahaprabhu visited his residence. The *Acharya* overwhelmed with his love and affection, asked Damodar Das to express any desire that he wanted to be fulfilled. Damodar Das politely replied that he hardly had any such wish or desire to be fulfilled. Then *Acharyaji* asked him to inquire from his wife. Damodar Das's wife wished to have a baby. *Acharyaji* blessed the couple, and in due course of time, Damodar Das' wife conceived a baby. Time passed by, and one day Damodar Das' wife happened to meet an astrologer who predicted that she would have a baby boy (p 17). This incident annoyed *Acharyaji* so much that on a visit to Kannuj when Damodar Das tried to touch his feet, the *Acharya* shunned him to do so and even accused him of becoming an irreligious person, devoid of any devotion to him. These harsh comments completely shattered Damodar Das, and in anguish, he inquired from the *Acharya* whether he had sinned. *Acharyaji* asked him to inquire about the reason for his pregnant wife. Meanwhile, the *Acharya* declared that the baby conceived by Damodar Das' wife is a *Malichh* (possibly the term is used for a Turk). The poor woman was so shocked by this comment of the *Acharya* that she abandoned all religious activities at her home. The mere feeling of giving birth to a *Malechchha* devastated her life. She requested her mother to come at the baby's time and take the infant along with her. She was even reluctant to see the baby's face as the *Acharya* had declared that she would lose her religious affiliation if she happened to see. The baby's face, she would lose her delivered baby, her mother was taken away and was brought up by another woman. Later, Damodar Das' wife left her home and went to Allahabad to donate all her belongings to Adel (a centre of *Vaishnav* saints).<sup>4</sup>

In yet another interesting narrative of *Chaurasi Vaishnav ki Varta*, one can peep into the minds of a couple and their day-to-day life issues. The story is related to a man named RamDas and his wife. It portrays the mental agony of the couple for not having a child. The social stigma associated with not having a baby is visible when the wife requested RamDas to re-marry so that he could have a progeny. But the loving husband refused politely and told his wife that he had no desire for a child. Such incidents amply reflect the contradictions in the societal belief system and the personal relationships of 16th and 17th-century society. The wife's concern reflects social expectations pressure while the husband's response highlights the personal warmth in their relationship.<sup>5</sup>

Several episodes in *Varta* also give reverences to gender issues such as the practice of *sati*, polygamy, and keeping of concubines. In one such episode, there is a reference to the practice of keeping concubines. The narrative is related to

---

<sup>4</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, p. 39.

MadhavDas, who had kept a concubine in his house. As the *Vaishnav* saints did not approve of this practice, they condemned MadhavDas for this act and reported the matter to *Acharya* Mahaprabhu. The *Acharya* asked MadhavDas, ' why did you have concubine in your house?' MadhavDas politely replied that he had kept her for his carnal desires. He further said that 'it is my personal will to have a concubine at my home.' Other saints who were present there were greatly annoyed with the blunt reply of MadhavDas and requested *Acharyaji* to restrain him from following this practice. The *Acharya* advised MadhavDas to stop the practice of keeping concubine and worship Lord Krishna with complete devotion to strengthen his will power. MadhavDas obeyed the *Acharya's* commands in right earnest, and after a time, he became famous among the *Vaishnav* saints.<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, we get the reference of the *sati* system also in the *Varta*. It is reported that once while Rana Vyas and MadhavDas were taking a bath in the river *Saraswati* at Sidhpur, they saw a group of men coming to the banks of the river carrying a dead body accompanied by his widow for cremation. The widow looked to them to be a Rajput woman. The pyre was prepared for the dead body's final ritual and those who were present; there also pressed the young widow to commit *sati* with her husband, which she persistently refused. Having failed to convince her to immolate, they build a small mud house near the river and left the widow in that shelter with some food. Rana Vyas, who was observing the event from a close distance, burst into laughter after listening to the villagers's arguments who were trying to convince the woman for the *sati*. However, the two of them left the place without making any effort to help the unfortunate widow, although they felt that burning her forcefully on her husband's pyre was a murderous act. After some time, while Rana Vyas and Madhav Das were passing by the widow's mud house, the widow approached them and inquired their laughter during her conversation with the villagers. Rana Vyas replied that they laughed because of the villagers' illogical reasons to convince her to commit suicide on her husband's pyre. He further said that her beautiful body is not meant for *sati*; she should make her life meaningful by becoming a true devotee of Lord Krishna. The lady was greatly impressed by Rana Vyas's suggestions; she dedicated her entire life to the devotion of Lord Krishna and joined the *Vaishnava* sect.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the *Varta* also indicates that polygamy was no taboo during that time. In the *Varta*, there is a reference to one Kapoor Khatri, a disciple of Pundit Bulamishra who was childless, and on the request of his wife, he married again to get an offspring. But his second wife also could not conceive. His first wife now suggested him to listen to *Harivanshpuran*, which she believed would gratify the couple to have a child. The couple went to Pandit Bulamishra, who recited the

---

<sup>6</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, p. 87.

verses of *Harivanshpuran* to them, and after some time, Kapoor Khatri had a child but strangely from his first wife. Kapoor Khatri could not have a child from his first wife due to some medical condition, and she conceived once that medical disorder was resolved. This incident, however, indicates that polygamy in the society was acceptable only in exceptional circumstances.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, we also get glimpses of women's lives associated with certain professions such as street performers and textile workers. The texts reference a woman giving a performance of singing and dancing on Agra's roadside to earn her living. Such performers were also invited at the *havelis* of rich people for a private function and were paid quite handsomely. It is stated in the text that one Krishna Das invited a street dance performer at his *haveli* and paid her one hundred rupees for her impressive performance.' .It is quite a heartening note that no social stigma was enforced against them in our text. (p. 194). Another profession, as mentioned above, was weaving. The *Varta* gives a reference to a woman who not only earned her livelihood but even saved some money to offer sweets daily to *Thakurji* (Lord Krishna). After some time, she decided to prepare the offering in bulk to avoid doing it every day and concentrate on her profession. She saved twelve *tankas* (quite a big amount for those days.) and purchased the ingredients for the offering's preparation. However, this practice was given as she realized that preparing to offer the deity daily was a better option.<sup>9</sup>

The account of *Chaurasi Vaishnav ki Varta* also gives a vivid description of superstitious beliefs prevalent in society during that period. One such incident mentioned in the text is related to a person named PadmanabhDas of Kannauj. His daughter-in-law Parvati was suffering from leprosy, which had resulted in white patches on her hands and legs. Given the social stigma associated with leprosy, Parvati was quite upset and wrote a letter to PurshottamDas Mehra with a request to appeal to Gosai ji on her behalf to do something to cure her of this dreaded disease. Gosai ji advised her to pray to Lord Krishna with complete devotion, which would cure her completely of the disease. The *Varta* narrates that Parvati got herself completely engrossed in devotion to Lord Krishna, and within a few months, she was cured of leprosy.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, we get another reference of superstition associated with a mountain in Jharkhand named *Mandar Parvat*. It was a tradition among the people of the area to visit the mountain; all their sins would be forgiven. They believed that if someone falls from the top of the mountain, wish would be fulfilled as an alternative to getting hurt.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from socio-cultural and economic glimpses, the text also references interaction between saints and royal personalities. One such reference is about a

---

<sup>8</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>9</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, p. 107-108.

<sup>10</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>11</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, p. 33.

meeting of Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605) and the famous poet Surdas (c. 1550).<sup>12</sup> The *Varata* narrates that Akbar visited Parsauli, a village located somewhere between Agra and Mathura, to meet the famous poet Surdas. During their meeting, the emperor requested Surdas to recite a few couplets composed by him. After listening to the couplets, Akbar asked Surdas that despite being blind, how could he visualize such beautiful composition (metaphorical descriptions)? Surdas replied that his soul is connected to God, and while composing verses, he gets divine inspiration.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, Akbar's conversations with Kumbhan Das are also recorded in the text. It is mentioned that Akbar was impressed with his compositions and anxious to meet him; he sent him an invitation to visit Sikri. Arrangements for his travel from Jamunavat, where he was residing to Fatehpur Sikri, were also made. But when refused to visit Sikri, was compellingly brought to court. He was given a warm welcome at the court when he arrived, and the emperor requested him to recite some of his verses. KumbhanDas recited the following lines to express his displeasure at being forcefully brought to Fatehpur Sikri. (p 177)

*"Bhaktan ko Kaha Sikri Kam!! Awat Jat Panhaiya Tooti,  
Vishar gaiyo Harinam!! Jako Mukh Dekhe Dukh Lago,  
Tako Karan Pari Parnam!! KumbhanDas Lal Girdhar Bin  
Yah Sab Jhhotho Dham"*<sup>14</sup>

[Explanation- The author declares that saints have no business in Sikri. The journey to Sikri tears the footwear. It also leads to disruption in the devotion of Lord Krishna. Kumbhan Das<sup>15</sup> is upset with the fact that in the absence of devotion of Lord Krishna, he has to pray before the person whose face is not all pleasant (referring to the emperor). He asserts that only Lord Krishna represents the truth; the rest all is illusion]. It is significant to note that despite these strong comments made by Kumbhan Das, Akbar did no punitive action.

---

<sup>12</sup> Surdas was a distinguish poet. He was devotee of Lord Krishna and composed the popular devotional lyrics on Krishna in Hindi dialect of Braj. For more detail see, Pandit Dindayalu Gupta, *Ashtachhap Aur Vallabha Sampradaya*, Hindi Sahitya Sammelana, Prayag, Samvat 2004; John Stratton Hawley, *Three Bhakti Voices*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014 (2005), pp. 181-248; Christian Lee Novetzke, *History Bhakti and Public Memory*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2018 (2009), pp. 94-97.

<sup>13</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>14</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>15</sup> Kumbhan Das was one of the important poet among *Ashtachhap* poets. He was a devotee of Lord Krishna and composed poetry on Lord Krishna in local dialect Braj. For more detail see, Pandit Dindayalu Gupta, *Ashtachhap Aur Vallabha Sampradaya*, *op. cit.*; Brajbhushan Sharma & others (ed.), *Kumbhandas*, Vidya Vibhag, Kakarauli, 1948; Prabhudayal Mittal, *Ashtachhap Parichaya*, Agraval Press, Mathura, 1950.

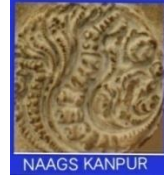
In yet another anecdote, *Varta* mentions that once Raja Man Singh (d. Jul. 1614).<sup>16</sup> visited Mathura to meet Kumbhan Das and offered him gifts and revenue-free land for his maintenance, the saint refused to accept. There are several other references in the *Varta* that show that the saints had no inclination to associate themselves with the imperial authorities and that they were also averse to taking any financial assistance from the state.<sup>17</sup>

From the above discussion on some of the *Varta's* anecdotes, it becomes amply clear that this hagiographical text is indeed an important source for studying the life of the people of 16th and 17th century India. The information given in the *Varta* about today's daily lives and the evidence available in the traditional historical sources will significantly add to our understanding of the people's socio-cultural and economic life, especially of the *Braj* region. Besides that, this genre's present *Varta* or other literary works could also be used as an important local history source. These works focus much more on the customs, traditions, and sources of livelihood of people, especially of downtrodden, of a particular region, often ignored by the traditional official narratives.

---

<sup>16</sup> Maan Singh, a prominent noble at the court of Akbar and Jahangir. For more details of his biography, see Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, *Zakhirat-ul Khawa'nin*, ed. Moinul Haq, Vol. I, Karachi, 1970, pp. 104-111.

<sup>17</sup> Gokulnath, *Chaurasi Vaishnavan Ki Varta*, p. 180.



NAAGS KANPUR

## **NANA SAHEB PESHWA OF BITHOOR**

**MAHENDRA SINGH VIST**

Research Fellow

Department of History

V.S.S.D. College Kanpur

C.S.J.M. University Kanpur India

Not much information is available about the early life of Nana Saheb of Bithoor who was the commander of the great revolution of 1857. Dr. Surendranath Sen wrote in his published book 'San Sattavan' that he did not know anything about Nana Saheb's childhood and training<sup>1</sup>. Contemporary newspapers<sup>2</sup> and records stored in the Uttar Pradesh Secretariat and the forms of the Kanpur Collectorate throw some light on the life of Nana Saheb, from which it is known that a great! The revolution coordinators and messengers of the Bengal Army had the blessings of Nana Saheb Peshwa, who held the royal position. National Library Calcutta records show that Nana Saheb was born in

He was born in Vikrami Samvat 1881, that is in 1824, in a Konkan Brahmin family<sup>3</sup>. In the form of the Uttar Pradesh Secretariat, the date of birth of Nana Saheb is given as 1820 AD, but in the absence of strong evidence regarding his date of birth, it is more expedient to accept his date of birth as 1824.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Surendranath Sen, year 1857, page 123

<sup>2</sup> Newspaper (daily) Englishman published from Calcutta, Saturday, 29 August 1857

<sup>3</sup> North Western Provinces Proceedings - Political Department, January to June 1864 AD Part 1, page 19, index number 17, report number 72 July 1863  
Description of Nana Rao, his family and servants (descriptive roll)



Nanasaheb's father Mahadev or Madhonarayan Rao was a resident of Venu village under Nastapur taluka at the foothills of Matheron hills in Maharashtra<sup>4</sup>. To overcome the economic disparity, Madhonarayan Rao had to come to Bithoor in 1827 to seek the shelter of Peshwa Bajirao II. Madhonarayan Rao was favored by Bajirao Peshwa because he was his cousin. Bajirao Peshwa had more affection for his sons. In 1827, Bajirao Peshwa made Nana Rao his adopted son and by accepting him as the eldest son, declared him entitled to the Peshwai throne. After being made an adopted son, Nana Rao was named Nana Rao or Ghodonpant. Bajirao Peshwa had given the information about the nomination of the successor to the commissioner of British rule located in Bithoor. He believed that his adopted sons (Nana Rao, Gangadhar Rao and Sadashiv Pant) would be able to enjoy his posthumous pension, titles, privileges and facilities by informing in this way and getting consent<sup>5</sup>; But after the death of Peshwa Bajirao II on January 28, 1851<sup>6</sup>, the English government changed its stand. He was denied the title of Peshwa, political rights and special personal privileges of Nana Rao. The English government informed Nanasaheb that the freedom of the Peshwa and his family men and women from the jurisdiction of the court was only till the lifetime of Peshwa Bajirao. This decision of the British Government was not practical and justified. The English historian Charles Ball wrote that immediately after the death of the Peshwa, the government sent 'honours' to his widowed queens to attend the Supreme Court of Calcutta. It was intolerable and shameful for Nana Rao and the Peshwa family. Not only this, the Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, by his letter dated 15 September 1851, also rejected the recommendation of the officiating commissioner, according to which part of the annual pension of Rs.8 lakhs should be given to his heirs. In this context, Dalhousie wrote in his letter, 'In my view, the recommendation of the officiating commissioner is inconsistent and undesirable' Nana Saheb also corresponded with Governor General Lord Dalhousie for the purpose of getting back the Peshwai pension; But Dalhousie flatly refused to do so and recommended the Court of Directors to oppose and reject it. Disappointed in the end, Nanasaheb sent Azimullah Khan as his lawyer and sent him to London to Queen Victoria. Other Indian kings, who were offended by Dalhousie's abduction policy, were following the same path<sup>7</sup>. The

