

**A HISTORICAL APPROACH TOWARDS THE ECOLOGY OF FOREST AND  
THE FOREST DWELLERS OF PALAMAU PURNEA AND MANIMAHESH:  
THE THREE BENGALI NOVELS (1880 TO 1969)**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARTS**

**By**

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**A Historical Approach Towards The Ecology Of Forest And The Forest Dwellers  
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**Thesis submitted for the Degree of Ph.D. (Arts)**

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## Certificate

Certified that the Thesis entitled **A Historical Approach Towards The Ecology Of Forest And The Forest Dwellers Of Palamau Purnea And Manimahesh: The Three Bengali Novels (1880 To 1969)** submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of **Prof. Mahua Sarkar**, Department of History, Jadavpur University And that neither the thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.

Countersigned by the

Supervisor:

Candidate:

Dated:

Dated:

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Dedicated to

*Dadu, Maa and Baba*

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## ABBREVEATIONS

<i>ASLE</i>	The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment
<i>ISLE</i>	Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment
<i>I.A.S</i>	Indian Administrative Service
<i>US \$</i>	United States Dollar
<i>UN</i>	United Nations
<i>ST</i>	Scheduled Tribe
<i>SC</i>	Scheduled Caste
<i>JAAC</i>	Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council
<i>CPI</i>	Communist Party of India
<i>CPI(M)</i>	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
<i>BJP</i>	Bhartiya Janta Party
<i>CTSM</i>	Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine
<i>C.I.D</i>	Crime Investigation Department
<i>INC</i>	Indian National Congress
<i>SOP</i>	Standard operating procedure
<i>RFA</i>	Recorded Forest Area
<i>VDF</i>	Very Dense Forest
<i>KM</i>	Kilometer
<i>LLB</i>	Bachelor of Legislative Law
<i>AD</i>	Anno Domini/After Death
<i>BC</i>	Before Christ
<i>NGO</i>	Non-Government Organisation
<i>BDC</i>	Block Development Committee
<i>BPKS</i>	Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha



## **ILLUSTRATIONS**

1. Total Forest Cover in Hill Districts of India as per Census of 2011.
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The writing of history had a continuous interface with literature. Choosing a particular item from the past and recreating it as a variant, is in part, an act of historical significance. The past is viewed from the present, wherever the present may be located, and that which is selected from the past goes into constructing a tradition or constructing a history.<sup>1</sup> A tradition is never handed down intact from generation to generation, however appealing this idea may seem. Innovation is what gives it vitality. The items selected from the past are often so chosen as to legitimise the values and codes of the present. In selecting and recasting cultural items we highlight some and marginalise others. The act of selection becomes a dialogue with the past.<sup>2</sup> The point in time at which the selection is being made gives a different value to the selection as a cultural symbol, as an idiom, as an icon. This has happened throughout our cultural history, although our awareness of this process is perhaps more apparent now. Where the narrative is culturally central to our own present today, we have also to see it as a part of the intervention of the colonial period and recognise the disjuncture this may produce. The concept of culture in relation to the early past, implies an intersecting of disciplines of which history, it seems to me is foundational. This involves the original text and its historical contexts, as also frequently the Orientalist

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Jenkins, "Rethinking History", *Routledge*, (London, 1991): 35

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36

reading of it and equally frequently, the internalising of this reading by commentators of the last century or two, that is, the present and more recently, the questioning of this reading.<sup>3</sup> Inevitably, there is a contextualising of the Orientalist re-presentation and European perspectives brought, to bear on the reading. A single item can therefore have multiple identities which change at historical moments. Understanding a cultural item historically requires some comprehension of the world—view which it represented. Each version has some relation with those which preceded it: a relation ranging from endorsement to contestation of earlier versions.<sup>4</sup> Here in, lies the context of the present thesis. The main motive of this research paper is to narrate chosen literary texts which puts light on the environment, its preservation and decay, and link it with history. As literature is an imaginary examination of a particular society and environment, history preserves those, because with passing time, texts become archives which help in preserving writings and help in further readings and researches. A narrative can have its own biography, and the changes it manifests can provide us with a view of historical change.<sup>5</sup> By historical change it does not mean just chronology but rather, the manifold dimensions of the historical context. A narrative frequently recreated over time becomes multi—layered like a palimpsest. One can attempt to reveal the many pasts which went into the making of its present. Where the retellings of a narrative or where narratives implying an event, become contesting versions, the differing perspectives also provide evidence for historical constructions. If eco—critics seek to understand not only how

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<sup>3</sup> Vathana Fenn, "Roots Of Ecocriticism: An Exploration Of The History Of Ecocriticism, A Literary Theory Of The Post-Modern World," *Journal Of English Language And Literature (Joell)*, Volume 2 Issue 2, (2015): 113, retrieved on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 6:20pm <<http://www.joell.in>>.

<sup>4</sup> Romila Thapar, "Narratives and the Making of History: Two Lectures", (First Lecture Sakuntala: Histories of a Narrative), Oxford University Press (2000): 2

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3

particular texts represent the interactions between humans and their ecological environment, but also how such representations reflect and shape real—world environmental practices, they must place them within the larger context of historical dynamics that cannot be inferred from these texts alone.<sup>6</sup> By the same token, the recognition, that human beliefs and desires play an essential part in environmental practices, and entails the corollary that textual interpretation is an indispensable component of historical research. Whether they openly acknowledge it or not, ecocriticism and environmental history are mutually implicated. The question that matters is how this relationship can be rendered more explicit and more productive.<sup>7</sup>

A very important aspect of my research are the inhabitants of the forests, whom I have referred to as the forest dwellers. These inhabitants are mostly the Scheduled Tribes present in the forests. They are the original rural people living in the forests and the authors are outsiders, who are paying a visit from the urban areas for a few days and leaving the place for other future endeavours. Here a loop is being formed where if we see from the eyes of a forest dweller then the person going to the forest from outside could be called as ‘other’ from their aspect, again the ‘Urban Man’ does not quite fit into the ‘other population’ who are ‘uncivilised to its core’. So he analyses the ‘deprivation of the unheard’ and tries to be their voice by penning down their livelihood and everyday struggle and deeply wants that the inhabitants come out of their misery someday, as they are the ones who fascinated the writers and led them to document their beauty. The word ‘tribe’ appears to have been derived etymologically from the Latin word ‘tribus’ which

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<sup>6</sup> Romila Thapar, “Narratives and the Making of History: Two Lectures”, (First Lecture Sakuntala: Histories of a Narrative), Oxford University Press (2000): 4

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 4-5

means 'group'.<sup>8</sup> The Romans used terms like 'tribus barbari' meaning the Barbarian group or tribes with beards and shabby hair unlike the Romans. In English such people were named as primitive people (L. Primus populus — the first people). They are also called the aborigines (L. aborigine — from the origine). These people are called the indigenous people, meaning those naturally existing in a place or country rather than arriving from another area according to Cambridge dictionary.<sup>9</sup> In India these primitive people are called the "Adivasees" (H. adi vasee — first settler), one who has first come to a particular place and cleared the jungles and made it habitable.<sup>10</sup> If we closely examine the definitions given by several scholars we find the following characteristics of the tribes: (1) that it is a group of people of homogenous unit, (2) speak a common language or dialect (3) share common culture, (4) governed by customary laws of their own under a chief, (5) have common ancestry and history, (6) have their habitat in isolated geographical regions preferably in the forests and hilly terrains, (7) have a compact community life and (8) generally, they are averse to mixing with people of other society of the plains. People with the above characteristics are the aborigines or the Adivasees, the first settlers.<sup>11</sup> The Indian government has scheduled some of these aboriginal tribes on the recommendations of the States to give them some benefits and opportunity to develop and come at par with other advanced society economically and socially. The history of these tribes go far back in the past thousands of years ago reaching to the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro of the Indus Valley. Besides their history, or even

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<sup>8</sup> B. H. Mehta, "Historical Background Of Tribal Population", p. 210, retrieved on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 6:22pm, <<https://ijsw.tiss.edu/collect/ijsw/index/assoc/HASH018b/22b1969f.dir/doc.pdf>>

<sup>9</sup> Definition of tribal from the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary © Cambridge University Press

<sup>10</sup> Alun Munslow, "Authoring the Past: Writing and Rethinking History", (Routledge, 2013): 4

<sup>11</sup> Daniel J. Rycroft, "Adivasi worlds: Encountering 'Indian' idealism in anthropology before independence", Mahua Sarkar (ed.) 'Environment and the Adivasi World', (Alphabet Books, 2017): 36

before, the other aspects of the tribal life too, are quite interesting. Their languages and literature, customs and rituals, their religion and philosophy, their social and political organisations, arts and culture, dance, songs and the whole tribal ethos may as well be an engrossing study. The writers of the tribal history and even some tribals of Chota Nagpur, think of the forts of Rohtasgarh or Ruidasgarh on the Kaimur hills in South Bihar, as belonging to their ancestors. But off and on some of the tribal people of this region spoke of Ajamgarh, Harappa and Mohenjodaro and the long sojourn of their ancestors through the valley of the twin rivers Ganges and Yamuna. These names do come in their folk songs. Archeologists, anthropologists, linguists and historians began to take keen interests in them. The academic interests grew. Several questions arise as to the origin of these tribes, their possible exodus from the Indus Valley and their long journey southeast to reach the Mountain regions of Chota Nagpur now called Jharkhand, and the name was given to it by the Mughal emperors in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

My research here mainly aims on relating the Eco-critical Bengali texts with history and analysing the relationship between man and nature and how this is directly or indirectly affecting the environment and the question of preserving the flora and fauna of the forest and rights of the forest dwellers.<sup>12</sup> Western and Eastern literatures have played a very important role in shaping the understanding of my research work. The literary texts that have been the main attraction of this research are highly eco-critical in nature. There are several eco-critical texts available in American, European and Indian literature. Writers like William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Margaret

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<sup>12</sup> J.J. Roy Burman, "Adivasi: A Contentious Term to denote Tribes as Indigenous Peoples of India", *Mainstream*, Vol XLVII, No 32, (July 25, 2009), retrieved on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2022, 6:30pm  
<<https://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article1537.html>>

Fuller (1810-1850), Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay (1834-1889), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), Robert Frost (1874-1963), Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay (1894-1950), Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay (1902-1997), Raymond Williams (1921-1988) and Jonathan Bate (1958) have written extensively from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Modern Indian novelists like Ruskin Bond, Buddhadeb Guha, Mahasweta Devi, Debesh Ray, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Kamala Markandya, Arundhati Roy and Amitava Ghosh are of special mention when it comes to literary texts on environment and ecology. Literary texts focus mainly on the 'story' that the novelist tries to interpret to his/her readers, and these texts are not devoid of limitations. If it is analysed from the perspective of a history researcher, most of the literary works are lacking proper historicity and if we want to situate these works historically then there are many hurdles. But these are essential evidences where historical sources are not available. Often anthropological, sociological and literary works are to be referred to make a proper study of historical time, space and people.

The main three Bengali texts that I have taken up are 'Palamau' by Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay (1880-1883), 'Aranyak' by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay (1937-1939) and 'Manimahesh' from Bhromon Omnibus Volume II by Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay (1969). These three eco-critical texts form the main component of my chapters where I have analysed these texts individually, by portraying the genre where I am interpreting literary texts as history. This research is unique in its aspect because the three Bengali texts that I have taken into account are absolutely one of a kind. The English translations of these texts are available, but the texts can often be situated historically.

The main focus here is on, how the texts are being historically interpreted by keeping into account all the details provided by the writers. Two of my selected texts are Travelogues among which ‘Palamau’ is more of a novel and less of a travelogue, ‘Manimahesh’ justifies itself as a travelogue and ‘Aranyak’ is a pure Novel. Palamau and Aranyak are written in the colonial time, which portrays challenges faced by the forest inhabitants and how they resisted against the colonial domination for their rights in protecting their birth land and the environment too. On the other hand, Manimahesh is a post-colonial take on travel, visiting new places and getting to know more about the history of that particular place and their tribes. The stories of Palamau and Aranyak are geographically situated in the Eastern part of India and Manimahesh takes us to the Northern part of India. Here, I have tried to portray the difference between the writings, and the thought processes of each writer, and how they are having sudden revelations after encountering the forests and interacting with the inhabitants. Another very important history that I have taken into account are the tribes of the particular forests. In Palamau we see the “Kol” tribes who are people of the forests, in Aranyak we see the Oraons, Mundas and Santhals who are continuously fighting against the British for their rights in the forest, but in Manimahesh we see the Gaddi tribes who are mainly the inhabitants of Bharmour, Himachal Pradesh (who trace their origin from Alexander and Aurangzeb) leading a transhumant life and are claiming their tribal identity in a post-colonial time. They are very different in nature and occupation from the other tribes we know about. At the end I am taking into account all the forest protection acts and policies that the Indian government has adopted to protect the rights of these people.



## **The forest dwellers struggling to survive: An Eco-critical Analysis**

The main theme of my research, Eco-criticism, has opened up a wide scope of understanding about nature through literature and also situating it in the historical paradigm. Environment played an important role in the process of historical developments.<sup>13</sup> The history of nations and evolution of culture and civilisation have greatly been influenced by environmental features because human society, like any other living organism, tries to adopt itself to natural environments. Nature not only provided man with shelter and food but also played a significant role in the making of human society. Ever since man emerged on the earth, there had been persistent dependency on nature. In the early stage of his emergence, man was quite helpless in nature. Even in the modern times, in spite of outstanding progress and attempt of science to control nature and environment, human beings are unable to subdue it; rather they are greatly controlled and influenced by the natural phenomena.<sup>14</sup> Natural resources available on this earth, however, having their limits, overexploitation of which leads to environmental crisis in some form or the other. The writing of the Indian history in proper perspective is incomplete without adequate knowledge of environment, geography, ecology and physical features.<sup>15</sup> The study of early Indian environmental history, in fact, is a necessity for the present generations. Environment is a broad term which encompasses all natural things that surrounds us and is essential to sustain life such as air (atmosphere), water (hydrosphere), land (lithosphere), flora, fauna etc, and environmental history is the study

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<sup>13</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, "Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature," *BRICS Journal of Educational Research*, 6(4), (2016): 155

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 155-156

<sup>15</sup> Ramachandra Guha, ed., "Social Ecology", (Oxford in India Readings in Sociology and Social Anthropology), Oxford University Press, (Delhi:1994): 398

of human interaction with the natural world. Environmental history shares a very messy boarder with economic and social histories, history of science and technology, disease history, and even with various other disciplines.<sup>16</sup> The principal goal of environmental history is to deepen our understanding of how human beings have been affected by the natural environment. Those can be traced back in the Vedas and the Upanishads.<sup>17</sup> And numerous suggestions and implications of this theory can be found in the cultural life of the tribes of India as the Santhals, the Kols, the Totos, the Ravas, the Gaddis and the Mahalis. But it being considered as a literary theory is a recent development. At different phases of history, at different places thinkers and litterateurs have expressed concern for environmental plundering and misuse of natural resources which could bring disaster and destruction of Mother Earth. Many thinkers describe environmental crisis to be the crisis of civilisation.

Though eco—criticism is a theoretical development of the nineties, William Rueckert (1926-2006), first, used the term ‘eco—criticism’ in 1978. In his article ‘Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco—criticism’ (1978), Rueckert has made a comparison between literary activities and biological activities.<sup>18</sup> He thinks that poetry like trees and plants store energy from the collective vital energy of the human society. Rueckert’s theory implies that poetry is a power—store that can be used to bring a change in human consciousness. According to Rueckert, aesthetics is not something in isolation of life and

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<sup>16</sup> Amit Bhattacharyya, Mahua Sarkar, ed., *History and the Changing Horizon: Science, Environment and Social Systems*, (Setu Prakashani: 2014): 20

<sup>17</sup> Jagmeet Singh, “Ecocriticism and its’ Conceptual Developments: A Sensitive Portrayal Through Critics’ Pen”, *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, Volume 6 Issue 1, (January – March 2019): 570

<sup>18</sup> William Rueckert, “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism,” *Iowa Review* 9, no. 1 (1978): 60

society. Rather it is something emerging out of life and directed to the welfare of life.<sup>19</sup> And this life is the collective life of the flora and fauna of the world. Like Rueckert, SuElleen Campbell (1951), too has treated a literary theory as an action or an activist movement that can create a jerk, adequately powerful for the society and human consciousness to change.<sup>20</sup> Campbell believes that litterateurs and environmentalists are revolutionary minds who can think ahead of other people.<sup>21</sup> The book which proved instrumental in getting eco—criticism accepted as a literary theory is ‘The Eco—criticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology’ (1996) edited by Cheryll Glotfelty (1958) and Harold Fromm (1933). In this book Glotfelty defines eco—criticism as the ‘study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.’<sup>22</sup> He regards ecocriticism, like Marxism and Feminism, is an active methodology that can initiate activist movements to change human consciousness to make it caring for Nature.<sup>23</sup> Another book which contributed to the growth of ecocriticism as a literary discipline is Lawrence Buell’s book ‘The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture’ (1995).<sup>24</sup> Buell thinks that seeds of ecocriticism can be traced back in Walden Diary of Henry David Thoreau (1817—1862). Thoreau advocates a nature—centric life which does not use nature simply as the source of resources for

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 60-61

<sup>20</sup> SueEllen Campbell, “The Land and Language of Desire: Where Deep Ecology and Post-Structuralism Meet.” ‘Western American Literature 24, no. 3’ (1989): 199, Retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 11:00 am, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43023727>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 199-200

<sup>22</sup> Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, ed., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, (Athens and London: University of Georgia press 1996): 20

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 20-21

<sup>24</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* Copyright Date: 1995, Harvard University Press (1996): 8

consumption but a part of life.<sup>25</sup> Thoreau's attempt was to go beyond the homocentric philosophy of life upheld by the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Modern life meant for consumption and comfort is no life to Thoreau. He writes, "I did not wish to live what was not life".<sup>26</sup> Accounts of his diary are accounts of a search for an alternative life beyond modernism. Masanobo Fukuoka (1913—1987), a Japanese agriculturalist and philosopher thought of an alternative method of agriculture and an alternative life style. In spite of being trained in modern agriculture and an expert in pesticide, Fukuoka could discover the dark sides of modern agriculture exclusively dependent on technology, chemical fertilisers and pesticides. He suggested 'Natural Farming', as a system that keeps tilling and chemical fertilisers away. He built up his own farm to prove efficacy of his philosophy of 'Natural Farming'. In 1975 he published a seminal book on natural farming, named, 'One Straw Revolution'.<sup>27</sup> This book, though it does not use eco-critical terminologies, should be regarded as a work which links literature, philosophy, agriculture and environmental issues, together. Rachel Carson's (1907-1964), 'Silent Spring' (1962) elaborately discussed the impact of pesticides on birds.<sup>28</sup> Modern agriculture has binded human hunger at the cost of other components of Nature. The title of the book suggests that human beings will have to see the advent of a spring without

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<sup>25</sup> Henry David Thoreau, "The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Vol. II: Walden", *The Riverside Press*, (Cambridge, 1906): 10

<sup>26</sup> Subhasis Biswas, "European Environmentalism in India: Experiments, Expressions and Ideologies (1861-1947)," *VDM Verlag Dr. Muller* (2010): 18

<sup>27</sup> Masanobo Fukuoka, "The One-Straw Revolution: An Introduction to Natural Farming", *New York Review Books classics*, first published, (September: 1975), (trns.) by Larry Korn, Chris Pearce and Tsune Kurosawa, *New York Review Books classics*, (1992): 10

<sup>28</sup> Rachel Carson, "Silent Spring", *Penguin Books Ltd.*, (30 June 1962): 30

bird—music.<sup>29</sup> Here we can also read an eco-critical poem by Ralph Hodgson (1869—1915)<sup>30</sup>:

I saw with open eyes

Singing birds sweet

Sold for people to eat

Sold in the shops of

Stupidity Street.

I saw in vision

The worms in the wheat

And nothing for sale

In the shops of

Stupidity Street.

(Stupidity Street, Ralph Hodgson)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 31

<sup>30</sup> Ralph Hodgson, “Stupidity Street”, Upton Sinclair, ed. (1878–1968) in ‘The Cry for Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest 1915’, p. 22

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 22-23

Hodgson means to say that nature will take care of us if we take care of nature. By destroying nature we pave the way of our own destruction. Indiscriminate killing of the flora and fauna as well as destruction of biodiversity is a wrong way of development.<sup>32</sup> Due to adaption and assimilation of theoretical elements of numerous thinkers from diverse fields, eco-criticism has grown up as a multidimensional and multi—perspective theory. So Buell describes ecocriticism to be ‘a multiform inquiry extending to a variety of environmentally focussed perspective more expressive of concern to explore environmental issues searchingly than of fixed dogmas about political solutions’.<sup>33</sup> ‘ASLE’ (The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment), an organisation formed in 1992, has played the most important role in popularising eco-criticism all over the world and strengthening the philosophical foundation of this theory by publishing research articles on environmental issues in its famous journal ‘ISLE’ (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment). Ecocriticism is now a subject of study in different parts of India. In West Bengal Pannalal Dasgupta (1908-1999), a socialist thinker and the founder of Tagore Society, attempted to make environmentalism a social movement. His ‘Meen—mangal festival and the concept of Dharmogola’, demand collaborative efforts for conservation of nature and elimination of economic exploitation from the society. The Meen—mangal festival makes us aware that we must care of the rivers and give

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<sup>32</sup> Ardhendu De, “Analysis of “Stupidity Street” (“I saw with open eyes”)", p. 2, retrieved on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 6:40pm, < <https://ardhendude.blogspot.com/2012/07/analysis-of-stupidity-street-i-saw-with.html>>

<sup>33</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, (2005): 15

something to the rivers in return for what they give us.<sup>34</sup> We can read the seminal books of Vandana Shiva (1952) in relation to ecocriticism. Her books such as ‘Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge’ (1997) and ‘Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply’ (1999) exposes the ulterior motive of the American Patent laws and the rhizomatic ways of functioning of new capitalism to ensure the plunder of natural resources, the ‘Pancha bhuta’ as described in the Indian scriptures. Vandana Shiva’s writings add a postcolonial perspective to the theory of ecocriticism. In this regard we can also remember activists like Medha Patkar<sup>35</sup>, Amitav Ghosh<sup>36</sup> and Arundhati Roy.<sup>37</sup>

Indian civilisation is distinctive in the sense that it evolved in the forests, not in the city. According to Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), ‘Forests have nurtured India’s mind and India’s civilisation.’<sup>38</sup> Intellectual growth in India did not take place in enclosures made of brick, wood and mortar, but was inspired by the life of the forests in which nature’s living forces expressed themselves in daily variation, creating a diversity of life and sounds, providing the context for the understanding of nature and man.<sup>39</sup> Human understanding in such a context, could not be restricted to perceiving nature as inert, as an accumulation of dead resources waiting for exploitation. Nature provides light, air, food and water through living processes of creative renewal. This awareness of life in

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<sup>34</sup> Dirk Bryant, Daniel Nielsen and Laura Tangle, “The Last Frontier Forests: Ecosystems And Economies On The Edge What Is The Status Of The World’s Remaining Large, Natural Forest Ecosystems?”, World Resources Institute (Washington, 1997): 30

<sup>35</sup> Sunderlal Bahuguna, Medha Patkar, Vandana Shiva, Sathis Chandran Nair and N.D. Jayal, “India’s Environemnt: Myth and Reality”, Natraj Publishers, 2007: 32

<sup>36</sup> Amitav Ghosh, “The Hungry Tide”, HarperCollins, (UK, 2004): 14

<sup>37</sup> Arundhati Roy, “The God of Small Things”, Penguin Books, 1997: 22

<sup>38</sup> Vandana Shiva, in *Staying Alive* (1989), quoting (Rabindranath Tagore, Tapovana): 55-56

<sup>39</sup> Jagmeet Singh, “Ecocriticism and its’ Conceptual Developments: A Sensitive Portrayal Through Critics’ Pen”, *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, Volume 6 Issue 1, (January – March 2019): 570

nature as a precondition for man's survival, led to the worship of light, air, food and water and these were considered sacred. Indian culture has been cradled by the culture of the forest first in the Vedic period and later during the times of Buddha and Mahavira. Also, the Mughal rulers of medieval India were also deeply concerned about their gardens and forests. Thus, forests in India had remained central to its civilisational evolution. The forest-teased 'ashramas' (settlements) produced the best scientific research and cultural writings and India thus came to be known as an 'Aranya Sanskriti' or a forest culture. Human understanding of the fundamental ecological utility of forest ecosystems and their economic importance led to veneration of trees.<sup>40</sup> This basic dependence on the existence of forests for human survival was the material basis underlying the worship of trees in almost all human societies. In the Rig Veda, forests are described as 'Aranyani' or mother goddess who takes care of wildlife and ensures the availability of food to man<sup>41</sup>. These ashramas and forests, not urban settlements, were recognised as the highest form of cultural evolution providing society with both intellectual guidance and material sustenance. This civilisational principle became the foundation of forest conservation as a social ethic through millennia. Its erosion began with the spread of colonial methods of management of forests in India. Teak from the forests of the Western Ghats, Sal from Central and Northern India and conifers from the Himalayas were felled to meet the

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<sup>40</sup> Ranjan Chakrabarti, "Situating Environmental History", *Manohar Publishers and Distributors*, (1 January 2007): 15

<sup>41</sup> Jagmeet Singh, "Ecocriticism and its' Conceptual Developments: A Sensitive Portrayal Through Critics' Pen", *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, Volume 6 Issue 1, (January – March 2019): 570-571



timber needs of the British Empire. The result was not merely the destruction of forests but the destruction of a culture that conserved forests.<sup>42</sup>

India's forest wealth is characterised by richness of diversity which is related to the diversity of soil types and climate. Moist tropical evergreen and semi—evergreen forests are characteristic of the Western Ghats and the northeastern region. Tropical dry deciduous forests are seen in the north and the south with Sal and Teak being the dominant species, respectively. The Himalayan region has a diversity of moist and dry temperate forests changing into alpine vegetation at the highest altitudes.<sup>43</sup> Each region of India had paid special attention to the growth of village forests with multipurpose tree species providing, fuel, fodder, fruits, fibre, green manure, etc.<sup>44</sup> The ecological role of forests in soil and water conservation was widely recognised and social control over the felling of trees in ecologically sensitive areas like river banks was strictly exercised. The protection and propagation of forests as a deeply ingrained civilisational characteristic in the South Asian region is evident from the existence of sacred groves in river catchments and fore shores of tanks, and from village woodlots.<sup>45</sup> These practices were of critical value both ecologically and economically. Ecologically, indigenous and naturalised vegetation have provided essential life support by stabilising the soil and water systems. Economically, trees have been a source of small timber, fodder, fuel, fibre, medicines, oils, dyes, etc. Indigenous medicines use more than 2,000 species of plants, both wild and cultivated.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Subhasis Biswas, "European Environmentalism in India: Experiments, Expressions and Ideologies (1861-1947)," *VDM Verlag Dr. Muller* (2010): 30

<sup>43</sup> Jagmeet Singh, "Ecocriticism and its' Conceptual Developments: A Sensitive Portrayal Through Critics' Pen", *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, Volume 6 Issue 1, (January – March 2019): 571

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 571-572

<sup>45</sup> R. Grover, (1998), "Village Voices, Forest Choices: Joint Forest Management in India", ed. By Mark Poffenberger and Betsy McGean, *Oxford University Press*, (Delhi: 1996): 356

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 356

The centrality of trees to survival and economic well-being created the need for their conservation which was achieved through the concept of sacredness. In the archaeological remains of the Harappan culture, it is clear that even in the third or fourth millennia BC trees were held in high esteem and were worshipped. The planting of trees, either for their fruit or for the purpose of obtaining shade, was an act which was held in high esteem in oriental countries, and especially in India, since ancient times.<sup>47</sup> The oriental appreciation of the luxury of shade led to the plantation of trees along canals and highways. In the ‘Sanad’ (Royal Order) of Emperor Akbar, it is directed that on both sides of the canal down to Hisar, trees of every description, both for shade and blossom, be planted, so as to make it like the canal under the tree in paradise; and that the sweet flavour of the rare fruits may reach the mouth of everyone.<sup>48</sup> During the reign of Emperor Sher Shah a 2,000 km long Grand Trunk Road, connecting Punjab and Bengal, was planted with shade—giving trees on both sides.<sup>49</sup> In Mysore state, roadside plantations of trees — constituted another vital source of tree wealth, not only providing ample shade to the traveller but also ensuring a steady flow of supplies of timber, fuel, fruits, green manure and animal feed. The access roads to the villages from the main highways were known for their leafy cover, generally of honge, neem and tamarind, and maintained by the village organisations themselves; and the avenues along the highways were covered by species such as ala, bage, neem, tamarind and jamun, and were managed by the services of the state administration.<sup>50</sup> The importance attached to village forests and roadside plantations

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<sup>47</sup> Vandana Shiva, “Ecology and the Politics of Survival: Conflicts Over Natural Resources in India”, (United Nations university programme on peace & global transformation), ‘Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd’, (1 July 1991): 50

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 50-51

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 51

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 51-52

by the state administration, century ago is reflected in an explicit statement in the report on forest area of the Princely State of Mysore: In 1880—81 village forests numbered 16,293 standing on a total area of 14,376 acres and containing 8,11,308 trees while 3,750 miles of public roads had been planted with trees on both sides, at distances varying from twelve to sixty feet. Plants (oshadhis) and trees (vanaspatis) are personified as goddesses and deities and collectively invoked as the jungle goddess, 'Aranyani', in the Vedas.<sup>51</sup> All religions and cultures of the South Asian region are rooted in forests, not out of fear and ignorance but due to ecological insights. This is true of all forest cultures in the tropics. As Isabel Myers (1897-1980) observes, in contrast to the folklore of temperate zones, which often regard forests as dark places of danger, traditional perceptions of forests in the humid tropics convey a sense of intimate harmony, with people and forests equal occupants of a communal habitat and a primary source of congruity between man and nature.<sup>52</sup>

### **Conflicts over forest resources**

Conflicts over forest resources in India can be demarcated into four phases. The first phase began when the British 'reserved' large tracts of forests for commercial exploitation to meet the military and other needs of the British Empire. These conflicts led to forest struggles and forest satyagrahas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The second phase was the post—colonial phase when the 1952 forest policy led to the rapid expansion of forest based industry, large—scale clear felling of natural forests, and

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<sup>51</sup> Madhav Gadgil and M. D. Subash Chandran. "Sacred Groves." *India International Centre Quarterly* 19, no. 1/2 (1992): 183

<sup>52</sup> Isabel Briggs Myers and Peter B. Myers, "Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type", CPP 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (January 1, 1995): 20

their conversion to monocultures of commercial species. Conflicts generated by this intensification of forest use led to movements like Chipko.<sup>53</sup> In the third phase, around 1976, spurred partly, as a response to growing public criticism of the commercial exploitation of forests, and partly, as a response to the crisis in the supply of raw materials for wood based industry, agricultural plantations expanded on farm lands and village commons under ‘Social Forestry’ (1976) and ‘Wasteland Development Programmes’ (1989-1990). These afforestation programmes had become a new source of conflicts during the eighties. The fourth phase, is expected to emerge in the future, that is, as the present one, as international finance, changes in biotechnologies and biomass conversion into chemical and energy substitutes for petroleum based products are supported by major investments in forestry, are expected to lead to a new level of trans—nationalisation of forest use and forest conflicts.<sup>54</sup>

### **Colonial Forestry: Commercialisation against Survival**

Colonial rule introduced dramatic breaks in the way in which forests in India were perceived and used. The perception of forest ecosystems, as having multiple functions for satisfying diverse and vital human needs for air, water and food, were superseded by the growth of one—dimensional scientific forestry, during the colonial period, which had as its only objective the maximisation of the production of commercially valuable timber and wood, while ignoring the other ecological and economic objectives for the utilisation of forest resources.<sup>55</sup> In India, forests play three major economic roles. In order of their

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<sup>53</sup> Ramachandra Guha, “The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Changes and Peasant Resistance in the Himalayas”, *Oxford University Press*, (1989): 155

<sup>54</sup> P. Bhatnagar, “The Problem of Afforestation in India”, *International Book Distributors*, (Dehra Dun, 1991): 10

<sup>55</sup> M Rangarajan, ‘Imperial agendas and India’s forests: The early history of Indian forestry, 1800-1878’, *The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 31(2), (1994): 147

significance for economic development in a democratic society like ours they may be classified as contributions to: Nature's economy through regulating the supply of water to the nation's water resources and conserving soil to support the viability of this vital economic function. Survival economy, provided the supply of basic domestic biomass needs of fodder, fuel, fertiliser, etc., to three fourths of the population.<sup>56</sup> The market economy provided the supply of wood for satisfying industrial and commercial demands. Obviously, the first contribution of forests to the national economy through maintenance of nature's economy is the defense against the threat to our survival from floods, droughts and soil erosion. Commonly this is characterised as conservation.<sup>57</sup> Lack of recognition of this vital contribution led to the downfall of the Roman, Mayan, Harappan and Mesopotamian civilisations.<sup>58</sup> The second contribution is the sustenance of nearly three—fourths of the people who depend on the free productivity of nature for the satisfaction of basic biomass needs. The third and last contribution is mainly for the process of growth of wood based industries which obviously comes after survival and sustenance is ensured, and not before it. Conflicts over forests emerged when colonial rule ignored nature's economy and the survival economy through indifference to the conservation and basic needs role of forestry, and developed forestry only along the one dimensional criterion of commercial/industrial requirements.<sup>59</sup> Forest resources, like other resources needed for survival, have traditionally been common resources, collectively managed and utilised by

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<sup>56</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan, "Fencing the Forest: Conservation and Ecological Change in India's Central Provinces, 1860-1914", Oxford University Press, 1996: 130

<sup>57</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, "Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature," BRICS Journal of Educational Research, 6(4), (2016): 160

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 160

<sup>59</sup> Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, "This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India (Oxford India Perennials Series)", Oxford University Press, (1992): 36

village communities. To transform these common forest resources into commodities, from which revenues and profits could be derived, it was therefore necessary to change property relationships. Through the Indian Forest Acts of 1865 and 1878, the British acquired a monopoly right over all valuable tracts of forests by converting them into reserved forests.<sup>60</sup> The traditional free access to forests of the forest communities was therefore curtailed. British forest legislation aroused resistance from village communities, who were thus deprived. Local revolts broke out in all forest regions of the country.<sup>61</sup> Forest struggles have been a sustained response to commercial forestry introduced by the British. The earliest records of commercial exploitation are of a syndicate formed in 1796 by Mr. Alexander Mackonochie of the Medical Service for the extraction of teak in Malabar to meet the demand for shipbuilding and military purposes.<sup>62</sup> In 1806, a police officer, Captain Watson was appointed the first Conservator of Forests in India in-charge of Malabar and Travancore to extract teak for the King's navy, indicating that policing, not science was needed in the colonial forestry of that period. Indigenous trade was sealed and peasants were denied rights.<sup>63</sup> By 1823, the growing discontent of the forest proprietors and the timber merchants by chafing under the restrictions of the timber monopoly, and the outcry of the peasant's indignance at the fuel cutting restrictions, came to a head. On the recommendation of the Governor of Madras, Sir Thomas Munro (1761-1827), and with the consent of the Supreme Government, the conservatorship, on which

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 37

<sup>61</sup> Richard H. Grove, "Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860", *Cambridge University Press*, (1995): 40

<sup>62</sup> Sérougne, Lucas. "Teak conquest. Wars, forest imperialism and shipbuilding in India (1793-1815)", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, vol. 399, no. 1, (2020): 123

<sup>63</sup> Mahua Sarkar, "Colonial Power and Tribal Space: The Environmental Crisis in North Bengal, in Ranjan Chakrabarti (ed.), *Space and Power in History: Images Ideologies Myths and Moralities*, Penman, (Kolkata, 2001): 108

Captain Watson had been followed by several successors during the seventeen years of its existence, was abolished. The Forest Act of 1927 aroused a new response against the denial of traditional rights of local people. During 1931—33 forest satyagrahas were organised throughout India as a protest against the reservation of forests for exclusive exploitation by British commercial interests and the transformation of a common resource into a commodity.<sup>64</sup> Villagers ceremonially collected forest produce from the reserved forests to assert their right to satisfy their basic needs of forest products. The forest satyagrahas were particularly successful in regions where survival of the local population was intimately linked with the access to forests as in the Himalayas, the Western Ghats and Central India. These non—violent protests were suppressed by the armed intervention of the British rulers. In Central India, the Gond tribals were shot down for participating in the Satyagraha. On 30 May 1930, several unarmed villagers were killed and hundreds injured in Tilari village of Tehri Garhwal when they gathered to protest against the reservation of forests.<sup>65</sup> Following the loss of many lives, the satyagrahas were finally successful in reviving some of the traditional rights of the village communities to forest produce as recognised privileges. The forest satyagrahas, like the Salt Satyagraha, were generally protests against legislation introduced by the British administration which transformed vital common resources into resources reserved for revenue and profit generation through the establishment of monopoly rights and control.<sup>66</sup> These satyagrahas were a response to conflicts which were based on the exclusion of the competing demand

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<sup>64</sup> Dirk Bryant, Daniel Nielsen and Laura Tangle, "The Last Frontier Forests: Ecosystems And Economies On The Edge What Is The Status Of The World's Remaining Large, Natural Forest Ecosystems?", World Resources Institute (1997): 45

<sup>65</sup> Ramachandra Guha, "The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Changes and Peasant Resistance in the Himalayas", *Oxford University Press*, (1989): 130

<sup>66</sup> Ananda Raj, " Mahatma Gandhi and Salt Satyagraha", *Swastik Publication*, (2009): 60

on the resources for survival needs.<sup>67</sup> The imperative for increasing revenue and profits in a growth economy, however, drives resource utilisation patterns in directions which maximise production of the commercially valuable components of the ecosystem at the cost of destruction of those components which are commercially valueless but essential to survival. Thus, in the case of forest resources it was not enough to manipulate policy and legislation to exclude the local communities from free access to forests. It also became imperative to manipulate nature to increase the production of biomass for commerce at the cost of decreasing and destroying biomass for survival. Systems of science and technology thus combined with systems of policy and legislation, in becoming essential tools for the appropriation of vital common resources for commerce, revenue and profits.<sup>68</sup> Scientific and technical aspects of forestry determine prescriptions for the functioning of forests, which maximise immediate production of wood of commercial value, through the destruction of other biomass forms that have lower commercial value but may have very high use value. Silvicultural systems of modern forestry are prescriptions for destruction of non—commercial biomass for the increased production of commercial biomass. Ultimately this increase in commercial production is achieved by mining the ecological capital of the forest ecosystem and disrupting the essential hydrological and nutrient cycles of nature which make plant, animal and human life possible.<sup>69</sup> The growth of commercial economic activity through the manipulation of nature generates second order conflicts over natural resources which arise not merely

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 60

<sup>68</sup> Vinita Damodaran and Rohan D'Souza, "Commonwealth Forestry & Environmental History: Empire, Forests And Colonial Environments In Africa, The Caribbean, South Asia And New Zealand", *Primus Books*, (2020): 50

<sup>69</sup> Dirk Bryant, Daniel Nielsen and Laura Tangle, "The Last Frontier Forests: Ecosystems And Economies On The Edge What Is The Status Of The World's Remaining Large, Natural Forest Ecosystems?", *World Resources Institute* (Washington, 1997): 46



from issues of how a particular resource is distributed, but also how it is utilised and how it affects related resources. Thus, in the case of forest resources, contemporary conflicts are being generated by silvicultural systems, aimed at maximising the production of commercially and industrially valuable species, like, eucalyptus, pine and teak, through the destruction of natural indigenous mixed forests which have a high use value for basic needs and for ecological stability.<sup>70</sup> In Bihar, the conversion of sal forests into teak plantations had been resisted by the tribals. In 1980, a violent confrontation between tribals and the forest officials and police in Gua, Jharkhand resulted in the death of thirteen tribal and three policemen. This clash was the outcome of the conflict between two types of silviculture, one based on trees for the people and the other based on trees for commerce.<sup>71</sup> Movements arising from conflicts over natural resources at this level are ecologically rooted since they do not merely emerge from an unfair distribution of a single resource, but from the unjust and unsustainable use of an ecosystem as a complex of interrelated resources. In ecologically sensitive regions, the destruction of forest ecosystems had in turn threatened the survival of the forest dwelling communities. The people's response to this deepening ecological and economic crisis induced by the commercial exploitation of resources had been the emergence of movements for the conservation of forest resources throughout the country. The most well-known and successful among these, was the non-violent Gandhian movement called the Chipko (hug the tree) movement.<sup>72</sup> Beginning in the early seventies in the Garhwal region of Uttar Pradesh, the methodology and philosophy of Chipko had now spread to Himachal in the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 47

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 47-48

<sup>72</sup> M. Gadgil and R. Guha, "Ecology and Equity: Steps towards an Economy of Permanence", Geneva: UNRISD, (1994): 10

north, Karnataka in the south, Rajasthan in the west and Bihar in the east. Chipko, as a national campaign for forest conservation was a response to the multidimensional conflicts over forest resources at the scientific, technical, ecological and economic levels.

### **It started long ago: The Colonial period**

The arrival of the British and their exploitation of India's forest resources marked a new phase in the use of forest produce in India. The British were hard—pressed for hardwood, since their own oak forests were destroyed and rendered unproductive in the second half of the eighteenth century through unscientific management.<sup>73</sup> Susan Stebbing (1885—1943) had recorded the situation in India after the arrival of the British, “The new Administration possessed no knowledge of tropical forestry, nor, indeed, of European forestry, since British forestry had almost ceased to be understood as a commercial enterprise in Great Britain”.<sup>74</sup> With the realisation of the value of teak the British Admiralty were soon engaged in enquiries with the object of replacing (local) oak timber by teak from India for use in the construction of the Fleet. For the supplies of first class oak, timber were falling short in England owing to the cessation of the planting, which had fallen off to a great extent early in the later part of the eighteenth century. In 1805 a dispatch was received from the court of Directors enquiring to what extent the King's navy might, in view of the growing shortage of oak in England, depended on a permanent supply of teak timber from Malabar. This dispatch led to the immediate formation of a forest committee charged with a comprehensive programme of enquiry both into the

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<sup>73</sup> Sunderlal Bahuguna, “Environment Crisis & Sustainable Development”, Natraj Publishers, (1992): 35

<sup>74</sup> Susan Stebbing, “Thinking to Some Purpose”, New York, NY, USA: Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Eng., *Penguin Books* (1938): 10

capacity of the forests themselves and the status of proprietary rights on them.<sup>75</sup> Thus the first real interest expressed in the forests of India and the subsequent study of those accessible at the time originated from England, and the reason was the same which had kept forestry in the forefront in England for a period of three centuries—the safety of the empire, which depended upon its ‘wooden walls’.<sup>76</sup> The planting of oak owing to the supineness of successive governments had fallen into abeyance for nearly a century, and the country was faced with a shortage in timber supplies which, in view of the bid of the French for sea supremacy, might well spell the doom of England. When the British started exploiting Indian timber for military purposes, they did it rapaciously, because the great continent appeared to hold inexhaustible tracts covered with dense jungles, but there was no apparent necessity for their detailed exploration even had this been a possibility. In the early years of our occupation the botany of the forests, the species of trees they contained and their respective values were an unopened book.<sup>77</sup> As far as the government and its officials were concerned, the important role played by forests in nature and the tremendous influence these forests had on the physical well-being of a country went unnoticed, neither were their revenue producing potentials or their importance to the people were appreciated by the officials. In view of the tremendous forest wealth that existed, for some years the government obtained its full requirements without any difficulty and the people also managed to get all they wanted. The early administrators appeared to have been convinced that this state of affairs could continue for an unlimited

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<sup>75</sup> M. Gadgil and R. Guha, “Ecology and Equity: Steps towards an Economy of Permanence”, Geneva: UNRISD, (1994): 12

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>77</sup> Tribal Cultural Heritage in India Foundation: A guided tour, (1 December 2018): 5, retrieved on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 7:00pm, [www.indiantribalheritage.org](http://www.indiantribalheritage.org).

period of time; and that in many localities forests were an obstruction to agriculture and, therefore, a limiting factor to the prosperity of the country.<sup>78</sup> The overall policy was to expand agriculture and the watchword of the time was to destroy the forests.<sup>79</sup> The requirement of the military for Indian teak led to an immediate proclamation declaring that the royalty right in teak trees claimed by the former government in the south of the continent was vested in the East India Company. Under increased pressure from the Home government to ensure the maintenance of the future strength of the King's navy, the decision was taken to appoint a special officer to superintend the forest work; someone who was conversant with the language and habits of the people in addition to having a knowledge of forests. His duties were to preserve and improve the production of teak and other timber suitable for shipbuilding. A police officer, Captain Watson was appointed the first Conservator of Forests in India on 10 November 1806, under the proclamation of April 1807, he wielded great powers, which unfortunately were somewhat vague in both scope and in the extent of interference he was permitted in the established order.<sup>80</sup>

Forestland in India was a tract of land that is legally proclaimed to be forest under the forest laws (mainly Indian Forest Acts 1865, 1927). India had a notified forest area of 77.47 million hectares (m ha), comprising 39.99 m ha of Reserved, 23.84 m ha of Protected and 13.64 m ha of Unclassed (unclassified) Forests. The Reserved Forest was an area notified under the Indian Forest Act or a State Forest Act enjoying a higher degree of protection (human activities are prohibited unless expressly permitted); Protected

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 5-6

<sup>79</sup> Irfan Habib, "Man and Environment: The Ecological History of India", Aligarh Historians Society, Tulika Books, (Delhi, 2010): 15

<sup>80</sup> Tribal Cultural Heritage in India Foundation: A guided tour, (1 December 2018): 6, retrieved on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 7:00pm, [www.indiantribalheritage.org](http://www.indiantribalheritage.org).

Forests were also notified under the Forest Acts but the restrictions were less stringent (human activities were permitted unless expressly prohibited). Unclassed Forests were forests which had not been included in reserved or protected forest categories. The tenurial status of such forests varied widely. Forestry as a land use category was the second largest land use category after agriculture in India. Land use categories other than forestry also encompassed some forestry activities as important constituents of the respective management domains.<sup>81</sup>

### **Forest Policy of the Colonial Government**

Before 1865, forest dwellers were completely free to exploit the forest wealth. Then, on 3 August 1865, the British rulers, on the basis of the report of the then—superintendent of forests in Burma, issued a memorandum providing guidelines restricting the rights of forest dwellers to conserve the forests. This was further modified in 1894. It stated that: The sole object with which State forests were administered, was the public benefit. In some cases the public to be benefited was the whole body of tax payers; in others the people on the track within which the forest was situated; but in almost all cases the constitution and preservation of a forest involved, in greater or lesser degree, the regulation of rights and restriction of privileges of users in the forest areas which might have previously been enjoyed by the inhabitants of its immediate neighborhood. This regulation and restrictions were justified only when the advantage to be gained by the public was great and the cardinal principle to be observed was that, the rights and privileges of individuals must be limited otherwise than for their own benefit, only in such

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 6-7

degree as it was absolutely necessary to secure that advantage.<sup>82</sup> In actual practice, however, all these pious declarations were set aside whenever they came in the way of British interests. For example, forests in Nagaland and the Terai were unscrupulously cut to meet the increasing demand of wood during both world wars. The National Forest Policy of the Government of India (1952) was an extension of this policy. This policy prescribed that the claims of communities near forests should not override the national interests, that in no event could the forest dwellers use the forest wealth at the cost of wider national interests, and that relinquishment of forest land for agriculture should be permitted only in very exceptional and essential cases. The old policy of relinquishing even valuable forests for permanent cultivation was discontinued and steps to use forest land for agricultural purposes were to be taken only after very serious consideration. To ensure the balanced use of land, a detailed land capability survey was suggested. Conservation of wildlife was to be regularised. The tribals were to be weaned away from shifting cultivation.<sup>83</sup> The concept of ‘national interest’ had been applied in a narrow sense. A welfare state could not have a basic contradiction between local and national interests. As the analysis that follows will show, in the implementation of the forest policy, ‘national interests’ remained confined to augmenting revenue earnings from the forests.<sup>84</sup> Whenever the interests of the local people or ecological considerations hampered possible revenue from forests, the forest department pushed them aside on the pretext of broader national interest. Forest dwellers had been dissociated from the

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<sup>82</sup> Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, “Rights of Tribals and Forest Dwellers, Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs”, (07.08.2014): 20

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 20-21

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 21

management and exploitation of forest wealth. The British contractual system that still exists in many states had resulted in unscrupulous exploitation of the local people and of the natural vegetation and wildlife that the forest policy was intended to conserve. Development programs — construction of roads and availability of educational, medical and housing facilities — had allowed economically viable outsiders to enter forest regions. In order to make quick profits, they had exploited the forest dwellers, displacing them from their land and making them bonded laborers.<sup>75</sup> Except for the states of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Daman and Diu, the government had been earning huge net forest revenues. Over the years, this revenue had increased. On the other hand, except for a few places, the condition of the forest dwellers had deteriorated. The government's various development programs and the tribal welfare schemes had by and large failed to make any dent in the deteriorating condition of the forests and forest dwellers. The crux of the problem therefore lay in misdirected policy and its half-hearted implementation.<sup>85</sup>

### **The forest dwellers: Post-Colonial scenario**

In 1974—1975, about 22 percent of India's total geographical area was covered by forests. This forest region, interspersed all over the country, consisted of evergreen forests, deciduous forests, dry forests, alpine forests, riparian forests and tidal forests. Some of these forests were conspicuous for their dense growth. Besides the commercially valuable sal, teak, ironwood, sandalwood and shisam, these forests were rich in the growth of climbers (epiphyte) and various kinds of minor forest produce. While the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 22

forest—based industries had relief on the commercially valuable wood, the forest dwellers, a majority of whom were Scheduled Tribes, were dependent on the minor forest produce for their subsistence.<sup>86</sup>

According to the 1971 Census Report, a majority of the tribals lived in the countryside and relied mainly on agriculture. From an economic point of view, the tribes could be classified as semi—nomadic, the jhum cultivators and the settled cultivators, living completely on forest produce. Forests were the main source of subsistence for them. They collected their food from them; used the timber or bamboo to construct their houses; collected firewood for cooking and in winter to keep warm; used grass for fodder, brooms and mats; collected leaves for leaf plates; and used ‘harre behra’ for dyeing and tanning. The forest regions were also inhabited by non—tribals, who depended on forests for fuel, fodder and other things.<sup>87</sup> We would here, try to assess the nature and extent of forest dwellers’ dependence on forests. To what extent was the forest policy implemented by different states and Union territories which ensured that the basic needs of forest dwellers were met? How does the forest policy seek to improve the socio-economic conditions of the forest dwellers?

