

DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

MASTER OF ARTS - HISTORY

SEMESTER-IV

HISTORY OF NORTH BENGAL (1757 A.D.-1947A.D.)

ELECTIVE 406

BLOCK-2

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

Postal Address:

The Registrar,

University of North Bengal,

Raja Rammohunpur,

P.O.-N.B.U.,Dist-Darjeeling,

West Bengal, Pin-734013,

India.

Phone: (O) +91 0353-2776331/2699008

Fax:(0353) 2776313, 2699001

Email: regnbu@sancharnet.in ; regnbu@nbu.ac.in

Website: www.nbu.ac.in

First Published in 2019



All rights reserved. No Part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from University of North Bengal. Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this book may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages. This book is meant for educational and learning purpose. The authors of the book has/have taken all reasonable care to ensure that the contents of the book do not violate any existing copyright or other intellectual property rights of any person in any manner whatsoever. In the even the Authors has/ have been unable to track any source and if any copyright has been inadvertently infringed, please notify the publisher in writing for corrective action. Infringed, please notify the publisher in writing for corrective action.

FOREWORD

The Self-Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavours.

HISTORY OF NORTH BENGAL (1757 A.D.-1947A.D.)

BLOCK-1

Unit 1: Emergence of Modern North Bengal

Unit 2: Pre-colonial North Bengal; North Bengal and Sub-Himalayan

Unit 3: Region-adjointing areas: Ethno Socio-Religious confluence

Unit 4: Colonial penetration

Unit 5: Colonial administration

Unit 6: Re-organization of North Bengal

Unit 7: History of Migration: Demographic Changes: New Social
Structure

BLOCK-2

Unit 8: History Of The Cooch Behar Raj Since 17726

Unit 9: Cultural Response And Reaction28

Unit 10: Land Revenue SETTLEMENT: Plantation Economy.....52

Unit 11: Forestry And Commercialization Of Agriculture76

**Unit 12: Protest Movement: Peasant Movement And Plantation
Worker Movement106**

Unit 13: Social Movements135

Unit 14: Saga Of National Movement159

BLOCK-2 HISTORY OF NORTH BENGAL (1757 A.D.-1947A.D.)

Introduction to the Block

Unit 8 deals with History of the Cooch Behar Raj since 1772. Cooch Behar, at present a district of West Bengal, is a picturesque town with its planned straightcut roads , innumerable ponds , beautiful temples , build-ings and above all the magnificent Royal Palace, which is now under the supervision of the Archeological Survey of India attracted the tourists from all over the world.

Unit 9 deals with Cultural Response and Reaction. These kinds of frustrations are likely to solve themselves as you become more knowledgeable and competent in the new culture. They probably fall under the category of" culture fatigue."

Unit 10 deals with Land Revenue Settlement: Plantation Economy. It has been seen in the discussion of the earlier chapter that North Bengal is the main producer of tea of West Bengal, the second largest tea growing state of India.

Unit 11 deals with Forestry and Commercialization of Agriculture. In an economically stagnating region like North Bengal, agriculture is very much dominating among should other economic parameters.

Unit 12 deals with Protest Movement: Peasant movement and Plantation worker movement. Their wages have not seen any real increase for so many years. Women who are a major workforce in the industry continue to face increased discrimination.

Unit 13 deals with Social movements. The present proposed Dissertation will highlight both the major and minor Social and Political Movements of North Bengal during 1911-1969.

Unit 14 deals with Saga of National Movement. One of the most unpopular and terrible measure of the British Indian Government was the Partition of Bengal in 1905.

UNIT 8: HISTORY OF THE COOCH BEHAR RAJ SINCE 1772

STRUCTURE

8.0 Objectives

8.1 Introduction

8.2 History of Cooch Behar Raj

8.3 Early history: Mughal interference, Mughal-Koch conflicts (1587–1680)

8.4 Bhutanese invasions, Bhutan-Tibet-Koch conflicts, Bhutanese reversals (1680–1772)

8.5 British East India Company acquires control

8.6 Let us sum up

8.7 Key Words

8.8 Questions for Review

8.9 Suggested readings and references

8.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know:

- History of Cooch Behar Raj
- Early history: Mughal interference, Mughal-Koch conflicts (1587–1680)
- Bhutanese invasions, Bhutan-Tibet-Koch conflicts, Bhutanese reversals (1680–1772)
- British East India Company acquires control

8.1 INTRODUCTION

THE PRINCELY status of Cooch Behar may only be living in the hearts of the people, the ‘Maharaja’ resides in his two-storeyed ‘palace’, and waits for the return of the “lost glory”. He holds his court outside; a plastic table and three chairs fill space while the bright yellow flag of the ever-in-making ‘Greater Cooch Behar’ flutters in the wind. It is this “independent state”, the ‘Greater Cooch Behar’, that ‘Maharaja’ Ananta Rai claims to be the “king” of. And the ‘king’ counts Prime Minister

Narendra Modi as one of his allies. Not one to regard politics, the 'Maharaja' has put faith in the BJP this election season, with hope that the cherished dream of attaining statehood will come true.

That would bring the 'king' out of the "exile".

"I do not have land nor do I have the authority to rule. I am a king because the people here made me the king. I am a king in exile," Ananta Rai, linked historically to the royal family of Cooch Behar, said. It is this royal history the region could never let go of. Residents believe Cooch Behar's inclusion into West Bengal was "illegal" and against the treaty signed between the Government of India and their then king, Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan, on August 28, 1949.

In 1998 came the Greater Cooch Behar People's Association (GCPA) — and the title of 'Maharaja' for Ananta Rai — with the sole aim of ensuring that the 'Greater Cooch Behar' area is recognised either as a separate 'C' category state or a Union Territory. "Cooch Behar has been a part of a democracy only for a few years. We have always been a monarchy. We have tried and adapted to the Constitution and democracy but it is not in our blood," Rai says.

While the BJP has never publicly endorsed Cooch Behar's demand for a statehood, Rai is confident that the saffron party's government at the Centre will "accept" it. "Elections aren't for us, but we are supporting Modi and the BJP. They are the only ones who have given us any support. Our people attend BJP's rallies and while I can't ask anyone to vote for a particular party, I have asked the Koch-Rajbanshis (the region's indigenous population) to consider the BJP's promise," he said.

An indication of the people's support was seen in Siliguri on April 7, when thousands of GCPA supporters had turned up for Modi's rally.

While Modi himself remains reticent on commenting on GCPA's demand, Home Minister Rajnath Singh promised while speaking in Tufanganj recently that the NDA government would "do whatever is

Notes

possible” for the movement. “I want you (the people of Cooch Behar) to believe that our government will do whatever is possible to ensure that your identity is preserved...I have told Maharaja Ananta Rai that the government has and will continue to stand with you,” Singh had said.

As the roaring lion and the elephant of the Koch dynasty’s coat of arms stare back from the walls and doors of the palace, Rai digs into his life and politics, comes out with references from the past. He speaks of Maharani Gina Narayan, Cooch Behar’s blonde queen who landed in the Calcutta of 1960s, with disconcerting immediacy. Rai switches between past and present, constitutional apathy, political disregard and the ill-treatment of the Koch-Rajbanshis is summarized simply.

“Cooch Behar was never a part of India and now we have to bow our heads to the rules and regulations that aren’t ours,” he says. He refers to the letters between the GCPA and the Union government, reports written by academics, historical documents and sepia photographs before he concludes, “In exchange, we got nothing — no development, no jobs. We want our lost glory back.”

But even as he speaks of the many ways in which Kolkata and Delhi ignored the needs of the Koch-Rajbanshis — deemed a scheduled caste in West Bengal — he grudgingly admits that Bangsibadan Barman, the first general secretary of the GCPA and currently the leader of a separate faction of the group — continues to hold influence on the community.

When Rai was meeting representatives of the central government, Barman — still one with political ambitions — was organising a ‘Rail Roko’ agitation in February. Formerly with the Students Federation of India (SFI), Barman is presently on the run, according to the police. But Rai believes otherwise. “I think he has made an understanding with the Trinamool Congress. He stays out of jail and works against us and the BJP.”

While Barman couldn't be contacted, a close aide said, "The Rail Roko agitation was completely peaceful. It was the police who unleashed atrocities on us. Since then, Dada (Barman) has been on the run. But we will be coming back soon, and stronger. The Centre will never simply 'give' us our right. They will use us, like previous governments in the past."

8.2 HISTORY OF COOCH BEHAR RAJ

Cooch Behar, at present a district of West Bengal, is a picturesque town with its planned straightcut roads, innumerable ponds, beautiful temples, buildings and above all the magnificent Royal Palace, which is now under the supervision of the Archeological Survey of India attracted the tourists from all over the world. This erstwhile princely state still bears the glory and fame because of the endeavour of the State during the time of the Maharajas, particularly from the second half of the nineteenth century till the merger of the State with Indian union in 1949. The history of Cooch Behar is a multiple dimensional picture which consists of social - cultural – political – economic history of the princely state. At the same time it represents the welfare activities of the Maharajas. The advanced modern ideas of the rulers set an example in British India. In one side the history of Cooch Behar explains the Anglo – Cooch Behar relations since 1772; on the other side it explains Cooch Behar – Bhutanese relations. Thus we find a new chapter in the history of Cooch Behar. The weakness of the Koch ruler gave the Bhutias an opportunity to meddle into the internal affairs of Cooch Behar State (practically Bhutan became the king – maker of Cooch Behar). When Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan ascended the throne of Cooch Behar in 1765, the glory of the dynasty was already set in. Taking the opportunity of the weakness of the Koch ruler, the Bhutias captured and imprisoned the Maharaja.

The continuous interference of Bhutan in the Duars areas irritated the British Indian Government. Cooch Behar became strategically important to the British Government for a secure peaceful North - East frontier. A system of indirect rule was likely to be experienced from the

Notes

model of administration they developed in many parts of the world and the case of Cooch Behar was a glaring example of such a design .

When the British came to India, their main objective was to develop a congenial position of trade and commerce . But from the second half of the Eighteenth Century, they created a Political Residency System . Such an attempt gradually shifted their interest from trading to political goal. As the British realized their new opportunities and needs , they began to transform their network of commercial representatives into a system of political agent . The Colonial Govern -ment had a soft corner for the State of Cooch Behar and they found their oppor – tunity to fulfill their desires as the State experienced a political turmoil since the accession of Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan . During this period Dewan Deo , Nazir Deo and Maharani played important roles to run the state . On the other hand Bhui -tias continued hostility against Cooch Behar and carried away Maharaja and Dewan Deo as prisoners . Then Nazir Deo applied for military help from the Colonial Go -vernment against Bhutan in 1772 . They responded immediately as it gave them an opportunity to interfere in the affairs of Cooch Behar . This resulted in the signing of the Treaty of 1773 between Cooch Behar and the Colonial Government . Since then the British Government tried to implement various clauses to fulfill their designs . Althou -gh from 1783 to 1839 they faced obstacles as Maharaja Harendra Narayan didnot cooperate with them . But after his death Company had free run in the state and the successors maintained good relations with them as they had a pro – British attitude since the period of Maharaja Shivendra Narayan (1839 – 47) .

After the 2nd Anglo – Bhutanese war (1864 – 65) , all the 18 Duars areas came under the authority of the British. For their proper security and maintenance the importance of Cooch Behar was also increased . To establish a well organised British Raj in the North - East frontier , the development and modernisation of Cooch Behar was very much essential So the period of Maharaja Narendra Narayan (1847 - 63) can be viewed as the beginning of development in Cooch Behar . His son Maharaja Nripendra Narayan also set a new dimension of modernization and development . In 1863 after the death of Maharaja Narendra Narayan , Maharaja Nripendra Narayan succeeded him at an early age of ten

months . But the state did not face any kind of problem due to the friendly relations with the British . Since his forefathers the state of Cooch Behar maintained friendly relation with the East India Company .

A British Commissioner undertook the direct management of affairs on behalf of the Prince during his minority. Maharaja Nripendra Narayan was first educated in the Ward's Institute at Venaras, and next in the Bankipure college , Patna and subsequently attended the law lectures at the Presidency College , Calcutta for three years

Among the many improvements effected during this period , was a complete survey of the State, although it started earlier . It is important to note that the state was connected with adjacent commercial centers by the construction of good roads and of bridges over rivers and water courses . An efficient system of postal and telegraphic communication was established ; the police administration was re – organized and an education department was constituted . The introduction of Cooch Behar State Railways was a distinct land mark from the economic point of view. It not only ushered a new avenue of communication with the out side of the state but also symbolized the modern means of import - export facilities of trade . During the rule of the Maharaja industrial development was notable , specially introduction of artizan school . Now -a - days it is no important matter , but during those days it was a symbol of advanced modern activity of the ruler . The military achievement of the State was remarkable . For instance the good service rendered by the state in the Bhutan war , ten guns were presented to Maharaja Nripendra Narayan by the British Government, in 1866. At the Delhi Pro -clamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India in 1858, the Cooch Behar chief was present ed in 1877 with medal and sword along with other Princes of the same rank. Maharaja maintained a military force that included a cavalry regiment – two hundred infantry and four guns and he was entitled to get a salute of thirteen guns. The administration of the State was well organized.

Development of education in the State of Cooch Behar was a top priority for the Maharaja. He made sufficient grants for the infrastructural

Notes

development of the Jenkins School , which was formed in 1861 . This school had a long history of its own . In 1857 a Bengali medium school was established in the State of Cooch Behar under the instruction of prince and kinsmen of the royal family , in 1859 , English began to be taught at this school . In course of time it took the shape of Jenkins School . In commemoration of the jubilee , Maharaja founded the Victoria College , which taught up to the standards of the Calcutta University examination , and was an absolutely free institution . In addition to this , he helped a wide circle of poor but intelligent boys from his own purse . His enlightened views on education and on the necessity of physical training expressed his advanced modern ideas for the state. He held that the Calcutta University should approve the suggestion that physical education should be made compulsory and should be introduced for the benefit of the student (at that time Calcutta University controlled the educational department of Cooch Behar). The establishment of a library namely Maharaja Library which later on was renamed as North Bengal State Library shows the reading interest of the Maharaja . Such an attempt was an instance of the welfare thought of the ruler. Mr. J. W. Trotten , in his book “ India under Victoria”, writes : ‘The little state of Cooch Behar on the Assam border can boast of a library richer than any outside Calcutta .’ In 1897 the appointment of Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal as the Principal of Victoria College was an important step . His philosophical ideas moulded Maharaja to take benevolent measures for the people of Cooch Behar . All these measures indicated that Maharaja was out and out modern in outlook . It was he who felt the urgency of registration of birth and death , because such kind of calculation helped the state to understand what was its population and what was the condition of the health of the general people . In 1901 and in 1911 Census operations were organized in the State. It is gradually held that the old rajas were very careless as regards the preservation of records. Maharaja Nripendra Narayan was the first ruler of Cooch Behar , who introduced the work of copying from old records , which in course of time helped the successors to run the state of Cooch Behar successfully . Keeping Records in printed form was nothing but the farsightedness of the Maharaja . The two volume of Select Records containing day to day

correspondence with the British Government is a valuable primary source for the history of Cooch Behar. Researchers who are now investigating the different aspects of the history of Cooch Behar during the Maharajas, the Select Records are the valuable source of information to them . In fact he had brought the state to the present satisfactory condition . In the place of what was an uninteresting tract of land (selected apparently on account of its natural defence) , a picturesque town with flourishing business centres , prospered due to his endeavour . The construction of various buildings shows the artistic taste of the Maharaja . The arrangement was neat and orderly . Domes, spires , minarets , public buildings and palatial residences were established in the town of Cooch Behar , although the rural areas and the sub – divisions of Cooch Behar was not far from the developmental works of the ruler . During his rule medical system of the state of Cooch Behar was on the whole on satisfactory condition . A significant measure was taken by the state authority during his rule in the settlement operations . From the earlier mistakes the authority got a major experience and introduced a system of survey and settlement work in the town and in the sub - divisional areas . Maharaja maintained a well formulated finance department , through which the state could be able to know what measures were appropriate to the situation and what was the income and expenditure of the state . In the cultural sphere he created a new avenue which was full of sporting arrangements, khedda operations for taking elephants under control.

After Maharaja Nripendra Narayan , his successors Maharaja Raj Rajendra Narayan (21st) and Maharaja Jitendra Narayan (22nd) continued the developmental works in the State . They were engaged in the implementation of benevolent works as their father did for the state . For his benevolent activities Maharaja Jitendra Narayan is known as ‘ Prajabatsal Maharaja ’ . During his reign Cooch Behar had a rich literary tradition . Maharaja also himself was a great literature person . His poem “Hello Darjeeling” is pleasant to read. Maharaja Jitendra Narayan was also aware of environmental pollution . For saving the state, he followed in the foot steps of his father (through the work of plantation of saplings in the State).

Notes

The 23rd and the last ruler of the Princely State of Cooch Behar, Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan deserved an amount of popularity for his innovative activities in the State of Cooch Behar . He maintained the royal tradition (welfare works) and invented one after another advanced schemes like introduction of income tax act , public health department , Cooch Behar State Transport for travel through bus , air – craft act of 1946, cultivation of commercial crops , motor spirit - rationing order , ancient monument preservation act of 1947 etc. The modernisation cum development of the State of Cooch Behar , can be compared with the same of the developed princely States of Western , Southern and Northern India . It would not be irrelevant to point out that the mental makeup of the Maharajas of Cooch Behar was moulded according to the taste of the English. The general policy of the Raj towards the native princely state during 1890's was that the system of princely rule, stripped of its dead wood, could be made an instrument of progress and modernisation, there by ensuing that the darbars continued to play an effective role in the governance of the subcontinent.¹⁶ But according to Ian Copland this civil mission began to fatter. There was criticism of the slow pace of modernization in many states, and disillusionment with the impact of modernization on the life style of the ruling prince. Cooch Behar may be set an exception to this end. Reference may be made of Prince Gayatri Devi s' statement, "a few princely states of the time enjoyed all sorts of privilege ". The Maharajas of Cooch Behar by their developmental policy and benevolent works succeeded in achieving the loyalty of their subjects . It can be concluded by saying that during the long run of the State of Cooch Behar , the period from 1847 to 1949 was an golden and modern era of development under the Maharajas and thus the study of their work on social – cultural – economic sphere on the whole historically significant .

Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan (1922 -1949) - The Innovative Ruler of Cooch Behar.

The history of Cooch Behar specially its development reaches the peak of success during the reign of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan (1922 – 1949) . Due to his minor age , he was under the guidance of Rajmata

Indira Devi and the Cooch Behar State Regency Council from 1922 to 1936 . During this period Cooch Behar State Regency Council looked after the State's affairs on behalf of minor Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan . In fact his period can be divided into two parts . First, The Regency Councils' activities on behalf of minor Maharaja and after 1936 when Maharaja attained maturity and followed the tradition in social , cultural and economic field . Secondly, he implemented some new and modern innovative schemes . Maharaja like his father was a benevolent ruler . One of the special features of his nature was that most of the time during his day to day activity , was spent on the queries of the smooth running of the administration . He always wanted to make his people happy and for that reason gold - silver trophy, certificates were given to the people . Never the less his period was a golden era in the history of Cooch Behar . Let us now explain the role of the Cooch Behar State Regency Council which may be discussed under the following heads :

A. Development in Social field This arena covers the educational , medical , veterinary , P.W.D , Railway System etc. , which were as follows : Education During his rule important measures were taken by the Cooch Behar State Regency Council towards the spread of education . In 1922 – 23 the Education Committee of Cooch Behar implemented a further impetus towards the improvement of the sub - divisional Higher English Schools and the issue was that there must be a trained B.T teacher in each of the Higher English Schools . As a result, permission was obtained from the syndicate , Calcutta University , to send up candidates for the Matriculation Examination in Hygiene from the Dinjata Higher English School with effect from 1924 and the Tufangunj Nripendra Narayan Memorial High er English School also received permanent recognition from the University . A scheme for the improvement of the pay and prospect of the pundits of all the Primary and Secondary Schools in the State was submitted. Subsequently it was sanctioned by the honourable Cooch Behar Regency Council, offering better inducement for works to the teacher and giving scope for suitable men in the department. In this year another proposal was introduced in the undergraduate education and it was to open B. Sc. Class in the

Notes

Victoria College . Since the formation of the Victoria College , the academic stream was only for arts subjects . This proposal was submitted and sanctioned by the Cooch Behar State Regency Council and side by side the recognition of the Calcutta University was applied for. In response to this application the University Inspector paid a visit to the college.

In 1925 implementation had been made on admission and transfer rules for students in higher English Schools .4 The formation of Schools for the spread of education was on going under the guidance of State Council . Thus , the number of schools were increased to 344 (Primary and Secondary School) . 5 In 1928 such number was increased to 350 , which indicates that spread of education in Cooch Behar was phenomenal .6 On 1st April , 1930 one state model school was converted into a Middle English School . 7 In 1931 Sunity Academy (girls' school) was recognised by the Calcutta University with permission to present candidates for the Matriculation Examination to be held on 1933 .8 Such implementation indicates that girls' education received a warm support in Cooch Behar . Similarly , in 1932 another issue was implemented regarding the admission of girl students in the High English Schools of the State of Cooch Behar . The Regency Council accorded provisional sanction to the admission of 5 girl students for co - education in the Mathabhanga and the Mekligunj High English Schools . It was directed that the Managing Committee of the Schools concerned would make suitable arrangements for retiring rooms for the girls and that the Head Masters and other teachers of the Schools would accept the responsibility involved in this new departure . During his reign (Jagaddipendra Narayan), girl students were admitted in the Victoria college to spread undergraduate education among the girls' . In 1934 Cooch Behar State Regency Council framed new rules for the grant of free studentships in state institutions . Here it is to be noted that these grants were open to the Cooch Behar subjects, sons and daughters of the State Servants (Cooch Behar) , and other permanent residents of Cooch Behar , eighty per cent. being reserved for Cooch Behar subjects. In this year apart from Middle English Schools, State Model Schools, Middle Vernacular Schools,

Primary Schools, Upper Primary Schools , Lower Primary Schools , Night Schools , Girls' Schools ; the Industrial School which was under the instruction of Cooch Behar Bayan Silpa Vidyalaya, the only technical school in Cooch Behar , got financial support from the authority. In 1937 under the revised regulations of the Calcutta University, elementary scientific knowledge has been made a compulsory subject and accordingly steps have been taken for imparting instruction in this subject. A special grant of Rs. 376 was sanctioned by the Cooch Behar State Council for the equipment of the science room. The necessary apparatus , chemicals , charts and specimens of rocks and minerals have been purchased . A demonstration room , too , had been fitted with a sink and water connection.

Medical The medical system of Cooch Behar was a sound one during the reign of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan . In Cooch Behar the main building of the Sudder Hospital being old and was in a very dilapidated condition and was it unfit for further use as a hospital . Therefore, the State Regency Council of Cooch Behar, had been pleased to construct a two storeyed building to be built in the memory of Maharaja Jitendra Narayan . For maternity cases in 1923 one midwife was employed at Dinhata and another employed at Mathabhanga . In 1924 some measures were taken by the state authority to cure people of the disease of cholera . Temporary medical officers were appointed and a few hands from the existing permanent staff with compounders were sent to the mufussil to cope with the diseases . Two temporary dispensaries were opened in this manner, one at Kholta and other at Bhaiskhuchi . Anti – Cholera inoculation was introduced which proved successful . The police and the military forces and the sudder hospital staff were inoculated first as a preventive measures against cholera . A large number of tube – wells were sunk for the supply of pure drinking water in the cholera infected places . There were altogether 1,603 cholera cases out of which 1,113 ended fatally and 490 were cured . In 1926 reports of cholera came from all the sub – divisions of the state and the disease threatened to spread in epidemic form . The disease was , however, checked in all the sub – divisions except Mathabhanga where it broke out in an virulent form .

Notes

The sub – divisions were divided into five circles with a medical officer and staff for each circle , to deal with the outbreak . A large number of tube – wells were sunk in the affected areas to supply pure drinking water .¹⁹ Several taluks of Cooch Behar were infected by small – pox in 1927 . In order to cope with the disease , two temporary medical officers were appointed by the authority . ²⁰ To improve the treatment facilities , Cooch Behar State Council permitted the civil surgeons of the sudder hospital to attend the All India Medical Conference .²¹ The hospitals and dispensaries , sudder jail , sub – jails, police stations and out posts were regularly inspected by the Civil surgeon . Several schools were also inspected by him . ²² The health of the students of the Jenkins School was examined by the sanitary officer assisted by the Sanitary Inspector of the sudder circle.

In 1928 a clinical laboratory was formed by the Medical department of Cooch Behar for diagnostic purposes in the town , because at Cooch Behar Tropical diseases practically prevailed throughout the year . Hence since the begin -ning of the year 1928, a regular clinical laboratory was started in a miniature scale in the sudder hospital under a specially trained sub – assistant surgeon and every effort being made to improve it gradually . For the people of Sitai a cottage dispensary at Sitai was opened with effect from the 1st august , 1932 . For the maintenance of the dispensary monthly subscriptions amounting to Rs. 30 was available from local sources . It has been accommodated for the present in a private rent – free house and the Superintendent of vaccination , a sub – assistant surgeon was placed in its charge . Regarding vaccination , during the reign of Maharaja Jaga -ddipendra Narayan, serious steps were taken by the medical department . In 1933 four vaccination inspector and twenty - five vaccinators were engaged in vaccination work . A subsidiary center for anti – treatment was established at the sudder hospital on the 15th December in 1933. It was under an officer of the state medical department , who had previously under gone a course of training at the Pasteur Institute, Kasauli . The State Council sanctioned a sum of Rs. 140 for the last months in 1936 for laying out a garden in the compound of the hospital . Under the direction of the Garden

Superintendent of the state it was laid out and it had added considerably to the beauty of the hospital building and it was thought that it had not been without beneficial effect psychologically on the more sensitive patients.

In 1937 the medical department of Cooch Behar sent sub- assistant surgeon of Sudder Hospital at Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine for receiving training on anti – malaria work. During this year a survey of almost all the houses of the town was made . The weeds and jungle in the tanks behind the Palace Stables were cleaned . Larvicides were sprayed on stagnant water in the town. The pucca drains on the eastern side of the town, the water troughs maintained for cows and buffaloes at the crossings of roads , unused wells, and stagnant water in drains by the side of hydrants , had been found to be the main breeding – places of mosquitoes , especially during the dry season .

The other part of medical treatment i. e the veterinary department also developed very steadily during the reign of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan . There was only one veterinary assistant surgeon in the service of the State . As he was in charge of the veterinary hospital in Cooch Behar town it was not possible for him to visit the rural area often , and in fact he used to go to the rural area and then there was a particularly bad outbreak of cattle disease . The Regency Council of Cooch Behar decided that the veterinary department should be strengthened , accordingly , a second veterinary assistant surgeon for touring was appointed in 1924.

8.3 EARLY HISTORY: MUGHAL INTERFERENCE, MUGHAL-KOCH CONFLICTS (1587–1680)

The Kamata kingdom split at a time when the Mughals under Akbar were aggressively expanding their empire. The state soon became a dependency of the Mughal empire, and steadily lost territory to the empire.

Notes

Lakshmi Narayan (1587–1621), Nara Narayan's son, was the first ruler of the Koch Bihar portion of the former Kamata kingdom. He was an ineffectual ruler. After losing much territory to the Mughal commander Ali Kuli Khan, he accepted Mughal sovereignty and assistance in defending against his neighbours. The next Mughal emperor, Jahangir, again attacked Bihar and captured territory including Tripura. Lakshmi Narayan went to Delhi and won guarantees for his much-reduced state. On his return, he established his capital at the Atharokotha village. Lakshmi Narayan was a patron of scholars and the arts. He partially restored the Shiva Temple of Jalpesh, but did not complete construction of the temple during his lifetime. Influenced by Madhavdeva, a famous preacher, he made Ekasarana dharma the state religion.

Bir Narayan (1621–1626), Lakshmi Narayan's son and successor, was a pleasure-loving ruler who failed to exert his authority to levy taxes on the king of Bhutan. In his peaceful reign, he sponsored schools for the aristocracy and supported intellectuals. His successor Pran Narayan (1626–1665) ruled in peace until 1657, when a struggle for succession in the Mughal empire began between Aurangzeb and his brothers. Pran Narayan invaded Bengal, seizing Ghoraghat, a centre of Mughal power in 1658, and in 1661 capturing Dhaka, the Bengali capital. However, by this time Aurangzeb had consolidated his power and sent his armies to invade Bihar and Assam. Pran Narayan retreated to the mountains and waged a guerrilla war for three years, finally making a pact with the Mughal Nawab Shaista Khan in 1664. During his rule, the Behar kingdom expanded to Tajhat Baharband Pargana in the south, Basakpur near Khutaghat of Goalapara district in the east and Bhatgaon within Morang in the west. Thus Koch Bihar maintained its sovereignty [essentially the entire North Bengal] against Mughal invasions.

Maharaja Pran Narayan rebuilt the temples of Baneswar, Shandeswar and the Kamteswari temple of Gosanimari. He sent for architects from Delhi to complete the Jalpesh temple, but the work was not completed in his lifetime. He constructed broad highways and bridges, and many beautiful buildings in his capital. He was a patron of the arts.

Madan Narayan or Mod Narayan (1665–1680) succeeded Pran Narayan after a short struggle with his brothers. For some time, the power behind the throne was Mahi Narayan, who had been Nazir (summoner) for his father. After a fierce struggle, Madan Narayan gained control and Mahi Narayan fled to Bhutan. Madan Narayan began a survey of his lands and a register of landholdings. He completed the construction of the Jalpesh Shiva temple, providing lands for the temple's maintenance. The Koch Bihar state of his time comprised the entirety of present-day Jalpaiguri division and large parts of Maldah division of present-day West Bengal. It also included the entire Rangpur division and large parts of the Rajshahi division of current Bangladesh. He assisted the Mughals in a war with the Ahom kingdom in 1666. This strategy helped him keep two competing forces at bay from threatening his holdings.

8.4 BHUTANESE INVASIONS, BHUTAN-TIBET-KOCH CONFLICTS, BHUTANESE REVERSALS (1680–1772)

The growing power of Bhutan saw the turmoil in Behar and the waning authority of the Mughals as an opportunity to extend their influence. They provided support to competitors for the throne of Koch Bihar, and later attempted outright annexation.

On the death of Madan Narayan with no immediate successor, the sons of the Nazir Mahi Narayan attacked Behar, assisted by the Bhutan army. The Raikats of Baikunthapur, distant relatives of the royal family based in the Jalpaiguri area, sent troops and helped force the Bhutia army to retreat. The Raikats crowned Basudev Narayan (1680–1682), Madan Narayan's brother, as Maharajah and helped establish peace before returning to their home. Two years later, Yajna Narayan and Jagat Narayan (sons of Nazir Mahi) attacked Behar again with Bhutanese troops, captured the palace and massacred the royal family, including Basudev Narayan. The Raikats Yogyadev and Bhujdev intervened again, defeating Yajna Narayan in a battle on the banks of the Mansai river. The

Notes

Raikats then crowned Mahendra Narayan (1682–1693), a five-year-old grandson of Pran Narayan, as the next Maharajah.

During the minority rule of Mahendra Narayan, the state was unsettled. The lords of places such as Tapa, Manthana Kakina and Karjirhat rejected Bihari rule in place of direct tribute to the Mughal rulers as zamindars (landlords) of their territories. They accepted the authority of, and paid taxes to, Ibrahim Khan the Mughal Faujdar of Ghoraghat and Dhaka. Even the Raikat princes of Baikunthapur and Pangar transferred loyalty to these powers. The Mughals chose this time to attack Behar. With no other choice, Mahendra made a pact with Yajna Narayan and appointed him as Nazir. Aided by the Bhutanese, Yajna Narayan fought the Mughals at Patgram but was defeated. The Mughals took Boda, Patgram and eastern Pargana in the year 1711. However the Koch warlords offered dogged resistance to Mughal expansion beyond the lower tracts of Rajshahi division. This caused the military frontier to stabilize in the central Malda-Rangpur axis.

Mahendra Narayan died at the age of 16. With the main royal line extinct, Rup Narayan (1693–1714), a grandson of Nazir Mahi Narayan, became the next Maharajah. Rup Narayan was a strong and popular ruler, but made the mistake of attacking the Mughal Faujdar of Rangpur. Defeated, he lost Karjihat, Kakina and Fatehpur Chakla, retaining only Boda, Patgram and eastern Chakla. Soon after, he lost these territories too, and was reduced to holding the three Chaklas under lease to the Mughals in the name of his Najir. He moved his capital from Atharokotha to a new site, Guriahati on the east bank of the Torsa River, where he built a beautiful temple of Sri Madan Mohan Thakur.

Upendra Narayan (1714–1763), the next ruler, had no son of his own. He adopted Deena Narayan, the son of dewan Satya Narayan, and gave him considerable powers, but did not formally grant him the succession to the throne. Deena Narayan met the Mughal Faujdar Md. Ali Khan at Rangpur and agreed to accept Mughal supremacy in return for Md. Ali Khan's support in gaining the throne. Md. Ali Khan invaded, but was

forced back by a combined army from Behar and Bhutan and had to flee to Rangpur. A joint push by Koch-Ahom-Bhutan forces pushed the Mughals out of Rajshahi. This caused the Mughals to go on the defensive to protect their main flank at Dhaka. Coupled with major Ahom victories to the East, this push removed the Mughal threat from North Bengal for good. However, the Bhutanese took advantage of the situation to occupy some forts in the northern regions of Behar. These forts were later cleared of invaders by Koch warlords based at the Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Alipurduar tracts.

Late in life, Upendra Narayan's second queen gave birth to a male child, Debendra Narayan (1763–1765), who ascended the throne at the age of four. His short reign was chaotic. The Bhutias annexed further land in the north of Behar, and their ambassador in the capital of Behar became the de facto ruler of the state. The young maharaja was assassinated in a palace plot at the age of six.

On 12 August 1765, the British East India Company took over control of Bengal. The Maharaja of Bihar now had to pay rent to the East India company for Boda, Patgram, Panga and other chaklas in Bengal.

After Debendra Narayan's assassination, Debraj, king of Bhutan, sent troops to arrest Rajguru Ramananda Goswami, the leader of the assassination plot. The Behar court agreed to crown Dhairjendra Narayan (1765–1770), a cousin of Debendra Narayan, as Maharaja. However, he was a puppet of Bhutan: the Bhutanese ambassador Pensuthma was the effective ruler. Bhutan seized direct control of Behar territories including Jalpeswar, Mandas, Jalash, Lakshmipur, Santarabari, Maraghat and Bholka. During this time there was large scale famine. The court degenerated into intrigues and conspiracies. Eventually, Debraj of Bhutan arrested Dhairjendra Narayan and took him to the Bhutanese capital Punakh, crowning Rajendra Narayan (1770–1772) in his place as nominal ruler. After a short "reign", Rajendra Narayan died of a fever in 1772.

Notes

Maharaja Rajendra Narayan left no heir. The Bhutias attempted to take over direct control, seizing the royal regalia, but the court rebelled and enthroned Dharendra Narayan (1772–1775). The Koch warlords once again rallied their banners and chased the Bhutanese-Tibetan-Khampa forces out of the Northern areas of Koch Behar. Pensuthma -the Bhutanese regent- fled back to Bhutan, whose King sent troops to invade Behar. After some fighting, the Bhutanese regained control and established a new puppet ruler, a child whom they installed in Chekakhata in Bhutan. On his early death, the Bhutias finally attempted direct control, garrisoning forts in strategic positions. However most tracts of the extensive North Bengal region remained fiercely opposed to any Northern control. As, for example, an important warlord — Rupan Singh of Rahimganj Pargana — maintained that the Bhutanese presence in North Bengal was illegal and issued directives to the Bhutan court to pull back their forces.

8.5 BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY ACQUIRES CONTROL

Maharaja Dharendra Narayan appealed to the British, rulers of Bengal, for assistance in regaining his kingdom in exchange for a large payment. However, the Governor General Warren Hastings rejected the terms and insisted on an agreement by which the Maharaja would pay an annual tribute to the Company in exchange for protection: in effect an agreement to accept the supremacy of the British. The British then sent a regiment commanded by Mr. Paling from Kalikata (Calcutta/Kolkata) who marched through Rangpur towards Mughalhat, joined on their route by Behar forces from all the warlords and the chiefs of North Bengal. After a series of sharp encounters with the Bhutanese forces, the British-Koch coalition force captured the capital (1772) and moved forward into southern Bhutan.