---

<sup>4</sup> Charles Ball, History of the Indian Mutiny, pp. 302-303

<sup>5</sup> Foreign Political Consultation, dated 3 October 1851, numbers 8-11; Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh, Volume 1, page 12-13, Dr. Motilal Bhargava, Nanasaheb, page 19

<sup>6</sup> 'Pioneer' daily newspaper (published from Allahabad) 30 October 1874

<sup>7</sup> English historians Sir John Kay, Forest and Mure etc. have supported the predetermined plan of the revolution. Contemporary text, 'Majha Pravas'

information published in 'Pioneer' shows that the Court of Directors was not impressed by the arguments of Azimullah Khan and he remained firm in his determination to stop the Peshwai pension." With the stoppage of this pension, Nana Rao was unable to maintain his thousands of dependents. Worried about nutrition. As a result, intense bitterness, competition and unquenchable enmity against the British permanently settled in Nana Saheb's mind. This was confirmed by the manifesto broadcast from Delhi in the month of May 1857 and the announcement made by Nana Saheb in Kanpur. , 1859. It shows that Nana Saheb had strong opposition to foreign power and a burning desire to drive out the British from India. In order to fulfill this goal, revolution and massacre were justified in Nana Saheb's view. Therefore, Nana Saheb led the great revolution of 1857. Some historians say that whether this revolution was planned by Nana Saheb or not, it seems misleading. response field Come in, doesn't seem right. The plan of revolution was pre-decided<sup>8</sup>. Nana Saheb had prepared the plan of revolution

---

(Marathi) on page 46, author Vishnubhatt Godse has supported the British historians in pre-fixed plan of revolution.

<sup>8</sup> Translation of Ishtiharnama "You have forgiven all the sins of India; and the murderers have also been pardoned. It is surprising that your soldiers who killed your wives and children, and Mammu Khan and Farrukhabad You have also pardoned the dignitaries (i.e. Nawab Farrukhabad) who are actually murderers, and you have written to Jang Bahadur to return the Begum and other kings to their respective countries in safety. It is astonishing that when I sided with the revolutionaries in a helpless state, I was not forgiven. I did not commit any murder. If General Houla (Wheeler) had not invited me and my soldiers from Bithoor, my soldiers would not have rebelled; The family was not called to the safe wall. My soldiers were not from my country (Maharashtra), and I had already said that a poor person like me (of little importance) would not be of any real help to the British, but General Houla told me Don't listen to one and come to the wall Did not chant When your army rebelled and went to take possession of the treasure, my soldiers also joined. On this I thought seriously that if I go to the fort, my soldiers (considering me a traitor) will destroy my family and the British will definitely punish me by holding me responsible for the rebellion of my soldiers; That's why it was necessary for me to play with death. My subjects (ryots) needed me, so I had to support the soldiers. Two-three years ago, I did Rubkari - that is, sent applications before the government, but no attention was paid to them. The soldiers in Kanpur disobeyed my orders and started killing British women and subjects. Those whom it was possible to save, I definitely did that. When the British left the ramparts, I arranged boats for them so that they could go to Allahabad, but your own soldiers attacked them. With great persuasion I stopped the soldiers and saved the lives of 200 British women and children. I heard that

very secretly and the British could not know the reality till the last moment. Even after the start of the revolution, the diplomatic moves of Nana Saheb remained a mystery. Nana Saheb first established contact with Scindia Rajmata Baijabaï for secretly preparing for the revolution<sup>9</sup>. After that established contact with Holkar, Scindia and the kings of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jhalawar, Rewaan, Baroda, Hyderabad, Kolhapur, Satara, Indore etc. Nana Sahib also corresponded with Begum Hazrat Mahal of Lucknow and Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah of Delhi, who was dissatisfied with the justice of the British. . Nana Saheb also sent a letter to Emperor Napoleon III of France, in which he discussed the unequal and unjust behavior of the British towards the Indians. It is clear from the records of the National Archives, New Delhi, that Nana Saheb's letter had reached the Emperor of France." Nana Saheb established contact with the soldiers by visiting major cantonments of northern India like Meerut, Ambala and Lucknow on the pretext of pilgrimage. British historian Mallison has written that the plan of the revolution was pre-determined in which Nana Saheb, Maulvi Ahmed Ullah Shah of Faizabad, Azim Ullah Khan, Tatya Tope, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Begum Hazratmahal etc. were all active. On May 10, 1857<sup>10</sup>, untimely explosion of revolution The First Indian

---

later your own soldiers and miscreants, while our soldiers fled from Kanpur and my brother was hurt, killed him! After this I heard about the advertisement published by you, and got ready to fight. I have been fighting with you till now and will fight as long as I live. You know very well that I am neither a murderer nor a criminal, nor have you published any order regarding me. You probably have no enemy except me. If so, I will fight as long as I live. I am also a human. Only I live two miles away. How wonderful that you, a great and mighty nation, have been waging war against me for two years; But still nothing could harm me! On the fact that my soldiers do not obey my orders and I do not have even a small plot of my country under my authority! You have forgiven everyone's crimes. The king of Nepal is your friend. Despite all this, you could not harm me. You have turned all my followers to your side, only I am left, but you will see what the soldiers I have saved for two years can do. When we meet, I will make your blood flow knee-deep in a stream. I'm ready to die It is a matter of pride for me if I am the only one who deserves to be considered an enemy of such a powerful nation. All my heartfelt wishes came true. Death will come one day. Then what am I afraid of but those whom you have got on your side today will one day rise against you and kill you. You must be intelligent but you have made a mistake in your cleverness. I had sent a letter to Chandranagar. But he did not reach there. This bothered me otherwise you would have seen what I could have done! Still I will try again for Chandranagar."

<sup>9</sup> Vishnubhatt Godse, *Majha Pravas* (Marathi text) page 46

<sup>10</sup> Foreign Political Proceedings May 27, 1859, Consultation No. 66

Freedom Struggle could not be successful due to his departure. In the battles of Kanpur, Vijayashree remained in the hands of the British and Nanasahab's dream of Kanpur victory got destroyed." The British also got convinced that the suppression of the revolution is not possible until Nana Saheb is imprisoned. Even after the defeat of Kanpur, Rao Saheb, Taty Tope, Jhansi ki Rani etc. were conducting the revolution at places like Jhansi, Banda, Farrukhabad etc. in Yamunapar South Pradesh according to the secret orders of Nana Saheb. Leaving the palaces of Bithoor, Nanasahab and his family were moving secretly from one place to another while facing the difficulties of camp life and carrying out the work of revolution. It was difficult to trace him.

In December 1859 it was generally believed that Nanasahab had died. But 'The Friend of India' in its November 22, 1860 issue made his death even more suspicious by confirming that Nanasahab had visited Tibet in 1860<sup>11</sup>.

1. Nothing can be said with certainty about the death of Nana Saheb, nor have there been concrete official records on this fact. It is surprising that despite the news of his death being published, the search for Nana Saheb by the British Government from 1861 to 1874 continued equally and the British officials tried unsuccessfully to arrest him with all their imperialist power. The British officers were not going to sit quietly either. He kept on searching for Nanasahab even after Ferozshah Shahzade had left India for Central Asia, Raosaheb Peshwa was hanged and other revolutionary leaders were sent to Kalepani<sup>12</sup>. In November 1861, suddenly two persons were caught in Karachi, whose real names were Harji Bhai Vald Chhedanand and Brijdas Bhagat Ramji, the first was considered to be Ghodopant Nanasahab, a resident of Bithoor and the second was his personal servant. Nanasahab was found suspicious from the statements of the witnesses, so the so-called Nanasahab and his servant were released. On June 22, 1863, near Munda Sthan Kunds in Ajmer, a blind priest was taken prisoner under the delusion of Nanasahab, whose age was 45 years and he looked like Nanasahab. On comparison with the appearance of Nanasahab's family, it could only be clear that he appears to be a suspicious Nana Rao. In the confusion of Nanasahab, many persons similar to his figure were imprisoned and tireless efforts were made to identify them by taking them to Kanpur, but the government could not get success, so the government ordered the prisoners to be released. Even after arresting and interrogating Nanasahab's assistants and relatives, the information about the mysterious secret residence of Nanasahab was not found. Even after

---

<sup>11</sup> The defeat of Kanpur was undoubtedly the most important and influential event in the revolution of 1857. After this war, the second aspect of Nana Saheb's life begins incognito

<sup>12</sup> Rex: "Notes on the Revolt" - Information received by Bilgram Harkara, 28 January 1858 AD

1864, efforts were made by the government to arrest him. Meanwhile, on October 23, 1874, the Pioneer published that "among the leading rebels, perhaps the most instigator of the mutiny, who had successfully escaped, is now apprehended." According to the Pioneer, it was learned by telegram that "Nana Sahib Not only has Maharaj been captured by Scindia, but he has also accepted everything. The captured person calls himself Nana Saheb." In Murar, a Maratha Kshatriya named Hanwanta, mistaking him for Nana, was taken prisoner and taken to Kanpur, but was able to identify him. described him as different from the real Nana. When efforts were being made to identify the suspected Nana Saheb in Murar, Gwalior and Kanpur, at the same time the news was published in the month of November that the real Nana Saheb left his body in the Ganga in despair. His companions kept on lamenting. It is known from Dr. Bhargava's article "Nana Saheb who could not be imprisoned by the British" that Nanasaheb's wife was living in Nepal as Sadhwa<sup>13</sup>. On December 18, 1874, 'Pioneer' also published this news, which seems misleading. Seeing the copy of 'Pioneer' of December 18, 1874 shows that no such information has been published. The records related to the residence of Nanasaheb's wife in Nepal have not come to light, so it cannot be said with certainty that Nanasaheb's wife used to live in a cottage in the garden of Rana Jang Bahadur's palace, where she worshiped in a temple. And Nana Saheb used to visit his wife in the temple once a year<sup>14</sup>. Records from the National Archives of Delhi show that Nana Sahib was staying in Mecca in 1877-78. The British agent based in Jeddah informed the British Government about this news. When a mysterious letter reached the Viceroy's office in 1879, there was a stir, the question arose, "Was Nanasaheb alive, did he return to India from Mecca? Re-checking started on the letter. It bears the following note from the State Department's General Section dated April 29, "It is said that Nana Sahib is on his death bed and will be dead by the time this letter reaches, Nana gives amazing secrets in the letter, Christians to the country gives his plan to free them from the (foreigners) as well as his relationship with Surjuja, whom he had received from Jaipur and who was in fact the rightful owner of the Jaipur throne, reveals the location of the hidden treasure , pray that it may be dug up and presented to Surjuja, who was at this time in England.

Unfortunately the first page of the letter is not available so it is difficult to say to whom it was addressed and from where it was written. There is definitely an indication in the letter that his secret place was Kashi; But the last page of the letter and the farewell address on it are very strange and mysterious. Nanasaheb

---

<sup>13</sup> 'Parliamentary Papers' - The Mutiny in the East Indies Enclosed form 6, No. 6, telegram sent by the judge from Kanpur: dated February 11, 1858 The Friend of India Newspaper Daily April 15, 1858

<sup>14</sup> William Howard Russell, My Indian Mutiny Diary; page 265

writes to a Bithoor resident "I am afraid to present myself before you because I have heard that you are on the side of the Europeans, it has been ten years since the child has been in the possession of the British. If the action took place, it was probably intended, it should have resulted in the infinite mercy of the Lord; but unfortunately it turned out to be a curse, this sin would have completely descended on Nana Sahib, if that child had survived and was found. The letter ends with this hope. In the end, Nana Saheb writes.

farewell ! Farewell dear brother

Yours only in disaster and degradation

Nana Saheb is a resident of Bithoor.

The style of the address is very touching; The signature is in English. From this letter preserved in the National Archives, Delhi, Nana Saheb's unknown existence, difficult life, feeling of vengeance from the British and his survival till 1879 can be seen. The Indian government suppressed this mysterious letter and did not inform Queen Victoria about it. Dr. Motilal Bhargava has written that after publishing the news of Nanasaheb's death, how could the government inform that Nanasaheb was alive in 1879 and could have written letters. The Viceroy and the Governor General neither did any investigation nor did any correspondence.

Nanasaheb had resided in Pratapgarh during his period of exile. On this fact, the receipt of some important documents, paper and diary of Dewan Azimullah Khan from Mr. Suraj Pratap, a resident of Pratapgarh, gives light. Mr. Suraj Pratap is said to be the great-grandson of Nanasaheb and enlightened historian Dr. Ishwari Prasad has also considered this record as authentic and reliable<sup>15</sup>. The receipt of these documents from Mr. Suraj Pratap proves that Nanasaheb may have been staying in Pratapgarh during his period of exile or his companion Azimullah Khan may have been staying there and Nanasaheb used to visit there sometimes. It is known from Dr. Bhargava's article 'Anonymous of Nanasaheb' that at the time of collection of research material on history of freedom struggle of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Parameshwar Singh, Village Raigarh, Tehsil Patti, District Pratapgarh told in his statement that his Baba Hanwant Singh Nanasaheb Peshwa and Azimullah were familiar with Khan. He told that my Baba used to call him Maratha Raja and I got his full introduction from my Baba. In 1914, when I had the opportunity to attend the birth anniversary of Nanasaheb's grandson at Madhramau, I saw him sitting in a royally bearded look with Raja Singramau of Raja Bazar. After this my father died in 1915 and I came to Bombay where I met Nanasaheb at Sadhuvesh in Bombay at the end of 1916. In the beginning of 1917, I and Nanasaheb and his disciples came together till Delhi and he stayed in Delhi and I went home, after that he returned to Delhi with his companion Azimullah Khan

---

<sup>15</sup> Capt. Shurveer Singh Pawar, 'Did Nanasaheb go into exile in Uttarkashi— article; Dharmayug February 1976 issue, page 20

and stayed with me for one year.<sup>16</sup> Reached home later. It is also known from this article that when Nanasaheb came to Pratapgarh while doing pilgrimage, he went from here to Naimisharanya district Sitapur. Such a statement was given on 18-10-55 by Harishchandra Singh, a resident of Jagdishpur village of Pratapgarh, at the time of investigation regarding Nanasaheb. Harishchandra also told that his Baba Thakur Jadunath Singh was also taken to Naimisharanya by Nanasaheb. On February 1, 1926, he had seen with his own eyes the death incident of Nanasaheb on the banks of Gomti. They also used to tell that they went missing due to sudden flood in the river. ,

On making inquiries in Naimisharanya, it was found that Panda Shri Jagdamba Prasad Tiwari had mention of some people of Peshwa family from Bithoor coming and staying there. Inquiries made there in 1954 revealed that one Kailashan Baba used to live in the temple of Lalitadevi and used to get marble stones installed in that temple from the property buried in the forest. He used to call himself a king. Others heard him calling himself the king of Satara. This Kailashnath Baba had come to the temple in 1888. He stayed there for about 20 years. 35 Strong proofs of Nana Saheb's stay here have not been found and the talk of his survival till 1926 is also unconfirmed.