### **Restrictions on Forest dwellers**

The backbone of forest dwellers economy was the vegetation found in the nearby forests. But the forest dwellers’ rights to collect fuel, fodder and minor forest produces were restricted. (In Arunachal Pradesh, the tribals had special rights to collect all forest produce

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<sup>86</sup> Tribal Cultural Heritage in India Foundation: A guided tour, (1 December 2018): 7, retrieved on 12<sup>th</sup> Septemeber 2022, 7:00pm, [www.indiantribalheritage.org.iberid](http://www.indiantribalheritage.org.iberid).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 7-8



and hunt and fish freely in all forests, whether reserved or unclassified. This concession was not found anywhere else. In almost all states, forest dwellers could collect forest produce, either free or at concessional rates, only from protected and unclassified forests. Even these were not legal rights, but were subject to various government restrictions and regulations. These facilities could even be terminated if the capacity of forests did not permit the exercise of the right. The right holders were also obligated to help the forest department prevent and fight forest fires and to help the staff in connection with forest offenses.<sup>88</sup> In West Bengal, since Independence, forests had been the bone of contention between the forest department and the forest dwellers, most of whom were tribals. In forest dwellers contend that they, by virtue of being native people, had the right to use forest trees for their livelihood. One of their complaints was the cattle trenches dug around the forest areas prevent the free flow of water into their arable land. They were charged high rates for permits to collect minor forest produce, especially tussar cocoons. Grazing had been prohibited and their agricultural land had been recorded as forest land in the recorder of rights; later the tribals were asked to vacate the land. The forest department, on the other hand, blamed the tribals for wanton and indiscriminate destruction of vegetation and wildlife, and urged the restriction of their rights over the forests. The tribal welfare department, while conceding the need to preserve the forest, said that, the tribals did have special claims over the forests and forest produce.<sup>89</sup> The attitude of the forest department in many states were of callousness, indifference and negligence towards the tribals. For example, the forest department in Karnataka (then Mysore), in the Section 35

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>89</sup> L. A. Bruijnzeel, 'Hydrological functions of tropical forests: not seeing the soils for the trees? Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment', *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 104 (2004): 185

of the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972, in its enthusiasm to set up a game sanctuary in the state, drove out the local inhabitants without making alternate arrangements for their resettlement. The intervention of the social welfare department was of no avail. The roads constructed in reserved forests by the social welfare department of the state for the benefit of the tribals, on the express understanding that they would be maintained by the forest department, had been badly neglected. The forest department was often persuaded with great difficulty to release water from tanks lying in reserved forests for irrigating the tribal areas lower down. In Andhra Pradesh, too, extensive areas under cultivation were being converted into reserved forests.<sup>90</sup> The forest department had extended its boundaries almost to the door step of many tribal villages, instead of leaving open a strip, at least one kilometer in width, between the villages and the forest boundary. Areas were also included in the forests which had no tree growth at all and heavy fines were being imposed on tribal encroachers. In Tamil Nadu (then Madras), discriminations were found against the tribals but not the non—tribals in Wenlock Down. The latter were given land on pattas (land titles) either permanently or for long periods, but the Todas — local inhabitants — received only annual cultivation permits. It was also noted that extensive areas now classified as forests were under unauthorised cultivation. Without rights of ownership, the tribals could not undertake soil conservation measures. Moreover, the forest department's practice of serving eviction notices to tribal encroachers and fining them operated as a great hardship to the tribals.<sup>91</sup> Finally, it was observed that tree pattas, which entitled the holder to the use of the fruits of trees, were issued in Coimbatore district to non—tribals living far away from the tribal settlements, in respect to mango and tamarind trees in the

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 185-186

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 187

tribal villages. Gopa Joshi in her article ‘Forest Policy and Tribal Development’ (1989), writes that, Om Prakash Arya, an IAS officer, in his interview with the officials of the forest department, voluntary agencies and forest dwellers, had tried to show the bitter relationship between the forest administration and the local populace. The divisional forest officer he interviewed was critical about the attitude of tribals toward the forest. His view was confirmed by the collector and the charge officer.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, the people — about eighty percent — complained during the field survey about harassment by the forest officials. The privileged ones, however, had good rapports with the forest department.<sup>93</sup> Joshi also writes that, An Irish missionary stationed in the area gave a very impartial view of the whole problem and said that the forest officers used to take a lot of benefits from the tribals of the village. Some of them used to be employed in the forest and were paid much less than government rates. They used to take gifts in kind, too.<sup>94</sup> Since the villagers depended solely on forest officers for their livelihood, the officers behaved like ring—masters and made them do whatever they desired.

### **Exploitation of the Forest Dwellers**

The various kinds of restrictions imposed on the forest dwellers virtually put them at the mercy of the forest department, especially lower—level functionaries. Illiteracy and poor economic conditions made them even more vulnerable. In some areas in Andhra Pradesh, the forest guards had their cut of minor forest produce earnings, and in some areas the tribals were often made to work without pay. In spite of the rest houses spread all over

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 187

<sup>93</sup> Gopa Joshi, “Forest Policy and Tribal Development”, *Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine*, (June, 1989): 10

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 10-11

the block, the forest rangers or high level functionaries could not find it convenient to inspect the area. This is not an isolated instance. The I.A.S probationers, during their survey of socioeconomic conditions of tribals in different states, noted different modes of exploitation by the forest guards and other lower—level functionaries who were invariably in league with the patwari and the local police constable.<sup>95</sup> Forest dwellers had also become victims of the commercial exploitation of the forest. Since British rule, contractors had employed the forest dwellers to do unskilled jobs for low wages and in appalling conditions. Tribal communities had a customary and traditional history for protecting their local forest resources due to their dependency on it. The fact that the State had destroyed 90% of natural grasslands by planting non-local trees and declaring them as ‘forests’, showed the government’s need for the tribal communities’ knowledge to protect our forests. The Symington committee’s recommendation in the 1940s (to include local communities in collecting forest produce) and the Government’s policies for Joint Forest Management in recent years had shown that the government too, recognised this need.<sup>96</sup> The Committee on Forests and Tribals in India (1982) stated that “they were not only forest dwellers but also for centuries they had evolved a way of life which, on the one hand, is woven around forest ecology and forest resources, on the other hand, ensures that the forest is protected against the degradation by man and nature”.<sup>97</sup> In 1946—1947, the Forest Labour Societies were initiated by B.G. Kher (1888-1957), in the then Bombay

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<sup>95</sup> M. Gadgil and R. Guha, “Ecology and Equity: Steps towards an Economy of Permanence”, Geneva: UNRISD, (1994): 15

<sup>96</sup> Prakash Tripathi, “Tribes and Forest: A critical appraisal of the tribal forest right in India”, ‘Research Journal of Social Science and Management’ (2016): 50, retrieved on September 13<sup>th</sup> 2022, 9:00am, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308794288\\_Tribes\\_and\\_Forest\\_A\\_critical\\_appraisal\\_of\\_the\\_tribal\\_forest\\_right\\_in\\_India](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308794288_Tribes_and_Forest_A_critical_appraisal_of_the_tribal_forest_right_in_India)

<sup>97</sup> Indian State of Forest Report (2019). Forest Survey of India. Vol. 1, p. 12, retrieved on September 13<sup>th</sup> 2022, 9:10am, <https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/ISFR2019%20Vol-I.pdf>

state. The purpose of the Forest Labour Societies was not only to give the Adivasi labourers full wages along with a share in the profit, but also to train them gradually to take up the responsibility of conducting forest and other business by their cooperative efforts.<sup>98</sup> The Bombay state experiment was complemented in the First Five Year Plan. The Second Five Year Plan recommended the establishment of Forest Labour Societies in an increasing number in all states. It recognised that the manner in which the forest resources are exploited has a great deal of bearing on their welfare; in many ways the penetration of forest contractor into tribal economy has been harmful.<sup>99</sup> The Third Five Year Plan stated that “development of forestry and forest industries is also essential for raising the income of the tribal people who live in the forest areas.”<sup>100</sup> The Working Group of Welfare of Backward Classes for the Fourth Plan stated that the manner in which the existing forest policy is understood and implemented had placed the tribals completely at a disadvantage.<sup>101</sup> The Resolution of the Central Board of Forestry reiterated replacing the contractors with Forest Labour Cooperatives. Gradually, the Forest Labour Cooperatives were set up in most of the states. But the contractual system of exploitation had not yet been rooted out. The Union Minister for Agriculture, Rao Birendra Singh, promised in the Parliament to end the contractual system of exploitation of forest wealth within three years. In fact, the forest dwellers’ share as wage earners in cutting, logging and loading was significantly less than the ruling market price. The forest dwellers could

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<sup>98</sup> L. A Bruijnzeel, ‘Hydrological functions of tropical forests: not seeing the soils for the trees? Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment’, *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 104 (2004): 188

<sup>99</sup> The Indian Forest (Bombay Amendment) Act, 1956, (Bombay Act No. 10 of 1956), Bombay Government Gazette, 1956, Part V, p. 6

<sup>100</sup> Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966), Govt. of India, Planning Commission, the Director, Publications Division, Delhi-6a, p. 77-78

<sup>101</sup> Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, p. 53-54

gain from the forest wealth only when they were involved in its processing through cooperatives.<sup>102</sup> The forest department also employed laborers for a variety of tasks such as road repair, road making and silviculture operations. Workers were also employed for departmental construction — building bridges, culverts and causeways. This gave much needed additional income to the tribals. With the expansion and development of forest—based industries, the demand for the exploitation of minor forest produce had increased. Unlike the major forest produce, minor forest produce in several states was collected by the government agencies and in others by business people. Both the forest department and business people were exploiters. In Madhya Pradesh, trade in tendu, patta, timber, gum, harra, bamboo, sal seeds and catechu were nationalised. The payment of wages in the collection of tendu leaves was on the basis of number of bundles collected.<sup>103</sup> The rate per bundle was different in the bordering states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. For example, when in Uttar Pradesh the rate was higher by 20 paise (US 20) per bundle, a person could not collect more than two bundles a day. Just to earn 40 paise (US 4c) more, the tendu leaf collectors in Madhya Pradesh used to walk 12—20 miles during the night and sell the bundles in Uttar Pradesh anon. In Orissa, the forest department had taken over the collection of tendu leaves. The forest region was classified into subdivisions and ranges. Each range had about ten collection centers from which pluckers received 10 paise (US 1c) for leaves. In this way the government earned annually Rs 44 million (US \$3.4 million) or royalty, and the Forest Corporation a profit of Rs. 20 million (US \$1.5 million). But this profit had been made at the cost of the tribals.<sup>104</sup> Where the minor forest

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 55

<sup>103</sup> L. A Bruijnzeel, 'Hydrological functions of tropical forests: not seeing the soils for the trees? Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment', *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 104 (2004): 190

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 190

produce was not nationalised, business people exploited the forest dwellers. In the Uttarakhand region in Uttar Pradesh, contractors employed local people at nominal wages, but made huge profits themselves. In Chamoli district the Dashauli Gram Swarajya Sangh (1964), intimidated the local people about the prevailing market prices of the different herbs and mushrooms they had collected, and advised them to sell their herbs rather than collect them at nominal wage for the contractor. Some tribal regions had no regular market. At the weekly mandis (marketplaces), private wholesale dealers bought the minor forest produce at very low rates and sold them at huge profits in the cities. Many times they paid the tribals in advance and later bought their goods at nominal costs. Since most of the tribals did not know how to count, the price that was promised often did not correspond to the amount they actually receive. Generally, the trader was a moneylender, too, who bought the produce from the tribals as repayment of a debt, but at incredibly low prices. The Tribal Development Corporations, Forest Corporations and some other cooperative agencies had taken up the sale of some produce, but the moneylender—cum—trader had yet to be eliminated by them.<sup>105</sup>

### **Ecological Problems**

India's national forest policy had not been successful in protecting the ecosystem. According to a UN estimate, fifty percent of the total land area in India was seriously affected by water and wind erosion. The displacement of fertile soil was estimated to be around 6 billion tons a year, thus depriving the country of a vast amount of total plant nutrients. About 4 million hectares of land were in ravines and eroding along mountain

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 191

roads, causing frequent landslides.<sup>106</sup> According to the UN estimate, the siltation rate of different rivers and water reservoirs varied from 150 to 500 acre feet per 100 square miles. Of the total catchment area of about 77.5 million hectares of 30 major river valley projects, nearly 11.6 million hectares required conservation treatment on a priority basis. At the same time, the area of sand cover in Rajasthan was reported to have increased by eighteen percent since the early 1960s. Besides population increase, modern agricultural techniques also seemed to have contributed to this process of desertification.<sup>107</sup> It is because of such gigantic devastation that there was widespread demand for imposing a ban on tree felling. There were reported to be about 500 central and state acts of legislation relating to environmental issues. Some fundamental changes have been proposed in the national forest policy.<sup>108</sup> Thus, the focus seemed to be on the conservation of nature, which in turn implied increasing restrictions on the local people. The past experience showed that the forest policy sought to protect forest wealth from forest dwellers, not from the unscrupulous contractors. In estimating the loss caused by the disturbance of the ecosystem, the dangers posed to the lives and economy of forest dwellers by floods and landslides were often ignored. The afforestation program gave top priority to quick—growing species that could be used as raw material for forest—based industries. Even ecological considerations were often overlooked. On the other hand, the movements by the forest dwellers — Chipko, Bhoomi Sena, Silent Valley Movement, Jharkhand Movement — were insisting on a planned strategy incorporating the needs of the local

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 191

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 192

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 192-193



ecology, local economy and the national interests.<sup>109</sup> Only a people—oriented forest policy and development strategy would be able to bring the forest dwellers in the mainstream of national life without adversely affecting the ecosystem.<sup>110</sup>

### **Decline of Environment**

Since the early nineteenth century, establishment of plantations in different hills led to the destruction of forests which in turn impacted negatively on the environment. In fact, the colonial administration actively encouraged and promoted the British planters by providing concessions. In due course, the planters encroached on vast tracts of common property resources like forests and tanks. The traditional iron—smelting and sugar—boiling industries depending on forests for fuelwood were to some extent responsible for the denudation of green cover in the different hills of south India. These industries had extracted a large quantity of forest resources in different regions of the south India. In fact, the British iron—making industries favoured by the administration availed exclusive privileges extensively and the British sugar—boiling industries continued to consume very large quantities of fuel—wood and speeded the deforestation to some extent in the early nineteenth century. The establishment of the railways in the later part of the nineteenth century provided an additional momentum to the extraction of forest wealth especially, timber and fuel wood. For example, in 1859—60 about 2,45,743 berths were supplied from Salem and Baramahal region alone. Further, the revenue expenditure was much lower than the receipts. It clearly indicated that the forest resources had been

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<sup>109</sup> Ram Dayal Munda and Samar Bosu Mallick, "The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples' Struggle for Autonomy in India", International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 108, (Copenhagen, 2003): 10

<sup>110</sup> Arunabha Ghosh, "Jharkhand Movement: A Study in the Politics of Regionalism", Minerva Associates (Publications), (India, 1998): 10

extracted for the commercial purpose which implied a decline of the environment. Since the early nineteenth century the colonial government had extracted the forest resources for the different commercial purposes and had also denuded them for the establishment of the plantations. Further, it was not only extracted for the Company's requirements but also exported for commercial motives. In fact the colonial government had encouraged the exploitation of forest resources by providing concessions and privileges during the early nineteenth century in different parts of India. To say precisely, the matter of fact was extraction of the forest resources and ensuring that supply for future requirements was the main agenda of the colonial government during the early nineteenth century.<sup>111</sup>

The genre of my work centres round eco-criticism and so by taking into account eco-critical 'Bengali novels' it has been easier for me to address this research from a historical perspective, which is a very new approach towards literary history writing. I have divided my research into the following chapters. The first chapter, *The Forest Dwellers: Ecocriticism And Literary Texts As History*, deals with, what Ecocriticism is and how history forms the foundation for evaluating any kind of interdisciplinary text, as, history itself can bridge the gap between different genres of writing. Literary texts here, does not only deal with romantic nature writing but also elaborates the struggles of the people who are the most important part of nature. In the second chapter, *A Historical Approach Towards Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's Eco-Critical Travelogue "Palamau"*, in Jharkhand (1880–1883), I have dealt with an analysis of this wonderful travelogue which is more of a novel and less of a travelogue by citing the scenario of the

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<sup>111</sup> Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, "Ecological Conflicts and the Environmental Movement in India", *Institute of Social Studies*, (1994). P 110

then Jharkhand to show how the ecological balance was maintained in the dense forest of Palamau by the forest dwellers, despite challenging conditions and threats imposed by the British government. I have mentioned about all the measures taken by the Indian government to preserve the forests and its dwellers. In the third chapter, Man And Nature: A Portrayal Of Environmental Consciousness In Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's Eco-Critical Novel "Aranayak" (1937-1939), I have tried to focus on Purnea, in Bihar, its forest, the forest dwellers and on the man and nature relationship. My main aim here, is to establish how the novelist being the main protagonist himself could see through the miserable lives of the forest dwellers and could give voice to the people who were unheard before. I showed how Satyacharan, the author, wanted to preserve the forest land of Purnea by not letting the British to continue with deforestation and preserve the environment for the survival of its people. Though he was a failure, still his deep love towards nature and the people have made him a true environmentalist. Along with this I have also tried to see how in the post-independence era the Bihar government took necessary measures to preserve the forest lands and rights of the forest dwellers. In the fourth chapter, named, Situating Historically: The Sahitya Akademi Award Winning Eco-Critical Travelogue "Manimahesh" By Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay (1969), I have tried to focus on the travel writing and analyse it historically by taking into account the Gaddis of Bharmaur-Manimahesh, who are a very interesting bunch of tribesmen with totally different characteristics from the tribal people we come across, and I have showed how their rights are being protected and what the government is doing for the betterment of them. Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay, is the first among other novelists who has taken into account the not-so-known tribal community of the Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh There has

not been any historical research on an ecocritical travelogue like Manimahesh and my work would be the first of its kind. By linking this eco-critical text with history and by showing the writer's love for the environment it has become easier to tag the travelogue as an eco-conscious writing where the writer has kept his eyes on every minute detail of the land, its people and the environment.

Works on eco-criticism have been done by many authors in western and eastern literature, but literary novels have never been situated historically, except in, "Narratives and the Making of History: Two Lectures", (First Lecture Sakuntala: Histories of a Narrative), by Romila Thapar. Along with literatures that are describing the environment of the forests, my main focus has been the forest dwellers too. And to situate them in a historical timeline I have taken into account works of eminent historians like David Hardiman in, "The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India", E.T. Dalton in, 'The Kols of Chotanagpore', K.S. Singh in, "The Tribal Situation in India", William Wilson Hunter in, "A Brief History of the Indian Peoples", Arun Bandopadhyay and B.B. Chaudhuri (eds.) in, "Tribes, Forest and Social Formation in Indian History", Daniel J. Rycroft, "Adivasi worlds: Encountering 'Indian' idealism in anthropology before independence", Mahua Sarkar (ed.) 'Environment and the Adivasi World', V. Damodaran in, "Environment and Ethnicity in India 1200-1991", Paul R. Brass in, "Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison", F. B. Bradley Birt in, "Chotanagpore: A lesser known province of the empire", Ranajit Guha in, "Subaltern Studies II", in Ranajit Guha's, edited book, "Writings on South Asian History and Society", Suchibrata Sen in, "The Santhals of Jungle Mahals: An Agrarian History, 1793-1861", Sanjukta Das Gupta in, "Adivasis and the Raj: Socio-economic Transition of the Hos, 1820-1932" and in Subhasis Biswas,

“European Environmentalism in India: Experiments, Expressions and Ideologies (1861-1947)”, which has been a main source of my thesis. Environment being the main genre of my research has made me take into account works of environmental historians like, Ramachandra Guha’s edited book, “Social Ecology” and “The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Changes and Peasant Resistance in the Himalayas”, Amit Bhattacharyya and Mahua Sarkar, edited, “History and the Changing Horizon: Science, Environment and Social Systems”, Vinita Damodaran and Rohan D’Souza’s, “Commonwealth Forestry & Environmental History: Empire, Forests And Colonial Environments In Africa, The Caribbean, South Asia And New Zealand”, Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha in, “This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India”, Subhasis Biswas’s, “European Environmentalism in India: Experiments, Expressions and Ideologies (1861-1947)”, Mahesh Rangarajan in, “Fencing the Forest: Conservation and Ecological Change in India's Central Provinces, 1860-1914” and Richard H. Grove’s, “Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860”, which has helped me in shaping my research. All these combined are literature and environment based works, but my research has a different vision, as it mainly tries to situate the literature, historically, by framing it into an environmental history genre.

To support my research I have taken into account both, primary and secondary sources. The most important primary sources I have consulted are the novels themselves. I have tried to interpret them as nature and environment from an environmental history perspective. These sources gives us a holistic account of the place with particular reference to nature and environment together. Archival sources like several census reports and official documents from the colonial period have played a very important role in

shaping my work. Several published and unpublished books, thesis work and articles by historians, authors, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers and researchers, have acted as my secondary source. Oral history has also acted as a very important part of this research. To complete my research and get access to the different sources I have visited different libraries like the Departmental Library of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, the Central Library of Jadavpur University, National Library of India, Bangiya Sahitya Parisad, the Bihar State Archives and the Himachal Pradesh State Archives. I have done some fieldwork and taken interviews by visiting the places where my work is concentrated. All these have helped me in shaping my work and has given access to research of a very new genre of environmental history.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE FOREST DWELLERS: ECOCRITICISM AND LITERARY TEXTS AS HISTORY**

The world of literature throngs with works dealing with splendor and power of nature. However, the concern for ecology and the threat that the continuous misuse of our environment poses on humanity have only recently caught the attention of the writers. It is this sense of concern and its reflection in literature that has given rise to a new branch of literary theory, namely Ecocriticism. The study of literature has long been preoccupied with historical approaches. However, in recent years critics are increasingly aware of the relation between literature and history, and are drawing insights from the mutual study of these two fields.<sup>112</sup> Nature and literature have always shared a close relationship as is evident in the works of poets and other writers down the ages in almost all cultures of the world. Today the intimate relationship between the natural and social world is being analysed and emphasised in all departments of knowledge and development. The literary critics try to study how this close relationship between nature and society has been textualised by the writers in their works. There have also been numerous debates on

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<sup>112</sup> Vathana Fenn, "Roots Of Ecocriticism: An Exploration Of The History Of Ecocriticism, A Literary Theory Of The Post-Modern World," *Journal Of English Language And Literature (Joell)*, Volume 2 Issue 2, (2015): 113.

whether to include human culture in the physical world. Despite the broad scope of enquiry, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it.<sup>113</sup> It is a broad genre that is known by many names like green cultural studies, eco—poetics and environmental literary criticism, which are some popular names for this relatively new branch of literary criticism. Literary criticism in general examines the relations between writers, texts and “the world”.<sup>114</sup> In most literary theory “the world” is synonymous with society — the social sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of “the world” to include the entire ecosphere. Ecocriticism takes an earth—centered approach to literary criticism. It does not only mean the application of ecology and ecological principles to the study of literature, but also the theoretical approach to inter—relational webs of natural cultural and supernatural phenomena.<sup>115</sup> Eco—critics encourage others to think seriously about the aesthetic and ethical dilemmas posed by the environmental crisis and about how language and literature transmit values with profound ecological implications. The considerable increase in the emergence of Eco—conscious writers in the post—modern era has paved a path for this new kind of critical approach called Ecocriticism.<sup>116</sup> It is a fairly recent but rapidly developing concept in the area of Literary Criticism. It has emerged as a modern ecological literary study and is now acknowledged as a vital critical approach. Ecocriticism not only gives emphasis on the ‘harmony’ of humanity and nature but also talks about the destruction caused to nature by the changes which take place in the modern world for most of which man is directly responsible. Ecocriticism gives a new

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<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, 113-114

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, 115

<sup>115</sup> Alun Munslow, “Authoring the Past: Writing and Rethinking History”, (Routledge, 2013): 4

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, 4-5



meaning to place, setting, and environment. It is one of the youngest revisionist movements, which has swept the human knowledge system over the past few decades. The present world is facing eco—disasters and our environment is now at stake. Only science and technology are not enough to combat the global ecological crisis. We should also make some changes in our attitude towards nature. Literature does not float above life, so it has its role to play. For a long time nature was not given due consideration by the literary critics, so ecologically oriented literature requires a better understanding of nature in its wider significance. Ecocriticism has developed as ‘a worldwide emergent movement’ during the last three decades. The scholars are still engaged in developing its nature and scope. The term Ecocriticism was first coined by William Rueckert in his critical writing “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” in 1978. According to Rueckert, ecocriticism applies to ecology or ecological principles into the study of literature.<sup>117</sup> Lawrence Buell defines ecocriticism “as a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist’s praxis”<sup>118</sup>. Ecocriticism does not simply mean nature study; it has totally distinguished itself from the conventional nature writing. At first, by its ethical stand and commitment to the natural world and then by making the connection between the human and the non—human world.<sup>119</sup> According to Joseph Wood Krutch, Thoreau’s work is not about plants or animals or birds; it is about his relation with them; one may almost say about ‘himself in connection with nature.’<sup>120</sup> Patrick D. Murphy is right in

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<sup>117</sup> William Rueckert, “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism,” *Iowa Review* 9, no. 1 (1978): 79

<sup>118</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* Copyright Date: 1995, Harvard University Press (1996): 4

<sup>119</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, (2005): 10

<sup>120</sup> Joseph Wood Krutch and Oscar Ogg, *Henry David Thoreau*, Methuen and Co. Ltd. London (1948): 25

saying that Ecocriticism is literary “criticism that arises from and is oriented toward a concern with human and nonhuman interaction and interrelationship.”<sup>121</sup> Eco—critics in their study want an ecological perception of nature to change the ways humans inhabit the Earth. Ecocriticism is a rapidly changing theoretical approach, which is different from the traditional approach to literature. Here the critic explores the local or global, the material or physical, or the historical or natural history in the context of a work of art.

An eco—critical approach to literature is often interdisciplinary, citing knowledge of environmental studies, the natural sciences, and cultural and social studies. Loretta Johnson further explains thus: ““Eco”, from the Greek root oikos, means “house”... Just as “economy” is the management or law of the house (nomos = law), “ecology” is the study of the house. Ecocriticism, then, is the criticism of the “house,” i.e., the environment, as represented in literature. But the definition of “house,” or oikos, is not simple.<sup>122</sup> Thus, the questions still remain: What is the environment? What is nature? Why did the term “environment,” which derived itself from the verb “to environ or surround,” change to mean that which is nonhuman? Are not humans natural and a prominent environment in themselves? Where and in what does one live? Ecocriticism is by nature interdisciplinary, invoking knowledge of environmental studies, the natural sciences, and cultural and social studies, all of which play a part in answering the questions it poses”.<sup>123</sup> Over the last three decades, Ecocriticism has emerged as a field of literary study that addresses how humans relate to non—human nature or the environment

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<sup>121</sup> Patrick D. Murphy, *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies: Fences, Boundaries, and Fields*, Lanham: Lexington Books (2009): 217

<sup>122</sup> Loretta Johnson, “Greening the Library: The Fundamentals and Future of Ecocriticism”, *The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment* (December 2009): 7

<sup>123</sup> <[http://www.asle.org/assets/docs/Ecocriticism\\_essay.pdf](http://www.asle.org/assets/docs/Ecocriticism_essay.pdf)> [Accessed 7 September 2022], p. 5

in literature. Today, with the development and expansion of eco—critical studies, any line between human and non—human nature has necessarily been blurred. So when subjected to Ecocriticism, literature of all periods and places — not only eco—centric or environmental literature or nature writing, but all literature is viewed in terms of place, setting, and environment. Ecocriticism is inherently interdisciplinary. Ecocriticism is most appropriately applied to a work in which the landscape itself is a dominant character, when a significant interaction occurs between author and place, character and place.

Eco—critics ask several questions on the relationship between environment and literature, but one question still remains, which seems to be the most important. Literary ecocriticism offers an ecological interpretation of texts. Cheryl Glotfelty says that, “Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”.<sup>124</sup> She lists a number of questions which could be asked by literary eco—critics like “How is nature represented in this sonnet?” and “What cross—fertilisation is possible between literary studies and environmental discourse in related disciplines such as history, philosophy, psychology, art history and ethics?”<sup>125</sup> The term ‘Ecocriticism’ is a short form of ecological literary criticism. The tendency to drop the reference to literature distorts the full ecological implication of this discipline. Kroeber like Howarth, points to the linking function of literary ecocriticism between humanism and science and calls the romantic poets “proto—ecological” because they accepted “a natural environment existent outside of one’s personal psyche”. According to Glen Love (2006), Ecocriticism focuses on the “inter connections between the material world and

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<sup>124</sup> Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, ed., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, (Athens and London: University of Georgia press 1996), 18

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, 19

human culture, specifically the cultural artifacts: language and literature”<sup>126</sup>. Robert Kern in his essay “*Ecocriticism: What is it good for?*” aptly observes, What ecocriticism calls for, then, is a fundamental shift from one context of reading to another, more specifically, a movement from the human to the environmental, or at least exclusively from human to the bio—centric or eco—centric, which is to say a humanism (since we cannot evade our human status or identity) informed by an awareness of the ‘more — than — human.’<sup>127</sup> Arthur Lovejoy’s (1873—1962) contribution in this field is also very eminent. He observes that one of the strangest, most potent and most persistent factors in the western thought is the use of the term ‘nature’ to express the standard of human values, the identification of the good with that which is ‘natural’ or ‘according to nature’. Nature has always proved to be stronger than human. It has often shown its power by controlling manpower through natural calamities like famine, drought, flood, earthquake etc. Human’s life and nature are so interlinked that it is not possible for human beings to separate themselves from its influence. Therefore they have no choice but to accept both nature’s bounty and adversity. This can be said to be reciprocal as nature too is the recipient of human’s action. Our irresponsible actions cause irreparable damages to nature. This is how the chain of ecosystem works in which everything is related to each other and therefore affects each other. However, even with a term that defined a new group of writing, Cheryl Glotfelty’s *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* published in 1996 adeptly narrowed the term in spite of a “postmodern age that

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<sup>126</sup> Nancy Easterlin, “Review: Practical Ecocriticism” review of *Practical Ecocriticism* by Glen A. Love and Dana Phillips, *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 8, no. 1 (2006): 118–29, retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2022, 4:00pm, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41209957>

<sup>127</sup> O. Alan Weltzien and Western American Literature “The ISLE Reader: Ecocriticism, 1993–2003” review of *The ISLE Reader: Ecocriticism, 1993–2003* by Michael P. Branch and Scott Slovic, ed., *The Western Literature Association* Volume 39, Number 2, (Summer 2004): 267

exists in a constant state of flux” as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”.<sup>128</sup>

Ecology has two shades, the shallow, and the deep ecology. Shallow ecology is essentially anthropocentric, which believes that the whole purpose of nature is to serve mankind and humans are the masters of nature; man being the only literary creature thinks himself superior over the others. It also advocates systematic usages of natural resources like coal, gas, forests, oil, etc. for a sustainable future. But deep ecology challenges this conservation mode and advocates preservation of nature to keep it in its original form without any interference of man as nature has its own right to survive. All organisms on this earth have their own intrinsic values and no one is the master of anybody. This realisation will give equal rights to every organism maintaining a balance in the eco—system. Ecocriticism gives emphasis on this eco—consciousness removing the ego—consciousness man. The present environmental crisis is a bi—product of human culture. It is not caused by how the ecosystem functions; but how our ethical system functions; how we behave with ‘Mother Nature’ etc. Ecocriticism builds this awareness among man.<sup>129</sup> There are two waves of ecocriticism as identified by Lawrence Buell. The first wave eco—critics focused on nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction. They used to uphold the philosophy of organism. Here environment effectively means natural environment. The aim of the wave was to preserve ‘biotic community’. The eco—critics of this wave apprised “the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action”. So

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<sup>128</sup> Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, ed., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, (Athens and London: University of Georgia press 1996), 18

<sup>129</sup> Arne Naess, “The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement. A summary,” *Inquiry*, 16:1-4, (1973): 95

ecocriticism initially aimed at earth care. The second wave eco—critics inclined towards environmental justice issues and a ‘social ecocriticism’ that takes urban landscape as seriously as ‘natural landscape’.<sup>130</sup> This wave of ecocriticism is also known as revisionist ecocriticism. It seeks to locate the vestiges of nature in cities and exposes crimes of eco— injustice against society’s marginal section.<sup>131</sup> The eco—critics interpret nature writing texts and at the same time, they use them as a context for analysing the principal customs of our society in relationship to nature. Often, the result is a critique of how our culture devalues and degrades the natural world and the distinction between environmental writing and eco—critical writing is critical to an understanding of ecocriticism. Glotfelty notes that “environmental writing supports a dualism that asserts nature as totally separate from humanity, while eco—critical writing unifies the two, or at least analyses the relationship between them”.<sup>132</sup>

Environmentalism is a critique of industrial modernity. Environmentalism began to take shape in the second half of the twentieth century, in response to perceptions of how environmental damage has become the threat to all lives on the earth. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), is widely traced as a first work in the field of environment study, and the first modern environmentalist movement in its more recent incarnation. Emerging in the 1960s, it gave rise to a rich array of fictional and non—fictional writings concerned with humans’ changing relationship to the natural world. Accordingly, various theories

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<sup>130</sup> Lawrence Buell, “The Emergence of Environmental Criticism,” *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, (2005): 10

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>132</sup> Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, ed., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, (Athens and London: University of Georgia press 1996), 25

and formulations are made in different disciplines of academics.<sup>133</sup> A number of sister disciplines have been emerged in relation to the study of environment like; Environmental Studies; Environmental anthropology; Environmental history; and Environmental philosophy. There is no doubt, that the last decade of twentieth century is known for its industrial development, and it has affected the environment.<sup>134</sup> Ecocriticism is an intentionally broad approach which is by its very nature interdisciplinary. It draws its sustenance from the existing literary theories. All sciences come forward to contribute to the field. Therefore, new theories like Post—colonial Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, Eco—Marxism and Eco—spiritualism are coming into light. But it differs from the other theories in that while all of them consider earth as a social sphere, Ecocriticism considers it as an ecosphere. All other theories are marked by their individual ego—consciousness while Ecocriticism is characterised by eco—consciousness.<sup>135</sup> In short, it is an earth centric approach to literary studies which promotes the understanding of who we are, where we stand, how we should behave with our mother nature etc.<sup>136</sup> In order to meet with the present environmental crisis, the eco—critics play an important role in building up the eco—consciousness among the readers. For this they read major canonical writings; they look at the natural world differently than others.<sup>137</sup> They shift our critical attention from the inner consciousness to the outer; rejects the belief that everything is

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<sup>133</sup> Jagmeet Singh, "Ecocriticism and its' Conceptual Developments: A Sensitive Portrayal Through Critics' Pen", *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, Volume 6 Issue 1, (January – March 2019): 576

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 577

<sup>135</sup> Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1660*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 540

<sup>136</sup> Mahesh Rangarajan, "9. Environmental Histories of India: Of States, Landscapes, and Ecologies" in *The Environment and World History*, ed., Edmund Burke and Kenneth Pomeranz, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009): 233

<sup>137</sup> Serpil Oppermann, "Theorizing Ecocriticism: Toward a Postmodern Eco-critical Practice," (*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 13, no. 2, 2006): 110, retrieved on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2022, 2:30pm, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44070262>

socially or linguistically constructed: believes that Nature really exists beyond ourselves, but is with us and affects us (perhaps fatally if we mistreat it); apply growth and energy, sustainability and unsustainability, balance and imbalance to view nature in literature.<sup>138</sup> Eco—critics lay emphasis on the preservation of landscape in order to save the human race. Ecocriticism not only gives emphasis on the ‘harmony’ of humanity and nature but also talks about the destruction caused to nature by the changes which take place in the modern world for most of which man is directly responsible. Ecocriticism expands the notion of “the world” to include the entire ecosphere. Ecocriticism takes an earth—centered approach to literary criticism. Literary scholars specialise in questions of value, meaning, tradition, point of view, tradition and language and it is in these areas that we are making a substantial contribution to environmental thinking. Over the last three decades, it has emerged as a field of literary study that addresses how humans relate to non—human nature or the environment in literature. Today, with the development and expansion of eco—critical studies, any line between human and nonhuman nature has necessarily blurred. So when subjected to Ecocriticism, literature of all periods and places — not only eco—centric or environmental literature or nature writing, but all literature is viewed in terms of place, setting, and environment.

Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyse the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation. Ecocriticism investigates the relation between humans and the natural world in literature,

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<sup>138</sup> Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, ed., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, (Athens and London: University of Georgia press 1996): 25



it deals with how environmental and cultural issues concerning the environment and attitudes towards nature are presented and analysed. One of the main goals in ecocriticism is to study how individuals in society behave and react in relation to nature and its ecological aspects. This form of criticism has gained a lot of attention during recent years due to higher social emphasis on environmental destruction and increased technology.<sup>139</sup> It is hence a fresh way of analysing and interpreting literary texts, which brings new dimensions to the field of literary and theoretical studies. Ecocriticism is an intentionally broad approach that is known by a number of other designations, including “green (cultural) studies”, “eco—poetics”, and “environmental literary criticism.”<sup>140</sup>

Western thought has often held an utilitarian attitude towards nature — nature is for serving human needs. However, after the eighteenth century, there emerged many voices that demanded a revaluation of the relationship between man and environment, and man’s view of nature. Eco—criticism gets its inspiration from the three major American writers whose works celebrate nature as a life force, and the wilderness as manifested in America. They are Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803—1882), Margaret Fuller (1810—1850), and Henry David Thoreau (1817—1862). The trio belonged to the group of New England writers, poets, essayists, novelists and philosophers collectively known as the transcendentalists, the first major literary movement in America to achieve ‘cultural independence’ from European models.<sup>141</sup> Foundational to this study of work in nature is

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<sup>139</sup> Kalyanakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan, “Science, Environment and Empire History: Comparative Perspectives from Forests in Colonial India.” *Environment and History* 14, no. 1 (2008): 50, retrieved on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, 8:30pm, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20723651>

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, 51

<sup>141</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, “Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature,” *BRICS Journal of Educational Research*, 6(4), (2016): 168

Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1836) definition of nature and art and his argument about what it means to be whole through work in nature. In his essay, "Nature", Emerson defines nature as "essences unchanged by man," and art as a "mixture of man's will with what is unchanged by man".<sup>142</sup> Thus, employing nature as a subject of literary study should address human will in nature. Emerson acknowledges that environmental problems arise because of man's "resumption of power" and that "the problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty...is solved by the redemption of the soul. The ruin or the blank, that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye"<sup>143</sup>. R. W. Emerson had enjoyed the influence of nature in his first reflective prose narrative 'Nature'. The writer here celebrates a nontraditional approach to nature which is popularly known as 'transcendentalism' (a theory that propounds that 'the divine' or 'god' pervades nature). He suggests that reality can be best perceived studying nature. Fuller's 'Summer on the Lake, In 1843' is a transcendental travelogue that encounters the American landscape at large. It is based on the Great Lakes region. Fuller here differentiates the utilitarian motives of the settlers and spiritual aesthetic aims of tourists. But it is Henry David Thoreau (1817—1862), who is considered to be the father of Ecocriticism. Thoreau's 'Walden' is an autobiographical account of his two year stay in a hut on the shore of Walden Pond, two miles away from his home town, Concord. It is a classic account of dropping out of modern life and seeking to renew the self by a 'return to nature'. This book has exerted a strong effect on the attitudes of its readers which changes from ego—consciousness to eco—consciousness.<sup>144</sup> Robert Frost (1874—1963), a major American

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<sup>142</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature", *Boston and Cambridge: James Munroe and Company*, (1836): 5

<sup>143</sup> Vathana Fenn, "Roots Of Ecocriticism: An Exploration Of The History Of Ecocriticism, A Literary Theory Of The Post-Modern World," *Journal Of English Language And Literature (Joell)*, Volume 2 Issue 2, (2015): 118

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 119

poet has made use of woods, lakes, stars, horses, etc. His poems are simple on the surface level. But if we probe deep under the surface we find that nature reveals the universal truth of human life. His *Stopping by the woods on a snowy evening* deals with the perennial beauty of nature, and the obligations of transient human life. Ecocriticism is less developed in the UK than in the USA. Whereas the American writing celebrates nature, the British eco—critics seek to warn us of environmental threats emanating from governmental, industrial, commercial, and neocolonial forces. Rudyard Kipling stayed a long time in India and most of his reactions were on Indian nature. These writers helped the construction of the myth of India and the Orient and treated Indian natural world as the ‘other’. Analysing these literature we can find out how the colonial perspective about Indian nature had developed and what were its real limitations.<sup>145</sup> From the diaries of Rudyard Kipling (1865—1936), we find a vivid description of Indian forests. Kipling’s voice was truly imperialist. But it was directly related with the creation of the image of Indian forests, its wildlife and its people.<sup>146</sup> It should be remembered in this context that English literature exposed the first wave of environmental romanticism in the form of warning, since the seventeenth century where a literature of USA gave it a matured shape since the twentieth century. Jonathan Bate’s (1958) *The Song of the Earth* (2000) argues that colonialism and deforestation have frequently gone together. His *Romantic Ecology* reevaluates the poetry of William Wordsworth (1770—1850) in the context of pastoral tradition in English. Here Bate explores the politics of poetry and argues that Wordsworth is the earliest of eco—critics. Raymond William’s (1921—1988) *‘Country and the City’*

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 120

<sup>146</sup> Subhasis Biswas, “European Environmentalism in India: Experiments, Expressions and Ideologies (1861-1947),” *VDM Verlag Dr. Muller* (2010): 23

(1973) shows a striking contrast between the country and city life. William here represents country life as the hub of modernity, a quintessential place of loneliness.<sup>147</sup> Lawrence Coupe's (1950) 'The Green Studies Readers: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism' (2000) is a comprehensive selection of critical texts which addresses the connection between ecology, culture, and literature. In short, the book is a valid source and a useful entry into Green Literature as it provides a huge amount of sources to be used for research. Arne Naess (1912—2009), a Norwegian philosopher, developed the notion of "Deep Ecology" which emphasises the basic interconnectedness of all life forms and natural features, and presents a symbiotic and holistic world—view rather than an anthropocentric one.<sup>148</sup> Earlier theories in literary and cultural studies focussed on issue of class, race, gender, religion are criteria and "subjects" of critical analysis. The late twentieth century has woken up to a new threat: ecological disaster. The most important environmental problems that humankind faces as a whole are: nuclear war, depletion of valuable natural resources, population explosion, proliferation of exploitative technologies, conquest of space preliminary to using it as a garbage dump, pollution, extinction of species (though not a human problem) among others.<sup>149</sup> In such a context, literary and cultural theory has begun to address the issue as a part of academic discourse. Numerous green movements have sprung up all over the world, and some have even gained representations in the governments. Large scale debates over "dumping," North versus South environmentalism

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<sup>147</sup> Jonathan Bate and Laurence Coupe, ed., "The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism," *Routledge*, (2000): 5

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, 6

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, 7

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, 8

(the necessary differences between the environmentalism of the developed and technologically advanced richer nations — the North, and the poorer, subsistence environmentalism of the developing or “Third World” — the South). Donald Worster’s (1941) “Nature’s Economy” (1977) became a textbook for the study of ecological thought down the ages.<sup>150</sup>

In this context, it can be stated that, Indian philosophy is rich in ecological thought since the Vedas which paid equal importance to all organisms. India is also a land of rich biodiversity. From the Himalayas of North to Kanyakumari of South, from the Bay of Bengal off east to the Arabian Sea on the west, the country has versatile physical surroundings leaving a deep impact on human beings. Literature is not apart from that. A good number of writers deal with eco—critical texts. Eco—critical perspectives may be best perceived in the writings of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1861—1941), who founded Visva—Bharati at Santiniketan far from madding crowd. His ‘Muktadhara’ (1922) and ‘Rakta Karabi’ (1924) are the best example of eco—critical texts where he denounces human atrocities against nature. His eco—critical poems include “The Tame Bird was in a Cage” (reprinted from ‘The Gardener’ in 1913), (The caged bird has even forgotten how to sing) and “I plucked you Flower” (‘The Gardener’, 57: I Plucked Your Flower, 1915), (The humans feel that plucking flowers is their own right. Nature is not a silent spectator. One day it will react. It would not be just a thorn—prick but can be a mighty tsunami. The humans should be careful about this).<sup>151</sup> Apart from Rabindranath Tagore, later writers of India harped on similar views of nature. Anita Desai’s ‘Fire on

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<sup>151</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, “Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature,” *BRICS Journal of Educational Research*, 6(4), (2016): 170

the Mountains'(1977) is a good example of eco—critical text dealing with the problem of animal killing, population explosion, moral degradation of man — all causing a threat to the ecology symbolised by frequent fire in the forest. Kamala Markandaya's 'Nectar in a Sieve' (1954) represents Nature as a destroyer and preserver of life. The novelist here has shown how the evils of industrialisation spoil the sweet harmony of a peasant's life.<sup>152</sup> Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things' (1997) is a portrayal of Exploitation of nature, by human beings in the name of progress and modernisation which is a dominant theme of the novel. The author here has shown her keen awareness of today's pressing environmental issues. The novelist in this novel has raised her voice for the environment, which is now under a great threat of pollution. In this novel, she not only exposes the massive degradation of nature but also reflects on the reason behind its de—humanisation.<sup>153</sup> Ruskin Bond's 'No Room for a Leopard' (1998) presents the pathetic condition of the animals after deforestation. 'All Creatures Great and Small' (1972), 'The Cherry Tree' (1980), 'Tree Lover' (2001), and many others are all about the chain which binds man and nature, as in the chain of the ecosystem, showing interdependence.<sup>154</sup> Kiran Desai in her 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard' (1998) is critical of the hectic town life, having dissatisfied of which the protagonist takes refuge in the Guava Orchard. In her 'The Inheritance of Loss' (2006), the novelist shows how Kanchenjunga pays for the brutality of human aggression. Ecocriticism here gets a political dimension in the novel when an un—estimated loss occurred due to Nepali insurgency causing a lot of damage to human life, animals and the serene beauty of nature. Amitav Ghosh's 'The Hungry

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<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, 170

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, 171

<sup>154</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, "Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature," *BRICS Journal of Educational Research*, 6(4), (2016): 171