Unwilling to go further into the difficult hill country, the British negotiated a peace agreement (25 April 1774) with Bhutan in exchange for surrender of Bihar royal captives, Bhutan agreeing to return to its pre-1730 boundaries, and a symbolic tribute of five horses. The British left a

small garrison in Behar, and withdrew the main army to Rangpur. When Dhairjendra Narayan realised that he had exchanged one master for another, and had permanently lost independence of his ancestral land, he abdicated in favour of Dharendra Narayan, who reigned until his death in 1775, when Dhairjendra Narayan resumed the throne (1775–1783)

From now on, until the transfer of control to the State of India in 1949, Koch Behar was a princely state subject to overall British Suzerainty. In 1949, it was merged with the Union of India and later became a part of West Bengal state. Alternatively if it had acceded to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) then India would not have had land access to North-east India and that territory would have seceded to independence. Also the former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) would have land borders with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim.

Subsequent princely rulers under the British East India company were Harendra Narayan (1783–1839), followed by Shivendra Narayan (1839–1847) and then by Narendra Narayan (1847–1863).

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. Discuss the History of Cooch Behar Raj.

.....
.....
.....

2. Discuss in details about the Early history: Mughal interference, Mughal-Koch conflicts (1587–1680).

.....
.....
.....

8.6 LET US SUM UP

Notes

The Narayan dynasty founded the principality on the ruins of the ancient Hindu kingdom of Kamarupa. The first Raja, Chandan Narayan, of Koch and Mech descent, established himself on Mount Chikna in 1510. His half-brother and successor, Maharaja Vishnu Narayan, greatly expanded his domains and established his capital in the plains. Vishnu's son, Maharaja Nara Narayan, conquered vast territories and subjugated most of the surrounding principalities. Their successors maintained their independence until the late seventeenth century, when Maharaja Mahendra Narayan faced repeated attacks by the Mughal Nawab-Nazims of Bengal. His successor ceded half his principality and became their tributary in 1711. The state came under British protection after the acquisition of the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, by Lord Clive of Plassey in 1765. Bhutanese intervention in succession disputes prompted a formal treaty between the rightful heir and the British in 1775. The family, belonging to the Rajbhansi and Sudra caste, was highly cultured and of modern outlook, championing education, Hindu reform and Indian literature. Maharaja Sir Nripendra Narayan, and his wife Maharani Siniti Devi, were court favourites of the Queen-Empress Victoria. Their children were educated in England and two of their daughters married Europeans. The state acceded to the Dominion of India in 1947 and merged with the state of West Bengal in 1950.

8.7 KEY WORDS

Conflicts: A conflict is a clash of interest. The basis of conflict may vary but, it is always a part of society. Basis of conflict may be personal, racial, class, caste, political and international. Conflict in groups often follows a specific course.

8.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Write about the Bhutanese invasions, Bhutan-Tibet-Koch conflicts, Bhutanese reversals (1680–1772).
2. Discuss about the British East India Company acquires control.

8.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Nath, D (1989), History of the Koch Kingdom: 1515–1615, Delhi: Mittal Publications
- "Cooch Behar Government: Royal History : Book of Facts and Events C1-C2 p9". Archived from the original on 23 October 2018. Retrieved 20 October 2008.
- "Cooch Behar Government: Royal History : Book of Facts and Events C2 p10 – C3 p11". Archived from the original on 23 October 2018. Retrieved 20 October 2008.
- "Cooch Behar Government: Royal History : Book of Facts and Events C3 p11 – C6". Archived from the original on 23 October 2018. Retrieved 20 October 2008.
- Cooch Behar Princely State (13 gun salute)
- Moore, Lucy (2004). Maharanis: The lives and Times of Three Generations of Indian Princess. Penguin Publishers. ISBN 978-0141009728.
- Devi, Gayatri. The Princess Remembers. Rupa Publishers India.

8.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 8.2
2. See Section 8.3

UNIT 9: CULTURAL RESPONSE AND REACTION

STRUCTURE

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Vicarious Choice

9.3 The Role of Rejection Avoidance in the Response to Vicarious Choice

9.4 The Present Research on Cultural Response

9.5 Let us sum up

9.6 Key Words

9.7 Questions for Review

9.8 Suggested readings and references

9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.0 OBJECTIVES

They usually come from:

1. functioning in unfamiliar social and academic settings without a clear understanding of how to succeed or avoid failure. "Trying harder" without understanding the "rules" of the culture or modifying your normal behavior tends to compound the problem and rather than resolve it;
2. going abroad with unrealistic expectations and preconceptions of what life would be like and discovering those ideas are naïve, idealistic, or stereotypical;
3. making every effort to learn the language or culture and failing to make the kind of progress you expected;
4. attempting to make "foreign" friends, but finding this does not result in the kinds of relationships you had hoped to have.

These kinds of frustrations are likely to solve themselves as you become more knowledgeable and competent in the new culture. They probably fall under the category of "culture fatigue." Culture shock is a somewhat different and more intense version of "frustration" and usually arises

from sources which are far less obvious and circumstances which persist over time.

While reactions that signal transition shock are frequent enough to be considered completely "normal" by psychologists and study abroad advisers, they can present a great personal challenge to students struggling through a difficult period in their adjustment. When travelers begin to ask themselves questions like, "What have I gotten myself into?" "What am I doing here?" "What is the matter with these people?" and "Why can't they do it the right way?" you can be pretty sure that some degree of transition shock is present.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

"It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are" (Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, 1998). Rowling's (1998) line reveals how central choice is for an individual's psychology and life course. The provision of choice and self-determination are crucial for autonomy and human motivation and make individuals happier and healthier (Zuckerman et al., 1978; Deci and Ryan, 2008). On the other hand, evidence on social influence suggests that individuals tend to adjust themselves to the thought of the majority in a group pressure situation (Asch, 1952; Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). Although both the pursuit of personal choice and seeking to fit in the group underlie individuals' behaviors, which of these two aspects is emphasized might be moderated by cultural differences in the weight on self and social relationships. Indeed, a growing research stream has documented that Western individualistic cultures generally promote a stronger desire for personal choice, but a smaller influence of interpersonal concerns on decisions than East Asian collectivistic cultures (e.g., Kitayama et al., 2004; Savani et al., 2008, 2010).

In this research, drawing on the literature on culture and choice, we examine cultural differences in reactions to a group member's vicarious choice in Germans and Japanese. Based on previous work suggesting that East Asians are more motivated than Westerners to avoid rejection by group members (Sato et al., 2014; Hashimoto and Yamagishi, 2016), we

Notes

hypothesized that Japanese would be more likely than Germans to react positively to vicarious choice and that cultural differences in rejection avoidance would account for the cultural influence on response to vicarious choice.

The symptoms of culture shock are quite varied and can be easily misunderstood or even overlooked because they are similar to reactions that can occur in everyday life. The link between culture shock and what you are feeling at a given moment may be difficult to see. It is very common for people experiencing culture shock to not only deny the possibility that culture shock might be the problem, but to shift the focus, attributing their stress wholly to the behavior or values of the people around them.

Common symptoms of culture shock:

- Extreme homesickness
- Feelings of helplessness/dependency
- Disorientation and isolation
- Depression and sadness
- Hyper-irritability, may include inappropriate anger and hostility
- Sleep and eating disturbances (too little or too much)
- Excessive critical reactions to host culture/stereotyping
- Hypochondria
- Excessive drinking
- Recreational drug dependency
- Extreme concerns over sanitation, safety (even paranoia), and being taken advantage of
- Loss of focus and ability to complete tasks

Mediation Analyses

To analyze whether individual rejection avoidance tendencies constitute a factor underlying the cultural differences in reactions to vicarious choice, we first calculated rejection avoidance tendencies for each participant by merging the five items measuring this construct ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = 0.82$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = 0.85$). In line with previous research, we found that compared to Germans ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.33$), Japanese ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.11$) were

more anxious about being rejected by others, $t(430) = 6.53$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.63$, 95% CI = (-1.00, -0.54). Correlation patterns between rejection avoidance and acceptance were $r_{\text{Ger}}(210) = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$, $r_{\text{Jap}}(218) = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$ and between rejection avoidance and choice demand $r_{\text{Ger}}(210) = -0.36$, $p < 0.001$, $r_{\text{Jap}}(218) = 0.07$, $p = 0.33$.

Next, we conducted mediation analyses to investigate the hypothesis that the cultures provoke different levels of rejection avoidance, which in turn affect reactions to choices on one's behalf. We dummy coded German culture as 0 and Japanese culture as 1. Regressing culture on acceptance tendencies, we found that culture is a significant predictor, $b = 0.93$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(430) = 8.58$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [0.72, 1.14]. Culture also predicted rejection avoidance tendencies significantly, $b = 0.77$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(430) = 6.53$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [0.54, 1.00]. Importantly, individual rejection avoidance tendencies in turn affected reactions to vicarious choice $b = 0.36$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(430) = 8.82$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = (0.28, 0.44) and the predictive power of culture was significantly reduced to $b = 0.65$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(430) = 6.23$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = (0.45, 0.86) when we controlled for rejection avoidance. Bootstrap analyses revealed a significant indirect effect (1,000 bootstrap samples): 95% CI [0.17, 0.41]. Hence, the cultural difference in acceptance of vicarious choice was partially mediated by individual variation in rejection avoidance (Figure 3).

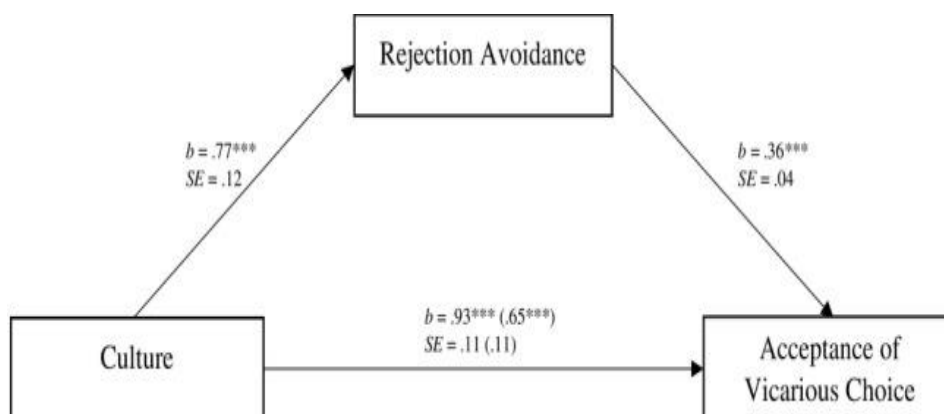


Figure 3

Notes

Individual levels of rejection avoidance as a mediator of the cultural differences in acceptance of vicarious choice in Study 2. Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are shown. Coefficients indicating the relationship between culture (coded as German culture = 0 and Japanese culture = 1) and acceptance of vicarious choice after controlling for rejection avoidance tendencies are given in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$.

Next, we tested whether rejection avoidance tendencies likewise mediated the cultural difference in choice demand. Culture was a significant predictor for choice demand tendencies, $b = -1.15$, $SE = 0.10$, $t(430) = -11.24$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = (-1.35, -0.95). When we entered rejection avoidance simultaneously to an analysis of regression, the effect of culture was significantly reduced, $b = -0.99$, $SE = 0.10$, $t(430) = -9.50$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = (-1.19, -0.78) and rejection avoidance predicted choice demand, $b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(430) = -5.05$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [-0.28, -0.12]. The indirect effect was significant [1,000 bootstrap samples, 95% CI (-0.26, -0.07)]; suggesting that the cultural difference in choice demand was partially mediated by rejection avoidance (Figure 4).

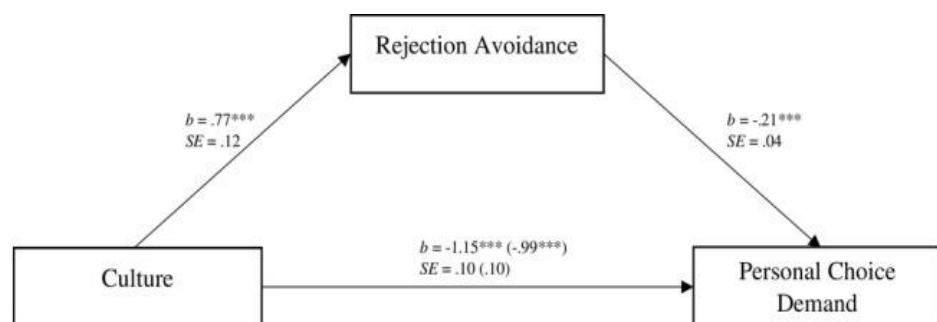


Figure 4

Individual levels of rejection avoidance as a mediator of the cultural differences in personal choice demand as a reaction to vicarious choice in Study 2. Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are shown. Coefficients indicating the relationship between culture (coded as German culture = 0 and Japanese culture = 1) and acceptance of vicarious choice after controlling for rejection avoidance tendencies are given in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$.

As an alternative possibility, based on the claim that rejection avoidance is more connected to structural factors in Japan than in Germany, the association between rejection avoidance and responses to vicarious choices could be evident in the Japanese sample, but not in the German sample. We tested this possibility by comparing two regression models, one that includes culture and rejection avoidance to predict acceptance of vicarious choice (model 1) and one that includes also the interaction of culture and rejection avoidance (model 2). Although both models were significant [model 1: $R^2 = 0.277$, $F(2, 429) = 82.22$, $p < 0.001$; model 2: $R^2 = 0.283$, $F(3, 428) = 56.20$, $p < 0.001$], the variance explained by these models did not differ significantly [R^2 change = 0.006, $F(1, 428) = 3.29$, $p = 0.071$] and the interaction term was not significant ($b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = 0.071$). The effect of rejection avoidance was significant in both samples [German sample: $b = 0.42$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI (0.32, 0.52); Japanese sample: $b = 0.27$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI (0.15, 0.40)], suggesting that if someone has a strong tendency to avoid rejection, this person is likely to accept vicarious choice regardless of his/her cultural background. When we performed this analysis with choice demand as dependent variable, both models were significant [model 1: $R^2 = 0.270$, $F(2, 429) = 79.53$, $p < 0.001$; model 2: $R^2 = 0.287$, $F(3, 428) = 59.84$, $p < 0.001$]. We found a significant change in $R^2 = 0.016$, $F(1, 428) = 9.84$, $p = 0.002$ and the interaction term was significant ($b = -0.25$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = 0.002$). However, quite the contrary to the assumption that rejection avoidance plays a crucial role in Japan but not in Germany, the effect of rejection avoidance was stronger in the German sample ($b = -0.31$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.42, -0.21]) than in the Japanese sample [$b = -0.06$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI (-0.18, 0.06)]. This indicates that in Germany, people with strong tendencies to avoid rejection would rather not demand personal choice, compared to people with weaker rejection avoidance tendencies. In Japan, people would be unlikely to demand personal choice, regardless of their rejection avoidance tendencies. Aligning with previous findings, over the studies presented here, Germans indicated to be likely to demand personal choice when a group member had chosen vicariously, while Japanese were found to likely

Notes

accept vicarious choices. This indicates that Westerners likely perceive vicarious choice as a threat to their rather independently oriented selves, thereby promoting reactance. However, the emphasis on interdependence would lead East Asians to avoid social rejection by meeting others' intentions and expectations. Hence, the mechanism behind cultural variation in choice seems to be related to the extent to which people are motivated to avoid social disapproval.

This research investigated a specific form of interpersonal choice: psychological consequences of situations in which one group member decides for the entire ingroup without consulting its individual members. This is unique, as previous studies (e.g., Iyengar and Lepper, 1999; Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005; Savani et al., 2008) largely ignored group processes. The focus on groups, however, allowed us to test whether previous findings extend to this very common form of vicarious choice, in which group pressure can be anticipated and perceived. Despite this group pressure, our German participants indicated that they would reject vicarious choices and thereby risk negative social consequences. This gives an idea about the strength of German people's desire for personal choice. In addition, the results suggest that cultural differences in reactions to an ingroup member's vicarious choice are not limited to a closely related other like a mother or best friend. Rather, they would extend to colleagues, who are ingroup members but not as closely related. Moreover, focusing on rejection avoidance, these studies contribute to the literature by partly revealing the mechanism behind cultural differences. Elucidating the mechanism behind cultural differences contributes greatly to the field and advances the knowledge of culture and choice by explaining existing differences rather than merely describing them. In addition, identifying the driving motivations behind variation in behaviors informs psychology in general about the processes underlying individual conducts (Heine and Norenzayan, 2006). Our findings would suggest that interdependently oriented Japanese people are acceptant of choices that imply others' expectations because falling short of these expectations would result in social rejection or exclusion. In contrast, independently oriented German people were not concerned about social rejection as much and were, therefore, more likely to reject

vicarious choices and demand personal choice in order to regain their sense of autonomy. While individual differences in rejection avoidance tendencies affected the likeliness to accept vicarious choice in Japanese and German participants, rejection avoidance did not affect how likely Japanese participants in Study 2 were to demand personal choice. A possible explanation for this is that the norm of not standing out would be so strong that it covered the effect of rejection avoidance at the individual level. However, when we temporarily made rejection avoidance salient with a priming method in Study 3, German and Japanese participants' tendency to demand personal choice decreased.

The finding that the described vicarious choice situations occur more frequently in Japan than in Germany gives some insight as to the instantiation of cultural differences in daily life. It supports the claim that sociocultural contexts affect individuals by providing them with particular kinds of regularly encountered situations, and the experiences in these socioculturally shaped situations lead to habitual ways of thinking about oneself and the world (Kitayama et al., 1997). As sociocultural contexts foster specific situations that demand specific behaviors and ways of being, individuals learn to construct themselves in order to match these sociocultural expectations. If so, frequently encountered situations might have shaped individuals' understandings of the self and agency, thereby (unconsciously) advising them on either emphasizing personal, autonomous choice or social connectedness and conformity.

Whereas previous findings were based on studies conducted primarily with North American samples, we examined German people's behavior and found that they responded negatively to vicarious choice. This is in line with previous findings illustrating that compared to East Asians, Germans considered recommendations by ingroup members less in their workplace choice (Eisen et al., 2016) and that Western Europeans showed strong psychological reactance when they had to give up their personal freedoms (Jonas et al., 2009; Graupmann et al., 2012). Although some previous findings proposed differences in the emphasis on individual achievement and self-promotion between North Americans and Western Europeans (Kitayama et al., 2009), the findings related to

Notes

choice and agency would not suggest differences between these cultures in the tendency to condemn social influence. However, as this study does not include a North American sample, a direct comparison remains to be addressed in future research.

In our studies, we used vicarious choice stimuli that are likely to happen in everyday life. While we eliminated concerns that culturally different reactions are only side effects of these situations occurring more or less frequent in the two cultures (Study 1a), our findings can be generalized only to everyday choice situations and not to more consequential choices. It is possible that Japanese people are more likely to demand personal choice if the decision is important to them, or alternatively, that increased importance makes them even more likely to reflect upon social approval and accept choices on their behalf. Similarly, more consequential decisions might lead Germans to incorporate the social context more strongly or to be even more likely to decide merely based upon their own preferences. Indeed, previous research suggested that the importance of a decision is a relevant factor to consider (Savani et al., 2010; Li et al., 2014). Furthermore, our scenarios are all work-related and included diverse vicarious choices. Choosing work-related contexts enabled us to create scenarios in which an equal-status ingroup member chose vicariously. However, it is possible that the differences observed pertain to norms about work settings in particular, as opposed to more general cultural differences. In addition, the scenarios described situations in which someone chooses food on behalf of the group, situations in which someone chooses which task each team member has to accomplish, and situations in which a team member responds on behalf of the whole group. This is a very wide understanding of vicarious choice and goes beyond the common definition of choice. Future research needs to explore the generalizability of our findings.

Despite providing insights into the mechanism behind culturally diverse reactions to vicarious choice, rejection avoidance tendencies cannot fully explain sociocultural differences. Additional testing for mediators, such as self-esteem (Heine et al., 1999; Schmitt and Allik, 2005), self-monitoring (Gudykunst et al., 1989), relationship and group-based trust

(Yuki et al., 2005) will be necessary to specify the precise factors and their interactions to completely understand the underlying mechanism behind diverse reactions to choice situations.

Another future research direction could be to examine more automatic and unconscious responses to vicarious choice and to investigate its neural mechanism. For instance, given that the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC) plays a crucial role in the detection of a behavioral conflict, previous research found that cognitive dissonance, particularly conflict evoked by difficult choice, is linked to strong activation of dACC (Kitayama et al., 2013). If Westerners evaluate the group member who chooses vicariously more negatively than East Asians, they might feel that the denial of personal choice caused by the group member's vicarious choice causes a conflict. If so, the cultural differences in response to vicarious choice would be reflected as cultural differences in activation of dACC.

Finally, it is important to explore whether cultural differences in reaction to vicarious choice mediated by rejection avoidance can be observed even in children. Given that Iyengar and Lepper (1999) tested children ranging in age from 7 to 9 years and found cultural differences in intrinsic motivation toward tasks chosen by either children themselves or others, future work is needed to test children in elementary schools and investigate whether socialization may impact on reaction to vicarious choice as well as rejection avoidance across cultures. This investigation will contribute to our understanding of how children learn and acquire culturally proper forms of choice through socialization.

To conclude, the present research adds to previous evidence on culture and choice by showing that responses to vicarious choice differ across cultures. It also provided the first evidence that the cultural influence on responses to vicarious choice can be explained by cultural differences in rejection avoidance. This evidence for the mechanism that underlies responses to vicarious choice has implications for fields such as marketing and politics particularly in the globalizing world today where

people with different cultural backgrounds are urged to work together as a group. Also, the present research presents interesting questions, which should be addressed in future research. We believe that additional insight provided by further investigations suggested in the present research will enhance our understanding of cultural mechanisms behind responses to vicarious choice.

9.2 VICARIOUS CHOICE

The self has been featured as being independent and separate from other people in Western cultures such as in Germany, whereas it has been featured as being interdependent and connected with others in East Asian cultures such as in Japan (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Against the backdrop of the greater emphasis on independence, the pursuit of personal choice is crucial for Westerners, as choice enables them to express their individual, autonomous selves through showing their preferences, attitudes, values, and feelings (Kim and Sherman, 2007). On the other hand, Eastern cultures place greater emphasis on social adjustment and accommodation to others (Morling et al., 2002), while self-expression through choice is relatively unimportant.

Cultures promote different implicit frameworks of normative behavior, called models of agency (Markus and Kitayama, 2003). North American and Western European contexts promote a rather disjoint model of agency, which characterizes good actions by their independence of social circumstances and their contingency on one's own preferences, goals, intentions, and motives. On the contrary, many East Asian contexts promote a rather conjoint model of agency, in which actions are responsive to others' obligations and expectations, and good actions promote interdependence with and adjustment to others (Markus and Kitayama, 2003; Kitayama and Uchida, 2005; Markus et al., 2006).

Mirroring these divergent models of agency, previous research has illustrated sociocultural variation in emphases on personal and interpersonal aspects in choice. Research identified cultural differences in whether choice is considered individual, personal decision-making or

whether multiple people can be involved in a more interpersonally constructed form of choice (Markus and Kitayama, 2003; Mesquita and Markus, 2004; Savani et al., 2010). People in many cultures base their choices not merely on their personal preferences, but rather seek advice and include others' opinions in their choices without feeling constricted or burdened (Savani et al., 2008, 2010; Eisen et al., 2016). Consistently, previous research illustrated that whereas Asians and Asian Canadians showed no cognitive dissonance in a condition with the standard free-choice paradigm, dissonance was observable in a condition where interpersonal concerns and worries were induced by presenting eyes of others (Kitayama et al., 2004) and when they were to make a choice for their friends (Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005).

Although evidence is limited, the consequence of the denial of choice also differs across cultures. For instance, in Savani et al.'s (2008) Study 5, the experimenter usurped participants of their personal pen choices by choosing on their behalf. The researchers found that, compared to an own choice condition, North Americans indicated less liking of the pen in the usurped choice condition, while Indian participants rated the pens equally likable in both conditions. In addition, Jonas et al. (2009) asked participants to imagine that a colleague they briefly knew requests the abandonment of a certain good participants assumed as theirs, or that an authority prohibited certain products for health reasons, and measured self-reported negative reactions to these scenarios. They found that compared to people from collectivistic cultures, people from individualistic cultures showed greater psychological reactance when they had to give up their personal freedom to use the respective good. As described in reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), the denial of personal choice by another person's vicarious choice likely threatens Westerners' freedom and therefore elicits negative responses (reactance) from them. Moreover, Jonas et al. (2009) manipulated independent and interdependent orientations and found that people primed with independent orientation reported more reactance than did those primed with interdependent orientation when they had to give up personal freedom.

Notes

In this research, we pay attention to situations in which someone else decides on behalf of a group, for example, when selecting or saying something on the others' behalf, and thereby restricts the others in their expression of personal preferences and ideas. Studies have examined how choices made by ingroup (e.g., mother) or outgroup (e.g., experimenter) choosers on behalf of the individual affect this individual's performance and judgments (Iyengar and Lepper, 1999; Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005; Savani et al., 2008). However, vicarious choice situations in which an equal-status ingroup member decides on behalf of the entire group have not received sufficient attention – in spite of being frequent daily life occurrences. Examinations of the consequences of vicarious choices made for the whole group could add to the understanding of how agency is understood in interdependent contexts. Therefore, the present research focuses on these vicarious choices and investigates reactions in Eastern and Western cultures.

The analysis compared the way the various cultures responded to risky situations, with the results indicated that distinct differences across the groups investigated. For example in the ticker task designed to measure how people responded to ambiguity, the South-Asian participants appeared to be significantly more conservative, responding 27% ($p < 0.036$, $N = 145$) quicker when compared to their mainstream White-British counterparts.

In contrast to the South-East-Asian participants showed a greater willingness to take their chances under the same circumstances, let their ticker run 24% ($p < 0.047$, $N = 130$) longer than their White-British counterparts. This relative greater appetite for risk was again demonstrated in a separate task designed to measure the extent people are adverse to losses, as participants were given money with the proposition to “double or nothing.” South-East-Asian participants were found to be 21% ($p < 0.032$, $N = 138$) more likely to take the gamble, than those that identified as White-British.

What might explain these differences?

Insights were gathered into this question when observing the responses of participants to the ERS in which they were required to recall and document in their own words a recent event in their lives when they had to deal with risk. The survey yielded responses which placed emphasis on different aspects of the decision depending on the individual's cultural group. For example for similar events such as making a purchase online or making an investment, Asian participants considered more contextual concerns for their situation such as family, reputation and career. In comparison White-British participants focused on specific metrics and logical rationales to recall their thought process during their risk event.

These observations highlight how different cultures think differently when presented with risky options. There are a variety of cultural mediums such as the community environment, values and social interactions that could explain these varying responses to risk. For instance South-East-Asian communities have a strong tradition of playing games of chance including various card games and Mah-jong during social and family gatherings, as well as having a high regard for superstition and numerology where luck is viewed as a blessing from their ancestors and gods. In comparison in underlying South-Asian belief systems such as Karma, one becomes worthy of good fortune through selfless sacrifice and self-control.

According to some theories, emotions are universal phenomena, albeit affected by culture. Emotions are "internal phenomena that can, but do not always, make themselves observable through expression and behavior". While some emotions are universal and are experienced in similar ways as a reaction to similar events across all cultures, other emotions show considerable cultural differences in their antecedent events, the way they are experienced, the reactions they provoke and the way they are perceived by the surrounding society. According to other theories, termed social constructionist, emotions are more deeply culturally influenced. The components of emotions are universal, but the patterns are social constructions. Some also theorize that culture is affected by emotions of the people.

9.3 THE ROLE OF REJECTION AVOIDANCE IN THE RESPONSE TO VICARIOUS CHOICE

While negative reactions to the denial of freedom are associated with independence of the self (Savani et al., 2008; Jonas et al., 2009), a positive reaction to the denial of freedom might be associated with interdependence of the self. Although this possibility has been suggested by Iyengar and Lepper (1999), who found an association between personal choice and intrinsic motivation in European American children and an association between a choice made by a close other (e.g., their mothers) and intrinsic motivation in Asian American children, the underlying psychological mechanism of such a cultural difference has not been fully tested.

To explore the underlying mechanism of a cultural difference in the response to vicarious choice, we focus on how being afraid of social rejection leads to avoidant behavior. People care deeply about social rejection, as they want to connect with other people in their own group. The need to belong has been shown to play a significant role across cultures (Fiske and Yamamoto, 2005). Previous research illustrated that experience of rejection leads to rejection sensitivity, which in turn promotes rejection avoidance behaviors (e.g., Feldman and Downey, 1994). Molden et al. (2009) showed that when people recalled or underwent experiences of being rejected, they showed prevention-focused responses. Similarly, studies suggest that rejection experiences bring to mind broader social connections, for example, social groups one belongs to (Knowles and Gardner, 2008) and promotes to seek out group settings (Maner et al., 2007), to adhere to group norms (Kerr et al., 2009), and to increase contribution to group efforts (Williams and Sommer, 1997). Taken together, these findings suggest that the experience of being rejected generally leads to increases of rejection sensitivity and avoidance at the individual level.

However, the literature also suggests cultural differences in the significance of the strategy to avoid rejection in order to live a good life.

Hashimoto and Yamagishi (2013, 2016) argued that a society like Japan, which is maintained by mutual monitoring and sanctioning within fixed group boundaries, promotes heavy dependency of individuals on others. As groups are closed to outsiders and mutual commitment relationships are prevalent, rejection by group members and exclusion from the community-based cooperation system is very harmful. It is therefore wise to be sensitive to the needs and expectations of other members of the group and not to offend them in order to avoid social rejection. In contrast, a society like Germany allows its members to find alternative interaction partners easily, and therefore, social rejection is not as deleterious. Sato et al. (2014) have provided empirical evidence for the claim that being rejected is more threatening to East Asian people than for Westerners because the cost of being disliked and eventually excluded by others is greater in these societies, where finding alternative relationships is rather difficult. Other studies have consistently found that East Asians exhibit more pronounced rejection avoidance tendencies than Westerners (Yamaguchi et al., 1995; Garris et al., 2011). Consistently, empirical research has shown that Asians oftentimes behave in a way that allows them to avoid any disruption of harmonious relationships: Compared to Westerners, East Asians more frequently engage in self-criticism (Heine et al., 2000), are less willing to seek social support (Kim et al., 2008; Ishii et al., 2017), and more frequently inhibit their desire to express disagreement (Hashimoto et al., 2012) in order to prevent social disapproval. These findings suggest that although rejection poses a threat and experiences of rejection lead to avoidance behaviors to people regardless of their cultural background, structural factors (e.g., whether a society is maintained by a mutual monitoring and sanctioning system) promote these avoidance behaviors to varying degrees.

The concern for others' appraisals might lead individuals across cultures to feel a threat of rejection from the group they belong to, particularly in situations in which all group members form a mutual commitment relationship and can observe individuals' behavior. Choosing based on one's inner attributes while ignoring the social context or failing to incorporate others' preferences could be seen as incongruent to social

standards and thus potentially elicits rejection by the other group members. However, as structural factors in Japan promote the prevention of social rejection more strongly than structural factors in Germany, Japanese people might respond more positively to vicarious choice by in-group members, while Germans would be more likely to risk rejection and claim personal choice. We hypothesized, accordingly, that the cultural differences in reactions can be partly explained by variation in levels of rejection avoidance.

9.4 THE PRESENT RESEARCH ON CULTURAL RESPONSE

The present research conducted three studies among German (representing a Western culture) and Japanese (representing an East Asian culture) participants to explore cultural differences in responses to vicarious choice. We hypothesized that Germans would be more likely than Japanese to demand choice as a reaction to vicarious choice and evaluate the chooser more negatively, whereas Japanese would be more likely than Germans to accept vicarious choices and evaluate the chooser more positively. Following Study, which tests the cultural differences, Studies 2 and 3 hypothesized that Japanese would be higher in rejection avoidance than Germans and that higher rejection avoidance would lead people to accept vicarious choice and demand less personal choice.

Given that rejection avoidance reflects a concern for social disapproval, the impact on responses to vicarious choice would be clearly demonstrated in a group situation such as when people are working in a team. Thus, we developed a set of group scenarios that one group member first chooses and proposes a collective behavior without asking and considering individual preferences and opinions. Little is known about cultural differences in reactions to vicarious choice in a group setting, as previous findings that the consequences of vicarious choice depend on culture are mainly based on the examinations at the dyadic level (e.g., mother; Iyengar and Lepper, 1999). Testing with these group scenarios, we also explore the cultural differences in reactions to

vicarious choice can be generalized even in a condition where group pressure can be estimated and perceived.

Culture and emotional experiences

A cultural syndrome as defined by Triandis (1997)[19] is a "shared set of beliefs, attitudes, norms, values, and behavior organized around a central theme and found among speakers of one language, in one times period, and in one geographic region". Because cultures are shared experiences, there are obvious social implications for emotional expression and emotional experiences. For example, the social consequences of expressing or suppressing emotions will vary depending upon the situation and the individual. Hochschild (1983)[20] discussed the role of feeling rules, which are social norms that prescribe how people should feel at certain times (e.g. wedding day, at a funeral). These rules can be general (how people should express emotions in general) and also situational (events like birthdays). Culture also influences the ways emotions are experienced depending upon which emotions are valued in that specific culture. For example, happiness is generally considered a desirable emotion across cultures. In countries with more individualistic views such as America, happiness is viewed as infinite, attainable, and internally experienced. In collectivistic cultures such as Japan, emotions such as happiness are very relational, include a myriad of social and external factors, and reside in shared experiences with other people. Uchida, Townsend, Markus, & Bergseiker (2009) suggest that Japanese contexts reflect a conjoint model meaning that emotions derive from multiple sources and involve assessing the relationship between others and the self. However, in American contexts, a disjoint model is demonstrated through emotions being experienced individually and through self-reflection. Their research suggests that when Americans are asked about emotions, they are more likely to have self-focused responses "I feel joy" whereas a Japanese typical reaction would reflect emotions between the self and others "I would like to share my happiness with others."

Culture and emotion regulation

Notes

Emotions play a critical role in interpersonal relationships and how people relate to each other. Emotional exchanges can have serious social consequences that can result in either maintaining and enhancing positive relationships, or becoming a source of antagonism and discord (Fredrickson, 1998; Gottman & Levenson, 1992)). Even though people may generally "want to feel better than worse" (Larsen, 2000,) how these emotions are regulated may differ across cultures. Research by Yuri Miyamoto suggests that cultural differences influence emotion regulation strategies. Research also indicates that different cultures socialize their children to regulate their emotions according to their own cultural norms. For example, ethnographic accounts suggest that American mothers think that it is important to focus on their children's successes while Chinese mothers think it is more important to provide discipline for their children. To further support this theory, a laboratory experiment found that when children succeeded on a test, American mothers were more likely than Chinese mothers to provide positive feedback (e.g. "You're so smart!"), in comparison to Chinese mothers who provided more neutral or task relevant feedback (e.g. "Did you understand the questions or did you just guess?"; Ng, Pomerantz, & Lam, 2007). This shows how American mothers are more likely to "up-regulate" positive emotions by focusing on their children's success whereas Chinese mothers are more likely to "down-regulate" children's positive emotions by not focusing on their success. Americans see emotions as internal personal reactions; emotions are about the self (Markus & Kityama, 1991). In America, emotional expression is encouraged by parents and peers while suppression is often disapproved. Keeping emotions inside is viewed as being insincere as well as posing a risk to one's health and well being. In Japanese cultures, however, emotions reflect relationships in addition to internal states. Some research even suggests that emotions that reflect the inner self cannot be separated from emotions that reflect the larger group. Therefore, unlike American culture, expression of emotions is often discouraged, and suppressing one's individual emotions to better fit in with the emotions of the group is looked at as mature and appropriate.

Emotional perception and recognition

The role of facial expressions in emotional communication is often debated. While Darwin believed the face was the most preeminent medium of emotion expression, more recent scientific work challenges that theory. Furthermore, research also suggests that cultural contexts behave as cues when people are trying to interpret facial expressions. In everyday life, information from people's environments influences their understanding of what a facial expression means. According to research by Masuda et al. (2008), people can only attend to a small sample of the possible events in their complex and ever-changing environments, and increasing evidence suggests that people from different cultural backgrounds allocate their attention very differently. This means that different cultures may interpret the same social context in very different ways. Since Americans are viewed as individualistic, they should have no trouble inferring people's inner feelings from their facial expressions, whereas Japanese people may be more likely to look for contextual cues in order to better understand one's emotional state. Evidence of this phenomenon is found in comparisons of Eastern and Western artwork. In Western art there is a preoccupation with the face that does not exist in Eastern art. For example, in Western art the figure occupies a larger part of the frame and is clearly noticeably separated from the ground. In East Asian artwork, the central figure is significantly smaller and also appears to be more embedded in the background. In a laboratory setting, Masuda et al. also tested how sensitive both Americans and Japanese would be to social contexts by showing them pictures of cartoons that included an individual in the context of a group of four other people. They also varied the facial expressions of the central figure and group members. They found that American participants were more narrowly focused with judging the cartoon's emotional states than the Japanese participants were. In their recognition task they also observed that the Japanese participants paid more attention to the emotions of the background figures than Americans did.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

Notes

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. Discuss about the Vicarious Choice

.....
.....
.....