Government records and advertisements show that Nana Saheb had arranged for local eminent people to publish such advertisements in which they confessed that they had carried the body of Nanasaheb with their own hands. And gave fire to the body. It appears that this was only to mislead the British. Similar thing was told by Nanasaheb's sister Kusumavati that Nanasaheb had died in 1859 due to fever and his last act took place in front of her. She was then twelve years old. But it is not possible to make any decision on the basis of this statement. Because how could a twelve year old girl have any sense of the mysterious tricks of Nanasaheb<sup>17</sup>.

It is difficult to say how long Nanasaheb lived. A mysterious letter written by him in 1879 gives the impression that he was alive till this time. The impression of Nanasaheb's survival till 1879 can be seen from the manifestos installed in all the major places of Pune in 1879 by Maharashtra's revolutionary Vasudev Balwant Phadke. In this manifesto it is said that Vasudev Balwant Singh, on behalf of Mr. Nanasaheb Peshwa (absent), declares that a reward of five lakh rupees will be given to the person who brings the head of Sir Richard Temple, the Governor of Bombay. Writing Nanasaheb absent in this manifesto clearly means that till then Nanasaheb was alive and Vasudev Balwant Phadke was in contact with him. In

---

<sup>16</sup> Dr. Motilal Bhargava, article 'Nana Saheb - whom the British could not make a life prisoner' - Dharmayuga August 15, 1976

<sup>17</sup> Grandmothers, 'Where did Nanasaheb live after the mutiny?' Article - Dharmayuga, 9 May 1976, page 8-10

fact, where and how Nanasaheb died, no reliable basis has been available till date. Dadumiyan, in one of his articles 'Where Nana Sahib remained after Gadar', has given this information on the basis of Kalyan ji's diary that after the failure of 1857, Maharishi Dayanand Nana Saheb went near his birthplace Maurvi to keep him safe. Located in Sehore village. Nanasaheb lived in Sehore for 46 years and continued to work for the welfare of the poor and the poor people as per the order of Rishi Dayanand. His dilapidated tomb is also available here. Maharaj (Nana Saheb) died on Shravan Shukla Panchami Monday in 1959. His dead body was carried in a palanquin to the 1500 year old Brahmakund in Saurashtra where the last rites were performed. ,

But from the mysterious letter written by Nana Saheb, we get information about his survival till 1879 and his wandering in a saintly state. No concrete evidence has been found regarding the exact date and place of his death. This confusion is likely to remain until definite news is received based on the records. In fact, the events of his unknown life and death are so mysterious that it does not seem possible to solve it easily.





**MISSIONARIES, MERLINS AND MERCHANTS: RECENT  
SCHOLARSHIP ILLUMINATES HOW MEDIEVAL SOUTHEAST ASIA  
TRANSFORMED INDIAN CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS IDEAS  
BROUGHT TO THE REGION BY MONKS AND TRADERS**

**WILLIAM DALRYMPLE**  
London U.K.

Sometime in the early tenth century, a ninety-foot-long, three-hundred-ton trading ship sank off the coast of Java, probably the victim of a sudden monsoon storm. The ship went down with all hands. The crew and the cargo lay on the floor of the Java Sea undisturbed until 1997, when marine archaeologists located the wreck near the Intan oil field. In due course, the salvage divers brought to the surface all that survived of the vessel's rich cargo. The finds were described by one of the excavators as "astounding."

There were fine Chinese ceramics, including costly white porcelain, and 20,000 Chinese stoneware pots. There were gold ring-weights used by jewelers to measure expensive raw materials, as well as the jewelers' intricate creations themselves. There were bronze vanity mirrors of exactly the sort depicted in the sculpture galleries of the nearby Buddhist site Borobudur, where the sophisticated court women of Java are shown combing their hair and applying makeup, in present-day Indonesia. Load by load, the divers brought up Indian steel weapons and Bengali brass lion-head finials, bottles from Thailand, glass from the Middle East, and silver ingots from Tang China. The ship also appears to have been carrying carved ivory and wooden doors from Bengal to a temple in Southeast Asia. There was even a ship's compass—a new technological breakthrough at the time.

Intriguingly, there was also a lot of ritual Buddhist paraphernalia, apparently smelted in Sumatra and intended for export: bronze Buddhist statuettes and masks representing Kala, the demon of time; ceremonial spears, vessels, and bells; and a haul of Buddhist ritual scepters called *vajras*, or “thunderbolts,” that were used by tantric monks as magical weapons and symbols of power. Hinges from now-lost wooden chests hinted that the most valuable cargo may have been textiles: Indian cotton or Chinese silk, or maybe both. A “brief description cannot do justice to the wealth of information that the Intan [wreck] provides,” wrote John Miksic, a historian of Southeast Asia. “A shipwreck is a time capsule, a moment frozen in time.”

Analysis of the Intan shipwreck provided a detailed picture of both the economic and the human connections linking early medieval India, Southeast Asia, and China—the region sometimes described as Monsoon Asia. Today, in a world divided by national boundaries, we tend to think of Cambodia, Indonesia, and China as very far from India. But in the ancient and medieval world the sea did not divide so much as unite. Sea travel was the fastest, safest, and cheapest way to move people and goods in the premodern world, costing about a fifth of the price of equivalent land transport. For all their fame, the overland Silk Roads always carried much less trade than the Sea Roads: ships, after all, could carry much greater loads and travel more quickly than camels.



'Krishna Lifting Mount Govardhan'; sandstone sculpture from Phnom Da, Cambodia, circa 600



**BRITISH COLONIAL INTERVENTION: TRADE PATTERN,  
SPATIALITY OF MARKETS AND TRADING NETWORKS IN  
THE GOALPARA REGION TILL 1826**

**MASUMA FIRDAUSI**

Ph.D. Scholar

Centre of Advanced Study

Department of History,

Aligarh Muslim University

Aligarh India

**Abstract:**

Till 1826, Assam was controlled by the Ahoms. With the treaty of Yandaboo (1826), the long-ruling power of the Ahoms came to an end, and Assam got a new ruler, i.e., the British. With the signing of this agreement, the British gained control over Assam, Manipur, Cachar, and Jaintiya. The Goalpara region's geopolitical status was quite significant for all the imperialist power who were eyeing the natural resources of Assam as well as its neighbouring provinces. The period of study undertaken about the region of Goalpara has its relevance. Before the East India Company's ascendancy, Goalpara was Bengal and Assam's most crucial commerce center. This region has acted as a gateway to Assam for centuries. An essential commodity in the Assam market's, salt, was regarded as equivalent to gold by the locals due to its scarcity. Because of the less salt supply from the Naga Hills, Sadiya, and Burhat region, Assam was forced to rely on the supply of salt from Bengal. To earn a handful amount, the British East India Company opened various salt warehouses at Goalpara. Ultimately, Goalpara became the hub of the trade-in salt for the North-Eastern Frontier countries. Apart from salt, sal timber (*Soria Robusta*) and jute brought enormous profits for the Company. Thus, this paper attempts to highlight the significance of Goalpara in the British annexation of North-Eastern India.

**Keywords:** Salt, Goalpara, Rangamati, Jogighopa, Sal, Brines

People from other parts of India and the rest of the world have always been fascinated by Assam's wilderness and sacredness, primarily because of its rich natural resources. Numerous references to Assam's interaction with the outside of India, including China, Tibet and Burma, and other regions of India, can be found in ancient<sup>1</sup> and medieval literature. One of such prominent examples can be found in the work of Minhaj-i-Siraj, where he pointed out that there were up to thirty-five passes in the north that served as a communication route between the hills and the plains. He also mentioned a market place Karampatan, where livestock trading was held every day, and roughly 1500 *tangahan* horses from Bhutan were sold.<sup>2</sup> The overall prosperity of the region can be easily understood by the remarks of Tavernier, "*the kingdom of Assam is one of the best countries of Asia, for it produces all that is necessary to man's life, and there is no need to go for anything to the neighboring states.*"<sup>3</sup> People of the Brahmaputra Valley lived a very self-sufficient life. During Ahom's reign, Assam followed a complete isolation policy. The rulers of Ahoms did not allow the inhabitants of Assam to go out, nor did they grant permission to the outsiders to settle in the region. Still, to some extent, they had commercial relations with the Bengal, Mughal, and other provinces of India. The Europeans travellers like Manucci, Bernier, Tavernier has given some glimpses of the kingdom of Assam in their respective travelogues. As one of the first group of Europeans to travel as far as the capital or its vicinity, Glanius the Dutch sailor of Mir Jumla has left a record of his experiences in Assam, his narrative has its own significance. The main products of Assam are mentioned by Glanius as pepper, sandalwood, aloe wood etc.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand Manucci lists pears, apples, peaches, cherries and grapes as the principal products of Assam. Assam's conquest by Mir Jumla had been described by him as a prelude to the invasion of China and Pegu. Mir Jumla and Diler Khan both were

---

<sup>1</sup> Ancient Assam, also known as Pragjyotisha in the Mahabharata and Kamrupa in the Puranas and Tantras, is frequently mentioned in the Hindu epics as well as in Puranic and Tantric literature. According to Yogini Tantra, Kamrupa stretches from the mountain range of Kanjagiri in the north to the junction of the Brahmaputra and Lakhya rivers in the south, and from the Karatoya river in the west to the Dikhu in the east.

<sup>2</sup> Minhaj-i-Siraj, *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, ed. and tr. H.G. Raverty, Asiatic Society of Bengal, London, 1813, pp. 567-568.

<sup>3</sup> Tavernier, *Travels in India*, ed. William Crooke, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, New Delhi, 1977, p. 220.

<sup>4</sup> *Bengal: Past and present*, Vol. XXIX, Part 1, Serial No. 57. The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1925, p-20

anxious to open to Aurangzeb a door for entering China. For that seemed as easy thing after the acquisition of Assam.<sup>5</sup>

The Goalpara region of Assam is bordered on the north by Bhutan, on the east by Kamrupa, on the south by Garo-Hills<sup>6</sup>, and on the west by Koch-Bihar and Rangpur. The Brahmaputra River divided the region into two geographical zones, north and south. The British and the Bengali merchants used Goalpara as their commercial center. For the British to maintain control over or manage their relations with Bhutan, Mizoram, Manipur, Burma, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh, they need to have a firm foothold in Goalpara. The three commercial hubs from which Bengal and British merchants used to conduct commercial intercourse with Assam were Goalpara, Jogighopa, and Rangamati. Goalpara lies on the southern border of Brahmaputra, and Jogighopa and Rangamati are on the northern bank. At the customs house in Hadira or the Assam chauk at the mouth of the Manas River, the *Duaria Barua*, an agent of the Assam, lived. After exchanging Assam's commodities for Bengal products, he realized all import and export taxes. In exchange for the exclusive right to trade with Bengal, which he had, he paid the Assam Government a 90,000-rupee annual rent.<sup>7</sup> For all the commercial and imperialist powers that entered Assam through the western border, the geopolitical status of Goalpara is highly important. Goalpara's vital location forced all the external powers to pay close attention to the region. Assam would function as the rich hinterland of Calcutta in addition to supplying a market and acting as a forwarding agency. With these high expectations, the Company embarked upon a determined penetration process into a region that had remained practically isolated from the rest of the country for centuries.<sup>8</sup>

J.M.Cosh discusses certain trade routes between Bengal and Assam in his *Topography of Assam*(1837). He calculated that the voyage from Goalpara to Calcutta is performed in twenty-five to thirty-five days and from Calcutta to

---

<sup>5</sup> Niccolao Manucc, *Storia Do Mogor*, tr. Irvine, Vol.II, John Murray, Albemarle Street, London, 1907, p-98

<sup>6</sup> The Khasi Hills, the district of Goalpara, Maimansingh the district of Bengal form the northern, eastern and the southern boundaries of the Garo Hills, respectively. Garo Hills had a 3180 square mile size, and the Deputy-Commissioner calculated that there were 100,000 people living there. Additionally, only recently has the boundary between the Garo Hills and Goalpara been established. Some territories that were formerly part of Goalpara are now added to the Garo Hills. The general rule followed drawing the line was to include all of the hilly region inhabited by Garos in the newly created Garo Hills district and to isolate Goalpara from it. This idea has been effectively put into practise.

<sup>7</sup> S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati, 1949, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> Priyam Goswami, 'Colonial Assam: Trade, Development and Dependence', *Indian Council of Historical Research*, North-East Regional Centre, Guwahati, 2007, p. 6.

Goalpara in about eight days more. There were mainly four routes, one by water and three by land. The three overland routes from Bengal to Assam were; the first by Murshidabad, Mauldah, Dinagepore, Rangpore, Baugwah, and Goalpara. The second road is via Dacca, Dumary, Puculoe, Jumalpore, Singimary and Goalpara. The third road passes through Sylhet, Moplung, Nunklow, Ranneygodown, Cannymook, and Gauhati.<sup>9</sup> The waterway communications were mostly used by the Bengal traders of Dacca, Mymensingh, Dinajpur and Koch Behar to go the seasonal trading locations at Goalpara and the Rangpur city. In this way, the creation of natural trade networks and communication linkages was significantly aided by the River Megna of Eastern Bengal, the Brahmaputra of Assam and their tributaries.