Tide' (2005) is a powerful eco—critical text as the novel underscores environmentally and socially oppressive system harbored by humans. The delta of the Sundarbans has been presented as the destroyer and preserver of life. The novel faithfully depicts the state sponsored terrorism to evict the dispossessed Bengali Refugees settled at Marichjhanpi. Ecocriticism as an academic discipline arose rather late in India.<sup>155</sup> The Indian eco—critics making a considerable contribution to ecocriticism in India are as, in her 'Stolen Harvest' (2000), a nice example of eco—critical text, Vandana Shiva (an Indian environmental activist turned eco—critic) denounces the bio—piracy of the west in the name of patents from the poor countries. Thus, she shows that colonisation is not a matter of the past; it is still very much alive. According to her, industrial agriculture has not produced more food; it has destroyed the diverse sources of food. Thus, she gave a neocolonial dimension to ecocriticism. Among her notable contribution to the field of ecocriticism, mention may be made of 'Tomorrow's Biodiversity', 'Soil Not Oil', 'Staying Alive', 'Ecofeminism', 'Violence of the Green Revolution', 'Water Wars', 'Biopiracy', 'Making Peace with the Earth' and the like. Suresh Frederick (Associate Professor, Bishop Heber College, Tamil Nadu) in his article 'Suicidal Motive' (2007) studies poems about animals like squirrels and birds like sparrows who usually love to live near human habitation and help in ecological balance. But the unhealthy practices of human beings threaten their very survival.<sup>156</sup> Nirmaldasan (an Assistant Professor of SRM School of Journalism, Tamil Nadu) along with Nirmal Selvamony, (a Reader in English, Madras Christian College, Chennai) has made notable contributions to 'Oikopoetics' which means the poetics of the 'Oikos' or habitat consisting of the spirits,

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<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, 172

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, 173

humans, nature and culture particular to it. His first volume of verse entitled *An Eaglet in the Skies* (1996) is the joy of creation, a joy much akin to an eaglet that has learned to fly. Ecocriticism in India is now in its second phase, which propagates the amalgamation of the first wave and the second wave as proposed by Lawrence Buell. While the first phase of Ecocriticism promoted regional understanding of ecology, the second phase witnesses Ecocriticism as an organized movement moving towards a global concern.<sup>157</sup>

The historian Arnold Toynbee recorded the effect of human civilisation upon the land and nature in his monumental, “*Mankind and Mother Earth*” (1976). During the 1980s, a series of books and article on the environmental history of South Asia began to emerge. Two American scholars, Robert K. Winters and Richard Tucker tried to find out a link between nationalist protest and colonial forest policy in Western India. In India the pioneering work was done by Ramachandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil.<sup>158</sup> They challenged the central premises of the imperialist historians. To them, the colonial period was an ecological watershed as it disrupted the relationship of forest—based communities and land. They argued that colonial commercial exploitation destroyed the older systems of land use and also promoted commercially valuable trees, at the expense of massive deforestation of species which were vital for subsistence economies. Mahesh Rangarajan does not find such simple polarities between the British and the Indian sets of ideas. Richard Grove questioned Guha and Gadgil about the hypothesis of a purely destructive environmental imperialism. He stated that as colonial expansion proceeded, the environmental experience of European and indigenous people, living within the colonial

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<sup>157</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, “Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature,” *BRICS Journal of Educational Research*, 6(4), (2016): 174

<sup>158</sup> Mahua Sarkar, “Environment and History: Recent Dialogues,” *Kalpaz Publications, Delhi* (2008): 19-20



periphery together played a dynamic part in the construction of the new evaluation of nature and in the growing awareness of destruction.<sup>159</sup> Ajay Skaria, R. Sivaramakrishnan also traces a hybridity in the history of forest, tribes and state making in India. Many other eminent historians like, Vinita Damodaran, Atulri Murli, Rajan Gurukkal, Sumit Guha, Arun Bandyopadhyay, Archana Prasad, Satpal Sangwan are presently working in this new frontier of historical research.<sup>160</sup> Environmental issues and landscape use were also the concern of the Annales School of historians, especially Braudel and Febvre. “Nature and the Orient” (1998) edited by Richard Grove, Vinita Damodaran and Satpal Sangwan, David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha’s “Nature, Culture, Imperialism” (1995) have been significant works in the environmental history of India and Southeast Asia.<sup>161</sup> Various versions of environmentalism developed. Deep ecology and ecofeminism were two important developments. These new ideas questioned the notion of “development” and “modernity,” and argued that all western notions in science, philosophy and politics were “anthropocentric” (human—centred) and “androcentric” (Man/male—centred). Technology, medical science with its animal testing, the cosmetic and fashion industry all came in for scrutiny from environmentalists. Deep ecology, for instance, stressed on a “biocentric” view (as seen in the name of the environmentalist group, “Earth First!!”). Ecocriticism is the result of this new consciousness: that very soon, there will be nothing beautiful (or safe) in nature to discourse about, unless we are very careful.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, 20

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*, 20

<sup>161</sup> Nasrullah Mambrol, *Ecocriticism: An Essay*, “Literary Theory and Criticism,” (November 27, 2016), p. 3, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2022, 3:15pm, <https://literariness.org/2016/11/27/ecocriticism/>

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*, 3-4

Although ecocriticism is about the written texts, not scientific disciplines, it is necessary to understand the term more clearly by having a preliminary idea about what are generally known as ecology and ecosystem in modern biological sciences.<sup>163</sup> Briefly speaking, an ecosystem is a community of both living (biotic) and non—living (abiotic — soil, mud, water, sunlight, air, cloud) things interacting with each other and their larger physical environment. It consists of communities of interdependent organisms inhabiting a common environment as their housekeeping niche, biome, biosphere, or hydrosphere.<sup>164</sup> Ecology is a branch of biology that deals with the interrelationships between organisms (plants, birds, animals, and insects) and their natural habitat. In other words, ecology is the scientific study of biologically diverse ecosystems, complexly variable and unstable through time, weather and seasons. Human ecology, it follows, is a study of human organism in relationship with other biological organisms in their mutually inclusive habitat, be it parasitical or symbiotic.<sup>165</sup> Keeping with time and technology, there has been a growth of environmental studies that is: a multidisciplinary academic field which systematically studies human interaction with the environment and brings together the principles of the physical sciences, commerce, economics and social sciences so as to solve contemporary environmental problems. It is a broad field of study that includes the natural environment, the built environment, and the sets of relationships between them.<sup>166</sup> The field encompasses study in basic principles of ecology and environmental science, as well as associated subjects such as ethics, geography, anthropology, policy, politics,

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<sup>163</sup> Cheryll Glotfelty, *What Is Ecocriticism?*, "Defining Eco-critical Theory and Practice Sixteen Position Papers from the 1994 Western Literature Association Meeting" Salt Lake City, Utah, (6 October 1994): 22

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23

<sup>165</sup> Thomas K. Dean, *What Is Eco-Criticism?*, "Defining Eco-critical Theory and Practice Sixteen Position Papers from the 1994 Western Literature Association Meeting" Salt Lake City, Utah, (6 October 1994): 26

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 26

urban planning, law, economics, philosophy, sociology and social justice, planning, pollution control and natural resource management. Ecocriticism, perhaps the latest in modern critical vocabulary, is the study of literature in relation to nature, ecology and environment. It is an examination of the possible connections made in a text among the notions of place, people, self, society, and, certainly, the physical natural system, including the geographical and geological aspects of the earth. Various called literary ecology, eco—theory, eco—literature, eco—poetry, eco—poetics, eco—composition, eco—consciousness, green writing, and green studies, literature and the environment and their variations, ecocriticism is a demonstration of how the sense of biology, bio—politics, environmentalism, pastoralism, living spaces, and ergonomic designs informs the works of literature. “Put as simply and loosely as possible,” in the view of Ian Marshall (1994), ecocriticism is “literary criticism informed by ecological awareness that means either scientific or spiritual recognition of the interconnections of living things, including humans, with each other and with their environment.”<sup>167</sup> According to Jonathan Culler (1997), ecocriticism has potential to bring change to society: “Most narrowly, it is the study of literary representations of nature and the environment and the changing values associated with them, especially evocations of nature that might inspire changes in attitude and behavior.”<sup>168</sup> Pippa Marland (2013), refers to ecocriticism as an umbrella term that embraces “a range of critical approaches that explore the representation in literature (and other cultural forms) of the relationship between the human and the non—human, largely from the perspective of anxieties around humanity’s destructive impact of

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<sup>167</sup> Ian Marshall, *The Ecocritical Heritage*, “Defining Eco-critical Theory and Practice Sixteen Position Papers from the 1994 Western Literature Association Meeting” Salt Lake City, Utah, (6 October 1994): 30

<sup>168</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*; 9: *Ethics and aesthetics*, “Oxford University Press”, (2nd edn), (1997): 43

the biosphere”.<sup>169</sup> Eco—critical or environmental criticism may have originated from exactly the same anxieties: modern issues of life affecting global warming, desertification, deforestation, inappropriate agriculture, and the human caused damage and degradation to natural environment (or the looming threats of such crises) causing the green peace, climate change, conservation, recycling drives, and animal rights movements going forward. It may also have been prompted the cyclical renewal, regeneration and revitalization in nature from idyllic, rural and rustic to urban and residential landscapes to remote wilderness and seascapes.<sup>170</sup> All this paves the way for Ursula Heise’s (2008), idea of a “world citizenship” based on everyone’s connection to earth as against global capitalism and climate change. Recent decades have consequently seen the “save the earth” movements, following the ecological imbalances, decreasing biodiversity, and the destructive effect, that is, pollution, resulting from urbanisation, industrialisation, and technological mechanisation at the cost of nature. These are among the most important issues facing the countries and communities today, far and near, developed and underdeveloped, or desert and fertile.<sup>171</sup> Considering the global scale of the widely talked about environmental crisis, the United Nations has been regularly organizing international conferences to address the problem of climate change and help the nations meet the challenges thereof. Green movements promoting conservation of plants and animals and protesting environmentally destructive technology have for years proved to be politically effective pressure groups in today’s world politics. It is in this context of earthliness that ecocriticism has emerged as a prominent mode of literary

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 44

<sup>170</sup> Thomas K. Dean, *What Is Eco-Criticism?*, “Defining Eco-critical Theory and Practice Sixteen Position Papers from the 1994 Western Literature Association Meeting” Salt Lake City, Utah, (6 October 1994): 27

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*, 27

criticism and critical theory. It is now an integral part of both literature studies and environmental humanities. Looking for a balance or compromise among the different forms of ecocriticism, David Taylor (2019) defines ecocriticism as “a broad term that groups very disparate types of criticism.”<sup>172</sup> One type is polemical in so much as it distances itself from the text as no more than a linguistic structure, self—sufficient and self—contained, or as a work of merely aesthetic beauty, or as merely depicting human society and human values. Its main interest lies in the physical terrain of the land itself and then in the cultural constructions of environment and human descriptions of an actual landscape. Yet another type such as New Criticism is opposite and also polemical in being solely textual and language centered, based on the close reading of a literary work. In New Criticism’s style of interpretation, according to Terry Eagleton (1996)<sup>173</sup>, it is thought to be “public and objective, inscribed in the very language of the literary text, not a question of some putative ghostly impulse in a long dead author’s head, or the arbitrary private significances a reader might attach to his words. It ignores the milieu in which the text is read, the historical concerns of and influences on the author, and, of course, the cultural background of the reader.”<sup>174</sup> While ecocriticism does not disapprove of cultural critique and historical backgrounds, New Criticism by its very definition does. Both ecocriticism and New Criticism are, however, disinterested in New Historicism, anthropocentrism, and aesthetic viewpoints. Neil Evernden’s *The Social Creation of Nature* (1992), as the title suggests, presents ecocriticism not as a separate or isolated

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<sup>172</sup> Thomas K. Dean, *What Is Eco-Criticism?*, “Defining Eco-critical Theory and Practice Sixteen Position Papers from the 1994 Western Literature Association Meeting” Salt Lake City, Utah, (6 October 1994): 27-28

<sup>173</sup> Terry Eagleton, “Literary Theory An Introduction” (Second Edition), *Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Great Britain*, (1996): 26

<sup>174</sup> Don Scheese, *Some Principles of Ecocriticism*, “Defining Eco-critical Theory and Practice Sixteen Position Papers from the 1994 Western Literature Association Meeting” Salt Lake City, Utah, (6 October 1994): 23

species of criticism as the rigid and exclusively earthbound critics plans to do, but as interdisciplinary in scope and approach. According to Neil Evernden (1943), “Nature is as much a social entity as a physical one. In addition to the physical resources to be harnessed and transformed, it consists of a domain of norms that may be called upon in defense of certain social ideals. In exploring the consequences of conventional understandings of nature, the book also seeks a way around the limitations of a socially created nature in order to defend what is actually imperiled...”<sup>175</sup> In a similar view, Don Scheese (1994)<sup>176</sup> considers eco—studies “inherently political” the way, as she mentions, Judith Fetterley (1978), considers feminism to be political. Not strictly separating ecocriticism from other critical stances such as the aesthetic view and, having much in common with other critics, Scheese attempts to integrate between (1) nature writing and the historicizing literary/critical theories, (2) real nature and “the post—modernist claim that nature is a social and psychological construct,” and (3) ecocriticism and the aesthetic and anthropomorphic considerations. Like many others, Scheese also is asking the eco—critics to be tolerant of their critics. He believes one could benefit from and be informed by interpretations from diverse points of view and so rejects or excludes nothing from the equation because he thinks “all writing is anthropocentric in that it must be filtered through a human consciousness.” In common with others, he shares with us that:

*One of the startling discoveries I have made in teaching nature writing over the years is of the broad community of scholars across the disciplines who regularly incorporate the*

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<sup>175</sup> Lorne Leslie Neil Evernden, “The Paradox of Environmentalism: Symposium Proceedings”, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, 1984, p. 15

<sup>176</sup> Irfan Habib, “Man and Environment: The Ecological History of India”, Aligarh Historians Society, Tulika Books, (Delhi, 2010): 15-16

*literature of place in their courses. Ecocriticism is most appropriately applied to a work in which the landscape itself is a dominant character, when a significant interaction occurs between author and place, characters and place. Landscape by definition includes the non—human elements of place — the rocks, soil, trees, plants, rivers, animals, air — as well as human perceptions and modifications. How an author sees and describes these elements relates to geological, botanical, zoological, meteorological, ecological, as well as aesthetic, social, and psychological, considerations.*<sup>177</sup>

Since, there is hardly any creative writing that is conceivable without some kind of setting in the enlivening and actual life—sustaining external nature that shields and shelters the human element in its bosom. Almost all literary works, in all genres, including folk—and—fairy tales, deeply and meaningfully lend themselves to diverse eco—critical interpretations. They do not yield to the same extent to other critical modes. No other theories — Marxist, Structuralist, Deconstructionist, New Historicist, New Critical and Feminist — would apply as aptly and suitably as ecocriticism does to a large body of literary texts. As just stated, since the majority of literature, as an artistic and/or realistic representation of life (be it a novel, a play, a poem, or even a war poem or an epic narrative of adventure) invariably and indispensably lies in the lap of nature, nothing seems to fall outside the scope of biological and environmental discourse about both the human and nonhuman presences in a text. Due to global ecological crisis, there may indeed be a state of “interregnum” (a term that Fiona Macleod uses to suggest not a break, “no interregnum,” but a continuity in the life of nature even in deep winter around the Scottish

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<sup>177</sup> Don Scheese, *Some Principles of Ecocriticism*, “Defining Eco-critical Theory and Practice Sixteen Position Papers from the 1994 Western Literature Association Meeting” Salt Lake City, Utah, (6 October 1994):26

shores) on the way.<sup>178</sup> Nature has increasingly become “a silenced other,”<sup>179</sup> necessitating that it be foregrounded in the human representations of it and that a portrayal of the harmonious relationship between the human and the natural be consistently made. A large part of literature has of course been devoted to doing precisely that kind of depiction for ages and centuries. The bio—centric vision of poets and writers, as rightly pointed out by eco—critics, one after another (Jonathan Bate, Karl Kroeber, Lawrence Buell, David McCracken, Onno Oerlemans, Scot Russel Sanders, Edward Sapir, Greg Gerrard, Gary Snyder, Kate Soper, Wilhelm Trampe, Dominic Head, William Howarth, Richard Kerridge, Joanna Cullen Brown, James McKusick, Keith Thomas, and Timothy Morton, among others) have made them focus on the interplay of the human and the nonhuman, seeing themselves “as fellow citizens with non—humans in the sylvan surroundings.”<sup>180</sup> As a solution to the problems of technological mechanisation, industrialisation, and urbanisation at the cost of nature, environmentally conscious literary texts suggest that since there cannot be a quick fix, politically or policy wise, there should at least be a change in the human consciousness in terms of locating the place of humans in nature that would challenge the marginalisation of ecological concerns and foreground the impact of ecosystems on life and language.<sup>181</sup>

A decade has passed since Michael P. Cohen (2004), in a widely read essay, took stock of ecocriticism and suggested that it urgently needed to broaden its perspective.<sup>182</sup> To a

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<sup>178</sup> Don Scheese, *Some Principles of Ecocriticism*, “Defining Eco-critical Theory and Practice Sixteen Position Papers from the 1994 Western Literature Association Meeting” Salt Lake City, Utah, (6 October 1994): 27

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 28

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29

<sup>182</sup> Michael P. Cohen, “Blues in the Green: Ecocriticism under Critique Author(s)”, *Oxford University Press on behalf of Forest History Society and American Society for Environmental History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan., 2004): 29



remarkable degree, his hopes for the future of the field were borne out by subsequent developments: ecocriticism has “re—grounded” itself in ecofeminism and postcolonial studies so as to address problems of globalization and environmental justice; it has moved beyond the confines of Anglo—American nature writing and adopted a more ecumenical, cosmopolitan view of its subject; and it has become more hospitable to controversy and genuine debate.<sup>183</sup> Given the prescience of Cohen’s essay, one can be struck by the fact that the change of perspective which was its foremost concern did not come to pass. Ecocriticism and environmental history have not grown any closer than they were back in 2004, rather, they have probably drifted even further apart. This can be understood as reflecting their increasing consolidation, that, the more firmly the two fields established themselves within their respective home disciplines, the less pressing became the need for inspiration and validation; and the scholarship in both is now copious enough and keeping track of internal debates can become an all—absorbing task. One may welcome these developments as a sign of maturity, but one can also see them as worrying symptoms of calcification.<sup>184</sup> Many of the scholars who had been promoting the notion of the environmental humanities over the past few years would probably lean toward the latter view. A large part of the appeal of this new meta—discipline lies in the recovery of the heterodox, eclectic impulses which first gave rise to ecocriticism and environmental history (as well as to related sub—disciplines in other areas of the humanities), but receded in the course of their institutionalisation. Even if one takes a more sober view of the matter, it should be obvious enough that both fields can only profit from a closer engagement. If ecocritics seek to understand not only how particular texts represent the

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 30

interaction between humans and their ecological environment, but also how such representations reflect and shape real world environmental practices, then, they must place them within the larger context of historical dynamics that cannot be inferred from these texts alone.<sup>185</sup> By the same token, the recognition that human beliefs and desires play an essential part in environmental practices entails the corollary that textual interpretation is an indispensable component of historical research. Ecocriticism and environmental history are mutually implicated. The question that matters is how this relationship can be rendered more explicit and more productive.<sup>186</sup> The four essays in this cluster tackle this question from different angles. “No More Eternal than the Hills of the Poets”: On Rachel Carson, Environmentalism, and the Paradox of Nature” by Hannes Bergthaller (2015), takes an approach where the case for collaboration between environmental history and ecocriticism is perhaps most easily made, namely conceptual history. Following the sociologist Niklas Luhmann’s “Ecological Communications: Coping with the Unknown”<sup>187</sup> (1989), it is argued that modernity has produced a bifurcated semantics of nature. On the one hand, there is the nature of the natural sciences; on the other, a normative concept of nature that juxtaposes it with the human domain and serves to anchor social critique.<sup>188</sup> Using the work of Rachel Carson as an example, it can be said that environmentalism can be interpreted as a reaction to the crisis of this modern semantics of nature. Ecocriticism and environmental history have responded differently to this crisis, but they converge in their search for a new concept of nature, which would

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 30-31

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 32

<sup>187</sup> Niklas Luhmann, “Ecological Communication: Coping With The Unknown”, *Polity Press* (1989): 32

<sup>188</sup> Hannes Bergthaller, “No More Eternal than the Hills of the Poets”: On Rachel Carson, Environmentalism, and the Paradox of Nature, “Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment”, (April 2015): 5

be better able to accommodate the paradoxes necessarily engendered by attempts to articulate the unity of society and environment.<sup>189</sup> The essays by Adeline Johns Putra (2015), “Historicising the Networks of Ecology and Culture: Eleanor Anne Porden and Nineteenth Century Climate Change” and Agnes Kneitz (2015), “‘As if the River Was Not Meat and Drink to You’: Social Novels as a Means of Framing Nineteenth Century Environmental Justice”, can be understood as providing alternative genealogies for contemporary environmental concerns.<sup>190</sup> Both build on an insight that was already central to the New Historicism, but which, as Johns Putra emphasises, also resonates with theoretical developments in science and technology studies: text and context are cut from the same cloth; establishing the historical “background” of literary texts involves interpretive procedures that are not essentially different from those applied to the texts themselves. Even the ecological realities to which they are seen as reacting are accessible to us (as they were to their authors) only through multiple mediations.<sup>191</sup> Meticulously interlacing literary and historical sources, Johns Putra traces the ramifications of the discursive and material network from which Eleanor Porden’s ‘The Arctic Expeditions’ emerged a poem that, published in 1818, responded to contemporary reports of Arctic ice melt which in turn had been triggered by the eruption of Mount Tambora in 1815. Porden’s poem thus stands as one of the earliest attempts to imagine global climate change.<sup>192</sup> Agnes Kneitz’ reading of nineteenth century social novels by Charles Dickens

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6

<sup>190</sup> Agnes Kneitz, “As If the River Was Not Meat and Drink to You!”: Social Novels as a Means of Framing Nineteenth-Century Environmental Justice, *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, Volume 22, Issue 1, (Winter 2015): 47

<sup>191</sup> Adeline Johns-Putra and Xi’an Jiaotong, “Historicising the Networks of Ecology and Culture: Eleanor Anne Porden and Nineteenth—Century Climate Change” in *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, (April 2015):1

<sup>192</sup> *ibid.*, 1-2

(1812—1870), Wilhelm Raabe (1831—1910), Upton Sinclair (1878—1968), and Emile Zola (1840—1902), positions them as precursors of a discourse that we have learned, over the past few decades, to refer to as environmental justice — a linkage that contemporary readers have generally overlooked because the inequities these novels address are primarily based on divisions of class, rather than gender or ethnicity.<sup>193</sup> To describe the cultural and ecological work they performed, Kneitz draws on the concept of socio—natural sites as developed by environmental historians Verena Winiwarter and Martin Schmid.<sup>194</sup> Such sites emerge from an interlocking circuit of sensory experience, communication, and physical labour. In this process, the production and reception of texts (both literary and otherwise) is of crucial significance.<sup>195</sup> Social novels, Kneitz argues, helped to shape both the imaginary and the real topography of early industrialized nations, instigating important social reforms. In the last essay of this cluster, “Posthumanism, Environmental History, and Narratives of Collapse”, Dana Phillips (2015), mounts a critique of environmentalist apocalypticism. While the latter is frequently understood as an assault on human arrogance, it implicitly attributes to our species a level of self—knowledge that, from the standpoint of evolutionary theory, must appear as delusional.<sup>196</sup> In their eagerness to impose a reassuringly familiar narrative pattern on the messy history of humanity’s relationship with nature, stories of ecological doom frequently fudge the facts, placing blame where it doesn’t belong or, conversely, allowing us to indulge in

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<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*, 2-3

<sup>194</sup> Verena Winiwarter, Martin Schmid, and Gert Dressel, *Looking at half a millennium of co-existence: the Danube in Vienna as a socio-natural site*, *Water History* 5, (2013): 10

<sup>195</sup> Hannes Bergthaller, “Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment” , (Oxford University Press, Winter 2015, Vol. 22, No. 1): 5

<sup>196</sup> Dana Phillips, “Posthumanism, Environmental History, and Narratives of Collapse”, *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, (Volume 22, Issue 1, Winter 2015): 63-64

fantasies of lost innocence. Phillips argues, that, Posthumanism and environmental history offer an antidote. They complement each other in their de—familiarising effects, enabling us to look at ourselves with alien eyes — and thus helping us to put our current ecological predicament into proper perspective.<sup>197</sup>

So far, the present researcher has delineated most of the theories of ecocriticism. From that multi—tiered perspective I have focused my research on three particular Bengali novels: ‘Palamau’ (1880—1883), ‘Aranyak’ (1937—1939) and Manimahesh (1969). These novels are written in different points of time. Their spaces can broadly be mapped within North and Eastern India, but their micro—spaces are different and reactions to nature are also multi—dimensional. Each of my essays on these novels offer a distinctive idea of the relationship between man and nature and how they are situated in its proper historicity and to do that I have to discuss about the forest dwellers of the particular spaces including the nature.

### **The Forest Dwellers: Who are they? What is their relationship with the forest?**

Without attaching much distinction to the *Aryans* and *Non—Aryans*, it must be conceded that the population of India may be broadly arranged under two distinct divisions — namely, the *Aboriginal* and the *Immigrant*.<sup>198</sup> The term Adivasi refers to the various “indigenous peoples of India” (ādi “original”, “earliest” vāsi “inhabitant”, “settler”): According to Archana Mehendale (2003), “Indigenous communities of India are commonly referred to as tribal or adivasi communities and are recognised as Scheduled

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 65

<sup>198</sup> Horatio Bickerstaffe Rowney, “The Wild Tribes of India”: Introductory Remarks, London (1882): 9

Tribes under the Constitution of India.”<sup>199</sup> India has the most diversified population of native peoples worldwide: According to the official Census held in 2001, Adivasis constitute eight per cent of the nation’s total population, over 84 million people. Unofficial figures vary significantly but represent a much higher proportion of India’s population. For J.J. Roy Burman (2009), “the term ‘indigenous peoples’ itself appears to be contentious in the Indian context as there are many claimants to it”.<sup>200</sup> Yet in 2011, a Supreme Court of India Bench cited historical and anthropological evidence that “ancestors of the present Adivasis were the original inhabitants of India” and asserted that “despite horrible oppression on them, the tribals of India have generally (though not invariably) retained a higher level of ethics than the non—tribals.” Historian Romila Thapar in an interview published March 2, 2016 asserts that in India, “Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Dalits and Adivasis are all equal citizens. All citizens have the right to debate and discuss their duties towards the state and also the obligations of the state to ensure that the claims to human rights of all citizens are met by the state to an equal degree.”<sup>201</sup> “Tribal communities are entitled to being involved in a dialogue on eye level rather than being told how to manage their affairs: Adivasis have a proud History of their own. Wherever their traditional way of life remains feasible, they avoid dependence on charity. India’s representative at the 2007 United Nations General Assembly affirmed his government’s commitment promotion and protection of indigenous peoples’ rights: Ajai

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<sup>199</sup> Archana Mehendale, *Tribal Children’s Right to Education in India & Proclamations on child rights*, “Unesco: Child Rights International Network”, Bangalore, (2003): 1

<sup>200</sup> J.J. Roy Burman, “Adivasi: A Contentious Term to denote Tribes as Indigenous Peoples of India”, *Mainstream*, Vol XLVII, No 32, (July 25, 2009)

<sup>201</sup> Romila Thapar, “Nationalism does not allow the Hindu in India to claim primacy”, *The HINDU*, March 02, 2016, p. 1, retrieved on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2022, 6:15pm, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/Historian—Romila—Thapar—says—Nationalism—does—not—allow—the—Hindu—in—India—to—claim—primacy/article61451355.ece>

Malhotra (India) said his country had consistently favoured the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples' rights and affirmed their right to autonomy or self—government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as means and ways for financing their autonomous functions.”<sup>202</sup>

The tribal population in India is accepted to be the oldest population of the land. These communities have lived for centuries in the forest and hilly regions, and at present they are found in a wide central belt beginning with the Aravalli Hills in the West and extending through the Dangs, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Bengal to Assam. There are tribes in the North in the lower ranges of the Himalayas, and also in the South in the Western and Eastern Ghats, and in the Vindhya and Satpura mountains. There is a small, but very important tribal population in the Andaman, Nicobar, Maldives and other islands off the mainland. Since the first census in India it has been found difficult to reach a correct estimate of their population, and equally difficult has been the problem of their definition and classification.<sup>203</sup> In the various Census Reports and studies of the Castes and Tribes, they have been called by various names, like ‘aboriginal tribes’, ‘primitive tribes’, ‘tribal populations’, ‘animist’, ‘Hindu tribal’, etc. In the Indian Constitution this population is termed as the Scheduled Tribes. The Schedule of Tribes was issued by the President of the Republic in March, 1950, in order to determine the tribal groups who were privileged to enjoy the special rights and benefits conferred by the Constitution on the Scheduled Tribes. According to this Schedule, the tribal population in 1950 was 178.75 lakhs, consisting of 245 tribes. Before Partition, the estimated tribal population in

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<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*, 1-2

<sup>203</sup> Tribal Cultural Heritage in India Foundation: A guided tour, (1 December 2018): 2, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2022, 1:00pm, [www.indiantribalheritage.org](http://www.indiantribalheritage.org).

India was about 26 millions.<sup>204</sup> A very small section of the tribal population might have been transferred to areas now belonging to Pakistan. The reduced estimate of the population of Scheduled Tribes in 1950 is, therefore, due to the fact that a section of the tribal population which was entirely acculturated with the non—tribal population are not classified as tribals.

In order to determine the correct population of Scheduled Tribes, it is necessary to define a scheduled tribe. A tribe consists of a group of families who are bound together by kinship, usually descending from a common mythical or legendary ancestor and who live in a common region, speak a common dialect and have a common history. A tribe is invariably endogamous. All tribal groups which can be covered by this general definition of a tribe are not necessarily Scheduled Tribes. For many centuries, the tribal population has come into contact with other different human groups and cultures.<sup>205</sup> This contact has necessarily led to different types of inter—actions, co—operation and conflict, leading to a high degree of acculturation, and sometimes even to total assimilation with groups possessing more dominant cultures. It has been suggested, therefore, that the tribal population should be classified into the following groups: (1) Forest dwellers; (2) Ruralised tribals; (3) Acculturated tribals and (4) Assimilated tribals. The Scheduled tribes will be only those who have not yet been acculturated to any great degree with non—tribal communities. There are six distinct features which could be taken into consideration to determine whether a particular tribe should be put on the Schedule. These factors are: (1) The nature of the physical region, and communications in that region; (2)

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* 3-4



language; (3) economic life; (4) religion; (5) social organisation and type of marriage and family life; and (6) the cultural pattern of the group, its traditions and modes of living.<sup>206</sup> Though the tribal population has lived in India from the earliest times, there is no historical evidence to show that they are the first inhabitants of the land. Likewise there is no evidence about the lands which were originally occupied by the tribes found in India at the present day. In the absence of any definite information regarding their early history or subsequent migrations, it is to be assumed that, whilst certain tribes in India could have been the original dwellers, other tribes might have migrated into India from outside the country, especially from Burma, Tibet and China. Some tribes must have migrated from one part of the country to another during the last many centuries.<sup>207</sup>

The construction of railways and the gradual opening up of the country side by highways broke down the barriers between the forest dwellers in the tribal areas, and the agricultural communities in the plains.<sup>208</sup> This resulted in different types of relationships, regular contacts for the exchange of commodities, and the intensification of the process of acculturation which is still continuing. The constant growth of population, its pressure on the soil, the desire for acquisition of land allied to the land policy of the British Government, and the greater use of money as a medium of exchange reduced the possibilities of hunting as well as hunting areas in the tribal territory.<sup>209</sup> The introduction of an element of absentee landlords in tribal areas turned a large section of tribal into

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<sup>206</sup> Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, "Rights of Tribals and Forest Dwellers, Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs", (07.08.2014): 20

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 20-21

<sup>208</sup> "Report Of The Committee To Study Development In Hill States Arising From Management Of Forest Lands With Special Focus On Creation Of Infrastructure", 'Livelihood And Human Development Planning Commission Government of India New Delhi', (November 2013): 24

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 24

agricultural labourers, or drove a part of the tribal population to cities like Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad to become industrial workers. During the transition period from hunting to agricultural economy, the tribals commenced, what is now known as “shifting cultivation”,<sup>210</sup> whereby each year they occupied a particular area, set fire to it, broadcast seeds, and harvested a scanty crop of coarse cereals. This kind of cultivation is continued by some tribes even at the present day, though organised efforts are being made by the Government to settle this type of primitive agriculturists to a more permanent form of improved cultivation. Pastoral tribes, especially where there were suitable pasturelands, were not uncommon in India; the Todas of the Nilgiri hills, the Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh and some tribes in Southern India are important examples of a grassland economy. The tribals were quite successful in breeding cattle, and a majority of them kept herds of goats and developed poultry farming.<sup>211</sup> Elements of hunting, fishing, animal husbandry and agriculture are thus found amongst the tribes of India, whilst the section of industrial workers is also sufficiently large. The gradual death of hunting economy has to be examined in the light of the food problem of the country, as well as the importance of adjusting the economic activities of human groups to the physical environments in which they live. The competition between hunting animal life for food supply and the economic development of a forest for the purpose of timber and other commercial products has ended the possibilities of hunting in many areas; and once the trees are destroyed, there is the possibility of acquiring land for the purpose of agriculture.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 25

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 26

As the importance of a forest is now realised, the policy of afforestation could be linked with the restoration of hunting grounds; and there is the possibility of developing a hunting economy, supplemented by a scientific exploitation of the forest for timber and a large number of other forest products through co—operatives organised amongst tribal communities.<sup>213</sup> Where the tribal have taken to agriculture, and where irrigation facilities are available, they will be naturally acculturated to the rest of the rural population of the country. By now it has been proved that the tribes can work efficiently in well—developed industrial areas; and therefore, it should be possible to develop mining and other industries based on local raw materials within the areas in which the tribes live. The tribes at the present day have a very low standard of life. Their poverty is due to their inability to take the fullest advantage of their physical environment to develop profitable economic activities whilst they have to live in a social environment which stimulates artificial desires which cannot be easily satisfied. The tribes themselves remarked that within the same environment they were once able to live a comparatively easy existence where there was food and they were able to weave their colourful clothing and wear attractive ornaments; and live in well— constructed and artistic houses.<sup>214</sup> There was work, leisure and cultural recreation full of song, music and dance. Development of communications, extensive use of money economy, and greater contact with new tribal population deprived them of opportunities for their normal economic activity. They lost their lands to money lenders, and the gradual destitution of their forests for commercial purposes led them into a life of inadequately paid wage earners where there was no

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<sup>213</sup> B. H. Mehta, "Historical Background Of Tribal Population", p. 236, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2021, 7:30pm, <https://ijsw.tiss.edu/collect/ijsw/index/assoc/HASH018b/22b1969f.dir/doc.pdf>

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 236-237

hunting to supplement their food, and where they had to buy grains for which they had little cash. Thus began an existence of chronic malnutrition facing the entire tribal population. The degeneration of clothing habits, and the gradual disappearance of well—built houses is a story of hardly one hundred years. The absence of freedom in their own environment, lack of money, and worries and anxieties or a life of want and suffering have told on their happy ways of living, and the decadence of tribal arts and culture are today very much in evidence.<sup>215</sup> No historical data are available about the health and physical fitness of the tribal population. It is generally assumed that where small concentrations of people live a natural life, they maintain a high standard of health and fitness. Highly developed senses and virile physique possessing agility, stamina and high powers of endurance were common to tribal population till malnutrition and poverty entered their lives to be followed by diseases which took a high toll of human life. Throughout the tribal areas, the belief in the doctrine of ‘possession’ and of supernatural causation of disease, yet prevails.<sup>216</sup> The traditional medicine man with his potions and magic rituals, yet exists. The deficiency of health services in rural areas is well known, and the tribal areas which are extensive and lacking in communications, with the population scattered over vast distances, have been hardly provided with any medical assistance up to now. Some of the diseases commonly prevailing in tribal areas are malaria, scabies and other skin diseases, venereal diseases, small pox, leprosy, tuberculosis, trachoma, glaucoma and elephantiasis. Unhygienic environmental conditions, malnutrition, insanitary water supply, lack of protection against climate, and some harmful social customs and practices are some of the known causes for the extensive

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<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 238

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 239

prevalence of diseases among the tribal population.<sup>217</sup> The story of the tribes are retained in the literary texts. The design of the present thesis is to interpret literary texts as history.

### **Interpreting Texts as History**

Historical context is an important part of life and literature, and without it, memories, stories, and characters have less meaning. Historical context deals with the details that surround an occurrence. In more technical terms, historical context refers to the social, religious, economic, and political conditions that existed during a certain time and place. Basically, it is all the details of the time and place in which a situation occurs, and those details are what enable us to interpret and analyse works or events of the past, or even the future, rather than merely judge them by contemporary standards. In literature, a strong understanding of the historical context behind a work's creation can give us a better understanding of and appreciation for the narrative.<sup>218</sup> In analysing historical events, context can help us understand what motivates people to behave as they did. Put another way, context is what gives meaning to the details. It is important, however, that we do not confuse context with cause. Cause is the action that creates an outcome; context is the environment in which that action and outcome occur. No work of literature can be fully appreciated or understood without historical context. What may seem nonsensical or even offensive to contemporary sensibilities, might actually be interpreted in a completely different manner by considering the era it is from. A good example is Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," published in 1885. It is considered an enduring work

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 239-240

<sup>218</sup> Grace Fleming, "The Importance of Historic Context in Analysis and Interpretation," 'ThoughtCo', (September 9, 2021), p. 5

of American literature and a biting social satire. But it is also criticised by modern critics for its casual use of a racial epithet to describe Huck's friend Jim, a freedom-seeking enslaved person. Such language is shocking and offensive to many readers today, but in the context of the day, it was the common place language for many.<sup>219</sup>

Back in the mid-1880s, when attitudes toward newly liberated enslaved African Americans were often indifferent at best and hostile at worst, the casual use of such racial epithets would not have been considered unusual. In fact, what is actually more surprising, given the historical context of when the novel was written, is Huck's treating Jim not as his inferior but as his equal — something rarely portrayed in the literature of the time. Similarly, Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein"<sup>220</sup> cannot be fully appreciated by a reader who is unaware of the Romantic Movement that took place in art and literature in the early 19th century. It was a time of rapid social and political upheaval in Europe when lives were transformed by the technological disruptions of the Industrial Age. The Romantics captured the public's sense of isolation and fear that many experienced as a result of these social changes. "Frankenstein" becomes more than a good monster story, it becomes an allegory for how technology can destroy us.<sup>221</sup>

The manner in which we construct the past is now acknowledged as an important process in the writing of history. This involves appropriating the past, an act in which the concerns of the present are apparent. Historical sources are used to construct a link between an event in the past and how we view it today. It can be argued that there are in addition

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<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7

many representations of an event between the points at which it happened at the present, and that these representations are significant to the eventual understanding of the past. Such representations in the form of a narrative may either be fictional or may claim to embody an event, but in both cases they address themselves to a historical moment.<sup>222</sup> This brings the relationship between narrative and history to the forefront. Does the retelling of the same narrative help our understanding of historical change in as much as the retelling reflects change in both society and ideology? Can we treat the act of narrativisation or the making of a narrative, as constituting an event?<sup>223</sup> Every narrative has a context which is consciously or subconsciously derived from a world view and an ideology. However, this is not to authenticate a story as history, for a story remains fictional. But it can reveal perspectives of a time and a society and it can be analysed as representing such a perspective, which emerges all the more clearly through a comparison of its retellings. A fictionalised narrative cannot be treated as history but it can be an indicator of a past condition.<sup>224</sup>

A narrative can have its own biography and the changes it manifests can provide us with a view of historical change. By historical change I do not mean just chronology but rather, the manifold dimensions of the historical context. A narrative frequently recreated over time becomes multi—layered like a palimpsest. One can attempt to reveal the many pasts which went into the making of its present. Where the retellings of a narrative or where narratives implying an event, become contesting versions, the differing perspectives also

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<sup>222</sup> Romila Thapar, “Narratives and the Making of History: Two Lectures”, (First Lecture Sakuntala: Histories of a Narrative), *Oxford University Press* (2000): 1-2

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3

provide evidence for historical constructions. This relationship has been the subject of lively discussion among historians. Best known perhaps was the discussion between Lawrence Stone on the revival of narrative in history and its critique by Eric Hobsbawm, published in the 1980s in the British historical journal, *Past and Present*.<sup>225</sup> The discussion focuses largely on whether there was a shift away from social and economic history, drawing on the disciplines of the social sciences, towards directing attention to language, culture and ideas and a focus on micro events. Was this a new way of viewing the structures of the story and of society? The suggested duality was found to be untenable since there was a considerable overlap in both sources and interpretations; even narrative history as it has developed in recent times, was not just a bald telling of a story.<sup>226</sup> The new use of narrative incorporated analytical history and the analyses of the micro event illuminated the macro generalization. The discussion has taken a different form in this decade with the introduction of what has been termed ‘the linguistic turn’. Some have stated that history as a discipline has no future given the kind of analyses of narrative which are possible. History in this argument becomes a kind of pointillist history — rather like the style of painting a collection of unconnected dots which taken together compose a picture. Historians have reacted with the logical argument that even these dots have to be contextualized as indeed does the picture itself. However significant the understanding of the fragments may be, history attempts to look at the larger whole. What ‘the linguistic

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<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4

<sup>226</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History*, “Oxford University Press on behalf of The Past and Present Society”, No. 85 (Nov., 1979): 11-12, retrieved on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2022, 6:00pm, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/650677>



tum'<sup>227</sup> has done is to make historians more aware of the nuances of language and words, which far from terminating historical investigation, have added to its precision.

The writing of history has had a continuous interface with literature. Historians have culled literature for information on what may have happened in the past, the statements being juxtaposed with other kinds of evidence. This is a legitimate activity. I would however suggest a sharpening of this interface by changing the focus somewhat, by searching for the historical perspectives which this interface provides, through examining the representations present in the narrative. The same narrative or approximately the same, can occur in variant forms as different genres of literature — in this case, the story of Sakuntala in the Mahabharata, the play of Kalidasa, the prose—poem in Brajabhasa. From a different perspective but with a bearing on the narrative, are the many translations of the Kalidasa play where the act of translation in itself becomes a cultural negotiation, and there is also the commentary in the form of an essay by Rabindranath Tagore. These are significant moments in the biography of a narrative.<sup>228</sup>

But there is more than just an interface between literature and history. The narrative of Sakuntala, highlights the gender perspective. The same character is depicted differently in the variant forms. Does this reflect different social perceptions, the understanding of which requires some familiarity with the historical context? The form which the variants take — epic fragment, drama, poetry — and the cultural interpretations which they encourage, makes the narrative an item in cultural history.<sup>229</sup> Choosing a particular item

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>228</sup> Romila Thapar, "Narratives and the Making of History: Two Lectures", (First Lecture Sakuntala: Histories of a Narrative), *Oxford University Press* (2000): 11

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 11-12

from the past and recreating it as a variant is in part, an act of historical significance. The past is viewed from the present, wherever the present may be located, and that which is selected from the past goes into constructing a tradition or constructing a history. A tradition is never handed down intact from generation to generation, however appealing this idea may seem. Innovation is what gives it vitality. The items selected from the past are often so chosen as to legitimise the values and codes of the present. In selecting and recasting cultural items we highlight some and marginalise others. The act of selection becomes a dialogue with the past. The point in time at which the selection is being made gives a different value to the selection as a cultural symbol, as an idiom, as an icon.<sup>230</sup> This has happened throughout our cultural history, although our awareness of this process is perhaps more apparent now. Where the narrative is culturally central to our own present today, we have also to see it as a part of the intervention of the colonial period and recognise the disjuncture this may produce. The concept of culture in relation to the early past, implies an intersecting of disciplines of which, history, is foundational. This involves the original text and its historical contexts, as also frequently the Orientalist view of it and equally frequently, the internalising of this view by commentators of the last century or two. And more recently, the questioning of this view. Inevitably there is a contextualising of the Orientalist re-presentation and European perspectives brought to bear on the reading. A single item can therefore have multiple identities which change at historical moments. Understanding a cultural item historically requires some comprehension of the worldview which it represented. Each version has some relation with those which preceded it: a relation ranging from endorsement to contestation of

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<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 12

earlier versions.<sup>231</sup> The main motive of this research paper is to narrate chosen literary texts which puts light on the tribal ecology and environment, its preservation and decay, and links it with history. As literature is an imaginary examination of a particular society and environment, history preserves those because with passing time texts become archives which helps in preserving writings and help in further readings and researches.

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<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13

### CHAPTER 3

#### A HISTORICAL APPROACH TOWARDS SANJIB CHANDRA CHATTOPADHYAY'S ECO-CRITICAL TRAVELOGUE "PALAMAU" (1880– 1883)

Eco—criticism is a term used for the observation and study of the relationship between the literature and the earth's environment. It takes an interdisciplinary point of view by analysing the works of authors, researchers, and poets in the context of environmental issues and nature. Since the purpose, scope, and methodology of this theory are a bit confusing, it is difficult to have all eco—critics agreed to this. However, some of them also propose the solutions to the current environmental issues. In the context of scope, the critics call this term as a broad approach that is also known by several other names, i.e. Environmental literary criticism, green studies, and eco—poetics. It is also referred to by some other fields such as ecology, social ecology, bio—politics, sustainable design, environmental history, environmentalism, and others.<sup>232</sup> Generally, the traditional theory considers the linguistics or the cultural background or the social background as an important factor, eco—critics take nature as a dominant factor as they believe that our evolution as a society is largely dependent on the forces of nature. Because, according to

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<sup>232</sup> Nasrullah Mambrol, *Ecocriticism: An Essay*, "Literary Theory and Criticism," (November 27, 2016), retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, 11:00am, p. 3, <https://literariness.org/2016/11/27/ecocriticism/>

them, the world in which we live is not made only with the language and social elements. It is only one of the many factors responsible for the existence and development of humans. Life including the human life is heavily affected by the role nature and environment plays and thus nature is the most important consideration of this theory.<sup>233</sup> After converting into the field of theory, the green criticism was split into parts and one part developed itself as a branch dedicated to rereading and analyzing the role of nature, representation and the natural elements in the literary works produced by the scholars from the worldwide. Green studies are merely the regional literature as it takes into consideration the differences of nature in different places. But the central source of thoughts, research, and findings in this field will always be the authors and poets well—known and established in the world of literature.<sup>234</sup> This paper attempts to revisit one of the earliest and most significant contributions towards the rich oeuvre of Bengali travelogues made by Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay through his work *Palamau* (first published serially in *Bangadarshan* from December, 1880 to March, 1883) and to situate it historically and compare it with available archival sources of the colonial government. According to Ashin Dasgupta, “It cannot be denied that, imagination is one of the key factors to elaborate a person’s life. But historical imagination and literary imagination are not the same. History always stays outside the event that takes place, a historian is an audience to the events that take place. But an author takes up the task of bringing the harsh truth of life in front of the audience, so an author is the creator.”<sup>235</sup> This discussion will widen the study of eco—criticism and would deal with the primary sources, too and

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<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>235</sup> Ashin Dasgupta, “*Itihash o Shaityo*”, *Ananda Publishers*, 1989: 27

make a distinctive approach towards writing history with the help of a travelogue, which will deal with the then colonial situation and also how the tribal people of Palamau were looked upon by the civilised world and how the tribal people, who were a part of the nature, could go to any extent to preserve their mother land and so, this writing itself will be unique in its own essence.