2. Discuss about the Role of Rejection Avoidance in the Response to Vicarious Choice.

.....
.....
.....

3. Discuss the Present Research on Cultural Response.

.....
.....
.....

9.5 LET US SUM UP

Culture "Surprise": Usually occurs early in your stay in the new culture when you begin to be aware of superficial, novel, and startling differences. Often characterizes the "honeymoon" phase of adjustment.

Culture "Stress": A mild response to "stimulus overload." Culture Stress" is often seen in travelers abroad. One becomes tired and withdrawn. Annoyance builds as daily reality becomes more difficult.

Culture "Irritation": Often manifests itself in terms of "Item Irritation" and is usually traceable to a few observable behaviors that are common in the culture, and to which an individual reacts particularly strongly (a personal "hot button"). These may include spitting, hygiene, verbal harassment, public displays (affection, drunkenness, etc.), or other overt behaviors to which an individual has a strong negative response.

Culture "Fatigue": A fairly short-term response to "stimulus overload." This occurs when you begin to respond to the behavior of the "new" culture and are stressed by trying to deal with lots of new cultural information all at once. Stress and irritation intensify as you attempt to

study or work in a foreign environment. There is a cumulatively greater impact due to the "need to operate" in unfamiliar and difficult contexts. Symptoms intensify. Ability to function declines. It can occur soon after arrival or within a few weeks. It can hit you quickly and is often accompanied by "Language Fatigue." Language fatigue occurs when, trying to use a second language constantly, you become physically and psychologically drained by speaking, listening, and finding meaning in, until now, a little used "new" language.

Culture "Shock": Culture Shock comes from the natural contradiction between our accustomed patterns of behavior and the psychological conflict of attempting to maintain them in the new cultural environment. While the time of onset is variable, it usually occurs within a few months of entering a new culture and is a normal, healthy psychological reaction. While culture shock is common, relief is available. There are ways to minimize its effects -the first of which is to accept that it is a real phenomenon- and to learn to recognize its sometimes vague, if persistent, signs in yourself as well as others.

If negative attitudes towards minor annoyances do not change, a low level of persistent frustration is likely to build up. This can quickly lead to volatile anger when accumulated stress inappropriately and unexpectedly erupts and you vent your feelings, but you are unable to trace the outburst to a single source. People around you might comment, "What was that all about?" or "Where did that come from?"

Just remember that unlike temporary annoyance when you are in the presence of a particular cultural practice (e.g., mistreatment of animals or public displays of affection), culture shock is neither caused by a single act nor easily traceable to a particular event. It is cumulative, attributable to many small things that happen over time, and it has the potential to be more deeply felt and take longer to alleviate.

What happens as multicultural communities assimilate with the mainstream?

Notes

In an additional line of inquiry, the ticker task responses of a subset of participants with South-Asian and South-East-Asian ethnicity who were identified as having immigrated to the UK, were analysed separately to identify patterns in their risk taking as they settled.

The associated regression analysis showed that for every 10% of a person's lifetime spent in the United Kingdom, they took on 3% less risk, equivalent to responding 2 seconds quicker on the risk ticker ($p= 0.002$, $N= 63$). The increasing aversion to risk among migrants makes sense when considering the financial and emotional investment required in the process of relocation and integration into their new community and respective standing. These investments may create inertia and bias for maintaining the status quo and to take less risk.

The results of this research provokes further thought with regards to how we respond to risk and challenge the notion that all cultures do so in the same way. The cultural attributes of social interactions, value and environment may affect our responses although these influences are often overlooked in politics, social policy and marketing. With the increasing focus on public perceptions and growing divergence on views on societal challenges, research into how culture shapes our immediate reactions to risk is required and will grow in importance going forward.

9.6 KEY WORDS

Avoidance: the action of keeping away from or not doing something.

Rejection: Social rejection occurs when an individual is deliberately excluded from a social relationship or social interaction. The topic includes interpersonal rejection, romantic rejection and familial estrangement. A person can be rejected by individuals or an entire group of people.

9.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Write in details The Role of Rejection Avoidance in the Response to Vicarious Choice.

9.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Asch S. E. (1952). *Social psychology*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall;).
- Brehm J. W. (1966). *A theory of psychological reactance*. (New York: Academic Press;).
- Cialdini R. B., Goldstein N. J. (2004). Social influence: compliance and conformity. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* 55, 591–621. 10.1146/annurev.psych.55.090902.142015, PMID:
- Deci E. L., Ryan R. M. (2008). Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: an introduction. *J. Happiness Stud.* 9, 1–11. 10.1007/s10902-006-9018-1
- Eisen C., Ishii K., Miyamoto Y., Ma X., Hitokoto H. (2016). To accept one’s fate or be its master: culture, control, and workplace choice. *Front. Psychol.* 7:936. 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00936, PMID:
- Feldman S., Downey G. (1994). Rejection sensitivity as a mediator of the impact of childhood exposure to family violence on adult attachment behavior. *Dev. Psychopathol.* 6, 231–247.

9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 9.2
2. See Section 9.3
3. See Section 9.4

UNIT 10: LAND REVENUE SETTLEMENT: PLANTATION ECONOMY

STRUCTURE

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Introduction

10.2 A Note On Tea Plantation Labourers

10.2.1 Origin and Migration

10.2.2 Traditional Occupation of the Adibasi Labourers

10.2.3 Bureaucracy in Tea Plantation

10.2.4 Labour Recruitme

10.2.5 Types of Work, System of Works and Working Hours

10.2.6 Wage and Remuneration of the Labourers and other Job
Facilities

10.3 Social Environment of the Plantation Labourers

10.4 Let us sum up

10.5 Key Words

10.6 Questions for Review

10.7 Suggested readings and references

10.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know:

- To know about the Tea Plantation Labourers
- To discuss about the Social Environment of the Plantation Labourers

10.1 INTRODUCTION

It has been seen in the discussion of the earlier chapter that North Bengal is the main producer of tea of West Bengal, the second largest tea growing state of India. The North Bengal districts, mainly the hills and foot hill areas of Darjeeling and Doars of Jalpaiguri is the prime tea producing zone of the state. This region supplies both CTC and orthodox tea of which the tea of Darjeeling hills is world famous for its quality and

flavour. On the other hand the tea of Terai and Doars have much thicker brue. The tea plantation of this region has been started under the British patronage in about 1850 onward and gradually took commercial shape. Now all the gardens are owned by the Indians. The economy of North Bengal districts is even at present highly under developed while the tea gardens are the pockets of prosperity. In this chapter a discussion will be made on the adibasi tea plantation labourers of Terai and Doars of North Bengal. The prime part of the story of tea is the story of the people who built the industry. This part is more interesting with its own rhythm of joy and sorrow. This includes their migration, adoption of. this new economic and living environment, their social life - cultural life so on and so forth. But there is a difficulty to get a systematic chronology of the history of these people due to the lack of documentary evidences. This is only available in part in the record of different tea enquiry committees. (Bhowmik 1981)

10.2 A NOTE ON TEA PLANTATION LABOURERS

10.2.1 Origin and Migration

At the early stage of this industry the planters faced two vital problems. Firstly the ideally suited are~for tea were covered with thick unhealthy forest cover which were to be cleared. The second problem was the scarcity of labour. Tea being a very much labour intensive industry need continuous supply of cheap labour to carry on its operation at its different levels. The local people were reluctant to join the industry due to the hazardous condition of work as well as its low wage. The labourers had no fixed hour of work neither any fixed type of work. Their wages was as low as three rupees per month as the planters viewed their work as 'easy and light'. To solve the problem of labour crisis the planters started the import of labourers from outside the state mainly from Chotonagpur area of Bihar and its adjoining area of Orissa and Madhyapradesh. These people were the aboriginal people of Oraon, Murida, Santhal, Barik, Tulsi, Asur, Lahar, Kheria and others, popularly known in India as 'adibasi'. The tribal society of Bihar in the 19th century was 'in a state of

Notes

turmoil'. Since the 17th century the decay of their traditional society started. By this time their tribal King and the royal family got Hinduised and interlinked to the neighbouring Hindu princely family by intermarriage, and started encouraging the Hindu Brahmin and other high caste people, with rudimentary education, to settle down at their place and offered them high administrative posts and land. These people locally known as Dikus i.e. aliens...started exploiting these innocent tribal people and expropriate them from their land. This problem intensified with the introduction of British rule into this area. The traders and money lenders poured into this area and cornered land through various means. The simple minded innocent people finally burst into unrest and revolt. All the cultivating tribes. Munda, Kharias, Ho, Oraon, jointly fight against the aliens in 'Kol Insurrection' of 1831; 'Santhal Revolt' of 1858 and 'Uigulan in Mundari' of 1899-1901 are the series of tribal aggression against the Dikus and the Britishers. In addition to the turmoil, the natural hazards like a series of flood and famine (of 1868-69, 1873-74, 1893-94, 1897 the severest, 1918) destroyed the society of the tribals of Chotonagpur. As a result the poor and ill-fated people had, nothing to leave their place to earn their bread and butter from any where through any type of work. Finally they migrated to the areas of tea plantation and came under the grip of the planters who exploited these uprooted people more easily. Being deprived from the means of their lively hood, turned into the pool of unemployment...these adibasi people became sturdy, hard-working and submissive who could live at an almost subhuman level of existence. Almost all the tea plantation of Terai and Doars are served by the slave or indentured labourers from the tribal people of Chotonagpur.

Since 1853 recruitment of indentured labourers from outside the state started. Migration of these labourers to the plantation was mainly family based and organised instead of individual man and woman though this type of migration also occurred. The plantation absorb both male and female member of tribal family as labourers. The one of the major operation of plantation is plucking. This requires a huge number of female participation who had a good reputation to score over the male

more in efficiency and quality of leaf plucked. Moreover as the planters wanted cheap labour they encouraged the labourers to settle down permanently in the respective garden by providing them family quarter and a small plot of arable land as share cropper thus make them unable to go to any other sector of employment. The family based immigration cut off the labourers from their place of origin and ensure the planters that these people would never leave the garden. The present tea garden tribal labourers are the third or fourth generation of these early migrants and are totally cut off from their natal place. In 1835 the time of take over the Darjeelig from the Raja of Sikkim by East India Company its population was 100 (Dash 1947). Its increased to 10000 by 1859. When Terai was annexed to this district its population was not known. The first regular census of 1872 of this district showed its population figure as 94712. In 1881 the population was 155179. The population increased very rapidly by the consecutive years. The population in 1901,1911,1921,1931 and 1941 was 249117, 265500,282748,319635 and 376369 respectively. This rapid growth of population was mainly due to the very rapid growth of tea industry in hills and foothills of this district and also due to waste land cultivation. Most of the increased population comprises the immigrant tribal labourers from outside the state. The census of 1961 showed the district was inhabited by 624640 persons of which 67,00 was the immigrants from outside the state, primarily from Bihar. The census of 1961 further revealed that 96,444 persons returned themselves as belonging to various scheduled tribes. The Siliguri subdivision had a predominance of scheduled tribes with the Oraon from Chotonagpur being the maximum in number followed by Mundas from Bihar and Santhal from Santhal Pargana. In 1872 the Oraons were 1648 in number which increased to 14433 in 1941. The Mundas was 255 in 1891 and increased to 5993 in 1941. The Santhals was 999 in 1891 and increased to 4045 in 1941 (Bhadra : 1997).

The census of 1858-59 showed the population figure of the settled part of Jalpaiguri district was 189067 (9011961). The subsequent census showed considerable increase in the population. In 1871-72 the population was 327985. This increase of population was mainly due to

Notes

the rapid growth of tea industry there in which attract the tribal immigrants from outside the state. In 1989 the number of immigrants of this district was 143922 (9011901). The census of 1901 put the number of immigrants as 188223. Bulk of the immigrants were tribal people from Ranchi, Santhal Pargana of Chotonagpur. The migration statement show that 80436 immigrants were from Ran chi district and 1 0562 from Santhal Pargana. According to census report of 1911 the number of persons born in Ranchi district who were enumerated in Jalpaiguri district was 126214. The following table shows the immigration to Jalpaiguri since 1891 to 1941. This table includes all'types of immigrants, not only those from Chotonagpur to Jalpaiguri.

Table 10.1.: The Immigrant Population of Jalpaiguri District (1891-1941)

Year	Actual Population	Immigrants
1891	433334	44329
1901	544906	95899
1911	661282	152174
1921	694054	163024
1931	739260	158757
1941	845702	156765

Source : A. K. Mitra 1953, Census of India 1951.

The immigration of tea garden labourers in North Bengal were very high since 1860-1881 because a number of tea garden sprung up during this time. Between 1896-1901 tea price fell greatly in Britain. Consequently the gardens reduced their labourforce. During 1901-1911 the plantation population showed a decline in its number. The immigration of tribal labourers from Chotonagpur was stopped by rule in 1950. Since then the planters could employed the labourers from among the surplus ones settle down in the neighbouring villages and plantations. In 1952 the Plantation Labour Act was passed to protect men and women workers in plantation. Now the feudalistic relation between planters and the labourers changed to a relationship between employers and employees. The plantation labourers were given some legal protection and there was a scope to form their own association . Since the Plantation Labour Act

was effective for permanent labourers the planters wanted to reduce the number of the permanent labourers as these would decrease the overhead cost. Consequently there was a reduction in the labour force since the passing of the act.

Table 10.2.: Decline of Plantation Labour Force in India and West Bengal (1950-1980).

Year	West Bengal	India
1950	329034	1033090
1955	273163	989656
1959	236674	919405
1960	—	—
1965	191702	806152
1970	200280	759646
1975	200130	774897
1980	228705	912522

Source : Tea Statistics 1957, 1959, 1968-69, 1969-70, 1977-78, 1981-82

10.2.2 Traditional Occupation of the Adibasi Labourers

The adibasi plantation labourers of North Bengal are generally the immigrant tribals of Chotonagpur and their descendents. These people altogether form a more or less homogeneous group commonly referred to as 'Modesia' by the local people. These poverty sicken, innocent, hard-working, people are originally traditional agriculturists though some are of artisan background. Of these, . . . Oraons are agriculturists, Baraiks are weavers of cloth, Mahalis and Turis are basket makers, the Lohers are iron smiths. Tea plantation being an agro based industry has an agricultural environment in gardens. Besides, these gardens are generally situated in rural areas. This condition helps the traditional rural agriculturist tribes to adopt the industry much easily. According to their traditional occupation there exists a kind of social hierarchy within their society, keeping the traditional agriculturist in the upper rank and the

Notes

artisans in the inferior position. In factory there are somewhat industrial environment. These people are considered as industrial workers though actually these semi isolated working group does not enjoy the actual status of the industrial workers. This industry does not need any education or previous working experience and here the unit of recruitment is family. Both male and female members of family here get job as labourer alongwith their children. A kind of strick bureaucratic structure exists in each tea plantation keeping management at the top and labourers at the bottom with a number of intermediatories. Butthe relationship between the planters and the labourers are some what fu ,dalistic in nature which has been changed to some extent in modern times with the exposure to the outer world. At present almost 85 percent of the labour force of Terai and Doars. consists of the descendants of the immigrants of Chotonagpur. In plantation we get four categories of labourers male, female, adolescents (16-18yrs) and Children (12-16yrs). The last two categories i.e. the child and adoieJ'tent labourers are the special feature of plantation industry. The rest 15 percent includes the Nepali, Bihari and Bengali caste groups. Most of the plantation labourers are resident labour and live at scattered labour lines within plantation. The works in plantation start early in the morning o.n..eand labours1 to report much earlier. Moreover the labourers are the immigrants and their descendants, so the authority had to give them the housing facility which was compulsory according to the Plantation Labour Act of 1951. Labour force in tea gardens are of two types (a) workers in the fields (b) workers in the factory. Factory workers are generally male. Female child and adolescents eY'..s work1 rarely work as factory workers. Factory workers form a fragment of the labour force.

10.2.3 Bureaucracy in Tea Plantation

Every tea plantation has a strict bureaucratic structure of administrative work organisation with a very little chance of promotion or upward occupational mobility. At the top level there is the executive category, includes . . Manager (Sara Sahib) and a group of assistant Managers (Chotta Shibs) who are the immediate authority of the plantation and look after its overall administration. The next category includes the

supervisory staffs- both the garden (Bagan babu) and the factory (Factory Babu) and the clerks (Babu). The third category includes the sub-staffs who mainly carry out orders from the top and keep eyes on the collies. This group has a hierarchy within itself having at the top the Munshi (Field Staff) and Sardar (Factory Staff). Then comes Chaprasii. (peon); Boidar, who keeps the attendance in the field; Defadar, the gang leader of the collies; Chowkidar, the watchman; Paniwala, the man who carry water to the workers and he should be of a higher rank; Davawala the health assistant. The fourth and the last category of this hierarchical organisation is the 'Collie' include all the field and factory workers and daily wage workers directly engage in the process of production. The Collies form the large labourforce in the plantation. These people both male and female do all kinds of manual works in the garden and factory and carry on the flow production process.

10.2.4 Labour Recruitme

At the initial stage of tea industry in North Bengal the disperse and scanty population of this area failed to meet the enormous supply of required labour force for this very much labour intensive industry. Besides, the character of this local labour force was unsatisfactory. As a result labourers were imported from the tribal belt of Chotonagpur. Before 1874 Assam was a part of Bengal and here tea industry has started much earlier than Bengal. In 1859 Tea Planters Association was formed in Assam to regulate the process of Labour Recruitment through the contractors (Arakatthi) in an organised manner in Assam and also looked after the gardens of Terai and Dooars. However this process proved unsatisfactory by 1863. Besides this process, recruitment was also done by the planters themselves through the garden sardars and also through the recruiting agencies by contract basis. In 1874 Assam was separated from Bengal. The tea gardens of Darjeeling hills faced recruitment problems as these gardens were manned by the poverty sicken Nepali immigrants who were compelled to migrate from over populated Nepal due to its rising economic pressure. For the gardens of Terai and Dears imported labour force were to be needed. Here the planters recruited labourers following the popular policies namely

Notes

Sardari system, Arakathi system and recruitment through some private agencies. Of these three systems Sardari system is the most successful one. In the first system garden sardar was sent to the recruiting ground with some money in the recruiting season, generally from early October to late February. It was easier for a sardar to collect this native people to induce them to show the advantage of work and the false prospects of ultimate settlement on independent holding. He then collect the willing people and brought them to the respective gardens. The sardars were usually accompanied by one management personnel who keep a vigil on him. In the second one i.e. in the Arakathi system the agents of the planters, generally the members of Gashi, Barik and other non-cultivator) tribes of Chotonagpur, went to the recruiting districts and collected labourers by giving them false promise of prosperity. Under the Amendment Act of 1870 these two system was in vogue till 1952. Since 1952 there has been no recruitment in plantation at least officially though this system. The third system of "labour l"scruitment i.e. recruitment through local agents of some private agencies was done in the recruiting districts. These agencies supply labourers (Girmibas) to the garden concerned as per some agreements and get money for this job.

To look after the Labour Recruitment policy in Terai and Doars the British planters of this area established an association named as Tea District Labour Association with its head quarter at Calcutta. This association had their agents in recruiting grounds. Besides, the Christian Mission had their own labour Bureau to help the TDLA. There was the problem of Labour Enticement. The employers who had less labourers would seek to entice labourers from their neighbouring gardens, and they had spent considerable amount for it. In 1889 a set of rules provided interalia that workers leaving one estate for another without permission must be turned out or sent back. Doars planters and then the planters of Terai region signed to this agreement. In 1959 recruitment from outside West Bengal has been reduced and gradually the TDLA dissolved. By this time a surplus condition among the plantation labourers has been created in North Bengal and the planters could recruit

the required labours from the surplus one settled down in and around their plantation.

10.2.5 Types of Work, System of Works and Working Hours

In-plantation daily wage labourers perform all types of manual works such of plucking of leaves, weeding, hoeing, manuring, forking, cleaning soil, pruning the tea bush in winter, taking care of nursery bed of young tea plants and cleaning the tea stalk in factory, spraying of pesticides and so on. Plucking is considered to be the most important job in plantation and need patience. This job is generally done by the women folk who are believed to collect better quality of leaves with greater efficiency. The plucking season generally begins with early rain in March and ends either in November or in early December. The plucking gives the highest yield during July to August when rain fall is heavy. The plucking in early monsoons is supposed to produce the best quality tea . . After plucking the season of pruning the tea bush comes in winter on which depends the yield of the next season. On the basis of height of the bush pruning is made as light, medium and deep. The women folk perform the light and medium pruning while the deep pruning is done by the male labourers. Beside this male labourers perform the heavy manual works like deep hoeing, digging, spraying of pesticide and weedicides. The women workers -also perform: weeding, manuring, light hoeing, collecting the seeds of the shade trees, forking and preparing of nursery beds. The adolescent labourers perform the same types of works as the women folk. The aged labourers are generally engaged in picking out the stalks from the tea leaves. They also engage in making nursery seed beds. Children are generally given light agricultural works such as removing creepers and parasites from tea bushes, light digging, collecting the seeds of shade trees etc. Plantation works is generally done in group or groups termed as 'Patti' consisted of fifty labourers either men and women under the supervision of Sardar and Dafader. The tasks are fixed either interms of Nal or Dangs or Bushes. A Nal or Dang is an area of 12 square feet and roughly 3000 Nals comprise an acre. The task assigned to the women and

Notes

children are proportionately less than the men. In 1951 the Plantation Labour Act lays down the maximum weekly working hour for the labours. Later in 1957 another Plantation Labour Act is enacted which is in vogue. According to this act the normal weekly hours of work were in between 37hr and 47hr in West Bengal. The act provides for a day rest long period of seven days and for the payment of work done on the day before rest. The act also provides for grant of leaves with wage at the rate of one day for every fifteen working days. Accumulation of leave is allowed upto a maximum of 30 days.

Table 10.3.: Sexwise classification of Plantation work

Operation in Garden Factory	Period in Month	Sex of labourers
Garden Operation		
1. Filling of vacancies of Tea Bushes	Jan-May	Men & Women
2. Transplanting	Jan-Mar	- do -
3. Manuring	Feb-May	- do -
4. Tipping	Mar-Dec	- do -
5. Plucking	Mar-Dec	- do -
6. Spraying Pesticides	April-Sept.	Men
7. Pruning	Oct-Jan	Men & Women
8. Weeding	Throughout the year	- do -
9. Hoeing	- do -	- do -
Factory Operation		
10. Machine operating	Mar-Dec	Men
11. Withering	- do -	- do -
12. Rolling	- do -	- do -
13. Fermenting	- do -	- do -
14. Drying	- do -	- do -
15. Sorting	- do -	- do -
16. Packing	- do -	- do -

Source : 'Class Formation In Plantation System' . Bhowmik 1981

10.2.6 Wage and Remuneration of the Labourers and other Job Facilities

The tea garden labourers are paid according to the task they perform. A work is known as 'Thika'. He is paid a wage for completing his 'Thika' which is known as 'Haz. ira. The wage were previously fixed arbitrarily by the planters though their organisation. The Hazriraremaind static between 1920- 1947. It was for one anna, three annas and six paises per thika respectively for men, women and children (P. Griffith 1971). The labourers could increase his income by completing more than one Thika once a day. Beside the wages they were given certain monetary benefits

like bonus, sick allowance, maternity allowance, incentives, some ex-gratia payments during festivals. All these were paid either directly to the labourers or through the Sardars. The wage of the labourers was determined by the labourers capacity to bargain to higher wage but not by the productivity of the labourers. Their condition was miserable. The government do nothing to protect them. In the post independence period the situation was quite favourable for the but the wage in tea plantation lagged far behind those in other industries. In the post independence era several committee viz. Modak Committee 1950, Banerjee Committee 1952 were appointed who recommended 6 merely and subsistence wage, food, education and medical and other facilities for the tea plantation labourers. A Central Wage Board was appointed by 1960. This board announced two interim wage increments of Bpaise and 6 paise. The then wage in Terai plantation was Rs. 1.95 for men, Rs. 1.81 for women and Rs. 1.07 for children in Doars Rs. 1.98, Rs. 1.84, Rs. 1.07 for men, women and children respectively. The central board recommended the wage of men women and children will be increased by 13, 10 and 7 paise respectively from 1966. 1966 onward wages gradually increased either through recommendations of bipartite meetings or through the demand of the trade unions.

Table 10.4.: Wage Chart of the Labourers (1969-1978)

Year	Male	Female	Children
1969-70	Rs. 2.39	Rs. 2.22	Rs. 1.29
1970-71	Rs. 2.48	Rs. 2.48	Rs. 1.33
1971-72	Rs. 2.71	Rs. 2.54	Rs. 1.45
1972-73	Rs. 2.94	Rs. 2.77	Rs. 1.56
1973-77	Increased of wage for 4 times of 1973		
1978	Rs. 5.24	Rs. 3.04	Rs. 2.73

Source : Class Formation in Plantation System Bhowmik 1981

The wage differences between men and women labourers was abolished in December, 1976. but many of the employers in West Bengal refused to pay equal wage even after the Equal Wage For Equal Work Act was passed. The Indian Tea Planters Association is in favour of maintaining the wage differences between the men and women labourers because Thika assigned to women labourers is always lesser than that of men.

Table 10.5.: The Rate of Daily Wage for Tea Plantation Labourers

Daily wage rate	1.6.90 Adult	30.5.91 Child- ren	1.6.91 Adult	31.5.92 Child- ren	1.6.92 Adult	31.3.94 Child- ren	1.4.94 Adult	31.3.95 Child- ren
1. Doars								
(a) Tea Est 500 hec & above	16.50	8.37	17.90	9.07	19.30	9.77	21.80	11.02
(b) Tea Est. bellow 500 hec	16.47	8.37	17.87	9.07	16.47	8.37	17.87	9.07
2. Terai	16.44	8.35	17.84	17.84	9.05	9.77	21.80	11.02
3. Darjeeling	16.12	8.19	17.52	8.89	19.30	9.77	21.80	11.20
Plucking incentive rate : Doars & Terai 25p each for per 1 kg (Valied upto 31.5.92)								
Plucking incentive rate : Doars & Terai 32p each for per 1 kg. (Valied upto 1.7.94)								

Source : Tea Board Statistics 1992-93

The Dearness Allowance form a part of the revised wage fixed under the Minimum Wage Act. Besides a labourers gets ration at concessional rates with firewood. Some protective uniforms like umbrella, apron to protect their cloth in tea bush, pullover, jute hessian which are essential for working in the plantation are supplied free to the labourers alongwith blanket once in every two years. Beside the other job facilities in tea plantation the labourers according to the Plantation Labour Act 1951 the labourers are provided housing facilities, with the provision of adequate supply of drinking water, latrine and other health facilities and a medical leave of 14 days in a week with 2/3rd of his minimum daily wage, Women enjoy maternity leave with full payment. The act also provides that every employer should provide and maintain a primary school for labourers children and a creche (where 50 or more women are employed.) The act also provides recreational facility to the labourers and paid holiday on Independence Day, May Day and Republic Day and one day each for Durgapuja, Diyali and Holi.

10.3 SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PLANTATION LABOURERS

Environment, means surrounding, that stimulate or influence the behaviour of a group. 'Social environment' includes that part of environment consisting of interacting individuals, their pattern of social

organisations their way of life and the other aspects of society. The social environment of the multi ethnic plantation society of North Bengal with colonial background is very complex.

Modesia

The immigrant plantation labourers of North Bengal from Chotonagpur belong to different ethnic groups. Externally they form a more or less homogeneous group commonly referred to as 'Modesia' by the local people. The word 'Modesia' is an indigenous term denotes 'our people' or 'my native people'. The immigrants labourers initially referred to their native people as 'Modesia' (Mo-desia) before the local folk who later on started calling the whole immigrants tribal labourers group as 'Modesia'. Another meaning of 'Modesia' is the migrants tribal of middle areas of the country i.e. Madhyadesh .. "Modesia' is not at all a single tribal group but a heterogeneous group . comprising a number of immigrant tribal groups from Chotonagpur and adjoining area who are internally highly differentiated with their distinct sociocultural traits, religion, customs and languages :Yet they have some common traits due to their same place of origin and same type of traditional occupation. Their customs~ beliefs, rituals hasome similar traits though each tribe name them separately. Due to their daily close and face to face interaction some cultural assimilation take place among them; each group has to evolve a compromise formula and an attitude of tolerance to others. The most common thing the tribal groups have the illiteracy, ignorance and dire poverty. They are socially, economically as well as culturally backward.

Settlement Pattern

Almost the entire labourforce of plantation is resident labourers. They live at labour 'Bastee' in labourlines scattered all around the garden. Previously the housing was done by the labourers themselves under the vigilance of the Sardar and these werethe 'kaccha' huts. The materials were supplied by the management. But the Plantation Labour Act of 1951 lays down the provision of pukka structured quarter of the labourers with proper sanitation system and provision of drinking water. The labourers are not able to get all these facilities but same pukkaquarters .

Notes

{are built. Usually the tribes of same category cluster together surrounded by their same status, . group. By this their community life maintained along with separate tribal identity. In the present days the rule of single tribal cluster is not maintained so rigidly as was in past. The habitants of a bastee bond each other in kinship terms.

Language

Originally the tribals from Chotonagpur has their respective languages like 'Kurkh', Mundari of Dravidian language group. But in plantation living together for a long time these groups has undergone a process of acculturation affecting their culture, society even language. The effect of linguistic intercourse is unique, though superficial because no single language could emerge as dominant language. Rather a link language which is a mixture of Hindi, Bengali and Assamese had been made current. This link language known as 'Sandri J' is at present the means for verbal communication. The major vocabulary of this language is either Assamese or Bengali with a considerable amount of Hindi. The choice of major vocabulary depends on the regular contact and use of neighbouring Indo-Aryan language. The primary unit consists of Assamese, Bengali and Hindi words with secondary units comprising the language of Eastern Bihar. The original grammar of the language is seen to be lost totally. The interaction of various tribal groups and contact with highly developed speech community might be the main reason for the growth of Sandri language in the garden. It is already in the form of pidgin and functions as lingua franca among the labours of the garden. (Benerjee 1998).

Social Structure and Social Stratification

The social structure of the adibasi labourers group is very complex. Internally these Modias are further subdivided into various sub-groups. Religion is one of the criteria of such subdivision. On this basis the tribals are divided into 'gaosar' (follower of tribal religion) and non tribals mainly Christian. Integration of these two groups are very easy. Among them there is no sense of inferiority or superiority complex. But

subdivisions into various status group depending on same place of origin and same traditional occupation creates some complexities. The different ethnic groups arrange themselves in a hierarchical rank depending on this criteria keeping the traditional agriculturists at the top and artisans at the bottom. On this basis the traditional agriculturist tribes like Oraon, Munda Kheria form a common status group superior to that of the artisan tribes like Turi, Baraik, Lahar etc .. Their commensal relation follows this hierarchy. The tribals of higher status group do not live with the lower one and not willingly come to form any affinal relation. The women are more conservative in this respect. This hierarchy and this commensal relation was followed very strictly in the earlier days but the rigidity slacken in the present days to some extent but in case of community participation these rules are followed strictly but no rule of pollution is followed in case of taking rice beer (haria).

Family-Authority and Kinship

Mainly pairing family, nuclear family is predominant in the plantation society along with very few joint families. The tea industry absorbs both male and female members as its labour. The basic unit of recruitment of the planters is the family. They encourage the family based immigration to get cheap and settled labourers. Several job facilities like small family quarter, ration, firewood are given according to the household except according to the heads of family members. Additional labourers are also taken from household basis. All these encourage the nuclearisation of family in plantation. The functional role of family changed in plantation economy as the self supporting tribal peasants turned to wage earner. Thus the family changed from the unit of production to the unit of consumption. Traditionally joint family was essential for joint and organised effort for agriculture and to support the family economy. In the present situation in plantation joint living deprives the labourers of some of the due benefits from the garden authority. Thus joint family except under some special circumstances is disfavoured. With the break down of joint family in plantation society the patriarchal authority system has been diminished. Here both men and women are the wage earner. The authority came into the hands of the earning male member though he exercises his dominance comparatively less on his working wife, who too

Notes

earns the bread for the family. Kinship ties are slackening in plantation society and kinship obligations are comparatively less than the order days. There is a striking decrease in the frequency of their visit to their natal places now a days. Local marriage which is highly preferable in this society, that develops a new kind of kinship groups within plantation and the neighbouring villages. A close relationship with a new set of neighbouring kinsmen arises who help each other in problems. This close kinship interdependence of the plantation society differs from that of the other industrial society.

Marriage Marriage among the tribals of plantation is more a social contact based on individual choice rather than a sacrament. A tribal boy and girl can marry according to their own will without prior consent of their parents. Such union easily breaks down as their own will. Negotiation marriage (Sadi) is the general rule fixed up generally by the parents of the couple concerned. Here bride price is prevalent. After the fixation of bride price a premarriage celebration takes place in the girl's house followed by feast, drink and dance. There is no fixed age at marriage. Endogamous marriage is a rule though intertribal marriage also takes place. But marriage within the same status group is desirable. There is no problem in the marriage between Christian and saosar. Marriage is strictly monogamous. Polygamy is also practiced though socially criticised. Divorce and remarriage of both men and women is also common. Another common feature of tribal plantation society is consensual union (Rajikhusi) in which couple live together without marriage and have children. 'Ghardamad' is another peculiar feature of plantation society where the boy stays in the girl's family for some period after marriage and works for this family if he fails to give the fixed bride price. 'Ghardamad' concept has changed today from that of the previous time. Now a man having plenty of land or property but has no son can keep his 'Damad' (son-in-law) at home out of agreement settled at the time of marriage. The plantation community try to confine their marriage within their same occupation group. At present marriage in the same garden is common as the job opportunity is diminishing. If the girl of other garden comes to her husband's place she has to give up her job. Now in the surplus labour condition there is very little chance to get a job for

her in the new garden. Marriage alliances in their natal village is now not preferred mainly due to the communication problem. In plantation society plantation work become essential and normal component of married women's daily existence. Their husband as well as in laws have a positive attitude towards their work.

Social Control

Law and order in garden is maintained by the Panchayat, not the statutory one but the un official_ garden panchayat which is generally a temporary body form when problem arises. This Panchayat is of two kinds one is the tribal panchayat deals the problems exclusive to the respective tribe like inter tribal dispute, custody of children of a separated couple etc. The garden panchayat is a multi ethnic panchayat body solve the problem of the garden like theft, roidism etc.

Employment

The adibasi people in plantation generally work as labourers in garden and factory. By upward mobility they come only upto the chaprasi level. In the slack seasons the temporary labourers work as share cropper in agricultural field in an out the plantation. The economic condition of the permanent labourers are stable. Beside this these people get engage in rickshwa pulling ... petty business, and also get some return from live stock and poultry.

Social Interaction

The plantation society of North Bengal is a plural society where several ethnic groups with their diverse place of origin and linguistic and racial differences live side by side and communicate to each other during their daily and face to face interaction being in /same economic activity. Each group has to evolve a compromise formula and degree of tolerance in their course of interaction. Here several social processes are in operation. Some groups lose their identity through the process of amalgamation. Additional groups are created out of ethnic differentiation. Some groups lose their identity while some, specially the numerically dominated ones, able to retain their traditional identity, to some extent. But no group is so dominant to keep their identity intact. Here the tribals have to keep three levels of interaction. Besides the interaction within their own tribal group_, with the different tribal labour

Notes

groups, they have to interact with the other non tribal groups of lower caste Nepali, Bihari and Bengali as well as the Bengali-Bihari and Nepali Babu groups. The Bengalees are considered superior to all the groups whom the tribals try to imitate almost in all respects. The tribals being inferior are looked down upon.

Political consciousness

Tea plantations are generally located in the isolated part of rural areas of hills and foot hills of North Bengal. Besides, as a part of colonial economy the planters kept the labourers out of the contract from outside. These people are very little conscious of their actual position and the happening; outside of their 'Universe'. The surplus labourers of this region as share cropper (Adihar) got involved in the Tebhaga Movement of 1940's, Land Grab Movement of 1950's and Naxalbari Movement of 1960's. But these failed to keep any long lasting effect on them. At present Trade Unionism and Co-operative system entered among them. But they are much concerned to increase their bonus, wage and issues strike for these rather than long lasting improvement.

Religion

The adibasi plantation labourers are commonly the follower of traditional tribal religion, animism. They call themselves 'Saosar'. They are mostly divided into different clans with their respective totem which is also taboo to them. At present in the plantation society converted Christian tribes men are also there. Some also claim themselves to be Hindu as they do not mean this term in its orthodox sense. Among the Christian and Saosar there exists easy integration and very little differences in their life style except the Christians attend church and follow a somewhat different rule of marriage. Actually the Saosars too are not the follower of their traditional religious life. They have come from their homeland long past and exposed to the tea garden culture. The religion they are practising to day is a mixed religion with some of its original traits blended to the new ones which they adopt in tea garden from their neighbouring ethnic groups.