Goalpara has seen various jurisdictional changes since it came under the British administration. The permanently settled area was once part of the Rangpur (Bengal) district. The territory was divided from Rangpur by Regulation X of 1822, and it was placed in charge of David Scott, the first administrator of the frontier. It was necessary to exempt the Garo mountaineers and other rude tribes on the north-eastern boundary of Rangpur from the operation of the existing regulations and to establish a particular system of Government for the country occupied by them or bordering on their possessions.<sup>10</sup> This was done to civilize the underdeveloped races, quell inter-racial unrest, and stop neighbouring landowners from encroaching on their territory. When Assam was ceded to the British in 1826, Goalpara was annexed to the Assam Valley division. Its administration was placed in the hands of the Commissioner and the Judicial Commissioner of Assam. And then Goalpara was separated from the province of Assam and placed under the Commissioner of Koch-Bihar division in all matters by the provisions of a government notification 1866.<sup>11</sup> It was placed under the judicial Commissioner of Assam for judicial purposes, and it was eventually incorporated into the new province when Assam was established as a separate administration in 1874. This district was again moved to the Bengal administrative divisions in 1905. The partition of Bengal was annulled in 1912 under the pressure of the Swadeshi Movement, and the Goalpara was permanently merged with the newly constituted province of Assam. After establishing its dominance in Bengal, East India Company started its sway over Assam. During the post-independence period there has been only one major change in the administrative set up of the district but its effect was confined within its

---

<sup>9</sup> John M'Cosh, *Topography of Assam*, G.H.Huttmann, Bengal Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1837, pp- 8-9

<sup>10</sup> W.W. Hunter, "A Statistical Account of Assam", vol. 2, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1998, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> D.P. Barooah, *Assam District Gazetteers Goalpara District*, The Editor-in-Chief, District Gazetteers, Government of Assam, Gauhati, 1979, p. 2.

boundaries. A new sub-division known as Kokrajhar sub-division was erected on February 9, 1957 by carving out of Dhubri sub-division the areas under Gossaigaon, Kokrajhar, Bijni, and Sidli police stations.

The British Colonialism commenced in India only after the acquisition of Diwani rights of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa by the Treaty of Allahabad (1765). After the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26), the British conquered the whole province of Assam by the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. This established British influence upon the region and gave them a secure foundation in the Brahmaputra Valley. As mentioned above, Assam and the eastern Himalayan region were significant not just for their natural resources but also for their strategic location as the area shared a demarcation line with Tibet and Burma. The military and commercial routes that connected Bengal with Bhutan, China, Burma, Tibet, and Sikkim through the northeast of India were vividly described by R.B. Pemberton in his account *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*.

In 18<sup>th</sup> century England, the emphasis changed from revenue collection and trade to new kinds of surplus appropriation as the country transitioned from merchant capitalism to industrial capitalism, intending to dominate the world economically. This colonialism process undertaken by the British was mainly to extend their political and economic power. The British's search for global resources must be evaluated from this perspective. The overall effect of this phenomenon was that enormous territories were conquered, and new markets and raw materials were taken at a meagre cost. The politically emerging alliance at home between land and money, they argue, created the notion of power being centred in land and hence the preoccupation of the Company-state with "the need to raise revenue as well as to keep order."<sup>12</sup> Hence, Assam in the north-eastern region of India was no exception to the overall British penetration pattern. The Company was attracted to Assam by the massive gains made by the traders and the merchants, as well as by the different representation produced by Huge Baillie, David Killican and George Bogle to the Company. Additionally, Captain Welsh points out in his report that encouraging correct conduct could benefit the business dealings with Assam. Assam and the Eastern Himalayas were notable not just for their natural resources but also for their strategic location, sharing a common border with Tibet and Burma. Britain tried to fill the gap left by the decline in commerce with Europe by engaging in trade with Burma, Tibet and China. As Tibet imported more than it exported, trade with the country was of even greater importance, as the balance was made up in gold and silver.<sup>13</sup> The mission led by Welsh, sent in 1792 by Lord Cornwallis to quell the rouge raids of

---

<sup>12</sup> Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition and After*, Orient Black Swan Private Limited, New Delhi, 2004, p.62

<sup>13</sup> Alastair Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia The Road to Lhasa*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1960, p.5



Bengal Burkendazes,<sup>14</sup> was the first official visit by Europeans to Assam during the pre-yandaboo period. In the colonial era, Goalpara's trade was primarily limited to salt, forest products, and agricultural items, particularly jute and sal timber. Salt, which was very rare in Assam, was regarded as being equivalent to gold in the region. A large amount of salt was being exported to Assam from Bengal. Literary sources of ancient and medieval Assam are entirely silent about the mass-level salt production in the area. However, there were few salts of brine sites like Sadiya, Burhat and Naga Hills. But these salts were not affordable for the masses. People in the valley used *khar* (alkaline-like substance), the burnt ashes of specific trees that provided a salty taste, instead of ready-made salt before the British settlement in the region. The chronicler of Mir Jumla explained the region's local salt production in his words, "*some natives cut the young banana trees and dry them in the sun, then they are burnt and the ashes are kept in a canvas bag, and the canvas bag packed with the ashes is put on a high platform and water is poured over it. In this process, it is distilled and used as salt though it is very acidic.*"<sup>15</sup> The East India Company was drawn to the salt trading possibility; therefore, they established salt warehouses at Goalpara. Under British rule, the primary commercial good of Goalpara, salt, was turned into a monopoly trade, bringing them significant profits. Jean Baptiste Chevalier, a merchant who belonged to the French East India Company, came to Assam in 1755. From Sylhet to Goalpara, he conducted his trading activities. At last, he opened up a salt factory and warehouse at Goalpara and continued his commercial activities over sometimes as the salt business was highly profitable in the region. The annual use of Bengal salt in Assam was often calculated to be 100,00 maunds.<sup>16</sup> George Lear, another merchant in 1769, came to Goalpara for trading. After that, he spent rupees 21,742 for constructing an independent salt factory and emporium to carry out his business smoothly.<sup>17</sup> In 1759, Paul Richard Pearkes, a European trader, entered Assam and established a factory at Jogighopa for some time. He was enthralled by the Assamese wares, which primarily consisted by the Assamese wares, which mainly consisted of fir and other types of woods and gold obtained from the Brahmaputra's sand. He wrote to a friend, "*I am at present on my voyage to Assam, a country that only two Europeans have visited besides myself, and where trade may, I am certain, be carried on greatly to the advantage of the*

---

<sup>14</sup> The disbanded soldiers of Muslim armies of Zamindars were collectively called as "Barkandazes" They were organized in small groups and had their weapons ready to give services to anyone who paid them money.

<sup>15</sup> Shehabuddin Talish, *Tarikh-i-Aasham*, ed. Akdas Ali Mir, tr. Mazhar Asif, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati, 2009, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> R. Boileau Pemberton, "*Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*", DHAS, Guwahati, 1991, p. 82.

<sup>17</sup> S.K. Bhuyan, 1949, p. 97.

*Company and their servants, and doubt not I shall make it turn out to my present profits.* John Robinson and Hugh Baillie followed Pearkes in the district. The East India Company's direct commercial relationship with Assam began in 1765 when Robert Clive established the Society of Trade. The main aim behind the establishment of this society was to deal with areca nuts, salt, and tobacco. Hugh Baillie was recruited by Robert Clive to serve as an agent of the Goalpara Society of Trade in 1765. Later, he became a monopoly trader who controlled the trade in Bengal and Assam after obtaining the lease of the salt trade at Goalpara from the Company in 1768. Along with the English merchants, there were several Frenchmen living at Goalpara to conduct salt trade with the Assamese traders, specifically Laval, Giblot, and Campanag. In 1767, Mr. Laval moved to Goalpara to conduct a salt trade with the Assamese merchants. Robert Bigger and Mc Cullam, who both lived in Jogighopa and had a trade branch in Goalpara, were significant merchants who traded salt with Assamese dealers. Daniel Raush, another important English salt trader, visited Bengal in 1766. Under David Kallican, he did continue his business. On August 31, 1787, the Government had published an advertisement inviting tenders to transporting 50,000 maunds of salt from Narayangunge to Goalpara. A Greek trader by the name of Constantine Theodosius made the first and only request. Due to his expertise in river transportation between Narayangunge and Goalpara, the Greek merchant had been employed. On August 16, 1787, Baillie asked the Bengal authorities to send salt of Khulna to Goalpara. By October 15, 1787, the Bengal Government had sent 50,000 mounds of Khulna salt, along with 25,000 mounds in July. By the middle of August 1788, Goalpara had also received about 25,000 mounds of salt. Numerous Indian merchants engaged themselves in the Assam trade, especially in Goalpara. For instance, Naib Dewan of Bengal, Muhammad Raza Khan granted Gunny Sam Sarkar and Sooberam Palit Perwanas a three-year monopoly in the salt trade at Goalpara. Jagat Seth, the famous banker of Murshidabad, also had trading concerns at Jogighopa, Gauhati, and Goalpara, which continued up to 1815 and even later.

W.W. Hunter's work *A Statistical Account of Assam* (1879) pointed out that the local trade of Goalpara region was principally in the hands of Marwari merchants.<sup>18</sup> Following Assam's conquest, the British East India Company eased trade restrictions between Assam and Bengal, encouraging Marwari traders to establish themselves in Assam. During the second half of nineteenth century the total number of Marwari merchants in the region was 155, Agarwala traders 19, Oswal traders 215, jaswar 13, Bais-baniya 17, Gandha-baniya 285 in number. Marwari merchants handled the majority of the export and import while also conducting a sizable amount of retail business. Numerous Bengali merchants

---

<sup>18</sup> W.W. Hunter, 1998, p. 76.

were also very active in the region. Rice, pulses, paddy, silk, jute, wax, mustard seeds, tobacco, cotton clothes, timber, betel-nuts, dried fish, cows, pigs, buffaloes, sheep, goats, etc., were some of the essential articles in the region. Apart from the list of the commodities of export and import Hunter has also mentioned the important places of trade and commerce. Bilasipara, Bijni, Dhubri, Jogighopa, Dumaria, Gauripur, Patamari, Agamani, Simlabari, Kherbari, Dimakari, Bagribari, Marnai, Rangjuli, Damra, Jira, Nibari, Singimari, Rajabala, Putimari, Manikachar, Karaibari, and Dalo where commercial activities happened frequently. Local trade in Goalpara is conducted at permanent markets and occasional fairs in conjunction with religious festivals. Many shops were also dispersed around the region. There were two different categories of traders: petty traders and big merchants. Periodical markets, fairs and marts were some common places where these petty traders used sell their commodities. The *gandha-baniya*, the *beparis* and the *bais-baniya* were the small traders. The *gandha-baniya* and the *bais-baniya* mainly engaged themselves in the business of spices and grocery. B.C. Allen, in the *Goalpara District Gazetteer* (1903), had given us the details about the prices of the commodities that were some of the common items in the market of the region. He noted that unhusked rice also made up an export item in the market. Though the prices were not static, they kept fluctuating according to the prevailing situation of the society, and also it depends on the production level. Prices increase during the time of famine, and calamity made it impossible for ordinary people to afford even a little amount of rice. The following table shows the price of the commodities in the early colonial period of Goalpara region:

Items	Prices
Hoes	Rs 1 to Rs 1-4
Sickles	2 to 4 annas
Sal trees	Rs 10/-
Cow	Rs 10 to Rs 15
Eri clothes	Rs 8 to Rs 12
Good quality trees	Rs 6 each
Ordinary trees	Rs 2 each
Mats (kath)	Annas 6 to Annas 10
Mats (Pati)	Annas 8 to a rupee
Idols	Rs 3 to Rs 4

Daily wages of the colly were 4 to 6 annas a day. Traders came up to the rivers and exchanged earthen pots, dried fish, salt, and other articles for rice, at rates of exchange usually fixed by the panchayat. Typical rates are 5 seers of paddy (unhusked rice) for one seers of salt, which is equivalent to about 12 annas

a mound for paddy, and 6 seers of paddy for an earthen pot, while dried fish fetches about twenty items its weight in grain.<sup>19</sup>

Prior to the British annexation, Bhutan enjoyed extensive commercial relations with Assam and Bengal's plain area. The five *Duars*, Guma, Ripu, Chirang, Sidli, and Bijni collectively known as the eastern *duars*, are located close to the Goalpara district. The Bhutanese were very frequent in the trade fairs, which were conducted seasonally in the lower Assam region. They came up with products like musk, cow, tails, rubber, elephant tusk, ponies, Chinese silk, knives, etc. Eastern duars, which became a part of British India after the Anglo-Bhutan war of 1866, was annexed to the Goalpara district for administrative purposes. And on the other hand, Garos too were very frequent in the frontier markets. Cotton was the principal commodity sold by the Garos in the market, and it was bartered for rice, livestock and other goods. The Assamese also engaged in significant trade with Tibet, China, and neighbouring hill tribes in addition to the Bengal trade. The trade with Tibet amounted to 200,000 rupees a year.<sup>20</sup>

In 1823, Robert Bruce, a Scottish adventurer made the discovery of tea in the Brahmaputra Valley. This was the crucial outcome of the annexation of Assam as it began well-organized tea cultivation. In order to compete with the Chinese tea, the British Government decided to promote tea cultivation in the area. The sole reason behind the formation of Assam Tea Company in 1838 was to encourage more production. In order to entice European investment in the tea gardens, the Government also passed the "Waste Land Rules" in March 1838.<sup>21</sup> In accordance with this regulation, European planters were given land at extremely low prices to grow tea gardens. Some semi-permanent Marwari traders from Bengal arrived in Goalpara around the eighteenth century and set up branches of their firms to conduct trade there. They belonged to the Agarwal, Jaswal, and Oswal communities. For jobs in British administrative offices, people from Sylhet, Dacca, Mymensingh, Rangpur, and Central India also migrated to Goalpara. The British East India Company thus found a lucrative market in Goalpara from which they benefitted greatly. Sal, jute, and timber from the Goalpara area were extremely important products with high market demand.

To sum up, this study has examined at how and in what ways British mercantile policy and its involvement in local politics during the early stages of colonial authority in the Goalpara region changed the pre-existing trans-frontier regional trading practices.

---

<sup>19</sup> B.C. Allen, "*Assam District Gazetteers, Goalpara*, vol 3, City Press, Calcutta, 1903, pp. 47, 48.

<sup>20</sup> S.K. Bhuyan, 1949, p.55

<sup>21</sup> Amalendu Guha, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, pp. 12-13.



## **FREEDOM STRUGGLE OF INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF KANPUR (1885 – 1920)**

**DR. JITENDRA SINGH**

Assistant Professor  
Department of History  
Jagran College of Arts, Science & Commerce  
Kanpur India

A bird's eye view of the rise of Indian nationalism, it is a matter of debate among historians whether the Indian political nation in the modern sense existed before the establishment of the British state or whether its self-consciousness has been embedded in Indian civilization Which gradually developed over time. But as Prasenjit Duara has criticized such ideas by calling them "Purgative Model of the History of knowledge" and has said that this model inspires the nation with a mythical ideas. Despite this it seems expedient to draw further consensus on the fact about Indian nationalism that faced British imperialism in the 19th century and the independence hailed from 1947 was a product of the colonial structure.