Secular travel writing has been a major part of Bengali literature since the late nineteenth century when the race towards colonial modernity had opened up new avenues of exploration, both spatial and imaginary.<sup>236</sup> Travel narratives by men predominantly and later by a few women who had the opportunity of travelling or migrating abroad with their kin have been documented as an extremely popular genre with a steady market demand and readership in both the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The early years of the nineteenth century had already witnessed a massive imperial interest in mapping and charting unknown territories through not just cartographic and related expedition activities but also through the proliferation of travel literature which sought to reinstate a consolidated sense of British masculinity and hegemony.<sup>237</sup> Bengali periodical writings from the mid nineteenth century onwards in magazines, journals, etc. were naturally influenced by the thrill and excitement of adventure and travel abroad in exotic, unfamiliar lands. Coupled with this was an increasing conscious urge to fashion a sense of the ‘modern’ native self as well as the impulse to forge a cohesive sense of identity and nationalism. Most of these existing records relate to the travels of Bengalis to the West, as Supriya Chaudhuri (2019) states in her article “Indian Travel Writing”, “personally

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<sup>236</sup> Supriya Chaudhuri, “Travels to Europe and Beyond”: Indian Travel Writing, subsection: 2, ed. Nandini Das and Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, (Cambridge University Press, 2019): 168

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 169

shaped by the modern sense of a self in movement as they engage with the problematics of modernity itself, developing contrasted models of Indian nationalism”<sup>238</sup>. However, gradually from the beginning of the twentieth century, the interest of the travellers appears to have shifted towards an exploration of Asia and the territorial interiors of India in particular, with a newly imagined sense of cultural and political solidarity. Apart from these patriotic and nationalist moorings, there were probably very few forays into the realm of Romantic travel writings. With the arrival of intellectuals like Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay (1834—1889), Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay (1894—1950) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861—1941) to the scene, the notion of travel for the sake of pleasure, excitement and Romantic curiosity was perhaps broached seriously for the first time in the realm of Bengali travel writings. However, these writings were also not shorn of the negotiations between the colonised, native subject on the one hand, and the ideas of modernity, development, civilisational progress and freedom on the other.<sup>239</sup>

From the early years of the twentieth century we see a tendency to explore the Eastern horizon. With the burgeoning of the idea of ‘Greater India’<sup>240</sup>, nationalism had found a firmer ground under its feet. Along with Japan, China and South Asian islands, explorations of Central Asia had also begun. Apart from big names like Rabindranath Tagore (e.g, *Japan Yatri* (1918) and *Java Yatrir Patra* (1929)), Indumadhav Mallik (*Chin Bhraman*, 1911) and Benoy Kumar Sarkar (*Chiner Baudha O Confusian Dharma*,

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<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 169—170

<sup>239</sup> Stella Chitralkha Biswas, *The Travels and Travails of a Bengali: Reading Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay’s ‘Palamau’, ‘Café Dissensus’*, (October 23, 2020): 2

<sup>240</sup> Simonti Sen, “Emergence of Secular Travel in Bengali Cultural Universe: Some Passing Thoughts”, ed. Somdatta Mandal in *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities “India and Travel Narratives”* (Vol. 12, No. 3, 2020): 10

Chinader Jiban Yatra, Chiner Dunia Pujo, Pekinger Nana Mahallay etc., all published in Prabasi, 1916) and so on, the East was also explored by women like Hariprabha Takeda (1890—1972) and Saroj Nalini Dutt (1887—1925).<sup>241</sup> In all these accounts variety of tropes were employed to bring home to the readers an image of India's 'glorious past' when she was the civilizer, a role unfortunately usurped by the Europeans in the present times. However, it will be simplistic to try to read into every travel account by Bengalis of the time some kind of social or political purpose; people also responded to the call of the unknown and had personal dreams to fulfill. Thus Bimal Mukherjee, undeterred by all uncertainties and risks, set out on a world tour on a bicycle. His account of the tour from 1926—1937 was later published in a book form as *Du Chakay Dunia* (1986).<sup>242</sup>

While considering travel writings from a historical perspective, it is indeed necessary to look at the important developments that took place in the modes of travel in nineteenth century Bengal. While roads and waterways were the only options open to travellers initially, the establishment of the railways for the first time in Bengal in 1854 between Howrah and Hooghly greatly revolutionised not only travel but the entire gamut of Bengali socio—cultural life.<sup>243</sup> The gradual expansion of links between the city and the rural or suburban interiors boosted the advancement of various socio—economic prospects and egged the growth of secular leisure travel all the more, though within a highly gendered framework of understanding modernity and mobility. However, the idea of romantic travel entails the choice of a peculiar and yet common mode of locomotion

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<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 10—11

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>243</sup> Government of India, *Classified List of Gazetted Establishment of Indian Railways*, Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), (07.05.2022): 1



within the laps of Nature, that which lay beyond the grasp of the colonial project of modernity. Walking or dawdling happened to be one of the most common means of travel for the young, penniless Romantics of Europe, a trope which seems to have particularly interested Bengali Romantic travel writers as well.<sup>244</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopdhyay's travelogue, Palamau dwells upon this idea of leisurely Romantic travel in a hilly, wilderness clad location which was perhaps yet to be ravished by the imperialist mechanisms of control. The virgin topography of Palamau, with its indigenous tribal inhabitants opens up a niche for the narrator to negotiate with the binaries of civilized and uncivilised, progress and stagnation, the metropole and the margin, etc. His Romantic philosophising on the exotic natural beauty of Palamau and anthropological take while enunciating the customs, traditions and lives of the Kol community are manifest with these colonial and cultural broodings, typical of every native subject in the nineteenth century.<sup>245</sup> To describe Palamau it is very important to take into account what events were happening in Jharkhand area to get a clear vision of the tribes living there.

### **Jharkhand: The Tribes and their Uprising**

Jharkhand played a significant role in the Indian freedom movement. It provided financial support to the struggling coal mines and industrial workers and contributed generously to the Congress funds. The pain and sacrifices of Sidhu Murmu, Kanhu Murmu Tilka Manjhi, and the Birsa Munda will be always remembered.<sup>246</sup> Jharkhand being an

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 1—2

<sup>245</sup> Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ed., 'Selected Subaltern Studies', *Oxford University Press*, (New York, 1988): 157

<sup>246</sup> Mark Poffenberger and Chhatrapati Singh, "Communities and the state: re—establishing the balance in Indian Forest Policy", in Mark Poffenberger and Betsy McGean, ed., 'Village Voices, Forest Choices: Joint Forest Management in India', *Oxford University Press*, (Delhi, 1998): 58

Industrial place was always vulnerable for exploitation by the British, but at the same time, it had also offered a lot to the Indian national movement. National leaders frequented time and again and took an active part in solving industrial and labour problems. Revolutionary nationalism entered in Jharkhand after the formation of Bihar and Orissa. Jharkhand also had a locational advantage during the freedom struggle, in the coalfield areas it was easy to give shelter to absconders and get to learn the dynamics of gun powder without the knowledge of the corollary authority. So Jharkhand became an important center of revolutionary activities.<sup>247</sup>

### **Tribal Resistance and Aspirations for self—rule:**

The concept of self—rule can be traced way back from Jharkhand tribal movement before enunciation by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi. Adivasi armed revolts and resistance characteristically differed from other contemporary currents of the struggle for independence. Adivasi revolts were mass uprisings of peasants. They used bows and arrows and other traditional arms against firearms. Their struggle was for freedom, natural justice, identity and traditional rights on land, forest and water. They adopted the tactics of guerilla warfare.<sup>248</sup> They fought against the British army and their sepoy, police, zamindars, money lenders and government administrators. It might sound strange to many but the native tribes – considered illiterate, naive, and backward by rest of the people from the so—called modern society – are among the first torchbearers of protest against the invasion of forests by the outsiders and the British knew it too well. The subjugation and

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 59

<sup>248</sup> Robert D. Benford, and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 600, retrieved on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 10am, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/223459>

colonisation of Jharkhand region by the British East India Company resulted in spontaneous resistance from the local people.<sup>249</sup> Almost a hundred years before India's First War of Independence (1857), tribes of Jharkhand were already engaged in a series of armed struggle to liberate their land from the British colonial rule.<sup>250</sup> There was a glorious history of resistance by the forest—dwelling tribes who stood up to protect their community—based governance and control on the surrounding forests. Even non—tribal people of Jharkhand felt proud about the legendary tribal leaders such as Tilka Manjhi (Jabra Pahadia), Sidhu, Kanhu, Birsa Munda, Tana Bhagat, etc who not only caused heavy damages to the powerful White invaders but also forced them to enact legislation to protect their land rights. The historic acts such as Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act (1908) and Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act (1912) are two examples of the impact of tribal struggle against oppression. Tribal struggle in Jharkhand gave a new direction to the Indian national movement.<sup>251</sup>

### **The course of the Tribal Revolt:**

According to David Hardiman, “The study of Adivasi movements can enrich our knowledge of some of the central themes of the history of India during the colonial period. These concern the religiosity of peasant consciousness, the structures of the pre—colonial society, the impact of the colonial rule and laws on these society, and the manner in which the Indian peasantry of which the Adivasis are an important component – have both adapted to and struggled against this harsh new social system. We can, furthermore, learn

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 600—601

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 601

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 601—602

something about Indian nationalism at the village level, as we have seen these movements often developed a nationalist content. It is for these reasons that I have undertaken a full length study of a movement which was considered by many educated observers – both at the time and subsequently to have been the product of mere ignorance and superstition. By doing so I hope to be able to provide a history which can be a source of encouragement and pride to a people who have suffered grievous and prolonged injustices over the past century, not the least of which is to have a major movement of their so denigrated.”<sup>252</sup>

The tribes of Jharkhand had struggled immensely during the colonial period due to outside intervention in every sphere of their life. Jharkhand is located on the Chota Nagpur Plateau and Santhal Parganas and abounds with forests, minerals, and scenic beauty. The subjugation and colonisation of Jharkhand region by the British East India Company resulted in spontaneous resistance from the local tribes. In fact, the Adivasis frequently engaged the British in armed struggle in order to take control of their lands from 1771 to 1900 AD. The first ever revolt against the landlords and the British government was led by Tilka Manjhi – a valiant Santhal leader in Santhal tribal belt – in 1771.<sup>253</sup> Then in 1779, the Bhumij tribes rose in arms in Manbhum, now in West Bengal. It was followed by the Chero tribe’s unrest in Palamau in 1800 AD. Seven years later in 1807, the Oraons in Barway murdered the powerful landlord of Srinagar, West of Gumla. Soon the uprisings spread throughout Gumla. Then it spread eastward to neighboring Tamar areas of the Munda tribes who rose in revolt in 1811 and 1813. The Hos in Singhbhum came out in open revolt in 1820 and fought against the landlords and the British troops for two

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<sup>252</sup> David Hardiman, “The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India”, *Oxford University Press*, (Delhi, 1995): 16

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–17

years. This is known as the Larka Kol Risings 1820 to 1821.<sup>254</sup> Then came the great Kol Rising of 1832 which was quite strong and greatly upset the British administration in Jharkhand. It was a determined attempt to resist attempts by the Zamindars to oust the tribal peasants from their hereditary possessions.<sup>255</sup> The Santhal rebellion broke out in 1855 under the leadership of two brothers Sidhu and Kanhu. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Birsa Munda's "Ulgulan" (revolt) broke out in 1895 and lasted till 1900. Though the revolt initially started in the Munda belt of Khunti, it soon spread to other areas. It was the longest and the stiffest tribal revolt against the British occupiers.<sup>256</sup> It was also the last organised armed tribal revolt in Jharkhand. Needless to say, this uprising was also quelled by the superior firepower and Birsa was soon killed. In the twentieth century, the tribal uprising was influenced by the mainstream freedom movement of Mahatma Gandhi and the focus shifted from sporadic uprising to party politics led by the urban intelligentsia. In 1914, Jatra Oraon started what is called the Tana Movement. Later this movement joined the Satyagraha Movement of Mahatma Gandhi in 1920 and stopped giving land tax to the Government. In 1915, the Chota Nagpur Unnati Samaj was established for the socio—economic development of the tribes. In 1928, it petitioned to the Simon Commission for a separate tribal Jharkhand State which was ignored. Then in 1931, the able Oraon organised Adivasi Mahasabha which merged with the Chota Nagpur Unnati Samaj in 1935, in order to become a stronger political force. In 1939, Jaipal Singh from Darjeeling became the president of the Adivasi Mahasabha,

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<sup>254</sup> E.T Dalton, 'The Kols of Chotanagpore', *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, Vol. VI., (London, 1867): 10

<sup>255</sup> Sanjukta Dasgupta, "Adivasis and the Raj: Socio-economic Transitions of the Hos, 1820-1932", *Orient Black Swan*, (New Delhi, 2011): 26

<sup>256</sup> E.T Dalton, 'The Kols of Chotanagpore', *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, Vol. VI., (London, 1867): 11

which was renamed “Jharkhand Party” after independence. Jaipal Singh remained its president from 1939 to 1960.<sup>257</sup>

### **Jharkhand Movement as a Social Movement:**

Social movements are generally conceived as a manifestation of collective behaviour. They are often the results of organised group efforts aimed at some reform of the existing social structure or creating a newer one through revolutionary activities. They can also assume the form of a counter—group activity for the resistance of such changes in the status quo. In this sense, Robert D. Benford (2000) defines social movements as “collective attempts to promote or resist change in a society or a group.”<sup>258</sup> On the basis of their objectives, social movements vary in scale and nature. If the objective of any social movement has some bearing across the whole society then it certainly acquires a larger scale than the one which has some particular objectives relating to any specific group or segment of society. The Jharkhand region, as we all know, is the home of numerous Adivasi communities. These Adivasis along with their social and cultural attributes come very close to what we mean by an ethnic group. In the movement, these Adivasis undoubtedly are a major force to reckon with. Due to this, the movement is often designated to be an Adivasi movement, hence ethnic.<sup>259</sup> But this is only one side of the argument. There are scholars who launch a severe criticism against this on the following grounds. Firstly, the imposition of the ethnic status upon the Adivasi community follows from the word ‘tribe’ which is a colonial construct purposefully applied to convey a sense

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>258</sup> Robert D. Benford, and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 612, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2022, 7:15am, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/223459>

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 612—613

of inferiority to those indigenous communities who tried to resist the colonial encroachment in India right from its beginning. In the words of K.S. Singh, the tribal communities who with a sensitivity born of isolation and with a relatively intact mechanism of social control revolted more often and far more violently than any other administrative sanction.<sup>260</sup> Secondly, although the Adivasis are participating in the movement in large numbers, non—Adivasis are also present in it. Hence it is incorrect to designate it solely as an ethnic movement. Finally, the objectives of the movement changed with the passage of time and the movement gradually acquired considerable maturity, which can be revealed from its objectives as it enveloped to cover the aspirations of the different cross—sections of the Jharkhand society.<sup>261</sup> For the analysis of social movements, this debate, however, has no serious implication simply because there is no point in characterising a social movement on the basis of some of its dimensions exclusively. As a matter of fact, all the social institutions of any given society play their role either actively or passively in the long history of it. Ethnicity which is shaped by the social and cultural institutions of any society, hence, may assume significance in some stages in the life history of a social movement.<sup>262</sup> The history of the Jharkhand movement should be traced back to the introduction of British rule in India. It is by no means, the colonisers, who were the first to subjugate the indigenous Adivasi communities of Jharkhand, in fact, it well happened in the pre—British period when the independent native states of this region were converted into tributaries of the Mughal Empire. This resulted in a considerable increase in the economic significance of the region. To cope

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<sup>260</sup> K.S. Singh, "The Tribal Situation in India", (*Indian Institute of Advanced Studies*, 1972): 47

<sup>261</sup> William Wilson Hunter, "A Brief History of the Indian Peoples", *Oxford Clarendon Press* (1895): 29

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 30

with the demands of the changing economy the indigenous states required the generation of agricultural surpluses and for this, they invited people from the plains who with their better agricultural technology could do this. By affecting the economic sphere through the change in the agricultural relations of production and the cultural sphere through the introduction of people from outside the region the Mughal rule prepared the ground for rural class struggle with all of its pre—conditions.<sup>263</sup> British colonialism made very excellent use of this situation and added some more dimensions. Through the enactment of the Permanent Settlement Regulations Act in 1793, it introduced the concept of private property in land, which was unknown in Indian history.<sup>264</sup> As a result of this most of the erstwhile Adivasi rajas or chieftains were converted into zamindars or landlords and the common peasants were transformed into serfs or Rayats. Instead of payment of nominal subscription to the Mughal emperors, British rule made the payment of land revenue a compulsion. The responsibility of revenue collection was vested with the zamindars. The burden of this proved to be enormous for the peasants and a large number of them were forced to sell their lands, only to become landless labourers.<sup>265</sup> The moneylenders, liquor vendors and other people from outside the region exploited this situation. Hence a new class of absentee landlords was also created.<sup>266</sup> By undermining the local rajas or the chieftains the British rule for the first time in Indian history tried to bring this region under its uniform administrative network. The people of this region did not have any such experience of the monolithic ruling. This provided a severe blow to their political

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<sup>263</sup> Ram Dayal Munda and Samar Bosu Mallick, “The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples’ Struggle for Autonomy in India”, *International Work Group for Indigenous Affair*, 108, (Copenhagen, 2003): 25

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 25—26

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 26

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 27



organisation, which was governed more by custom rather than contract.<sup>267</sup> The Adivasis of this region conceived of themselves as natural owners of the land, which they have reclaimed by extensive labour. Labourer, land and the forest were not merely viewed as means of production in their custom; they were rather, culturally and religiously, associated with the land and forest. In fact, the land was the primary medium through which, in their view, they were connected to their ancestors. So, they could hardly tolerate their alienation from the land and the forest as created by the British agrarian policies. These, therefore, brought them into the arena of resistance movement for the first time in Indian history.<sup>268</sup> The Jharkhand Movement, as we know it today, definitely has its legacy in these earlier insurrections of the indigenous communities of this region. Hence, the Jharkhand Movement started through the unfolding of the agrarian movements pitted against the colonial agrarian policy. Then onwards, it passed a long course of time to reach its present state. This period can be analysed and divided into four discernible phases which are also indicative of the underlying trends of the movement in relation to the social, economic, cultural and political scenario through which it passed and is still passing today. The phases are, (1) The phase of Agrarian Struggle (1765—1845), (2) The phase of Consolidation (1845—1920), (3) The phase of Confusion (1920—1970), (4) The phase of Elevation to Social Movement (1970 onwards).<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 30

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 30—31

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 32

### **Phase of Agrarian Movement (1765—1845)**

In the words of Alvin Johnson (1935), “true agrarian movements take place whenever urban interest have encroached, in fact, or in seeming, upon vital rural interests. Hence agrarian movements take place whenever urban penetration occurs in the rural areas. It may be through the influence of urban values, (as for example, interdependence, individualism, etc.) or through the acquisition of better lands in the rural area, the imposition of land revenue, land tax and so on. Hence, in any agrarian movement both the culture and economy occupy the center stage.”<sup>270</sup> In this phase of the Jharkhand movement, all the uprisings bore the evidence of agrarian movement, especially, the later ones. The major peasant uprisings of this phase were, (1) First Chuar Rebellion (1767), (2) Dhalbhum Rebellion (1769—1774), (3) Tilka Manjhis War (1784—1785), (4) Pahadia Revolt (1788—1791), (5) First Tamar Rebellion (1795), (6) Second Chuar Rebellion (1798—1799), (7) Chero Revolt (1800), (8) Second Tamar Rebellion (1820), (9) Ho Movement (1820—1821), (10) Kol Insurrection (1831—1832), (11) Bhumij Movement (1832—1833), (12) Santhal Rebellion (1887).<sup>271</sup> British encroachment into the Jharkhand region started in the year 1765 after receiving the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. At its initial stage, colonial administrators were basically interested in collecting land revenues from this region which was quite inaccessible due to its heavy hilly and forest covers. Apart from this, the British administrators had to face another difficulty and that was concerning the attitude of the indigenous communities who refused to pay land revenues. Hence payment of land revenue and that too in a compulsory manner

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<sup>270</sup> Alvin Johnson, “Agrarian Movements”, *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. I, (New York, 1935): 4

<sup>271</sup> Ram Dayal Munda and Samar Bosu Mallick, “The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples’ Struggle for Autonomy in India”, *International Work Group for Indigenous Affair*, 108, (Copenhagen, 2003): 9—10

was the basic reason behind the uprisings of this phase, especially those prior to 1793, the year in which the Permanent Settlement Regulation Act was enacted.<sup>272</sup> Along with all these, solely the land question came into prominence so it cannot be said that all the pre—conditions of an agrarian movement were present there. Here, a mixture of the essences of rural class struggle and agrarian movements is witnessed. The Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 brought certain administrative changes which much more directly undermined the traditional customs of the Adivasi communities of this region.<sup>273</sup> Firstly, the payment of land revenue by the cultivators to their chiefs were customarily guided, but the Permanent Settlement Act tried to suddenly substitute contract for custom as argued by W.W. Hunter.<sup>274</sup> Secondly, the law and order of this region were maintained by the ghatwals<sup>275</sup> or the likes under the command of the local chiefs who were well informed of the customs and local cultures of the people. These pykes enjoyed gifts of lands from their chiefs for the service rendered by them. But the Permanent Settlement Act brought these lands also under its purview. Naturally, the pykes suffered due to this change and became rebellious. The British administration dispossessed the pykes from their duties and the government took into its hands the law and order system. The indigenous people perceived it as a threat to their traditional system of administration. Thirdly, due to the strict revenue assessment, most of the local chiefs were found in huge arrears and their estates were auctioned to meet the revenue balances. The indigenous

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<sup>272</sup> Arun Bandopadhyay and B.B. Chaudhuri (eds.), "Tribes, Forest and Social Formation in Indian History", *Manohar*, (New Delhi, 2004): 224

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 224—225

<sup>274</sup> William Wilson Hunter, "A Brief History of the Indian Peoples", *Oxford Clarendon Press* (1895): 42

<sup>275</sup> K.S. Singh, "The Tribal Situation in India", (*Indian Institute of Advanced Studies*, 1972): 24, "Malik or Malak is a gotra of Jats found in Haryana, India. The Malik Jats were originally called Ghatwal (or Gathwala); they proudly started calling themselves malik ("lord"). They were zamindars (landowners) during the Mughal era."

communities had a traditional organic relationship with their chiefs and could not bear the system that eventually led to their extinction. Finally, and most importantly, the estates of the local chiefs in arrears were auctioned and in most of the cases, they were purchased by the outsiders, mostly non—Adivasi zamindars. This was the final assault to be tolerated by the Adivasis.<sup>276</sup> They perceived the entry of the non—Adivasis into the region to establish their cultural distinctiveness. Therefore, the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 marginalised the peasantry economically and also drove them towards a state of cultural alienation.<sup>277</sup> The traditional economic and political organisations of the indigenous people centering on the autonomous village community were undermined. The entry of the outsiders in this region became associated with a considerable degree of urban encroachment which had its effect felt in the life of the indigenous communities there. This resulted in a value conflict and the all—important issue of the collective identity of these communities was facing the crisis of disintegration. The uprisings after 1793 were, thus, the voices of protest of the indigenous Adivasi communities to protect their economic self—sufficiency and cultural distinctiveness. The second Chuar Rebellion of 1798—99, later the Kol Insurrection of 1831—32 and the Bhumij Movement of 1832—33 most prominently showed this trend. In all these the Adivasi communities especially the Bhumijis of the Jungle Mahal and adjacent areas of the Chota Nagpur plateau region participated in large numbers.<sup>278</sup> Economic to the question of land and land revenues were definitely there but the uprisings were more and more directed to protect

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<sup>276</sup> V. Damodaran, (2000) “Environment and Ethnicity in India 1200—1991, by Sumit Guha. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1999). Reviewed by Dr. Vinita Damodaran”, *Journal of Political Ecology* 7(1): 12

<sup>277</sup> Sumit Guha, “Environment and ethnicity in India, 1200—1991”, Cambridge University Press, 2006: 33

<sup>278</sup> Ram Dayal Munda and Samar Bosu Mallick, “The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples’ Struggle for Autonomy in India”, *International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs*, 108, (Copenhagen, 2003): 11

the culture and custom of the autochthons which were on the verge of submergence due to the onslaught of an alien rule. The magnitude of these rebellions reached such a proportion that led E.T. Dalton to write with a great degree of despair, “I do not think that the settlement of any one of the Bhumij Jungle Mahal was effected without a fight.”<sup>279</sup> Hence, all these rebellions, particularly those that took place after 1793 can be designated as agrarian struggles.

### **Phase of Consolidation (1845—1920)**

Agrarian struggles are always indicative of an emerging conflict of values, ideas, beliefs, and, so to speak, cultures of the two polar opposites – the rural and the urban. In the case of underdeveloped economies where the differences between these two are highly pronounced, there the rural communities due to its sheer backwardness, grown out of relative isolation, develop kind of hatred towards the townsmen. But the backwardness of the rural people should not be blamed for this exclusively. In fact, the urbanites also try to use the backwardness of the rural people and exploit them, their resources.<sup>280</sup> This conflict often turns to be more violent if some other dimensions viz. race, class, region, ethnicity, etc. are added into it. In the case of the Jharkhand movement, this happened in its second phase where the conflicts, which were already there in its first phase, assumed some other dimensions, most prominently, ethnicity. Ethnicity, as we all know it, is primarily a method of group formation in the societies on cultural accounts. It pertains to the individual, or the group, a sense of identity, which only assumes significance in the context of inter—group relations by creating a demarcation between us and them. With

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<sup>279</sup> E. T. Dalton, “Tribal History of Eastern India”, Cosmo Publications, (Illinois, 1.1.1973): 56

<sup>280</sup> Paul R. Brass, “Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison”, Sage Publications, (New Delhi, 1991): 120

the entry of the outsiders into the Jharkhand region, and with the increasing intensity of the agrarian struggles in the first phase, gradually the insider—outsider contradiction became crystallised.<sup>281</sup> In the second phase, this gained momentum, as the insiders were increasingly becoming conscious of their Adivasi (original inhabitant) identity in contrast to the outsiders who were largely non—Adivasis. These outsiders were mostly the zamindars, moneylenders, etc. created by the British rule, and they used to exploit the peasantry severally. In this way, the identity of the outsider became largely conterminous with that of exploiter to the insider Adivasis whom the latter designated as Diku.<sup>282</sup> Christianity in the second phase of the movement also played a major role in the process of identity formation of the indigenous communities of Jharkhand. Christianity was introduced into this region in the middle of the nineteenth century. Unlike in some other parts of the globe, Christianity in India never became an agrarian institution. Rather, the main mission of Christianity in India was to prepare a support base for the British rule among the indigenous communities. To attain this they quite successfully utilised the prevailing insider—outsider contradiction, which was there in the socio—cultural mosaic of Indian society. In Jharkhand also, like many other Adivasi—inhabited regions of India, they appropriated it and tried to consolidate it. In the words of K.S.Singh, “they gave a new sense of self—respect to the tribal peasants and sought to create a separate identity for them.”<sup>283</sup> Although Ganga Narayans, Ho uprising of 1832—33 was the final major uprising of the first phase but the fallout of the combined uprisings continued until the middle of the next decade. In this period the British authority felt the need of separating

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<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 120—121

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 121

<sup>283</sup> E. T. Dalton, “Tribal History of Eastern India”, Cosmo Publications, (Illinois, 1.1.1973): 65

Chota Nagpur from the Calcutta Presidency for its smooth administrative functioning. For this, the South West Frontier Agency (SWFA) was established and Captain Wilkinson became the first administrative agent of it.<sup>284</sup> This separation also contributed to the development of the ethnic identity of the inhabitants of the Chota Nagpur region. This was the major achievement of all the uprisings of the first phase. Hence it was 1845, the year which saw the introduction of Christianity into this region, which should be regarded as the starting point of the second phase. The major uprisings of the second phase are, (1) The Santhal Insurrection (1855), (2) The Sepoy Mutiny (1857), (3) Sardaro Agitation or Mulku Larai (1858—1895), (4) Kherwar Movement (1874), (5) The Birsa Munda Movement (Ulgulan) (1895—1900), (6) Tana Bhagat Movement (1914—19).<sup>285</sup> In all these uprising ethnicities played a major role although the general discontent of the masses arising out of the exploitative British agrarian policy cannot be neglect. But what it can be asserted with a great degree of certainty is that all these were the products of an ethnicised socio—political structure where the question of economic inequality was viewed through the lenses of ethnicity. All these uprisings centered on the Adivasi—non—Adivasi divide. The Adivasis in order to safeguard their distinct cultural identity, which in their view was jeopardised by the non—Adivasis often sought the political solution of it in the form of self—determination through self—rule. This was most prominent in the Santhal Insurrection, the Kherwar Movement and the Birsa Munda Movement.<sup>286</sup> In the first two, the Santhals participated enormously and tried to establish the Santhal Raj while the Birsa Munda Movement went for the Munda Raj under the

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 65—66

<sup>285</sup> David Hardiman, "Peasant resistance in India, 1858—1914", Delhi ; *Oxford University Press*, (New York, 1992):100

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 100—101

leadership of Birsa Munda. Religion also proved to be very significant in shaping the ethnic identity of the contending groups.<sup>287</sup> J. Marshman (1867),<sup>288</sup> J.T. Wheeler (1889),<sup>289</sup> Lee—Warner (1904)<sup>290</sup> and C.E. Buckland (1901)<sup>291</sup> have made brief references of tribal uprisings in India during the British rule. E.T. Dalton (1815—1880), W.W. Hunter (1840—1900), H.H. Risley (1851—1911), F.B. Bradley—Birt (1874—1963) and L.S.S. O’Malley (1874—1941), were administrators—turned—anthropologists and treated the tribes as ‘noble savages’. W.W. Hunter writes about the Santhal insurrection in his, ‘The Annals of Rural Bengal’ (1868). It refers to the developments of European enterprises like the indigo factories, the rail—road construction, etc., which would benefit the Santhal labourers set by the British, but it does not refer to the ill—treatment of Santhal women by the European engineers and others. It does not even refer to the Santhal resentment at the encroachment of their isolated existence. Belonging to the imperialist school, Hunter only hoped that the Santhals would someday accept ‘civilisation’.<sup>292</sup> Except, F. B. Bradley—Birt, who wrote a monograph on the Santhal Parganas in 1905, they did not recognise the special problem of the Santhals and often studied them along with other tribes. Besides, they had an administrator’s prejudice against the violent rebellion of the Santhals and looked at things with western standard and values.<sup>293</sup> The exception perhaps is According to Ranajit Guha,

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 103

<sup>288</sup> John Clark Marshman, “The History of India” Vol. II, Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, (London, 1867): 48

<sup>289</sup> J. Talboys Wheeler, “A Short History of India”, *London MacMillan & Co.*, (New York, 1889): 31

<sup>290</sup> William Lee Warner, “The Life of the Marque of Dalhousie”, Vol. II, *London MacMillan & Co. Ltd.*, (New York, 1904): 22

<sup>291</sup> C.E. Buckland, “Bengal under the Lieutenant—Governors, 1854—1898”, Vol. I, S. K. Lahiri & Co., (Calcutta, 1901): 12

<sup>292</sup> W. W. Hunter, “The Annals of Rural Bengal”, *Smith, Elder, & Co.*, (London, 1869): 8

<sup>293</sup> F. B. Bradley Birt, “Chotanagpore: A lesser known province of the empire”, *Smith, Elder, & Co.*, (London, 1903):50



in his *Subaltern Studies II*, (1983) the “sympathy expressed for the enemies of the Raj in the tertiary discourse”<sup>294</sup> like Suprakash Ray's *Bharater Krishak— bidroha O Ganatantrik Sangram* (Vol. 1, Calcutta, 1966) is similar to that in the “colonial secondary discourse” like Hunter's. On the other hand, Ray thought that the very presence of the British colonial power in India had compelled these tribals to raise in revolt, for the landlords and moneylenders derived their authority from the new regulations of Cornwallis as well as from the contract replacing custom and money economy taking the place of barter. Another writer L. Natarajan (*Peasant Uprisings in India, 1850—1900*, Bombay, 1953) also thinks that “the Clarion call that summoned the Santhals to battle” was soon heard elsewhere, the Indigo unrest of 1860, the Pabna and Bogra uprising of 1872, the Maratha Peasant Rising in Poona and Ahmadnagar in 1875—76. This is supported by Abdulla Rasul (*Saontal Bidroher Amar Kahani*, Calcutta, 1954). If Natarajan and Rasul ignore the element of religiosity and emphasise its secular aspects, Ray, Datta and others take note of the religious aspect of the movement.<sup>295</sup> R. Carstairs, who served in the Santhal Parganas for more than a decade in the late nineteenth century, published an interesting historical novel entitled *Harma's Village* (1935). The first independent study of the strictly historical nature of the Santhal rising of 1855 was that of the late K. K. Dutta: *The Santhal Insurrection of 1855—57* (Calcutta, 1940). The author, born and brought up in the Santhal Parganas district, consulted some important original records available in the record—rooms of Dumka, the headquarters of this district, as well as some contemporary and later accounts of the Hul in Bengali.<sup>296</sup> Unfortunately the Santhals, like other tribals,

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<sup>294</sup> Ranajit Guha, “*Subaltern Studies II*”, *Oxford University Press*, (Calcutta, 1983): 38

<sup>295</sup> David Hardiman, “The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India”, *Oxford University Press*, (Delhi, 1995): 30

<sup>296</sup> *ibid.*, 33

left no written accounts, but Dr. Dutta did not even care to take note of their oral tradition as contained in Chotrae Desmanjhi Reak Katha by C. Deshmanjhi (1966). A. Mitra in his Hand Book, Bankura (Calcutta, 1953), refers to another work in ‘Santali’ Hor Koren Mare Hapram Ko Reyak Katha, Nor did Datta take up Carstairs’s memoirs and the Settlement Report of the Santhal Parganas (Macpherson, 1908).<sup>297</sup> As Macpherson says (Foreword to Harma’s Village), Carstairs, a household name among the Santhals, played a significant role in the foundation of the Santhal System with its unique agrarian code. Wood, who served in the Santhal Parganas from 1860 to 1879 and later John Boxwell, W.B. Oldham and Carstairs were sympathetic interpreters of the spirit behind the Act XXXVII of 1855 and the Regulation III of 1872. Dr. Datta’s main emphasis was on the anti—mahajan (grocer—cum—usurer) stance of the rebels.<sup>298</sup> He underlayed the anti—British dimension, presumably because he was a government servant. In 1945, W.G. Archer and W.J. Gulshaw in their paper on the Santhal Rebellion (Man in India, Ranchi, vol. 25, no. 4, Dec. 1945), extensively quoted from E.G. Man’s work “Sonthalia and the Sonthals” (London, 1867) and asserted that the ignorance and the inexperience of the British authorities in dealing with the primitive tribes was an important cause of the rebellion. The first Indian writer to understand the Santhal point of view was N.B. Roy, who presented two papers on the Hul to the Indian Historical Records Commission, New Delhi, in 1960 and 1961. He criticised the stereotype begun by Hunter, F. B. Bradley—Birt, K.K. Datta and others that the Santhals bore no ill—will against the alien government and the European planters and others and that their wrath was directed against

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<sup>297</sup> T.S Macpherson, *Final Report on the operation of a record of rights in Pargana Porahat, Dist. Singhbhum*, (Calcutta, 1908):83

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 84

the Hindu and Muslim usurers, darogas and others. Even though the Santhals gained economically by the development of the indigo and silk industry and the introduction of the railways, they hated the European and Eurasian entrepreneurs, railway engineers, planters, Christian missionaries and others who threatened the Santhals traditional way of life. They could not tolerate the insult to the Santhal women. Hence they “Swore before their God that not one Feringhie could escape their vengeance.” as written in P.O. Bodding’s “Kharwar Movement among the Santhals”, published in 1921—22 which was an anthropological study. John Macdougall’s, “Agrarian reform versus religious revitalisation in collective resistance to peasantisation among the Mundas, Oraons and Santhals, 1858—95” was a sociological study.<sup>299</sup> Apart from the Santhal Insurrection, in all the other uprisings religion became a major issue. The Sepoy mutiny of 1857 got ready support from the Hindu zamindars of the region as they were engaged in the struggle against their Christian ryots who were aided by the Christian missionaries. The suppression of the mutiny turned the tide in favor of the Christian ryots to launch severe protest movements against the zamindars, which marked the beginning of the Sardari Agitation in which the Munda Sardars and the Oraons of Chota Nagpur region took part in 1858. Just as the Sardari Agitation was influenced by the Christian missionaries so was the Kherwar Movement of 1874 by Hinduism.<sup>300</sup> According to S. C. Panchbhai (1989), the leaders of the movement, sought to introduce social reforms in the line with the Hindu traditions and adopted many Hindu symbols to mobilise the masses. The general aim of the movement was to drive away the British and the Christian missionaries from the

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<sup>299</sup> John Macdougall, "Agrarian reform vs. religious revitalization: collective resistance to peasantization among the Mundas, Oraons and Santals, 1858—95." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 11, no. 2 (1977): 310

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 310

country and to establish a Santhal Raj. In the Birsa Munda Uprising also known as Ulgulan, the new religion Birsaism preached by prophet Birsa assumed an important role in mobilising the Adivasis against all the outsider Dikus: Indian as well as English<sup>301</sup>. Finally in the Tana Bhagat Movement too religion in the form of Hinduism became crucially important in order to mobilise the Oraons. In the words of Sachidananda the entire Bhagat movement may be conceived as an attempt to raise the status of its members in the eyes of Hindu neighbours by Sanskritisation which also included the inculcation of Hindu beliefs and practices.<sup>302</sup>

The revivalist, revitalising, and the messianic characters of these uprisings bring them close to what is perceived as ethnic movements. These were revivalist, revitalising or to be more precise revivalistic nativism to use Ralph Lintons (1943) concepts,<sup>303</sup> as they tried to revive and revitalise certain chosen moribund elements of Adivasis: a culture like wearing of sacred threads and sacred paste, the practice of offering prayers instead of sacrifices to spirits (in case of Birsa Mundas uprising) and insistence of ceremonial purity in food and drink (in case of Tana Bhagat Movement). In the context of Santhal Uprisings of 1855, Macpherson (1785—1786) wrote, “Santhal yearning for independence, a dream of the ancient days when they had no overloads perhaps a memory of the pre—historic times when according to some speculators they were themselves, masters of the Gangetic valley and had not yet been driven back by the Aryan invaders.”<sup>304</sup> These uprisings were

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<sup>301</sup> S. C. Panchbhai and M. K. A Siddiqui, “Acculturation and Social Change In India: An Interdisciplinary Appraisal”, *Anthropological Survey of India*, (Calcutta, 1989): 10

<sup>302</sup> Suchibrata Sen, “The Santhals of Jungle Mahals: An Agrarian History, 1793-1861”, Ratna Prakashan, (Calcutta, 1984): 140

<sup>303</sup> Ralph Linton and A. Irving Hallowell, “Nativistic Movements.” *American Anthropologist* 45, no. 2 (1943): 235, retrieved on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2022, 1:00am, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/663272>

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 235

also millenarian and messianic in character as in all these the belief was there that they were always supported by the divine power either in the form of God or of any prophet. W.H. Grimley the Esq. Commissioner of Chota Nagpur Division in his report on the “Birsa Munda Uprising mentions in 1895, that Birsa claimed that he was a prophet sent by God to preach the coming of a deluge which not only made it unnecessary for the people to cultivate their lands but would sweep away government.”<sup>305</sup> Hence, all these major uprisings of the second phase reveal their resemblance with ethnic movements. In fact, the British rule through a very crude interference in the indigenous communities economic and socio—cultural system created the pre—conditions for ethnic conflict to emerge in the Indian social structure. In any ethnicised social structure all its elements become conscious of their identity and it becomes more vibrant to those who are being pushed into the periphery. In the instances of these peripheral groups deprivation in economic as well as cultural terms conjointly influence the process of collective identity formation. This was the case with the uprisings of the second phase as Swapan Dasgupta (1985), writes, “to the adivasis, the loss of land was not merely a matter of economic deprivation, but an affront to their dignity, their izzat, a theme recurrent in subaltern perception.”<sup>306</sup>

All the uprisings prior to this were largely unorganised, though spontaneous in character, but the opposition comprising the landlords, the moneylenders, and the British Authority combine was not only well organised but also very systematic. This may be the reason

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<sup>305</sup> Ralph Linton and A. Irving Hallowell, “Nativistic Movements.” *American Anthropologist* 45, no. 2 (1943): 235—236. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/663272>

<sup>306</sup> Swapan Dasgupta, “Adivasi Politics in Midnapur, c. 1760—1924”, Ranajit Guha, (ed.) “Writings on South Asian History and Society”, (Oxford University Press, 1985): 383

behind the failure of these uprisings. The third phase, which covered a considerable portion of the twentieth century, however, witnessed a significant change in this respect. The need for the organisation of the oppressed was felt at the very beginning of this stage. In the words of Susana B.C. Devalle (1980), “The twentieth century inaugurates the modality of formal politics in Jharkhand”.<sup>307</sup> The central objective of these formal organisations was to turn the unorganised Adivasi uprisings into a systematic movement. But their endeavor was not successful, as they became plagued with a great dilemma concerning their objectives, structure and the nature of the participants. It was in this phase that mining and industrial activities ranging from small to large scale were introduced in the Jharkhand region. As a result of this, the process of working—class the formation began here. Industrialisation triggered the process of urbanisation also. Some large cities like Jamshedpur, Rourkela, Ranchi, and Bokaro came into being containing a sizeable portion of the middle class whose genesis went hand in hand with the twin process of industrialisation and urbanisation. A considerable section of the industrial workforce was composed of people from outside. All these made the social composition of the area quite complex. Ethnicity, which emerged as an engine of mass mobilisation in the second phase, especially among the Adivasis, found itself in a very confusing state, which manifested itself in several dimensions but the centrality of it was located in the nature of interaction and interrelationship of ethnicity and class. The major organisations of this phase were, Chota Nagpur Improvement Society (Chota Nagpur Unnati Samaj), Adivasi Mahasabha, and the Jharkhand Party. The first formal organisation of the Adivasis having the support of all the core groups were the Chota Nagpur Improvement

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 383

Society formed in the year 1915 under the leadership of some educated Christian Adivasis. From the very beginning, it was concerned with the issues of social security and the distinct identity of the Adivasis. Although formed in 1915, this organisation officially came into existence in the year 1920. The Samaj tried to ameliorate the social, economic and political backwardness of the Adivasis of Chota Nagpur.<sup>308</sup> To safeguard the identity of the Adivasis, the Samaj placed a demand before the Simon Commission in 1928 to form a sub—state of Chota Nagpur joined either to Bengal or Orissa. This should be regarded as the first demand for the separation of Chota Nagpur from Bihar. Its attempt, however, failed to attain the desired objectives because it could not resolve the contradictions regarding its scale and scope of activities. Firstly, it was concentrated only on the educated segments of the Adivasi population, but initially, it had the goal of the upliftment of the Adivasi society in general. Secondly, although there was an effort to extend its range of activities to the rural areas, in reality, it remained confined within the urban areas only. One reason for this may be its orientation towards the middle class that was basically urban in nature. Finally, as only the Christian Adivasis dominated it, the large section of the non—Christian Adivasis of the region, somehow, remained isolated from it. In fact, this intra—ethnic contradiction centering on the question of Christianity was so fundamental that it led to the division of the Samaj into two parts. The non—Christian Adivasis formed the Kisan Sabha while the Christian Adivasis formed the Chota Nagpur Catholic Sabha.<sup>309</sup> In order to bridge this intra—ethnic gulf, the Adivasi Mahasabha was formed in the year 1938 in which all the organisations that had the vision

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<sup>308</sup> Susana B.C. Devalle, “Multi—Ethnicity in India: The Adivasi Peasants of Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas”, *IWGIA*, (Copenhagen, 1980): 50

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 50—51

of developing the Chota Nagpur region were merged. The Adivasi Mahasabha tried to respond to the demands, which were there in the then society of Jharkhand. Due to industrialisation and urbanisation, the area witnessed an influx of outsiders from the neighbouring states which led to a change in the social fabric of the Jharkhand region. To ensure the proper representation of the different cross—sections of this society, the Mahasabha under the leadership of Jaipal Singh, an Oxford—educated Adivasi, opened itself to all the non—Adivasis also despite its nomenclature. This led to a change in the concept of Diku also. Previously all the non—Adivasis were regarded as Dikus. Hence, the Bengalis who founded their interest unsafe in Bihar, and the Muslims who had some strategic interest in Chota Nagpur at that time stood beside the Mahasabha and were not considered as Dikus. The term only signified those outsiders, according to Sinha, Sen and Panchbhai, “who are from north Bihar in particular...who earn and send their earnings outside to their homes”.<sup>310</sup> This type of precision in defining the term Diku gave the Adivasi Mahasabha a relatively wider space of operation. But unfortunately, it could not capitalise on this as, with the passage of time, the non—Adivasis became gradually separated from it, the reasons whereof can be diagnosed from the objectives of the Adivasi Mahasabha as mentioned by B.P. Mohapatra: “...the establishment of a separate province for the aboriginal tribes of Chota Nagpur within the framework of the Government of India, the representation of the aboriginal tribe in the state cabinet of Bihar by at least one educated aboriginal, and the introduction of Santhali and other aboriginal languages as the media of instruction in schools.”<sup>311</sup> Hence, just like the intra—ethnic contradictions

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<sup>310</sup> Swapan Dasgupta, “Adivasi Politics in Midnapur, c. 1760—1924”, Ranajit Guha, (ed.) “Writings on South Asian History and Society”, (Oxford University Press, 1985): 385

<sup>311</sup> B. P. Mohapatra, “Dimensions of Extension Education”, ‘NIPA GENX Electronic Resources and Solns Pvt Ltd.’, (2016): 11



that had plagued the Chota Nagpur Unnati Samaj earlier, here in the case of the Adivasi Mahasabha, the inter—ethnic strife centering on the Adivasi non—Adivasi conflict besides other, led to its downfall. But here we should take into account the resilience of the factor of class. In fact, the Dikus who were the people of North Bihar, Marwaris, etc. were also viewed by the Adivasis as exploiters. There were plenty of outsiders who were non—Adivasis, located in the lower stratum of Hindu caste hierarchy, were never regarded as Dikus. Therefore, here ethnic identification coincided with that of class. But the Adivasi Mahasabha perhaps failed to grasp this crucially important social reality. At a specially convened meeting in Jamshedpur in the year 1950, the Adivasi Mahasabha, which was gradually becoming unpopular, was wound up and the Jharkhand Party was formed under the leadership of Jaipal Singh to mobilise all segments of the people of Chota Nagpur with the demand of a separate Jharkhand state. Under its auspices, the concept of Jharkhand was enlarged to include all the areas that once formed part of the Chota Nagpur administrative division. Thus, some parts of West Bengal, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh was included in it. The result of this was quite interesting. Some portion of the non—Bihari moneylending community who otherwise could be regarded as Dikus became the members of the Jharkhand Party. This led to the apparent transition of the Jharkhand Movement from the level of ethnicity to regionalism.<sup>312</sup>

### **Palamau: A Brief History**

“The district of Palamau lies in the south—western part of the State. It is one of the three districts comprised within the newly created South Chota Nagpur Division. The

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 11-12

jurisdiction of the district has remained intact in the last few decades and it has remained unaffected as a result of the re—organisation of districts which took place after the 1971 Census. It contain, three subdivisions, viz., Daltonganj, Garhwa ami Latehar, the headquarters of which are located in towns bearing the names of respective subdivision”.<sup>313</sup> The district is bounded on the north by Rohtas and Aurangabad districts, on the east by Hazaribag district, on the south by Ranchi district and on the west by Surguja district of Madhya Pradesh and Mirzapur district of Uttar Pradesh. The district of Palamau was constituted on the 1st January. 1928. Just after the movement of 1857. Palamau had been formed into a separate subdivision with the headquarters at Daltonganj. In 1871 parganas Japla and Belaunja were transferred from Gaya to Palamau. Tori Pargana was also added to it in 1891, Daltonganj town is the headquarters and the principal town of the district situated on the Koel River. The town has taken its name after Colonel Dalton, Commissioner of Chota Nagpur in 1861.<sup>314</sup> The early history of Palamau is shrouded in legends and traditions. Autonomous tribes probably inhabited the area in the past. Inscriptions and other relics which have been found indicate a fairly developed civilization inspite of the jungles and comparative inaccessibility of the area. Kharwars, the Oraons, and the Cheros practically ruled over this tract. The Oraons had their headquarters at Rohtasgarh in the then Shahabad district (which include the present district of Bhojpur and Rohtas). There is some indication that for some time a portion of Palamau was ruled from the headquarters of Rohtasgarh. Palamau was suffering from chaos and disorder which facilitated its subjection by the British.<sup>315</sup> In the beginning, the

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<sup>313</sup> L.S.S.O. Malley, “Bengal District Gazetteers Palamau”, ‘The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot’, (1907): 1

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 1

<sup>315</sup> B. B. Lal, “Census of India 1981 Series 4—Bihar District Census Handbook Parts Xiii—A & B Village & Town Directory Village & Town—wise Primary – Census Abstract of Palamau District” (Bihar,1981): 1

officers of company hesitated in taking action against Cheros. This was because the Calcutta based high officials of the East India Company had instructed the Patna Council to abstain from the use of force against the Chero with a view to occupying the Palamau fort. The British decided to favour Gopal Rai, who was the son of Chatrapal Rai. By that time Chiranjit Rai and Jainath Singh had captured the fort. The British sent a message to Jainath Singh through Ghulam Hussain for handing over the Palamau fort.<sup>316</sup> Captain Camac marched to Palamau and triumphed on 21 March 1771 when the fort was surrendered. Chiranjit Rai and Jainath Singh managed to escape to Ramgarh. Mukund Singh, the ruler of Ramgarh had been actively assisting Chiranjit and Jainath in their fight with Camac. Even after the fall of Palamau fort, Mukund Singh sent his emissary to Gopal Rai asking him to call back Jainath Singh and assist him in expelling the British from Palamau. Gopal Rai, however, did not oblige him and reported the matter to Camac. The Patna Council ordered Camac to restore peace after the fall of Palamau fort. In July 1771 Gopal Rai was declared the ruler of Palamau. Thus by the middle of July 1771, the East India Company established its authority over the whole Palamau.<sup>317</sup> As in some other districts, the British intervened in Palamau at others' invitation. The circumstances leading to the establishment of Bihar rule in Palamau sowed the seed of disaffection and enmity between the dispossessed Cheros and their new masters. The first intervention of the British in the affairs of the Chero Raj of Palamau occurred in 1772<sup>318</sup> owing to the protracted internecine quarrels between two rival Chero factions (1722—70).<sup>319</sup> Two candidates claiming to be the rightful Raja, one Gopal Rai, grandson of Jaikishun Rai, the

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<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 1—2

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 2—3

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

other Chitrajit Rai, grandson of the murdered ruling chief, Ranjit Rai, brought their suits to the British. The British, more interested in revenue collection than in family quarrels, decided to occupy the fort of Palamau. As Chitrajit's Dewan, Jainath Singh, refused to agree to this even in return for recognition of Chitrajit's claim, the controlling council at Patna decided to support the cause of Gopal Rai. The fort was occupied by the British in February, 1771 and Gopal Rai was installed as the ruler on his agreeing to pay an annual tribute of Rs.12,000. Gopal Rai was, however, removed after trial in 1776.<sup>320</sup> There followed a scramble for power. Bishwanath Rai, his minor brother, succeeded him while Gajraj Rai became the manager. But their position was assailed by Sugandh Rai and Sheo Prasad Singh. However, Gajraj Rai could continue due to the support of the Collector of Ramgarh. Meanwhile in 1780 Daljit Rai, brother of Chatrapati Rai attempted to revive the fortune of the house of Medini Rai. The Governor ordered that Bishwanath Rai, the third brother of Gopal Rai and not Gajraj or Sugandh, was the successor to the gaddi. Since this order was resisted. Major Crawford was sent to Palamau with military force to restore peace. Major Crawford managed to capture Gajraj and Sugandha. Raja Bishwanath Rai died in 1763. He was followed by Churaman Rai who came of age in 1793. Churaman Rai succeeded in resuming the estate of his weaker tenants. His action provoked the tenantry, and led to the Chero insurrection in 1800. The leader was Bhukhan Singh, a Chero.<sup>321</sup> The British came with a force and suppressed the insurrection but by that time the Raja and the administration had been reduced to bankruptcy. An Assistant Collector of Bihar was appointed to look after the revenue collection in the western part

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 3—4

<sup>321</sup> L.S.S.O. Malley, "Bengal District Gazetteers Palamau", 'The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot', (1907): 10

of the province. Parry, the Assistant collector who took over in 1811 made the first settlement of revenue in 1812. He annulled the Sanad granted by Churaman Rai and took over direct collection. The Palamau estate was attacked. In 1812, the sale of Palamau estate was authorised and it was accordingly sold for Rs.51,000 against arrears amounting to Rs.65,000. The assessment of the estate was reduced to Rs.9,000 in 1814 when it was granted to Ghanshyam Singh of Deo as a reward for his help to the British in suppressing the Cheros and the Kharwars. In 1813 there was a rising organised by great Jagirdars.<sup>322</sup> This led to the attachment of the estates of Chainpur, Ranka, Lokaya, Bistrampur and Obra. The Kol rebellion of 1832 had its impact in Palamau also.<sup>323</sup> The Cheros and the Kharwars rose against the administration, and non-tribal Hindus and Muslims. The insurgents were, however, defeated in an engagement with the British forces near Latehar.<sup>324</sup> These sites of pre-colonial Palamau are very important for us because these provide an unhappy scenario which the original local Rajas had to face with the coming of the British. These Rajas as well as their followers were all successors of the original tribal tradition of the area. Their fights with the British exposed the history of their gradual sub-ordinations, a tragedy also found in the literature written on them. The story reveals that there was no centralisation in this area and so the British took advantage of the situation.