Status of Women

These tribal women are generally enjoy much freedom than the Hindu caste women. They are exposed to very few restrictions. There is no pro

habitation of their smoking and drinking. In these society men usually exercise less authority over women. The inclusion of women as wage earner and their crucial economic contribution helps to raise their status, personal_ power an authority in the family. Besides, the role as bread earner they have.to bear the buf)den of household and child rearing. Here they has to play the role as a woman worker, wife and mother at a time. They haveto perform the role of wage earner at their working hours and as housewife in the time when the males enjoy leisure. In plantation society doing the domestic work and looking after the children do , not affect the dignity of the husband. Here in this society husbands take the opinion of their wives but naturally it is not much valued except regarding the matter of day to day expenditure domestic action etc. The wives usually do not object to their drinking which is their traditional habit but quarrel occur regarding excessive drinking and spending a large part ofthe income on it. It is found that women are the primary bread earner of the plantation family. The life of the immigrant tribal labourers havtchanged to a great extent as they came to plantation system of North Bengal. The innocent hard working tribals with traditional peasant or artisan background turned to industrial wage · earner and came to the fold of industrial bureaucratic organisation of plantation with agro based productive system. The village based tribals have to live into labour settlement allotted by the management. The new working and living environment affect their traditional life to a great extent. Nuclearizat on of family, reduction of kinship obligations increase in inter ethnic marriage, change in the religious rites and ritualsare the result of this. These changes due to the immigration and adoption of new working and living condition and so on havea great sociological importance.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. What do you know about the Tea Plantation Labourers?

.....
.....
.....
2. Discuss about the Social Environment of the Plantation Labourers.
.....
.....
.....

10.4 LET US SUM UP

As the tea industry in North Bengal flourished since 1860's onward a huge labour force was needed to carry out the operation of this labour intensive industry at its different levels. The then scanty and disperse population of North Bengal failed to meet the demand of enormous supply of cheap labour. As a result and also as a part of colonial rule semi aboriginal people were imported from outside the state to serve the industry. These people were from different tribal groups viz. Oraon, Munda, Santal, Bhumij, Kheria, Lahar, Asur, Turi, Barik etc. of Chotonagpur plateau of Bihar and its adjoining region of Madhyapradesh and Orissa. Traditionally these people were of agricultural or atrisan background. They came in the fold of the strict three tyre bureaucratic structure of tea industry. Initially the immigrant labourers were recruited by 'Arakati' or 'Sardari' system though the agents who draw them from their natal place by advance paying. With the expansion of tea industry in North Bengal by 1959 the recruitment from outside the state were stopped by ad. By this time the planters could recruited labourers directly from the previous ones who immigrated with family and settled down in and around the plantation creating a surplus condition. In plantation the daily wage labourers perform all types of manual works ~~~ld and factory. Depending on sex generally light work is given to women; children. In West Bengal they have to work in between 37 to 47 hours in a week. The tea garden labourers are given wage (Hazira) according to the task (Thika) given to them fora time period. In 1994-95 the daily wage of the adult workers were Rs. 21.80 in the big gardens (500 hec) of Doars and Rs. 17.87 (500hec) Terai and hills of Darjeeing while the children gets Rs. 11.02. Besides wage they enjoy some other

job facilities like free quarter, fire wood, ration, medical facility education facility for the children etc. The immigrant tribal labourer groups externally form a more or less homogeneous group termed by the local folk as 'Modesia' (i.e. native people) by which the adibasi people initially referred to their tribes men before the local folk who started calling the whole group by this name. Internally the Modesias are highly differentiated with their distinct socio-cultural traits, language, religion and customs. They may have some similarities due to their same place of origin and same traditional occupation yet the great similarity they have is the illiteracy, ignorance and dire poverty which make them backward socially and culturally in every aspects of their life. The structure of the multi-ethnic plantation society is very complex and unique where different ethnic groups have daily, friendly and face to face interaction being engaged in same economic activity. Here several social processes are in operation, several groups and subgroups are formed through the process of assimilation, amalgamation, as well, based on religion, traditional occupation, place of origin and so on. The different ethnic groups arrange themselves in caste like hierarchy on this basis and their commensal relations follow this hierarchy, though not so rigidly in today except in community participation. In plantation the adibasi labourers live in 'Bastee' i.e. the labour settlements allotted by the management, communicate in 'Sandri' i.e. broken Hindi mixed with Bengali and mostly are 'Saosar', animist, by religion. Their family gets nuclearised with the authority resting upon the earning male member of the working couple. Their kinship obligations in homeland get slackening and new relationships grew up within plantation with increasing local as well as inter ethnic marriage. Marriage, commonly endogamous, appears more a social contact based on individual choice than social sacrament.

Law and order of this society rests upon the unofficial garden panchayat. Large scale women participation in plantation as wage labourer raise their status in society. Besides plantation work these people also engage in agricultural activities as share cropper in and outside plantation and also in petty business. These people living in the remote gardens of North Bengal are very much unaware of the political scene of the country. At

present trade unionism entered among them but these unions are much concern about the issues like increase of wage, bonus etc. Immigration, adoption to new socio-cultural setting, occupation mobility from traditional agriculture to industrial bureaucratic organisation of plantation changes almost all the aspects of life of the Modesia labourers which is of a great sociological importance.

10.5 KEY WORDS

Recruitment: Recruitment refers to the overall process of attracting, shortlisting, selecting and appointing suitable candidates for jobs within an organization. Recruitment can also refer to processes involved in choosing individuals for unpaid roles.

Migration: Human migration is the movement of people from one place to another with the intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily at a new location. The movement is often over long distances and from one country to another, but internal migration is also possible; indeed, this is the dominant form globally.

10.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What do you know about the Origin of Migration?
2. What is the Traditional Occupation of the Adibasi Labourers?
3. Discuss about the Bureaucracy in Tea Plantation.
4. Discuss about Labour Recruitment.
5. Discuss the Types of Work, System of Works and Working Hours.
6. What is the Wage and Remuneration of the Labourers and other Job Facilities?

10.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Thorner, Daniel. 1976. Agrarian Prospect in India. New Delhi: Allied Publishers.

- Appu, P. S. 1996. Land Reforms in India: A Survey of Policy, Legislation and Implementation. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Besley, Timothy and Burgess, Robin. 2000. “Land Reform, Poverty Reduction, and Growth: Evidence from India.” The Quarterly Journal of Economics 115: 389-430.
- Appu, P. S. (1996). Land Reforms in India: A Survey of Policy, Legislation and Implementation. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Deininger, Klaus. 2003. Land Policies for Growth and Poverty Reduction. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Basu, Kaushik, eds. 2008. The Oxford Companion to Economics in India. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Dey Biswas, Sattwick. 2014. Land Rights Formalization in India; Examining de Soto through the lens of Rawls theory of justice. FLOOR Working paper 18. p. 16.
- "Assembly election 2011 West Bengal: Trinamool Congress rises like phoenix". The Times Of India.
- [Heller, Patrick. 1999. The Labor of Development. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, Chapters 2 and 3.]
- Banerjee, Abhijit V., Paul J. Gertler, and Maitreesh Ghatak. 2002. “Empowerment and Efficiency: Tenancy Reform in West Bengal.” Journal of Political Economy 2: 239–280.
- Roy, Dayabati. 2013. Rural Politics in India: Political Stratification and Governance in West Bengal. Cambridge University Press.

10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 10.2
2. See Section 10.3

UNIT 11: FORESTRY AND COMMERCIALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

STRUCTURE

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Resource base of North Bengal
- 11.3 Forestry
- 11.4 Commercialization of Agriculture
- 11.5 Changing land ownership, agricultural, and economic systems
- 11.6 Let us sum up
- 11.7 Key Words
- 11.8 Questions for Review
- 11.9 Suggested readings and references
- 11.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know:

1. Resource base of North Bengal
2. Forestry
3. Commercialization of Agriculture
4. Changing land ownership, agricultural, and economic systems

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Sometimes in the non-industrialised countries or where industries are at low level, spatial allocation of resources and development efforts are given less attention as compared to the sectoral aspects of development. Thus, it seems that especially in less industrialised countries (developing countries of the third World) problems of regional development are better to be viewed both in terms of mobilising new resources, and spatial allocation of already existing resources through full and efficient utilisation. To do justice to the issue as well as to the region, it is better to examine and evaluate the available resources of North Bengal and

identify the processes that are working behind the stagnation of the regional economy.

Agriculture: The Resource: In an economically stagnating region like North Bengal, agriculture is very much dominating among should other economic parameters. Thus, any attempt to develop the region/give proper emphasis and importance to the agro-sector of North Bengal. A thorough study of the industrial counterpart of the region under study, only reconfirms the fact. It is because most of the industries have their birth from the womb of agriculture, i.e., tea, tobacco, sericulture or fruit processing, Moreover, economic development of any region is resultant of proper management of existing local resources and their optimum utilisation through proper planning. Spatial allocation of resources, therefore, is very important for any developmental effort.

North Bengal with its varied topography, soil, climate, socio-economic as well as unique cultural characteristics, shows a market[^] intra-regional diversity or uniqueness in the said aspects. But one common bond or tie of all the five districts can be observed in their overwhelming, importance in the agro-sector. One can hardly fails to notice the dominance of agriculture in the total regional economy if the relevant statistics are consulted.

11.2 RESOURCE BASE OF NORTH BENGAL

Better ecological conditions provide certainly better / productivity in the plains. Forests have been cleared for the extension of agriculture.' The percentages of agricultural area as well as to agroworkers (table 11.1) are high everywhere especially in 'Active Plains'. But limited irrigation facilities stand pn the way of multicropping and' other extensions. It is basically a rice growing region harvesting two crops annually. Islampur in West Dinajpur district has highest percentage (48.3%) are under double crop. But if one considers the percentage of net irrigated area, total rabi crop area is very low J underlying the subsistence nature of agriculture. Though the clayey loam soil has high water retentivity,

Notes

extension of irrigation could have changed the agro-landscape totally. Hopefully after the completion of Teesta Barrage Project the situation may change.

Table 11.1

Sl. No.	Districts	Percentage of agricultural workers (cultivators + agro-labour) to total Main Workers	
		1961	1981
1.	Darjiling	49.17	35.37
2.	Jalpaiguri	49.39	49.59
3.	Koch Bihar	86.79	79.26
4.	West Dinajpur	87.85	81.50
5.	Maldah	66.48	74.30

Source : 1) Dept. of Agri. W.B. in Census
2) % computed by author.

From the table (11.1) it is very clear that inspite of the dominance of agriculture in the economy of North Bengal, there is intraregional or inter district disparities. In Darjiling the percentage of agricultural worker is not showing dominance over this sector. But in / Koch Bihar, Malda or West Dinajpur the figures have exceeded 74 per, cent. This particular feature of excessive importance on agrosector in nothing uncommon in a third world country. Thus, despite the fact that industrialisation as a development stragery iTas""been""pursuedcted the development—strategy has been pursued in most of the developing third world countries to bring about a sudden, revolutionary structural change in the existing economy, it is not always the best choice anywhere and everywhere. Industrialisation, in turn is very much related to urbanisation also. But unless it is true urbanisation it implies a massive inflow of the rural population into the non-rural areas, in towns and cities, leading to subsequent agrarian crisis. In many cases the towns or cities, naturally not having constantly extendable civic amenities and services to the constant human inflow, in no time get over-populated (Munshi S, 1971) and the whole urban system explodes. In North Bengal the towns like

Siliguri, Jalpaiguri or Balurghat registered substantial population growth after 1950s. But this growth is not related to the development of industrial sector. It is either immigration from surrounding rural areas or it is the influx of refugees from bordering countries like Nepal or Bangladesh. Surprisingly despite this importance of agrosector, (agri in, North Bengal) it is still in very primitive state, even after the "green revolution"!

In Koch Bihar or southern part of Jalpaiguri, in fine textured soil, the important cashcrop is jute grown with rice. Tobacco is another important cash crop grown as a rabi crop in water. Cylindrical cage made by bamboo is attached to dugwell to supply irrigation water in the tobacco fields as it needs regular supply of water. Dearth of irrigation water is a serious problem which is more marked in the interior or higher fields. In Koch Bihar the only tea garden is located in the northern part where higher 'danga' land is favourable for the crop. In West Dinajpur percentage of cultivable area is quite high, but the decreasing annual rainfall necessitates irrigation extension acutely. It is mainly composed of old alluvium known as 'Barind' , and so is eastern Maldah. The land was originally reclaimed / by the Santals of Chhotonagpur. Between 1881 and 1901 this Santali and Rajbanshi population rose at the rate of 42.5% and 38.1% respectively (Bell, F.O., 1941). Sharecropping is a typical phenomenon here, though the extent is not uniform all over. Magnitude and extent of sharecropping were outcome of the interaction of different economic and social issues and produced various responses in different parts. The soil in the eastern part is very rich though the western part is composed of acidic soil, similar to Tista formation. In Chopra p.s. here, there are a number of small tea gardens, Debijhora being the oldest. The smallgardens mainly came up after 1980. This transformation process of rice lands into tea gardens is creating a stir in the region as the farmers are not happy about it (Ananda Bazar Patrika, 10.12.91). Oilseeds is the other cashcrop, West Dinajpur being the most important producer of oilseeds in North Bengal. Raiganj dr Islampur have highest areas under the crop. But mango orchards are surprisingly decreasing. In 'moribandl lands of Barind rice is grown with vegetables - Gajal, Habibpur or Hamangola blocks of Maldah present a similar picture but in West

Notes

Dinajpur section jute is rotated with rice, irrigation facilities could have introduced a newer pattern though.

In 'diara' lands of the plains mango orchards are concentrated. But in swampy 'tals' boro rice is traditionally grown. In general diara lands are multicropped areas, very intensively cultivated. In Maldah and Ratua p.s. mango orchards are very important. Other / special crop in this district is mulberry for sericulture (Kaliachak, English Bazar and Manikchak P.S.). Sugarcane is an occasional cashcrop of the region.

11.3 FORESTRY

As you soak in the Green, allowing the fresh air to rejuvenate your tired, city lungs, the hush that had first greeted you metamorphoses into the deep thrum of the ancient forest. The forests of West Bengal are like none other.

Forests are strewn across the state from the northernmost tip, on the slopes of the high Himalayas, to the Dooars in the foothills, through several lesser-known forest, in the western tracts of the state and the fertile Gangetic plains, on to the magnificent Sunderban on its southern edge. These cover 15.32% of the state, comprising 11,879 sq kms, of which 7,054 sq kms are reserved forests.

Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that the forests of West Bengal present a cross-section of the forests found through the length and breadth of the country. The most striking aspect of the state's natural resources, therefore, is the complete divergence in the features of the vegetation and wildlife that inhabit them.

North Bengal comprising the districts of Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Dinajpur and Cooch Behar lies at the foothill of the great Himalayas. The area covers the moist and dense riverine forests of the Bengal Dooars (Duars) and the stark foothills of the snow-capped Kanchenjunga range. The unique climatic and ecological conditions makes North Bengal an unique home for a large variety of mega-fauna & superb restricted bird species. Bhutan and Nepal are two beautiful countries having an easy access from North Bengal. Sikkim previously an independent country joined union of

India later on as one of its states. All these three beautiful places are all adjacent to parts of North Bengal.

North Bengal is a term, for the parts of Bangladesh and West Bengal. The Bangladesh part denotes the Rajshahi Division. Generally it is the area lying west of Jamuna River and north of Padma River, and includes the Barind Tract. The West Bengal part denotes Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda districts together. It also includes parts of Darjeeling Hills. Traditionally, the Hooghly River divides West Bengal into South and North Bengal, divided again into Terai and Dooars regions.

Red Panda

This region comprising the state of Sikkim and the adjoining parts of North Bengal - Darjeeling and Kalimpong, is a rugged strip of vertical mountain country. Wedged between Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, and the North Bengal Plains of India. This tiny region is just 90 km wide and 150 km deep. The grain of the country rises from near sea level to 8500 meters, in a short distance, The great Himalayan Range with its giant spurs – Singelila and Chola, virtually enclose this region in a titanic horseshoe. Starting from the plains of North Bengal tangled interlacing ridges rise range after range to the foot of the great wall of high peaks and passes opening into Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan. The climate varies between the tropical heat of the valleys and the alpine cold of the snowy regions. With rainfall averaging 348 cm, it is the most humid region of the Himalayas. Dry season is from November to April. The altitudinal zones of vegetation range from tropical, sub tropical, temperate to Alpine – some places only 10 km in a direct line separates the palm growing valleys from perpetual snow. The varied terrain - from the pleasant humid foothill valleys below 1000 meters, to the arctic cold of the snow capped peaks up to 8000 meters, has created marked altitudinal zonation in the humidity, rainfall, climate and vegetation.

One-horned rhinoceros

THE TERA

Notes

The Terai ("moist land") is a belt of marshy grasslands, savannas, and forests at the base of the Himalaya range in India, Nepal, and Bhutan, from the Yamuna River in the west to the Brahmaputra River in the east. Above the Terai belt lies the Bhabhar, a forested belt of rock, gravel, and soil eroded from the Himalayas, where the water table lies from 5 to 37 meters deep. The Terai zone lies below the Bhabhar, and is composed of alternate layers of clay and sand, with a high water table that creates many springs and wetlands. The Terai zone is inundated yearly by the monsoon-swollen rivers of the Himalaya. Below the Terai lies the great alluvial plain of the Yamuna, Ganges, Brahmaputra, and their tributaries.

DOOARS

The Dooars or Duars are flood plains at the foothills of the eastern Himalayas in North-East India around Bhutan. Duar means door in both Assamese and Bengali languages and for the Bhutanese people can communicate with the people living in the plains. This region is divided by the Sankosh river into the eastern and the western Duars consisting of an area of 8,800 square kilometer (3,400 square-mile). This region was controlled by the Kingdom of Bhutan when the British annexed it in 1865 after Bhutan War. They are now part of the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal. Many wars have been fought over them. These plains are very fertile. There are innumerable streams and rivers flowing through these fertile plains from the mountains of Bhutan. In Assam the major rivers are Brahmaputra and Manas, and in northern West Bengal the major river is the Teesta besides many others like the Jaldhaka, Torsha, Sankosh, Dyna, Karatoya, Raidak, Kaljani among others. The forested areas of Northern West Bengal present a plethora of Wildlife. This mixed dry deciduous forest land dotted with grasslands, harbors the largest diversity of mega fauna in West Bengal. A large range of foothill forest in North Bengal is called Dooars. Once the whole area was under the reign of Koch Raj. Tea Gardens, alpine landscape, transparent river, National Parks and the Wildlife Sanctuary creates a paradise. Beautiful motorable roads cut through deep forests, rich with wildlife. Mauve hills stand at the end of velvet green plains. The forests echo with the melody of birds. In between, there are fabulous wildlife

sanctuaries with, log cabin lodges and valleys carpeted with tea gardens. Dooars is the habitat of the rare Toto tribes.

The most convenient entry point to Dooars is through Siliguri by road. Regular bus connections between Siliguri and most important spots in the Dooars. Also broad gauge rail connection between New Jalpaiguri and Mal, Madarihat, Nilpara, Jainti, Mainaguri, Dhupguri and Falakata. Metre gauge rail connection between Siliguri and most spots.

Dooars Jungle in North Bengal are:- Buxa, Gorumara, Jaldapara, Neora Valley, Bindu, Jaldhaka, Jhalong, Malbazar, Samsing

The state has 4031 sq. Km. of forests, under protected area network which is 34% of the State's total forest area and 4.54% of the total geographical area. There are five National Parks, fifteen sanctuaries, two tiger reserves and one biosphere reserve. The PA network includes 1055 sq. km. of sanctuaries, 1693 sq. km. of National Parks, the balance are being represented by buffer areas of the two tiger reserves, viz. Sunderbans Tiger Reserve and Buxa Tiger Reserve.

Habitat Loss

Habitat loss has largely taken place due to human intervention and change in land use pattern. Large scale conversion of natural habitats for a variety of purposes have led to shifts in floristic pattern (like in case of weed flora) and also fragmentation and loss of natural corridors for animals, leading to man-animal conflict. After the armed conflict with China in 1962, for example, the Army has been permanently stationed in Binnaguri, which has led to loss of the elephant corridor. Similar is the case of tea gardens in North Bengal, which have also witnessed man-animal conflict after forests were clearfelled. Habitat loss has led to decline in several species, and fauna like otter, Bengal jackal, pangolin, mongoose, porcupine are among those which are not frequently sighted today. Much needs to be studied about the underlying inter-relationships between biodiversity and the anthropogenic element, to clearly establish

Notes

how harm to flora and fauna as a result of human interference must be stemmed.

Tea Gardens

The jungles of North Bengal is an extremely rich biodiversity zone but today faces, a declining rhino population, political unrest in the entire zone and incidences of elephants being hit by speeding trains in their migratory corridors are some of the glaring issues. In the face of industrial resurgence, land acquisition has become a grave issue, The locals are least concerned about preserving the forest ecosystem. Efforts are on to set up a tourism development centre in the area that will hamper the forest biodiversity. Industrialisation has a considerable impact on environment. Another disturbing environmental site is the East Calcutta Wetlands that has been declared a Ramsar Heritage Site but is poorly maintained. In the tea gardens of the Dooars, huge amounts of pesticides are used that have a damaging effect on the floral biodiversity. All's not well in the jungles of North Bengal with recent incidences of loss of an increasing number of wild fauna and the major factors contributing to the depleting wildlife habitat are lack of proper administration by forest officials and hazardous methods of conservation. The North Bengal forests are reeling under severe crisis owing to the threat from the fringe populace residing in and around the plains of the Dooars. The tension brewing in the tea sector has caused misery for a huge section of locals and this is creating increased pressure on the forest resources. There are other prevailing threats that are posing a danger over a considerable period of time, including excessive grazing that has not been taken care of. The rising conflict between man and animals has placed certain prominent categories of mammalian species in jeopardy. The rapid tourist influx has also degraded the environmental scene in North Bengal since it generates a lot of non-biodegradable wastes in the hilly areas. Efficient treatment and recycling of waste will provide a source of livelihood for locals, make the environment safe and clean and will be a draw for travellers.

Dooars forest

The Forests & Protected Areas

The forests of West Bengal are classified into seven categories viz., Tropical Semi-Evergreen Forest, Tropical Moist Deciduous Forest, Tropical Dry Deciduous Forest, Littoral and Swampy Forest, Sub-Tropical Hill Forest, Eastern Himalayan Wet Temperate Forest and Alpine Forest. The state has a recorded forest land of 11,879 sq. km., of which 7,054 sq. km. is Reserved Forest, 3,772 sq. km. is Protected Forest and 1,053 sq. km. is Unclassified State Forest, thus constituting 13.38% of the geographical area of the state. Under the conservation and protection regime the State has one Biosphere Reserve, two Tiger Reserves, five National Parks and 15 Wildlife Sanctuaries. Four out of five National Parks are located in the North Bengal along with one tiger reserve and seven Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Elephant Country**Neora Valley National Park**

The Neora Valley National Park, spread over an area of 88sq.km. in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal was established in April 1986. The park, a unique area of rich bio-diversity lies in the Himalayan foothills and is bordered on the east by Western Bhutan and the forests of Neora Valley, one of the least tracts of virgin wilderness in the country sustains a unique eco-system where tropical, sub-tropical, sub-temperate, and temperate vegetative system still harbours a wealth of flora and fauna.

Buxa National Park

The Buxa Tiger Reserve with an area of 759 sq. km was established in the year of 1982-83 at the north eastern corner of West Bengal bordering Bhutan and Assam. The core area of 315sq.kms around the Buxa Duar Fort was declared a National Park in January 1992. This park is located in eastern Dooars (rolling humid plains) at 2600 ft above sea level. The Dooars comprises of deciduous forests which are densely wooded and grasslands and is home to some of West Bengal's most varied flora and fauna.

Singalila National Park

The vegetation of these virgin forests mainly alpine, changes with the range in altitude. The main tree species found are the Rhododendron,

Notes

Magnolia, Oak, Hemlock, Silver Fir, Juniper, Mailing Bamboo, Buk, Kawla, Bhujpatra etc. Other flora includes primulas, aconitums, gentians, arisaemas and orchids adorning the forest clearings. The fauna found in the park are leopard, serow, pangolin, elephant, chinkara, red panda, barking deer etc. The park has a variety of birds such as pigeons, doves, sibia, minivet, magpie, cuckoo, hornbills, Kaleej pheasants and a large number of migratory birds.

Gorumara National Park

Gorumara National Park is located in the Dooars (rolling hill slopes) region of Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal. This small forest area famous for its natural population of the Great Indian one horned Rhinoceros was declared a wildlife sanctuary in the year 1949.

Later in the year 1992, it was established as a National Park, comprising 80 km of diverse forests.

Jaldapara Wild Life Sanctuary

The sanctuary lies amidst the idyllic surrounding created by the mysterious backdrop of the Mountains of Bhutan and the confluence of river Torsa and Malangi. The sanctuary covers an area of 100sq.km. The park is the home of several wild lives, which includes the famous one horned Indian Rhinos, Swamp Deer, wild boar, leopard and tigers. The sanctuary has the maximum number of one-horned rhino in India after Kaziranga. The park has excellent facilities for wild life enthusiasts.

Crested Serpent Eagle

BIRD HAVEN

The varied terrain - from the pleasant humid foothill valleys below 1000 meters, to the arctic cold of the snow capped peaks up to 8000 meters, has created marked altitudinal zonation in the humidity, rainfall, climate and vegetation. This factor is responsible for the great variety and abundance of the resident bird life, making this area arguably one of the richest areas of its size anywhere in the world. 527 species of resident birds have been recorded. In addition there are vagrants, and transients on migration. It is estimated that more than 30 percent of the species of the Indian Sub continent can be spotted in this region.

Lava

Lava and Neora Valley National Park are the prime birding destinations in North Bengal. Located 35 Kms from Kalimpong, it is surrounded by very large tracts of protected forests ranging in elevation between 1600 and 2400 m. There are several sites for bird watching and photography around Lava and the adjoining Neora National Park. Some of the rarities that can be found at Lava are : Satyr Tragopan, Rufous-throated and Spotted Wren Babblers, Yellow- throated Fulvetta, Ashy wood Pigeon, Red – Faced Liocichla, Blue-fronted Robin, Long-billed thrush, Cutia, Rusty-bellied shortwinged, various Laughing Thrushes ,Warblers and Sunbirds.

Mallard

Death on the Tracks

There have been repeated incidents of elephant and bison deaths on railway tracks running through the forests of North Bengal. In the last seven years, 26 elephants have been killed in North Bengal. Nine elephants have been killed in the last two years alone. Most of the cases have been reported from a 100-km stretch between Alipurduar to Siliguri. The track was converted to broad gauge line in 2004 allowing an increase in train speed.

Elephant knocked down by speeding train

This stretch passes through prime protected areas like Buxa Tiger Reserve, Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, Mahananda and Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuaries. There are four extremely vulnerable corridors in this stretch that are fragmented by several railway lines. Ten cases of elephant deaths have been reported from Panjhora region under Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary, five cases from Gulma under Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary, four cases from the Mongpong stretch under the Kalimpong division and three in the Rajabhatkhawa stretch under Buxa Tiger Reserves. What is more alarming is that there has been a sudden rise in the number of goods train in this stretch in the last two years. While restrictions on the speed limit of the train passing through the area have been imposed, the wild animals continue to be killed on

these tracks. Nearly 43 km of railway tracks cut across different wildlife sanctuaries in North Bengal.

11.4 COMMERCIALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

Salient features of agriculture :

The level of farming practised in North Bengal is subsistence in nature. Some fundamental trends in the rural economy of North Bengal are

- i) The over pressure of population on agriculture through blocking the other channels.
- ii) low productivity (per capita as well as general due to low level of techniques used, i.e., limited use of irrigation, fertiliser, pesticides, or . shortage of warehouses etc.,
- iii) poor management of soil which is largely responsible for monoculture,
- iv) high incidence of sharecropping as well as high percentages of landless labourers and
- v) Steady stagnation and deterioration of agriculture.

Agriculture ; The sharecroppers : During the 19th century the continuous process of de-industrialisation contributed to the gradual and subsequent increase of population pressure on land in Bengal. But the productivity did not increase in the same pace, rather it showed a decline. Some authors cited the incidence of share cropping a reason behind this stagnation and decreasing productivity of land, though the extent of sharecropping was not uniform throughout the region (Cooper A., 1981). Different economic forces produced various responses in different regions. Even in the later part of eighteenth century sharecropping existed in Dinajpur of undivided Bengal. Evidence shows that in Kismat Koodlah Estate of Dinajpur district, 22 of the 206 bighas / (10%) were cultivated by sharecroppers. Their produce supported the family of the zamindar.

In the beginning of the 19th century sharecropping is found to exist in different situations : on the homefarms of the zamindars, on reclaimed land where labour was scarce; and on the excess land of the more substantial raiyats (Rudra A., 1981a). Anyway, this bhagrent or sharecropping had a negative impact on the ploughers. They resented the whole system and The great agrarian struggle of 1946-47 that shook the whole of Bengal, popularly known as "Tebhaga movement" originated in North Bengal, and in no time spread over in other parts of Bengal and India. It was the struggle of the sharecroppers for 2/3 share of their produce" (Sen S., 1972).

In Dinajpur, there was as high as 150,000 sharecroppers among the total cultivators in 1807/8 when Francis B. Hamilton travelled over the region. Compared to the other parts of Bengal, monopoly of land was very striking in Dinajpur or Rangpur districts in North Bengal. Though it is difficult to estimate the actual extent of barga cultivation, it had certainly a great impact on the subsequent development of economic and political issues. This particular agrarian structure of sharecropping has a crucial relationship with the production of crops. Since the industries in North Bengal are mostly agro-based, any negative phenomenon in agro-sector definitely affects the industrial sector negatively. Perhaps the sole obstacle which was strong enough to stand in the path of any substantial increase in agricultural production was this system in which the jotedars did not bear the expenses of cultivation. The bargadars were too poor to pay for improved methods of cultivation. Lack of security of tenure and the constant threat of eviction did not surely act as an incentive to increase production (Sen S., 1972). The Report of the Settlement Officer, Medinipur, in 1917 only justifies it which says : From an economic point of view bhagrent is hopelessly bad and it is always associated with inferior cultivation (Govt. Report, 1917). Actually the sense of insecurity affected the production adversely. As a result the farmers failed not only to use modern techniques and inputs in improving the productivity, but progressive fragmentation of per capita land led to uneconomic holdings, not suitable for modernisation.

Agriculture : The Colonial Context :

During the nineteenth century a very prominent structural change took place in the agrarian economy of Bengal with the introduction of a number of cash crops like tea, jute, tobacco or mulberry. In no time these cash crops assumed greater importance than the existing indigenous production of food crop. West Dinajpur which was used to be called the "granary of Bengal",

Table 11.2

Districts	Agricultural workers as % to total main workers	Per capita Arable Land (h.a.)	PC of Irrigated Area (Govt.Canal)	Forests as % to total area	Cropping Intensity*	Area Cultivable**
Darjiling	35.37	0.05	3.22	38.02	168.2	54.9%
Jalpaiguri	49.59	0.16	1.09	27.17	178.7	52.3%
Koch Bihar	79.26	0.16	0.09	1.67	196	76.9%
West Dinajpur	81.50	0.20	-	0.34	153	87.5%
Maldah	74.30	0.14	-	0.54	161	78.5%

Source : Census 1981, Directorate of Irrigation and Waterways.
Economic Review, Government of West Bengal, 1988-89.

*Annual Plan of Agriculture for 5 Districts.
Directorate of Forests, 1986, West Bengal.

**Including hilly areas.

lost its importance slowly. The result of this change was felt during 1930~1940s when Bengal became deficient in foodgrains production. This shift of focus of Indian traditional agro-system to commercialisation of crops deeply affected the agricultural production system of West Bengal.

Tea or cinchona earning huge foreign capital, introduced a new form of agriculture, i.e. plantation farming, which involves substantial amount of capital investment, new techniques into a traditional foodcrop based

subsistence economy. Tea is the most important among the cash crops but the enclave nature of tea plantation or industry did not produce any multiplier effect in the regional economy [Chaudhuri A, 1990]. This commercialisation of agriculture necessitated the extension of railway network and North Bengal was linked , to Calcutta to facilitate the export of the products through Calcutta port.

Tea and timber of North Bengal attracted hundreds of people. The ferruginous soil of the undulating uplands of Dooars surprised the planters. Thus, these two contrasting farming practices ran simultaneously in the same region. Marginal lands were reclaimed by Saontal or Nepali coolies employed by the Europeans and later by Indian planters to bring them under tea. Oraos or Santals from Chotonagpur area infiltrated into the region. Naturally the indigenous cultivators was ,, trapped in traditional forms of production. In the last decade of the 19th century Jalpaiguri surpassed the Barind land, so long reknowned for mango, mulberry and rice, as a place for investment. Immigrants from Nepal, Chhotonagpur or other adjoining areas found themselves as sharecroppers or as coolies in tea gardens. They were originally brought into this tract to be owner cultivators. In Jalpaiguri, with the establishment of British administration in the tract, the Marwaris (traders), pleaders (land disputes invited them) and speculators came in and bought land in lots (jotes). The process of deindustrialisation during later part of nineteenth century is also another cause behind this investment on land.

In Maldah also, especially in the poorer tracts of Barind, the same thing happened. Actual cultivators and owners of land became adhiars on their own land. Accumulation of capital in the hands of jotedars caused regional inequality which in turn increased tension in the rural society. The discontent of the peasants burst out in the 'Tebhaga' movement which was launched by the BPKS (Bengal Provincial Krishak Samity) in September 1946. Meanwhile the partition of Bengal dislocated the existing marketing and trading pattern which in turn created food crisis.

Notes

Jute industry suffered a set back. Rice lands, wherever possible, were given to grow jute to feed the jute mills around Calcutta industrial belt.

Agricultural resources: in Post independence period :

Before going into the detailed discussion about the agro-resources of / North Bengal in terms of crops grown, productivity, etc. it must be mentioned that due to diverse terrain, soil and climate the agricultural practices and usages of land are also very diverse.

Physiography has a very important bearing as well as control over the prevailing landuse in North Bengal, like any other region. Morphologically North Bengal can broadly be divided into three units, viz,

- i) mountain areas
- ii) foot hill zone and
- iii) the plains.

Mountain areas cover about 2339 sq. kms. of North Bengal mainly within the Darjiling district¹. Steep slope, undulation and low temperature have restricted the prevailing landuse pattern. Arable –land in the area is quite small (Table-3.2) but the land under forest is worth mentioning. Actually uncultivable areas, particularly the land area not available for cultivation, is generally covered by forests. In Darjiling, Kalimpong and Kurseong sub-divisions (excepting Siliguri), the / share of cultivable land is the lowest in North Bengal because of difficult terrain.

Table 11.3

Production and Productivity Index of Rice in North Bengal

1980-81

Districts	Area (h.a.)	Productivity	Yield (kg./ha.)
1. Darjiling	43.1	52.8	1225
2. Jalpaiguri	265	294.7	1114
3. Koch Bihar	272.7	278	1018
4. West Dinajpur	257	486	1064
5. Maldah	203	289	1416

Source: Dept. of Agriculture, West Bengal

Fig 11.1

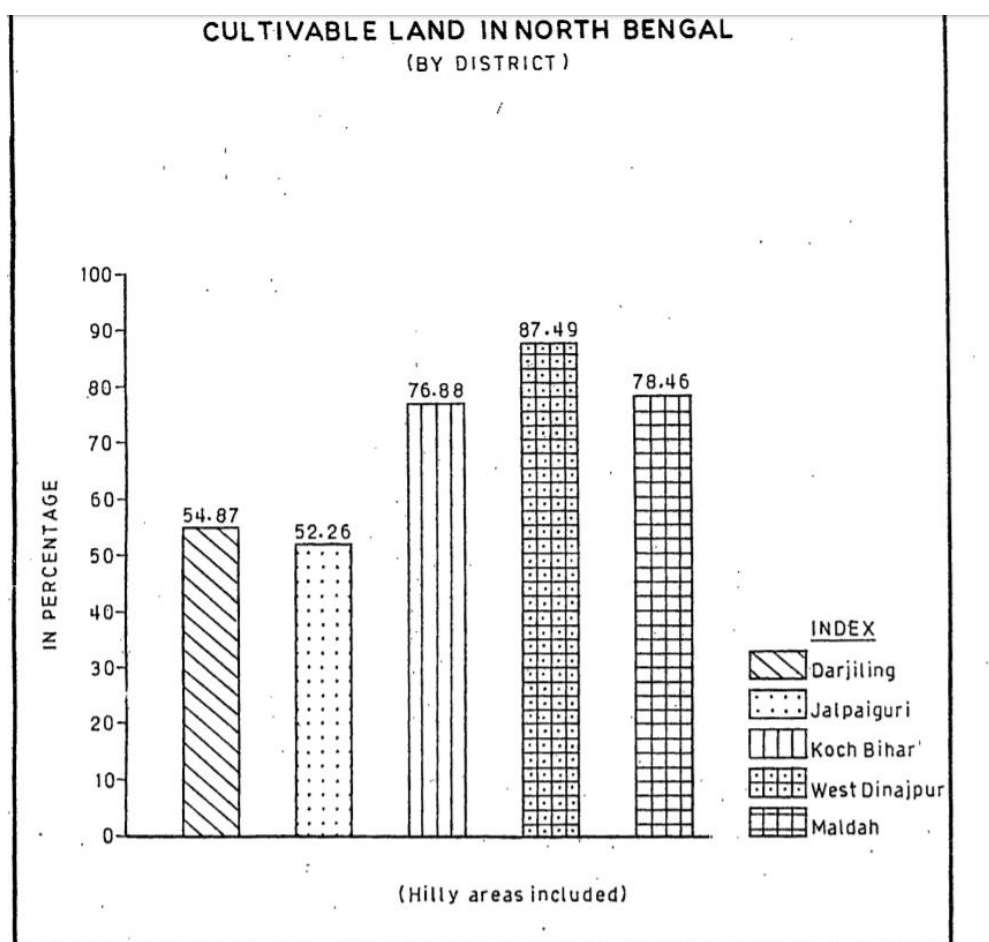


Fig. 3.1.1.