Early nationalist historians studying this process of nation building emphasized the superiority of a "nationalist consciousness" based on the character of colonial rule and the patriotism that stemmed from it, as well as the ideology of ancient Indian glorious history. This consciousness is expressed in the form of social and cultural renaissance of the 19th century, while increasing racial tension, conversions and other similar activities tried to prove the British supremacy the best, while the Indians were also Indian among the western educated Indians. The pride of civilization deepened the idea of the best expression of its spiritual consciousness which not only helped the Indians to organize and dignify their personal lives, but its ideological inspiration encouraged them to face the colonial state i.e. that modern nationalism which was developed in the last phase of 19<sup>th</sup>

century. In this context, as Benedict Anderson did not call nationalism the result of Western influence, but the role of Western knowledge and education was important because it gave rise to such an intellectual and rational mass dialogue. In the words of J.A. Desai, India was full of rationalist and democratic ideas and which played an important role in making the initiative of social and cultural renaissance nationwide Which Dipesh Chakraborty has called "political modernity" and it contained the concepts of state citizenship, human rights, democracy, sovereignty of the people, social justice, scientific intelligence etc.

In the late 19th century, this intellectual renaissance did not challenge imperial power, but the Queen's loyal subjects continued to demand their rights from the autocratic colonial rule, through a "print culture" to express their ideas. Efforts to spread to every nook and corner of the subcontinent continued, and as SR Mehrotra also expressed "these newspapers removed internal barriers and promoted inter-regional solidarity".

On the other hand, the Lex Loci Act passed in 1850, under which the converting person had the right to get his ancestral property, the Indian Council Act of 1861 proposed a limited number of non-official Indian members to be included in the Governor General's council, 1876. The maximum age for appearing in the Indian Civil Service Examination was raised from 21 years to 19 years, which was not in the interest of the people of India. In this sequence, Lord Lytton's most heinous act on Indians in 1878 came to the fore in the form of "Vernacular Press Act", whose original purpose was to ban the Indian press which criticized the colonial rule. In such an environment, the victory of the Liberal Party in Britain raised a ray of hope in the minds of Indians, under which Lytton resigned and Lord Ripon came as the new Viceroy. He banned the Vernacular Press Act in 1882, but the most negative act of his time came in the form of the "Ilbert Bill" on 2 February 1883, in which the Indian district magistrates and sessions judges of the mufassils (small towns) had given the right to imposed chargesheet over the guilty Europeans. It was strongly opposed by the British officers along with the non-official Indian people. Among them was Revers Thomson, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, who denounced the bill as "not giving importance to racial distinctions to establish equality. It was also said that "the female babu is not fit to prosecute a male Englishman". Is. This controversy presented a dismal picture in the minds of various Indians, however, under pressure in 1884, Rippon withdrew the bill.

The incident of the Ilbert Bill controversy caused widespread anger against colonial rule in the minds of educated Indians, and during this time there was a

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Arvind Arora Kanpur Ka Itihas, Part-3, Kanpur Itihas Samiti, Kanpur – 2003, Kanpur

massive propaganda war through the press, which is an important point in the development of modern political activities. In the latter half of the 19th century, many demands were being raised by educated Indians on this political scene, often regional in character but of national importance, such as Indian representation in the legislature, separation of executive and judicial functions of government, Indianisation of the civil services, impose import duty in the cotton, maintain good relations in the financial matter between India and England, the demand for the extension of the Permanent Settlement to other parts of British India. Gradually began to form many political and social organizations throughout the country, which were apparently anti-British but they fought for their limited rights; At the same time he expressed a new public consciousness and demanded a share in the administration of the country. Thus the colonial rule of the late 19th century accepted the political importance of the newly educated class and felt that in view of the legal demands of this class it was necessary to give them a right environment and make them friends of the empire but viceroys like Lord Dufferin gave them a derogatory sense. Looked at him and said "Babu who represents the smallest minority". Thus the concept of early nationalism was plagued by many contradictions. It was against this background that the Indian National Congress was born in 1885 under "limited rights", which dominated nationalist politics for years to come. The report on the establishment of the Congress came from the work of William Wedderburn, who wrote the biography of A.O. Hume, which was published in 1913. Wedderburn was a former civil servant who wrote that in 1878, Hume had seen seven editions of the report and it revealed the rising discontent among the lower classes and a conspiracy to overthrow the British government, he became concerned and met Lord Dufferin to make an organization of educated Indians as it would act as a sort of "safety valve" between the empire and the ruled and would prevent any anti-British mass movement.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, it is certain that before understanding the concept of nationalism, it is necessary to know that where was its origin? From this point of view, the importance of regional history is required by which it helps in developing a comprehensive view and therefore it seems expedient to understand the events in the context of regionalism. Under this, the combined effort of the anti-British ideology of nationalism and politics which was developing against colonialism and in which all sections were included, emerged in the form of a mass movement. Undoubtedly, it had started after the Great Rebellion of 1857 which affected all the provinces of India, even the princely states also. In this regard, it seems expedient to take the name of Kanpur district of the United Provinces, which played an important role in the revolt of 1857. After that, in the coming

---

<sup>2</sup> Smarika: Kanpur Shatabdi Samaroh (1885-1905), Shahar Congress Committee

times, this area will also be unforgettable in the discharge of its peculiar role in the mass movement of freedom struggle of India.

The fact that the background of a fast-moving movement against imperialist exploitation was being formed in Kanpur would be no exaggeration and there is no doubt that there was no anti-colonial movement in Kanpur before the revolt of 1857. There was a stir! But due to the efforts of Nana Saheb in Kanpur, the uprising took a widespread form. From this it seems expedient to say that there must have been some pre-plan for the revolt of 1857, because only then its form was very fierce and widespread. Although the mutiny became unsuccessful, but as Veer Damodar Savarkar in his famous work "India's Freedom Struggle" considered this rebellion as India's first freedom struggle. The fact that the final result resulted in the independence of India cannot be denied. But after the revolution, the great repression of the British started and dissolving the British East India Company, the rule of India came under the British Empire with the Queen's proclamation in 1858 AD, but as a result of the exploitative policies of Lord Lytton, an environment was created against the British rule. Consequently the "India Association" established by Shri Surendra Nath Banerjee in 1876. In Kanpur too, his speech was held in the "Station Theatre (present wire house) in 1877 AD and with this, the Kanpur branch of "Indian Association" was started. After this incident, political stir started in Kanpur and the first seeds of the country's freedom struggle were sown by Pt. Jugal Kishore of Kanpur who published the first Hindi paper titled "Udant Martand" on 16 February 1826 from Calcutta. At the same time, the ideology of Arya Samaj, established in 1875, was also successful in creating a great socio-cultural awakening, highlighting the patriotism, relevance of Vedic philosophy and glorious culture. As a result, youths like Pt. Pratap Narayan Mishra established a branch of Arya Samaj in Kanpur in 1879. On March 15, 1883, Mishra started the publication of his famous letter "Brahman", through which he wrote articles on social backwardness, economic poverty and evils, which were very popular among the common people. Even against the Britishers, he did not lag behind. Thus, due to the efforts of Mishraji, the national consciousness was gaining momentum in Kanpur. Due to this national consciousness, the "Indian National Congress" was established on 28 December 1885 in Bombay by the efforts of Lord Allen Octavius Hume. Along with the establishment of the Congress, it was the politics of the country for a long time that in the month of the annual session of the Congress, Political discussion took place, as during the Allahabad session of the Congress of 1888 in Kanpur. Before this session, the famous lawyer Pt. Prithvinath Chak started the Kanpur branch of Congress in Kanpur in 1888. He was elected the first President of the City Congress Committee, Kanpur. He was a Kashmiri Brahmin who settled here from Unnao and started his advocacy. Being very self-respecting in nature, he did not accept any case under any big lawyer, even if that person was



an Englishman. Before the Allahabad Congress session, the UP Governor Sir Auckland Calvin and the Collector of Kanpur, "Mal" Sahab spread the rumor that any representative elected for Allahabad in the election meeting in Kanpur would be immediately arrested. Pt. Prithvinath Chak accepted this challenge and himself appeared in the election meeting of Kanpur Congress and said to Collector "Mal" in threatening words- 'If anyone has courage, then touch me'. This was a symbol of his indomitable courage. Thus the election of Congress representatives was held in Kanpur on 23 December 1888 and about 35 delegates attended the Allahabad session.<sup>3</sup>

At that time there was wide participation of lawyers and nobles in politics. He used to give his full cooperation in the programs of the Congress which the local police considered as rebels. An example of this can be understood as an incident in Kanpur. Pt. Hriday Narayan was a famous lawyer and the secretary of the local Congress. The Kotwal of the city was Ali Hussain, a crook named Arsaan, a henchman of the Kotwal Saheb, who, with the indirect support of the Kotwal Saheb, got sticks on Pt. Hriday Narayan. The crook fled and was not caught. ". The nobles who joined the Congress also had nexus with the police so that both would be in the interest<sup>4</sup>.

In 1889, two missionaries George Westcott and Foss Westcott came to Kanpur. He established the Christ Church College, which not only propagated education but also produced many freedom fighters, revolutionaries and intellectuals in 1892 who played their best role in the freedom movement. In 1899, the fifteenth session of the Congress was held in Lucknow under the chairmanship of Shri Ramesh Chandra Dutt. In this too many servants had arrived from Kanpur, in which Basant Kumar Ghosh and Abdul Haq, students of Christ Church College, did commendable work as Congress volunteers. Babu Banshilal Singh was in the reception committee of this convention, who provided free facilities to the Congress representatives. This generosity was visible for the first time in the history of Congress. Similar generosity was introduced by the people of Kanpur in the session of 1925.

From the inception of the Congress till the beginning of the twentieth century, the political turmoil in the district continued, as well as the basis of a massive movement was also being prepared, but in 1900, Kanpur became plagued by plague, which caused immense loss of life. Unemployment, hunger and the repressive policies of the regime further worsened the situation. As a result, a 'Plague Riot' took place in Kanpur on 11 April 1900 AD, which was a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity. Lokmanya Tilak's article encouraging this riot was published on 4 May 1857 in his letter "Maratha Kesari", in which it was written - "

---

<sup>3</sup> Naresh Chandra Chaturvedi: Abhinandan, City Press, Meston Road, Kanpur

<sup>4</sup> Shiv kumar Mishra: Kranti Ke Agradoot, Kanpur

the government wants to crush the souls of the people." Encouraging from this article, Mr. Rand, a plague officer from Poona, was shot by DamodarChapekar. Rand was accompanied by his colleague Lt. Ayerst.

During the plague in Kanpur, travelers coming from outside had to stay in safe places for a few days before entering the city. But due to the negligence of the officials, they were looted and there was a loss of life and property. Along with this growing discontent, some disruptive elements of the society also caused riots. In this order, there was an emphasis of government repression and in the local riots, two prominent leaders VokilaKumhar and Karim Elahi were hanged together. As a result, the Hindu-Muslim community of the district got absorbed in the thread of unity in such a way that its imprint remained for many years. In the meantime, due to the closure of the whole markets for seven days, there was a shortage of food for the Britishers and then, meat market of the parade was opened for the food requirements of the gentlemen.

The British repression after the Plague Riot in Kanpur led to widespread discontent in the district, which greatly affected the political and social life of the district and culminated in the Bengal Partition of 1905. This year the annual session of the Congress was held in Banaras under the chairmanship of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, in which many volunteers and intellectuals of Christ Church College had gone from Kanpur. In the meantime, the partition of Bengal of 1905 announced by Lord Curzon had far-reaching consequences, which did the work of mass awakening in the district, as well as the political activities of the Banaras session generated two types of ideologies in the Congress. Leaders like Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal were supporters of extremist or extremist ideas while Malviya ji Gokhale etc. were supporters of moderates. On the other hand, the wave of Swadeshi movement arising out of the partition of Bengal affected Kanpur on a large scale. Meetings were organized from place to place for the promotion of indigenous goods, especially sugar and indigenous clothes. The contribution of Late Pt. Surya Prasad Mishra in organizing and running the organization was commendable, who infused unprecedented enthusiasm among the youth of the district, as well as inspired them to speak. Writers like the late Nalinkumar Mookerjee wakil used to give inspiring speeches in these meetings. Mishraji made every effort to promote indigenous sugar, due to which local sugar was being used properly in many confectionery shops of the district and eating sweets made of Java-made sugar was considered a sin.<sup>5</sup>

Another aspect of Bengal Partition came to the fore as Rakhi Day on 16 August 1905, which was a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity in a way. In Kanpur also, this day was celebrated with enthusiasm. People tied Rakhi to each other and said

---

<sup>5</sup> Naresh Chandra Chaturvedi: Kanpur Sahitya Ka Vikas Aur Kanpur, Kanpur Itihas Samiti, Patkapur Kanpur, 1957

"Bhai Bhai Ek Thai". During this many leaders came to Kanpur with indigenous ideas. Gopalkrishna Gokhale was one of them whose lectures were given at the theatre hall of Raipurushottamchand in Anwarganj. Pt. PrithvinathChak was its chairman who, despite the opposition of the extremists, maintained the system of this meeting. After him, Raidevi Prasad Purna ji led the political system in Kanpur. Purna ji first opened a reading room above his house in PrayagnarayanShivala Mandir and propagated Swadeshi. Thus the political activities in Kanpur were gradually gaining momentum. Along with the moderates, extremist ideas were spreading rapidly among the youth. Therefore, he tried his best to awaken the indigenous sentiments through secret meetings. Shri Shyamkrishna Varma's letter 'Indian Sociologist' issued from England started coming secretly in Kanpur itself, through which revolutionary ideas were spread rapidly among the members. "Gadar" edited by the Gadar Party from America and "Talwar" etc. published from Berlin also promoted the anti-government movement in the city.<sup>6</sup> The front page of "Talwar" had a picture of Shri Madanlal Dhingra and this statement was quoted in it-

“Ghaziyonmein jab talak bakihai boo Iman ki

Tab tak London takchalegi teg Hindustan ki”

There was also a library of this secret organization in Kanpur, many of its members were youths of the city who were inspired by the ideas of revolution.