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 11-12

<sup>323</sup> E.T Dalton, 'The Kols of Chotanagpore', *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, Vol. VI., (London, 1867): 15

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 16

## **Kol Revolt of Jharkhand**

The tribal unrest of 1831–32, generally known as the Kol Insurrection, was a crude form of protest against all the recent changes and outside influences which had badly affected the tribal society. It was a gesture of despair. The Kols were called by a variety of names—Mundas, Oraons, Mahalis, etc., and early ethnologist such as Dalton described them all as Kolarians,<sup>325</sup> distinguishing among the Kols the Munda Kols in Chota–Nagpur proper, Larka Kols in Singhbhum, and Bhumij Kols in Manbhum and Dhal bhum. In fact, the word Kol is a very loose term, used by the Hindus of the plains as a word of derision. These tribal people were, and are, remarkable for their physical strength and hardiness. Sarat Chandra Roy in his ‘The Oraons of Chota Nagpur’ (2019), comments that the Oraon has a “better physique than many of his neighbours who pride themselves on their ‘higher caste’. The Oraon is sturdy in his limbs and erect in his bearing.”<sup>326</sup> His account of their exceptional physical endurance can be matched by the much earlier comments of men like Drummond who in 1841 wrote, “They undergo with patient endurance the most incredible fatigues; extremely active, their movements are accomplished with the utmost celerity...No obstacle, however great, is capable of sub during their utmost courage and perseverance in the attainment of any desired object.”<sup>327</sup> The Kols were a peace—loving tribe and it was born out of frustration and anger – frustration with the new system of Government and laws, and anger at the people who either enforced them or took undue advantage of them. The real tragedy of the tribal people of Chota Nagpur was that their

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 16–17

<sup>326</sup> Sarat Chandra Roy, “The Oraons of Chota Nagpur”, *Gyan Publishing House* (2019): 36

<sup>327</sup> Jagdish Chandra Jha, “The Kol Insurrection Of Chota–Nagpur”, *The Archaeological Survey Of India Central Archaeological Library*, p. 23–24

chiefs, alienated by their conversion to Hinduism and the English administrators, born and bred in the tradition of agricultural landlordism, had no sympathy with the tradition of tribal ownership of land or the idea of peasant—proprietorship.<sup>328</sup> That was why the former brought in non—tribal settlers and the latter a complex administrative machinery run by unsympathetic people. Against these the tribal people found no remedy except unrest and violence. In the course of their rising the tribal people were guilty of most heinous crimes, of banditry, murder and arson. But they knew no other method of effective social protest. According to Eric Hobsbawm, “Social banditry, a universal and virtually unchanging phenomenon, is little more than endemic peasant protest against oppression and poverty; a cry for vengeance on the rich and the oppressors, a vague dream of some curb upon them, a righting of individual wrongs. Its ambitions are modest: a traditional world in which men are justly dealt with, not a new and perfect world.”<sup>329</sup> The tribal leaders were in their own society the equivalent of Robinhood or Rob Roy, rebels against landlords, bailiffs, merchants and usurers who were exploiting the tribal people. If their movements were “blind and groping” that was because they were the movements of peasant protestants, extremely in—articulate, not knowing how to express their legitimate grievances.<sup>330</sup> Thornton Wilson (1921—1999) and others voiced their belief that the events of 1831—32 were a mere spasmodic expression of tribal people’s savagery and propensity to plunder.<sup>331</sup> A brief review of what the tribal people did when they broke out in violence and against whom their anger was directed will show that they were indeed

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>329</sup> Eric. J. Hobsbawm, “Primitive Rebels: Studies in Arabic forms of Social Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries”, (1: Introduction), Manchester University Press, (1959): 5

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 5—6

<sup>331</sup> J. D. Jha, “Nature Of The Kol Insurrection Of 1831—32”, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* , Vol. 24, (1961):217, retrieved on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2022, 8:00am, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44140756>

savage in their attacks upon their enemies, savage perhaps from despair of securing justice by peaceful and orderly means. But it will also show that the outbreak was not an unconsidered, spasmodic affair, but one very closely connected with the oppression which they had suffered.<sup>332</sup> The tribesmen had no hope of redress because the police were base and corrupt, the law court amlas were engaged in all sorts of illicit gains and the revenue officials tried to fleece them. In the face of this combined system of oppressive exactions, forcible dispossession of property, abuse and personal violence and a variety of similar tyrannies, the tribesmen found no other alternative than to make a desperate attempt to escape from this galling situation. Their retaliation, therefore, was as violent and unprecedented as the oppression on them had been.<sup>333</sup>

In 1824 the board had expressed apprehension that the pargana would never be peaceful until all agrarian questions were set at rest. The people rose in 1832, a year of serious disturbances also in the Ranchi district and the Cheros and Kharwars of Palamau had joined them.<sup>334</sup> The Kols attacked the Hindus, Muslims and others who were settled in their villages, drove them from the homes and property which were burnt or plundered. Those who fell in their hands were sacrificed. The Company's troops were checked near Satbarwa where they marched from Lesliganj. Cuthbert and Captain Wilkinson sent four companies of Infantry, a squadron of cavalry and a gun from Ranchi and additional troops moved from Sherghati. Some jagirdars and Rana Bahadur Singh, son of Churaman Ray, joined the British. The insurgents were defeated and dispersed near Latehar. The British rule, in this manner, slowly led to the extinction of Chero Kingship. But the idea based

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<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 217–218

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 218–219

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 219



on .the past tradition lingered and had a flare up some time later in the insurrections of 1857.<sup>335</sup> F. B. Bradley Birt (1874—1963) had thought that “the Cheros, deprived of their ancient line of chiefs, were no longer the prime movers”. This was not very correct, as Dr. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar (1955) has observed that, “Indeed, it is not surprising to find that attempts to restore the Chero dynasty would be made in 1857. Further, the traditional Chero – Rajput animosity was fanned not only by this spirit of restoration but by the entente between the British Government and the Rajput Thakurais. Moreover this party alignment was also dictated by feudal agrarian discontent of the Jagirdars and their risings in 1800, 1817 and 1832 were but the faint presages of the coming storm a few years later.”<sup>336</sup> Regarding the socio—political organisation of the Kharwars who also joined the 1857 movement, Dr. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar mentions in the same article: “unlike the Cheros, the Kharwars had very few Jagirdars among them. One section (gosthi or clan) of these, the Bhogtahs occupied an unassailable position in the area lying between the lowlands of Palamau and the uplands of Sirguja and possessed almost inaccessible mountain fastness. They were lawless free booters, whose predatory habits were somewhat repressed by the British Government conferring one jagir on two brothers, Nilambar and Pitambar Sahi, who shared the headship of the Bhogtah clan after the death of their father, an outlaw.”<sup>337</sup>

Apart from the opposition of the Cheros, Bogtahs and the Kharwars there is no doubt that the immediate cause of the movement in Palamau was supplied by the rise in Ranchi and Hazaribagh. Pitambar, as mentioned, actually saw the havoc in Ranchi by the outbreak of

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 219-220

<sup>336</sup> Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, ‘Palamau Jagirdar’, *Bihar Research Society Journal*, Vol. XLI, Part IV, (1955): 112

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 112—113

the Ramgarh Battalion. On his return to Palamau and taking advantage of the advance of the Hazaribagh Regiment through Palamau towards Rohtas he gave the signal to the Bogtachs. It cannot be doubted that the slipping of the power had been nursed by the hilly tribes with great resentment and they wanted to utilise the opportunity to make a bid for independence. But the signal was not confined to the particular sections of the hilly tribes alone. The movement percolated to the masses. The Chero–Bogta alliance<sup>338</sup> had their first target of attack on Thakurai Raghubar Dayal Singh who was taken as the common enemy and the protégé of the British. It is difficult to hold with Captain Dalton that the Cheros and Bogtachs merely wanted to supplant Thakurai for the old grudge. The move was deeper and Thakurai was attacked more as an agent of the British and the symbolic object of attack. The documents that are still available indicate a quick spread into the interior of the Palamau area in spite of the zamindar agents of the British trying to stem the tide. It is also possible that the economic condition of the Cheros added fuel to the fire. A large number of small Chero Jagirdars in the district had come into existence and they had mostly mortgaged their small estates. Dalton held that many proprietors might have joined the insurgents to avoid their incumbrances. This does not seem impossible. “There is no doubt that this assessment was light in comparison to that of other regions, and led the English officials to believe that the revolt of 1857 in Chotanagpore was merely an expression of the innate fighting nature of the Larka Kols. What they failed to acknowledge was that the very presence of the colonial power and its attempt to tinkle with the traditional institutions had created a new situation”.<sup>339</sup> The account to the

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<sup>338</sup> Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ed., ‘Selected Subaltern Studies’, *Oxford University Press*, (New York, 1988): 157

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-158

movement that has been quoted from the last District Gazetteer could be supplemented by the details of the movement as mentioned by Dr. J. N. Sarkar in his article on “Palamau Jagirdar’s”. He has divided the details into two sections, one part from October, 1857 to February, 1858 and the other part from February to November, 1858.<sup>340</sup>

According to B.B. Lal, “The Palamau district came into existence on 1st January 1892. Prior to this, it was a subdivision with the headquarters at Daltonganj just after the revolt of 1857. In 1871, Pargana Japla and Belauja were transferred from Gaya to Palamau. Lying between 83°50’ and 84 °36’ E longitudes and 23°25’ and 23°55’ N latitudes, the Palamau Wildlife Sanctuary was initially created over a forest area of 979.97 Sq. Km. and since then an area of 226.32 Sq. Km. of this sanctuary has been notified as Betla National Park. Both the areas have been included in the Palamau Tiger Reserve created under Project Tiger.”<sup>341</sup> The annual temperature here varies from 4° to 50°C and the mean annual rainfall is 1075 mm. The area is drained by the North Koel and its tributary, the Burha River. Forests here are of Dry as well as Moist Deciduous types with bamboo brakes. Besides diverse herbs, shrubs and grasses, the important tree species are Sal, Asan, Sidha, Semal, Karam, Chilbil, Kusum, Bherhul, Dhaura, Khair, Salai etc. The sanctuary is rich in flora and fauna with 47 species of mammals, 174 species of birds, 970 species of flora including 25 species of climbers, 46 species of shrubs in addition to herbs, grasses etc. Tiger, Leopard, Elephant, Gaur, Sambhar, Cheetal, Barking Deer, Sloth Bear, Nilgai, Wild Dog, Wolf, Hyaena etc and varieties of reptiles and beautiful birds can be sighted here without much effort. Once ruled by the Chero Kings, the sanctuary also has many

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<sup>340</sup> Jagdish Narain Sarkar, ‘Palamau Jagirdar’, *Bihar Research Society Journal*, Vol. XLI, Part IV, (1955): 114

<sup>341</sup> B. B. Lal, “Census of India 1981 Series 4–Bihar District Census Handbook Parts Xiii–A & B Village & Town Directory Village & Town wise Primary – Census Abstract of Palamau District”, p. 2

historical monuments and forts, deep inside Betla forests on the banks of the Auranga River. Other attractions nearby are Lodh and Sugabandh Water Falls and Tataha Hot-water Spring.<sup>342</sup>

According to P.C. Roychoudhury, “The total area of Palamau district is 4,921 square miles according to the area figures of the constituent units, e.g., police stations. According to the report of Surveyor-General of India the area of the district is 4,896 square miles. The difference between the two figures is not much and may be ignored. There are 3,202 villages and 3 towns and 1,78,775 occupied houses altogether, The urban population is 37,007 as against the rural population of 9,48,760 souls. The population of the district according to 1872 census was 4,23,795 souls.”<sup>343</sup> The following statement will show the variation in the population of the district since 1901 as mentioned in the District Census Hand-book for Palamau, 1951:

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 2—3

<sup>343</sup> P. C. Roy Choudhary, “Bihar District Gazetteers:“Palamau”, The Superintendent Secretariat Press, sub-section 4: “People”, (Bihar, Patna 1961): 1

Years. Variation.	Persons.	Variation.	Males.	Variation.	Females.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1901	6,20,092	..	3,06,454	..	3,13,638	..
1911	6,87,710	+67,618	3,41,840	+35,386	3,45,870	..
+32,232						
1921	7,33,394	+45,684	3,67,371	+25,531	3,66,023	
+20,153						
1931	8,18,736	+85,342	4,09,778	+42,407	4,08,958	
+42,935						
1941	9,12,734	+93,998	4,57,372	+47,594	4,55,362	
+46,404						
1951	9,85,767	+73,033	4,98,564	+41,192	4,87,203	
+31,841						

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The census of 1931 recorded an increase of 11.64 per cent and the population growth appears to have been much more rapid in the Latehar subdivision, which had come into being in 1925. The general incidence of health was also reported to be better than the previous decade. The 1941 census gave an increase of 11.5 per cent and the growth of population appears to be due mostly to natural accretion. In the last decade 1941–50 the population of the district has increased by 8 per cent only. There was a flare-up of cholera in this period.<sup>345</sup> The fall in the growth-rate appears to be due to the decrease in the birth-

<sup>344</sup> P.C. Roy Choudhary, (ed.), *Singhbhum Old Records*, (Patna, 1958): 54

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 55

rate. This also was partially due to a virtual collapse of properly reporting vital statistics because of 1942 Quit India Movement.<sup>346</sup>

The availability of virgin land in Palamau district had been one of the causes of the earlier incidence of immigration. The flow of immigrants to the district has never been very marked since 1901 but there has been a slow incidence through all the decades. Immigrants are mostly from the neighbouring districts of Gaya and Shahabad. In the recent years the various resources have attracted immigrants. A moiety of the immigrants consists of mahajans and business people. In 1901 the number was 38,838 representing 6.26 per cent of the population.<sup>347</sup> Apparently this was due to the undeveloped state of the district and the large area awaiting reclamation which invited a large number of immigrants from the neighbouring districts. The total number of immigrants in 1911 was 35,758 while in 1921 the figure came down to 24,246. As an abbreviated census was done in 1941 immigration figures for this census are not available. In 1951 census the total number of immigrants was recorded as 35,425. There used to be a regular recruitment of imported labour to the tea districts of Assam and Duars from Palamau district in the past. Emigration to the tea districts of Duars was not regulated but emigration to Assam was regulated under the Inland Emigration Act and was controlled by the Assam Labour Board. For decades there was an Agent for the Tea Districts Labour Association in Daltonganj who used to control the operation of the recruiting Sirdars for the district. The system of recruitment through Sirdars was substituted in place of a wholesale recruitment

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<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 55—56

<sup>347</sup> P. C. Roy Choudhary, "Bihar District Gazetteers: "Palamau", The Superintendent Secretariat Press, sub-section 4: "People", (Bihar, Patna 1961): 1-4

through any possible agency and even giving a false allurements.<sup>348</sup> The Daltonganj depot of the Tea Districts Labour Association has been abolished since 1956 and the flow of emigration to the, tea districts has considerably decreased. Some recruitment of the men of Palamau is now done through Ranchi depot. It is reported that the figures were 142 in 1956, one in 1957 and 154 in 1958. There was in the past also a small flow of emigration to the neighbouring area of Mirzapur and Surguja. It is not possible to collect the figures. The number of emigrants, i.e., persons born in Palamau but enumerated elsewhere in 1901, was 32,210 or 5.19 per cent of the population. O'Malley thought that the figure was not correct as many people born in Palamau might have given out that they were born in Lohardaga, the name of the old district of Ranchi and had been returned as such. The incidence of emigration in 1911 and 1921 was near about 5.5 and 4.81 respectively of the actual population. After 1921 the figure of emigration of individual district to other States of India was not compiled and emigration figures are available only for those who have been enumerated within the State. The incidence of emigration from 1931 is not very marked. In 1951 census 23,327 persons born in Palamau district were enumerated in other districts of Bihar.<sup>349</sup>

General forests predominate in the district of Palamau, out of the total area of 4,916 sq.miles of the district 2,146 sq.miles are covered with forests which are within demarcation. The economy of the district bears a very intimate correlation with the forests. A part of the total area under forests, viz; 364 sq.miles is situated on compact blocks with sparse habitation and the remaining area, viz., 1,782 sq.miles is honey-

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>349</sup> Census Of India 2011 Jharkhand Series-21 Part Xii - B District Census Handbook Palamu Village And Town Wise Primary Census Abstract (Pca) Directorate Of Census Operations Jharkhand: 9

combed with villages of appreciable population. The figures, therefore, show that major portion of the demarcated area is exposed to biotic factors and the general condition was not encouraging. However, the percentage of the area under forests when compared to the total area of the district which works out to 43.6 per cent, clearly indicates that importance of forests in this district is paramount. Biotic factors—its interaction and effect the area under forests, during last survey settlement when compared to that at the present (1957) shows that there had been a general decline. During the last settlement (1913–20) 3,200 sq.miles were reported to be under forests and during the period under report only 2,146 sq.miles were under demarcation. Within a period of 40 years it has, therefore, decline by 33 per cent. The main reason of this rapid rate of destruction of forests and breaking up of the land was the impact of the biotic factors. The increase in the population and the policy of the Government followed so far, sometimes in complete disregard of the main principles of forest conservancy, had led to the above results. Not only valuable forest growth had been removed and lands made barren, marginal lands as well, which should not be put under cultivation under the principles of best land use, had been brought under plough. The colonial period introduced new modes of forest extractions, so that, forest lands were turned into agricultural lands for revenue. The short sighted activity of the Government had resulted in accelerated, soil erosion, desiccation of the area, deterioration of the quality and had ultimately reflected in lowering of water table, shortage of rainfall and wash of the fertile top layers of the soil. All these adverse factors affected the economic status of the population. The agricultural economy had lost its balance completely. The crops and their yield had been upset totally and every now and then shadow of famine conditions made their appearance here and there. There was an



erroneous impression at the time when the last gazetteer was written that due to inaccessibility and vast extension, destruction could not be brought in the forests of Palamau. This idea thus, no longer hold good. Except in the Government managed forests extending over 364 sq.miles which had been worked under regular working plans, the evils of destruction had made themselves felt all over the forest bearing tracts of the district. This, however, had always been in the inverse ratio to the nearness of population. The forests of Garhwa, Nagar Untari, Bhawnathpur, Lesliganj, Bishrampur, Hussainabad, Chhatarpur and Harihargand police stations lying in the north and north—east corner of the district had been reduced to thorny bushes.<sup>350</sup>

This district, however, had an interesting cross—section of the population and there are a number of tribals that make a good percentage of it. It is, however, unfortunate that while the tribals of the neighbouring districts of Ranchi and Singhbhum had been studied, there has not been a proper investigation of the tribals and semi—tribals of Palamau. Some of the tribals of Palamau district like Oraons, Mundas and Kharias are found in great number in other districts as well. S. C. Roy's (1871—1942) studies of the Oraons,<sup>351</sup> Mundas, and Kharias, etc., is very interesting and generally applicable to these tribals in this district as well.<sup>352</sup> There are, however, local variations in the culture complex of even these tribals within Palamau district. There had not been adequate researches into the Birjias, Nagesias, Korwahs etc. This is an extremely important study as this district continued to be in possession of the Oraons, Mundas, Cheros and other Adivasis for a very long period

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<sup>350</sup> Census Of India 2011 Jharkhand Series—21 Part Xii – B District Census Handbook Palamu Village And Town Wise Primary Census Abstract (Pca) Directorate Of Census Operations Jharkhand: 12

<sup>351</sup> S.C. Roy, "The Oraons of Chotanagpur", Ranchi, Man In India Office, 1915, (reprinted 1984), pp. 16–17

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 17

continuously. It is interesting to observe that the Oraons, Mundas, Raksels, Cheros and Kharwars claim to be the rulers of the district by turn. Some of them have been treated separately. The Adivasis had been pushed out from the position of the rulers by the Raksel Rajputs. The Raksel Rajputs in their turn had to make way for the Chero chiefs. While the Raksels ruled, they brought families of Brahmins from much beyond the district to play the part of the priests. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of Christian era, it appeared that the Rajputs and Brahmins had their sway in the district. With the coming of the Chero chiefs and Kharwars there was a somewhat change and orthodoxy spread into the interior. The Cheros were very religious minded. The ancestors of Chainpur, Ranka and some other well—known Rajput families of the district had founded temples and encouraged Hindu orthodoxy and had contacts with advanced families beyond the district. The security that the Chero chiefs and Kharwars offered brought about development of home crafts and the growth of a number of service classes. According to Daniel J. Rycroft (2017), “In the early to the mid—twentieth century, overtly ‘historical’ social ecologies became identifiable in India. Informed by Brajendranath Seal’s (1864—1938) philosophy of inter—racial social development, a pluralistic approach to sociology in India focused on political cultures, highlighting their regional ‘evolutions’”.<sup>353</sup> This is the reason why even in an inaccessible village in the very interior of the district a solitary family of a barber, dhobi, carpenter or blacksmith could be found, which was not found in the inaccessible or remote villages of Singhbhum or Ranchi district. From the pastoral stage the villagers had passed on to the agricultural stage quickly and there grew up the classes of cultivators and agricultural labourers, landed or landless. There also grew up a

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<sup>353</sup> Daniel J. Rycroft, “Adivasi worlds: Encountering ‘Indian’ idealism in anthropology before independence”, Mahua Sarkar (ed.) ‘Environment and the Adivasi World’, (Alphabet Books, 2017): 35

service class of bonded labour (kamia) for the field and for the household (launri) as well. In this district till only three decades back every affluent family had one, two or more families of hereditary servants attached to the household. Where a girl of such a family was married, a few of the servants, usually young in age would be sent to the bride's new home to be permanently attached there. This was in vogue in Palamau even three or four decades back. These detailed studies of the warfare and the society of the inhabitants of Palamau are recorded mainly in the history and not in literature. The revolt and resistance of the people of Palamau had been mostly ignored in the mainstream history writing with the exception of one or two J.N Sarkar's works. The hard and inexplicable suffering of the masses of Palamau was never recorded in any newspapers, neither it were coming up in the voices of the Bhadrals of Calcutta (a place where the Bengal Renaissance was going on). There were only few exceptions like Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay. If history provided the structure of the discourse on Palamau, an exceptional literature provided the flare. This is why Sanjib Chandra's Palamau is "so important as a text of the colonial period unraveling the narratives of power, hegemony and colonialism."

Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay is the second of the three siblings of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, the eminent Bengali novelist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sanjib Chandra was born to an orthodox Brahmin family at Kanthalpara, North 24 Parganas, in today's West Bengal. He was educated at Hooghly Mohsin College founded by Bengali philanthropist Muhammad Mohsin and Presidency College, Calcutta. He was one of the first graduates of the University of Calcutta. Indian society prior to the arrival of the British has been described by Karl Marx as an "Asiatic" society. In this view, artificial irrigation by canals and waterworks formed the basis of Oriental agriculture. Though Marx's paradigm of the

Asiatic mode of production is being intensely debated in recent times his basic observations about the nature of the Indian society and the rise of an intellectual class tied to land must not be missed. Marx found among the Indian natives “reluctantly and sparingly educated at Calcutta, under English superintendence” a fresh class “endowed with the requirement for government”.<sup>354</sup> According to the unpublished thesis of Sarada Ghosh, Sanjib Chandra is widely regarded as a key figure in literary renaissance of Bengal as well as India. Some of his writings, including novels, essays and commentaries were a breakaway from traditional verse—oriented Indian writings, and provided an inspiration for authors across India, then and in later years.<sup>355</sup> He was appointed as Deputy Collector, just like his father. Chattopadhyay went on to become a Deputy Magistrate and retired from government service in 1891. Pulak Narayan Dhar<sup>356</sup> in his articles elaborates that, for the ambitious Bengali “Bhadrolok” it was really outside the bounds of their class interests to harbour any anti—British idea. Its outlook was inhibited by the conservatism of the middle class, dependent on land, “with stakes in the agrarian system the intelligentsia had a tendency to support the raj...”<sup>357</sup> But Sanjib Chandra in the other hand could not support the British officials because his years at work were peppered with incidents that brought him into conflict with the ruling British. However, he was made a Companion, Order of the Indian Empire in 1894. He wrote novels and essays some of which were reasonably popular in his lifetime. But his literary talent, though admittedly

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<sup>354</sup> Karl Marx, “The Future Results of British Rule in India”, *Selected Works Vol. I* (Moscow) 1962, p. 3

<sup>355</sup> Sharada Ghosh, “Banglar Chinta – Chetonaye Prakriti O Poribeshattwa: Ekti Aitihashik Bibartan”, Jadavpur University, 2001: 49

<sup>356</sup> Pulak Narayan Dhar, ‘Bengal Renaissance: A Study in Social Contradictions’, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (January, 1987): 31—32, retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2022, 2:15pm, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3517400>

<sup>357</sup> Sunil Kumar Sen ‘Economic Transition in Bengal—Renaissance Bengal (1917—1857)’, *The Asiatic Society*, (1972):

enormous, was eclipsed by his much more illustrious brother's, and also undermined by his own inadequate attention to it. "In his article on Sanjib Chandra and his 'Palamau', Rabindranath Tagore writes: "His (Sanjib Chandra's) talent had wealth, but not the husbandry". This is true of Sanjib Chandra to a large extent."<sup>358</sup>

Sanjib Chandra, in his book named 'Palamau', written in (1880—1883), is trying to describe his first brush with real life hills. Palamau is a travel account which is simultaneously a memoir by an 'old man' who 'loves to tell stories'. Memory does always have a knack for overlapping time sequences, and specifically an old man's memory is such that almost by rule it disregards the sequential patterns of time. In phenomenological view, the present is only a link of 'what has been' and 'what will be'. It is only likely that Sanjib Chandra allows his memory to work and run through the narrative in its natural diffusive cum wanton manner. He makes his narrative thread intertwined with the memorial thread with a pronounced subjectivity that has an appeal. There is, another aspect to consider in his descriptive nature. Sanjib Chandra here is writing a travelogue in the way of a memoir which is more like a monologue. Palamau, as a place is as much important in this account as the traveler's response to it. Sanjib Chandra's descriptive digression here plays the dual functions of vivifying the landscape/hillscape of Palamau, and locating it in the author's mindscape. This is the reason why Palamau has a distinct charm uncommon to travelogues, and also to impersonal anthropological accounts. With the descriptions of the clay models of the Gobardhana hill at the akhras of the Vaisnavas, a specific era of Bengali cultural life comes alive, and specific phase of the author's

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<sup>358</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay and Arnab Bhattacharya, "Palamou: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Classic of Bengali Travel Literature" *Createspace Independent Pub*, (10 February 2014): 1

development of personality becomes palpably evident. The travel through space thus merges with the travel through time as well.

Palamau is probably the first anthropological account of the Kols written at a time when anthropology was not even in its embryonic stage in India. But, for all the solid evidence of anthropology in the text, Palamau, at first, is a travel account. Anthropology is regarded as a branch of science which puts a heavy premium on rigorous field study and impersonal descriptions. Personal views and descriptions creep into an anthropological account, but an anthropologist is obliged to justify their inclusion on grounds of imparting an authenticity to the text so that his ethnography comes through not as a contrived, stage managed account, but the one emerging naturally of the people's lifestyle, their manner of speech which the people uninhibitedly unraveled to the ethnographer. In short, the inclusion of personal elements in an anthropological account is merely a strategic one, incorporated to impress an idea of the ethnographer's emotional propinquity to the native, specifically the latter's acceptance of the former as one of their own, on the reader.<sup>359</sup> Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski (1884—1942), one of the stalwarts of the twentieth century anthropology, comments in his celebrated book *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) that a cultural anthropologist is supposed "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world".<sup>360</sup> Obviously, an ethnographer always attempts to prove that he is following Malinowski's prescription, and hence tries to construct such a narrative subjectivity that becomes all—inclusive to the extent the

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 8—9

<sup>360</sup> Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski, "Argonauts of the Western Pacific", *G. Routledge & Sons; New York, E.P. Dutton & Co.*, (London, 1922): 15

narrow's 'I' merges with the narrated 'they'.<sup>361</sup> To demonstrate this point Arnab Bhattacharya in his book "Palamou: A 19th Century Classic of Bengali Travel Literature" (2014), quotes from Malinowski's 'Crime and Custom in Savage Society' (1926):

*Malinowski here is talking about the sanctimoniously revered custom of ceremonial exchanges within a tribal fisher—folk community. Noteworthy is Malinowski's use of such phrases as "make it difficult for the superficial observer" or "to one who knows the natives intimately" which is a very self-conscious way of indicating that the author belongs to the latter category.* <sup>362</sup>

But in a travel account the personal overtone is not strategic but modal. An author of a travel account does not become subjective in order to make his objective observations credible, but to make his account readable. A travel writer's construction of narrative subjectivity is the contrary to an anthropologist's in that the former never seeks to obliterate the distance between the narrative 'I' and the narrated 'they',<sup>363</sup> but rather to indicate a proximity which allowed him to analyse an alien culture from a very personal point of view. He is happy to remain an outsider to the natives, because he wants to remain a member of the target readers of his travelogue, and see with their eyes. This approach of a travelogue—writer is more desirable from the point of view of his narrative than an ethnographic attitudinising. Palamau convinces us that Sanjib Chandra had a deep

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<sup>361</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay and Arnab Bhattacharya, "Palamou: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Classic of Bengali Travel Literature" *Createspace Independent Pub*, (10 February 2014): 9

<sup>362</sup> Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski, "Crime and Custom in Savage Society", *Harcourt Brace & Co.*, (New York, January 1, 1926): 19

<sup>363</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay and Arnab Bhattacharya, "Palamou: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Classic of Bengali Travel Literature" *Createspace Independent Pub*, (10 February 2014):10

understanding of the desired narrative subjectivity of a travelogue writer, and as such, he quite deliberately plays the role of a proximal yet detached observer.<sup>364</sup>

Arnab Bhattacharya in his book “Palamou: A 19th Century Classic of Bengali Travel Literature” (2014), explains that we can see another noticeable feature of Sanjib Chandra’s narrative style is his mixing of tenses which suggest a modal blending of travelogue and anthropological writing. Sanjib Chandra in Palamau speaks about Kol boys amid a rocky landscape<sup>365</sup>:

*The rocks all over the place were black, the animals were stone-black too, and so were the herds. Here I must say that in that region the cattle comprise only of buffaloes, and not cows, and that these boys were the brood of the Kols. This region was predominantly inhabited by the Kols. These Kols are savage tribes; they are short-statured and swarthy-hued. I cannot decide whether they are ugly or beautiful. Among the Kols who come to Kolkata or go to work in tea gardens, I find none so attractive. Rather I find them particularly repulsive. But in his own land every single Kol looks beautiful, to my eyes at least; the savage are beautiful in the wilderness, children in their mothers’ laps.*<sup>366</sup>

While explaining about mixing of tenses in Sanjib Chandra’s writing Arnab Bhattacharya (2014), explains how Sanjib Chandra in most of the travelogue has used past and present tenses to support his way of thinking and to give the readers an idea about the two way of his writing, one of a travelogue writer and the other of an anthropologist. Bhattacharya

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>365</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay, ‘Palamou’, *Bishwasahitya Publishers*, (1989): 20

<sup>366</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay and Arnab Bhattacharya, “Palamou: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Classic of Bengali Travel Literature” *Createspace Independent Pub*, (10 February 2014):12



has called it as ‘modal blending’.<sup>367</sup> These two disparate modes are harmoniously miscible in Sanjib Chandra’s conversationist style. Sanjib Chandra in another instance writes about the Kol women<sup>368</sup>:

*The Kol women stood up once they noticed me. One of them was rather potbellied and advanced in years. Holding the pitcher balanced on her head with two hands, she told me with a beaming face, “Will you come tonight to watch our dance?” I nodded to accept the invitation, and the women gave out a squeal of laughter. Perhaps women of no other races laugh and dance as much as the young women of the Kols; our rumbustious youths cannot do even their hundredth.*<sup>369</sup>

According to Arnab Bhattacharya (2014), “Sanjib Chandra’s narration of a particular incident written in past tense mingles effortlessly with his descriptive observation of the boisterous, fun—loving nature of the Kol women. One temporal frame merges with another as Sanjib Chandra’s narration flows into description. This is how Sanjib Chandra balances narrative modalities of travelogue writing and anthropological writing.”<sup>370</sup>

The Foreword to Palamou composed by the then editors of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Brajendranath Bandyopdhyay and Sajanikanta Das who brought out the complete work as a single compilation in 1944, cites a certain section from the text in which Chattopadhyay had described in fascinatingly lucid terms the untainted innocence of a few roadside children he met on the way to his destination. The significance of this

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>368</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay, ‘Palamou’, *Bishwasahitya Publishers*, (1989): 22

<sup>369</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay and Arnab Bhattacharya, “Palamou: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Classic of Bengali Travel Literature” *Createspace Independent Pub*, (10 February 2014): 13

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., 13—14

anecdote lay in such a way which highlighted the writer's own childlike, genial disposition that enabled him to keenly observe and render in words the incorruptibility of the disposition of poor, vagrant dwellers. This childlike wonder, curiosity and simplicity coupled with the observational power of a seasoned artist and the humanist visions of a thinker together goes on to mould Chattopadhyay as the writer of this Romantic travelogue.<sup>371</sup> In fact, throughout the course of his narrative, he keeps harping on the binaries of old age and youth, constantly trying to negotiate between the attributional merits of the two and colour his perspectives accordingly. The novelty of looking at the natural world through the inquisitive eyes of a child, appreciating its beauty without the burden of adult presumptions or experiential knowledge is what he explains through his work. He perceives this as a radical departure from the existing patterns of thinking, meaning—making and negotiating with the diversity of socio—cultural experience. The graciousness and aesthetic sensibility from which he derives this Romantic consciousness of a world completely unknown to him lends ingenuity and a rare charm to his work. This preoccupation with a childlike mental disposition continues as a definite strain as he also undertakes a mental journey into his past, foraying into the wistful lanes of memory while maintaining a consciously vivacious stance. At times, it appears as if he had transcended to become one with this enlivening spirit which marks his literary expression, envisioning his own childlike relationship with the natural world which moulds his personality.

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<sup>371</sup> Stella Chitralkha Biswas, *The Travels and Travails of a Bengali: Reading Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's 'Palamau'*, 'Café Dissensus', (October 23, 2020), p. 3, retrieved on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2022, 5:00pm, <https://cafedissensus.com/2020/10/23/the-travels-and-travails-of-a-bengali-reading-sanjib-chandra-chattopadhyays-palamau/>

‘Nature’ is the canvas for the nurturing of his imaginative and aesthetic sensibilities, the locus of culture and the site of crucial socio—hierarchical negotiation.<sup>372</sup>

Distinct in style and structure from the other forms of travel narratives or writings about expeditions, missions or enterprises that were proliferating in Bengal since the late nineteenth century, Chattopadhyay’s work emerged as a fine example of Romantic travel literature which blends the elements of both fact and fiction to recount the travel experiences of the narrator in the hilly region of Palamau, located in Jharkhand. Chattopadhyay does not merely document the places and the cultures of the people he encountered on his many adventures in an ethnographic manner, but extended his creativity to project his own personal experiences, reactions and responses towards the diversity of life around him. Dwelling on the intersectional possibilities of the travelogue and the memoir forms of writing, Palamau evolved to be unique in its own right, exploring the nuances of both physical and mental travel. Coupled with this were the significant yet subtle discourses on race, colonisation, gender, socio—cultural hierarchy and other pertinent issues embedded within the narrative. Thus, Chattopadhyay’s travelogue is not just limited to the generic demands of secular travel writing but transcending itself to imbibe the Romantic spirit of speculating upon nature, beauty, memory, imagination and self—actualisation.<sup>373</sup>

Palamau, as a narrative, incorporates within itself the intersectional possibilities of both the memoir and the travelogue forms of writing. The narrator undertakes not just a literal, physical journey by various modes of locomotion into the heart of a Romantic wilderness,

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<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4

but also embarks on a mental journey into the past when he sets down to recount his experiences. The problematic interplay of memory, reminiscence and the actual temporal framework of the events add to the introspective nature of the work. It opens up new generic possibilities for the narrator to deal with certain contending issues as he retrospectively assesses his experiences of youth from the vantage point of his mature years. The skillful blend of his past youthful exuberance at Palamau and his present wizened, more informed outlook upon his experience has an almost Wordsworthian resonance in underlining the communion he has achieved with Nature. Nature evolves to become a transcendental source of nurturing his Romantic insight for pondering upon the deeper levels of existence.<sup>374</sup> The aesthetics of the picturesque landscape of Palamau has enabled him to undertake a metaphorical journey into self—actualisation and fashion his own socio-ethnic sense of identity. The subtext of negotiating with the complex concepts of masculinity, race, hierarchy, modernity and civilisation also remains palpably embedded within Chattopadhyay's narrative. Thus, Palamau exists as a legacy of the colonial Bengali man engaging with travel and its associated discursive travails, desperately trying to constitute an idea of the self within the larger imaginary of the nation while also attempting to synthesise it with his own Romantic perceptions. Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay himself is a fascinated spectator who is fascinated, stunned and overwhelmed by nature. He did not fall in love with the mountain alone, his followers abounded behind him. It is not a small matter to show the culture, festivals, sociality and way of life of Palamau in such a short range.<sup>375</sup> The way in which he had skillfully expressed the joys and sorrows of that place does not show that he had ignored the other

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<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5

side of the lives of the people living in Palamau, he had similarly shown that same skill by arranging the unspoken words of the miserable lives of the Kols, who are still immersed in the primitive melody. Sanjibchandra Chattopadhyay's introduction of this particular tribal group from Palamau has attracted the attention of the Bengali Bhadrals<sup>376</sup> is a very interesting part of this writing. The novelist never had much liking towards the colonial government. Although he served the government, Sanjibchandra Chattopadhyay never got along with other masters and employees. This can be understood by looking at his career. He never hesitated to reflect his own identity in his writings. His touches are also found in the Palamau travel story. Especially in the last sentence of the book<sup>377</sup> – “*Once our native wine can be sent to Bilet, birth is successful, a lot of heartburn is eliminated.*”<sup>378</sup> The reflected not only the typical mindset of the colonial agency and believed in the originality of Indian culture in its own way.<sup>379</sup>

To give a brief summary of Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel and why it is referred to as a travelogue, I have written how this novel narrates the story of Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's trip to a Pargana in India as a government official, it focuses on the story of the soil and the indigenous people of that area. I have elaborated in my chapter as to how after reading the newspaper, the novelist had a very different idea regarding Palamau and believed that it could not be such a huge forest area. After assuming the post of Deputy Magistrate, Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay lost his temper at the first 'Palamau

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<sup>376</sup> Sumit Sarkar, “Modern India 1885—1947”, *Palgrave Macmillan*, (USA, 1989): 35

<sup>377</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay, ‘Palamou’, *Bishwasahitya Publishers*, (1989): 24

<sup>378</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay and Arnab Bhattacharya, “Palamou: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Classic of Bengali Travel Literature” *Createspace Independent Pub*, (10 February 2014): 54

<sup>379</sup> Stella Chitralkha Biswas, *The Travels and Travails of a Bengali: Reading Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay's 'Palamau'*, ‘Café Dissensus’, (October 23, 2020): 5,, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2022, 8:15am, <https://cafedissensus.com/2020/10/23/the-travels-and-travails-of-a-bengali-reading-sanjib-chandra-chattopadhyays-palamau/>

darshan' shown by the palanquin bearers from Ranchi, he thought there was nothing there other than the forest lands. After his arrival at Palamau, the idea that he had made earlier was once again proved wrong. The forest was very deep and was not sparse. A travelogue has never been interpreted as history before. Here I will try to take into account how the British had exploited the forest lands and even used tribal people to fight for them as soldiers and also how Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay had written about the peasant community and how different rules proposed by the British government had ruined and mostly perished massive tribal population.

According to E. T. Dalton (1978), more than half of the people of Chota Nagpur were known by the name of Kol 'which included many tribes (e.g. the Mundas, the Oraons, Hos, Bhumij and others)'. They were simple but inflammable people and they belonged to a manly race. The author has given a wide picture of the tribal society and its impact on the environment which has enhanced our knowledge of the forest in the time of the colonial rule. Here, the wild, short and black people known as "Kol" are a tribal community, who are exposed to their own whims on a black rocky background.<sup>380</sup> It is in this closeness to nature that a valuable quote is written with the stroke of his pen – "Bonyera bone shundor, shishura matrikrore"<sup>381</sup> (Savages are as beautiful in the wilderness as infants in their mothers' laps)<sup>382</sup> stated Chattopadhyay in his work. This much-celebrated line underlines the basic ideological assumptions of the writer when he sets forth on his Romantic quest into a landscape which he visualises as marvelous, exotic

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<sup>380</sup> E.T. Dalton, "Tribal History of Eastern India" Orient Book Distributors, (1978): 25

<sup>381</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay, 'Palamou', *Bishwasahitya Publishers*, (1989): 26

<sup>382</sup> Sanjibchandra Chattopadhyay and Arnab Bhattacharya, "Palamou: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Classic of Bengali Travel Literature" *Createspace Independent Pub*, (10 February 2014): 24

and uncharacteristically hospitable towards his disposition. On the one hand, he imagines his relationship with Nature as that of a child with his mother, beautifully imagining a conventional construct to highlight the source of sublimity, beauty and cultural significance. However, on the other hand, the powerful discursive stance which he adopts while envisioning his relationship with Palamau and its tribal inhabitants inevitably ushers in the idea of a dialectical relationship between the metropole and the margin. As echoed in Subho Basu's (2010) argument in his article "The Dialectics of Resistance: Colonial Geography, Bengali Literati and the Racial Mapping of Indian Identity",<sup>383</sup> Chattopadhyay here seems to be evoking a similar method of reassessing his own sense of a native, 'modern' self, hailing from the center of culture or the metropole and the perceived 'otherness'<sup>384</sup> of the Kol community whom he locates within an imagined marginal space, beyond the demands of cultural progress or civilizational development. It is important to note the spatial markers of his journey, starting at Raniganj and gradually traversing through rural locations like Barakar and Hazaribagh and finally ending at the destination point of Palamau in the Chota Nagpur plateau area of Jharkhand. It is also interesting that throughout the course of his journey his mode of transport keeps changing as if in tune with the geographical backdrop and its cultural significance – from the ride on a mail van belonging to the Inland Transit Company, he switches on to a ride on a palanquin and finally to the ultimate choice of a Romantic traveler, leisure—walking. The deliberately crafted distancing between the 'self' and the 'other' has been achieved through a careful maneuvering of the ideas on race, modernity, primitiveness, socio—

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<sup>383</sup> Subho Basu, "The Dialectics of Resistance: Colonial Geography, Bengali Literati and the Racial Mapping of Indian Identity." *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2010): 60.

<sup>384</sup> W. W. Hunter, "The Annals of Rural Bengal", *Smith, Elder, & Co.*, (London, 1869): 70

cultural hierarchy and colonial subjectivity. The problematics of this negotiation between a proclaimed childlike narratorial deportment and the underlying tensions surrounding cultural and racial aspirations posit Chattopadhyay's travelogue as unique within the colonial understanding of travel writing.<sup>385</sup> In his novel, Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay has given emphasis on the lives of women specially, tribal women who work daily to keep their household going and are a major preserver of the forests. Curious, energetic and hardworking women were the mainstay of the tribal community. They were the driving force of their world.<sup>386</sup> The novelist writes that in the Kol community, men managed the house, looked after the children, and were lazy whenever they got the chance. As a result, men became prematurely premature with age and women became the epitome of youth.<sup>387</sup> Even in the Palamau forest the novelist witnesses, eye-to-eye talk, heart stealing and love results. The game of love was played by fights, quarrels or abuse between two families. The quarrel ended in a huge banquet. On the occasion of marriages, many people had to incur huge amount of debt and the author had skillfully portrayed the horrible result it led to.

### **The Forest Dwellers of Palamau**

Chattopadhyay's anthropological take on describing the details of the lives of the Kol community against the idyllic backdrop of hill clad, forested Palamau remains interesting for several reasons. He harbours an earnest desire within himself to not just gain ethnographic knowledge about a culture whose multiple folds were gradually unfurling

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<sup>385</sup> Sumit Sarkar, "Modern India 1885—1947", *Palgrave Macmillan*, (USA, 1989): 57

<sup>386</sup> Vandana Shiva, "Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development", *Zed Books*, (London, 1988): 6

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 6—7



in front of his eyes but there is also a deeply ingrained Romantic appreciation of the untainted beauty of a place not yet encroached by the onslaught of colonial exigencies. One might argue that a certain degree of paternalisation can be detected in the manner in which the narrator describes the practices and customs of the Kols, naturally owing to his perception of their ‘savage’,<sup>388</sup> indigenous status in juxtaposition to his position as a ‘modern’ traveler with agency and an assumedly superior sense of rationality. In fact, there are certain instances within the text when he emphatically isolates his identity and hierarchical status above these group of people whom he views as a homogenous entity and who are, in a sense, subservient to him. It is very telling that he wants to be addressed as ‘Khan Bahadur’<sup>389</sup> by the indigenous Kol people whom he perceives at the receiving end of his favours in the form of employment as his servants and bearers or other economic prospects. On other occasions, he wishes to blend into their culture by actively participating in their rituals of dance, marriage processions and so on. While the entire Kol community maintains a vivid distance from this perceivably superior ‘Saheb’,<sup>390</sup> there are situations in which the narrator undertakes flights of fancy while voluntarily trying to adapt to and identify with certain nuances of their culture. He is such a keen observer of the customs and practices of these indigenous people that he never fails to pen down every little detail that he presumes extremely significant in their lives. His elaborate descriptions of the drinking habits of the Kol men and women; their community dance rituals after sunset in the light of fires; their lengthy courtship rituals culminating in marital unions; their liquor making practices from the flowers of the Madhudrum trees,

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<sup>388</sup> Sumit Sarkar, “Modern India 1885—1947”, *Palgrave Macmillan*, (USA, 1989): 20

<sup>389</sup> H.H. Risley, “Tribes and Caste of Bengal”, *Bengal Secretariat Press*, Vol. I, (Calcutta, 1892): 19

<sup>390</sup> David Hardiman, “The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India”, *Oxford University Press*, (Delhi, 1995): 30

etc. – all of these present a vivid picture of the vibrant, animated lives of an indigenous, self—sustained community.<sup>391</sup> Chattopadhyay does not simply maintain a passive, objective stance while painting the picture of the Kol community but rather passionately and often even empathetically gets involved with the whole process, thereby also reflecting upon his own self and his relationship with the natural world around him.