Source: Dept. of Agri., W. B., 1988-89.

Terrace forming is a popular practice. Irrigation facilities are also very restricted, so are the usages of fertilisers or pesticides. Altitudinal variation in temperature influences the cropping pattern. From 300m to

Notes

2000m farming is done mostly in terraces. Rice is not the dominant crop as it is elsewhere in North Bengal, but wheat, maize, millets or barley are grown with potato and other vegetables or fruits [Table-11.3]. The interesting point to note here is that tea covers more than 54% of the total cropped area in Darjiling sub-division, 86% in Kurseong sub-division, but only over 14% in Kalimpong sub-division (Bagchi and Mukherjee, 1983), followed by maize and potato. At Sonada in Jore Bungalow police station the State Government has set up the State Potato Seed Multiplication and Research Farm. Another important agro-produce of the region is orange which is grown widely in this part of North Bengal fetching good foreign currency. But in recent years the production somehow declined. The State Govt, is also encouraging multiplication of orange orchards and presently bears about half of the total cost of a new orchard. The State Orange Research Centre is located at Dalapchan under Kalimpong p.s. Under agricultural development scheme of the state government area under orange cultivation expanded from 125 hectares to 273 hectares in 1986-87. Scion materials are distributed for growing temperate fruits. In summer months cabbage, beans, pea, cauliflowers are grown. Cinchona is another important produce, the cultivation being concentrated in Kalimpong, Kurseong and Rangli Rangliot p.s. Pastoralism is an economic pursuit in higher slopes while maize and millets are grown as fodder crops. Per capita arable land in Darjiling district is very low (Table 11.2) which probably is a reflection of low percentage of agricultural land in the district. But in spite of low and inadequate irrigation facilities, cropping intensity of North Bengal can favourably be compared with rest of the state.

In the plains or piedmont (Dooars) zones farming is definitely very important, though the priority of crop grown, i.e. whether it will be a food crop or a commercial crop, varies widely. In Dooars region rice is grown in fertile lowlands composed of clayey loam flanking the rivers, whereas the inferior soils of upper slopes are utilised to grow jute, mesta, or pineapples which grow in plenty. Pineapple growing is getting importance as a tropical fruit mainly canned for international market. Piedmont area stretching in a portion of Jalpaiguri district where, despite

the extent of rice cultivation, tea is the most valuable crop. The soil is mostly porous. Therefore waterlogging is not a problem. The ferruginous clay in the uplands of Jalpaiguri district is best suited for tea plants. After independence trials were made to bring cultivable wastes under paddy lands but were found not economical. 'The most striking features of recent years are the spread of cultivation in the Western Dooars and the increase in the jute, in some parts of the district at the expense of aus rice crops / (Grunning J.F., 1911). This points to the fact that even in the first decade of the present century there was not much scope for the extension of the arable lands. This was probably due to the reason of huge land area which was cleared and given to tea plantation. Moreover, the sudden influx of population after the partition, coupled with natural growth forced people to take up intensive form of agriculture which is subsistence in nature. The data available for the last quarter of the 20th century show that despite its importance, use of HYV rice seeds is limited to 20,000 acres of a total cropped area of 791.5 thousand acres in Jalpaiguri district. Besides tea in Jalpaiguri other cashcrops of the piedmont zone of Jalpaiguri and Koch Bihar districts are jute, tobacco, oilseeds, sugarcane and bamboo or cane. In Jalpaiguri tobacco is grown in the tract between Tista to Torsa rivers. Koch Bihar is the most important producer of tobacco in the state of West Bengal sharing almost 80 per cent of the total production. It was introduced in the agricultural landscape of North Bengal by the Britishers. In recent years production of tobacco is showing decline. Some possible reasons behind this trend are

- i) the fields where tobacco is grown tend to lose fertility after one crop.
- ii) To meet this deficiency fertilizers can be of help. But use of the same is very much restricted due to low level income of the farmers.

Commercialization of agriculture which can be defined as a process where peasants start producing primarily for sale in distant markets, rather than to meet their own need for food or to sell in local markets, has taken place at different times in response to different stimuli. In the Indian context though a number of commercial crops such as cotton,

Notes

tobacco and sugarcane were grown fairly extensively even before the advent of British rule, since land revenue had to be paid mostly in cash and the prices of these crops were much higher at that time relative to the prices of foodgrains, however, commercialization of agriculture at that time corresponded only to the requirements of traditional 'revenue economy' in which the main form of revenue payable happened to be an indistinguishable mix of tax, tribute and land rent. Moreover, the considerable economic differentiation that could be observed within the peasantry at that time reflected not so much the impact of market forces as the power of 'command' and 'custom' within the framework of traditional societies. No doubt the need to pay revenue in cash was the initial compelling force for the marketing of agricultural produce, the large surpluses so extracted from agriculture, without a flow of goods and services in the reverse direction in exchange, was basically an impediment to further commercialization. Thus, commercialization of agriculture in pre-British period existed only in its embryonic form.

In true sense, therefore, agriculture of India got a commercial orientation during the British rule. Though markets and trade in agricultural goods existed in quite organized forms and on a large scale in the pre-British period but the market expansion in the British period marked a qualitative and quantitative break. According to Tirthankar Roy, there were three main qualitative changes. 'First, before the British rule, product markets were constrained and subject to imperfections, given multiplicity of weights and measures, backward and risky transportation systems, and extensive use of barter. British rule and the railways weakened these constraints. By doing so, it enabled closer integration of global, regional and local markets. Second, from the time of industrial revolution, a new international specialization began to emerge as a result of trade. India specialized, in agricultural exports. Third, in turn, changes in the product market induced changes in land, labour, and credit markets'. It is interesting to note that though there is little controversy with regard to the role of British in initiating and promoting the forces which led to the commercialization of Indian agriculture, however, the nature of commercialization and its impact on the Indian peasantry had been very controversial issue, both during and after the British rule. To

the nationalists, it was not out of the free will of the cultivators—commercialisation of agriculture was forced and artificial. This was so because the high pitch of revenue demand in cash compelled the cultivators to sell large portion of the produce of their fields keeping an insufficient stock for their own consumption. On the other hand the colonial bureaucracy argued that it was the market force rather than the pressure of land revenue that was drawing the farmers into the business of production for the market. The commercial crops were more profitable and this economic incentive led them to produce for sale and export, thus making it possible for them to increase per capita income. Furthermore, the imperialist historiography and the colonial bureaucracy viewed commercialisation of agriculture, the expansion of trade in agricultural products and the rising agricultural prices as an indication of the ‘growing prosperity of the peasantry.’ On the other hand anti-imperialist historiography (both nationalist and radical Marxist) emphasizing the negative impact of commercialisation of agriculture and the integration implied that agricultural production in India was to be determined by imperial preferences and needs. Moreover, other historians following the neo-classical economic theory or with anti-imperialistic orientations (Marxists and non Marxists) have extended their support to either of the two.

Notwithstanding the divergent and conflicting notions and interpretations about the impact and significance of the expansion of commercialization of agriculture and agrarian market but there is little disagreement that British rule led to a complete but complex integration of India’s economy with the world capitalist system but in a subservient position. The various changes introduced by the British in India were primarily motivated by their objective of keeping the Indian economy subservient to the parent economy [British economy]. The integration of the Indian economy with the world economy, resulting in the increased demand for raw material, was meant to speed up the supply of raw material to the metropolis, which in turn forced the colonial government to revolutionize the communication system. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, synchronising with the fast growth steam navigation, revolutionized the east-west trade. Telegraphic communications between England and India

Notes

since 1855 further broadened the contact by making possible a more accurate and quicker study of the demand and supply position and of other related phenomenon. The liberalization of tariff policy by the British Govt of India, particularly after 1867, by abolishing or reducing export duties on many commodities, and the gradual fall in ocean freight also contributed to the expansion of the India's foreign trade. These developments affected not only the volume, but also the commodity composition of the trade. It was no longer practically confined to 'drugs, dyes, luxuries', and now included in large quantities foodgrains, fibres, and other great staples of universal consumption, boosting the commercialization of agriculture. Moreover, the internal trade and commerce was much stimulated by a gradual development of communications. The most remarkable development at that time resulted from the growth of railways, the role of which as an economic force and pace setter, involving innovation in some production functions, cannot be ignored.

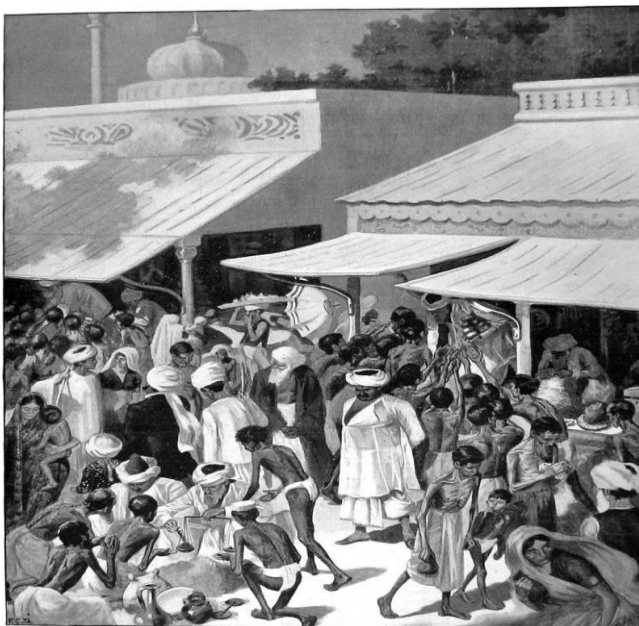
11.5 CHANGING LAND OWNERSHIP, AGRICULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Changes in land ownership and control affected how crop failures impacted human lives. Before the British colonial period, Indian agriculture was dominated by subsistence farming organized in small village communities. The farmer usually only grew enough food to feed himself and the non-agricultural people of the village community. When his crop production exceeded consumption because of favorable climatic conditions, he stored the surplus for use in lean years. The storage of food grains constituted the only remedy against famines and other crises. At the end of the eighteenth century, village communities began to disband under the pressure of new forces. The permanent land settlement of Lord Cornwallis in 1793 impacted Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, and later extended to North Madras, forming a class of zamindars, a social elite group with the right to collect tax. The zamindars became landlords in perpetuity and were the intermediaries between the colonial rulers and the peasantry. Peasants were required to pay fixed amounts of money to

the zamindars. Most of the cultivators became landless laborers: the magnitude of rural poverty was graphically described in the adage that the Indian is born in debt to the moneylender.¹ To pay taxes to the government, the peasants had to borrow from the moneylender, compounding the problem because indebted peasants could not be agricultural producers.

Economic Theorists and British Colonialism in India

Karl Marx saw colonial India as a good example for his critique of modern capitalism. In “The Consequence of British Rule in India,” Marx described the forced transformation of Indian agriculture and the resulting “destruction of the self-sufficient village society of India. Under this simple form of municipal government, the inhabitants of the country have lived from time immemorial. These small forms of social organization have been for the most part dissolved, and are disappearing, not so much through the brutal interference of the British tax-gatherer and the British soldier, as to the working of English steam and English free trade.”² Marx is not the only economic theorist often cited in discussions of Indian famines. Scholars frequently emphasize laissez-faire capitalist theories stemming from Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*; as well as Malthusian ideas about population, whereby famine was regarded as a natural check to overpopulation (with the unspoken benefit that it relieved imperial government from the responsibility of expenditure on relief).



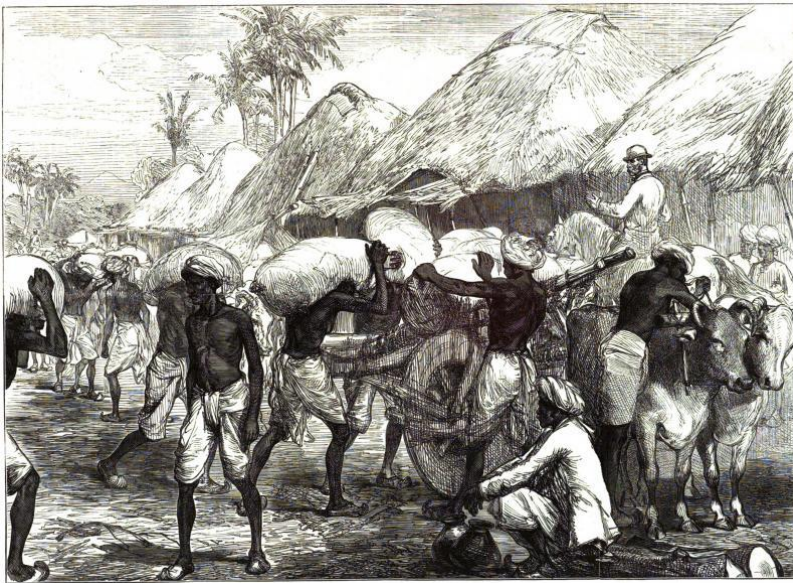
Notes

Shortages in food supply led to rising prices – to bunniahs', grainsellers', advantage.

Changes in land ownership were followed by the commercialization of agriculture, which started to emerge around the 1860s. This brought a shift from cultivation for home consumption to cultivation for the market. Cash transaction became the basis of exchange and largely replaced the barter system. The exported items in the first half of the nineteenth century included cash crops like indigo, opium, cotton, and silk. Gradually, raw jute, food grains, oil seeds, and tea replaced indigo and opium. Raw cotton remained in demand throughout. There was phenomenal growth in the export of agricultural commodities from India: the value of India's exports is estimated to have risen by more than five hundred percent from 1859–60 to 1906–1907.

The greater portion of the profits generated by the export trade benefitted British business families, big farmers, some Indian traders, and moneylenders.

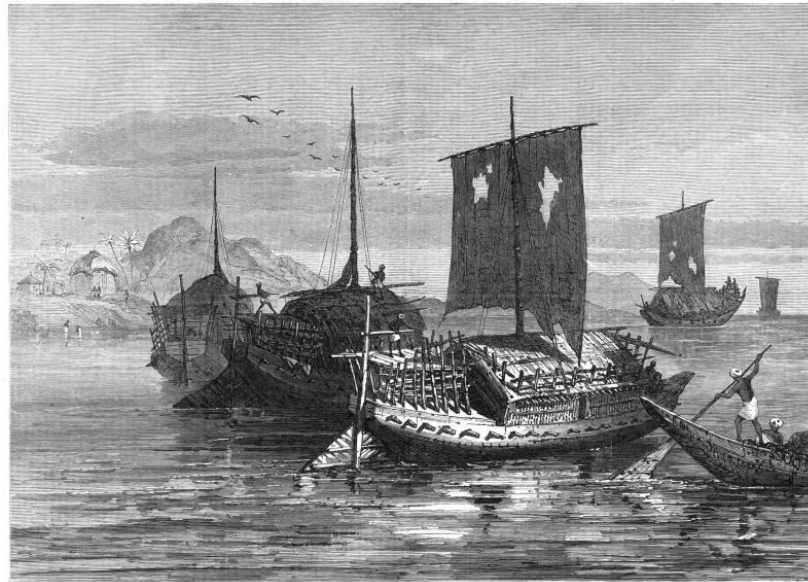
This put rural Indian communities at greater risk of damage due to famine because agriculture, which had previously been used to meet local needs, was now controlled from afar with the goal of profit rather than subsistence. Further, the shift from food crops like jowar, bajra, and pulses to cash crops contributed to disaster in famine years. Many scholars argue a close link between food exports and famine in India. In fact, there was an increase in agricultural exports from Indian farmers during the British colonial time.⁶ Even in 1876–77, just before one of the century's most severe famines, exports continued to grow to meet Land Revenue demand. And again in 1897–98, in the midst of widespread famine and starvation in India, the system continued: 17 million sterling of land revenue was collected; cultivators raised the money largely by selling food grains for export.



The famine in Bengal: Loading grain-carts near Calcutta

Reports made by the Famine Commission in 1880, 1898, and 1901 provide useful evidence to examine these events and suggest that food grains were present even during years of famine. The Famine Commission of 1880 provided the first attempt to measure the food supply in the country and the food requirements of the people. According to these measures, British India around 1880 produced a surplus of 5 million tons of food grains that were available for storage, export, or luxury consumption. Further, each region of India grew surplus food grains. The Famine Commission of 1898 again made fresh estimates of food supply near 1880, and considered the growth of population and acreage under food grains during the period 1880–98. The report concluded that “the surplus produce of India, taken as a whole, still furnishes ample means of meeting the demands of any of the country likely to suffer from famine at any one time, supposing such famines to be not greater in extent and duration than any hitherto experienced.” The measures of surplus production given by the Famine Commission of 1880 show that food grain exports did not actually wipe out the surplus in normal years.

Moreover, food grains export continued throughout the years of severe famine. Many observers have thus concluded that if there was an absolute shortage of food in those years, then this was largely a created shortage and cannot be attributed to natural disasters.



The famine in Bengal: Grain-boats on the Ganges

These Famine Commission Reports suggest that impacts of famine in British India were not due to lack of food, but were instead caused by inadequate food supply; one expert has thus distinguished between two types of famine: a “grain famine” and a “money famine.” In a money famine, it is a lack of capital—not crop failure—that makes it impossible for peasants to procure food. In another formulation that has been used, famine is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat; it is not the characteristic of there not being enough food to eat. Famines also are triggered by a lack of rainfall, but their impact is largely a result of chronic poverty. With greater wealth, people could compensate for crop failures in one area by buying food from elsewhere; crop failure would thus not necessary lead to starvation. Without financial resources, however, this is not possible and local crop failure can have deadly consequences for a large number of people.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. Discuss about the Resource base of North Bengal.

.....
.....
.....

2. Discuss about the Forestry of North Bengal.

.....
.....
.....

3. What is meant by Commercialization of Agriculture?

.....
.....
.....

4. Describe the Changing land ownership, agricultural, and economic systems.

.....
.....
.....

11.6 LET US SUM UP

The Dooars belonged to the Kamata Kingdom under the Koch dynasty; and taking advantage of the weakness of the Koch kingdom in subsequent times, Bhutan took possession of the Dooars. This region was controlled by the kingdom of Bhutan when the British annexed it in 1865 after the Bhutan War under the command of Captain Hedayat Ali. The area was divided into two parts: the eastern part was merged with Goalpara district in Assam and the western part was turned into a new district named Western Dooars. Again in the year 1869, the name was changed to Jalpaiguri District. After the end of the British rule in India in 1947, the Dooars acceded into the dominion of India and it merged with the Union of India shortly afterwards in 1949.

During the nineteenth century the shift of focus in the fields of commercialisation of agriculture facilitated by the extension of railway network introduced tea of Darjiling and Jalpaiguri or mulberry and mango of Maldah to the European market. In Maldah cultivation of mulberry was rather concentrated in the hands of wealthy peasants.

Rearing of silk worms is expensive and the demand was mostly outside the country, there was always risk should the market prove unfavourable. In cases of crop failures or natural disasters i.e., drought, flood etc., price fluctuation resulted into dispossession of the farmers of their property.

11.7 KEY WORDS

Dooars: The Dooars or Duars (/duˈɑːrʒ/) are the alluvial floodplains in northeastern India that lie south of the outer foothills of the Himalayas and north of the Brahmaputra River basin

11.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Discuss about the forest resource of North Bengal area.
2. Write about the agriculture of North Bengal.

11.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- R. Dutt, *The Economic History of India* (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960), vol. 1, 1–11, 127–75, 255–75, and vol. 2, 22–70; R. C. Majumdar, H. C. Raychaudhary, and K. Datta, *An Advanced History of India* (Madras: Macmillan India Limited, 1981), 794–6.
- K. Marx. “The British Rule in India.” *New-York Daily Tribune*, June 25, 1853.
- J. Caldwell. “Malthus and the Less Developed World: The Pivotal Role of India,” *Population and Development Review* 24, no. 4 (December 1998): 675–96; E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959).
- *Ibid.*; Dutt. *The Economic History of India*, vol. 1. 284–92, and vol. 2. 90–101, 252, 385; D. Naoroji. *Poverty and British Rule in India* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1901); B. N. Ganguli, *Dadabhai Naoroji and the Drain Theory*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House) 1965.

- See note 4; M. Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famine and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso Books, 2001).
- *Ibid.*, 63, 31–32, 290, 319.
- Dutt. *The Economic History of India*, vol. 2.
- 9 K. C. Ghosh, *Famines in Bengal, 1770–1943* (Calcutta: India Associated, 1944), 374, Table 1.
- The Indian Famine Commission, Report (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1898) 358, cited by A. K. Ghose, “Food Supply and Starvation: A Study of Famines with Reference to the Indian Subcontinent,” *Oxford Economic Papers*, New Series 34, no. 2 (1982): 376.
- This mode of description is used by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen in the book *Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: University Press, 1981) 1.
- *Ibid*; Dutt. *The Economic History of India*, 34; D. Arnold, *Famine: Social Crises and Historical Change* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 44–5 and 85.

11.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 11.2
2. See Section 11.3
3. See Section 11.4
4. See Section 11.5

UNIT 12: PROTEST MOVEMENT: PEASANT MOVEMENT AND PLANTATION WORKER MOVEMENT

STRUCTURE

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Protest Movement
- 12.3 Peasant movement
- 12.4 Plantation Workers Movement
- 12.5 Let us sum up
- 12.6 Key Words
- 12.7 Questions for Review
- 12.8 Suggested readings and references
- 12.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know:

- To know about the Protest Movement
- To discuss about the Peasant movement
- To discuss about the Plantation Workers Movement

12.1 INTRODUCTION

It is unfortunate that after 72 years of getting independence and many socio-economic and cultural developments including scientific and technological improvement taking place, the condition of the tealabourers in the northern North Bengal could have not yet been changed. Many Acts, Rules and Regulations have been passed, many Trade Unions have come up in the tea-gardens, many politics have been going on, but the real improvement of the tea labourers lies in dark room. Many crises and severe problems of the tea labourers in the Northern Bengal were started since the beginning of the 21st century and recently

it is increased tremendously as a result, the labourers have been losing their works in the tea gardens and as they have no alternative sources of income many of them have been suffering from various diseases, starvation, fasting, and ultimately they have been dying for want of food.

12.2 PROTEST MOVEMENT

Tea workers in Darjeeling, North Bengal

Tea is one of the oldest industries in India with a history dating back more than 150 years. Its cultivation started during the colonial period thanks to the discovery of tea leaves in the Brahmaputra valley in the northeast of India by Robert Bruce in 1823, and in 1838 the first tea leaves from Assam were sent for sale to the United Kingdom. India soon became a major tea-producing nation, with tea being grown mainly in four states: the northeastern states of West Bengal and Assam and the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. India attained the unique position of being the largest producer of tea in the world for nearly 100 years, until it was overtaken by China in 2005. India continues to maintain the position of the second largest producer. Apart from China and India, Sri Lanka and Kenya are the other major tea-producing nations, and the four of them together they produce three quarters of the world's tea. In 2008, India produced about 980 million kilograms of tea.

As of December 2009 the total turnover of the Indian tea industry stood at about 90 billion rupees, or about US\$2 billion. However due to huge domestic demand for the tea in both India and China, the majority, about 80% of the production, is consumed domestically and rest is exported. Thus, Kenya and Sri Lanka, despite producing less than half quantity of tea compared to India, are the leading exporters of tea.

Most of the tea is sold – loose unbranded in the Indian market. However, recently there is steady increase in the sale of packaged branded tea with global players active in India also. In the year 2000 the Indian Tata tea company procured the leading UK brand – Tetley - and Tata-Tetley has become a leading global brand. Within India, Unilever (manufacturer of the popular global brand Lipton) and Tata Tea are the leading brands. The brands, irrespective of the horrifying conditions of workers, have been posting steady profits over the years. Tata Tea has recently

Notes

overtaken Unilever to become the leading brand in India and has become an over US\$ 1 billion company.

Plantation Workers – Century of Bondage

There is no agreement on the number of workers employed in the tea industry and different sources give different figures, roughly between 1 to 1.5 million employed directly and another 10 million that are employed indirectly. It remains one of the largest employers of workers in India. It is estimated that almost 50% of the workers are women. The majority of the workers work as wage labourers on the plantations, also known as estates; there are also farmers who produce tea leaves on small pieces of land. The majority of tea estates are in the northeast of India. Tea plantations inherently have been exploitative right from their inception in the colonial times. Like other plantations cultivating rubber, sugar, etc. they were created to extract the maximum from the workers, as the part of the colonial economy. The situation has not changed even after more than 60 years of Indian independence. The majority of workers working on the plantations in the northeast are third or fourth generation migrants that were brought by the British from the central part of India, and the majority of them are either lower caste or tribal peoples belonging to the lowest social strata. Workers have always lived inside the plantations and housing has been used as an effective means of enslavement of generations of workers by the plantation owners. The wages they receive are among the lowest in the world, lower than Kenya and Sri Lanka, at about US\$1 – 1.5 a day, this in spite of the fact that the industry is global in nature and has quite capital-intensive operations. The industry has continued to maintain a feudal/semi-feudal structure in its pre-marketing production phase so as to maximize its profits.

Tea pluckers, who are almost exclusively women, work six days a week from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. They have an hour for lunch which they bring with them, or to go home to eat, if working in a nearby tea field. Men mainly work as field supervisors, carry out weeding and spraying, or work in the tea factory. Tea workers' wages are set by tripartite negotiations between the government, employer associations, and trade unions.

Their social status has ensured that their plight has been continuously ignored for generations. These workers have very low literacy rates and non-availability of any other livelihood in the region ensures that the children of the plantation workers are left with no other option than to work on the plantations under abysmal conditions. There is no escape from the vicious circle of the highest level of exploitation. The plantation workers also do not enjoy even basic amenities like safe drinking water, and often workers suffer from diarrhoea, cholera and other waterborne diseases. Malaria and tuberculosis are also rampant. The infant mortality rate is much higher than the national average. It is estimated that only one percent of the workers is active after attaining the age of 60.

The tea plantation workers in India are covered by the Plantation Labour Act (PLA), 1951, which regulates the working and living conditions of these workers. As well as prescribing standards for housing, healthcare and education, the PLA regulates working conditions including maximum working hours, overtime payments, child labour, paid leave, and sickness and maternity benefits.

However, it seems that even though the act has been there for more than 50 years, the majority of workers are deprived of the basic minimal necessities in their lives. Their wages have not seen any real increase for so many years. Women who are a major workforce in the industry continue to face increased discrimination. Plucking the leaves from the plants is a very hard and tiring job. The women have been often denied the maternity and related benefits they should have under the Plantation Act. For a long time their wages were much lower than their male counterparts.

Ironically, the tea industry is considered one of the most organized industries in India, with the first union being recognised by the industry as early as 1948. There are more than 50 recognized unions in West Bengal alone. However, the industry associations have been denying the benefits that workers should receive under the Plantation Labour Act. Most of the workers have been classified as unskilled workers and are paid daily wages and the majority does not receive any wages for Sunday.

12.3 PEASANT MOVEMENT

Peasant movement is a social movement involved with the agricultural policy.

Peasant movements have a long history that can be traced to the numerous peasant uprisings that occurred in various regions of the world throughout human history. Early peasant movements were usually the result of stresses in the feudal and semi-feudal societies, and resulted in violent uprisings. More recent movements, fitting the definitions of social movements, are usually much less violent, and their demands are centered on better prices for agricultural produce, better wages and working conditions for the agricultural laborers, and increasing the agricultural production.

The economic policies of the British adversely affected the Indian peasants under the British government, protecting the landlords and money lenders while they exploited the peasants. The peasants rose in revolt against this injustice on many occasions. The peasants in Bengal formed their union and revolted against the compulsion of cultivating indigo.

Anthony Pereira, a political scientist, has defined a peasant movement as a "social movement made up of peasants (small landholders or farm workers on large farms), usually inspired by the goal of improving the situation of peasants in a nation or territory".

India

Peasant movement in India arose during the British colonial period, when economic policies characterized in the ruin of traditional handicrafts leading to change of ownership, overcrowding of land, massive debt and impoverishment of peasantry. This led to peasant uprisings during the colonial period, and development of peasant movements in the post-colonial period. The Kisan Sabha movement started in Bihar under the leadership of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, who formed the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS) in 1929 to mobilise peasant grievances against the zamindari attacks on their occupancy rights. In 1938, the crops in Eastern Khandesh were destroyed due to heavy rains. The peasants were ruined. In order to get the land revenue waived, Sane Guruji

organized meetings and processions in many places and took out marches to the Collector's office. The peasants joined the revolutionary movement of 1942 in great numbers. Gradually the peasant movement intensified and spread across the rest of India. All these radical developments on the peasant front culminated in the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) at the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress in April 1936 with Swami Sahajanand Saraswati elected as its first President. In the subsequent years, the movement was increasingly dominated by Socialists and Communists as it moved away from the Congress, by 1938 Haripura session of the Congress, under the presidency of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the rift became evident, and by May 1942, the Communist Party of India, which was finally legalised by the then government in July 1942, had taken over AIKS, all across India including Bengal where its membership grew considerably.

D. D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma, together with Daniel Thorner, brought peasants into the study of Indian history for the first time.

British rulers very successfully penetrated into the depth of the Indian villages. Pre-British invaders in India did not disturb the existing revenue administration structure. Millions of the rural folk remained, therefore, indifferent to the ruling class. Economic historians are still continuing their debate on the pre-British agrarian structure. The main issue of their contention is the type of ownership of land prevalent in pre-British period. Henry Maine and Sir Charles Metcalfe, viewed the ancient village society as an undifferentiated one. Karl Marx in the New York Herald Tribune held the same view and opined that private ownership in land in India was first introduced by the Britishers. R.P. Dutt, Ramkrishna Mukherjee, A.R. Desai corroborated the same view. Ramkrishna Mukherjee after a long discussion in his *The Dynamics of Rural Society*, concluded that whether or not land alienation and transfer took place in Indian villages in ancient times, virtually land was then only for possession and use by the rural households for subsistence production, and, in a broad sense at least, the self-sufficient and autonomous village communities were based on 'possession in common of the land'."

Notes

Land In the pre-British period, observed R.K. Mukherjee, was, in no case, a marketable property. The ease of land alienation was made only either as religious gifts or due to want of heirs or failure to pay the land tax. Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutta, the noted Marxist writer and sociologist, however, refuted the Marxian idea of the self-sufficient village economy in India. He traced land-ownership back to the Vedic age. He ruled out any idea of communal ownership in land. In Rigvedic period it was clearly stated that the property of the father was bequeathed to the sons. Egalitarian village structure and village council was nothing but a myth. "In this way, at the close of the Vedic age, the following socio-economic relations are to be found: the King is developing more and more absolute power and exacting revenues from his subjects. There is a ruling class around him. Again a landlord class owning village has taken its rise. The cultivators and the peasants had in many cases landlords over them. Much of the rights on land have been curtailed upon. From the Vedic-rishi of a cultivator to the landlord-ridden and exploited agriculturists at the closing period, the dialectics of Historical Paternalism have wrought many changes,"

Dr. Dutta carried on his search of private ownership in land in the Buddhist literature, in the writings of Manu, in the inscription of the Gupta age and came to the conclusion that feudal hierarchy was present in each age. He traced back the origin of forced labour and crop-sharing in the writings of Manu. The Mughals also did not rule out the rights of the landlords. The Eastern region of India under the Pal and Sen kingdoms was subdivided into various grades of intermediary stakeholders. Then in the Pala era of eastern India the epigraphic records bear a grand array of the feudal hierarchs and state officials. This list is carried in the subsequent era of the rule of the Senas. From this big list of intermediary landlords whose posts beginning from the emperor or the king down to the peasant (Kars, aka). are mentioned in the grant places, we surmise that Eastern part of India had already at that time, various grades of intermediary estate-holders. The present-day intricate subfeudation of the lands of Bengal must have had its precursor in this period. Ratnalekha Ray in a recent publication made a thorough study on the changes in the agrarian society of Bengal during the regime of the

East India Company. She elaborately dealt with the land relations prevalent before the introduction of the Permanent Settlement by Lord Cornwallis in 1793. It transpires from her study that the traditional agrarian society was not at all free of class hierarchy rather it was marked by variety of land rights.

The two juxtaposed views on pre-British agrarian structure make any further study on agrarian relation complicated. Whatever may be the land relations, it can be safely maintained that, the raiders in pre-British period coming from less advanced economy assimilated themselves with the Indian economy. But the British traders in order to ensure easy transaction of trade captured the political machinery and introduced their own legal system and replaced the proportional payment of revenue by fixed payment. These new policies were responsible for radical transformation of the traditional rural structure. Moreover, In the name of trade they introduced an 1 'age of plunder', which led to utter ruination of the artisans goods turned to an importer of the same goods and began to export cotton and indigo along with food crops.

The forced indigo plantation and introduction of different repressive measures by the indigo planters turned a large section of cultivating peasants into landless ones. The blow upon the weavers was felt more fatal than it was in the earlier phase of 'plunder'. The markets were flooded with cheap foreign textiles. The indigenous cottage-made goods failed to compete with the machine-made ones. To crown all these sufferings the Britishers enhanced the revenue very frequently. This severely affected the rent-paying peasantry as the revenue collectors exacted the enhanced revenue from the tenants. The Permanent Settlement (1793) and the later regulations like Haftam and Pan jam empowered the revenue collector to collect any amount of rent from the tenants instead of paying a fixed amount of revenue to the government. A class of money-lenders emerged to whom the defaulters mortgaged their land. This ultimately resulted in large-scale eviction of the tilling peasants and increasing concentration of land in the hands of few. The simmering discontent among the peasantry generated by British rule often gave birth to spontaneous outburst. For long there was a misconception that the Indian peasantry was passive and immobile. It

Notes

was alleged that rigid caste structure prevented them in raising any protest move against the misrule.

Kathleen Gaugh took a strong stand against this underestimation of Indian peasantry and discovered as many as seventy-seven revolts by the peasantry during the British rule: 'I would argue that peasant revolts have in fact been common both during and since the British period, every state of present-day India having experienced several over the past two hundred years. Thus in a recent brief survey I discovered 77 revolts, the smallest of which probably engaged several thousand peasants in active support or in combat. About 30 revolts must have affected several tens of thousands, and about 12, several hundreds of thousands. Included in these revolts is the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857-58, in which vast bodies of peasants fought or otherwise worked to destroy British rule over an area of more than 500,000 square miles. The frequency of these revolts and the fact that at least 34 of these I considered were solely or partly by Hindus, cause me to doubt that the caste system has seriously impeded peasant rebellion in 1 time of trouble.' To name a few of these peasant-uprisings were:

- (i) Sannyasi rebellions (1763-1778) in districts of East and North Bengal, Jessore, Khulna, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Chapra and Ohamparan of Bihar;
- (ii) Wahabi rebellion (1830-31) in Baduria, 24-Parganas of Bengal;
- (iii) Faraizi rebellion (1838-48) in Faridpur, Bengal; (iv) Santal Rebellion (1855-56) in Birbhum, Bihar and part of Murshidabad;
- (v) Indigo rebellion (1858-61) in Nadia, Jessore, Khulna, Baridpur, 24-1 Pargana, Pabna of Bengal; (vi) uprising in Pabna and Bagura in 1872-73 (though the movement originated in Pabna and Bagura it soon spread to the whole of Eastern and Central Bengal); (vii) Moplah rebellion (1836-1849) in Malabar; and (viii) Deccan riots in 1875

A Without going into the details of all these peasant uprisings we would mention the following parameters of these uprisings:

- (i) In most of the uprisings peasants were generally mobilized on the plea of religion. In Wahabi rebellion, it was imposition of tax by the Hindu Samindors on growing of beard of the Muslim peasants which sparked off the rebellion. The Faraizi rebellion also initially started with a religious issue and culminated in peasant rebellion.
- (ii) Though the peasants were initially mobilized on religious issues, in course of the movement class polarization surpassed the other divisions. Hindu-Muslim, tribal, non-tribal, all the poor peasantry stood against the zamindars and mahajans. This was evident during the Santal rebellion when not a single witness from the affected villages could be produced to the Court.
- (iii) The movements were spontaneous but were marked by mass participation. What it amounts to is that even in the absence of formal organization and specific ideology, mass scale mobilization was not that difficult, however short-lived it might have been.
- (iv) Almost all the movements were characterized by some type of, charismatic leader like Majnu Shah in Sanyasi rebellion; Titu Mir in Wahabi rebellion; Dudu Miyan in Faraizi rebellion; Bir Singh in Santal rebellion. All these leaders have become legendary figures.
- (v) Mere economism was not the motivating factor of these movements. Not infrequently, political authorities were challenged too. Titu Mir (Wahabi leader) in Baduria established his own rule and peasants refused to pay the rent to the landlords and acknowledged Titu Mir as their real landlord. Santal rebels demanded in the same breath land and liberation.
- (vi) Though the British authority suppressed the movements with as much brutality as it was possible, it had nevertheless, to accede to the demands of the rebels. During the Sanyasi rebellion the British officials had to pay Rs.1,200/- from the treasury as tax to quell the rebels in Bagura. The creation of a

Notes

new district of Santal Pargana was an overt recognition of the just demands of the Santals.