At the same time, the editing of a letter named- 'Saraswati' was started by Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi while staying in Juhi, which was another step in the direction of revolution. Through these letters, the seeds of armed revolution were planted in the city. At the same time, the Bengali ideology had more influence in giving impetus to the revolutionary ideas in Kanpur than the revolutionaries of Punjab and Maharashtra because Bengalis were more in number. As a result, there was also a high demand for Bengali literature. In this context, the daily newspaper 'VandeMataram' published by Arvind Ghosh used to come here almost daily which was collected in the library of Rai devi Prasad Purna<sup>7</sup>. Lala Hardayal and Narayan Prasad Arora met with Shri Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi in this library, by whose inspiration, the agency of Arvind Ghosh's weekly paper 'Karmayogini' was taken. The articles published in it were read by the people of the city with great interest. The arrival of Lala Hardayal to the city in 1908 infused a new energy among the revolutionaries as well as the members of the extremists. The translation of some part of his book was published by BhudevVidyashankar ji under the name "Veer Aur Veeranganaye of Russia" by Pratap Press which was established in 1913. This press also made invaluable contribution in keeping the

---

<sup>6</sup> L K Tripathi: Kanpur Ka Navjagran, Dainik Jagran (Silver Jubilee Edition)

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Jawahar Lal Rohatgi: Abhinandan Granth, Composed by Gauri Shanker Trivedi, Kanpur

spirit of revolution alive. Meanwhile, in the middle of 1911-13, Meston Road, the famous road of Kanpur, was built and a part of the mosque located on Meston Road was also demolished in the construction of this road. There was a lot of anger in the Muslim community about this incident and they started a movement under the leadership of Maulana Azad Subhani. In connection with this dispute, the provincial governor and governor general also came to Kanpur, Maulana Subhani was an active member in the politics of Kanpur and continued to participate in the District Congress Committee. Many Muslims of the city also joined the Congress with him, in which Osman Sahib Qasim, Sahib Sardar Ali Sabri etc. were dignitaries. At that time, a Parsi gentleman Mr Honi Wala was also in the Congress and he was an ardent devotee of Maulana Subhani. Maulana Azad Subhani stayed with Gandhi ji for a long time but after few days, he got separated from politics. With this, in 1907, the British, after searching for the treasure, took out Regulation-3 of 1918 and Sardar Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Raj were arrested and sent to Mandalay Jail by which the revolutionary movement slowed down for a few days, but the spirit of patriotism continued to be propagated through political literature. For example, these lines were quoted on the signboard of the famous national poet Shri Lalchand Falak's shop "VandeMataram Book Agency"-

“ Kehne ko gair keh de apnamagar yeh sachhai

Hindustan ke hum hain Hindostan hamara”

The 1907 Surat incident tried to dampen the national movement when the Congress was divided into two factions -moderate and extremist. Narayan Prasad Arora from Kanpur attended the convention representatively in support of the extremists, but after reaching there, he was very upset by the political separation that arose. Therefore, the extremist party boycotted the Congress session and adopted the path of direct access to the public, which continued from 1908 to 1915. But later, due to Tilak's efforts, these two sides of the Congress united again in the Lucknow session in 1916.<sup>8</sup>

In this order, Tilak stayed in Kanpur for some time while leaving from Lucknow Congress. But due to the oppressive policies of the British, no institution dared to welcome them. During this, a huge public meeting was organized in the parade headed by Pt. Vishambhar Nath Shukla (Headmaster of a government school). Tilak also gave his impressive speech in this meeting. After this, he was ordained in Gwalior Dharamshala near the old station with the efforts of Ganesh Shankar Vidarthi and Narayan Prasad Arora. According to the statement of Acharya Shiv Prasad Gupta, till 1916, there was no organization of Congress nor any working committee. But when Gandhiji made a debut in the freedom struggle of India, then new activities were initiated in the politics of the country, due to which even

---

<sup>8</sup> Renuka Khosla: Kanpur-A Study in Urban Politics: From 1920-1928

Kanpur could not remain untouched. He further write- Before 1916, there was competition between both the factions of Congress, but after the annual session of Congress in 1916, Mahatma Gandhi came to Kanpur for the first time. In this sequence, after Ganesh ji, Dr. Jawahar Rohatgi was also among those coming from outside. Apart from social and political work, the spirit of hospitality was naturally present in him. That is why his bungalow in Civil Lines was the most suitable place for this work. Thus, after 1916, political activities gained momentum in Kanpur and Congress committees started being formed regularly in the city. With the advent of Mahatma Gandhi- district, city, tehsil, mandal and village committees were established, in which there was competition among themselves. The members of the city committee were considered to be of Dr. Murarilal's party and were biased towards Ram Prasad Mishra and Hasrat Mohani of the district. Eventually the urban committees captured the district. The Jallianwala shooting incident in 1919 shook the whole country. In protest against this event, a nationwide strike took place on 6 April 1919, which was the biggest movement of the country till date. Kanpur could not remain untouched by this. In this sequence, a meeting was organized in Khurd Mahal Park (Shraddhanand Park) under the chairmanship of Dr. Murarilal, in which local leaders like Narayan Prasad Arora, Ganesh Shankar ji, Pt. Raghuvardayal, Pt. Ram Chandra Mishra delivered speeches and communicated political consciousness in the district. . In the same year, the "Improvement Trust" was established under the chairmanship of District Collector NC Stiff, in which education up to the middle was done.<sup>9</sup> Under these new programs, the election of the provincial council constituted in the district was to be completed, in which liberal candidate Babu Anand Swarup from urban area and Dr. Murarilal were fielded from Congress. But during the completion of the election process, the Congress refused to enter the council. Therefore Dr. Murarilal abstained from the election and Babu Anand Swarup was elected without any opposition. The Congress not only boycotted the elections but during 1920-23 anti-British movements like non-cooperation, Khilafat, Swarajya etc. party took an active part. On 21 February 1920, Mahatma Gandhi stayed in Kanpur for some times when he was returning from Prayag and inaugurated the "Swadeshi Bhandar" here. He also gave his impressive speech in the parade on October 14, 1920, in which he invoked for the non-cooperation movement against the work of the government. As a result, many people resigned from government posts, in which Pt. Mannilal Awasthi resigned and established the National School. Dr. Murarilal also resigned from the presidentship of Improvement Trust and also gave up a

---

<sup>9</sup> A R Desai: *Bhartiya Rashtrawad Ki Samajik Prashthbhumi*,  
Rajiv Berry (Macmillan India Limited), New Delhi

title of 'Rai Saheb'. On the invocation of non-cooperation, many educationists left academic work and became freedom fighters, in which Pt. Balkrishna Sharma, Umashankar Dixit, Pyarelal Agrawal were prominent. Narayan Prasad Arora also participated in the freedom movement, leaving the headmastery of the Marwari school, built in 1916. In this sequence, Pandit Ramashankar Awasthi started the 'DainikVartman' in 1920; Simultaneously, "Dainik Pratap" also started on 13 November 1920. In the same year, Harcourt Butler Technical Institute (HBTI) for higher technical education was also established which proved to be a milestone in the development of educational work in Kanpur. In the context of Khilafat and non-cooperation movement of 1919-1920, there was a massive demonstration of Hindu-Muslim unity on the invoke of Gandhiji, which was a great blow to the character of colonial rule. Gandhiji again came to Kanpur on 8 August 1921, who was widely welcomed. To settle the disputes under local programs, a Panchayat was formed under the chairmanship of Pt. Jagjivan Lal Tiwari, who left his advocacy on the call of Gandhiji. In order to promote Khadi, Mr. Parshuram Mehrotra started the work of making charkha with the help of 3000/-, and it was also distributed among the local people. In this context, under the leadership of Ramnath Tandon, a Khaddar Bhandar was established by the City Congress Committee at AB Road, which was registered in the "All India Charkha Association". Along with , many local leaders were also arrested during the Non co-operation movement so that the movement could be weakened. Thus, with the adoption of Swadeshi during the non-cooperation movement, creative programs were flooded. In Kanpur, many stores were opened for the sale of Khadi with "cheap Khaddar. Pt. Ganga Narayan Awasthi established Swarajya Ashram. 'Rambharose Khaddar Bhandar' of Badshahinaka and 'Khadi Production Centre' of Narwal was part of the creative program. Meanwhile in the death of Tilak, Narayan Prasad Arora formed the 'Tilak Memorial Society' in 1922. Later on, this society was renamed as 'Tilak Hall' where local meetings of the Congress Committee were held. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, socialist ideas had an impact on many countries of the world: the establishment of trade unions was the culmination of this. In 1920 AD, the foundation of the first trade union - AITUC (All India Trade Union Congress) was laid in India. It certainly had an impact in Kanpur as well. In 1923, Maulana Hasrat Mohani led the labour movements with the slogan of-'InqilabZindabad'. This slogan made the atmosphere of Kanpur resonant. In the course of time, Bhagat Singh adopted this slogan and spread in the country.

In 1923, Narayan Prasad Arora published the daily 'Vikram', which was a nurturer of the ideology of the Swarajya Party formed in the same year. In the meantime, there was a push for the arrest of local leaders again so that the intensity of nationalist ideas could be reduced. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi was arrested for publishing revolutionary articles, speeches and poems and criticizing

the British Raj. In these circumstances, with his inspiration, the famous Jhanda song was composed by Shri Shyamlal Gupta Parshad, which was sung enthusiastically at the Phoolbagh ground in Kanpur and with this the Jhanda Satyagraha started. In the coming time, this song was modified by Babu Purushottam Das Tandon and accepted by the All India Congress Committee in the annual session of Congress and since then it became the statutory song of the Congress.<sup>10</sup>

In 1924, Narayan Prasad Arora, Pt. Krishna Dutt Paliwal, G. G. Jog and Manni Lal Awasthi together laid the foundation of Kanpur Swaraj Party. In the same year, the party participated in the provincial council elections in which Narayan Prasad Arora, the representative of Kanpur for Uttar Pradesh was elected and Babu Anand Swarup was defeated. The following year, from December 24 to 26, 1925, the 40th annual session of Congress was held in Tilak Nagar, Kanpur under the chairmanship of Sarojini Naidu, in which Dr. Murarilal Rohatgi became the president of the reception committee and Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi and Dr. Jawaharlal Rohatgi became local ministers. To conduct various functions in this convention, the reception executive formed several committees, such as, the Health Defense Committee under the ministership of Dr. Jawaharlal, the Pandal Committee whose minister was Ram Narayan Garg, the market committee under the leadership of Shaligram Bajaj, Dwarka Prasad Singh headed the Roshni Committee, under the leadership of Guruprasad Kapoor (Allu Babu) the riding and railway committee etc. While the superintendent of the women volunteers was Mrs. Taiji, the volunteer department was under minister GG Jog and the delegate camp was under Lallumal G. Dalal.

In the meantime, on 23 December, he inaugurated the Swadeshi Exhibition and on 26 December, he also gave his speech in the Congress session. Thus "Tilak Nagar", which was named by the Congress session, is still famous by the name Tilak Nagar. In this convention, along with national level leaders, for the first time, international leaders also attended, in which American pastor J.H. Holmes, British politician and former MP Dr. Rutherford's name was notable. The biggest achievement of this convention was to "recognize the use of the Hindustani language". Undoubtedly, this annual conference made its invaluable contribution in developing public consciousness in Kanpur and many regional constituents also came on the same platform in the context of the freedom struggle. Women also participated enthusiastically in the conference, as well as the support of the Sikh community, under which it seems expedient to name the famous Sikh industrialist Inder Singh, who did commendable work as a minister of Water Supply System Committee. Gandhiji, on 7 January 1926 in his letter -"Young India", he also

---

<sup>10</sup> R N Khazanchi: Kanpur-Past and Present, Citizen Press, Kanpur

congratulated the reception committee for making adequate arrangements for accommodation and food for the delegates of the convention.

In 1926, elections to the provincial legislative council were held in Kanpur, in which Vidyarthiji defeated the city's chief wealthy Chunni Lal Garg by a huge margin. In this sequence, after Dr.Murarilal Rohatgi, the leadership of the city Congress was taken over by the next generation leaders and during this time, Narayan Prasad Arora was elected as a member of the Provincial Congress Committee from 1921 to 1939 as well as a member of the All India Congress Committee.In this way, from the establishment of the Congress till the beginning of the non-cooperation movement, there was an unprecedented communication of national consciousness in the whole of India, due to which the general public, farmers, landlords, educated class, middle class, businessmen, job profession etc. were affected on a large scale and this is the reason that after the advent of Mahatma Gandhi , this national ideology was transformed into a powerful mass movement, which continued till the independence of the country. In this context, it is hardly possible to deny the role of Kanpur district withterritorial contribution, from where many revolutionary activities were born and a new direction was given to nationalist thinking.



*Kanpur Historiophers ISSN 2348-3814*  
*International Journal of History, Indology, Archaeology,*  
*Epigraphy, Numismatics, Modernity & allied disciplines*  
*Published biannually by New Archaeological & Geological Society*  
*Kanpur India*



*Vol. IX, Issue –I (Summer) 2022*  
<https://searchkanpur.com/journal/>  
**DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.26755.78880**

**ENCOUNTERING WITH THE DANGEROUS BEAST:  
A STUDY OF BOUNTY KILLING IN COLONIAL INDIA 1870s  
TO 1900**

**SHARAFUDHEEN TC**

Research Scholar  
CAS Department of History  
Aligarh Muslim University  
Aligarh India

**M. PARWEZ**

Professor  
CAS Department of History  
Aligarh Muslim University  
Aligarh India

**Abstract**

This paper mainly explores the dominant elements of colonial wildlife hunting and bounty killing in the nineteenth and twentieth-century British India. It examines the hidden nature of colonial wildlife policies and its sudden massive intervention in the jungle for extracting natural resources, just after 1857, which seemed to be a big dramatic change in forestry and wildlife resources in India. The colonial interventions toward Indian forestry extensively increased, with the introduction of modernisation in railways, roads and communications. Because, extraction of first quality timber and expansion of agriculture has to be continued simultaneously, therefore, hunting and bounty killing became imperative and continued on par with agricultural expansion. This paper analysing the extent to which the Introduction of bounties toward wild beasts had affected their future existence. There are many wild animals, once that were most abundant in India, became extinct by independence due to uncontrolled killing through the reward system.

Keywords: Hunting, Vermin, Rewards, Game

## Introduction

The role of wildlife in environmental history indeed plays a dramatic role to understand the real cooperation of ecology with various organisms, in which human and animal relations are the most part. Hunting is a part of people's livelihood since the time immemorial, but that process seemed to be changed over a period of time when the agricultural revolution came into being. The protection of wild animals has been confined within the religious practices, it is considered a spiritual duty, Ashram is the best resting place for animals and birds together, and Jaina and Buddha followers are also being respected for the value of species in India. Romila Thapar pointed out that, In particular, royal hunts were largely existed in ancient times in which participated by forest chiefs and kings alike and it "looked upon as an enviable expertise and the heroes success was measured by his prowess in the hunt".