### **Tribal women of Palamau**

It is rather interesting that the narrator, time and again, expresses his admiration for the exotic beauty of the Kol women whom he imaginatively identifies with the abstract concept of the ‘eternal feminine’.<sup>392</sup> Their youthful virility, charm, the grace of their half—naked bodies, their habits and virtues are starkly juxtaposed to their male counterparts who appear to the narrator’s eyes as withered, haggardly and lacking in vitality. He chooses to direct his gaze more at these women going about their routine chores and indulgences in their pastimes, which implicitly brings in the contending notions of masculinities between that of the ‘cultivated’ native and the ‘barbaric’ indigenous native. A particular incident which the narrator recounts bring this issue directly to the fore when he, along with a group of men from the Kol community, set out on an expedition to kill a man—eating tiger.<sup>393</sup> The anxieties surrounding the performance of ‘civilised’ masculinity, with the display of sheer courage and pragmatism, appear to be bearing down upon the ‘Saheb’ who is almost idolised by the ‘noble savage’<sup>394</sup> and his ‘uncivilised’

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<sup>391</sup> Jagdish Chandra Jha, “The Kol Insurrection Of Chota—Nagpur”, *The Archaeological Survey Of India Central Archaeological Library*, p. 35

<sup>392</sup> Vandana Shiva, “Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development”, *Zed Books*, (London, 1988): 10

<sup>393</sup> J.W. Nicholson (the then DFO Palamau, 1932): *Tiger Census of Palamau: Palamau Tiger Reserve has the distinction of being the first sanctuary in the world in which a tiger census was carried out as a pugmark count*, p. 12

<sup>394</sup> H.H. Risley, “Tribes and Caste of Bengal”, *Bengal Secretariat Press*, Vol. I, (Calcutta, 1892): 40

masculinity. This also explains why the narrator looks at the entire landscape of Palamau through a feminised, Romanticised lens. The flora and the fauna of the abundant wilderness hold a very feminine appeal to his sensual perceptions and he imagines himself as a solitary, Romantic dawdler exploring a virgin, unravished and unfamiliar landscape. Nature opens up a niche for not just self-reflection and Romantic philosophising but enables him to implicitly negotiate with the discursive notions on race, civilisation, culture, modernity, native identity, etc. Despite being a subject caught up in the modernising machinery<sup>395</sup> of the colonial powers, Chattopadhyay's Romantic vision has a redeeming quality about it because it does not envisage the overpowering of the Kol legacy with any civilizing mission on the part of the British. He does bring in a reference to the Asuras, another indigenous group residing in the jungles of Palamau, commenting upon their proneness to extinction.<sup>396</sup> However, he also critiques the civilising missions of the hegemonic powers which he sees as robbing the indigenous communities of their very essence and uniqueness. Thus, on the one hand, while he is self-conscious about his own position as a 'cultured' native from the metropole (the seat of colonial power), on the other hand, he is also aware of its deterring influence on the indigeneity of certain groups. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Chattopadhyay acknowledges the cultural significance, legacy and authority of the tribal inhabitants of the primeval forests of Palamau, the knowledge of which he aspires to gain through his travels.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay, 'Palamou', *Bishwasahitya Publishers*, (1989): 40

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 41

<sup>397</sup> Bipan Chandra, "Modern India", *National Council of Educational Research and Training*, 1971: 230

### **Political situation in India when Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay visited Palamau**

The war of 1857 created a disturbing situation for the British in India. In this crisis moment a general election in England resulted in the defeat of the Conservative Ministry. Lord Lytton resigned simultaneously with the Home Government, and the Marquis of Ripon was appointed his successor in April 1880. Since then, a British brigade suffered defeat at Maiwand, between Kandahar and the Helmand River, from the Herat troops of Ayub Khan, a defeat promptly retrieved by the brilliant march of General Sir Frederic Roberts from Kabul to Kandahar, and by the total rout of Ayub Khan's army on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1880. Abdurrahman Khan, the eldest male representative of the stock of Dost Muhammad, was recognised by us as Amir. The British forces retired from Kabul, leaving Abdurrahman in possession of the capital (1881). Ayub Khan again took the field. His success, however, was short lived, and Abdurrahman was still sovereign in Afghanistan (March 1883).<sup>398</sup> Lord Ripon however availed himself of the unbroken peace which had prevailed in India since 1881 to enter on a series of internal reforms. The year 1882 would be memorable for these great measures.<sup>399</sup> By repealing the Vernacular Press Act, he set free the native journals from the last restraints on the free and fair discussion of public questions. His scheme of Local Self Government had opened a new era of political life to the natives of India.<sup>400</sup> At the same time, by the appointment of an Education Commission, with a view to the spread of popular instruction on a broader basis, he has sought to fit the people for the safe exercise of the rights which he has conferred. The import duties on cotton goods, and indeed the whole Indian import duties were, with a

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid., 230—231

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 231

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 232

few exceptions, abolished (March 1882). In 1882, also, a contingent of the Indian Native troops took part with the British forces in Egypt, and displayed conspicuous powers alike of endurance in the campaign, and of gallantry in battle. A chosen band of the Indian officers and men were afterwards sent to England, and received an enthusiastic welcome from all classes of the people. Lord Ripon remained India's Viceroy from 1880—84. This liberal politician is known for many reforms in the internal administration of India. The most important events during this time were as follows:

- The Vernacular Press Act was repealed in 1882
- A Resolution in 1882 set off the institution of local self-government in India.
- Hunter Commission came in 1882 for the purpose of education reforms.
- The age for entry in the Civil Services was once again raised to 21 years.
- The First factory Act was enacted in 1881
- Introduction of Ilbert Bill in severely compromised state.<sup>401</sup>

The years 1882 and 1883 are memorable for these great measures. One important one was the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act, which was passed by his predecessor Lord Lytton in 1878. Thus, he set free the native journals from the last restraints on the free discussion of public questions. In 1882, he granted freedom to the Press. He was the founder of local self-government in modern India and was fondly called "Ripon, the Good".<sup>402</sup> Lord Ripon is known to have granted the Indians first taste of freedom by introducing the Local Self Government in 1882. His scheme of local self-government developed the

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<sup>401</sup> Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, "A Concise History of Modern India", Cambridge University Press (2012): 80

<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 80—81

Municipal institutions which had been growing up in the country ever since India was occupied by the British Crown. He led a series of enactments in which larger powers of the Local self– government were given to the rural and urban bodies and the elective people received some wider rights. Lord Ripon is known as Father of Local Self Government in India.<sup>403</sup> This was not enacted by any act; it was a resolution that was passed in 1882. A committee was appointed in 1875 to inquire into the conditions of factory work in the country. This committee had favored some kind of legal restrictions in the form of factory laws. During Lord Ripon’s time, the first Factories Act was adopted in 1881. Following this act, a Factory Commission was appointed in 1885. There was another Factories Act in 1891, and a Royal Commission on Labor was appointed in 1892. The result of these enactments was the limitation on the factory working hours. This was an answer of the Government to the pathetic conditions of the workers in the factory, wherein, only when a laborer exhausted, new laborer was to take his / her place. In 1882, Lord Ripon organised the Hunter Commission under William Wilson Hunter. William Wilson Hunter was the statistician, a compiler and a member of the Indian Civil Service, who later also became Vice President of Royal Asiatic Society. He was appointed as a Magistrate in the Bengal Presidency in 1862, and from there only he started compiling the local traditions and records. He published “The Annals of Rural Bengal”<sup>404</sup> and “A Comparative Dictionary of the Non—Aryan Languages of India”<sup>405</sup> but his best known work is “The Imperial Gazetteer of India”<sup>406</sup> on which he started working in 1869. This

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 82

<sup>404</sup> W. W. Hunter, “The Annals of Rural Bengal”, *Smith, Elder, & Co.*, (London, 1869): 20

<sup>405</sup> W. W. Hunter, “A Comparative Dictionary of the (Non—Aryan) Languages of India and High Asia, with a Dissertation”, Trubner & Co. (1868): 50

<sup>406</sup> W. W. Hunter, “The Imperial Gazetteer of India”, Trubner & Co. (1885): 45

work was delegated to him by Lord Mayo. The work appeared in 9 volumes in 1881. In 1882 as a member of the Governor General in Council he was appointed he chairman of the Commission on Education. In 1886, he was also elected as Vice Chancellor of the Calcutta University. The Hunter Commission brought out the neglect to the primary and secondary education in the country.<sup>407</sup> Indian Trusts Acts, 1882 is an act related to private trusts and trustees. According to Indian Trust Act, trust means an obligation annexed to the ownership of property, & arising out of a confidence reposed in & accepted by the owner for the benefit of another or for another and owner.<sup>408</sup>

### **Political Situation in Palamau in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The history of the district after the stratification of the administrative changes and since the beginning of the 20th century really merged into the history of the province and of India. The next event of public importance was the rapid political changes since 1919 and the inception of the Non—Cooperation Movement at the initiative of Mahatma Gandhi. Palamau along with other districts of Bihar played an important role during the Non—Cooperation Movement in spite of her comparative backwardness regarding education. The special session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta in 1920 was attended by a number of Adivasis who walked all the way from Palamau district to Calcutta. Strangely enough the call of Mahatma Gandhi had a quick response from the Adivasis. Some of the earlier non—Adivasis who took part in Congress work were Hiranand Ojha, Durga Nand Ojha, Vindeshwari Pathak, Sheikh Mohammad Hassan and Dee Narayan Mahta. A

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<sup>407</sup> William Wilson Hunter, “A brief history of the Indian people 1840–1900”, Trubner & Co., (London, 1883): 13

<sup>408</sup> The Indian Trusts Act, (1882), retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2022, 10:00pm, chromeextension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Flegislative.gov.in%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2FA1882-02.pdf&clen=491782&chunk=true

largely attended session of the Students Conference was held at Daltonganj on the 10th October, 1920 under the Presidentship of Rev. C. F. Andrews. This conference of the students was attended by Mazrul Haque, Chandra Bansi Sahay, Krishna Prassan Sen Sinha and others.<sup>409</sup> Mazrul Haque in his speech on the resolution of the use of Swadeshi cloth expressed the desirability of the students participating in political matters and proposed an amendment that college students and other students above 16 years of age could participate in the political matters. There was another resolution regarding the withdrawal of students above 16 years of age immediately and unconditionally from Government aided or controlled institutions to national schools. Abdul Bari had moved this resolution and it was passed by an overwhelming majority of votes. A national school was started at Daltonganj in the house of Sheikh Saheb and Vindeshwari Pathak was the headmaster.<sup>410</sup> It was mentioned that this national school was in a way the nucleus of the activities of the Congress movement in this district. Whenever any person of importance would visit Daltonganj, he paid visits to this national school where meetings used to be held. During 1921 and later a series of meetings were held at different places like Panki, Japla and other places where the cult of Charkha, Khaddar, anti—untouchability, prohibition, etc., used to be dwelt upon. In 1922, Manindra Nath Swami Banaras visited Daltonganj and delivered speeches and a notice under section 144, Cr. P.C. was at once served on him by the Deputy Commissioner of Palamau. Devaki Prasad Sinha, a reputed advocate of Palamau and Krishna Ballav Sahay were elected members of the local propaganda committee of the Chota Nagpur Division in the meeting of the Bihar Branch of the Swarajya Party held at Patna on 2nd June, 1923. Both of them moved quite a lot in

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<sup>409</sup> Bipan Chandra, "Modern India", *National Council of Educational Research and Training*, 1971: 100

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid*: 101



Palamau district to organise the Congress movement. A momentous event was the visit of Mahatma Gandhi along with Dr. Rajendra Prasad to Daltonganj on the 11th January, 1927 during his second tour in Bihar. Thousands of villagers from distances of 20 to 30 miles attended the meeting and Mahatma Gandhi had to move, from place to place within the meeting to address the great mass. It may also be mentioned here that the Bihar Students Conference and the Local Branch of the Kayastha Sabha took prominent part in shaping the advanced public opinion.<sup>411</sup> In this ambiance, the scope of educating these tribals was widened. This is how in anti—national movements the local issues were intertwined with the national and vice—versa. Still considering the number of educated population in Daltonganj the present researcher is skeptical about the ideology of the Gandhi. The 25<sup>th</sup> Bihar Students' Conference was held at Daltonganj in 1932 under the presidentship of Kedar Nath, an eminent lawyer of Gaya. It has also to be mentioned that the Kisan Movement in, Palamau district gave a wide support to the agitation against the constituted authority.<sup>412</sup> The time old Kamia system and the economic backwardness of the labourers were the common target. The relationship between the landlords and the tenants had deteriorated badly. Many tenants had stopped payment of rent as a result of which the landlords were unable to pay the Government revenue and cess in time. The Congress took a good deal of interest in the improvement of the condition of the tenants and the agricultural labourers and there was an active Congress propaganda for filing suits for determination of rents. Congress activities in this connection were particularly concentrated in spots where there was more of oppression on the tenants and the agricultural labourers, for example, at pockets of Hussainabad, Chhatterpur, Garhwa,

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<sup>411</sup> Sumit Sarkar, "Modern India 1885—1947", *Palgrave Macmillan*, (USA, 1989): 111

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid*: 112

Ranka and Bhaunathpur police stations. A well—attended political conference was held at Ranka in 1942 where Jadubans Sahay and other local leaders condemned the attitude of the landlords. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya visited Daltonganj in 1936 to inaugurate the Vishnu Mandir erected in the heart of the town. Malviyaji had accepted the inaugural ceremony only when the ‘enlightened people of Daltonganj’ had made the commitment that the Vishnu Mandir will also be thrown open for the Harijans. An Annual Session of the Bihar Provincial Hindu Sabha was held in 1941 under the presidentship of Kamakhya Narayan Singh, Raja of Ramgarh.<sup>413</sup> The labour problem particularly at Japla had also attracted a good deal of attention. There was a labour strike at the cement factory at Japla in 1937–38 and since then the labour problem in this district could be said to move along with the labour problem elsewhere. The August disturbances in 1942 had their echoes in Palamau as well, the railway lines were dismantled telegraph lines were cut and a large number of men both at the district headquarters and in the interior were arrested. Since then as from before the district had actively participated in the various phases of struggle for independence. Since independence was achieved the event of far—reaching importance was the abolition of zamindaris which has been dealt with separately. The partition of India and the creation of Pakistan was affected by widespread communal disturbances in the country. Luckily Palamau had escaped slightly. There has been an influx of displaced persons in this district particularly from the West Pakistan. This element has been completely absorbed in the population. Regarding the abolition of zamindaris, it may be mentioned that it, was a very necessary step. The relationship between the zamindars and the tenants had declined very badly and there was a lot of

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<sup>413</sup> Ibid., 112—113

trouble in the different parts of the district over Bakast and Gairmajrua lands, over lac and mahua trees, payment of rents, etc.<sup>414</sup> The realisation of abwabs<sup>415</sup> had become extinct sometime back but now the tenants had been refusing to pay their legitimate rent and the landlords, in their turn were harassing the tenants over their rights on lac and mahua trees. Agrarian troubles broke out in different pockets and at Kharaundhi in Bhaunathpur P.S. The tenants had resorted to Satyagraha for taking forceful possession of Bakast lands. Consequent upon the vesting of intermediary interests with effect from the 26<sup>th</sup> January 1955 the tenants ceased paying rent, etc., to the outgoing landlords. The Land Reforms Act put an end to all this and after the usual aftermath of such a revolutionary steps things are becoming normal now. An incidence of some importance took place in 1958 which was fomented by one Phetal Singh, a Kharwar. This local incidence attained much more publicity than what it deserved and even was loosely described in the Press as the Kharwar Movement. As mentioned before the Kharwars form one of the major Adivasi elements in the district. A certificate sale of a bullock belonging to a Kharwar at village Khobi near Manpur in Sarguja district of Madhya Pradesh bordering Palamau district created an alarming situation. The Kharwars organised themselves under one Chuni Singh and the movement quickly went out of alignment and refusal to pay taxes became a slogan. Their party came to be known as the Bharat Sarkar.<sup>416</sup> The so-called Bharat Sarkar Party was said to have the objective of creating and establishing an independent State of the Kharwars. The police in Madhya Pradesh naturally took steps to

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<sup>414</sup> Ram Dayal Munda and Samar Bosu Mallick, "The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples' Struggle for Autonomy in India", *International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs*, 108, (Copenhagen, 2003): 51

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, 51—52

<sup>416</sup> D. H. E. Sunder, "Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the Palamau Government Estate, Palamau District in Chota Nagpur, Bengal, Seasons 1894—95 to 1896—97 By Bengal (India)", Department of Land Records, 1898: 15

crush the movement and the movement spread to the south–western part of Palamau district where there is a large Kharwar population. The first meeting of the Kharwars was held at village Saraidih in Bhandaria P.S. Other meetings followed at Parasatand and Kutku in January, 1958. The leadership was of one Phetal Singh who moved quickly from place to place in the jungles. Phetal Singh came from village Bahahara, eight miles from Ranka P.S. and quite a number of villages in Ranka thana were badly affected. It is understood that Phetal Singh’s party had more than 300 strong adherents and a movement to create confusion and to benefit thereby won the sympathy from people of anti—social bias. As Phetal Singh and his party moved in the jungles, the forest contractors, Labourers and Tehsildars were terrorised.<sup>417</sup> The Tehsildar engaged in collection of chaukidari tax at village Bankhetta was asked to leave the village, and exaggerated stories regarding Phetal Singh and his gang frightened a number of subordinate Government employees. One Mahadeva Singh, a Kharwar of village Ramchandrapur, P.S. Sarguja was the chief adviser of Phetal Singh. The so called Bharat Sarkar of the Kharwars was quickly suppressed by the police. The village Bahahara, the centre of Kharwar activities was surrounded by the military police, reinforced from Ranchi and headed by the District Superintendent of Police of Palamau. The gang was surrounded up in the course of which one of Phetal Singh’s men was killed and injury was caused to a few others. Some policemen had also received injuries in the course of their round up. Phetal Singh was arrested along with six followers and the chief adviser. They were ultimately tried and

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 15—16

Phetal Singh was given rigorous imprisonment for three years. Phetal Singh and all his associates were given pardon and released in 1959.<sup>418</sup>

Overemphasis on regional solidarity made the Jharkhand Party unable to read the nexus between class and ethnicity, although the formal liberal policies of the party gave it some electoral success in the first two general elections of independent India in 1952 and 1957. At the height of the movement for a separate state, the Jharkhand Party submitted a memorandum to the State Re—organisation Commission (SRC) in April 1954 demanding the formation of the Jharkhand state within the national and the constitutional framework of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India.<sup>419</sup> The SRC, however, rejected the demand on certain grounds like, the minority status of the Adivasis in the Jharkhand the region, absence of a viable link language, the Jharkhand Party not having a clear majority of seats in the region and the imbalances between industry and agriculture which such a bifurcation would cause for a residual Bihar state. This refusal of the SRC had a tremendous frustrating impact upon the Jharkhand Movement, and in the general election of 1962, the strength of the Jharkhand party decreased considerably. Jaipal Singh, thinking that the separate state cannot be achieved by the politics of separatism or isolation merged the Jharkhand Party with the ruling Congress in 1963 ignoring all the views against it.<sup>420</sup> Regarding this merger, and the consequent degeneration of the Jharkhand Movement, many a reason can be put forward. But the reason that merits a

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<sup>418</sup> D. H. E. Sunder, "Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the Palamau Government Estate, Palamau District in Chota Nagpur, Bengal, Seasons 1894–95 to 1896–97 By Bengal (India)", Department of Land Records, 1898: 18

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

<sup>420</sup> Arunabha Ghosh, "Jharkhand Movement: A Study in the Politics of Regionalism", Minerva Associates (Publications), (India, 1998): 20

sociological analysis must concern itself with the internal contradictions prevailing at the level of the then Jharkhandi society. In fact, these contradictions were present there throughout the third phase and none of the organisations could resolve them. Nirmal Sengupta<sup>421</sup> very succinctly summarises the issues of these in his characterisation of the features of both the Adivasi Mahasabha and the Jharkhand Party, Urban orientation in thinking and activity; Christian domination and close links with the Churches; Pre—dominantly Munda—Oraon organisation and, Efforts to establish tribal solidarity alone tending to sectarian behavior against non—tribal autochthons.<sup>422</sup> Thus despite its advocated policies of liberalism, the Jharkhand Party failed to bring the rural agricultural non—Christian Adivasis into its fold. Being predominantly a Munda—Oraon organisation it also failed to win over the Santhals of the Santhal Pargana region who had a very proud legacy of struggle against the alien rule. Moreover, the non—Adivasis who had remained indifferent earlier became rather skeptical towards it. Against this backdrop, the merger of the Jharkhand Party with one of the mainstream nationalist parties, like the Congress, made it very difficult for the future Jharkhand organisations to reorganise it. As the causes of the deprivation of the people were there, so also the movement, but practically there was no organisation to lead it. Some associations were formed particularly in the Santhal Pargana region during this period, which tried to bring together the factors of class and ethnicity into the degree of their agenda. During the closing period of the 1960s, some degree of radicalization entered into their politics due to the influence of the Naxalite Movement going on in other parts of the country. This paved the way for the emergence of radical politics under the banner of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)

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<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 20—21

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, 21

led by Shibu Soren and some others, which ushered in a new phase in the history of Jharkhand.

### **Phase of Elevation to Social Movement (1970 Onwards)**

This phase witnessed the maturation of those tendency hints of which were apparent in the closing period of the last phase. The agrarian issues, hitherto neglected by all the organizations of the third phase were brought into a sharp focus. Ethnicity, which was considered the primary mobilizing agency, lost its exclusive significance. Efforts were being made to blend the ethnic factor and the class factor together, which was really the challenge before all the Jharkhand organisations in the third phase. The first organisation that tried to accomplish this goal was the Shivaji Samaj, a social reform organisation established by Binod Bihari Mahato in the year 1971. This organisation tried to bring the Kurmi—Mahatos of the Jharkhand region close to the Adivasis. It also tried to develop the consciousness of the people against the evil of land alienation. Hence it sought to form a kind of pan—ethnic solidarity of the wretched peasantry of Jharkhand to struggle against oppression. In the words of Arvind N. Das (1949—2000), “the leaders of the movement took the stand that any such struggle should be taken up by the people as a whole and not by any particular community. But, primarily being a social reform organisation, this could not actually lead the people in any political struggle.”<sup>423</sup> This led to the birth of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, a radical political organisation in the year 1973 under the leadership of Binod Bihari Mahato (1923—1991), A.K Roy (1935—2019), Sadanand Jha (early 1970s) and Shibu Soren (1944—present). This was the first

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<sup>423</sup> F. B. Bradley Birt, “Chotanagpore: A lesser known province of the empire”, *Smith, Elder, & Co.*, (London, 1903): 60

time in the history of the Jharkhand Movement that non—Adivasis became leaders, as the first three leaders mentioned were non—Adivasis. Binod Bihari Mahato was the leader of the Mahatos who was basically agriculturists in the Chota Nagpur region.<sup>424</sup> A.K. Roy had a considerable influence among the colliery workers of the Dhanbad belt of the region. Sadanand Jha was a militant trade union leader operating among the railway workers at Gomoh and finally, Shibu Soren had wide acceptance among the adivasis of the region who called him Guruji.<sup>425</sup> Naturally, the composition of the leadership resulted in the seeming unity of the Adivasis and the non—Adivasis on the one hand and the workers with the peasantry on the other. The JMM leadership realised that the problem of the oppression of the Jharkhand sub—nationality was integrally linked with the class exploitation of the workers and the peasantry of this region by both the private and the bureaucratic state capital. As Arunabha Ghosh says, “The Morcha projected itself as a radical Marxist party which not only demanded a separate state of Jharkhand with reservation of jobs for the sons of the soil but also to free that state from class exploitation.”<sup>426</sup> Hence, JMM by blending the factor of class and ethnicity widened the social base of the Jharkhand Movement. It also led to a change in the connotation of the term ‘Jharkhandi’<sup>427</sup> as well, by signifying, a producer, irrespective of caste, tribe or nation, residing in the Jharkhand region. But the JMM, in spite of having some initial success, failed to achieve its objective in the long run. This failure may be attributed to the complexity that the process of the working class formation experienced here due to

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<sup>424</sup> Ibid., 60—61

<sup>425</sup> Ibid., 61

<sup>426</sup> Arunabha Ghosh, “Jharkhand Movement: A Study in the Politics of Regionalism”, Minerva Associates (Publications), (India, 1998): 38

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., 38-39



the intervention of ethnic factors. A large portion of the working class here, was composed of immigrants who considered the Dikus as their ethnic brethren. Consequently, there was a split among the working class, and the movement along with the organizations lost the momentum, which was gained in the initial period of this phase. The immigrant working—class gradually distanced itself from the JMM and to achieve political mileage out of this hazy situation almost all the nationalist parties opened their Jharkhand cells here during 1978—1980. The salt was added to the injury when Shibu Soren, like his predecessor Jaipal Singh, decided to fight the seventh Lok Sabha election in 1980 by forming an alliance with the Congress.<sup>428</sup> Binod Bihari Mahato in protest left JMM and formed JMM (B) while A.K. Roy also resigned. The history of the Jharkhand Movement from this point was marked by the evil of narrow electoral politics. Unethical political adjustment, corrupt practices of the leadership, mushrooming of political organizations devoid of any concrete ideological base, and factionalism, isolated the people from all these. Several organisations like JMM (M); Jharkhand Peoples Party, All Jharkhand students union and many others came up but all these failed to achieve any noteworthy success. At times, there were some efforts at the integration of these splinter Jharkhandi groups. These saw the formation of the Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC) in 1987 but this also disintegrated without making any positive contribution due to the inimical stands taken by different leaders regarding its structure and operation. Basically, during the 80s and 90s, there was no Jharkhand Movement, despite the fact that there were a number of Jharkhandi organisations. These organisations did not try to organise and

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<sup>428</sup> John Clark Marshman, "The History of India" Vol. II, Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, (London, 1867): 10—11

mobilise people over the demand of Jharkhand their only intention was to convert it into an issue having considerable electoral value.<sup>429</sup>

The game of political understanding and adjustments for electoral benefit; resulted in the formation of the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC) in August 1995 which was a powerless and crippled body gifted to the people of this region to ensure their loyalty to the system of electoral politics. The same political arithmetic of electoral profit and loss saw the passing of the Jharkhand Bill by the Indian Parliament on 2 August 2000, which resulted in the formation of a separate Jharkhand state on 15 November 2000. The people of this region, realising that the formation of the state as a result of political manoeuvring instead of their active struggle, remained indifferent. They were enough conscious to perceive that this could not resolve their contradiction with the Dikus both indigenous and outsiders, hence the story of their exploitation would also carry on. The attitude of the common people of Jharkhand towards the new state was well reflected in The Times of India report; on 5 August 2000 read; “A quick survey of the Santhal Pargana area reveals that it is the Dikus who are celebrating the formation of Jharkhand, not the tribals. The reason, they are preparing for the loot of the vast natural resources of the area. Although electoral politics occupied the center stage one should not underestimate the role played by the people, in general.”<sup>430</sup>

In the later part of the 1970s and almost throughout the 1980s we saw the alienation of the ‘immigrant working class’ from the movement. But the ‘indigenous working class’, however minimum their proportion in the total workforce might be, was always there in

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>430</sup> Ranajit Guha, “Subaltern Studies II”, *Oxford University Press*, (Calcutta, 1983): 30

the movement. The economic policies of liberalisation, privatisation was undertaken by the Government of India in the latter part of the 1980s and the early 1990s resulted in severe exploitation of the working class. The economic reality of exploitation again brought the immigrant, mostly the non—Adivasi working—class close to their Adivasi counterparts. This was evident in some of the programs of Jharkhand bandh, the days—long economic blockade of the region, organised by the Jharkhandi’s political outfits here, where they participated in large numbers.<sup>431</sup> Therefore, at the societal level the working class, both indigenous and immigrants and the peasantry were on the same track. But unfortunately, there was no political organisation to recognise the merit of this to further the cause of the Jharkhand Movement.<sup>432</sup> As a result, this force remained unorganised, rather unutilised too. Even the Communist parties like the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPIM) perhaps due to their over—allegiance to constitutional politics did not make any serious attempt to mobilise these people. In such a situation of extreme political vacuum, the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), which did not have a very strong base here, realising the popular mood of frustration, appeared as a savior with its slogan of ‘Vananchal’.<sup>433</sup> The people knowing fully well that ‘Vananchal’ is a Sanskritic version of the word Jharkhand accepted it hesitantly. Thus, behind the formation of the Jharkhand state, in no way, can we undermine the role of the people of Jharkhand. A.K. Roy summarises it as, “The feeling of Jharkhand is so strong that no manipulation from the top can control it. Even if all the leaders are bought, the movement is reborn in another form. At present, the Jharkhand

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 31

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 31—32

<sup>433</sup> Ram Dayal Munda and Samar Bosu Mallick, “The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples’ Struggle for Autonomy in India”, *International Work Group for Indigenous Affair*, 108, (Copenhagen, 2003): 33

parties are weak but not so the Jharkhand sentiment.”<sup>434</sup> It is the pressure from the bottom that forced national parties like BJP and Congress to form this new state to survive politically in the area. The people of Jharkhand have to go many a mile to establish a state and society which is free from all sorts of exploitation, economic, and national, which was the dream of the forerunners of the Jharkhand Movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>435</sup> In this sense, the movement in its fourth stage is still continuing. In conclusion, we can mention that the analysis of any social movement should make a thorough study of its historicity. In the long historiography of the movement, we can see that, in some period ethnicity had played a major role, but socio—economic factors also contributed to its reinforcement while in some other period it gave way to other social factors, keeping itself in a dormant position. In the process of group identity—formation, ethnic factors, indeed, act hand in hand with other socioeconomic and cultural factors.

### **Post—Independence Tribal Aspiration and the Creation of a Separate State:**

In 1939, Jaipal Singh became the president of the Adivasi Mahasabha, which was later renamed as the “Jharkhand Party” after independence. Jaipal Singh remained its president from 1939 to 1960. Post—independence, the Jharkhand party became a prominent force in Bihar politics until its decay in the sixties. After that, one of its splinter groups led by Shibu Soren the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha continued the struggle for a “Greater Jharkhand.” In the meantime the BJP came out with its demand for a separate “Vananchal” state comprising 18 districts of Bihar, arguing that demand for a “Greater

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 34

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 34—35

Jharkhand” including areas from neighboring states was “not practical”. In 1988, Ram Dayal Munda committee submitted a report to the Union Home ministry advising it to grant ‘autonomy’ to ‘Greater Jharkhand’.<sup>436</sup> After yearlong discussions at various levels the idea of creating a “Union Territory” or “Jharkhand General Council” emerged. In 1995 the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC) was set up after a tripartite agreement between the Union government, the Bihar government and group of Jharkhand leaders including Soren, Munda, Mandal, Besra, and Tirkey. Some Jharkhand tribal leaders like N.E. Horo opposed the agreement, calling it a farce and stuck to the demand for Tribal Homeland.<sup>437</sup> But the road map to a separate Jharkhand state was already laid down. Aspirations of Jharkhand tribes came to fruition when the Jharkhandis got their separate Jharkhand State in November 2000. But did they really achieve more dignity and security? “No teacher teaches but learns so much more in the process. My students had been tasked to write essays on the broad subject of Indias nationhood. There was not a single essay from which I did not learn something. One of them, on tribal India...I rise, he said, to speak on behalf of...the original people of India...As a jungli...the whole history of my people is one of continuous exploitation and dispossession by the non—aboriginals of India punctuated by rebellions and disorder, and yet I take Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at his word. I take you all at your word that now we are going to start a new chapter, a new chapter of Independent India where there is equality of opportunity, where no one would be neglected,” this is a memorable quote from a speech given in the Constituent Assembly on December 19, 1946, by the Munda leader, Jaipal Singh.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> Sarat Chandra Roy, “The Oraons of Chota Nagpur”, *Gyan Publishing House* (2019): 70

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, 70—71

<sup>438</sup> Jaipal Singh, *Constituent Assembly Proceedings*, (December 19, 1946): 20

## **Palamau Forest Exploitation**

Palamau being a Tiger reserve, has been exploited by the government and common man separately. According to P.C Choudhury, “In the initial stages when the forests were taken over they were heavily jhumed as is recorded in the Working Plan of Mr. J. W. Nicholson (1932). In 1874–75 Mr. Johnston carried out linear valuation survey on the basis of which Dr. Schlich prescribed complete rest to enable the forests to recover from the past ill—treatment. In 1892 Mr. Dandey, the Conservator of Forests, Bengal prepared a Working Plan report and submitted some proposal as the basis of working of these forests. In 1904 Mr. Haslett, the then Divisional Forest Officer, submitted a Working Plan to the Inspector–General of Forests who, however, considered that the publication of the Working Plan was unjustifiable and only a Plan of Operation for fixed number of years was all that was necessary.”<sup>439</sup> Mr. Haslett’s proposals consisted of (1) selection felling of sal over 5 feet in girth and khair over 1 feet 8 inches, (2) non—regulated felling of dead sal trees and trees of other species for which demand may be found and (3) improvement felling. In 1905 one Khair Felling Series of 20 years rotation in Kechki, Saidup, Ramandag and Baresand was approved by the Conservator of Forests which at his instigation was altered in 1907 in which the exploitable size was raised to 2 feet and the 20 existing coupes were divided into two felling series worked on ten to fifteen years rotation respectively. Mr. Draper, the then Divisional Forest Officer, drew up a revised scheme of fellings for fifteen years rotation. For reasons not known the felling series to be worked out on ten years rotation was dropped out of picture. In 1908 a separate

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<sup>439</sup> P. C. Roy Choudhary, “Bihar District Gazetteers:“Palamau”, The Superintendent Secretariat Press, sub–section 5: “Forests”, (Bihar, Patna 1961): 9-10

working scheme for Betla and Kechki was introduced. The fellings, however, were carried regularly in Kechki Block up to 1922–23 and no fellings were undertaken in Betla till 1919–20.<sup>440</sup> This scheme operated till the year 1924–25. In 1909 Mr. Hearl, the Conservator of Forests, Bengal, amended bamboo working scheme and in 1915 Mr. Raines raised felling cycle to six years and constituted felling series in Ramandag Block as well. In 1923 Mr. Mooney submitted revised Working Scheme of Kechki and Betla Blocks but it came into effect from 1924. He prescribed selection–cum improvement fellings with felling cycle of 30 years in the plain working circle and fixed the exploitable size to 3’6” in girth. In hill working circle he prescribed Coppice with Standards on 60 years rotation and confined the standards to khair and Satin wood only. He also extended the scope of Mr. Haines’ scheme for bamboos over a part of Baresand forests and prescribed altogether nine felling series to be worked on felling cycle of three years. In 1927 Mr. D. H. Khan drew up a scheme for the Betla Protected Forests in which he prescribed Coppice with Standard under 30 years rotation. In 1932 a comprehensive Working Plan by Mr. Nicholson was introduced for the first time which covered almost all the approachable and workable areas of the forests. Under this Plan the forests of the Division were divided into seven working circles, viz., (1) Selection, (2) Coppice, (3) Village, (4) Teak Plantation, (5) Bamboo, (6) Kath and (7) Miscellaneous. Later during the Second World War one more working circle, namely (8) Salai Working Circle formed for meeting the demands of packing boxes. The most important feature of this Working Plan was the Teak Plantation Working Circle which was aimed at introducing an exotic species in the area which was of immense economic value and is very much in demand.

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<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, 10

This Working Plan was revised in the year 1950 by Mr. P. Mishra which is still in operation and covers the entire Government Reserved, Protected and former Khalsa Forests of the district of Palamau. With the introduction of intensive method of management and exploitation this Working Plan has a larger application and covers almost the entire area of the forests.<sup>441</sup> He has also endeavoured to introduce uniform system which was hitherto not applied in the sal forests of the district. Under this Plan the forests have been divided into ten working circles, viz., (1) Sal Conversion, (2) Selection, (3) Coppice, (4) Village, (5) Khalsa, (6) Plantation, (7) Bamboo, (8) Kath, (9) Salal and (10) Miscellaneous. On taking over of Private Protected Forests which ultimately vested in the State under the L. R. Act the Working Plan of the newly acquired area has been prepared by Mr. J.N. Sinha and is in operation since the year 1954–55.<sup>442</sup> Under this Plan the forests have been divided into four working circles, viz. (1) Coppice Working Circle, (2) Khair (overlapping), (3) Bomboo (overlapping) and (4) Semaj and.Salai (overlapping).Working Circles. In the new Protected Forests the forests of one village or a group of villages have been constituted as Felling. Series which is the unit of management and blocks and compartments have not been made so far. These felling series in their turn are divided into as many parts as there are number of years of rotation (40 parts of the rotation is of 40 years) and each part which is called a coupe is set apart for felling in the year when it falls due. Ultimately at the end the felling series will consist of 40 equal patches of forests in a series of age gradations, i.e., varying in age from one to 40 years. Large stretches of forest lands which were once covered with fine forests have

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<sup>441</sup> P. C. Roy Choudhary, "Bihar District Gazetteers:"Palamau", The Superintendent Secretariat Press, sub-section 5: "Forests", (Bihar, Patna 1961): 11

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., 12



since been completely denuded of all vegetation and stand out as desolate, naked wastes on which not even grass can grow. Large parts of such wastes have been gullied and deep ravines have been formed therein. For rehabilitating such denuded lands and for arresting the accelerated pace of erosion, afforestation schemes have been taken up.<sup>443</sup> Gaya Afforestation Division operates in this district with the above end in view. Besides the above, efforts are also being made by the local Divisions to afforest small patches of lands. Works of improvement in the shape of replacement of inferior species by species of higher value and utility like teak and semal is in progress in Palamau and Latehar Divisions.<sup>444</sup> The target is to plant up 400 acres with semal and 400 acres with teak at a cost of Rs. 40,000 each in each of these two Divisions by the end of the Second Five – Year Plan. For raising teak and semal stumps one nursery at Dorami has been established having an area of five acres by improving the old nursery which was very small in extent. Two wells have also been dug up which are fitted with pumps worked by electricity. Another nursery of four acres for raising teak stumps at Maromar and of two acres at Kurumkheta for raising semal stumps has been established. Another work of improvement which has been taken up in hand in the Second Five –Year Plan is the fencing of derelict areas.<sup>445</sup> Areas having potentiality which cannot show up on account of very heavy incidence of grazing have been fenced with barbed wire to exclude all grazing and it is expected that they will improve in five to ten year time”.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> T.S Macpherson, *Final Report on the operation of a record of rights in Pargana Porahat, Dist. Singhbhum*, (Calcutta, 1908):86

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, 86—87

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, 87

<sup>446</sup> P. C. Roy Choudhary, “Bihar District Gazetteers:“Palamau”, The Superintendent Secretariat Press, sub–section 5: “Forests”, (Bihar, Patna 1961): 36

### **Palamau: The Present Scenario**

In an article published on Business Standards in 2018, it is reported that Shailendra Sinha of Charkha Development Communication Network had expressed his views that, according to one figure, 40% of the country's minerals come from Jharkhand. Despite this, in the name of development it is counted as one of the backward and ailing states of the country. Not only this, it is also surrounded by forests of India's largest tribal-dominated state. The only means of tribal livelihood is forest wealth. But, due to its lack of policy use, there is a loss in both environment and economic forms.<sup>447</sup> At the same time there is a bad effect on the livelihood of the tribal. While on one hand you have deforestation, on the other hand, the land of the tribal is being snatched. However, special efforts are being taken by Jharkhand and the Central Government to overcome this shortage and damage. While implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, the Niti Aayog is also making efforts to ensure that the entire country and not only Jharkhand benefits from proper consumption of available natural resources. According to SDG 12 we need to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Target 12.2 states that – By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources. Jharkhand has inherited water, forest, mountains and rivers. The Adivasi tribals association with wildlife has been there for years. The resources and the sustainable development of the people of Jharkhand, which are rich in natural wealth, are seen in this. Economic development of the country is possible only through natural resources. The main sources of water, forest and climate, especially in East Asian countries, have always been there natural resources. The whole world is

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<sup>447</sup> Business Standard, “Development of Jharkhand with the help of natural resources”, May 18, 2018, p. 1

unanimous that the growing influence of ozone can be prevented through the improvement of jungles. Jharkhand has an everlasting relationship with the forest; the name 'Jharkhand' means 'Bushland' or 'The Land of the Forest'. The tribals here are living in the forest for ages and because of this, they have developed a very special relationship and love for the forest. The geographical area of Jharkhand is 79.71 square kilometers; it is 2.42% of the country's land. The state's protected forest area is 18.58%, the protected forest area is 81.28% and the non-classified forest area is 0.14%.<sup>448</sup> According to the Indian Wildlife Survey 2013, the total forest area in Jharkhand is 23473 square kilometers, which is 29.47% of the state's geographical area. In this way there is greenery in Jharkhand, which is rich in forest wealth and trees and the balance of the environment still remains. In this connection, afforestation campaign is being run in the state under tree plantations and tree rescue campaign. According to one figure, about 5.77 million trees have been planted so far in Jharkhand. This is a concrete move towards sustainable development. Efforts are also being made in the direction of water management and convergence. Trees are being planted in farm land under the CM Jan Yojana in the state. A grant is also being given by the State Government for this. Due to these efforts of the government, plantation has now taken the form of a mass movement. The efforts being made at Panchayat level behind the success of this campaign have also been remarkable. The forest of Jharkhand is not only known for various types of timber, but also many types of medicinal plants are also found here. Among them are neem, white muesli, gudichi, kalmegh, triphala, amar bell and karanj. The tribal society is familiar with these medicinal plants and for centuries it has been treating its disease with it.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 1-2

<sup>449</sup> Indian Wildlife Survey 2013, p. 1

Adivasis have their own medical practice in the state, which is called ‘Hodopathy’.<sup>450</sup> Preparing to build a forest park in the state for the purpose of identifying the same birdy world–class identity is being prepared in which a variety of tree plant species models are being prepared. Biodiversity Park is also being prepared in the state through the Forest Department. Jharkhand is the top in the country in terms production of Tussar silk. It has a prominent place in the international market. Thousands of poor farmers and women are working in the formation of cocoon of Tasar, which has become a means of income. Arjun trees have also been installed in large scale in the state, in which silk worms grow. On the other hand, self–employment is being provided to poor farmers through cottage industry too. Under this, processing of honey, tamarind, chironji, kananj, jamun, mango and amla are being promoted. For self–employed, the ability to work together with the finance as well as knowledge is important, which is the highest in Jharkhand compared to other states. On the other hand, the government has so many resources, institutes and provisions that it is fully capable of providing capital to eligible persons for self—employment. The effort being done in this regard will prove to be important in changing the condition and direction of Jharkhand in the coming years.<sup>451</sup>

Jharkhand is definitely filled with rich resources but, these have not improved the living standards of scheduled tribes of the area. Instead, the forests have become home to the Naxals who take refuge there. Various development agencies have shied away from this area. Only the forest department dares to venture there to fulfill its duty to protect and conserve Pashchimi Singhbhum’s forests for posterity. The Naxal attack will certainly sap

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 2-3

the department's morale.<sup>452</sup> To combat Naxalism, the forest department has to connect with local communities. Addressing their livelihood issues is essential for winning the trust of marginalized people in a resource—rich land. Only winning goodwill in Pashchimi Singhbhum and elsewhere would help combat the Naxal menace. Yet there is a problem. First, the mandate of the forest department is mainly the protection, conservation and development of forests, not providing livelihood or improving living standards for local communities. Second, the department lacks adequate resources to reach out to communities even if it was given the mandate to do so. The budget allocations for forest departments across India have been low and Jharkhand is no exception.<sup>453</sup> Few realise that forests and indigenous communities have a symbiotic relationship whether in the Amazon or in Pashchimi Singhbhum. They worship nature and tend to revere trees. They have used forest resources sustainably for centuries if not millennia. Therefore, it is important for any forest department to work with these communities. To be fair to the forest department in Jharkhand, it is already making an effort to do so. However, it faces a vicious timber mafia that is hell—bent on chopping down trees to meet rising urban demand. Mining — legal and illegal — is another threat to forests and local communities. Too often, the forest department finds itself outgunned and is unable to protect these communities or the forests they live in.<sup>454</sup> Goal 15 of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations aims to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial

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<sup>452</sup> Chenoy, Anuradha and Chenoy, Kamal. *Maoist and Other Armed Conflicts*. (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2010), 11

<sup>453</sup> Satya Prakash Negi, <Indigenous Communities Can Counter Naxals and Protect Forests in India>, p. 1, (October, 2020), 17—09—2022, 1:57am, [https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central\\_south\\_asia/satya—prakash—negi—jharkhand—india—naxalites—maoist—insurgency—india—forests—department—environment—world—news—76614/](https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central_south_asia/satya—prakash—negi—jharkhand—india—naxalites—maoist—insurgency—india—forests—department—environment—world—news—76614/)

<sup>454</sup> V.R Raghavan, ed., *The Naxal Threat: Causes, State Responses and Consequences*. (New Delhi: Vij Books, 2011): 23

ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.”<sup>455</sup> To achieve this, the government of Jharkhand has to focus on people—oriented natural resources governance. Simply put, they have to involve local communities in the conservation of forests and make the forest department work closely with them. To counter the Naxals, both the state and central governments must gain the confidence of the indigenous communities living in the forests. To do so, the government must protect their forest—based livelihood. It must also generate sustained employment through forest—based skill development programs that teach indigenous communities to put their incredibly rare know—how to good use. Such policies would increase the living standard of local people. They would also turn the indigenous communities into the eyes and ears of the government, thwarting Naxal violence. These policies would also involve the delegation of some powers and financial authority to local forest officials and indigenous communities. It would be fair to say that it is time for a real abua raj in abua dishum.<sup>456</sup>

### **Literature and History: The story remains the same**

In this chapter I have actually embedded a literary text of the nineteenth century and historical records together to show the continuity in the sufferings of the tribals in colonial and post—colonial India,. The independent government is willing to improve the situation and there are inevitable resistance to that development. Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay is to be remembered for bringing the story of Palamau in the inner domain of the

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<sup>455</sup> United Nation: Goal 15, “Sustainable Development Goals”, p. 11

<sup>456</sup> Satya Prakash Negi, <Indigenous Communities Can Counter Naxals and Protect Forests in India>, p, 15, (October, 2020), 17—09—2022, 1:57am, [https://www.faiobserver.com/region/central\\_south\\_asia/satya—prakash—negi—jharkhand—india—naxalites—maoist—insurgency—india—forests—department—environment—world—news—76614/](https://www.faiobserver.com/region/central_south_asia/satya—prakash—negi—jharkhand—india—naxalites—maoist—insurgency—india—forests—department—environment—world—news—76614/)

Bhadraloks, a vernacular space where history cannot always enter. In spite of this contradiction the search for a better environment in the form of a sustainable development of tribals began then onwards.