Peasantry and Gandhi: The National Congress[^]originally designed as a 'safety valve to all such uprisings'[?]held its first session in 1885. Till 1915 this national organization confined itself to elitist demands and failed to mobilize the common mass. With the entrance of Mahatma Gandhi into the political arena people came en masse to take part in national politics. It was he who could foresee the possibility of changing elite politics into a mass one through common people's participation.

Consequently the prime focus of his politics became the village. His programme of village reconstruction through revival of cottage industry and revitalization of panchayat system along with his campaign against untouchability stimulated the village people beyond measure. To give effect to these programmes- the Congress established peasant committees in rural areas. In addition to mobilize peasants for All India movements, like Non-cooperation (1920), Civil Disobedience (1930) Quit India (1942) these peasant committees organized a few local peasant movements for redressal of immediate grievances of the peasantry. They are :

- (i) The Champaran Satyagraha: In Champaran Gandhi first applied his technique of Satyagraha in India. The movement was a success and ended with the abolition of Tinkathia system. Under this system, it was obligatory on the part of the peasants to grow indigo on 1/20th of their land. Moreover they had to sell the produce at the prices fixed by the planters; Following an independent enquiry conducted by Gandhi, Government appointed an enquiry committee with Gandhi as one of the members.
- (ii) Satyagraha by Kaira peasants of Gujarat against the collection of land revenue (1918) : Peasants in this district were organized to boycott land revenue for the failure of crop. While Chandra, Tripathi and De were delighted in success of the movement (as "the government was ultimately forced to yield ground and arrive at a settlement with the peasants"), Sumit Sarkar opined that the

movement had to be called of 'after no more than a token concession'. The movement did not even spread over a larger part of the district as it affected only 370 villages out of 559.

- (iii) Peasant upsurges in Bardoli against revenue-hike (1928) In reaction to the proclamation of 22% revenue-hike by the Bombay Government, the peasants launched no-revenue campaign. This time the movement ended with a success as the Maxwell Broomfield Enquiry Committee admitted that the Bardoli assessment was defective and reduced the fiscal increase from 22 percent to only 6.25 percent.-
- (iv) Agitation in Oudh (1930-32) : Here the provincial leadership in the U.P. unlike in other parts of the country gave a call for a no-rent campaign along with no-revenue move. The no-rent campaign began in Oudh in early 1930, but though the movement was initiated by the local leaders with the support of Jawaharlal Nehru, soon it was discouraged by central leadership of the Congress.

Dhanagare has shown that the peasantry in Oudh did not respond to Gandhi's "symbolic protest of breaking salt law which was inaugurated in April 1930 in order to track the mounting discontent of the peasantry. It is true that only under Gandhi's leadership millions of rural people came into the arena of national politics, but the story does not end there. Gandhi no doubt made a sincere and also successful attempt to transform an elitist movement into a mass movement primarily through his appeal to the peasantry. At the same time he restrained the peasant movement whenever it leaned towards class struggle. He religiously eschewed any radical economic policy which would alienate the propertied class from the movement. He pleaded for village reconstruction and highlighted the abuses of Industrialism but not at the cost of the industrialists. In the same way, he tried to uphold the cause of the peasantry without injuring the zamindars' interest. Gandhian peasant movement obeyed in true spirit the Congress Working Committee resolution adopted on 12th February 1922, which advised Congress organisations "to inform the ryots that withholding of rent payment to the

Notes

zamindars is contrary to the Congress resolutions and injurious to the best interests of the country." In this contest Hauser /rwrofceTfor Gandhi's statement on 'Mo-Rent' movement in U.P. in,1921: "it is not contemplated that at any stage of non-cooperation we would seek to deprive the Zamindars of their rent. The Usan movement must be confined to the improvement of the status of the Kisans and the betterment of the relations between the Zamindars and them. Dhanagare commented that Gandhi shed tears for the poor without adopting any concrete programme for their upliftment. He mobilized the rural folk without doing anything substantial for them: "The Gandhian political idiom of 'village uplift', swaraj (freedom), swadeshi (self-reliance through the spinning wheel, etc.), and Satyagraha — non-violent political struggle, etc., undoubtedly endeared the Indian rural masses -- the peasants and tillage artisans — but the substance of his economic programme was far from what the masses really needed. Although therefore, the charismatic Gandhi aroused the rural masses, he did little or nothing substantial to bring about changes in land relations which alone could have alleviated the conditions of the peasant masses who followed him." Jacques Pouchepadass held that this stand on class collaboration is nothing accidental but a part of Gandhian ideology: "In the case of the typically Gandhian movements (Ghamparan, Kheda, Bardoli), class collaboration was not merely accepted by the political leaders; it was consciously favoured and served as a central element in the ideology. He referred to two important characteristics of the Gandhian movement —

- (i) the enemy was always made exterior to the peasantry, to avoid class struggle. While in Ghamparan the enemy was the British Indigo planters, in Kaira and Bardoli it was the colonial government,
- (ii) the movement in village level was actually conducted by the caste councils and not by any independent political organizations.

This avoidance of class politics was much more evident from Gandhi's inclination to agitate only on local issues and to leave the fundamental land relations unhurt and unexamined: "More fundamental questions

relating to land control and antagonistic class relations, whether in the Champaran district of Bihar, or in the Kheda district of Gujarat, were carefully left untouched by him," The course of the peasant movement also shows that Gandhi had withdrawn the movements when they began to gather momentum. This was true for all India movements as well as for local level peasant movements. Sumit Sarkar has shown that in the so-called Gandhian peasant movement the initiative and to some extent leadership actually came from local level while Gandhi "remained in the background. "The Initiative for no-revenue (to press the case for remissions in the context of the poor harvest) really came not from Gandhi or Ahmedabad politicians, but from local village leaders like Mohanlal Pandya or Kapadvanj taluka in Kheda In November 1917; It was taken up by Gandhi after a lot of hesitation only on 22 March 1918". Arvind N. Das In a recent article opposed the classical historians' stand on passive Immobile Indian peasantry who were only driven to politics by the Gandhian clarion call. He referred to Pouchepadass's recent work who have shown, "that not only was the 'peasantry by no means passive but that local peasant leaders had a far more important role in the agitation than has been described."

12.4 PLANTATION WORKERS MOVEMENT

Tea is an extremely popular beverage in India and Darjeeling tea is famous for its aroma and flavor. But the workers who work in these tea gardens taste the bitter flavor of life. Between 2000 and 2015, Fourteen Hundred (1400) people have died in 17 tea Gardens in the North Bengal. Severe malnutrition has been the main cause of death in these estates (Chaudhuri, 2015). It is said that, Out of the 276 tea gardens in four districts Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar and Alipurduar approximately 31 have shut down or are sick. And the lives of 4, 80,000 families who employed by those gardens are in a crisis –women and children being the worst affected. With no alternative jobs or income, it a daily struggle to survive (Roy, 2017). In the working estates too, conditions of the tea garden workers are pathetic because of miserably low wages (Rs.90 to 95), non availability of drinking water, sanitation

Notes

and food items. According to the law, tea garden workers are entitled to get provident fund payments, bonuses, pension (for retired workers), ration, housing, water, education and health facilities. But the reality is grim with most of the tea gardens been shut or sick, housing and medical facilities are in a shambles. Financial mismanagement is rife—many estates are not depositing the provident fund contribution deducted from workers wages, schools are non functional thereby affecting the education of the children in the tea estates. A survey by the Siliguri Welfare Association in July 2014 found the body mass index of tea workers to be as low as 14 in some estates. “The WHO has stipulated that anything less than 18.5 BMI constitutes famine affected population,” says Abhijit Majumdar, secretary of the organisation. Out of 1,272 workers at Raipur Tea Garden in Jalpaiguri, 539 or 42 per cent had a BMI of less than 18.5 (in India ideal BMI is 23-24). As many as 384 workers had a BMI of 17, 285 below 16, and 140 less than 14. Similar surveys were conducted at Red Bank, Bandapani, Diana and Kathalguri tea gardens and same results found, says Majumdar. Out of 273 tea estates, only 166 have hospitals. Out of these 166, only 56 tea estates have full time residential doctors. Other 110 tea estates' hospitals depend on visiting doctors. Among doctors of 166 tea estates, only 74 doctors have degree of MBBS, others are non MBBS. Out of 166 tea estates having hospitals, 116 do not have any nurse. 107 tea estates (hills 64, Terai 20 and Dooars 23) do not have any hospital. Out of 273 tea estates, 85 do not have any dispensary. Ten tea estates have neither hospital nor dispensary. Out of 273 tea estates, primary health centres (PHCs) exist in only 160, 113 tea estates (hills 38, Terai 23 and Dooars 52) do not have any PHC. Out of 273 tea estates, 160 provide ambulance. Many of these ambulances are not up to the standard (Bera, 2014). The starvation deaths and the other related problems like water scarcity, closed schools etc are also an indicator that the workers are not getting the social welfare/security schemes of the government. The chronic violation of basic rights of tea garden workers calls for immediate attentions from all quarters. The state must come forward to provide suitable livelihood opportunities to them and to enable them to access basic services like health and education.

Gaps in the existing Knowledge:

Food is one of the basic needs of human being for their survival but in developing country like India food is not adequately available for all. World Bank (1986) defined food security as ‘access by all people at all times to enough food for an active healthy life’. Later in 1996 FAO came up with a broader definition of food security ‘Food Security at the individual, household, national and global levels [is achieved] when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.’ Many research and academic reports have been done in the Tea Garden area which dealt with labor issues (wages and health risks), production and marketing of tea. But limited research solely focused on the food security of the tea garden workers. There are many reports and newspaper clippings on starvation death in the tea plantations. So it can be said that there is a scarcity of published material on the food security aspect of the plantation workers in the area. In this backdrop the research is intended to explore the reasons behind such situation in the tea estates.

There are three components of food security namely production and procurement, storage and distribution. All these functions are performed through the Public Distribution system in the country (Lenka, 2017). If any of the component of food security is affected it would affect the people. Food is a matter of Right and every individual has the Right to food- it is an entitlement to be free from hunger, which derives from the assertion that the society has enough resources, both economic and institutional, to ensure that everyone is adequately nourished. The primary responsibility for ensuring Right to food rests on the State, because the state alone commands the resources (economic and institutional) required to protect everyone from hunger, and because the state is generally responsible for safeguarding constitutional rights. In some circumstances at least, the responsibility for protecting the right to food is a shared responsibility, involving not only the state, but also other institutions or individuals (Dreze, 2004). The tea industry in India have been said to have been going through a crisis situation since the early

Notes

1990s. Some of the key reasons for the crisis a fall in tea auction prices, decline in exports, closure and abandonment of tea gardens resulting in curtailment of wages and benefits by the planters. The crisis declined the living condition of the workers and worsening human security. (Ellis, 1998). For this research, the researcher would follow the global definition of food security by FAO (1996). Tea Plantation Worker: Plantation referred to a group of settlers or a political unit formed by it under British Colonialism, especially in North America and West Indies (ILO, 1950). But later it acquired a broader connotation, which denote large scale enterprise in agricultural units and the development of certain agricultural resources of tropical countries in accordance with the methods of western industry. The products were mainly for export. The Plantation Labour Act 1951 defines plantation as any land used or intends to be used for growing tea, coffee rubber or cinchona which admeasures 25 acres or more and in which 30 or more persons are employed or were employed on any day of the preceding 12 months. Plantation worker means a person employed in the plantation for hire or reward, whether directly or through agency, to do any work, skilled, unskilled, clerical or manual. It exempts certain categories of worker like medical officer, any person whose monthly wage is more than Rs.300 or any employee who work in the managerial capacity.

The Plantation Labour (Amendment) Act 2010 further includes that a person employed on contract for more than 60 days in a year would be considered as plantation worker. The amended Act specifies that the term 'worker' does not include any person whose monthly income exceeds Rs.10,000. Also a person who works in the managerial and administrative capacity notwithstanding that his monthly wages do not exceed Rs. 10000 is also not included in the category of workers. In the research the researcher would use the term tea garden workers instead of plantation worker as here the study area is tea gardens. As far as definition goes the researcher accepts the definition given in 'The Plantation Labour (Amendment) Act 2010'. The tea industry in India began with the setup of Assam Company in 1839. The potential for growing tea in Assam was discovered in 1824 by Major Robert Bruce.

The British East India Company had a monopoly over trade with China and used to import tea from China. In 1833, the monopoly was cancelled by British Parliament and then the company decided to explore tea cultivation on a commercial scale in Assam. After three decades, tea plantation started in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Labors in the plantation were mainly recruited from the tribal community of central India-the Chotanagpur area (Bhowmik, 2011).

Tea- Labour Movements in the Northern Bengal Since 1947

There was no Labour Union of the tea labourers at the initial stage in the Northern Bengal and there were many factors behind it. Prof. Nirban Basu, a prominent scholar on labour movements has shown different reasons behind the absence of Labour Union at the initial stage in Northern Bengal. Firstly, Geographically Duars region was detached from other parts of the country. Tea region was like a danger fort controlled by the planters. It was not favourable to survive men though it was favourable for tea cultivation. No man even the people from Jalpaiguri did not want to proceed towards tea garden. Secondly, of all the tea gardens, a large number were in the hands of Bengali middle class. Naturally, the Nationalists had no intention to form Labour Union against the indigenous planters. Thirdly, the political leadership of the district was in the hands of English educated higher caste Hindu Bengalese. The social relation in between them was almost absence.1 Though the Labour Union was not found in the Duars, the labourers were not silent, they protested against the oppressions of the tea planters, administrators, police etc. following the different mode of movements. These protest movements were carried on from 1895 – 1918 in their own way of movements. It is unfortunate that no political party or Union or intellectual supported their movements. The enquiry committee of the Government mentioned, It is informed by the manager of Alipurduar Sub-division that in the month of September, 1903 the labourer of this region revolted due to not having wages for overtime. In the same way 13 labour of Dalsingpara tea garden attacked on an European manager for his illegal oppressions. In 1912, a group of sardars and coolies (tea-labourers) of Nagrakata tea estate area created noise and destroyed the

Notes

property of tea estate. The Rice Movement of 1906 was an unorganized movement of the tea labourers. The tea labourers demanded to supply more rice in ration and in this movement Santal, Munda, Oraon took the leading role to run their movement. Tea-planters carried on their torture on the labourers with armed raiders. In 1911 many labourers of the tea gardens stopped their work, came out and revolted. In 1916 Tana Bhagat Movement was started in the Jalpaiguri district which was an awakening movement of the tea labourers. In this regard Ranjit Dasgupta writes, —In its origin the Tana Bhagat movement was a messianic movement. It was believed that a Messiah would come to redeem the Oraon from their plight. They were called upon to pull out (tana) ghost and evil spirits which were held responsible for their misery. They were asked to purify and reform their lives.... They were, moreover, called upon to do no work as coolies and labourers under men of other castes and tribes.

The formation of Labour Unions among the tea labourers were started since the 1940s and in this task communist parties; particularly the CPI took a significant role in the process of organizing the tea labourers in the Duars. In 1946 at the time of election the communist leaders propagated the ideology of equality, liberty and nationality as a result; Ratanlal Brahman won the election from labour belt of Darjeeling district which encouraged extending the communist activities in Jalpaiguri district. Ranjit Dasgupta writes, —Prior to mid- 1946 these labourers had not been organized in a trade and on the whole remained untouched by the national movement. But several developments during the War and immediate post- War years converged to bring about a critical change in the life situation of the labourers. Left-wing employees of Domohani Railway Workers Union played a significant role among the tea labourers and peasants. In this task Debaprosad Ghosh (known as Patalbabu) who was involved as a whole timer in the Railway Union of Domahani Branch, would contact the tea labourers. Beside this, Bimal Dasgupta and Parimal Mitra, trade union leaders and Railway workers Jadunath Singh, Lalbahadur Chhetri, Budhan, Mansingh Guhi Mahavir tried their best to organize the tea labourers. The work of the

organization with the tea labourers, communication with them and carry on political movement was very difficult because the entry of political leaders into tea gardens and any kind of communication with tea gardens and labourers was prohibited. However, the leaders communicated with the labourers secretly at the deep night beyond the control of the planters. Sometimes the work of their organization and activities including meeting, discussion etc. were held in the Railway station or the residential area of railway gangmen. 6 Since 1946 when Tebhaga movement was started, the tea labourers of the district, Jalpaiguri supported and joined the Tebhaga movement. During 1946-48 tea labourers of the Duars started labour movement including general strike and cease work. In 1948 the labourers of Grasmere tea garden started strike for their demands which was continued till 11 days and this incident was the first in Bengal.7 Plantation Enquiry Commission noticed that 247 tea companies increased their property into two times during 1939 to 1953. But unfortunately this huge amount of profit went to the pocket of the tea planters depriving the tea labourers. After implementation of minimum Labour Wage Act huge number of tea labourers were beat off from their jobs, as a result, tea labourers fell into a great crisis. World-wide economic depression was started since 1951 for which tea labourers were more deprived by the tea planters. More than 1.5 lacs tea labourers were repulsed from their job and the rationing system was ceased. The Tea Labour Act was passed in 1951 by which it appeared to have been assured the health, drinking water, sanitary latrine, canteen, education of children and homestead of tea labourers. These facilities of tea labourers were more consolidated by the West Bengal Plantation Labour Rules of 1951. But the owners of tea gardens kept them silent about the rules and facilities of tea labourers. Naturally, against the oppressive attitude of the planters tea labourers came into a platform to organize their movements and in this context leftwing parties took a significant role in continuing their movements. Sir Percival Griffiths wrote, —In February, 1953 on the recommendation of the Minimum Wages Advisory Committee, the price of concession cereals in the Dooars was raised from Rs. 5 to 15 per maund, but a partial compensation allowance of 2.5 annas per day per adult worker on

Notes

gardens over five hundred acres, and 2 anas on gardens under five hundred acres, with corresponding payment for minors, was to be paid. At the same time Government ordered a ten percent cut in managerial salaries. For all practices purposes conversion, accompanied by what was really a wage cut, had been achieved.⁸ In 1953 Tea Labour Union started 3 days strike in favour of various demands of the tea labourers and to some extent their strike from 17th August to 19th August had a success. In continuation of this movement the union demanded to the planters to increase their wages and bonus. They demanded wages of 60 days as a bonus. A meeting was held on 24th June, 1954 in presence of Government. An endless strike was called since 12th July, 1954 for fulfillment of various demands. In this sitting some demands of labourers were accepted by the owners.⁹ In February 1955 a demand from the Cha Sramik Union led to an agreed increase of the minimum wage in the Dooars by 3 anas per day to Rs I/II/6 for men and to corresponding increase for women and children, with lower rates for gardens under five hundred acres. At the same time plucking rates were increased. These increases were substantial and represented the inevitable, though unfortunate, reaction to the high prices and profits of 1954. They were perhaps not justified by the long term economic position of Dooars gardens.¹⁰ The agreement of 1955 was not statutory as it was under process of passing orders on the proposed enquiry into the economics of the tea industry in the Duars. So, In this situation Unions requested the labourers to do a full day's work and to abstain from striking for wages. The Indian Tea Planters Association strongly objected to increase the wages of 3 anas and they showed their logic behind it. After long discussions the Government, employers and labour agreed that the agreement for a 3 anas increase should continue until the Government inquiry was completed on 31st December, 1956.¹¹ The Government inquiry dragged on for many months at the end of it agreement could be reached in the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee. The chairman of that committee then recommended an increase of one anna per day for adults. Still the matter held fire and in the mean time the demands of labour were raised and strikes were threatened. At length in August 1959 an order under the Minimum Wage Act was passed, granting labour an

increase of 2 annas per day with effect from 1st June 1959. The Indian Tea Association successfully challenged the legality of a retrospective order of this and the increase therefore only took effect from the date of the order, namely 20 August 1959.¹² The 'Co-ordination Committee of Tea Plantation Workers' was formed in 1965. The committee fought to attain the rights, prestige of the tea labourers through which the labourers can survive with honour and dignity. For attaining their demands and dignity they carried on their movements, sometimes they called for strike. In this circumstances, labour minister Abdus Sattar of Congress-led government formed one-man committee to solve the problems of tea labourers. In 1968 'Kader Nawaj Committee' published the report where mentioned to be scheduled the number of labourers accordingly the ratio of the amount lands. But the owners denied accepting the recommendations of the committee. Naturally, movement was started from the platform of coordination committee and in 1969 tea labourers again assembled in a strike which was continued till 17 days. At last the owners of the gardens surrendered, the labourers obtained 9000 new posts of recruitment and the owners could not drive out the labourers at their will. By the pressure of the movement of the labourers in 1975 the owners bound to increase 37 paise as wages. Since 1976 different issues led the tea labourers to start movement one of which was Idira Government attacked on the bonus of the tea labourers. Against all the oppressive attitude of the planters tea labourers mobilized strongly, they came into compact themselves under the banner of leftwing parties. The state conference of CITU was held in 1974 in Malbazar in presence of Jyoti Basu, the leader of CPI (M). Huge number of tea labourers from Malbazar, Meteli, Nagrakata assembled in this convention of Jyotibas. Since 1977 with the coming of Left-Front Government a new situation was raised in the labour movement of the Duars. 7000 new posts of labourers were created and 20% bonus was allotted for the labourers. In the changing situation after 1977 some favourable elements in the lives of the tea labourers were allowed. Amounts of lands for tea cultivation was increased, introduced new technology, but with the ratio of these changes labourers were not recruited. The owners of the gardens obtained profit by using temporary labours. A tripartite settlement was

Notes

signed in 1993 by which the labourers expected the owners would be sympathized to the demands of the labourers, But the Tripartite Committee could not solve the problems of the labourers. They had no pure drinking water, latrine, sufficient lights, and opportunity of treatment. The co-ordination committee, the common platform of all tea labourer organization called for a massive movement. 10- Days strike was observed on 12 July, 1999. Near about three lacs labourer participated in this strike. The movement expanded through village to village and garden to garden. At last, the owners of tea gardens bound to accept the demand of tea labourers. They agreed to recruit 10,000 labourers and to distribute medicine from hospitals. But different types of problems and crises rose among the tea labourers. There are many reasons behind this crisis. It is true that the monopoly of tea trade of India was lost many years ago with the emergence of tea cultivation in different corner of the world. The quality of Darjeeling tea like other parts of India was decreased whereas the quality of tea outside India increased rapidly as a result the market of Indian tea faced in competition. It is true that the quality of tea of India was the best in the world market since 1860 to the last phase of 20th century. But at present Indian tea lost this position and it is occupied by Kenya and China, India has gone to third and fourth position. Since the last two decades Indian tea has to face in hard competition in the exported market of the world. On the other hand the tea planters became corrupted; they invested money on the other sectors of industry. After taking huge amount of loan for the development of tea-gardens the planters cheated the money and ultimately the development tea-gardens became failure. Repeatedly the ownership of tea-gardens has been changed confidentially and nobody knows it. Technological development has not been done as a result the production cost of tea has increased where quality of tea has decreased. The age of many teatrees in the Duars has become 50-60 years; naturally the super quality of tea has not produced. Apart from these, there are many reasons such as corruptions in auction market for selling tea, corruptions of authorities in tea-gardens, unfair politics of various Trade Unions and negligence of government to the development of tea industry etc. led the tea- industry into challenge. Due to above mentioned reasons

many crises and severe problems of the tea labourers in the Northern Bengal were started since the beginning of the 21st century and recently it is increased tremendously as a result the labourers have been losing their works in the tea gardens and as they have no alternative sources of income many of them have been suffering from various diseases, starvation, fasting, and ultimately they have been dying for want of food. The following report shows the present condition of tea gardens and labourers of the northern North Bengal surveyed by labour department, West Bengal.

Population in tea estates 1,86,559 families reside in the tea estates of hills, Terai and Dooars areas of North Bengal. Tea estates of hills, Terai and Dooars have population of 11,24,907. There are 2, 62,426 permanent workmen engaged by 273 tea estates of hills, Terai and Dooars region. Housing and other facilities 1,66,591 workmen out of 2,62,426 have been provided houses. It means 95,835 workmen are yet to be provided houses. 6 tea estates (3 in hills & 3 in Dooars) have not provided even a single house to their workers. There are 51 tea estates who could not provide houses to 50 per cent or more workmen. The workmen of 10 tea estates are the worst sufferers as near 20 per cent of them could not be provided their houses. In 2009, 53 tea estates did not spend a single penny on housing. In 2012, 62 tea estates did not spend a single penny. 37 Tea estates did not spend a single penny (on housing) during last four years (2009 to 2012). 44 tea estates do not have any latrines. Houses in 12 tea estates in Dooars are under complete darkness (no electricity connection). The workers of tea estates suffer badly for supply of drinking water, both in quality and quantity. The tea estates of hill areas in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong sub division have severe scarcity of drinking water. Natural spring water and Jhora are only sources of water. Most of the tea estates of hill areas does not properly distribute the sources through pipelines. Health and medical facilities Out of 273 tea estates, only 166 have hospitals. Out of these 166, only 56 tea estates have full time residential doctors. Other 110 tea estates' hospitals depend on visiting doctors. Among doctors of 166 tea estates, only 74 doctors have degree of MBBS, others are non- MBBS. Out of 166 tea

Notes

estates having hospitals, 116 do not have any nurse. 107 tea estates (hills -64, Terai- 20 and Dooars-23) do not have any hospital. Out of 273 tea estates, 85 do not have any dispensary. Ten tea estates have neither hospital nor dispensary. Out of 273 tea estates, primary health centres (PHCs) exist in only 160, 113 tea estates (hills-38. Terai-23 and Dooars-52) do not have any PHC. Out of 273 tea estates, 160 provide ambulance. Many of these ambulances are not up to the standard. Since May 17, the Duncans tea factory at Dhumchipara in Alipurduar district of North Bengal, where Dominique works, has been —more or less‡ shut. Dried tea leaves lie strewn on sorting tables and a sturdy lock hangs on the door of the processing shed. In the past month, beginning October, nine employees of the factory and the Dhumchipara tea garden have died. Bagrakote — where reports of hunger deaths at tea gardens since it partially shut down in March prompted a visit by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to the region — saw casualties mostly among the ageing. Here in Dhumchipara, the youngest to die was 36-year-old Chanchal Mangar.¹⁴ The following report has been published in the Telegraph, Oct, 27, 2015: A tea worker died today in the Dooars from suspected lack of treatment and food in a Duncans Goenka estate where pay has been irregular for at least six months and medical facilities almost negligible, according to a report submitted to the state government. The 14 Duncans Goenka gardens in the Dooars and in Darjeeling "are in a state of limbo. They are neither closed nor open in the usual sense of the terms, with frightening consequences for the workers on the estates. This situation has added one more chapter to the shameful history of hunger in the tea industry," The latest death reported, of 44-year-old Mukti Santhal, was in Bagrakote estate in Jalpaiguri district. John Barla, a prominent trade union leader and president of the Progressive Tea Workers' Union, today said that in the past seven to eight months 42 residents had died in Duncans tea gardens from malnutrition and lack of treatment. The figure could not be confirmed from officials as deaths in gardens are not categorised as those from malnutrition or lack of treatment. The following report has been submitted to the State government, West Bengal by Harsh Mandar, the Supreme Court's special commissioner on right to food: There are close to 300 still operating, but gardens have

closed throughout the region, including in Bundapani, Dheklapara, Redbank, Surendranagar and Dharanipur. A study by the United Tea Workers Front (UTWF) in Dooars found that over the past decade, 1,000 workers have died. "The fact is there are more than 100 deaths this year, owing to the closure of at least five tea gardens and abject poverty," Anuradha Talwar, the State Adviser to the Supreme Court Commissioners on the Right to Food, told Al Jazeera. "As their wages are abysmally low, the poor workers or their family members have neither the fat on their bodies nor the balance in their banks to survive." It is clear from the above discussions that the oppressions, deprivations and life-pain of the tealabourers was started since the inception of the teagardens in the Northern Bengal as elsewhere in other parts of India under the British rule and this painful situation have been going on till today. Much water have been flowing over through the Tist, Torsa, Raydak and Mansai, many ups and downs have been taken place, but the condition and life-pain of the tealabourers could have not been ended. They are helpless, they have nothing to do but for accepting death.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. What do you know about the Protest Movement?

.....
.....
.....

2. Discuss about the Peasant movement.

.....
.....
.....

3. Discuss about the Plantation Workers Movement.

.....
.....
.....

12.5 LET US SUM UP

Tea is a popular drink across the world and in India it is one of the most common drinks to start a day. This popular drink originated in China who once had a monopoly, later to break the Chinese monopoly tea was introduced in India by the British. The climatic condition in North East India was found to be favorable for tea cultivation and hence tea cultivation flourished in the region which later also spread to some parts of South India. India is the second largest producer of tea after China. As per Tea Board of India, India recorded an annual production of 1233.14 million kilograms of tea in 2015-16. Assam contributes to nearly 52% followed by North Bengal which contributes to nearly 26% of total tea production in India. Although tea industry flourished in India yet the condition of the tea garden workers did not change with time. Media and journals reported hunger deaths in the North Bengal tea gardens. India is developing fast in every field yet hunger deaths are harsh reality of the country. India ranked 100th among the 119 countries, marked 'with serious hunger problem' in the Global Hunger Index 2017 report, released by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). The grave of the problem can be identified by its ranking in GHI as in 2016 India ranked 97th among the 118 countries and in 2015 it ranked 80th among the 104 countries surveyed. An attempt by IFPRI was made in 2008 to get the India State Hunger Index (ISHI) like the Global Hunger Index and a comparison among the States in India were done in a report. The report revealed that Madhya Pradesh was the worst affected State in the country with an 'extremely alarming' hunger problem. West Bengal was ranked 8th among the 17 States with an 'alarming level' of Hunger problem (Menon, Deolalikar, & Bhaskar, 2009). The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in India published a report entitled "Perceived Adequacy of Food Consumption in Indian Households 2004-2005" based on the NSS 61st Round, in July 2004- June 2005. The report revealed that "The percentage of rural household not getting enough food every day in some months of the year was the highest in West Bengal (10.6 per cent) followed by Orissa (4.8 per cent) and the least affected by food inadequacy were Haryana and Rajasthan. The proportion of those households who did not get enough food every day in any month of the

year was highest in the State of Assam (3.6 per cent) followed by Orissa and West Bengal (1.3 per cent each).” If the two figures i.e the number of household not getting enough food seasonally and the number of households not getting enough food daily are taken together then West Bengal will top the list with 12% of the rural house hold facing occasional and regular hunger (Bandhopadhay, 2007). Among these households who falls the victim of poverty and food insecurity are the Tea garden workers in the North Bengal, whose plight remains unheard. Reports of isolated starvation deaths came out in the print and electronic media in the early years of this millennium, in the North Bengal. Though, the government denied any such news of starvation deaths in the North Bengal it accepted the fact that malnutrition is rampant in the area.

The research would aim to explore the condition of the tea garden workers in the present day context where there are several government schemes implemented to address the issue of food security. It would put light into the fact that whether there is adequate availability and accessibility of food by the families of the tea garden workers throughout the year, as it a basic need for survival.

12.6 KEY WORDS

Peasantry: A peasant is a pre-industrial agricultural laborer or farmer with limited land ownership, especially one living in the Middle Ages under feudalism and paying rent, tax, fees, or services to a landlord. In Europe, three classes of peasants existed: slave, serf, and free tenant.

12.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Discuss about the Peasantry movement in North Bengal.

12.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Pereira, Anthony W 1997. *The End of the Peasantry*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Notes

- Social movements types at Sociology Guide
- Bandyopādhyāya, Śekhara (2004). From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India. Orient Longman. p. 406. ISBN 978-81-250-2596-2.
- Bandyopādhyāya, Śekhara (2004). From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India. Orient Longman. p. 406. ISBN 978-81-250-2596-2.
- Bandyopādhyāya, Śekhara (2004). From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India. Orient Longman. p. 407. ISBN 978-81-250-2596-2.
- States, Parties, and Social Movements, by Jack A. Goldstone. Cambridge University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-521-01699-1. Page 192.
- Habib, Irfan (2007). Essays in Indian History (Seventh reprint ed.). Tulika. p. 381 (at p 109). ISBN 81-85229-62-7.

12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 12.2
2. See Section 12.3
3. See Section 12.4

UNIT 13: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

STRUCTURE

13.0 Objectives

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Politics of Identity and Autonomy in North Bengal Perspectives

13.3 North Bengal Scenario in the Post-colonial Period

13.4 Left Politics and its Impact

13.5 Politics of Indigenous People–UKD

13.6 Kamtapur People’s Party

13.7 Cultural and Linguistic Movement

13.8 Let us sum up

13.9 Key Words

13.10 Questions for Review

13.11 Suggested readings and references

13.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to understand:

- Politics of Identity and Autonomy in North Bengal Perspectives
- North Bengal Scenario in the Post-colonial Period
- Left Politics and its Impact
- Politics of Indigenous People–UKD
- Kamtapur People’s Party
- Cultural and Linguistic Movement

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The present proposed Dissertation will highlight both the major and minor Social and Political Movements of North Bengal during 1911-1969. The Social movements which emerged during this period created serious identity problem of different ethnic groups of this region. The movements though started as a social one but ended as a political one. So the Social problems were inextricably connected with the political problems. As a result the social and political movements influenced each

Notes

other and finally led to the complexities of life and society of the region. In order to get a clear picture of the problems I would like to provide a social frame of this region. At the same time, I want to highlight also the importance for the selection of the period. Because the social problems which was gradually taking place in this time virtually led to the foundation of social conflict and discontent in the closing phase of my study. The area which I have selected for my research study is popularly known as North Bengal. Though administratively there is no place in the name. However, both the British administrators of Bengal and the Bengali literatures and historians used to describe this region as North Bengal in English and 'Uttarbanga or Uttar Bangla' in Bengali. The administrative areas which comprised North Bengal in undivided Bengal were eight districts of Rajshahi Division. They were Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Pabna, Bagura, Maldah, Jalpaiguri; Darjeeling. Though Cooch-behar was a native state but it was also considered by the Northbengologists as a part and parcel of North Bengal during the period of my study. This geographical defined North Bengal was partitioned like Bengal during the Great partition of 1947. After the partition, practically one third of North Bengal came to India and two-third went to EastPakistan. In my study I shall actually concentrate my major attention to that part of North Bengal which was in India at the time of the partition. In regard to the period I would like to say something because the beginning and ending phase of the study was very much linked to the social and political events of the area of my research. In the first place I shall explain the selection of the beginning year of the study. The year 1911 was a memorable year in the political annals of Bengal nay India. Because Bengal was re-united in 1911 but has lost the status of the capital of India. But 1911 was also an important year in the social annals of North Bengal. In this year the first caste and ethnic based social organization sprang up here. The name of the organization was 'Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti'. It was founded in 1911. It emerged in the canvas of North Bengal as a social organization but within a short time this organization entered into the political arena or region. Infact, since the beginning of the electoral politics particularly after the Montegu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, the Kshatriya Samiti has been fielded

candidates in the Bengal Council Election of 1921 onwards. Since they never look back as a social organization but asserted themselves both as social and political organization. The transformation of this social organization - 'The Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti' from a social body to a political organization created a serious problem in the political life of the region concerned. The present day political problem of the region is directly connected with the transformation of the 'Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti' during the period of my study. The year 1969 was also a remarkable year in the political atlas of my area of study. In this year I say the foundation of the first ethnic based political organization of the area. The name of the organization is 'The Utrakhand Dal.'" The emergence of 'Utrakhand Dal' initiated a change in the political profile of North Bengal because this was not only an ethnic-based political organization but also an ethnic-based regional political organization. It is true that in the pre-independence period the 'All India Gorkha League' founded in 1943 in Darjeeling. It was also an ethnic and linguistic based political organization. But it was not a regional organization it started its career as an all India political body of the Gorkhas and Nepalis of different nook and corner of India. The number of major publications on this problem is very scanty. It is true that same work have been taken up by the scholars in the pre-independence period upon the area. But in regard to the post-independence period. I do not find any major and minor publications of this problems ether in the books or monograph forms. Here I would like to draw attention to one important point. The point is that number of research academic publication on this theme is negligible. However, some nonacademic researchers whom we want to say as a folk historians, have done something on this theme though mostly, they were written in vernacular language specially in Bengal and Rajbanshis dialect. In preparing this Dissertation, I have followed different types of Methodology. The first is traditional one and the second the modern one. In regard to the first one, I have collected materials from the State and National Archives, District Collectorate Records offices and also the oldest libraries and institutions. In regard to the second one, I have collected materials from regional institutions and persons. There will not be a lot of materials on my study in the Archives

and National Libraries. So regional source materials will be used very meticulously. Apart from this, I have given much importance on oral history study; I have prepared a plan to meet with the large number of social and political celebrities of the region and interviewed them by presenting before a printed questionnaire in relation to my Dissertation work. So field study and oral history study will play an important role in the study.