<sup>1</sup> When agriculture was not being flourished or established at an optimal stage pupils used to depend upon pastoral fields for which they need to be acquired more lands that were indeed fulfilled through hunts. Hunting is a major leisure time in the past for kings in India, the Majority of them enjoyed chasing the wild beasts. Deer and black buck hunting was the most favourite item in the Vedic period, most of the Rishis were used deer skin as clothing and a mat for sleeping.<sup>2</sup> A centralised rule and administration came into force in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC by combining all main relevant regions in one platform popularly known as Mauryan Empire. The military success of these rulers had been intertwined with the large scale involvement of elephants on the battlefield.<sup>3</sup> But in Asoka's period, with the influence of Buddhism, hunting was renounced and imposed 100 panas of fine to those involved in it. King Ashoka through his various edicts, advocated the

---

<sup>1</sup> Romila Thapar. "*Perceiving the forest early India*" in Mahesh Rangarajan and K.Sivaramakrishnan (eds) *India's environmental history from ancient times to the colonial period*, New Delhi: Permanent black, 2012,p-110.

<sup>2</sup> Devdutt, Pattanaik. "*Beware the deer hunt.*", mid-day.com,15 April,2018.

<sup>3</sup> In Arthasastra mentioned about 'Hastavana' known as elephant forest and preserved this with the support of a protector. Elephants were largely available in forest and that need to be explored and captured for military and administrative purpose. For more details see, Mahesh Rangarajan. "*India's wildlife history*", New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001,p-4; Alexander himself realised the importance of wild elephants largely being used in battle by kings in India, therefore in a treaty with Chandra gupta maurya, seleucus got back 500 elephants as gift. These trained elephants used for battle against Antogonus of Ipsus in 301 BC. For more details see, Irfan habib and Vivekanand Jha. "*Mouryan India*". New Delhi: Tulika books, 2004, p-42.

importance of protecting wild animals and banned slaughter.<sup>4</sup> But complete banning of slaughtering animals did not implement widely.<sup>5</sup> The situation, however, was not that much favour to wild beasts in medieval India. Akbar was so passionate about hunting, that is facilitated by Mir shikar (master of hunting), which included leopard and tiger hunting, elephant catching etc. Cheetah one of the famous carnivore was very abundant during Mughal Period, in particular Akbar's time, he kept over a thousand at one time, using them to hunt the antelope, the gazelle and even deer.<sup>6</sup> Jahangir was also not backward in terms of hunting practices, in the period of first 12 years, he killed around 17,000 animals, 889 nilgais, 86 tigers, and many lions, 1670 gazelle and antelope. Shajahan was also not backward for bagging game, in four days of hunting at Palam on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1634, on the first day itself he shot 40 black antelope with the royal gun known as khasban. Although hunting was prevalent in these two periods The concept of massive hunting and extermination of wild beasts are not taken place (Ancient and Medieval). But gradually, a new phenomenon came into being with the advent of the British in India.

The forest act of 1878 helps the British to convert one-third of the land mass of South Asia into an extreme hunting ground. In the beginning, they were not made any drastic changes in the existing status quo that prevailed in India for many decades. British officers have highly attracted the style of living of Mughal rulers and welcomed local customers and mores of Mughals.<sup>7</sup> The knowledge and understanding of India's vast rich wildlife resources, British indeed, came to know from Rudyard Kipling's very famous work "The jungle book", in which he mentioned varieties of wild animals and birds like tiger, jackal, bull, tortoise, crow, mouse, elephant, owl, cat, crane etc.<sup>8</sup> For them, hunting was a good activity for enhancing their personality or character and helps them to become a good soldier, while keeping them away from a more dangerous activities like gambling and opium.

---

<sup>4</sup> Rock edict no 3 and 4 precisely emphasizing protection of wild animals, for more details see; Aloka Parasher Sen. "*of tribes, hunters, and barbarians: forest dwellers in the Mauryan period*" in M. Rangarajan and k. Sivaramakrishnan (eds) India's environmental history from ancient times to colonial period. New Delhi: Permanent black, 2012, p-142.

<sup>5</sup> Pillar edict 5 unveiled comprehensive list of animals that should not be killed under any circumstances and about certain animals precisely stated that not to be killed on certain days. Mean by, in Ashoka's time complete banning of slaughter didn't taken place. For more details see; Aloka Parasher Sen. "*of tribes*", p-145

<sup>6</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan. "*India's wildlife history*", p-23

<sup>7</sup> William Dalrymple. "*The last Mughal - The fall of dynasty, Delhi, 1857.*" New Delhi, Penguin, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Rudyard Kipling. "*The jungle book.*" The United kingdom: Macmillan, 1894.

British has started to involve in forestry and wildlife gradually, for them, hunting was a big option to demonstrate its identity and internal power, moreover, they realized the potential benefits of wildlife over time, which automatically led to the commodification of wild beasts in large numbers, especially rhinoceros, lion, cheetah, and the tiger was brought to the verge of extinction, elephant and leopard seemed to be wiped out from the areas once they were in numerous. As the British realized the economic benefits of wildlife, they began to involve in extreme shooting activity, which was not prevalent in India in pre-colonial times. Killing wild beasts by announcing rewards and providing guns also indirectly affected India's rich wildlife resources over a while, and the conservation policy adopted by the British with the support or pressure from some hunter-turned officials also can be understood as the real nature of British perpetuating hunting practices and exploiting resources at optimum level. While interestingly calculating the reparation of the wildlife assault in the British period, it should be about 15 billion pounds (149,200cr).<sup>9</sup>

This paper tries to examine the wildlife situation in colonial India and, at the same time tried to explore the extent to which colonial hunting practices and its attitude towards bounty killing destroyed India's vast rich wildlife resources. Besides this, carefully analyse the real motives of conservation policies about whether they had been implemented for protecting wildlife or its hollow policy to cover up all economic activity to be continued for its benefits. Here, I have considered some relevant primary and secondary sources, and certain important media reports to get a perfect understanding of colonial hunting expediency in India.

## **2. Hunting: A dramatic turnout**

The British aspiration to strengthen their imperial control over forest lands heightened the expropriation of India's rich forest resources and wildlife.<sup>10</sup> The rich India's wildlife resources had been popularised by the unique works of Rudyard Kipling, and other survey reports or understandings about forestry and wildlife from British botanists, and surgeons, gradually facilitated to explore of India's vast ecology in a most perfect manner. The style of hunting perpetrated by peasants and tribal groups in India is different from what Europeans had gone through, they usually do not kill any big wild beast other than to protect them

---

<sup>9</sup> Raghav Chandra and Shruti Chandra. "*Reparation for destruction of wildlife: That'll be 15 bn pounds, your highness*" Published on Oct 12, 2015

<sup>10</sup> Ramachandra Guha. "*The unquiet woods: Ecological change and peasant resistance in the Himalaya*". New Delhi: Oxford university press, 1989, p-29; Forest appropriation in south Asia, in particular in India, through the modern scientific mechanism in fact brought in new ecological changes on lands. German and French scientific forestry were indeed transferring to its colonies with more political dominance by emphasizing its paternal outlook. For more details see, S.Ravi Rajan. "*Modernizing nature: forestry and imperial eco-development 1800-1950*". Newyork: clarendon press, 2006.

from any tragedy, while tribal's were depends upon forest products for their livelihood to move on, and used to be hunt and eat the flesh of animals such as elephant, rhinoceros, tiger, leopard, buffalo, dog, monkey, deer etc. but, vast extermination did not take place because of this reason.<sup>11</sup> The weapons used by them includes axe, spear, shield, arrows, bows etc...<sup>12</sup>

But, all these existing status quo seemed to be changed by the intervention of white sahib in forestry. John Mackenzie defined hunting as “encompass the pursuit, driving, ambushing and trapping of wild animals of all species with the intention of killing them for meat, other animal products, or purely for sport”.<sup>13</sup> Ranjan Chakrabarti narrated the practice of hunting in three different perspectives, a) subsistence hunting b) of defence hunting c) hunting as sport or pleasure. Here first one particularly intertwined with the daily activity of villagers and tribals for their livelihood and sustenance, secondly defence hunting indicates the nature of resistance to killing or trappings wild animals as in the form of deterring agriculture devastation, thirdly hunting became a sport or game, unleashed drastic abuse on wild animals through the developments of modern rifles.<sup>14</sup> British officials, in particular, hunting is a big option to build character, and masculine power, moreover, expecting to enable them a good hunters and good soldiers, pioneers, explorers, and leaders of the empire.<sup>15</sup> Om Prakash stated that “hunting was not just a sport, but a symbol of status as well, the criterion being the number of animals one shot”.<sup>16</sup> Sports like Badminton have been considered effeminate, it basically not for them, and hunting a tiger from a machan (wooded elevation) was not respected that much it is considered only for natives. Shooting from the foot by any official has been recognised in more appreciated way than shooting from the mount of an elephant. So that, big game hunting especially shooting wild beasts has become a shortcut to the status of

---

<sup>11</sup> SC, Dutt. “*The wild tribes of India*”. New Delhi: cosmos publication, 1984, pp-131-169

<sup>12</sup>For instance, The detail study about the hunting practices of Gond tribes and its close attachment with forestry and wildlife with their respective environment dramatically explain by Vijay Ramdas Mandala in “*The making and unmaking of Gonds: History of hunting mores in colonial India*”, Global environment, Vol-10, No-2, 2017, pp-421-481.

<sup>13</sup> John.M.Mackenzie. “*The empire of nature:Hunting, conservation and British imperialism*”.United Kingdom:Manchester united press, 1988, p-2; here, Mackenzie explains that how hunting has been a part of human civilization since time immemorial, particularly in global settings, see page no 7-10.

<sup>14</sup> Ranjan Chakrabarti. (ed) “*Situating Environmental history*”. New Delhi: manohar, 2007. P-28.

<sup>15</sup> K, Sivaramakrishnan. “*Modern forest: state making and environmental change in colonial eastern India.*” New Delhi: Oxford university press, 1999,p-90.

<sup>16</sup> Om. Prakash. “ *Wildlife destruction: A legacy of the colonial state in India*”. Proceedings of the Indian history congress, vol-67, 2006-07, p-699.

being a gentleman.<sup>17</sup> The very famous Madras hunting society was established in 1776, with this set up a new mass phenomenon took place, like a big hunting ground particularly focussing on jackals.<sup>18</sup> This was the beginning stage of massive big game hunting in Madras presidency. In 1896, Madras presidency reserved 30sq miles of grassland for hunting purposes, especially targeting jackals, and in Nilgiri areas, most hunted animals were tiger, bison, jackal, deer and fox.<sup>19</sup> For the British, the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a big dramatic period of the mammoth industrial revolution, based on this they were expanding their economy from one country to another, so far as India is concerned, here, they could obtain enough resources at a cheap level to feed rising new industries in Britain. So that expanding agricultural land is very important for them, especially for cash crops and starting various plantation projects. In this situation, they had to fight with various wild beasts in order to expand cultivation, hunting was bound to happen, and automatically it led to the Commodification of wildlife and turned to decrease rich India's wildlife resources.<sup>20</sup>

In the British period, India's vast rich of wildlife seemed to be vanishing and some of our notable animals such as lions, rhinos, tragopan, and cheetahs, are on the verge of extinction.<sup>21</sup> The big animal like the tiger had been hunted "largely with the aim of dominating India's natural environment".<sup>22</sup> William storey posits that the hunting of big cats such as; lions in Africa and tigers in India indeed symbolised "the triumph of culture over nature and at the colonizer over the colonized". The various method had been used for hunting tigers, it was "generally it carried out from the machan (resting Place on tree) a few courageous tiger hunters went on foot and helped in the manoeuvre with the beaters" and another hunting method was done on the back of elephants.<sup>23</sup> In the British period, over 80,000 tigers, 150,000 leopards, 200,000 wolves were killed through hunting. During the British Raj, Sadul Singh, the Maharajkumar of Bikaner,

---

<sup>17</sup> Dhriti.k. Lahiri chaudhury. (ed) "*The great Indian elephant book: An anthology of writings on elephants in the Raj.*" New Delhi: Oxford university press, 1999, pp-45-47.

<sup>18</sup> Om, Prakash. "*Wildlife destruction*".p-692-702.

<sup>19</sup> W, Francis. "*The Nilgiris.*" Madras district gazetteers, vol-1, Madras: Government press, 1908, p-35.

<sup>20</sup> V.Saberwal, Mahesh Rangarajan,Ashish Kothari. "*People park and wildlife towards coexistence.*" New Delhi: Orient longman, 2002, p-15.

<sup>21</sup> R.W.Burton. "*The preservation of wildlife in India.*" Bangalore: Bangalore press, 1953, p-9

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Sramek. "*face him like a Briton*": *Tiger hunting, imperialism, and British masculinity in colonial India, 1800-1930*". Journal of world history, vol-2, no-4, (summer,2006) p-662.

<sup>23</sup> Rajarshi Mitra. "*To hunt or not to hunt: Tiger hunting, conservation and collaboration in colonial India*". International journal for history, culture and modernity, vol-7, 2017, p-832.

boasted of shooting 50,000 animal heads and 46,000 game birds. There were 889 nilgai, 86 tigers, and lions, and 1670 gazelle and antelopes among them.<sup>24</sup> Before 1947, Europeans used to take tiger heads and skin to home in various occasions.<sup>25</sup> The most interesting thing taken the place in 1911 as part of the warming visit of King George V of UK in the kingdom of Nepal, meanwhile he participated a big hunting expedition organised by maharaja, in which King and crew killed in next 10 days over 39 tigers, 18 rhinoceros, and 4 bears and several porcupines, and leopards.<sup>26</sup> On the other occasion viceroy, Lord Chemsford visited India and conducted a hunting party in which killed around 4206 birds in a single day and on another occasion “4273 birds were killed in honour of Lord Linlithgow in 1938”.<sup>27</sup> Viceroy Irwin in the hunting party in Bikaner in Feb 1929, in which as many as 10,000 sandgrouses were killed.<sup>28</sup> Hunting was a highly important component of any festivity, especially to honour the guests. It can be seen in the prince of Wales’ tour to India and Ceylon in 1875-76; George V indulged in hunting in 1905; and Edward VIII hunted animals frequently between 1921-22.

### **3. Reward giving and vermin Eradication**

The British government started to introduce various game laws and vermin eradication policy to eliminate the most dangerous wild beast from Indian forests, for which they began to give rewards to extending wildlife hunting, because of this reason, by 1900, the most abundant animal cheetah, seemed to be on the verge of extinction. The statements put forward by Mahesh Rangarajan was that British administration policy played a dramatic role to eradicate wild beasts in India.<sup>29</sup> Mass killings of wild beasts in India took place with the introduction of the British reward policy that had mostly attracted white sahibs as well as Indian shikaris too. As far as India is concerned, the system of reward giving was utterly unknown to the original rulers of India.<sup>30</sup> The policy of vermin eradication was so extreme in nature so far as British forest intervention is concerned, why because, they had been given a double standard over the matter of elephants to be hunted,

---

<sup>24</sup> Om, Prakash. “*Wildlife destruction*”. p-19

<sup>25</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan. “*Oxford anthology of Indian wildlife*.” Vol-II, New Delhi: Oxford university press, 1999, pp-24-26.