## CHAPTER 4

### MAN AND NATURE: A PORTRAYAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN BIBHUTIBHUSHAN BANDYOPADHYAY'S ECO— CRITICAL NOVEL “ARANYAK” (1937—1939)

The basics of eco—criticism are no new things to Indian literary minds. Many elements of this new critical discourse abound in Bengali writers like, Rabindranath Tagore (1861—1941) and Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay (1894—1950). According to Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's Aranyak, which was written in 1937—1939, while describing the forest and the inhabitants of Purnea District in Bihar we come to know a vast description of the place and its inhabitants. The aim of the present paper is to situate the novel 'Aranyak', written in 1937—1939 in its historical perspective and compare it with available archival sources of the colonial government. This purpose and its implementation will widen the orbit of eco—criticism where a dialogue—based imaginary realm is compared with primary sources, as I feel both are important. Bihar has a forest area of 6,473 square kilometers. The state consists of two prominent zones, North Bihar and South Bihar, demarcated by the river Ganges. The state is categorised into three agro—ecological areas. The Chota Nagpur plateau and South Bihar plains extending over the Southern part of the state boasts considerable forest resources while the Gangetic Plains which is densely populated and intensively cultivated, has scanty forest resources. By legal status the reserved forest area comprises 17.28%, protected forest area 82.69%

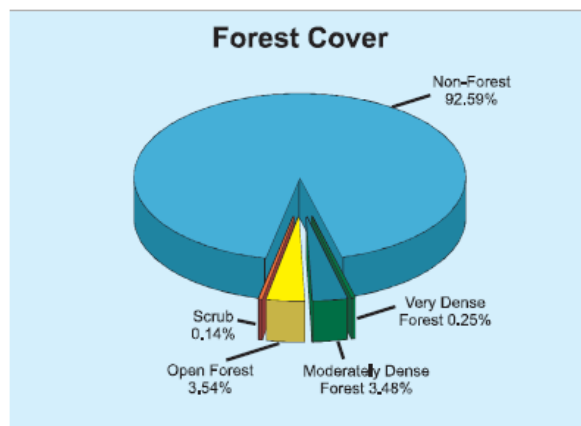


and unclassified forest area a mere 0.03%.<sup>457</sup> The forest area of Bihar is dominated by the following three type of vegetation:

- 1) Tropical Moist Deciduous
- 2) Tropical Dry Deciduous
- 3) Subtropical Broadleaved Hill Forest

Sal (*Shorea robusta*) is the major forest species which occupies about 55% of the forest area.<sup>458</sup>

Land Use	Area in '000 ha	Percentage
Total geographical area	9416	
Reporting area for land utilisation	9360	100.00
Forests	622	6.65
Not available for cultivation	2085	22.28
Permanent pasture and other grazing lands	16	0.17
Land under misc. tree crops and groves	241	2.57
Culturable wasteland	46	0.49
Fallow lands other than current fallows	119	1.27
Current fallows	569	6.08
Net area sown	5662	60.49



<sup>457</sup> Indian State of Forest Report, 2019, p. 2

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., 2—3

## **Early History**

As regards the earlier part of the history of the district, the 1961 Census of Bihar, mentions that Purnea apparently formed a part of the Kingdom of Anga and covered the area, west of the Mahananda. The area to the east of the river was under the control of the Pundras. Anga remained an independent kingdom till the sixth century B.C. when it was annexed by the Magadha Emperor, Bimbisara. The subsequent history of the western part of Purnea is, therefore, linked with that of the great Magadha Empire. Even the area east of the Mahananda was brought under the Mauryan Empire under Ashoka.<sup>459</sup> The district later, formed part of the empire of the Imperial Guptas which in 340 A.D., under Samudra Gupta, extended right up to Assam. Following the overthrow of the Guptas by the Huns, Purnea passed under Paladitya, the king of Magadha. Hiuen Tsang, who visited Paundravardhan (eastern Purnea) in circa 640 A.D., found prosperous people and the countryside having numerous tanks and groves and abundant crops. At the beginning of the 7th century the district seems to have come under Sasanka, the king of Gaur, who was a Shaivite, and did his utmost to destroy Buddhism. He was followed by Harsha, the great Buddhist. From the ninth to the twelfth centuries the district was under the Pala and the Sena kings of the Bengal. The earliest inhabitants of the district are supposed to have been Angas to the west and Pundras to the east. The former are generally grouped with the Bengal tribes in the epics and formed the easternmost tribes known to the Aryans during the time of the Atharva—sanhita. The latter are closed among the most degraded classes of men in the Aitarya—brahmana.<sup>460</sup> But it is also stated that they were descendants of

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<sup>459</sup> S. D. Prasad, "Census 1961 Bihar, District Census Handbook 11 Purnea", p. 2

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

the sage Vishwamitra that would seem to imply that they had Aryan blood, though degraded. The Pundra land appeared to have been bounded on the east by the river Kasataya, on the west by the modern Mahananda, which separates it from Anga, on the south by the modern Padma, and on the north by the hills, which were inhabited by aboriginal hill tribes, such as the Kiratas.<sup>461</sup> Local tradition still spoke of the struggle and the conquest of the Kiratas, and the Kirata women from the Morang or Tarai are said to have been the wives of Raja Virat, who according to the legend, gave shelter to Yudhisthira and his four Pandava brothers during the twelve years of exile. The site of his fort was still pointed out at Thakurganj in the north of the district. At the dawn of history, the part of the district, to the west of Mahananda apparently formed a part of Bhagalpur in the kingdom of Anga, while the eastern portion was included in Pundra—Vardhana.<sup>462</sup> The conquest of Bihar town, then capital of Bihar, by Bakhtiyar Khilji towards the close of the 12th century saw the commencement of Muslim rule in the State.<sup>463</sup> His successor Ghiasuddin Iwaz extended the limits of the territory to include virtually the whole of Bihar. Purnia also must have come under Muslim rule in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, since it formed an outlying part of the territory and revenues from it were not easily collected, the control remained rather loose. In fact, some of the northern portions of the district continued to be under the sway of the hill tribes of Nepal. Thus very little is known of the history of the district till the 17th century. Under the Mughal rule, the district comprised Sarkar Tajpur, east of the Mahananda River

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<sup>461</sup> R.C. Mazumder, "Outline of Ancient Indian History and Civilisation", *Archaeological Survey of India*, (Calcutta, 1927): 339

<sup>462</sup> R.C. Mazumder, "Outline of Ancient Indian History and Civilisation", *Archaeological Survey of India*, (Calcutta, 1927): 340

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, 340

and Sarkar Purnea, west of the river. Purnea, at that time was a great military seat under the rule of a Fauzadar as a frontier district; Purnea has always had an extra administrative importance. Purnea was administered by the Mughals through Governors or faujdars who also combined the revenue powers of Amildars.<sup>464</sup> Ostwal Khan was the first such Governor, followed by three others. He maintained very good relations with Murshid Kuli Khan, the Nawab of Bengal and managed to bring to book the refractory local chiefs, including Durjan Singh of Birnagar.

### **Coming Of The British**

Saif Khan also recovered large on Siraj—ud—daula's death (July, 1757) Nazir Ali Khan, took possession of the town, imprisoned Mohan Lal and seized the treasury with the support of Achint Singh, holder of four parganas, who was made the Prime Minister. Mir Jafar Khan was now the Nawab of Bengal. He sent Khadim Hussain Khan who took over control and became the Governor of Purnea.<sup>465</sup> The district of Purnea, which forms the north—eastern portion of the Bhagalpur Division, is situated between 25° 15' and 26° 35' north latitude, and between 87° 0' and 88° 32' east longitude. It extends over 4,994 square miles, and has a population of 1,874,794 persons, as ascertained at the census of 1901, its area being nearly as great as that of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex combined, while it has 400,000 more inhabitants than the whole of Wales.<sup>466</sup> The head—quarters are at the town of Purnea, the name of which was extended to the territory now included in the district. Purnea is an English corruption of the vernacular name Purania, and this or Puraniya is the designation of the district in old records. Local tradition states that it is derived from

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<sup>464</sup> S. D. Prasad, "Census 1961 Bihar, District Census Handbook 11 Purnea", p. 4

<sup>465</sup> S. D. Prasad, "Census 1961 Bihar, District Census Handbook 11 Purnea", p. 8

<sup>466</sup> L. S. S. O'Malley, "Bengal District Gazetteer Purnea", '1: Physical Aspects', (Calcutta, 1911), p. 1

the word *purain*, the local name for the lotus, which is said to have grown thickly in the — neighbourhood of the town, when the Kosi River flowed past it.<sup>467</sup> Another derivation which has been suggested is *pura—aranya*, meaning ‘absolute forest’, for tradition asserts that the district was once covered by dense forest. The district forms part of the alluvial tract known as North Bihar, but its eastern portion more properly belongs to Bengal.<sup>468</sup> In Bihar, the Purnea district is surrounded by Araria district in North, Katihar and Bhagalpur district in South, West Dinajpur district of West Bengal and Madhepura and Saharsa district in the West. Purnea is popularly known as the ‘Poor Man’s Darjeeling’.<sup>469</sup> Purnea district was once abode to monsoon and prairie forest. The principal trees are Sal, Sakhua, Teak, Shisham, Palash, Peepal and Semal. Bihar was one of the regions (along with some other areas of Bengal and some parts of Uttar Pradesh and Madras) where the Permanent settlement was introduced in 1793 wherein the zamindars were made the interim diaries for collection of land revenue/rent from peasants and in turn, they paid a fixed amount of land revenue to the state. Under the Permanent settlement, the revenue demand was fixed at nine—tenths of the rent that the zamindars were assumed to collect from their tenants. The right of land was vested in the landlords, but no protection was given to the class of actual cultivators. The Bihar Legislative Assembly Debates, described that only through the Act 19 of 1859 and more clearly through the Act 8 of 1885 (formerly, the Bengal Tenancy Act which later became, with some modifications, the Bihar Tenancy Act) that the rights of the tenants got some legal recognition. In course of time, consequent upon the growing demand for land, the zamindars started extracting exorbitant rent from the

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<sup>467</sup> Ibid., 1

<sup>468</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>469</sup> Hitendra Patel, “Communalism and the Intelligentsia in Bihar, 1870–1930: Shaping Caste, Community and Nationhood”, Orient Black Swan, (Hyderabad:,2011): 253

tenants, though the land revenue payable by them had been fixed permanently. Often, the zamindars farmed out the right of rent collection to subordinate agents who imposed their own arbitrary assessment on the ‘raiyaats’.<sup>470</sup> In the Bengal District Gazetteer Purnea, Calcutta, 1911, it is noted that, usually the tenants who paid low rents were evicted. After meeting the on—crop land revenue demand, the village was left with bare subsistence, if at all; there was little to spare for effecting improvements in land cultivation and improving living conditions.<sup>471</sup> On account of small and fragmented holdings, the generally low yields per acre and the limited scope for generating income from subsidiary activities due to the decline of handicrafts that were previously produced in peasant homes, most of the cultivators had very low incomes.<sup>472</sup> A large proportion of them hardly managed to make both ends meet even in good crop years. In bad years, with no past savings, they were obliged to borrow for sheer subsistence. And, once the peasant fell into the trap of indebtedness, he found it difficult to extricate himself from the web of very high and mounting debt obligations, thanks to the excessively onerous terms of borrowing and exorbitantly high interest rates. L. S. S. O’Malley has documented that, the agrarian structure — the intricately stratified system of relationship of people to land — as prevalent in the state during the period of the Permanent settlement between 1793 and 1950 when the zamindari system was abolished, had been captured by Jannuzi in 1974 in the following order: the state (the ‘super landlord’), the zamindar and the tenure—holder (an intermediary of the state for collection of rents), the occupancy raiyat (a rent paying holder of land having the occupancy on the land held by him), the non—

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<sup>470</sup> Bihar Legislative Assembly Debates: Official Report, Vol IV, No 35, (1939), p. 23—25

<sup>471</sup> L. S. S. O’Malley, “Bengal District Gazetteer Purnea”, ‘11: Land Revenue Administration’, (Calcutta, 1911), p. 145

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 146—147

occupancy raiyat (a rent paying holder of land not having the right of occupancy on land temporarily in his possession), the under—raiyat (a rent paying holder of land having temporary possession of a holding under a raiyat) and mazdoor (a wage labourer having no rights in land).<sup>473</sup> The Permanent settlement was conceived by Lord Cornwallis as a means of providing incentives to zamindars to promote the development of agriculture and invest accordingly or to lease out land to those who were interested in investing in agriculture. Either possibility would have contributed to the development of agriculture enabling landowners to increase the land revenue to be given to the government. Unfortunately, these objectives could not be realised.

### **Social Hierarchy**

The Indian caste system simply precluded the recreation of English—type landlordism leading to capitalist agriculture. The hierarchy of land tenure that was stabilised by the Permanent settlement simply reinforced the caste hierarchy, which proved inimical to agricultural revolution. This was basically because this hierarchy ascribed to a group, its status according to its distance from the plough or menial work in general. It is thus not surprising that the agrarian structure and its class had a clear—cut caste dimension also.<sup>474</sup> The four upper castes, i.e., the Bhumihar, the Brahmin, the Rajput and the Kayastha, had a heavy stake in land. ‘There were princely houses belonging to each of these castes, and owing to the zamindari system, the zamindars belonging to these castes had established a complete political and economic control in the countryside, unparalleled in the ‘ryotwari’

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<sup>473</sup> F. Tomasson Jannuzi, “Agrarian Crisis in India: The Case of Bihar”, University of Texas Press, (New York, 1974): 233

<sup>474</sup> L. S. S. O’Malley, “Bengal District Gazetteer Purnea”, ‘5: Agriculture’, (Calcutta, 1911), p. 89

areas of Madras and Karnataka'.<sup>475</sup> The upper classes of society zamindars as well as tenure holders — were almost exclusively drawn from the upper castes. However, a large number of the upper caste households were also tenants and peasants (these were the people — mostly Bhumihars — who organised militant peasant movements in the 1920s and the 1930s against the zamindars). The upper middle castes were largely peasants, non—occupancy raiyats and to a lesser extent traders and agricultural labourers, while the lower middle castes were essentially agricultural labourers and to a lesser extent artisans, peasants and tribals. The scheduled castes were mainly agricultural labourers. Thus, caste stratification was almost identical to that based on the interests in land. Clearly, the above agrarian structure was inherently exploitative and detrimental to agricultural development. Though the kind of rural scenario described above was not confined to only permanently settled areas, the situation in these areas, particularly in Bihar, was extremely bad. One reason for this was that the number of absentee zamindars was much lower in Bihar compared to Bengal and as such the intensity of exploitation in Bihar was far more severe. 'Even discounting the contribution of the Bengal renaissance, the fact, that the system of lease to a burgeoning class of rich peasants did not evolve in Bihar, the pressure of population on the land was much higher in Bihar and as there was an admittedly lower level of awareness on the part of the Bihar peasantry of their rights, did much to make the system even worse, the tenants even more oppressed, the landlords even stronger and land even a more valuable asset in Bihar than in Bengal'.<sup>476</sup> The zamindars not only made exorbitant exactions in the form of land rent, but also, in other

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<sup>475</sup> Jitendra Kumar, "Agrarian Issues, Peasant Movements, and the Congress Politics in Bihar, 1929—1950", *Nehru Memorial Museum and Library*, (2020): 20

<sup>476</sup> Achintya Kumar Dutta, "Black Fever in Bihar: Experiences and Responses", *Epidemics In South Asian History; Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, Issue No. 12—13, (22 March, 2008): 10



forms such as labour rent, produce rent, homage, etc. In sum, the ‘pegging’ of land revenue as compared to other taxes was reflected in the inflated value of land, the benefit from which flowed to the limited class of zamindars, which, by and large, either purchased more rent—receiving land with it or dissipated it in ostentatious consumption. The system of produce rent was mainly prevalent in Bihar. It was a vicious aspect of rent exaction from the largest group of peasants — the sharecroppers. Besides, the zamindars and their ‘amlas’ (subordinate rent collectors) extracted agricultural surplus in various other forms such as, ‘abwabs’ or various extra—legal exactions and a blatantly exploitative ‘begar’ system. Climaxing this whole edifice of exploitation was the physical maltreatment and oppression — ‘zulum’ — of agricultural workers in the exaction of labour rent through the unpaid forced labour called begar. Legal provisions notwithstanding, the zamindar had the first claim on the tenants’ labour which was exacted ruthlessly.<sup>477</sup> The exploitative agrarian structure did not lead to the emergence of the agrarian capitalist in the form of rich peasantry independent of landlords. There was almost complete stagnation in agricultural production in Bihar during the British period.<sup>478</sup> The class that acquired the surplus used it on conspicuous consumption such as luxury goods, purchase of more zamindaris etc, while the class of peasants, which could have invested in land, was hardly in a position to do so because of the prevalent practice of rack—renting. There was little investment by the government on infrastructure such as irrigation, which was undertaken on a large scale in states such as Punjab; this also contributed to the stagnation of agricultural production. In view of the policy of the

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<sup>477</sup> L. S. S. O’Malley, “Bengal District Gazetteer Purnea” ‘6: Rents, Wages And Prices’, (Calcutta, 1911): 109—110

<sup>478</sup> J.C.Jha, “The Changing Land System of the Tribals of Chota Nagpur, 1771—1831” in Tarasakar Banerjee, ed. ‘Changing Land Systems and Tribals in Eastern India in The Modern Period’ (report of seminar held at Santiniketan, 6—7 March 1986): 32

government and partly due to the peasants' own monetary needs, the cultivation of some commercial crops like indigo, sugar cane, opium, etc, increased at the expense of food—grains and as such, the per capita availability of food—grains declined in the state. The extreme exploitation, combined with the agricultural stagnation, led to pauperisation of the peasantry on a large scale. A significant proportion of the tenants were unable to pay the rent and consequently they were evicted from land. Such land, appropriated in compliance with rent decrees, was known as 'bakasht' land. There was another class of even less fortunate tenants — tenants—at—will ('bataidars') — who were mostly employed on zamindars' 'khas' and 'bakasht lands' and were merely share—croppers with no right on land. According to the survey by L S S O' Malley, it is quite clear that this was a distinctive feature of Bihar's agrarian system and its incidence was very pronounced here, particularly in the south Gangetic districts (in Patna and Gaya districts the incidence of such tenancy being 44 and 66 per cent respectively).<sup>479</sup> "And, perhaps the most vicious aspect of rent exaction through such tenancy showed itself in the produce rent or 'bhaoli' system. Again, this produce rent is to be distinguished from the rent, also paid in produce by a numerous group of peasants like sharecroppers; the main point of distinction was the absence of any customary or legal rights of the latter group on the land that made them cultivate on a crop—sharing basis".<sup>480</sup> Apart from zamindars, the upper caste priests, teachers, doctors and lawyers had a tendency to turn their land into 'batai' cultivation. And since the 'bataidar' had no security of tenure the landlord could always evict him. The area of land transferred annually in Bihar (excluding Chota Nagpur

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<sup>479</sup> M. Das, R.P. Bhattacharya and V. Mudgal, ed., 'Floristic Diversity and Conservation Strategies in India' Vol. II: In the context of States and Union Territories, *Botanical Survey of India, Calcutta*, (Bihar, 1999): 670

<sup>480</sup> L. S. S. O'Malley, "Bengal District Gazetteer Purnea" '6: Rents, Wages And Prices', (Calcutta, 1911): 111

division and Santhal paraganas) between 1923 and 1935 varied from 1.4 lakh to 1.6 lakh acres. But land transfer increased from 1935 onwards and peasants who lost their lands, either became labourers or were resettled on the zamindars land as sharecroppers. The landlords started making exorbitant demands for a share of the produce as rent from these sharecroppers, which at times, amounted to even three—fourths of the gross produce. During the period, 1915—1933, landlords time and again ruined their tenants financially by systematically suing them for arrears of rent. The expropriation of owner—cultivators and the consequent proletarianisation led to the proliferation of agricultural labourers in the state.<sup>481</sup> The immiserisation of the peasantry due to rack—renting and ‘abwabs’ on the one hand and commercialisation of agriculture without growth on the other, led to migration to different parts of the country and even abroad as a strategy of survival and in the absence of organised resistance.<sup>482</sup> Later, as we will see, the peasants did resort to organised resistance against feudal exploitation. Since feudal exploitation was most vicious in Bihar, the state was also most migration—prone. The fact that during the close of 19th century, thousands of people migrated as indentured labour to various British colonies speaks for itself. In the early 20th century they also migrated to jute mills of Bengal, Calcutta and tea gardens of Assam in large numbers. According to Dr. Jagdish Chandra Jha, the permanent settlement produced an extremely exploitative agrarian structure in the countryside of Bihar, which in turn led to large scale alienation of the peasants from their lands, which, after becoming bakasht lands of the zamindars, continued to remain a source of tension, often erupting in violent outbursts.<sup>483</sup> In the 1930s

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<sup>481</sup> Ranajit Guha, “A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement”, Orient Longman Ltd., 1963, p. 92

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., 92—93

<sup>483</sup> Jagdish Chandra Jha, “The Kol Insurrection of Chota Nagpur”, *The Archaeological Survey of India*, (1964): 61

the tenants, hit as they were by the low prices of food grains due to depression and faced with exorbitant rental demand, resisted this forced alienation of land, and as a result the bakasht disputes became the focus of peasant unrest in Bihar. This culminated in an unprecedented peasant mobilization for nearly one and a half decades in different parts of the state, more so in the areas south of Ganges.<sup>484</sup> Apart from bakasht issue, this sometimes took the form of movements for conversion of produce rent into cash rent as well as the reduction of rates of rent and at other times, of those for ending the system of illegal exactions like abwabs, begar and finally of the movement for the abolition of zamindari itself. According to N Kumar, “Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and others launched this struggle under the banner of the Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (BPKS) as one of the provincial contingents of the All India Kisan Sabha”.<sup>485</sup> The support base of the BPKS comprised largely upper caste substantial raiyats and was dominated by the Bhumihars; it did not cover under—raiyats and agricultural labourers.<sup>486</sup> There seems no doubt that colonial economic exploitation and the ecological changes it brought about have had far—reaching and enduring effects on public health. For instance, the expansion of irrigation canals and the construction of railway embankments created favourable habitats for malaria—carrying mosquitoes in India.

### **Poverty, Dirt and Disease**

The occurrence of kala—azar epidemics in India has also been attributed to climate, which is not convincing. For, this disease was not confined to India, it occurred even in

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 61—62

<sup>485</sup> N Kumar, “Bihar District Gazetteer : Patna”, (Patna, 1970): 102

<sup>486</sup> Alakh N. Sharma, “Agrarian Relations and Socio—Economic Change in Bihar”, ‘Economic and Political Weekly’, Vol. 40, No. 10, (Mar. 5—11, 2005): 961—963

the temperate zone. There was no racial or class immunity to it. Europe's "civilised" people with clean habits also suffered from it. The global occurrence of kala—azar would seem to indicate that the vector, the sand fly, had a worldwide existence.<sup>487</sup> Sand flies were common in Assam and were there long before the outbreak of kala—azar in the Garo Hills in an epidemic form. So the possibility that sand flies aided the spread of the disease cannot be ignored. They must have found conditions suitable for further breeding after plantations grew up in the 19th century. The spread of kala—azar rapidly followed the opening up of communication by rail and road for British commercial and military penetration. During the course of his investigation in 1910 in Assam, Leonard Rogers (1868—1962), had apprehensions the railway would spread kala—azar over the Assam valley. It came true a few years later.<sup>488</sup> The opening up of tea plantations in large areas of Assam and the movement of tea—garden workers caused the diffusion of the disease not only throughout Assam but also to other parts of India. The unhygienic coolie lines where the labourers were forced to stay on the tea plantations facilitated the spread of this epidemic disease. From the excerpt of E.A. Gait, *History of Assam*, edition 1906, it has been recorded that the entry of Kala—azar had never been heard of in Bihar in pre—colonial times. It was British economic policy that made Bihar a kala—azar affected area. There was agricultural distress in Bihar in the second half of the 19th century. Famines and scarcities followed each other in quick succession. Indebtedness was very widespread and the material condition of the cultivating classes was bad, even worse than in

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<sup>487</sup> Achintya Kumar Dutta, "Black Fever in Bihar: Experiences and Responses", *Epidemics In South Asian History; Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, Issue No. 12—13, (22 March, 2008): 18

<sup>488</sup> Leonard Rogers, *Report of an Investigation of the Epidemic of Malarial Fever in Assam or Kala—azar* (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1897), p. 132, quoted in "Dutta, 'Medical Research and Control of Disease'", especially pp. 96—99

Bengal.<sup>489</sup> The population of Bihar increased during the second half of the 19th century but there was only a limited increase in the area of land under cultivation. The result was impoverishment. The low price of cereals kept cultivators in poverty and landless labourers were in a wretched state. Landless agricultural workers and even members of many poor landowning agricultural families had to work as coolies in different sectors to make a living, resulting an exodus of labourers from Bihar to the jute mills and tea plantation areas of Bengal and Assam. Economic exploitation led to the destruction of village industries and artisans and craftsmen deprived of their occupation fell back on cultivation. Ultimately all had to depend upon land.<sup>490</sup> Thus labour became cheap and this was exploited in different ways by the planters, the miners or the contractors. The civil surgeon of Saran district once estimated that about half a million people left the district a year to take up work elsewhere. According to Phanindra Nath Gupta, a large number of labourers for Assam's tea gardens were drawn from Bengal and Bihar. Most of them came from the tribal tracts and were absorbed as labour, and sometimes as tenants, in the tea plantations. In 1884—85, 21.6 percent of the plantation labour force in Assam was recruited from United Province and Bihar.<sup>491</sup> In 1889, half of it was from Chota Nagpur, about a quarter from Bengal and only five per cent from Assam itself. Thus Assam got Bihar's cheap labourers and Bihar got kala—azar in return. In Bihar, kala—azar was regarded as a disease imported by the labourers returning from the kala—azar areas of North Bengal and Assam. According to a Report by W H C Forster, there was constant

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<sup>489</sup> E A Gait, "History of Assam", in *Records of Past Epidemics in India*, edition 1906, p. 100

<sup>490</sup> Census of India 2011, District Census Handbook, Series 11, Bihar, Part – A, Purnea Village And Town Directory, p. 80—81

<sup>491</sup> Phanindra Nath Gupta, "Final Report of the Survey and Settlement Operation in the District of Saran 1915—21", (Patna, 1923): 48—50

interaction between some parts of Bihar and the plantation sectors of Assam and Bengal. A large number of coolies who were employed in rail and road construction were also drawn from Bihar. Needless to say, the condition of the tea plantation workers in Assam was deplorable. Rising prices and relatively low wages worsened their economic condition. So when they fell sick, they returned to their homes, bringing the disease which they had acquired with them. Thus kala—azar was brought to some districts of Bihar and close association between the infected people and healthy people helped diffuse it.<sup>492</sup> During the 1911–20 periods, Purnea suffered from epidemics of cholera every year from 1915 to 1919. According to the Annual Public Health Report of the Province of Bihar (1938), it is documented that, a very serious outbreak of cholera occurred in 1925. Incidences of smallpox and malaria was very high during this period.<sup>493</sup> In 1913, the civil surgeon of Saran district rightly expressed the worry that this disease would become firmly established in the district. There was no specific treatment for kala—azar before 1919 and no remarkable improvement occurred in the preventive measures either. British efforts at medical intervention succeeded in 1919 with the introduction of an antimony treatment in the form of tartar emetic. Kala—azar attracted much attention of the government in Bihar after 1920 when it took a huge toll of labourers and people in and around the Pusa Estate.<sup>494</sup> Kala—azar might also possibly have seriously affected the supply of labourers to plantations and mines, and for rail and road work. A special kala—azar enquiry at Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine (CSTM) stimulated interest in the

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<sup>492</sup> W H C Forster, "Report on an Enquiry into the Prevalence of Malaria in Bengal Season 1908—09" in 'Government of Bengal, Municipal Department (Sanitary)', Prog Nos 14—15, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata (WBSA), (September 1909): 50

<sup>493</sup> Annual Public Health Report of the Province of Bihar for the Year 1938, p 18 (hereafter APHR, Bihar)

<sup>494</sup> Achintya Kumar Dutta, "Black Fever in Bihar: Experiences and Responses", *Epidemics In South Asian History; Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, Issue No. 12—13, (22 March, 2008): 4—5

disease and not as many cases as before were being overlooked. By 1921, more efficacious drugs such as urea stibamine and neostibosan had been found and were being used by doctors. The government set up kala—azar treatment centres and provided them a special grant to purchase new drugs. The hospitals and dispensaries in different districts also received an additional grant for kala—azar medicines. The budget for the treatment of the disease and the number of dispensaries gradually increased. The government extended its anti—kala—azar policy in North Bihar in the 1930s. By 1939, twenty, special kala—azar treatment centres had been set up in north Bihar districts, run entirely at government cost. Some doctors were deputed to Patna Medical College Hospital to receive training in conducting kala—azar serum tests. Thousands of cases were treated in these centres and mortality due to kala—azar declined phenomenally. The government of Bihar reinforced its anti—kala—azar policy with the help of regulations, the objective obviously being the prevention of its further spread. Treatment of the disease was made compulsory with special kala—azar regulations in 1942, framed under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, on the lines of a notification issued by the Assam government.<sup>495</sup> This picture of economic and social life of the area can now be seen in the light of the novel of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's, 'Aranyak'.

Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, born on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1894 in a village in Bengal's Nadia district, had a hard life. Although he was a bright student, he was forced to interrupt his postgraduate studies to earn a living. He took on several odd jobs, from teaching in schools to managing estates, to support his family, while keeping up his writing. By the time he died in 1950, Bandyopadhyay had left behind a rich legacy, in spite of the

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<sup>495</sup> Ibid., 5—6



relatively brief 56 years he lived. More than a dozen works of fiction, hundreds of short stories, a handful of memoirs and essays: his output was diverse, eclectic and prolific. Although he lived and wrote in a literary golden age in Bengal, Bandyopadhyay crafted a distinctive style, cultivating a voice that suited his sensibility and the subjects close to his heart. His novels did not necessarily dwell on the psychological depth Tagore had brought to the genre. Nor did he follow the earthy realism, tinged with melodrama, which had become the staple of the best-selling novels of Saratchandra Chattopadhyay (1876—1938). And although he was a modernist writer in a historical sense, Bandyopadhyay remained fairly traditional in his execution of language and plot, compared to some of his more daring contemporaries like Manik Bandyopadhyay (1908—1956), whose experimental novels were unique for Bengali readers of the 1930s and 1940s. Yet, Bandyopadhyay was, and remains, as one of the most original voices in Bengali literature. Having lived through two world wars and witnessed the destruction wrought by avarice and lust for power, Bandyopadhyay also turned his gaze on the pristine, if poverty-stricken, heart of rural Bengal. He did write with empathy and insight about the challenges of urban life as well, especially during the war and its aftermath. But it was his close attention to the realities of rural life; the challenges that pushed desperate men to choose the hostility of the big city over the hard but sedate life of the village; that gave his writing its unique flavour. From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bengal witnessed a change in its socio-cultural norms as British Raj came into ruling, known as the Bengal Renaissance — during this time Bengal flourished with newspapers, magazines and journals which introduced a new age of Bengali literature through stories, poetry and translations. All these magazines and journals had one important aim — to start a literary

movement, catering to establish modernism in literature.<sup>496</sup> To voice against the bourgeois society, ‘Kallol’ magazine was established in 1923. History marks in it as one of the first conscious literary movements of Bengal. Kallol’s vociferous emergence gave a jolt and jerk to the system of the outdated society. Not only did Kallol help to establish a new perspective in Bengali literature but also established a new generation of Bengali writers and thinkers. The Kallol era of seven years added a new chapter to the history of Bengali literature – a chapter marked by Bengali modernism. By breaking from this phase Bibhutibhushan started a new era of “Modern Literary Romanticism”.<sup>497</sup> Having been influenced by foreign literature, still it is seen that Bibhutibhushan did not believe in imaginary romanticism, instead he was inclined more toward writing about his roots and the people who were man of the soil, he concentrated mainly on people who were unexplored by others and he wanted to become their voice through his writings. We get to know about this from Sharada Ghosh’s unpublished MPhil dissertation “Banglar Chinta – Chetonaye Prakriti O Poribeshtattwa: Ekti Aitihashik Bibartan”.<sup>498</sup> His novel *Aranyak* (literally, of the forest) is, for instance, a quintessentially modern work that surveys the incursion of the long arm of capitalism into the wild, forested terrain of Bihar. Satyacharan, the protagonist of the story, is forced by unemployment in Calcutta to take up the job of an estate manager in the neighbouring state. But he is singularly unsuited to his role, smitten as he is by the natural beauty of the landscape over which he must impose the ruthless claims of the landowners, his employers. Read together with some of Bandyopadhyay’s non—fictional essays, such as, *Hey Aranya Katha Kao (The Forest*

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<sup>496</sup> Apurba Jahangir, “The Kallol Era – A Glimpse into Bengali Modernism”, p. 2

<sup>497</sup> Achintya Kumar Sengupta, “Kallol Yug”, M.C Sarkar and Sons Pvt. Ltd., (Calcutta, 1950): 25

<sup>498</sup> Sharada Ghosh’s unpublished MPhil dissertation, “Banglar Chinta – Chetonaye Prakriti O Poribeshtattwa: Ekti Aitihashik Bibartan”, Jadavpur University, 2001, p. 80

*Speaks*), *Aranyak* seems to hold up a mirror to our times, when the destruction of the environment is being unthinkingly normalized for the sake of economic progress. Bandyopadhyay, had an immense love for nature which has been reflected clearly in his novel *Aranyak*. Bibhutibhushan can be compared with the great poet of all time William Wordsworth who in all his writings showed deep love for nature. The district of Purnea which included the areas of Katihar, Araria, Kishanganj and Malda was constituted in the year 1813. The area of the district in 1877 as reported by J. Byrne on January 1908 was 12934.4 sq. kms. The present area of the district is 3229 sq. kms only because of the fact that Katihar, Kishanganj and Araria have been upgraded as independent districts. Purnea is the divisional headquarters of Purnea Division which comprises four districts, namely, Araria, Kishanganj, Purnea and Katihar.<sup>499</sup>

### **Political History**

According to the Census of 1961, Bihar, by S. D. Prasad, the Purnea district has 120,713 persons belonging to Scheduled tribes. They comprise 3.91 per cent of the total population of the district. The corresponding percentages in previous censuses were — 4.75 in 1951; 3.99 in 1941 and 3.25 in 1931. Thus, the 1961 proportion is lower than previous censuses except 1931.<sup>500</sup> Purnea district ranks seventh among the districts of Bihar in the number of scheduled tribes as well as their proportion to the total population of each district. Manihari anchal has the greatest concentration of scheduled tribes where they comprise 13.12 percent of the total population. Dhamdaha anchal follows next with 11.96 per cent. In 23 anchals, the proportions are between 2 and 9 percent and in the remaining 13 anchals

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<sup>499</sup> J. Byrne, "Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Purnea, 1901—1908 Bengal (India)", *Department of Land Records*; Bengal Secretariate Book Depot, (January 1908): 50

<sup>500</sup> S. D. Prasad, *Census 1961 Bihar, District Census Handbook 11 Purnea*, p. 26

their number and proportion are insignificant.<sup>501</sup> The statement given below gives the population of scheduled tribes having more than 1,000 persons in the district:

**Population of scheduled tribes having more than 1,000 persons in Purnea district, 1961**

Name of scheduled tribe	Population	Number per 1,000 of	
		Total scheduled tribe population in the district	Total population of the respective scheduled tribe in the State
1	2	3	4
1. Santal .. ..	76,042	630	49
2. Oraon .. ..	26,624	221	36
3. Kharwar .. ..	5,740	47	52
4. Munda .. ..	3,644	30	6
5. Bedia .. ..	2,289	19	60
6. Lohara or Lohra .. ..	1,726	14	19
7. Kharia .. ..	1,429	12	13
TOTAL .. ..	117,494	973	36

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Among individual tribes, the Santhals are by far the most numerous and account for 63.0 per cent of the scheduled tribe population of the district. The Oraons come next contributing a little over 22 per cent of the tribal population in the district. 1,540 persons belonging to scheduled tribes have been shown under 'Unclassified'. This category relates to those cases in which the names of the tribes were not clearly mentioned. According to the Census of India 2011, we come to know that, Purnea passed into the

<sup>501</sup> Ibid., 26—27

<sup>502</sup> Ibid., 27

hands of British in 1770 when Mohammad Ali Khan was the Governor of Purnea. He was replaced by Ducarrel, the first English Supervisor or Collector of the district. The year was marked by a severe famine in which, according to the European Supervisors, almost half of the ryots lost their lives.<sup>503</sup> With the creation of Commissioner's Divisions in 1829, Purnea was included in Bhagalpur Division. In 1834 it was placed under Rajshahi Division under which it continued until 1893 when it came back to Bhagalpur. It again went to Rajshahi in 1905 and later came back to Bhagalpur under which it has continued ever since. The early years of the British rule were largely directed at establishing law and order and setting up of the revenue administration on a sound footing. Raids and depredations in border villages by Nepali Sardar took place in 1788 and again in 1793 in spite of a commercial treaty signed with Nepal in 1792. A delegation was sent under Abdul Quadir Khan in 1795 to secure a lasting demarcation of the boundary with Nepal to prevent further border raids, but it did not meet with appreciable success. The next important event in the district is the movement of 1857.<sup>504</sup>

From the Mutiny register from 5th August 1857 to 15th September 1858, Chota Nagpur, we come to know that the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of the Native Infantry and a detachment of the 11<sup>th</sup> Irregular Cavalry were then stationed at Jalpaiguri, just across the eastern border of Purnea district. Although the administration did not expect any trouble at Jalpaiguri, nevertheless, a corps of Nepalese, was allowed to be raised by Kerr, an indigo planter of the district, in October, 1857.<sup>505</sup> Two detachments of the 11th Irregular Cavalry at

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<sup>503</sup> Census of India 2011, District Census Handbook, Series 11, Bihar, Part – A, Purnea Village and Town Directory, p. 21–22

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, 23

<sup>505</sup> Mutiny register from 5th August 1857 to 15th September 1858, Chota Nagpur, p. 80

Jalpaiguri rebelled on 4<sup>th</sup> December and Yule, the Commissioner of Bhagalpur learnt on the 9th December that they had passed south of Kishanganj. In the engagement that followed on the 11th December, the rebels retired after fighting bravely and with small casualties and injuries. Yule later unsuccessfully tried to intercept the insurrectionists from Dacca from entering the forests of Nepal. No further fighting took place in Purnea.<sup>506</sup> E.A. Samuels, writes that, the movement of 1857 led to measures for tightening up the administrative system. The European planters were authorized to maintain their own protective forces from which sprang the Auxiliary Force which was ultimately converted into the Bihar Light Horse. An earthquake occurred in 1897. In the same year a scheme for taming the turbulent Kosi was mooted by engineers, though it was actually taken up only after the country attained independence.<sup>507</sup> The district of Purnea had also played its part in the agrarian reforms and the Congress movement. Prominent lawyers of the district gave up their practice and joined the Non—co—operation Movement of 1921. Dr. Rajendra Prasad visited Purnea district in 1921 and Mahatma Gandhi in 1925. Over 700 persons were arrested in the district in connection with the Salt Satyagraha. The district, like other districts of the State, has thus played an important role in the country's freedom struggle.<sup>508</sup> The early years of British rule were years of trouble for Purnea. The district suffered terribly during the great famine of 1770. From the old records, it appears that there were European settlers in Purnea almost immediately after the establishment of British rule in the district.<sup>509</sup> According to the Census of India 2011, it is documented

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 80—81

<sup>507</sup> E.A. Samuels, "Certified copy of the letter dated 6th September, 1857", letter from the Commissioner of Patna, to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, detailing the achievements of the British troops at different places in Bihar, p. 111

<sup>508</sup> Ibid., 111—112

<sup>509</sup> Ibid., 112

that, by 1771, a number of Europeans had settled in the area known as Rambagh, the only building left in Rambagh was the church and the priests' houses. The Roman Catholic Church was dismantled and re—erected in the new station of Purnea where the Europeans had already set up their residences. The foundation of this new church was there until 1934, when it was badly affected by the Bihar earthquake.<sup>510</sup> In this situation we come to know From the Bihar State Archives Repository; Political Department Special Section containing the subject: Mr. Gandhi Tour in Bihar and Orissa where the Inspector General of Police, C.I.D, documented the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in Bihar due to the earthquake relief work and not because of the Harijan Movement.<sup>511</sup>

The church was dismantled again. The nuns of Loretto convent of Darjeeling had come to Purnea near about 1882 and had opened a day school as well as a boarding school for children in Purnea district. When the Jesuit Mission of Bengal took over the Purnea Mission from the Capuchin Mission, the school was closed and the nuns returned to Darjeeling. This house still stands and is known as the Coumblin.<sup>512</sup> It is one of the oldest houses in Purnea town and is now occupied by the Allisons. Historical works on peasant movements display several instances of peasant rebellion in colonial India such as the Chota Nagpur Uprisings of 1801 and 1817, Barasat Revolt of 1831, Santhal rebellion (1855—56), Indigo riots (1859 and 1907), and Munda uprising (1899—1901). In Bengal, the Indigo Revolt of 1859 primarily broke out against the European indigo planters; it also protested against the increasing land revenue continuously by indigenous landlords.

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<sup>510</sup> The Census of India 2011, District Census Handbook, Series 11, Bihar, Part – A, Purnea Village And Town Directory, p. 84

<sup>511</sup> Bihar State Archives Repository; Political Department Special Section containing the subject: Mr. Gandhi Tour in Bihar and Orissa where the Inspector General of Police, C.I.D, dated 2nd February 1934, p. 100

<sup>512</sup> Jitendra Kumar, "Agrarian Issues, Peasant Movements, and the Congress Politics in Bihar, 1929—1950", Nehru Memorial Museum and Library', (2020): 67

In 1875, Deccan Riots exposed ‘a reflection of tension generated within rural society’<sup>513</sup> due to the legal and administrative reforms introduced by the British. Champaran Satyagraha raised the question of indigo plantation and pressurised the British government and European planters to end a teen—kathia system. Yet, this Satyagraha was limited to ‘an attempt by the rich peasantry to remove those hurdles in the way of the profitable cultivation of food grains and sugar cane which had been placed by the deposition of the English planters’. However, this could not break the exploitative power of the rulers. In the early 1920s, Bihar also recorded peasant movements led by Swami Vidyanand, Babu Sheonandan Singh and Deoki Nandan Sinha. Nonetheless, the organised form of peasant movements only began with the establishment of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (hereafter the Kisan Sabha or BPKS) in 1929 under the leadership of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati (hereafter Sahajanand). The Kisan Sabha later created an atmosphere that put pressure on the Congress ministry to abolish zamindari system and take land reform initiatives to eradicate rural poverty, and to diminish social and economic disparities.<sup>514</sup> However, it was the Champaran Satyagraha (1917) which revealed that there was a space for a systematic way of peasant movements in India.<sup>515</sup> Kisan Sabha movement, which had been responsible for an acute agitation in Purnea district in the third decade in 20th century and figured prominently for about 20 years, had its roots in the very agricultural economy and the precious structure of permanent land—lordism in this state’.<sup>516</sup> The Kisan Sabha was formed at Mungher near about 1922—23. After

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<sup>513</sup> Ibid, 68

<sup>514</sup> Ibid, 69

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 70

<sup>516</sup> Ibid., 71



1940—41, the Kisan Sabha movement slowly merged into the Congress Movement.<sup>517</sup> Some historians have argued that ‘the whole history of peasant movement has been strongly nationalist in outlook’ and both the Congress and peasant leaders have ‘frequently worked together’. Vinita Damodaran claimed that Kisan Sabha in Bihar was ‘moderate’ in nature which limited its aggression only to big landlords and did not come up with any radically socio—economic programme distinct from the Congress,<sup>518</sup> whereas Walter Hauser saw it basically as ‘a movement of agrarian agitation’ and not as ‘a neatly structured and functioning organisational unit’,<sup>519</sup> whose leadership ‘was characterised by the changing attitudes of Swami Sahajanand towards the agrarian problems and political circumstances of the 1930s’. In the wake of the electoral setback in 1937 the Chota Nagpur Improvement Society (Unnati Samaj), the Chota Nagpur Catholic Sabha and the Chota Nagpur Kisan Sabha merged together to form the Adivasi Mahasabha in May 1938. It aimed at the creation of a separate Province of Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas which formed part of Bihar. Theodore Surin and Paul Dayal were elected its President and Secretary respectively. Adivasi Movement for a separate province launched under the aegis of the Adivasi Mahasabha in Chota Nagpur made one to believe that outbreak of rebellion among the aboriginal (Adivasi) population was round the corner. All the forces opposed to the Congress Ministry of Bihar—the Christian missionaries, the British officials, the Muslim League and a section of domiciled Bengalis

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<sup>517</sup> Lata Singh, “The Bihar Kisan Sabha Movement: 1933—1939”, *Social Scientist* 20, no. 5/6 (1992): 21, retrieved on 3<sup>rd</sup> august 2022, 3:00 pm, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3517930>.

<sup>518</sup> Vinita Damodaran, “Broken Promises: Popular Protest, Indian Nationalism and the Congress Party in Bihar, 1935—1946”, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992): 118—119

<sup>519</sup> Walter Hauser, “The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929—1942: A Study of an Indian Peasant Movement”, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2019): 120.

helped and encouraged the separation movement.<sup>520</sup> Non representation of Adivasis in the ministry was made an issue to project the Congress regime (1937—39) in Bihar as *Diku raj* (alien rule) and the anti—*Adivasi*.<sup>521</sup> The separation demand of the Adivasi Mahasabha was debated in the Bihar Legislative Assembly in June 1938. In response to a question of Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha, the government replied that since Chota Nagpur came under British influence in 1765 it was an integral part of Bihar. As regards financial aspect of the demand, it was brought out that in 1936—37 Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas put together had a deficit in their income over expenditure of Rupees 28 lakhs which was bound to increase appreciably if these areas were formed into a new province as then they would have to be responsible for additional charges for a governor, a ministry, a secretariat, several heads of departments, a high court, a university and many other consequential paraphernalia of a separate administrative unit. As regards the economic aspect it was said that, though Chota Nagpur had vast potentialities, it would be difficult for the new province to develop and expand its resources by reasons of the financial stringency and also the educational and industrial backwardness of the people of the tract, in general, and of the aboriginals, in particular.<sup>522</sup> The election of Jaipal Singh as President of the Adivasi Mahasabha at its second annual session held at Ranchi from January 20 to 22, 1939 proved to be a turning point in the history of the separation movement in Chota Nagpur. Under his leadership the movement received a new momentum which it had never achieved before. In his presidential address, he frankly admitted that the separation movement had the support of the Muslims, the Christians

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<sup>520</sup> Ibid., 121

<sup>521</sup> Ibid., 121

<sup>522</sup> Ram Dayal Munda and Samar Bosu Mallick, "The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples' Struggle for Autonomy in India", *International Work Group for Indigenous Affair*, 108, (Copenhagen, 2003): 70

Missions and the Bengali Hindus, along with the sympathies of the British officials. He evoked the primordial sentiments of the Adivasis to unite them and declared that the Muslims and Bengali Hindus as genuine Adivasis to get their moral and material support.<sup>523</sup> The famous Chota Nagpur Separation Resolution passed unanimously by over a lakh of Adivasis at this Mahasabha session sought the constitution of Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas together with suitable portions of outlying tracts into a separate Governor's Province at the earliest possible date, in any case, before the proposed "Federation" of India was instituted.<sup>524</sup> In support of this demand, Jaipal Singh held a series of massive Adivasi meetings. In his public speeches he used to portray the Congress government as exploitative and anti—Adivasi. Very soon, he emerged as a mass leader of Adivasis who hailed him as Marang Gomke (Supreme Leader).<sup>525</sup> On his initiative the Munda, Ho and Santhal Movement which was led by Prof. J.C. Heyward was amalgamated with the Adivasi Mahasabha in June 1939. He also set up an Adivasi Labour Union at Jamshedpur to protect the interest of Adivasi workers in industrial area, in the District Board elections, 1939, the Adivasi Mahasabha captured 22 out of 25 seats in Singhbhum district and 16 out of 25 seats in Ranchi districts. Emboldened by this success, Julius Tigga (1903—1971), wrote two extremely offensive articles 'Nili Rang Bhumi Se' and 'Bihari Bandar Nacho', intended to stir up anti—Bihari sentiments which were published in Adivasi in its issue of 1st July 1939.<sup>526</sup> The worsening political situation in

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<sup>523</sup> Ibid., 70—71

<sup>524</sup> Chevuri Satish Kumar, "Remembering Jaipal Singh Munda: The forgotten great Adivasi intellectual of India", retrieved on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022, 10pm, <https://www.roundtableindia.co.in/remembering-jaipal-singh-munda-the-forgotten-great-adivasi-intellectual-of-india/>

<sup>525</sup> L.N. Rana, "The Adivasi Mahasabha (1938—1949): Launching Pad Of The Jharkhand Movement", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 53 (1992): 397, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021, 9.30pm, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44142817>.