13.2 POLITICS OF IDENTITY AND AUTONOMY IN NORTH BENGAL PERSPECTIVES

IDENTITY AND autonomy as concepts are interrelated and presuppose each other. But they are problematical in that they always involve a supplement to become meaningful. This supplement is that of both the interior and the exterior. For example, in case of an individual it relates to both his 'self' as interior and 'other' as exterior which enter into a play of identity and difference producing a further supplement. This phenomenon renders givenness or a stable meaning of the self an illusion, inscribing an element of slippage in the process that necessitates production of the ever new rather than the retrieval of a given one. This is true also of the ethnic or cultural identity of a community built on the one hand on a shared culture within itself and on the other hand on difference from others outside. But a genealogy that articulates historicity would also locate a repressed difference in the apparent identity of the community itself even as it locates identity in its difference from others outside. This inherent play of the two constituting elements renders the nature of cultural identity and its relation to autonomy which is both its function and agenda problematical and open-ended. As we have seen, determination of a cultural identity is an embattled one. It is a production rather than a rediscovery, a process rather than an accomplished fact. It envisages a dialogic relationship between past and present, continuity and discontinuity, self and other, being and becoming. Its production presupposes its constitution within discursive representation, and hence within a ceaseless play of discourse and power. In Stuart Hall's succinct formulation, 'It is not something

which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power.... Identities are the names, we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past’ (Hall in Mongia: 1997, 112). Hence, as the phenomenon suggests, ‘there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position’ (Ibid, 113) and therefore a politics of power relations– a fact which involves it with the question of autonomy. Autonomy suggests a resistance against a hegemonizing dominant culture or a homogenizing state power that refuses to negotiate difference. Hence politics of identity is at the same time a politics of autonomy and politics of difference. Various sections of society such as women, ethnicities, classes, communities resort to it not for creating discord but concord by giving all multiplicities in a concert, as it were, their proper play. Paradoxically, therefore, as Ranabir Samaddar says, autonomy implies ‘on the contrary, responsibility, legality, universality and morality’ (Samaddar: 2005, 17). It can be seen as ‘the symbol for the emerging patterns of new spaces in politics, spaces that speak of rights and justice, the plank for these rights’ (Ibid., 9). Various forms of autonomy are really various forms of contestations, offering new possibilities of freeing democracy from dominant organisations of power, thereby ensuring a reorganization of society. To quote Samaddar again, ‘Autonomous practices in sum indicate the way society can be reorganized, the dialogic zone that can be created where autonomies may be negotiated, the responsibilities that autonomies may have to bear in order to converse among themselves – a situation that can be described as a daily plebiscite of a democratic personhood’ (10-11). Two terms are most significant here: dialogue and reorganization of society, the former being the means and the latter the end in order for the identities to achieve the repositioning. Raising the demand for autonomy has proved to be ‘the most effective way of countering constitutional essentialism, and forcing the agenda of dialogue to come out in the front’ (15). It is not therefore an exceptional principle of democracy but an integral and

organizing one based on dialogue. It helps create the emerging political subject, the 'other' of the hegemonic practices and the governmental rationalities, that refuses to be subsumed by them and claims to be redefined against the dominant form of relation and rule.

13.3 NORTH BENGAL SCENARIO IN THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

In its postcolonial phase, North Bengal has been experiencing these twin forces mainly through the identity and autonomy movements of the Gorkhas of the Darjeeling hills and the Rajbanshis of the other districts of North Bengal. The former has meanwhile achieved its goal in the form of Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council (DGAHC), while the latter still indefinitely struggles within a more complex cultural, linguistic and political situation. No such communitarian/identity politics can hope to achieve absolute solidarity within the community at the first instance and against the state power at the second. Yet an optimum measure of it is necessary to achieve the set goal. The Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) as the political party masterminding this identity and autonomy movement has failed to do that. The failure in a sense was, however, inherent in the project itself. But this failure should not be looked upon in the light of the successes of the Gorkhas, the Bodos, the Jharkhandis, the Nagas, the Mizos, or some such others of the North East and elsewhere. Unlike these mentioned here, the Rajbanshis in the post-partition period in North Bengal are reduced to a minority of barely 20% of the total population. Their claim to territorial boundary commensurate with demographic density does not clinch their issue; their language still struggles for the required credibility; their culture still carries the denomination of folk culture vis-à-vis the mainstream culture whose assimilating pressure together with the global thrust for transculturalism has already proved to be deterrents enough within the community itself for any optimistic future move. Their history is a discontinued one; their geography is a fragmented one; their society is a rural one awaiting acculturation. Indeed, this acculturation as a mode was adopted and intensified by the Kshatriya Samiti leaders of the community through the caste movement in the colonial period rather than a struggle for a unique

cultural identity in terms of difference of culture, language and ethnicity. It was not a politics of difference but a politics of acculturation or sanskritization through ritual shuddhi, implying self-obliteration through purification for a higher niche in the Hindu Varna fold, thereby hoping to be linked to the imagined past history. But caste being 'interactional' rather than 'attributional', the discontinuity of that history persisted and identity remained as minimal as ever. The failure of the KPP is not a failure if we consider its role over the last one decade in formulating and articulating the politics of difference which in the post-colonial phase all over the world has proved to be the most powerful discourse to resurrect subjugated knowledge and identity to fight cultural domination and exclusion. The fight was indeed a daring one if we keep in mind the political and social background against which the party had to work. It was principally a politics of integration that was being pursued by the triumphant Congress Party after independence. Our Constitution offered a federal structure of government but governance was conducted from a strong Centre to ensure and augment national unity, especially after the partition trauma. The first casualty of this politics here was the efforts of the Hitasadhani Sabha to assert a separate cultural entity of the indigenous people of the erstwhile Cooch Behar state by resisting its merger with the state of West Bengal. The discourse of separate cultural identity as asserted by the Hitasadhani Sabha could not take shape due to the contemporary political reasons as much as due to the required self-confidence of the community in the given historical situation. Most of the leaders of the community were meanwhile incorporated into the mainstream political parties, while others were acting as compradors to the dominant society for a share of power at various levels. Kshatriya Samiti with whatever strength it had was playing into the hands of these political leaders for their own political mileage. Besides, Kshatriya Samiti was thought to have had no more programmes to hold people in its fold.

But meanwhile the life in the post-partition North Bengal started being gradually worsened for all the people in general and especially for the indigenous people in particular. Economists have explained why development was delayed and deferred in North Bengal but that did not

Notes

stop the people from being stagnated and frustrated. Political freedom was not realized in the economic and social freedom for the people. A general charge of neglect of the region in all spheres was deeply ingrained. The plight of the indigenous people as communities or ethnicities was not yet seen separately. In the dissident left vocabulary the divide was seen as widening between the poor and the rich on the one hand and between rural and urban areas on the other. The Congress Party was under fire from the left as a party of the rich, by the rich and for the rich, protecting the interest of the rich landholding class in the rural areas and that of the capitalists in the urban areas. On the whole, it was a high tide of the left vocabulary of class struggle in West Bengal that gained ground in the late sixties and overthrew the Congress Party in 1967 from its apparently never-ending rule since independence. Suffice it to say, the Congress suffered in 1967 an electoral debacle in eleven states, signaling a changeover in Indian politics itself from that year onwards. It was evidenced in the rise and capture of power by the left parties in some states and by the ethnic and regional parties in some other states. But in political discourse of both the left and the right parties, ethnic and regional politics was shouted down as disruptive and communal. The left, especially the Communist Parties, declared themselves to be the true representatives of all the proletariat and the common people without ever taking into consideration the questions of gender, ethnicity or community. From their class ideology, if the Congress and its allies represented the rightist interests of the exploiting rich, the regional and ethnic parties represented the disruptive and communal interests.

13.4 LEFT POLITICS AND ITS IMPACT

In North Bengal, the rise of the left politics and that of the regional occurred at the same time. It was in 1969 that the Uttar Khanda Dal (UKD) was established. But its ethnic and regional vocabulary could not have any impact, let alone on the people in general, not even much on the Rajbanshis of the region. The high tide of the left vocabulary of class struggle after decades of Congress or for that matter bourgeois misrule swept the minds of the common and middle class people, Rajbanshis and all. The left under the leadership of the CPI (M) appeared at last to be the

great Messiah to usher in revolution under the leadership of the proletariat with the collaboration of the peasants. Whoever had anything else to say were considered the enemies of the revolution. In this broad categorization, the message that came out of the first political party of the indigenous people was lost sight of. No matter whether what it said was wrong or right, the contemporary mindset was too tuned otherwise to listen to it. The equation and correlation about the new party and the people were as straight as the then class division of bourgeois and proletariat, progressive and reactionary, rightist and leftist. The organizers of the UKD were called frustrated jotdars and at the same time elements of the Adi Congress out in renewed way to regain lost power. This sounded to be true at the time, more so because of the electoral politics that was in favour of the left that claimed to have the majority of the indigenous people with them. But this kind of charge could always be proved in case of the Rajbanshis who were basically an agricultural community and whoever of this community was politically enlightened could be said to have hailed from jotdar families. This was true both for the Congress and Communist leaders. But while in case of the former reaction was taken for granted, in case of the latter it was always imputed and apprehended. Not very strangely, accusers of this charge could themselves be accused of the same charge. In Bengal left politics that was more often than not the case. But since they claimed to have belonged to a zamindar and not merely to a jotdar background, they were thought to be beyond all doubts. The irony was not noticed. However, as a result, no one cared to listen through what the sons of these jotdars said the painful sighs and utterances of the sons of the soil. No one tried to read the language of the protest of the sons of the soil, who found themselves everywhere excluded. They spoke of their steady recession everywhere due to heavy refugee influx at different times after independence. Today everybody refers to it and the consequent demographic change as one of the prime reasons for the discontent of the indigenous people in North Bengal as much as for their identity crisis. But at that time when they first articulated it as one of their grievances urging upon the government to stop it, that was not only given no heed but was considered reactionary.

13.5 POLITICS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE–UKD

Today everybody is vociferous about the Teesta Barrage Project failing to deliver the goods even after thirty years. But the first wails and objections came from the sons of the soil, who lost their lands for that mammoth project. Who would listen to them at that time? For a communist writer like Debesh Roy, who made this period and the UKD movement the central theme of his award-winning book, *Teesta Parer Brittanta*, this intervention on the part of the UKD leaders was suggestive of anti-development. His correlation of left politics and the Teesta Barrage with development, while UKD's articulation of the repressed voice of the sons of the soil as that of anti-development, offers not only the Marxist cliché but a view of development from only a dominant position contributing to domination itself. It was the UKD which first conceived of a separate Kamtapur State for not only the Rajbanshis but for the interest of the people of the region belonging to the same region, culture and language. The thought was called absurd and the mindset separatist. Maybe from the dominant and homogenizing position it was so. But as an articulation from below, it could be read as a manifestation of the ills of deprivation, speedy recession and social humiliation that the indigenous community was being victims of. Today, in order to understand the KPP politics or the so-called KLO militancy we have to reread that UKD history of the seventies because what was inchoate at that stage came to be full-blown with the KPP in the late nineties. We can't simply ignore the issue by dismissing them as separatist and communal. However, before I pass on to the KPP politics and its influence, I would like to quote a page from Debesh Roy's huge book to allow ourselves a glimpse of what the UKD leaders spoke of as their demands and grievances at that time as well as to have a view of the early state of a discourse which turned out to be so crucial later. May it be stated that Roy devotes a whole section of 141 pages to a graphic and detailed presentation of the contemporary issue entitled 'Uttarkhand Daler Swatantra Rajyer Dabi'. If we leave out the fictional part, it has some documentary value where he reconstructs nearly verbatim the speeches of the leaders and the resolutions adopted in one of their

conventions. I will quote of length Roy's reference to the resolutions as well as his comments to give an idea of their perception of the state of affairs at the time as much as their first-ever protest against Govt. rationality and wrong-doing: Ultimately it was known that a number of resolutions were adopted in the convention. These are some of them. One, the areas where the Rajbanshis are majority must be accorded separate rights and status. For this, if necessary, the Committee for delimitation of the state boundaries must be appointed. Two, in North Bengal in all Government offices, Colleges, Universities, and Medical and Engineering colleges there must be a reservation of 50% seats for the Rajbanshi students and for their admission there must not be an entrance test. Three, equal measure of land as was taken over from the peasants for the Teesta Barrage Project must be given back to them from the Govt. vested land. No further land could be taken over. Four, in North Bengal a ceiling on the highest price of agricultural products must not be imposed. Nor could there be the imposition of levy because here there is no irrigation and land is here less fertile. These were, however, more in the nature of proposals related to standing principles. Resolutions related to immediate action were in fact two: First, the way the Teesta Barrage is being constructed, the convention cannot but express its deep concern. Govt. has willfully done land acquisition. At the time of acquisition, even the lands having standing crops were not spared. If a map as to the direction in which the barrage would move were provided earlier, then the farmers could have been alert about the land that might be acquired and they would not have done sowing there. Further, the local people were not recruited for the work of the barrage. Moreover, it was not made known where and how water from the barrage will be distributed. As a result, the tradition of farming in North Bengal will be disrupted. But despite this apprehension, the Govt. wants to start the barrage at the earliest. The convention expresses deep concern at the announcement that the Chief Minister would soon inaugurate the first phase of the barrage. It is sheer undemocratic and improper to inaugurate it without allowing the people to know how far of the work is complete and how far is under way. Under this situation, the convention alerts the people of North Bengal to shout protest against this inauguration.... The Second

Notes

Resolution was more far-reaching. It says that no state government has hitherto paid any attention to the development of North Bengal. But as revenue here from tea, timber and tobacco both the state and central governments earn crores of rupees. To protest against this neglect, this convention calls upon the people of North Bengal not to cast their votes in the coming Assembly election. The convention calls upon the people of North Bengal to boycott the election (Debesh Roy: 1988, 658-659). As I have mentioned, their basic issues concerned the marginalization of the indigenous people (Rajbanshis in particular and in later parlance Kamtapuris in general indicating people of the region partaking of the same language and culture) in all spheres and it led to a resurgence of the feeling of identity crisis in the seventies. The long-standing indeterminacy about their position in the Hindu caste hierarchy had not been resolved once and for all, for as we have already said caste was 'interactional' rather than 'attributional'. It was further bedeviled by the community's entry into the Scheduled Caste list. So a sense of social inferiority had always dogged the community and it was further intensified due to the demographic change in the post-partition period and the vortex of competition into which the people of this region were thrown. The increasing Bengali population in the region and the phenomenon of recession of the indigenous people from centers and places of power and position were correlated. At this stage, the question of whether the Rajbanshis were at all Bengalis also occupied the centre stage for some time hurting their feelings further. In other words, an air of difference was already active despite the community's efforts down the decades to overcome it by being a part of the mainstream. It was here that the KPP started by reversing the discourse into the discourse of difference or the politics of difference by capitalizing difference of language, culture, history and ethnicity to claim the community's uniqueness and thereby disprove the theory of inferiority. The basic intervention coming from the UKD in the seventies was, however, lost sight of at that time in the glare of the dominant left ideology. The KPP emerged finally as a political party in 1995 and developed the UKD thoughts into a political ideology. Now how and why could it happen when the left domination had continued ceaselessly since 1977? There

are answers of all sorts, especially those referring to encouraging examples all around, the examples of the Gorkhas, Bodos, Jharkandis, and so on that made valid use of the federal spirit of the Indian Constitution to safeguard their own interests against cultural and economic exploitation. In North Bengal two trajectories were seen to have moved in an inverse direction suggesting perhaps still another answer. In the heyday of the rise of the left politics the voice of UKD was submerged. But the more the left was entrenched in power, it sprang back to action in the new shape and spirit of the KPP. There could be more than one answer. But it too can be said from hindsight that the more the left under the CPI (M) reigned, the more it started coming under the spell of bourgeoisification and non-radicalism. It gave up its revolutionary class ideology and embraced the bourgeois hegemonic and homogenizing approach. The scenario reminds one of the same 'Hindu bhadrak communal discourse' as dominated the Bengal politics in the first half of the last century, alienating the Muslims and the so-called lower classes from the then dominant society (Chatterji: 1995, 150ff). It is now 'Bengali bhadrak progressive discourse' rather than the communist one that alienated the ethnic and indigenous people. In North Bengal in the late nineties once again there was resurgence of this spirit. It should, however, be mentioned that this spirit was not totally dead as evinced from the movements launched in the interim by the Uttarbanga Tapashili Jati O Adibasi Sangathan (UTJAS) and All Kamtapur Students' Union (AKSU). But certainly it was the KPP that could give a new turn to the regional politics and create a new enthusiasm of protest. It was formed in 1995 and later in 1997 came out with its demand for a separate Kamtapur state. Its demands included among other things: demand for a separate Kamtapur state; constitutional recognition to the Kamtapuri language; driving out foreigners; broadcasting of programmes in Kamtapuri language from the Akashbani and Doordarshan, Siliguri; setting up of a Kendriya Vidyalaya at Cooch Behar; Kamtapuri as the medium of instruction; nationalization of the Teesta Project, and so on.

13.6 KAMTAPUR PEOPLE'S PARTY

Notes

As a political party, KPP is absolutely based in the rural areas with the support of the common people under a rural organic leadership. In its political proposals there appears a shift of emphasis to culture and language to broaden its political base across religions and communities in the region. Hence, rather than the term Rajbanshi, it popularized the word 'Kamata' having charged it with historical and cultural connotations. The term indicates its associations with the Kamata and later kings and the area they ruled over as much as the language and culture that the inhabitants of the region shared. However, there is not an exact correspondence between the area that the historical name suggested and the area the KPP leaders claim to include within the proposed state of Kamtapur. In that case, the denomination is used only symbolically to emphasize the determination of a cultural identity, based not on caste and religion but on region, language and culture. It is not the Rajbanshis alone but the local Muslims as much as a number of other sections of the populations who subscribe to this language and culture. May it be noted that the local Muslims known as Nasya Sekh Muslims were converted ones from the Rajbanshis and despite their different religion they speak the Kamtapuri language and adhere to much of the Rajbanshi cultural practices. Not only that other communities like Jalia-Kaivartas, Tiyars, Namasudras, Bagdis, Malos, Barua-Mogs, Pods, GaroPaliyas, and so on also recorded themselves as Rajbanshis (Mukhopadhyay: 2006, 347). It is on this ground that the KPP claims these people to have formed a 'nationality'. In terms of population percentage these indigenous people taken together measure up to nearly 50% of the total population of the region, and hence its claim for a different linguistic state. The name suggested for the state is Kamtapur and the language, Kamtapuri. But one has also to observe here the phenomenon of social formation and assimilation. It goes in favour of the stronger and larger social group if the intervention misses out on time. However, the crux of the claim is contingent on challenging the dominant discourse that subsumes the Kamtapuri language into Bengali as one of its dialects and the Kamtapuri people to be Bengali by acculturation and assimilation. Indeed, that was what once the Rajbanshi leaders had aspired to attain through Kshatriyahood: merging into the Varna Hindu hierarchy as Kshatriya and

Bengali. The later leaders observed that this did not happen, although that meant abolition of the true identity of the community. The upper caste Bengali Hindu society had never accepted them as 'caste' at all, although the official voice at times called them Bengali for political expediency.

This led to vigorous attempts on the part of the Kamtapuri leaders as well as some intellectuals of the community to establish their identity in terms of a politics of cultural difference that took all pains to prove that their language was a different language from Bengali, not a distortion of it. Nor are their culture, food habit, dress and religious rituals in any way inferior to those of the Hindu Bengalis. It places them sharply against the earlier stand taken by the leaders of Kshatriyahood, who called themselves bratya or fallen in terms of religious practices, rituals and other habits, and thought that they needed to pass through shuddhi or ritual purification in order to be incorporated into the Varna fold. So it was needed now for the new politics to turn the tide back from acculturation. Indeed, it proved to be difficult in a fast changing modern society where education, employment and development are being carried on from the culturally dominant position. The educated middle class of the community was long unconvinced and is still aloof from the political activities of the KPP, as much because of the long acculturation as because of the state terrorism unleashed on them from time to time. But yet there happened to be a change among a major section of the Kamtapuri intellectuals. The Kamtapuri educated urban middle class was generally in favour of acculturation and assimilation because in the given situation there seemed to have been no viable alternative. They preferred calling themselves Bengalis and to prove that they abjured their language as a rustic one and their culture as hardly better than primitive. They were turned into an urban bhadralok class and so far as politics was concerned were scattered into different political parties of their choices. This section was small and yet its support in the struggle for autonomy was vital. This did not happen generally except in stray cases. The significant change however occurred towards the end of the century in 1998 when the entry of this class into the fray took place in a noticeable way. The KPP had formed an organization of its own called Kamtapur

Notes

Bhasa O Sahitya Parishad to carry on its linguistic and literary movement. But despite its attempt it could not integrate culture into its agenda in a major way. Nor could it project the language issue with the necessary force of argument, although it raised movement on this issue in various forms, demanding official recognition of the Kamtapuri language. It also called upon the Kamtapuri speaking people to insist on recording their language as Kamatapuri in the Census. It was the upsurge of this movement which got further intensified by the rough and shoddy intervention of the ruling party.

The ruling party had started the campaign that Kamatapuri was not a language but a dialect of the Bengali language and desisted people from recording it as their mother tongue and held several public meetings with linguist from the capital to drive home their argument. This triggered off the emotion and anger of the intellectuals of the community, who for the first time entered the arena in a significant way to respond to the situation by holding meetings and seminars and denounced the assault from the ruling party on their language as cultural colonialism. There was a retreat on the part of the ruling party as it tried to mend matters by holding a three-day seminar on North Bengal in June 1998. One of three days was devoted to the language issue. Intellectuals of all sections were allowed to speak. Opinions varied as was expected in view of the ingrained thoughts and ideas. Even some Rajbanshi intellectuals took pains to prove that Rajbanshi was merely a dialect. But a consensus was arrived at with the intervention of the presiding linguist from Calcutta to the effect that so far as the modern standpoint in linguistics goes all languages are dialects; that it is the specific politics, economy and history of a region that make one of these dialects a privileged one or the standard one performing many roles; that this phenomenon does not negate the existence of the other ones; that these other ones could carry on their roles in creative and cultural activities if they have that dynamism; that all cultures and languages are always equally powerful if opportunities are available for their varied uses and roles. So rather than putting paid to the Kamtapuri language issue, the seminar came out with a liberal and modern mindset.

13.7 CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC MOVEMENT

The history thereafter was a history of efforts on the part of the Kamatapuri intellectuals and writers to give the current upsurge a shape of cultural and linguistic movement. The basic logic was: one, whether dialect or language, a community had the right to choose it for daily transactions and literary use while carrying on its normal participation in the general civil society; two, the relation between dialect and language was relative and changing rather than fixed; and three, Kamatapuri by its standing from earlier times is an autonomous language of a speech community living within the Kamata culture. It has suffered setback due to historical reasons and especially due to the caste movement that once had aimed at assimilation. It was debated, however, for some time between the old school and the new among the community itself. The former held fast to the validity of the reasons for Kshatriyahood and thereby to all the implications of assimilation and abolition into the cultural mainstream. The latter urged for a separate ethnic identity defending its language, culture and ways of life as distinct and different, not inferior to the dominant one. It was held and advocated that in 'Panchananism', or for that matter the ideology of Panchanan Barma, that was known for organization and completion of the Kshatriya movement, this idea of separate language and culture of the community was inherent as evinced in Panchanan's attempt to write literature in this language and at the same time to popularize the earlier ones by writing critical articles. He also planned to institute a Kamata Anusandhan Samiti which could not be carried on for other reasons. But given the historical perspectives and compulsions of the period when because of the colonial policy it appeared to be more necessary to be identified as a caste, the idea of cultural autonomy could not take possession of his thought. Yet the contradiction that was immediately faced by him having to distance the community from the upper caste Hindu society and to have it included among the scheduled castes speaks volumes of its future potentialities.

Notes

What was potential at that stage found the nourishing ground in the postcolonial period when the question of linguistic reorganization of states came up on the national agenda. It was then merely a matter of time, opportunity and proper reconceptualization on the part of many subjugated ethnicities to clinch the issue in question. However, the intellectuals carried on threefold tasks: one, to resolve the language-dialect debate; two, to carry on bringing out creative literature; and three, to carry on intensive performance and demonstration of the indigenous cultural items like songs, dances, dramas and palas, called folk – a term which was resisted by the Kamtapuri intellectuals or for that matter by the KPP. However, a number of cultural organizations were set up and a number of literary journals in Kamatapuri language were being brought out from this period onwards. Not that there were not literary journals published in Kamtapuri earlier, but now this took on a form of a movement.

The unique phenomenon was that for the first time Kamatapuri educated middle class people assembled together spontaneously burying their earlier mutual hostilities for various reasons. But at the same time they have hitherto kept these activities separate from the political activities of the KPP, especially because most of these intellectuals did not subscribe to the KPP view on the demand of a separate state. If the success of the cultural movement was initially located in this strategy, then its failure too is visible in this unbridgeable separation. The mutual nourishment did not come along. This situation was further bedeviled by the occurrence of militancy allegedly perpetrated by an outfit called Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO) in the early years of the present century. It is said to have links with the Bodo and ULFA militants.

The state was determined to handle both KPP and KLO very severely, putting a large number of them behind the bars for a long time. A part of the civil society came out protesting against the Government's handling of the situation and called it 'state terrorism'. It urged upon the Government to hold dialogues to resolve the issues. But if it did not happen, then the dialogic relation between the KPP and the Kamtapuri intellectuals in a major way did not take place either. It is due to this

absence of mutual understanding and the lack of a shared vision of the future that both politics and culture suffered—the former failed to throw up a viable alternative vision, while the latter a radical cultural politics.

However, the present scenario of the KPP is not that of one consolidated party commanding absolute allegiance of all its members, not to speak of the people at large in the society. What with the unrelenting administrative repression, what with the internal groupism, the party has lost its earlier vigour. It is in fact divided into two factions and has in recent years failed even in its agitationalist roles of addressing various issues of injustice, oppression and exploitation. As a regional party, it will fail to enlist broad support if it goes on addressing only one issue of the separate state in an undefined manner. It could rouse the Rajbanshis and other indigenous people of the region to the fact of their being displaced in their own lands. It could uphold their dignity by claiming their language and culture as different and well organized. It was indeed necessary for a cross-cultural transaction with other groups. But its call for a separate state at the moment as it was given had alienated the intellectual section of the community because it did not have the right discourse at the moment to convince even its own people, not to speak of others.

Achievements, if any The prevalent official discourse of separatism and communalism which the state power had capitalized still held on and it proved to be a stupendous task for it to win over even a sizeable chunk of its own population from the clutches of other parties. So far as the urban areas are concerned, the party had very little influence on the educated middle class. This again shows a distinct divide in the community itself in respect of the problems and their perceptions by the two sections. But perhaps all is not lost.

At least two things have been achieved. One, the party's long persistent struggle in its own way and ability, the desperation and sufferings of its members in the jail, the reported KLO militancy—all these roused the civil society and the government to reckon with the stark reality prevalent in North Bengal, especially the indigenous people living in the rural areas of the region.

Notes

The debate over whether North Bengal was neglected or not was still carried on by the powers that be; that this agitation over regional backwardness and identity crisis in the region was unfounded was still the official claim; that all this was the handiwork of some interested people rather than reality itself was still the official counter-propaganda. Yet the civil society and the government grew conscious of the fact of long non-performance, and demonstrated intentions of soon doing something. Two, although not associated with the party, the urban intellectual section of the community joined the struggle in terms of creating a cultural movement to establish the community on the firm pedestal of respect and dignity. A very considerable work has been done during the last decade in the sphere of literary activity in the Kamtapuri language and in the matter of using the language in daily transactions in various forms. While this revived the lost community feeling to a very great extent, the increased cultural activities as well as the increasing performances of the cultural items like songs, dances, dramas, and so on, elevated the prestige of the community greatly. Of course the West Bengal Government's effort through its Cultural Affairs Department is worth mentioning in this respect. But what is more encouraging is the intense desire of the community itself to represent itself. Self-representation is itself a mark of intellectual and social progress.

To conclude, I would say that a few things are meanwhile resolved during the last one decade or so, and a few dominant and repressive discourses are adequately negotiated by the emerging Kamtapuri intellectuals. The so-called language-dialect debate has now considerably died down. The open opposition of the Govt. on this question together with a sort of quiet acceptance on the part of the civil society in general is itself a matter of comfort on the part of the movement makers. Good many Kamatapuri cultural and literary programmes have been held where leading Bengali intellectuals participated. It evinces the phenomenon of mutual understanding and acceptance when the community enters upon a phase of self-representation rather than that of being represented. Since it was something new, a first shock for the dominant cultural communities was natural. But it was beneficial in two ways: one, the intellectuals of the dominant society gradually got over

the age-old inhibitions and reservations; two, the Kamatapuri intellectuals themselves were free from the self-imposed ambivalence or lack of selfconfidence and even an unknown sense of shame. It evidences still another thing. It dispels the general fear about the Kamatapuri agenda. So far as the linguistic and cultural movement is concerned, although it is based on a politics of difference as an ideology, there is now indeed no ‘other’, that is, an opposed side to it, since acceptance of sorts has come along either through a liberalism characteristic of the time or to an extent on sufferance. So far as real politics in the form of KPP activities is concerned, however split within or crushed from outside, it has surely been successful in riveting Govt. attention to the alienation of the indigenous people from the general projects of development and thereby has proved its *raison d’etre* in a democratic polity.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. What do you know about the Politics of Identity and Autonomy in North Bengal Perspectives?

.....
.....
.....

2. Discuss about the North Bengal Scenario in the Post-colonial Period.

.....
.....
.....

3. Left Politics and its Impact

.....
.....
.....

4. Politics of Indigenous People–UKD

.....
.....
.....

13.8 LET US SUM UP

The politics of autonomy in a democratic and federal polity contains a necessary content of resistance for the efficacy of polity itself, and this is more so when it comes to the question of a region and a community in the face of cultural extinction. The KPP has tried in its limited way to put up this resistance. It has been successful to rouse the ethnic emotions of the cultural community even in the face of a left progressive challenge in West Bengal. It has been especially successful to evolve the powerful discourse of the 'Kamtapuri nationality' on the basis of a common culture, language and region. So far so good, but if one looks at the future for a telos other than this as an open-ended process of self-representation, self-respect and self-domination, one will be left with no optimism. There are however, no fewer deterrents in the way of this process itself. So far as the cultural movement is concerned, now that there is no ostensible 'opposition' to it as such, the leaders of the movement can have only their own agenda of selfdevelopment in cultural and linguistic spheres which, if adequately done, would be a great gift for the whole society in general. But one can imagine what great effort is required to carry it on. There is apparently no 'opposition' but the complexity and compulsion of the life in the society in general, its demand of upward movement and assimilation, and the cross-cultural and global thrusts themselves are deterrents enough, and the whole ethnic effort has to carry on in the midst of a whole host of uncertainties in terms of future needs in a newly emerging cultural and political economy. Here the only remedy that suggests itself at least for the present is to involve the rural society which having been free from centrifugal vectors could carry it a long way farther, for it is still deeply associated with their immediate development – development in its original meaning of being 'de-enveloped', that is, being unfolded in terms of its specific region, culture and language. But still another thing as a deterrent has to be reckoned with. That is the question of heterogeneity within the community itself as there is in all communities. Now the movement makers are working on the basis of a strategic essentialism which takes shape in the situation of all identity struggles. But when that dies down, fractures and fissures appear to cause erosion

from within. So there are these two deterrents through which the Kamatapuri identity politics has to move on. The farther it can carry it on, that is, carry on the process, the better for it, for it would generate the necessary representational autonomy and resistance to foreclose possibilities of exclusion from or absorption into the folds of the dominant culture.

13.9 KEY WORDS

Linguistic: Linguistics is the scientific study of language. It involves analysing language form, language meaning, and language in context. Linguists traditionally analyse human language by observing an interplay between sound and meaning.

Cultural: relating to the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a society.

13.10 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Discuss in details about the Kamtapur People's Party.
2. Discuss Cultural and Linguistic Movement.

13.11 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Chatterji, Joya, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, published in South Asia by Foundation Books, New Delhi, 1995.
- Hall, Stuart. 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in Padmini Mongia (ed.) *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, Delhi: Oxford university Press, 1996.
- Mukhopadhyay, Rajatubhra. 'Conversion Vs Construction: A Discourse on Hindu Identity of the Rajbanshis' in *Societies and Culture in India*, Vol. 2, edited by R.N. Bhattacharya, Kolkata, 2006.
- Roy, Debesh, Teesta Parer Brittanta, Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 1988.
- Samaddar, Ranabir (ed.), *The Politics of Autonomy: Indian Experience*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005.

13.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 13.2
2. See Section 13.3
3. See Section 13.4
4. See Section 13.5

UNIT 14: SAGA OF NATIONAL MOVEMENT

STRUCTURE

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Hindu-Muslim relation in Bengal before 1900
- 14.3 Towards partition
- 14.4 Turmoil during partition
- 14.5 Impact of partition
- 14.6 Let us sum up
- 14.7 Key Words
- 14.8 Questions for Review
- 14.9 Suggested readings and references
- 14.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know:

- To know about the Hindu-Muslim relation in Bengal before 1900
- To discuss the partition
- To highlight Turmoil during partition
- To know about Impact of partition

14.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most unpopular and terrible measure of the British Indian Government was the Partition of Bengal in 1905. Lord Curzon came to India (1899-1905) with a strong determination to curtail the rising tide of nationalism. The Calcutta Corporation Act (1899), The Indian Universities Act (1904) and The Official Secrets Act (1904) were some of the measures through which Curzon sought to curb the growing nationalistic and patriotic spirit. One of the main objects of the partition of Bengal was to break up the unity of the people of Bengal. Lord Curzon divided the territories of Bengal in such a way that the western part of Bengal including Bihar, Chhota Nagpur and Orissa formed the Hindu majority and the eastern part of Bengal including North Bengal

Notes

and Assam formed the Muslim majority area. The plan of partition announced in newspapers on 20th July 1905, and finally became operational on 16th October 1905. The partition of Bengal produced tremendous anti-British reaction among the Bengalis. The partition of Bengal and subsequent Swadeshi movement opened a new episode in the history of freedom movement of India. Though the movement started in Bengal it spread all over India. Starting from Bengal the agitation spread like wild fire in cities, towns and even villages where housewives, students and people of every corner in life participated to protest against the divisive policy of the Raj with zeal quite unprecedented in Indian history. A remarkable aspect of the movement was the widespread student participation all over Bengal, and in several other parts of India. The students showed the greatest enthusiasm and created Swadeshi spirit in Bengal and also India during the agitation.