<sup>26</sup> *Historical record of imperial visit to India 1911*, London: John Murray, 1914, pp-231-233.

<sup>27</sup> Alok kumar Gosh. “*State versus people: the Indian experience of environmentalism*”. In Ranjan chakrabarti (ed) *Situating environmental history*, 2007, p-62.

<sup>28</sup> John.M.Mackenzie. “*The empire of nature*”.p-194.

<sup>29</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan. “*The role of administration: fresh evidence on the cheetah in India*,” NMML, New Delhi, 1998, p-43.

<sup>30</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan. “*Fencing the forest, conservation and ecological change in India’s central province 1860-1914*.” New Delhi: Oxford university press, 1996, p-45.

as they were realised the important role of the elephant in economic purpose for increasing its revenue, they seemed to be avoided elephants in vermin eradication category as compared to other animals like cheetah, lion, tiger etc.

Vijay Ramdas pointed out that the intrusion of modern developments through railways, telegraph and engineering works into forested areas turned out to be “endemic struggle between the British and predatory big game species”.<sup>31</sup> The main question is, What was the main intention of introducing rewards system in India? And what was the main animal had been targeted through bounties? Was this policy imperative in the Indian context at that time? Does this reward system lead to vanish of the most abundant species in India? Rangarajan posits that reward system had been introduced by the British government in various provinces of India mainly to exterminate dangerous beasts and venomous snakes.<sup>32</sup> Rangarajan stated that “extermination and extension of agriculture had gone together. The two process were complementary, but vermin slaughter gave the process an added impetus”.<sup>33</sup> Most importantly, wild beasts like tigers, wolves, buffalo, and other animals made the cultivation difficult for them, it stands as a big stumbling block to expanding agriculture and ramping up maximum revenue.<sup>34</sup> On this occasion, the reward system was put forward as a solution for it.<sup>35</sup> The British officer Fayrer pointed out the need for urgent policy to eradicate dangerous beasts and further stated that, “Whole villages were at times completely depopulated, public roads and thorough fares rendered literally unapproachable by human beings, even in broad day light, and thousands of acres of once cultivated land were, in consequences, entirely deserted, and confined to the growth of brushwood and vegetation, to offer, in their own, safe converts to these various animals, and enables them to do more havoc in the surrounding country”<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Vijay Ramdas Mandala. “*The Raj and paradox of wildlife conservation: British attitudes and expediencies*”. The history journal, vol-58, no-1,2015, p-94.

<sup>32</sup> Rangarajan. “*India’s wildlife history*”. P-22; This reward system was not the new political mechanism introduced to India, bounty killing can be seen from various part of the countries particularly from North America prior 1630s and it transacted to European countries (Dutch East India Company also ordered to slain lion and leopard in 1656), for more details see, Vijay Ramdas Mandala. “The Raj and paradox”, p-80, also see Stephen Mosley. “*The Environment in world history*”, London, 2010,pp-21-22.

<sup>33</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan. “*The Raj and the natural world: The war against ‘dangerous beasts’ in colonial India*”. Studies in history, vol-14, no-2, 1998, p-280.

<sup>34</sup> Gunnel Cederlof. “*Founding an empire on India’s north eastern frontiers 1790-1840, climate, commerce, polity*.” New Delhi: Oxford university press, 2014, pp-183.

<sup>35</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan. “*The Raj and natural world*”.p-271.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Fayrer. “*Destruction of life: wild animals and venomous snakes in India*”. This paper read before the Indian section of the society of Arts, Feb 1, Friday, 1878, p-3.



Some suggestions put forward by colonial officials On the debate of what method is to be used for eradicating dangerous wild beasts, in which the main proposal stated by B. Rogers (who was a former army officer) about the involvement of local Shikaris in the eradication campaign that has to be established under the supervision of a civil or military officer.<sup>37</sup> Besides this, some other military officers also suggested various proposals about the strategy to be applied.<sup>38</sup> The battle against dangerous beast through bounties had been started so extensively from various provinces. The kind of main changes that were implied in British policy after the first two decades of 1857 was described by Joseph Sramek in three parameters. Firstly 'weapon revolution' that became easier to kill any game; secondly 'increased pomp of colonialism' from 1870's onwards; Thirdly implementation of forest acts accentuated the control of forest resources in a broad state supervision.<sup>39</sup> The main changes happen on weapon revolutionary, on this matter, The Indian professional Shikaris could able to use only 2 meter long matchlock, coarse gun powder rammed down the barrel, with scraps of iron or even as pebbles, but one time only one fire is possible to targeted beast, after it has to cool enough to fire again, but the situation seemed to be changed by the time of Raj by introducing new modern fire rifles, which able to fire most dangerous wild beast so easily.<sup>40</sup>

The number of rewards announced by the British was different from one province to another, it completely depends upon the ecology, wildlife and landscape of that particular area, the highest reward for the rogue elephant was 100 Rs, and the lowest reward was 2 Rs for hyenas was the minimal calculation. However, killing for reward was not only the case for them but also killing beasts on trophies also reached an unprecedented level during the British period.<sup>41</sup> Table 3.1 explains in detail about the wildlife eradication through reward system in 1875-1876. 292,542 wild animals were destroyed through the Reward system in 1875 as compare to 234,830 animals in 1876, which was 19 per cent more than the destructions of wild animals in 1876. In 1875 alone, there are 22,357 wild animals were destroyed through the Reward system except for venomous snakes as compared to

---

<sup>37</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan. "*The Raj and the natural world*". p-272, also see, NAI, H(p), July 1875, Nos 151-152: Proposal of Major B. Rogers regarding the organisation of a system spring guns for the destruction of wild animals in India, August, 1869.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph fayrer proposed the plan of 'Thuggee department' of colonel William sleeman and Major Tweedie proposed the plan of installing tiger killers in the same way of carried out in England as rabbit killers and mole catchers. For more details see, Mahesh Rangarajan. "*The Raj and natural world*".p-272-273.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Sramek. "face him like a Briton". P-664

<sup>40</sup> Irfan Habib. "*Man and environment: the ecological history of India.*" New Delhi: Tulika books, 2010, p-137.

<sup>41</sup> Rangarajan. "*India's wildlife history.*", p-34.

20,766 wild animals in 1876, which was 7 per cent more than destructions of wild animals in 1875 excluding snakes. Only 5 Elephants were destroyed in 1875 through the reward system as compared to 4 in 1876, in which Reward was given 5Rs in 1875 as compared to 50Rs in 1876. That means average 12.5Rs were given for each elephant being killed. Here, could be seen the kind of importance that has been given to wild elephants by the British.<sup>42</sup>

Table no.3.1.Statistics of wild animals and venomous snakes were destroyed through the Reward system in 1875-1876.

Animals	In 1875		In 1876	
	Destroyed	Rewards (Rs)	Destroyed	Rewards (Rs)
Elephants	5	5	4	50
Tiger	1789	41212	1693	43598
Leopard	3512	35756	3786	33972
Bear	1181	4453	1362	4915
Wolves	5683	15188	5976	18,633
Hyaena	1386	3602	1582	3650
Other Animals	8801	3251	8053	3985
Snakes	2,70,185	16548	212,371	15,757
Total	292,542	120,015	234,830	124,560

Source: Joseph Fayrer. Destruction of life: wild animals and venomous snakes in India, 1878, p-17

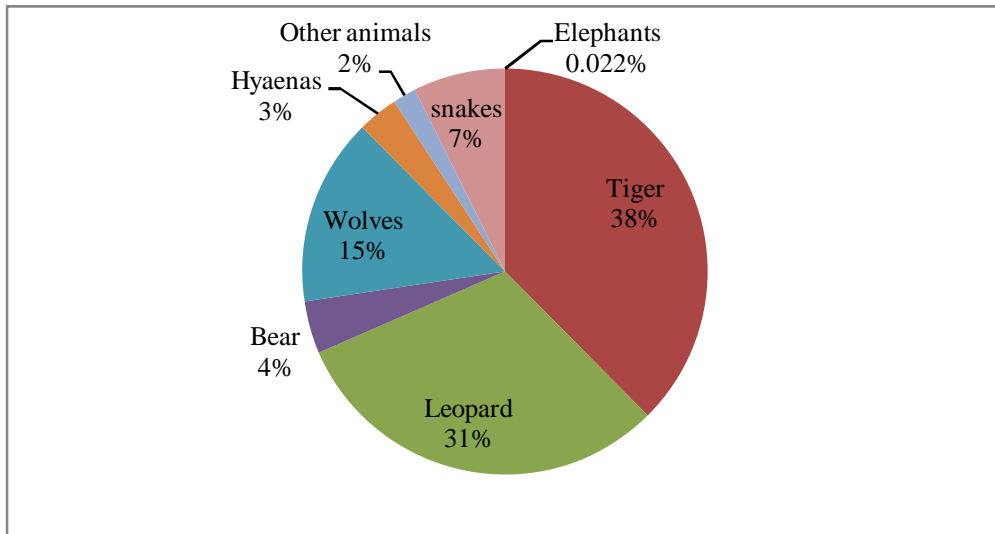
From an economic perspective, Elephants has been given more preference over tiger and leopard.<sup>43</sup> Reward paid to elephants only 0.022 per cent of total amount were given in two years. In the case of tigers, which are more dangerous so far as the British is concerned, that needs to be eradicated. There are 1789 tigers were destroyed in 1875 as compared to 1693 in 1876, which is 5.6 per cent more than the tiger destroyed in 1876, and there are 43,598 rewards were distributed in 1876

<sup>42</sup> Elephants importance has been increased with the establishment of modern railways and roads, for them successful timber transportation and lying down sleepers could be possible only through the help of elephants, therefore it has to be protected from being hunt and captured alive for economic purpose from various places in India. In the period of 1868 to 1880 approximately 30,000 to 50,000 wild elephants might have been captured alive from Indian territory, that was mostly from north east. For more details see, Om prakash. “wildlife destruction”. P-696, and also see, R.Sukumar. “Elephants days and nights”. New Delhi: Oxford university press, 1994, p-67.

<sup>43</sup> Selective nature of preservation policy carried out by British concerning to elephants and tiger. Elephants were protected and exempted from vermin eradication as compared to tigers, wolves, leopard and cheetah, they were more destructive to agriculture that need to be exterminated. For more details see; Vijay Ramdas Mandala. “The Raj and paradox”. 2015.

as compared to 41,212 in 1876, which is 5.7 per cent more than in 1875. For an Average 23Rs was given for each tiger killed in 1875 as compared to 25Rs in 1876, and the overall percentage of rewards distributed for tigers in 1875-76 is 38%.

Chart No. 3.1. Showing the amount of Reward given for the killing of wild animals and venomous snakes in 1875-1876.



Source: Joseph Fayrer. Destruction of life: Wild animals and venomous snakes in India, 1878.

In the case of leopards, there are 3786 were destroyed in 1876 as compared to 3512 in 1875, which is 7.8% more than in 1875, and there are 35756 rewards were distributed in 1875 as compared to 33972 in 1876, which is 5.2% more than in 1876. An average 10Rs were rewarded for each leopard being killed in 1875 as compared to 8.9Rs in 1876, and the overall percentage of rewards given for leopards in 1875-76 is 31%. In the case of bears, there are 1362 were destroyed in 1876 as compared to 1181 in 1875, which is 15.3% more than the bear destroyed in 1875. And 4915 rewards were paid in 1876 as compared to 4453 in 1875, which is 10.3% more than the amount paid in 1875. An average 3.1Rs were given for each bear killed in 1875 as compared to 3.6Rs in 1876, and the overall percentage of rewards given for bears in 1875-76 is 4%. In the case of wolves, there are 5976 wolves were destroyed in 1876 as compared to 5683 in 1875, which is 5% more than the wolves destroyed in 1875. And there are 18,633 rewards were distributed as compared to 15,188 in 1875, which is 22% more than the amount paid in 1875. An average 2.6Rs were given for each wolf being killed in 1875 as compared to 3.1Rs in 1876, and the overall percentage of rewards given for wolves in 1875-76 is 15%. In the case of snakes, there are 212,371 snakes were killed in 1876 as compared to 270,185 in 1875, which means there

are 57,814 snakes were killed more in 1875. And there are 15,757Rs were rewarded in 1876 as compared to 16,548Rs in 1875, which means 5% more rewarded in 1875 to 1876, and the overall percentage of snakes rewarded in 1875-76 is 7%. In British India, thousands of wild beasts had been killed for rewards with the support of Shikaris (native hunters), Major Tweedie underlined that nearly 20,000 animals were being destroyed every year for Rewards.<sup>44</sup> Rangarajan pointed out that “the bounty system had funded the killing of 16,573 tigers in 1879-88 alone”<sup>45</sup> and estimated the total number of tigers killed between 1875-1925, comes to over 56,000. Wolves and other animals have also been included in vermin because they were the most dangerous to children and pupils, and were destroyed through the reward system. Over 100,000 wolves were killed between 1871-1916 and around Delhi over 300 wolves were killed for bounties from 1878-83. Because of all these ruthless bounty systems, it can be easily visible that by the time of independence, Many wild beasts once that was numerous in India become extinct, for instance, the tiger population estimated at 40,000 in 1900 had dropped to 3000 and the cheetah completely vanished from Indian soil, and other animals like elephants and rhinos have also disappeared by 1952 from the areas where they had been in countless.<sup>46</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The crucial exploitation of wildlife in India has begun as soon as the industrial revolution came into being in Britain, because of this; they had to acquire vast natural resources to feed emerging new industries. For them, India is a good option to expand its new projects in the form of modernisation such as Railways, Roads, Irrigation and Plantation activities like tea and coffee, this was a huge demand in overseas. Therefore, they started to occupy India’s rich forest resources such as timber, sal etc. which helps to build new ships and other administrative setups. Intervention in forestry has badly affected wildlife resources as well because dangerous wild beasts were a hindrance to them to expand plantation or agricultural activity, so that, they need to be exterminated with the policy of vermin eradication. Many animals were being eradicated that finally leads to the extinction of many species in India. Conservation policy that was adopted with the interference of some hunter-turned naturalist necessitated the British to take certain acts to protecting wild animals, but that really not helped wildlife to relax from hunting. It had been continued so extremely until India got independence

---

<sup>44</sup> Vijay Ramdas Mandala. “*The Raj and paradox*”. P-93; also see, NAI, Home (public) Jan, 1875, A No.286-311, No.29, Major Tweedie, Hyderabad to secretary, Home 5 Jan.1874.

<sup>45</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan. “*The Raj and the natural world*”.p-285.

<sup>46</sup> M. Gadgil and R. Guha. “*This fissured land, An ecological history of India.*” New Delhi: Oxford university press, 1999, pp- 232-33.