Postcolonial India has witnessed many occurrences of popular movements. Both Bihar and West Bengal are known for radical peasant and student mobilizations during and after the struggle against the colonial rule. While Bihar has also experienced spates of identity based (chiefly along the axis of caste) political movements, which raised the issue of social justice as the core of popular politics, West Bengal is yet to witness any mass-based popular movement against caste hierarchies, while giving birth to huge popular movements on issues of refugee rights, price rise, inflation, civil liberty, land rights, workers' rights, etc. The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung–Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group research project on Popular Movements in West Bengal and Bihar (2016-2018) highlights and explores many such differences and similarities between the forms and trajectories of some of the popular movements that had taken place between the early fifties and the early nineteen-eighties in Bihar and West Bengal. The research was formulated in keeping with a three years' time frame in mind. In the first year (2016), the themes which were covered included the refugee movement in West Bengal, tram and teachers' movement in West Bengal, food movement in West Bengal, J P Movement in Bihar and Marxist Literary Discourses. The paper on refugee politics in West Bengal in 1950s (Refugee

Movement: Another Aspect of Popular Movements in West Bengal in the 1950s and 1960s by Sucharita Sengupta and Paula Banerjee, Policies and Practices, No 80) discussed in details how refugees became central to the Left politics of the state. The refugees did not see themselves as refugees waiting for government's charity. They saw relief and rehabilitation as their rights as citizens. Their fight for their rights was led by various Left parties. The paper studied the role of various Left parties in mobilizing the refugees staying in camps and colonies. While studying refugee politics in West Bengal, it highlighted the heterogeneous character of this group along the lines of class and caste. The research on the tram and teachers' movements (Tram Movement and Teachers' Movement in Kolkata by Anwasha Sengupta, Policies and Practices, No 80) complemented the research on refugees in many ways. When the refugees took to the street under the leadership of UCRC in demand for rehabilitation, the students and labourers came out in large numbers in their support, turning their movement into a "popular" one. The refugees reciprocated by participating in large numbers in two great urban movements of '50s, namely the tram movement against a decision to increase the second class tram fare and teachers' movement demanding a pay hike for the secondary school teachers. The Tram Movement and the Teachers' Movement were extremely violent yet they witnessed massive support from the residents of Calcutta. The movements revealed the discontent among the common people. That there could be such uproar over a 1 paisa hike of the tram fare or the city would come to a standstill for the teachers, point towards the politically vulnerable atmosphere of the period. This would be manifested further during the food movements towards late 1950s and 1960s. Food scarcity in Bengal had been a continuous feature since 1940s. The famine of 1943 perhaps marked the epoch of such crisis in colonial Bengal. But the situation did not improve with independence, rather scarcity of food grains and high prices became a constant point of criticism of the Congress party in power. People were mobilized across the state in demand of food and West Bengal witnessed two massive movements on this issue – one in 1950 and the other in 1966. Going beyond the city of Calcutta, the protests now engulfed the rural spaces and made it a state-

Notes

wide affair. Participation came from all quarters of the society. Once again, the movements witnessed massive participation from the students, including school students. A shift was also evident in the nature and contour of popular movements in West Bengal. It was no longer refugees as refugees who formed a crucial support base for such movements; rather they participated as peasants, urban poor, agrarian workers, informal labourers and disgruntled middle class. The effect of the Food Movements in West Bengal was so intense that it changed the political complexion of the state. In 1967, the United Front (a political front of 14 non-Congress and Left parties) replaced the Congress Government. It also paved the way for Naxalbari, the next militant phase of political movements in West Bengal (The Defining Moments of Left-Popular Politics in West Bengal: The Food Movements of 1959 & 1966 by Sibaji Pratim Basu, Policies and Practices, No 81). A paper focused on the Bihar Movement under Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as the JP Movement. JP movement has been in equal measure celebrated for its stand against a repressive state and vilified for its lack of coherence in ideology, strategy and tactics and even a positive political programme. What cannot be denied though is the fact that it did capture the imagination of a large section of society and more importantly was able to mobilize them across various divides so that the movement could be called for a brief political moment as constituting the 'people.' The paper demonstrated that Bihar Movement was an event that reflected all the contradictions of contemporary times and by rearranging those contradictions changed the structure of democratic politics in India. It also noted the need to reappraise the role of JP. There is a long held belief of JP being a confused popular leader, but the paper has showed him as a tactical leader who always came up with contingent ideas as a response to the events of the popular movement (From Insurrection to Popular Movement: Bihar Movement, its Possibilities and Limitations by Mithilesh Kumar, Policies and Practices, No 81). The paper on Marxian aesthetics reflects the culture of debating and discussing Marxist philosophy and politics in Bengal in the decades after independence. The Bengali intellectuals based in Calcutta and Dhaka had always been sympathetic to and informed about various shades of left politics. They

had engaged with Marxism both at the levels of discourses and practices. Intense debates regarding Marxian aesthetics have shaped the literary, cinematic and other art forms in West Bengal in '50s, '60s and '70s when the politics of the streets, factories and fields were being shaped by Communists of different shades (Marxian Literary Debates and Discourses by Subhoranjan Dasgupta, Policies and Practices, No 81). By way of a theoretical exposition of the concepts of class, people, citizens, multitudes, and the political moment in popular struggles/revolutions in terms of an analysis of Marx's Class Struggles in France and Civil War in France along with the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, an essay by Ranabir Samaddar entitled Class, People and Populism has been published as part of the Policies and Practices, No 75.

Naxalbari Movement that shaped the West Bengal politics of late '60s and '70s was examined in 2017. Since 1967, peasants' struggles in Naxalbari, Debra, Gopiballabhpur and other areas in West Bengal started to take shape inspired by the ideal of the peasant revolution in China. It also included the wave of students' movement which, inspired by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) of China, launched anti (prevailing) education system and movement against icons of the established culture. A section of these students also went to villages to organise/strengthen peasants' struggle in different pockets of the state. These mobilizations were countered by the state machinery with brutal police operations including arrests under special laws, torture, and killing. What is once again worth studying in this case is the overwhelming response from people of different social, political and cultural backgrounds to these mobilizations ranging from silent support and sympathy to active participation in militant struggle. Undoubtedly, through these movements a notion of people came into being. And hence, the question to be asked is: What constitutes the people in popular movements. This had been one of the major research questions in all the papers written in the first year of the project and this will also shape the research on Naxalbari movement in the second year (Ranabir Samaddar's work in Occupy College Street: Notes from the Sixties, contends with, elaborates upon and analyses the insurgent movements in the decade of the sixties of the last century in Kolkata, wherein the tactic of

‘occupation’ was employed for purposes of mobilisation - Policies and Practices, No 89).

14.2 HINDU-MUSLIM RELATION IN BENGAL BEFORE 1900

Before 1906 Hindu-Muslim conflict in Bengal was rarely seen as compared to the other states of India. There were reports of stray incidents regarding cow-slaughter, religious and social festivals, representation on consultative and legislative organisations, education and government employment but they remained only small frictions but never caused any great communal disharmony. The Muslim society in general before 1906 was a backward one, full of discriminations among themselves, divided in classes based on social and economic stand-points. The lower class Muslims were looked down upon by the elite Muslims and social contact was avoided as much as possible. In retrospect, the elite Muslims had more in common with the moneyed Hindu upper class than with Muslim lower class. In spite of the day-to-day contacts, there was almost no way of integration between Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, ignorance and indifference prevailed. No conscious effort was made by any of the two communities to understand and sympathise with each other’s inherent lifestyle, traits and cultures. Moreover, the attitudes of many religious and communal Hindus as well as of Muslims made any way of communication between the two impossible. Perhaps the greatest discrimination lied in the field of government jobs, educational opportunities and in agrarian opportunities. Although no obvious hostility was in view for any particular person, a general dislike for Muslims always brewed in the minds of the Hindus, as they were the one-time rulers. Stories were heard and spread about Muslim domination and oppression on one hand, and heroic Hindu rebellion against them on the other. As a result, such a passive hostility is natural. But whatever was the situation, a more or less peaceful co-existence between Hindus and Muslims was always witnessed in Bengal prior to the partition.

Naxalbari Movement:

Naxalbari Movement inspired multifaceted creativity; from propagandist poetry to reflective verse; from novels or prose narratives hailing the movement to stories and novels severely criticizing the theoretical ballast and its related activism; from revelatory plays transcreating the most decisive moments of the movement on the stage to cut and dried one act plays serving as slices of the experiential truth; from gripping films like Hajar Churasir Ma and Herbert to full-throated songs which exhilarated hundreds. While in the first year debates around Marxian aesthetics in '50s and '60s have been studied, in the second year special emphasis will be given to the world of literature, films and art that were inspired or were produced as criticism to the Naxalite Movement. Particular importance will be provided to the theatre activities of the time as this was one site where Naxalbari emerged as a major theme. Utpal Dutta's Teer, Anal Gupta's Rakter Rang or Amal Roy's Aat Jora Khola Chokh are but few examples of the theatres of the time (Subharanjan Dasgupta explores the subject in his current work entitled, The Cultural-Creative Dimension of the Naxalite Movement (Policies and Practices, No 90). Calcutta was the major site of the refugee movement or tram and teachers' movement. But with food movement and Naxalite movement, suburbs and districts of West Bengal became major epicentres of protest. There were other intense and popular mass movements outside Calcutta as well in '50s, '60s and '70s. Labour movement in Burnpur steel factory (near Asansol in Burdwan district) in 1950s, peasant agitation in Durgapur against their displacement for establishing the steel plant, strikes and labour protest in jute belts of Hooghly and Howrah, refugee agitation in Nadia or demands raised in various parts of Bengal for merger of Bengali speaking areas of Bihar with West Bengal require closer focus in order to understand the nature and extent of popular politics beyond the metropolis. What constituted 'people' in these protests, did it go beyond the groups of labourers/ peasants/refugees to draw a wider section of the society, which movement drew attention of the city elite and what remained invisible to them, was the student groups, left sympathizers and city intellectuals equally quick in responding to these movements? (Anwasha Sengupta and Atig Ghosh focus on the aspect of popular protests in the districts of West Bengal in

Notes

their paper entitled, Popular Movements in the Districts of Bengal, Birbhum, Nadia and Midnapore, 1950s-1970s in Policies and Practices, No 92). The Left Front's coming to power in West Bengal (1977) as a possible moment of culmination of the decades of popular movements in this province was explored in Atig Ghosh's research entitled, Long March Or Garden Path? The Left Front's First Term in West Bengal (1971-1982). How did the new government under the leadership of Jyoti Basu address the demands that had been raised through such movements, how did it cater to the needs and expectations of the "peoples" that were created in the course of such movements and what spaces for new protest movements were created are important to understand. While the new government implemented radical land reforms and freed the political prisoners immediately after coming to the power, in 1978 they tortured the Dalit refugees in Marichjhapi, killing hundreds of them, in the name of protecting a tiger reserve. Examining the early years of Left Front government - popular measures that they took as well as state oppression that they unleashed - is important in order to understand the history of the popular politics in West Bengal in the decades after independence (Policies and Practices, No 93). Coming to Bihar, the focus was on the backward classes' movement led by Karpoori Thakur, a close aide of Jayprakash Narayan. Popularly known as 'jana-nayak' (peoples' leader), Thakur had been chief minister of Bihar twice (between 1970-1971 and 1977-1979). The Karpoori Thakur government introduced reservation in government jobs for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in 1978. A year later, B P Mandal submitted his recommendations on OBCs and affirmative action to the central government under Morarji Desai. This twin move brought in its wake seismic changes in the politics of Bihar as well as India. The objective of this research project is to study the implications of these moves on the popular politics and mass movement of Bihar. The project investigates the entire process of defining caste, the debates around the parameters and political maneuver of inclusion and exclusion. The question of social justice also emerged in the background of the contingent defeat of the left movement in general and the Naxalite Movement in particular. This meant that the issue of izzat (dignity) and land for the dalits were also relegated into the background. The research

project investigated if the rise of politics of social justice in Bihar meant a suppression of radical and revolutionary politics and premature end to dalit politics. Also, how the government played a decisive role in the suppression of these alternative politics (Manish Jha and Mithilesh Kumar give further details about the Backward Classes Movements led by Karpuri Thakur in their respective papers - Policies and Practices: No 91). The research agenda for 2018 was to organise collaborative workshops and conferences for the purpose of dissemination of knowledge beyond the confines of Kolkata. A Collaborative Workshop was organized on June 22, 2018, Of Resistances and their Interfaces, which contended with populism, popular movements, popular/populist politics and figures. The workshop explored various dimensions of social and popular movements as well as insurgencies in different parts of India. The International conference in August-September Who are the People? Populism and the Populist Movements, sought to explore the hitherto unexplored areas in the context of this project with the following themes in mind: Populism as a global phenomenon: ideology, dialogue, political approach; Populism and its attitude to law; Populism and Gender and Institutions, Immigrants and Populist Politics.

14.3 TOWARDS PARTITION

Lord Curzon became the viceroy of India in 1899. He was an able and efficient administrator. Finding Bengal Presidency equivalent to France with significantly a large population for one governor to administer, the then Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon got it split into two, East and West Bengal, apparently to promote effective administration. Over the years the eastern region remained neglected and under-governed. The split was aimed at an improved administration to subsequently benefit the population in east Bengal with new schools and employment opportunities. The province of Bengal had an area of 489,500 sq. km. and a population of over 80 million. Eastern Bengal was almost isolated from the western part by geography and poor communications. In 1874 Assam, including Sylhet, was severed from Bengal to form a Chiefvalen Bengal with this large population the new province named Eastern Bengal and Assam with Dhaka as its capital and subsidiary headquarters

Notes

at Chittagong. Its area would be '106,540 sq. miles with a population of 31 million, where 18 million would be Muslims and 12 million Hindus'. Administration would consist of a Legislative Council, a Board of Revenue of two members, and the jurisdiction of the Calcutta High Court would be left undisturbed. The government pointed out that Eastern Bengal and Assam would have a clearly demarcated western boundary and well defined geographical, ethnological, linguistic and social characteristics. The government of India promulgated their final decision in a resolution dated July 19, 1905. After the announcement of partition of Bengal, the Dawn Society convened a meeting in which Satish Chandra Mukherjee, Rabindranath Tagore and Hirendranath Datta were present. Satish Chandra urged the students to sever connection with the official university and boycott its exams. They demanded the immediate establishment of a National University to promote national education. And the partition of Bengal was effected on October 16 of the same year. The province of Bengal and Assam came into being on October 16, 1905 through a Proclamation. Incidentally, the partition went in favor of the Muslims. Before the partition, West Bengal, being the first area to come under western influence, was developed and industrialized. It was a striking contrast to the eastern part where the Muslim peasantry was crushed under the Hindu landlords, the river system was infested with pirates, and very few funds were allocated for education. It was dreaded as a place of banishment. The partition helped boost Bengali literature and language; efforts were also made towards the social, economic and educational uplift of the Muslims. The Muslims outnumbered the Hindus in East Bengal and this alleviated the Bengali Muslims politically and economically. The Muslims of India welcomed the partition of Bengal, but the Hindu community strongly opposed it. Hindu protagonists alleged that the partition was effected on linguistic, rather than religious, grounds followed, with the Hindi, Oriya and Assamese areas separated to form separate administrative units later. They thought the Muslims were favored with the creation of a new province, where they were in a clear majority. Lord Curzon intentionally had struck a deadly blow to what they claimed Bengali nationality. They branded him upholder of the devilish policy of 'Divide and Rule'. Bengali Hindus spearheading a

political agitation for greater participation in governance thought their position would be weakened. Since Muslims would now dominate in East Bengal. They choreographed country-wide anti-British violent protests, boycotts and even an assassination attempt against the Governor of the new province of West Bengal. They launched a mass agitation, declaring October 16 as a day of mourning in Calcutta and patterned the 'Swadeshi Movement' against the British as the Chinese once boycotted American goods. 'Band-i-Mataram' was raised to charge the Hindu sentiment to protect worship of lord Shivaji as a national hero. This organized anarchist movement took a terrorist turn resulting in political sabotage and communal riots across the country. In 1906, Rabindranath Tagore wrote "Amar Shonar Bangla" (Golden Bengal) as a rallying mantra for proponents of annulment of partition, which, much later, in 1972, ironically became the national anthem of Bangladesh. Partition barely lasted half a decade, before it was annulled in 1911.

By now it is common knowledge how Indian independence was born out of partition that displaced 15 million people. In West Bengal alone 30 lakh refugees entered until 1960. In the 1970s the number of people entering from the east was closer to a few million. In the last sixteen years there is however a burgeoning literature on the partition refugees in West Bengal. The literature on refugees followed certain familiar terrain. I will endeavour to explain through broad sketches how that narrative evolved. To begin with it was a literature of victimhood in which the refugees were portrayed only as victims. It cannot be denied that in large parts these refugees were victims but even as victims they constantly tried to negotiate with powers that be and strengthen their own agency. By fixing their identities as victims and not problematising that victimhood the refugees were for a long time displaced from the centre stage of their own narratives. With the ascendance of cultural studies in West Bengal the refugee experience was reduced to the memory of the refugees. Authors such as Dipesh Chakravarty, Manas Ray etc. discussed the imaginative mappings of the refugee lives through memories. The understanding was that a refugee lived in his/her memories whether they be of pre-partition belongings or of post partition localities. These

Notes

writings did not contradict the victimhood narrative but added a new dimension to it. Such narratives were often anecdotal and reductive challenging the understanding of refugee experience not through multiplicity but through singularity. Often it was the author's own experience that was privileged over group experiences and it is through such discourses that the author reclaimed agency. Following these appeared a number of writings that discussed institutional responses to the arrival of forced migrants from both the west and the east. These writings by authors such as Samir Das and Monica Mandal discussed how the newly born governments operating within the imperatives of the state and nation building exercise came to terms with the influx of such huge population groups. The measures that were taken by these governments could be categorised under relief and rehabilitation. These authors critique how that state viewed refugees not as individuals but in terms of numbers, shelter, food, health, hygiene etc. By doing so however these administrative agencies made it possible for these huge groups to survive and prosper. These authors often conclude that given the challenges and obstacles the administration worked creditably. These authors therefore shifted the spotlight from the refugees to the administrators thus once again displacing the refugees. Apart from these there are other authors who have tried to understand refugee experience through experiences of particular communities. Shekhar Bandyopadhyay, Joya Chatterjee and others belong to these schools of thought. These authors feel that by generalising much of refugee experiences are lost. Also they feel that each population group had experiences that were unique to that group and cannot be reducible. Although there is much that can be applauded in these writings but perhaps there is another way of looking at refugee experiences that has been undertaken by authors such as Dipankar Sinha who talks about the self help initiatives of refugees who set up colonies and markets and strategize on their lives and lived experiences of their neighbours for sheer survival. The authors who have either dealt with communities of displaced or refugee activities in building localities have seen refugees as agents of their own lives. It is true that their own lives were sometimes torn apart by greater forces than their own selves. But it is not to be denied that they were agents and

through their agitative and communitarian struggles they emerged as empowered communities. Although partition refugees in West Bengal have now become a favourite topic of research for many scholars and a number of research scholars in different universities in West Bengal are doing their PhD in this topic but still there are aspects that have not been studied adequately. One such aspect is how the refugee movement became part of the popular movements in West Bengal in the 1950s and 1960s. Refugees fight for land titles and the role of UCRC has been studied by a few authors but has not been adequately connected to the larger popular movements. Most of these authors have not tried to portray its connections with movement against eviction, land riots, food movements or the women's movement. In this section I will endeavour to explore that connection. However, this will not be in the form of a research paper. I intend to do a collection that will contain documents that will address the history of how refugees became leading actors in the popular movements in West Bengal. For starters the refugee women changed the notion of who can be considered as bhadramahila in the post partition days. This collection will contain speeches of leaders and politicians on the issue and all documents that are in the public domain, albeit hidden from our everyday visions. It will also contain newspaper reports, government documents and these documents will have an annotated bibliography pointing to the archival materials that contributes to this narrative. In the introduction I will point out how refugees became part of the larger political protests followed by a collection of documents and an annotated bibliography.

14.4 TURMOIL DURING PARTITION

The peaceful anti-partition demonstration at the very beginning was joined by the Hindus and Muslims alike and in vast proportions. It started two main types of movements side by side. The first one called for an absolute boycott of using foreign goods and the other promoted the production and use of things made in the country. Both were welcomed with an overwhelming response. The "Swadeshi" and the "Boycott" movements inspired the Muslims and Hindus alike and they took part in it in large numbers. On 23 September, 1905 in a Muslim meeting three

Notes

resolutions were taken: i) offering their support to the Hindus against partition, ii) joining the Hindus also in matters other than the partition, iii) strong support for the use of swadeshi goods. Even a particular Muslim landlord asked his Muslim subjects not to believe the Government promise of benefits for their support in the new Province. On the day of the partition, a Rakhi Bandhan ceremony was observed all over Bengal as suggested by Rabindranath Tagore. It stood for the symbol of the unity of the Bengali people. There was no cooking in any house of Bengal. People practised abstinence as that day was marked as a day of mourning. From early morning huge processions marched on the roads of Calcutta. The high nationalist sentiments that it evoked, made the British afraid of a possible uprising against their rule. Precautionary measure was to be taken against the Swadeshi Movement and soon. Besides using the police to terrorize the demonstrators, special measures were taken to teach the students, the majority among the agitators, a lesson. Educational institutions were inflicted with circulars with orders of preventing the students either from joining the movement or to punish them. Along with the persecution of the convicted students their families were also been harassed by the police. The other method was directed towards the local landlords. Orders were given out to them to check the spread of the movement in their respective areas. Processions and meetings, which echoed any nationalist sentiment, were banned in public places. Most of the influential local leaders were imprisoned. There were some Muslims, who were not against the very idea of having a Province of their own at all. These loyal Muslims were induced with a separatist sentiment and were chosen to be used against the disobedient Hindus. Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka though at first sympathetic to the anti-partition movement, became the leader of the new Muslim opposition to the anti-partition movement. It was said that the British Government lend him huge amount of money at a very low interest to save him from his debt. Muslims were repeatedly being explained about the unsympathetic treatment they would likely get from the Hindus and the privileges waiting for them in the new Province. Lord Curzon's visit to East Bengal and his provocative Dhaka Address shows to which extent the British Government made no stones unturned for dividing Hindus and Muslims

into two different political camps with undying hostility for each other. Within no time, a split became very much evident between the two communities due to this shrewd British policy of divide-and-rule. It was the Government who appealed to the Muslims to support the partition stressing how much fruitful would be the advantages of partition for them. The Dhaka address of Lord Curzon in February 1904 stated that Dhaka was only “a shadow of its former self” and that the partition “would invest Ma-homedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussalman Viceroys and Kings.....” This attitude clearly echoed the Government hope of creating trouble between Hindus and Muslims. The British role in controlling the Hindu-Muslim tension after it broke out during and after the partition, was also not entirely impartial. In fact the wrong Government policy in many cases fanned the communal flames and at the same time inspired the demand of Muslim separatism. As a result of the newfound Muslim aggressiveness, there was increasing tension between the two communities. Gradually, Muslims started their pro-partition demonstration at the very same places where the anti-partition demonstrations were being held. The atmosphere of mutual hostility loomed large. The clashes between the two were now only a matter of time.

14.5 IMPACT OF PARTITION

The people participation and their active involvement in the anti-partition or Swadeshi and Boycott movement had left a deep impact in a number of ways. Its impact was felt at every stage in the life of Bengal and also of India in the arena of literature, music, art, science and education. The patriotism, sacrifice and courage of the students earned great respect from the common people. Influence of the student movements have been perhaps most pronounced in the literary and cultural life of the state. In literature, writers and poets have introduced a new tone and outlook. The agitating students habitually recite their poems in the various meetings and demonstrations. In the public meetings, rallies and demonstrations the agitating students staged dramas, which helped to create a new outlook. In addition to these, the students brought out many leaflets,

Notes

booklets, Chharas or rhymes which also influenced the common masses of Bengal. The famous song of Rabindranath Tagore 'Banglar Mati, Banglar Jal' i.e. soil and climate of Bengal was composed in the light of Swadeshi movement. On the other hand, political leaflets were extensively circulated amongst the students. Political songs of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's Anandamath were memorized by the students. The students were also used to held exhibition where paintings of Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bipin Chandra Pal were displayed. The agitating students spread the anti-partition movement from Bengal to other parts of the country especially South India. Bipin Chandra Pal took the leading role to spread the movement in south. In 1907, He visited Vizagapatnam, Madras, Rajahmundry etc. for delivering lectures on the movement and got a tremendous response from the students of south. Even the student of Madras bears the expenses of his visit.⁷ The Muslim community was well aware about their lack of development, but it had no separate organisation of their own to voice their plea to the people as well as to the Government. Political activities of the eastern Bengal Muslims were almost ignorable in the national political scenario. They felt the need of founding such an institution that would be able to convey their own views and needs to the Government. So they put their hopes on the Nawab of Dhaka, Nawab Salimullah, who was nothing but only a puppet in the hands of the British Government. He had neither the knowledge nor the talent for political leadership. In fact, the Government's efforts in saving him from his financial crisis itself speak for his loyalty to the British. Also, the important changes in the Government of India's policies in 1906 had its influence on the communal tension between the two communities. When the resignation of Lieutenant-Governor Fuller, the more sympathetic one for the cause of Muslims, was promptly accepted by both Morley and Minto, Muslim leaders became very much unsure of their position. It started a general Muslim awakening for the need of having a legitimate organisation for themselves. The possible expansion of the Legislative Council as proposed by Morley and Minto increased the Muslim wish of receiving more consideration through direct representation. The Simla Deputation in October 1 1906, stressed the importance of safeguarding the Muslim

interests as separate from those of other Indians. The deputation had three grounds for such a special consideration. Firstly, the Muslims were numerically the majority and they constituted more of the population than the Hindus in Bengal. Secondly, it stated that besides their numerical strength, their political importance should also be considered, as one of every three men in India's armed forces was a Muslim. Thirdly, it expressed the hope that Muslim representatives in the representative institutions should be chosen not by the 'unsympathetic' Hindus but by Muslims themselves and in sufficient numbers so that they will never be sidelined into an "in-effective minority". Lord Minto's sympathy and agreement with the Deputation inspired the Muslims to start an all India Muslim political party. After the Educational Conference in Dhaka in July 1906, the Delegates and members of the Simla Deputation met on December 30 to announce the formation of the All-Indian Muslim League.

In 1953, when the British owned tram company decided to hike the second class tram fare by 1paise, the city witnessed one of the most violent protest movements of the decade that continued for almost a month marked by repeated confrontation between the protesters and the police. The leadership of the movement came from a hurriedly formed Tram and Bus Fare Enhancement Resistance Committee presided by Hemanta Kumar Basu of Forward Block. Important members of this committee included Jyoti Basu (CPI), Subodh Bannerjee (SUC), Suresh Banerjee (Praja Socialist Party) and Satya Priya Banerjee of Marxist Forward Block. Calcutta Tram Workers' Union also opposed the move. They argued that the fare hike was unethical particularly because the Tram Company had already been making huge profit. The struggle began on July 1 when the Committee urged the commuters to keep paying the old fare. The modes of protest kept changing. If initially the protesters boarded the trams in large numbers with the exact old fare in their pockets, a few days later the Resistance Committee called for boycotting the trams altogether. Hence, from July 7, the city witnessed almost empty trams running from one depot to another. Consequently, the company suffered from serious monetary loss. Barricading the tram lines,

Notes

organizing demonstrations and putting up posters to mobilize people became the main strands of the movement. Another development intensified the struggle against the government further. A strike was going on in Burnpur where the police opened fire on July 5 and killed at least 7 workers and injured many. Several trade unions, except for Congress led INTUC, came together in protest against the police terror and a Joint Struggle Committee was formed. They, along with the Resistance Committee, called for a state wide strike on July 15. Among various agendas, the fare hike was a crucial point against which the strike was called. This strike was one of the most successful strikes of this period. Despite repeated police action, “about 10 lakh people struck work, affecting practically every industry, including jute mills, collieries, engineering works, bus transport and offices. Shops and markets remained closed even in the Congress strongholds like Burrabazar area dominated by Marwari business magnets.” The tramway men initially stayed away from this strike. But from July 17 CTWU and Calcutta Tram Mazdoor Panchayat went for an indefinite strike in support of the demands raised by the Resistance Committee. Violent clashes between the protesters and the police from across the city were reported, reporters of leading dailies were attacked, people were killed, many were injured and properties were destroyed in the course of this one month, particularly till July 22. The movement ended in a victory for the protesters as the older fare was reintroduced. The government was certainly taken aback by the magnitude of the protest, so were some of the later commentators of this movement. B.C. Roy, who was in Europe when the movement gained currency, on his return expressed regret “that so much trouble had arisen over a matter “which could have been settled without any difficulty across the conference table.” He insisted that the “root cause” of the movement laid elsewhere: “economic situation of the country was largely responsible for the agitation against the government and that situation was further aggravated by the ever increasing unemployment problem.” Thus, in his analysis, the enhancement of tram fare by 1 paisa, provided the already agitated and frustrated people of the city a reason to erupt. Perhaps, Bidhan Roy was indicating towards the refugees. The city had by then received several millions of refugees and

they were being continuously cited as the reason behind the economic crisis and the problem of unemployment in West Bengal. Bidhan Roy's plan of refugee dispersal, i.e., sending away the refugees to scarcely populated areas within and outside West Bengal, was at least partly to dilute 'the political impact of these unwelcome "trouble-makers" [i.e., the refugees] by scattering them in far-away districts.' In this context, "overpopulation leading to unemployment leading to frustration leading to violence" seemed easy logic. Indeed, as some of the existing works indicate, refugees played a crucial role in this movement. For instance, in the words of Prafulla Chakrabarty, "...the movement demonstrated that the workers, the students and the lower middle class had been brought together and behind them all lurked the ubiquitous figure of the refugee." Such a statement is corroborated by memoirs like that of refugee activist Tejendralal Dutta. He describes vividly how the refugee youths, both men and women, of South Calcutta colonies participated in this "completely political movement". He further writes that "because of this movement, the squatter colonies of this area got their political character." In other words, through this movement the colonies were mobilized against Congress and were brought together within the rubric of Left politics. Majumdar's description of the movement is significant as it illustrates the role of various sections of the society in this movement. He writes about Haren Roy, a tube well mechanic who was given the responsibility of uprooting the tram lines near Gariahat as he had many helpful tools. Then there were local women who supported the movements in various ways – if two Punjabi ladies poured water from their first floor flat on a police team rounding up some of the agitators, a Bengali working woman gave protection to the author when he was fleeing from the police. Thus, in the refugee dominated areas - women, working class and youths all seemed to participate or to sympathize with the movement. But the question that needs further probing is whether the participants and sympathizers were protesting as refugees or as students, workers and common people disillusioned by the "national" government, its police and its administration? The violence that marked the movement needs to be understood further as well. It has been repeatedly said that the agitation against tram fare hike was extremely, and according to

Notes

many, unnecessarily violent. The government insisted about the involvement of the hooligans and “anti-socials” in this agitation. Sandip Bandyopadhyay has argued that part of the reason behind such a violent movement resided with the fact that many among the leaders were “revolutionary terrorists” of colonial India. Moreover, even though the Communist Party had done away with its “ultra left” line, Bandyopadhyay thinks that some of the party supporters and other Left leaders pursued a radical course of action during the tram fare movement. What were the various forms of police violence and that of the participants’ violence, whether there were any internal debates about the way the movement should move forward, did violence deter certain sections of the population from the movement – are some of the questions that this research will address. The tram movement was only the beginning of a long decade of anti-establishment mass movements. In less than a year’s time, West Bengal witnessed one of the biggest movements by the teachers under the leadership of All Bengal Teachers’ Association (ABTA). Since independence, there had been a continuous demand from the secondary school teachers for an increased dearness allowance. As early as on September 1, 1948, a strike was observed by them on this issue. But since their demands were not met by the West Bengal government, ABTA launched a sit-down strike in early 1954 asking for a salary of Rs. 180 per month (instead of Rs. 75) with a dearness allowance of Rs. 35 per month. An All Parties Teachers’ Struggle Coordination Committee was formed that provided the leadership to the movement. From February 10, the teachers began their indefinite sit-in demonstration near Rajbhavan. At least 3000 teachers participated. On 15th when, despite requests from the Opposition, the governor refused to meet the protesting teachers, the members of Opposition boycotted the session and joined the protesting teachers. Teachers’ movement turned violent on February 16 when there was a direct confrontation between the police and the participating teachers on their way to the Assembly to disrupt the ongoing budget session in order to draw attention of the House to their demands. The confrontation was severe, claiming 4 lives and injuring 65 others. Throughout the day there were several instances of burning down the buses and trams, smashing

street lamps and traffic signals, barricading roads etc. even shops were looted at various parts of the city. As the ABTA narrative goes, earlier the “leadership suffered from hesitation of wielding the tools of the working class-street demonstration with shouting slogans, strike, mass squatting, courting arrest etc, against injustice, for winning rights and privileges. In 1954, under the new leadership A.B.T.A. broke down that barrier and decided firmly to wield those tools. Street demonstration, strike, squatting, courting arrest were taken up as in the teachers’ movement in 1954. Doubt about its propriety was dispelled. A broad alliance was forged with students, guardians’ all other working people and the left political forces.” To combat such a movement, military was brought in. However, given the fact that the teachers were paid a pittance, their struggle received sympathy from the wider society and the media. Students and labourers came out in support. As Sandip Bandyopadhyay quoted an eye witness, “when the teachers sat down on the roads in protest, almost a drama began to unfold. People from all over the city came out in thousands to show solidarity to the teachers. Someone sent a basket full of oranges for the protesters. Dwariks, the owners of a famous sweet shop in Bhowanipore, sent Luchi and sweets to the teachers.” Jugantar noted that “if the teacher is starving, education system will never improve.” The same report also harshly criticized the government’s attitude towards education: “the government is saying that it has no money – fine, but then how is this government spending so much money in deep sea fishing, underground railway system, manufacturing gas from waste, automatic Finish machine to count votes etc; how is it spending so much money for the expansion of the police and administration? Education and health is of pivotal importance in the making and the progress of a nation. And the government lacks money when it comes to these sectors. Actually, the West Bengal government does not even think that health and education should be their topmost priority.” How and why did a movement of the teachers attract other sections of the society to such an extent? What was the role of the Left parties in this movement? To what extent women, refugees and religious minority took part in the teachers’ strike? These are some of the research questions that the project seeks to answer. More importantly, my

Notes

research tries to understand the decade of 1950s as a whole. The new born national government continuously faced violent protests on several issues. Was it because people expected much from their own government but the later failed to deliver. Why was '50s such a turbulent decade? Was it because of the refugees? But partition and its consequences may not have all the answers for the questions that I raise. Sekhar Bandyopadhyaya has already warned us that too much emphasis on partition “excludes endless complexities of decolonization as an experience.” Answers need to be sought in peoples’ expectations from a national government, in long tradition of political protests in colonial times, in involvement of people in violent forms of mass action (like communal riots), in particular Left political thoughts and traditions, in labour unrest, unemployment and food shortage, in the behaviour of police, bureaucrats and the government in handling popular protests, and of course in refugee crisis.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. What do you know about the Hindu-Muslim relation in Bengal before 1900?

.....
.....
.....

2. Discuss the partition of Bengal.

.....
.....
.....

14.6 LET US SUM UP

As the partition agitation, pro- and anti-, condensed, the Simla Deputation and the founding of the Muslim League marked an undeniable change in the Indian Politics. The Muslim League, from its very birth, made it absolutely clear that its interests were separate from

that of the other Indians. Although several times attempts were made for a peaceful reconciliation between the League and Congress over many arguments, the basic difference laid in the mentality was hard to overcome. This separatist attitude was the memorable standpoint in the history of India as it ultimately resulted in the 1947 partition exactly almost at the same places where the line was drawn in 1905. In a way, the Bengal partition fired the spirit of a country-wide nationalism through which gradually the freedom became a reality, it also sowed the seed of the birth of Pakistan and Bangladesh. After the turbulent years of early 1900's, life ceased to be the same peaceful one in the Indian subcontinent. The communal harmony was destroyed and for ever. Now even after 70 years, the hatred is there for all to see. The journey through what Nevinson described as the 'dangerous road' began in 1905 by the British, and still no end seems to be in sight.

- Bengali Hindus were at the forefront of political agitation.
- Following the partition, an anti-British movement formed in opposition

This involved non-violent and violent protests, boycotts and even an assassination attempt against the Governor of the new province of West Bengal.

- After partition, Hindu resistance exploded as the Indian National Congress began the Swadeshi movement

The movement was not supported by the Muslims because the Muslims in East Bengal had hoped that a separate region would give them more control and hence, they opposed the movements.

14.7 KEY WORDS

Movement: an act of moving.

Partition: (especially with reference to a country with separate areas of government) the action or state of dividing or being divided into parts.

14.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Highlight Turmoil during partition

2. What do you know about Impact of partition?

14.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Rajimwale, Anil: History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development 1920-1947, Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2001, 44. 1. Syed Ali Ashraf, Ed. Begnali Literary Review, (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1973, 14.
- Majumdar Ramesh Chandra: History of the Freedom Movement in India, Firma K. L. M., Calcutta, 1963; 2:75- 76.
- Syed Ali Ashraf: op. cit. 16
- Ray, Sudhir: Marxist Parties of West Bengal: 1947-2001, Progressive Publisher, Kolkata, 2001, 253-255.
- Rajimwale, Anil: op. cit. 49. 6. Sankaran Nair V. Swadeshi Movement. The Beginnings of Student Unrest in South India, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1985, 43-45.

14.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 14.2
2. See Section 14.3