<sup>526</sup> Proshenjit Ghosh, "Political identities and dilemma in Jharkhand Movement, India: Question of 'environmental revivalism' and its consequences", p. 6

Chota Nagpur led the Congress Working Committee to entrust Dr. Rajendra Prasad to enquire into the causes of the Adivasi unrest in Chota Nagpur and make a report on it. Prasad sought suggestions in re—definite form for redressal of the Adivasis grievances from Jaipal Singh for consideration and necessary steps. Jaipal promptly submitted to him the demands of Adivasis which included : appointment of a Minister and a Parliamentary Secretary from the aboriginal communities on recommendation of the Adivasi Mahasabha; adequate representation to Adivasis in the government, legislature, services etc. in proportion to their numbers; posting of officials well acquainted with the aboriginal's problems in the partially excluded areas; opening of a degree college at Ranchi, nomination of Adivasis to various committees and District Boards, etc. He impressed upon Rajendra Prasad that he too wanted Purna Swaraj and that even the Adivasi Mahasabha was in full harmony with the Congress principles.<sup>527</sup> He wanted Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas to be constituted into a Congress Province, separated and redeemed from Bihar and the question of a Governors Province for Jharkhand to be studied and implemented from within the INC. He described his movement as thoroughly democratic and aimed at securing a place of honour in the national life of India. On July 5, 1939 a deputation of the Adivasi Mahasabha led by Jaipal met Sri Krishna Sinha, the then Prime Minister of Bihar, to demand the separation of Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas from Bihar, and submitted a memorandum of grievances. Jaipal's, tone towards the Prime Minister was rather offensive for which he received a snub, generally regarded as well merited. In the meantime, a Chota Nagpur Protection League was formed by the non—Adivasis to combat the separation movement launched by the Adivasi

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<sup>527</sup> S. P. Sinha, "Conflict and Tension in Tribal Society", *Concept Publishing Company*, (New Delhi, 1993): 289

Mahasabha,<sup>528</sup> The separation movement was also opposed by the Sanatan Adivasi Mahasabha formed in July 1939 by Theble Oraon, a non—Christian Adivasi leader and founder of the Kisan Sabha that merged with the Adivasi Mahasabha in 1938. To understand the novel, this discussion is necessary. The main complaint of Theble Oraon against the Adivasi Mahasabha was that it was dominated by the Christian Adivasis who usurped all the government facilities meant for the Adivasis. After the outbreak of the Second World War on 3rd September, 1939, the Adivasi Mahasabha extended its unqualified support to the British Government. ‘Adivasi Sakam’<sup>529</sup> a new paper of the Adivasi Mahasabha made its first debut in July 1940 in which full support to the British Government in the War was advocated. Subsequently, Jaipal was appointed member of the Provincial War Committee. As the War progressed he organised recruitment of literally thousands and thousands of Adivasis, combatant and non—combatant skilled and unskilled, for all arms of the forces, during the war period Jaipal Singh joined hands with Manek Homi, (President, Labour Federation, Jamshedpur) in organising Adivasi, Bengali and Oriya labourers against the labour strike sponsored by Tata Workers Union led by prominent Congress leader Prof. Abdul Bari.<sup>530</sup> This resulted in the gradual break down of the strike at Jamshedpur. When Subhas Chandra Bose visited Jamshedpur on 3 December, 1939 to enlist support of the labourers against the war efforts of the British Government, an address on behalf of the Adivasis was submitted to him by Jaipal demanding constitution of Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas into a separate Congress

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<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 290

<sup>529</sup> L.N. Rana, “The Adivasi Mahasabha (1938—1949): Launching Pad Of The Jharkhand Movement”, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 53 (1992): 398—399, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021, 9.30pm, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44142817>.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid., 400

province.<sup>531</sup> In reply to the address, Subhas Chandra Bose advised the Adivasis not to remain aloof from the Congress. Shortly after that Jaipal, who was not expected to receive this advice, held a meeting at Ranchi “in favour of a separate province for Chota Nagpur, drink, dancing and the British Government”.<sup>532</sup> He busied himself in explaining to the Adivasis that the Congress government, which had already resigned, was the worst they could ever have had. The INC held its 53<sup>rd</sup> session on 19 and 20 March, 1940 at Ramgarh under the Presidentship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. It stirred the Adivasi politics of Chota Nagpur. Jaipal planned an Adivasi rally at Ranchi during the Adivasi Mahasabha session to be held from 14 to 16 March, 1940, a little before the Congress session, and appealed to Jawahar Lal Nehru and Rajendra Prasad to visit his rally or hear a delegation of the Adivasi Mahasabha at the Congress session and to assure them that the Congress would consider their claim for separate recognition. In reply, Jaipal Singh was requested to send a delegation to Ramgarh to represent the Adivasis Case. He was also invited to join the anti—compromise conference to be held during the Congress session. Hurt at this Jaipal decided to go with his plan of holding Adivasi rally at Ranchi as scheduled. Before delivering his Presidential address, Jaipal moved a resolution of loyalty to the Throne.<sup>533</sup> The INC was requested in one resolution to take steps towards the creation of an Adivasi Province and to institute enquiries into malpractices of the Bihar Congress ministry. The name of Birsa (leader of the Adivasi rebellion of 1895—1900) was freely used by the Adivasi Mahasabha as a symbol of Adivasi Risorgimento.<sup>534</sup> This was protested by the

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid., 400—401

<sup>532</sup> Ibid., 402

<sup>533</sup> Chevuri Satish Kumar, “Remembering Jaipal Singh Munda: The forgotten great Adivasi intellectual of India”, p, 1, retrieved on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022, 10pm, <https://www.roundtableindia.co.in/remembersing—jaipal—singh—munda—the—forgotten—great—adivasi—intellectual—of—india/>

<sup>534</sup> Ibid., 1-2

Christians. The local administration also warned Jaipal to be careful about using Birsa's name and the warning had its effect. However, Jaipal justified the revival of Birsa cult and said that Birsa Munda will find a place in Indian History. The Congress utilized this situation to its advantage and eulogized Birsa as anti—British and anti—Christian. It observed Birsa day in 1940. The main gate of the Ramgarh Congress was also named after Birsa and stories on his life were written. There was a move on part of the Adivasi Mahasbha to popularise Bengali script among the Adivasis obviously to forge a fresh bond of unity between the Adivasis and the domiciled Bengalis.<sup>535</sup> The Bihar Herald of Patna, an organ of the Bengali community, published prominently the news about the Adivasi Mahasabha and even said in its issue of 21 November, 1939 that just as it was not for Germany to determine the destiny of Poland, it would not be for Dr. Rajendra Prasad to veto the wishes of the inhabitants of Chota Nagpur. The Adivasi Mahasabha also came closer to the Muslim League during the war period, especially after Pakistan resolution was formally adopted by the League at Lahore in 1940. The Muslim League thought of carving out an independent Adivasistan which would form a corridor between East and West wing of the proposed Pakistan. Some of the articles published in Christian missionary papers of Chota Nagpur such as 'Nishkalanka' 'Adivasi' and 'Jharkhand' were hardly distinguishable from the writings in Muslim papers advocating Pakistan. The Muslim League was reported to have donated Rupees one lakh to the Adivasi Mahasbha for the propaganda work for Adivasistan."<sup>536</sup> Purnea district, being so very contiguous to

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<sup>535</sup> Ram Dayal Munda and Samar Bosu Mallick, "The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples' Struggle for Autonomy in India", *International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs*, 108, (Copenhagen, 2003): 80

<sup>536</sup> L.N. Rana, "The Adivasi Mahasabha (1938—1949): Launching Pad Of The Jharkhand Movement", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 53 (1992): 405, retrieved on 10th June 2021, 9.30pm, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44142817>.

several districts of undivided Bengal, had been promptly affected by the Swadeshi movement in the first decade of the 20th century. At that time there were no facilities for higher education in Purnea district and the students who sought higher education had to go to Calcutta or to Patna. The Bihar National College and TK Ghosh Academy were suspected as the two centers for a secret students organisation, which indulged in sedition and both these institutions had a sprinkling of students from Purnea. According to the List of rebels arrested and placed on trial (1857 Revolt) 1st, 2nd, 4th case in the Bihar State Archives, it is documented that a boy from Purnea, Atul Chandra Mazumdar, a student of the BN College, Patna was arrested under the Defence Act of India. Since 1919, Purnea had closely followed the policy, aims and objectives of the Indian National Congress. Some of the delegates of Purnea attended the Nagpur session of Congress in 1920 and the moment Mahatma Gandhi gave the call for the Non—Cooperation, there were a number of volunteers in this district. Some of the early local leaders were Gokul Krishna Roy, Satyendra Narayan Roy and a few others who gave up their practice in the Bar and joined the movement. In 1921, a national school was started in Katihar<sup>537</sup>. In 1942 Quit India Movement tactics were fully implemented by the people of Purnea. Mahatma Gandhi visited Purnea in 1929, during which time he met the Raja of Nazargunj and addressed crowded meetings at various places including Kishanganj, Bishnupur, Araria and Purnea.<sup>538</sup> The Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Purnea, 1901—1908 Bengal (India); Department of Land Records, in Purnea district

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<sup>537</sup> Bihar State Archives: List of rebels arrested and placed on trial (1857 Revolt) 1st, 2nd, 4th case, p. 10

<sup>538</sup> Source Material for a history of Freedom Movement, Quit India Movement (August—December 1942) Vol XIII published by the Gazetteers Department, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai, p. 40



commenced in 1952 and settlement operations were concluded in 1960.<sup>539</sup> In ‘Famine in a Forest Tract: Ecological Change and the Causes of the 1897 Famine in Chota Nagpur, Northern India’, Vinita Damodaran quotes what Andrew Forbes of the Famine Enquiry Committee noted that, “Independently, however, of cholera there has been a marked increase, as in Manbhum, for instance, where although the deaths from cholera have notably fallen off since June, the death rate has still been increasing. This is no doubt due in great measure to the general lowering of the system among the labouring classes owing to the want of proper food and the consequent diminished power of resistance against attacks of fever and other ordinary diseases.”<sup>540</sup> In the past, large area of the district was covered under forest. The district had only 1,044 hectares of forest in 1981. Some teak, sal, sakhua, sheesham, palas, papal and semal trees are still found. Formerly the district was a paradise for sportsmen in search of wild game. Tiger, leopards, buffaloes, nilgai, and many kinds of deer used to be common. Political complexities had indirectly led to environmental degradation of the area. With the disappearance of forests, however, wild life has all but disappeared from the district. Habitat destruction is the principal cause for the loss of biodiversity. Anthropogenic activities, such as encroachment and conversion of forest areas into agricultural lands, and construction of dams and roads, and overexploitation of biological resources, pose threat to the existing biodiversity of the state.

### **The Novel**

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<sup>539</sup> <sup>539</sup> J. Byrne, “Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Purnea, 1901—1908 Bengal (India)”, *Department of Land Records*; Bengal Secretariate Book Depot, (January 1908): 55

<sup>540</sup> Vinita Damodaran, “Famine in a Forest Tract: Ecological Change and the Causes of the 1897 Famine in Chota Nagpur, Northern India”, ‘Environment and History’, Vol. 1, No. 2 (June 1995), p. 131

Aranyak is a Bengali classic novel written by one of the great novelists of Bengali literature Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay (1894—1950). It was composed between 1937 and 1939 and published in 1939. Aranyak is based on the journey of the protagonist Satyacharan and his subsequent valuable experience in the jungle of Purnea district in Bihar. Like Satyacharan, Bandyopadhyaya, the writer of the novel had left Calcutta to work in the world in the same place described as Aranyak. From 1924 to 1930, he worked as an assistant manager for the Pathuriaghata Zamindari Estate in Bhagalpur, North Bihar. In his novel the author tells the story of the struggling lives of the impoverished jungle people and an exquisite and perfect wilderness which seems to be in dire environmental crisis. In the novel, the narrator Satyacharan, is modelled largely on the writer himself. Important aspect of the novel is that by giving expression to the writer's forest experience he intentionally showed, in many cases, his environmental consciousness; so from that context we can get much information that show the author's eco—consciousness. 'Aranyak' does not deal with so many characters and Bibhutibhushan does not complicate the plot.<sup>541</sup> It begins with Satyacharan, the protagonist's getting job with the favor of a rich friend and Satyacharan's decision to go to Purnea district to lease out thirty thousand Bighas (33 decimal = 1 Bigha) of forest land to the poor subjects, as an estate manager in lieu of revenue earning. His job was to provide the homeless inhabitants some land for settlement and cultivation. Initially Satyacharan felt bit lonely after coming from bustling Calcutta city but the nature of Lobotulia with all its wonder gripped his mind gradually and at last he becomes mesmerized entirely. From the outset the pantheistic nature of Satya seems to be in a tug of war between his fascination for the natural beauty of Lobotulia and

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<sup>541</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra and Itishri Sarangi, "Rethinking Nature: An Eco—critical Analysis of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's Popular Novels", *Daath Voyage* 2, no. 4, (2017), p. 111

demolition of the forest. However, not his assigned duty of allocating land but his love for forest Goddess, in which he found a motherly affection, is central to the novel. So we find instead of the act of “Deforestation” Satyacharan shows more interest in environmental preservation. Along with Jugal Prasad, who was an ardent lover of forest Satyacharan, found it more important to decorate the forest by planting many rare species of herbs and saplings. Gradually, Satyacharan became fond of the wonderful natural beauty of Lobtulia and Fulkia—Baihar. He was touched by the struggling lives of dispossessed peasants, penurious Brahmins, migrant landless labourers and Adivasis (aboriginal people) who were supposed to get jungle land decided by the estate owner. But, the uprooting of age—old gigantic trees and removal of plants and herbs of rare species for making shelter for the landless resulted in a deep feeling of guilt and sadness that tortured his soft nature and loving mind throughout his stay.<sup>542</sup> Satyacharan is the most important character of Aranyak but not the central one. In fact, he is an outsider who has no connection with the forest or the forest people seemingly. Indeed, Jungle plays the central role in the novel. It shapes the mentality, activities and even the way of thinking of the characters. Different characters behave differently under the unknown spell of jungle. The forest with its myth and mystery has deciding effects upon the characters directly or indirectly. Though initially Satyacharan was not a match for the jungle life but as time passed by, the mysterious enticement of Lobtulia automatically made him a deep lover of it. Few many female characters seem to attract Satyacharan but not as much as the natural fascination of Lobtulia and Fulkia—baihar. As he remarks: “While coming to destroy this waste land I have fallen in love with this impeccable wild heroine.”<sup>543</sup> But,

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<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, 111

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, 111—112

in the course of time Satyacharan had to stoop in spite of his complete reluctance to give away the virgin forest lands for settlement and cultivation. The protagonist reminds us that telling the story of his deep love and acute loss of the forest can exonerate him somewhat from his profound guilt. Like the Ancient Mariner, of S.T. Coleridge's (1772—1834) poem, the narrator has to tell his story to exorcise his guilt.<sup>544</sup> As we flash back, we find that the writer begins the story in Aranyak with a heavy mind: "But these memories do not give me pleasure; they are filled with sorrow. By my hands was destroyed an unfettered playground of nature: I know too that for this act the forest Gods will never forgive me. I have heard that to confess a crime in one's own words lightens some—what the burden of the crime."<sup>545</sup> Later on we see, Satyacharan comes in close contact with a number of human beings in Aranyak the dancer lad Dhaturia, the holy sati mother Kunta, the generous money lender Dhautal Sahu, the poor, religious Brahmin Raju Panrey, mystic man and nature lover Jugal Prasad, the princess of the forest Bhanumati and also the powerful and dishonest Zamindar Nandalal Ojha, Chote Singh and dangerous Rashbehari Singh. But none could affect him as much as the hypnotising surroundings of Lobtulia forest ever did. Satyacharan's attraction for Bhanumati, is symbolic inclination for the prehistoric glory of the forest of which Bhanumati is reminiscence. Both the glory of the forest and Bhanumati are diminished; which is a symbolic coherence of the story of the novel.<sup>546</sup> Bhanumati is the symbol of unintelligible side of the jungle that attracts without any prior cause. In fact, coming into close contact with the nature Satyacharan's senses become sharper and there is a fundamental metamorphosis in his frame of mind.

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<sup>544</sup> S.T. Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", Educational Publishing Company, 1906, p. 22

<sup>545</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, "Aranyak", Mitra & Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., (May 1976): 30

<sup>546</sup> Ibid., 35

The hustle and bustle of city life is in a sharp contrast to the quiet repose of heaven like forest in Aranyak. As in Shakespeare's, 'As You Like It' (1599) the cruel courtly characters coming in to contact with nature goes through a purgation in the same manner nature cleanses the soul of Satyacharan making him compromising and peace—loving.<sup>547</sup> Nature divulges most valuable truth to him so he can read the fraud mentality of Rashbehari Singh or Nandalal Ojha and can appreciate the naive and simplistic condition of the destitute. Getting in touch with nature gives Satya a chance to understand human behavior quite clearly. Thus, he becomes liberal, loving and as generous as nature. He was eco—conscious to feel some sort of love for the nature as a reservoir of feral grandeur. It happens to Satyacharan as he thinks everything has got changed since the war of Plassay or the crucifixion of Jesus Christ but some wild nature like Mahalikharpur retains its inviolable loveliness.

Bibhutibhushan also raises important questions more than once about the meaning and necessity of violating the inherent beauty of nature. The writer is in confusion regarding the material development that negates the importance of wilds. As he contemplates autobiographically: What does man want – progress or peace? What is the use of advancement if there is no peace in it? I have known many people who progressed in life but lost peace. The ever—thoughtful character, Raju Panrey who was rather idle thus could not progress in cultivation and was leading a very poor life. However spiritually he was very robust and his strong devotion to nature like Satyacharan also can be traced. This pitiable man was deeply devotional and possesses important philosophy of life that also centers round the fondness to forest Goddess. He is out and out a spiritual and

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<sup>547</sup> William Shakespear, "As You Like It", *Longmans, Green, and Co.*, (1902): 15

unworldly person. Satyacharan liked the way of Raju Panrey's thinking: "The duration of life is very short sir. While clearing the jungle so many thoughts of life cross my mind, I think sitting idly. As you see the wild jungle, it is a very auspicious place; from time immemorial the flower clusters are blooming, birds are chirping, with the descent of wind the deities come down to put their footstep here. Where avarice and calculation of profit and loss are rife, the wind becomes poisonous! They don't live there. So, whenever you are with spade and shovel the deities snatches it away. They speak in such a silent manner in the ear that the thought of wealth and gaining withers away".<sup>548</sup>

To feel the silent wonder of forest, can be more pleasant than a throbbing city life. We see while going through the novel that the forest became so much precious to Satyacharan that he forgets the hazards of thick jungle and takes rides across the jungle even at nights. There was a sense of oneness between the wild jungle and infatuated mind of the protagonist. Gradually Satyacharan becomes a devotee of nature Satya understands the bounty of nature. Like a Bhakta (devotee) Satyacharan utters: "What nature gives away to its Bhakta is priceless. And one cannot achieve it without serving nature for a long time." The thought of Satyacharan is reminiscent of Coleridge's Dejection ode: "O lady! We receive but what we give, And in our life alone does nature live."<sup>549</sup> Initially the writer is against dismantling the forest due to his aesthetic passion. The writer repeatedly changes the date of allotting the lands to the hand of even poor tenants. He is totally unwilling to allow others to destroy the beautiful land and the rocky beauty of Nara—

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<sup>548</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, "Aranyak", translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, 'Aranyak: Of the Forest', *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 150

<sup>549</sup> S.T. Coleridge, "Dejection: An Ode", para IV, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Volume 2. Gen. ed. M.H. Abrams, *W.W. Norton & Company. Inc.*, (New York. 1962), p. 217

Baihar the place of which he named “Beauty Spot”.<sup>550</sup> His growing love for the Mother Nature is deeply apparent: “I was here to destroy the wild nature but has fallen in to love for it.”<sup>551</sup> Again in the same occasion he very consciously declares his apprehension over the demolition of forest land. The jungle area around his territory is not a waste land to him but its demolition is a wastage he understands significantly: “If I give thousand bighas of land most of the parts of the jungle will be wasted – how nice is the grove, how many sprouts would cruelly be cut!”<sup>552</sup> Meanwhile in the tenure of Satya many parts of Lobotulia were being given to the settlers. The new settlers began to clear it off by cutting and burning many precious trees and breaking high plains. The burning of the beautiful jungle for cultivation purpose comes to Satya as deep anguish. Satyacharan blames the activity in general, the aimless action by the people to do such meaningless wastage of valuable nature. Again, a feeling of deep regret is found in him: “I hear from afar, the guttering sound of the forest burning— so many beautiful trees and twigs are destroyed — I think while sitting down. I have some unknown feeling so I never feel like going there. Immensely valuable wealth of the country, which could bring everlasting peace and diversion to the people are gone— only for a handful of grains we had to sacrifice it.”<sup>553</sup> Not only the fast losing of the forest of Lobotulia that makes Satya uneasy; his despair is multiplied seeing the secret machinations of wealthy people to take possession of poor people’s land which they own with great hardship. The lust for owning land as wealth is

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<sup>550</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 150—151

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*, 152

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*, 153

<sup>553</sup> Md. Zillur Rahman, Md. Sadekul Islam and Md. Akhter Hussain, ‘Ecopoetic Notions in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s “Aranyak”’, *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR—JHSS)*, Volume 23, Issue 6, Ver. 1 (June. 2018): 71

criticised: “But soon new tenants locked in vicious fights. I understood they are not peace loving.”<sup>554</sup> Apart from sensibilities for green plains and forest land Satyacharan shows his disdain for killing birds. As the forest was filled with many types of birds, he could easily kill birds and relish but quite oppositely he remained a vegetarian. Bibhutibhusan voices his concern for safeguard of birds some hundred years back; though it is a fairly latest enterprise to save birds for maintaining the balance of eco—system. Satyacharan who is the voice of the author importantly shows his early carefulness for birds fairly like modern environmentalists: “Though there was no lack of Silli and Peacock, but my mind does not allow killing birds so in spite for having an air gun I was used to vegetables.”<sup>555</sup> In another instance, when he was climbing up the North Nara—Baihar forest with the company of Jugal Prasad here also Satyacharan shows his choice for not harming birds and its freedom. At this point he forbids a sentinel not to kill a bird. “A gigantic peacock was sitting just over our head. A sentinel came up with a rifle, when he was about to kill the bird, I forbade.” This shows how Satyacharan wanted to preserve the fauna. Preservation of Fauna is also described in the book ‘Environment and the Adivasi World’ edited by Prof. Mahua Sarkar where in the she writes that, “to understand the changing discourses of environment studies, it is necessary for us, to analyse the varied dimensions of human and nature interactions from the past. At the same time, tribal history of India is no longer considered to highlight merely themes of economic development and national integration but also to deal with a number of complex issues like identity, class, culture and gender, ecology and equity, state formation and ethnic transformation and

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<sup>554</sup> Ibid., 71

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 76



participatory management of forest resources by the community.”<sup>556</sup> The novel also reminds us of *Walden* (1813) by Henry David Thoreau (1817—1862) and his choice for the freedom of jungle birds. Presence of birds near the Walden Pond made Thoreau’s time more worthwhile. As he says: For I found myself suddenly neighbor to the birds; not by having imprisoned one, but having caged myself near them.<sup>557</sup> In *Aranyak* the author also makes other characters think in an eco—sensitive way. It is found in the female character Manchi’s thought, while talking to Satya she shows her interest for trees. She tells Satya, by the way, that she heard that there is no tree left in Calcutta city. And interestingly enough it is a common phenomenon of South Asian cities which lack a balanced environment necessary for healthy living. It is important to note that there is growing concern over this at present. The writer’s criticism over the urban people who are blind to inner mind to see the natural beauty is reminded when the picnic party comes to the jungle led by a retired official from Calcutta. While being acquainted with the picnic party Satya realises well that they don’t have the real eye to see the beauty of the mountains, the color of the setting sun, enjoy the chirping of the birds. The writer further indicates the myopic view of the urban girls who seem to be disappointed finding rice to be coarse in the area; in fact, staying long in the city area one loses one’s actual view of the jungle life. They also show their total indifference to environment because Satya knows very well that their sole enjoyment will be to kill some rabbits or deer. While the forest of Fulkea seems to be a safe den for the buffaloes as the buffalo God is their genial protector; on the other hand, Satyacharan remembers a very shocking incident of animal torturing

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<sup>556</sup> Mahua Sarkar, ed., “Environment and the Adivasi World”, *Alphabet Books*, 2017, p. 3—4

<sup>557</sup> Henry David Thoreau, “The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Vol. II: *Walden*”, *The Riverside Press*, (Cambridge, 1906): 181

in Calcutta which is a very common scenario in this part of the world. So, in a silent entreaty the writer invokes the aid of the buffalo deity Tarbaro to save the animals from predicament. This shows positive thoughts of Satyacharan for animals.<sup>558</sup> During few years of stay of Satya in Lobtulia and Fulkia—baihar most part of the forest was already gone and the few other acres of land needed to be distributed in an immediate measure. If the land is not leased on time, then Satyacharan would not be able to collect Khajna (revenue) from the authority. Thus, it would be impossible for him to pay his higher authority properly. So, in spite of serious unwillingness, he had to gradually allocate some other parts of Lobtulia—Baihar. Most part of the forest of Baihar that was assigned to Satyacharan had been distributed to the vagrant Gangota Brahmin or other poor clans.<sup>559</sup> Another man in the novel that could be equaled with Satya is Jugal Prasad. Jugal Prasad is a good companion of Satya because he is also drawn to nature finding an unmatched curiosity in it. There is an urgency in both of them, the writer and Jugal Prasad to save the environment. Satya along with mystic Jugal Prasad enthusiastically proceeds to protect the wonderful forest. Though the limitless forest line was decreasing every day, the admiration and attraction for nature is not diminished in Satyacharan; rather he along with Jugal Prasad take the voluntary effort to beautify the rest of the forest which is still intact. Satyacharan very pleasingly appreciates Jugal Prasad's voluntary effort to decorate Saraswati Kundi with rare plants, as he says in the final sections of the novel: “the quiet exquisitely lovely land has become more beautiful with the self—hand plantation of

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<sup>558</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 100

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, 100—101

flowers and plantlets by Jugal Prasad.”<sup>560</sup> Both of Satya and Jugal Prasad search for new plants in the Mahalikharup Mountain. Not only is the cause of beauty that fires their mind with love for wide spread jungle rather they are devotional to the purity, beauty and wild affection of Fulkia—Baihar. They are not just beholder rather they are devotee who finds it their holy duty to save the mother forest. Identifying new plants in the forest becomes a joy for the both. And when the land was given away to the new settlers for cultivation both the nature lovers not only showed their dismay but also, they were utterly shocked. Jugal Prasad’s shock is felt equally by Satyacharan: “The north line of Nara Baihar is still thick forest. But in the Lobtulia Baihar no forest mark is left anymore. Three—fourths of the beauty of Nara Baihar is gone, only in the northern territory two thousand bigha is not allotted to the subjects. I found Jugal Prasad utterly shocked at this.”<sup>561</sup> Jugal Prasad’s anguish over the act of destruction is more acute seeing the attitude of the Gangata tribe. He accuses of them as if they were murderer to the land because the Gangata clan unnecessarily disturbs the forest land in their short maverick stay here and there; to Jugal Prasad it is totally a meaningless act. But Satyacharan helplessly reminds Jugal Prasad that he is bound to give the lands away because his landowner has to pay tax to the government for having such a big forest land. However, the shocked Jugal Prasad requested Satyacharan fervently not to give away the land of “Saraswati kundi” because he did not want his forest goddess of beauty that resides there to die. “Please don’t lease the Saraswati Kundi sir I collected plants with much pain to plant there.”<sup>562</sup> In the passage

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<sup>560</sup> Md. Zillur Rahman, Md. Sadekul Islam and Md. Akhter Hussain, ‘Ecopoetic Notions in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s “Aranyak”’, *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR—JHSS)*, Volume 23, Issue 6, Ver. 1 (June. 2018): 40

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*, 40

<sup>562</sup> Kumaraditya Sarkar, “Problematizing Bibhutibhushan's Novel ‘Aranyak’”, India Study Channel, retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, 11am, p. 4, [www.indiastudychannel.com](http://www.indiastudychannel.com)

of time it became impossible for Satyacharan to save the unharmed part of Lobtulia, it seemed he no longer could afford to hold back “Saraswati kundi”, one of the favorite recluses of Jugal Prasad. Satyacharan was attracted to Jugal Prasad not only for his love of nature it was something else that attracted Satyacharan. Jugal Prasad was very unselfish; the worldly achievement did not press his mind he was not greedy like other people around Satya. He never in any occasion showed yearning for owning lands, and never ever cared for having cows or buffalos.<sup>563</sup> However, Jugal Prasad was preoccupied with the thought of losing Saraswati Kundi. Satya shows his full sympathy over this: “I feel pain — Jugal Prasad’s most loved “Saraswati Kundi” — how long I would be able to save it? Where the Hangsalata and jasmine grove would pass away? Instead tassel peeping over cereal grass and maze field would take its place.”<sup>564</sup> In the later few months of stay of Satya tenants began to take place in the lower areas of Mahalikharup Mountain stretching to Lobtulia and to the northern corridor of Nara—baihar. As the forest area began to be crowded Satyacharan and Jugal Prasad were feeling much distressed. Rapid usurpation of land by landless people was making the beauteous forest a swarming slum. This is how the vast precious wild was being wasted. The destruction of Lobtulia—baihar is the destruction of South Asian terrain in miniature. As the forest of Lobtulia was fading away fast so did the charm of Satyacharan began to wane. The writer made up his mind to leave Baihar.<sup>565</sup> For temporary pleasure and to remove the burden of guilt of losing Fulkia and Lobtulia—baihar Satya planned to pay a visit to Bhanumati, the poor princess

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<sup>563</sup> Md. Zillur Rahman, Md. Sadekul Islam and Md. Akhter Hussain, ‘Ecopoetic Notions in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s “Aranyak”’, *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR—JHSS)*, Volume 23, Issue 6, Ver. 1 (June. 2018): 40

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, 41—42

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, 42

for the last time. On the way through thick and deep jungle to his last visit to Bhanumati the writer gives us ample proof how much dissatisfied he became to see the lost glory of Lobtulia and how much passionate he was with the wild forest area and its charm. In the mountainous Dhanjhorī area, where Bhanumati lived, full with Palash, Mohua and Shalchara trees and hardly any men, the protagonist finds a tranquil heaven like repose. He also shows his scorn for those who do harm to nature: “I am rescued from utter monotony seeing so long the swarming squalid cots and slums and the grey stereotyped cultivated land of Lobtulia. This type of wild nature is rare in this part of the world.”<sup>566</sup> And he wishes to live in that wild unravished greenery of Dhanjhorī area perpetually that would not merely give him sustenance but also mental solace; because the forest of Lobtulia possessed something special, this ensures, supports, soothes and gives wider opportunity of peace in mind: “I would lease some Bidi Pata (tobacco leaf) producing woodland making a hut in this secluded, serene wild area and would live forever beside some flowery green valley and spring.”<sup>567</sup> The time of departure became impending as the forest was losing its originality, beauty, and grandeur fast. Interestingly the way of viewing the nature got changed to Satya at this period; he finds ethical necessity in the forest life now. He calls the unravished jungle land shrine. Satyacharan holds himself culprit for the destruction of innocent wilderness because it happened before his eye and under his governance. Even his deep love for Bhanumati could not stop him from leaving Lobtulia—baihar which spelled bound him with profound majesty. Eventually, His strong love for nature prevails. We do not only need nature for beauty or for solace but for the

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<sup>566</sup> Kumaraditya Sarkar, “Problematizing Bibhutibhushan's Novel ‘Aranyak’”, India Study Channel, retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, 11am, p. 5, [www.indiastudychannel.com](http://www.indiastudychannel.com)

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 5

sake of moral importance. His concluding thoughts are more clearly ecological: “There will be a time when people won’t find any wilderness – only cultivable land, jute mills and chimney of garments factories would come in to view. Then people would come to this calm wilderness, as the people come to shrine. Hope this forest remains intact for those future days.”<sup>568</sup>

“Aranyak” is an epic novel of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay. It can be analysed from a different perspective, of ecocide which is synonymous with the intensive damage done to the natural environment. This damage was done by a city dweller, who initially had no love for the forest environment. But having done the ecocide, he had undergone a thorough change in his attitude to nature. The dominant character is as suggested by the title itself is forest itself.<sup>569</sup> It is based on the practical experience of the novelist while working as an estate manager in the forest province of Indian state Bihar. Like his creator, the chief protagonist of the novel Satyacharan is also an estate manager who went from Bengal to look after the land settlement of a vast forest land. In the story I have tried to explore a socio—cultural encounter between the urban milieu and the rural/tribal population. Through this encounter Satyacharan could imagine the “other”<sup>570</sup> and his terrain of perception was widening with the new ideas of nature, environmental balance and sustainability. Apparently, the novel seems to be a travelogue. But a critical study certainly shows that the long prose narrative is an epic of life of the forester in a relationship with nature. The novel predominantly focuses on removal of forest for the

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<sup>568</sup> Ibid., 5—6

<sup>569</sup> Md. Zillur Rahman, Md. Sadekul Islam and Md. Akhter Hussain, ‘Ecopoetic Notions in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s “Aranyak”’, *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR—JHSS)*, Volume 23, Issue 6, Ver. 1 (June. 2018): 40

<sup>570</sup> Ibid., 40—41

sake of land settlement among new tenants so that the Zamindar gets a lot of revenue.<sup>571</sup> The very prologue of the novel gives us a hint that Aranyak is going to be a highly ecocritical prose work. The setting is in the outdoor wilderness of Bihar. The whole novel is written in the form of reminiscence of forest life experienced by the novelist himself. About the novel, he writes, “There are no dense forests close to human habitation. The forests lie in the distant land, where on banks of Godavari, the winds are burdened with the smell of ripe—fallen jambu fruit. Aranyak is an account of the imaginary land. This is not a travelogue; nor is it a diary, it is a novel... Yet, the background of Aranyak is not entirely imagined. There used to be and there still are, such vast expanses of forest spreading to the horizon.”<sup>572</sup> Composed between 1937—1939, the novel is based on Bibhutibhushan’s long and strenuous years in Northern Bihar, where he came across the dispossessed — landless peasants, poor Brahmins, wretched migrants, homeless labourers and wild Adivasis. “It is these people that I shall speak. Our earth has many paths where civilized men seldom tread. Along those paths, the strange cross—currents of life trickle their way through obscure pebbly channels— such currents I had known and the memory of knowing them remains with me”.<sup>573</sup> The whole novel is a recollection as it is presented in the mode of a flashback. But these memories do not give him pleasure. They are his sorrowful experience. Aranyak—of the Forest a memoir which is stuffed in recollection of Lobtulia and Nara Baihar where the novelist stayed for a period of time as an estate manager. His personal feelings which he penned down in his diary, gets a universal appeal as he brings into light the eternal saga of human life living in close

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<sup>571</sup> Ibid., 42

<sup>572</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. back cover

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., 160

proximity with nature. The whole novel is a recollection as it is presented in the mode of a flashback. But these memories do not give him pleasure. They are his sorrowful experience. The novelist writes — “By my hands was destroyed an unfettered playground of nature. I know too that for this act the forest goddess will never forgive me. I have heard that to confess a crime in one’s own words lightens somewhat the burden of the crime. Therefore, the story.”<sup>574</sup> “I saw the nomadic Aryans cross over the north—west mountain ranges and come down like a torrent into an ancient India ruled by primitive non—Aryan tribes. Whatever history that India had, became subsequently the history of this Aryan civilisation — the history of the vanquished non—Aryan races was not written down anywhere, or perhaps, it was written only in such secret mountain caves, in the darkness of forests...” Satyacharan, the first person—narrator of *Aranyak*, had this vision when he stood near the royal ancestral burial ground of the old Santhal tribal king, Dobru Panna.<sup>575</sup> This vision informs the narrative style of the novel which celebrates primitive non—Aryan history and its unique timelessness. As the translator, Rimli Bhattacharya observes, “*Aranyak* tells us of an innocence that is impossible.”<sup>576</sup> It is the pre—industrial revolution “innocence” of Europe which Blake hailed in his poems. This innocence, still preserved in the forests of Lobtulia, Nara—Baihar, Ismailpur and Phulkia, is quite inaccessible to Satyacharan, who represents the civilised races, because its conceptualisation calls for a willing suspension not only of disbelief, but of an entire belief—system. Satyacharan is thus agonised, not being able to get to the heart of the

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<sup>574</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “*Aranyak*”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘*Aranyak: Of the Forest*’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 161

<sup>575</sup> Kumud Biswas, *The Kingdom of Dobru Panna*, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021, 6:30pm, p. 11, [www.boloji.com/index.cfm](http://www.boloji.com/index.cfm)

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*, 12



darkness epitomised by the forest. According to the *Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar*, the forests of Bihar is mostly inhabited by poverty—stricken Gangota peasants, landless Brahmins and nomadic tribes. Satyacharan is appointed by the landlord as a lease—manager and sent to Bhagalpur to recruit new tenants and draw up new legal deeds with them. Satyacharan is thus a victim of this revenue—system. His self—hood is split between the conflicting roles of a lover and a destroyer — an ambivalence reflected in the narrative style.<sup>577</sup> If we were to question how nature is painted in the novel, the answer would be as written by Rimli Bhattacharya, “Nature in Aranyak is both pervasive and penetrative. Bandyopadhyay here goes well beyond merely exoticising the forest and ventures to explore its mysteries in order to portray the unbelievable fortitude of its inhabitants.”<sup>578</sup> Characters like the storyteller Ganu Mahato, the eccentric Raju Panrey, the benevolent moneylender Dhaotal Sahu, the scholar Matuknath Panrey, the nature—lover Jugal Prasad, the poet Venkateswar Prasad, the female characters like Kunta, Manchi and Bhanumati, the oppressors like Rashbehari Singh and Nandalal Ojha are depicted as comprising a community that leads a primeval life and yet is very much a part of civilisation. Bandyopadhyay is alert to the multilayered process of cultural invasion of the urban—industrial process into a marginal population. “Bharatbarsha kon dike (Which way is India)?”<sup>579</sup>, is the stunning question put to the narrator by Bhanumati on the eve of his departure. The semantic possibility of this question encompasses a wide range of negotiations taking place between the Centre and its margins and between the margin and its Centre. Aranyak is a deliberately non—structured narrative charting out this ever—

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<sup>577</sup> L.P. Vidyarthi, “ Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar”, *Punthi Pustak*, (Calcutta, 1964): 120

<sup>578</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 165

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, 166

changing negotiation. Bandyopadhyay insisted that *Aranyak* is a novel, neither a diary nor a travelogue. It indeed is, by its down—to—earth documentation and imaginative mind—travelling. The twenty first century reader confines his/her interpretation of *Aranyak* neither within the forest and its folk, nor in the narrating character of Satyacharan. The importance is likely to be shifted on the sub—textual intra—human relationships that underlay the obvious interactions between man and Nature. The magnum opus of Bibhutibhushan actually tells us a tale of multilayered transition. In this world, everything changes. The civilisation transforms the forest, the elite affects the unprivileged, and a man on a mission gets metamorphosed as he confronts with his ‘other’. The Prime Variable of all these changes is no doubt the urban colonization. According to L.P. Vidyarthi, the Bhadrak class represented by Satyacharan marginalises the autochthones of Purnea to a peripheral sociocultural existence. Nevertheless, for many a reason the traditional criticism tends to refute this truth. *Aranyak* is narrated from the ‘First Person Point of View’<sup>580</sup> that often hinders individualistic interpretation and goads the reader unto accepting the preconceived. Also, the text of *Aranyak* becomes a double narrative if we count the Prologue preceding it. Here, Satyacharan is sitting in a bustling metro at the present time, and is ruminating his bygone days amidst the woods years back. We are reminded of Joseph Conrad’s (1857—1924) *Heart of Darkness* (1899), where Charlie Marlow retells his past experience in Africa to an English audience in England. Nevertheless, the double narrative of *Aranyak* is not as clear as in Conrad’s work, hinted incidentally, only in the Prologue.<sup>581</sup> This technique increases the reliability of the narrator and compels us even more to take up his

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<sup>580</sup> L.P. Vidyarthi, “ Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar”, *Punthi Pustak*, (Calcutta, 1964): 150

<sup>581</sup> Joseph Conrad, “Heart of Darkness”, Coyote Canyon Press, English Literature Series, (California, 2007): 25

worldview. The story of Aranyak is mainly set in the Purnea district during the last phase of the British Raj. Very much like Conrad, Bibhutibhushan had himself lived in those forest lands between 1924 and 1930, and Aranyak was composed between 1937 and 1939. These dates are important, for they mark the heyday of Western imperialism as well as the sprouting of anticolonial forces. The much spoken British colonisation of the urban bhadralok gentry had the single equation of political power, whereas the tribes were doubly colonised. The British had snatched their land; the elite had marginalised their culture. For women, there was sometimes the third domination of patriarchy. And often we have no time to untie this Gordian of power equations, hence simply cut it off. The loss of the socio—cultural identity was often greater than the political defeat and more difficult to reconstruct. In fact, the very definition of a tribe marks it as a self—contained unit, constituting a society in itself, and distinguished by specific boundaries. As in Aranyak, the marking pillars or Nishandihi khamba of the tribal kingdom still stand high to demarcate the physical territory,<sup>582</sup> but the cultural borders have seriously been violated. Assistance for progress in civilisation has finally dated out as an excuse, as the very notions post—colonialism problematises the civilised—uncivilised binary. Subsequently, colonialism instills unto the dominated a sense of lowliness to substitute his own culture by that of the victor. The clerk, Goshtho Chakroborty, categorised the natives as ruffians only because they were not Bengalis. We may still excuse the clerk’s prejudice as the typical bhadralok bias. But when a native Venkateshwar Prasad condemns his brethren to show off his poetic calibre, the sheer loss of faith in the indigenous culture can at once be detected. He actually walks three miles across the hills

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<sup>582</sup> L.P. Vidyarthi, “ Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar”, *Punthi Pustak*, (Calcutta, 1964): 154

only for Satyacharan's approval. He uses the terms 'Bengali' and 'Learned' almost interchangeably.<sup>583</sup> And Venkateshwar is no exception. All around the forest this learned Bengali Babu is esteemed as an incarnation of God, as people try their best to honour him and seek his appreciation. For, only the coloniser enjoys the authority of codification. In this context we can see how deep colonialism can infiltrate and we are shocked to discover the unconscious Sanskritisation. Hence instead of any tribals myth, Dhaturia relives in his dance the stealing of butter by Krishna in his adolescence. Hence the younger generation replaces tribal names like Dobru with Sanskrit ones like Bhanumati. And this marginalisation has often been palpitated as the cultural borrowing. Hopefully, the narrator Satyacharan, characterised very much like Marlow, seeks to problematise all these binaries. In search of livelihood, he lands in the forest that he is destined to devastate. Initially it seems too sinister and itself becomes a challenge. No wonder he receives a culture shock as he finds even a Bengali bhadrak, Goshtho Chakroborty, quite mesmerised by the wild magnificence. Goshtho Babu is thus entitled a task that Kurtz had already excelled in Heart of Darkness. The destabilisation of cultural binaries culminates at the burial ground of the tribal royal household. Almost like an Epiphany in the James Joyce (1882—1941) novels, this 'significant time' leads Satyacharan to a greater comprehension of the primeval ethnicity.<sup>584</sup> His sophisticated 'Self' confronts his 'Other', and results in a psychological metamorphosis of the protagonist. His transformation becomes even clearer during his encounter with the picnic party. Nevertheless, this psychological change opens up a very disturbing question about its degree and duration.

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<sup>583</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, "The Marginalised Vs. The Civilised: An Ecocritical Approach to Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay's Aranyak", p. 12

<sup>584</sup> James Joyce, "Ulysses", *Shakespeare and Co.*, (Paris, 1922): 55

Satyacharan no doubt appreciates the wild magnificence, but every time he judges it by the scale of ‘civilised’ nature. Amidst the forest he pays homage to Buffalo God, but satirises Him under the palpitation of sympathy when he returns to the bustling metro. The obvious tone of sympathy for the marginalised thus makes the text even more problematic, like *A Passage to India* (1924) by E. M. Forster (1879—1970) and *Kim* (1901) by Rudyard Kipling (1865—1936) and surely, *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Joseph Conrad (1857—1924). What Chinua Achebe (1977) writes about Conrad’s work thus also becomes valid for Aranyak. As Africa has been the Other World for Europe, the forest of Purnea is very much antithetical to elitism and therefore to civilisation. Like the Congo basin, it is also “a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality.”<sup>585</sup> Satyacharan gives up his refined appearance, but nourishes an inborn sense of superiority till the very end. He derives a sort of pleasure looking at the marginalised, but he is never ready to encounter the Return Gaze. Hence when Raju opposes with his mythology to the science of the elite, Satyacharan never knows how to express his feelings, for he had never faced such an experience. Indeed, we may consider this subtle racism as not of the author but of his fictitious protagonist. But underneath it we find no irony. Also, Satyacharan appears to be a projection of the author himself, for the amazing similarities in their career. Aranyak thus seldom provides the colonised with a voice or a scope for the Return Gaze. The entire volume is faithfully dedicated to the manifold experiences of a Bengali bhadralok in the midst of a primordial

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<sup>585</sup> Chinua Achebe, ‘An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*’, *The Massachusetts Review*, 18, 1977, p. 36

nature. It is merely set ‘in the forest’, but never tells the tale ‘of the forest’. What we come across is ‘Aranye’, and not ‘Aranyak’<sup>586</sup>

### **Into their Land**

One of the keynotes of ecocriticism is its exploration of the wilderness and its impact on human culture. Peter Barry considers wilderness as a shade of nature as we find in his book ‘Beginning Theory’.<sup>587</sup> The value of wilderness has been best expressed in the “Spring” chapter of *Walden* (1854). The writer Henry David Thoreau (1817—1862) here envisions ‘the unexplored forest and meadows’ as the places where people can rejuvenate them. They get revitalised and reborn in presence of the wild. Ecocriticism studies ‘wilderness’ which signifies nature in a state uncontaminated by civilisation.<sup>588</sup> According to Greg Garrard in his article “Ecocriticism” (2004), the word ‘wilderness’ has been derived from the Anglo—Saxon word wild ‘deoren’ where deoren means ‘beasts’ that existed beyond the boundaries of evolution.<sup>589</sup> William Cronon (1995) agrees, “Wilderness is natural, unfallen, an antithesis of an unnatural civilisation that has lost its soul. It is a place of freedom in which we can recover our true selves we have lost to the contributing influences of our artificial lives. Most of all, it is the ultimate landscape of authenticity.”<sup>590</sup> The ecocritics investigate the underlying ecological values in nature literature. They examine how human perception of wilderness has changed over the years.

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<sup>586</sup> Kumaraditya Sarkar, “Problematizing Bibhutibhushan's Novel ‘Aranyak’”, India Study Channel, retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, 11am, p. 7, [www.indiastudychannel.com](http://www.indiastudychannel.com)

<sup>587</sup> Peter Barry, “Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory”, Manchester University Press, 1995, p. 25

<sup>588</sup> Henry David Thoreau, “The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Vol. II: *Walden*”, The Riverside Press, (Cambridge, 1906): 335

<sup>589</sup> Greg Garrard, “Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom”, *Routledge Taylor & Francis Group* (2004): 60

<sup>590</sup> William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature”, in William Cronon, ed., ‘Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature’, *W. W. Norton & Co.*, (New York: 1995): 80

In *Aranyak: of the Forest*, nature has been represented in its shade of wilderness. Etymologically ‘Aranyak’ means Of the Forest. This novel narrates the journey of the protagonist Satyacharan in the dichotomy of the urban and jungle lives. During the intervening period of two World Wars (1st and 2nd) when restlessness, unemployment, uncertainty was very common in the social life of Calcutta, Satyacharan gets the job of an assistant manager under Zamindar Kshelatcharan Ghosh in the Purnea district of Bihar. According to Sanjukta Dasgupta, the Chota Nagpur Plateau which is located in the eastern end of the Deccan plateau where it merges with the Bay of Bengal is an environmentally heterogeneous region. Since the eighth century onwards, the northern and southern part of Chota Nagpur saw the rise of feudal lords who, through land grants succeeded in colonising the region and established Bramhanical Sanskritic culture in that region.<sup>591</sup> This area is filled up with dense forest where his master has thirty thousand Bighas of land. Satyacharan has to deforest the land to set up new habitation that would provide his master with huge revenue. Initially, the city—bred Satyacharan had no love for the jungle life. The loneliness of the forest troubled him so much that it sat upon his chest like a stone. He felt that he was all alone in the world in the frightful jungle. He has spent most of his life in Calcutta with his companion’s enjoying libraries, theaters, films and music without which he could not even imagine a life. To him, the people in the katcheri were as good as barbarians who could not even understand his words! It seemed that kind of life was not for him. Apart from these, the narrator found the terrible drought during the summer month there. The hotness grew intolerable and there was a great paucity of water. From Ajmabad in the north and Kishnapur in the south, further eastwards from Phulkia—

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<sup>591</sup> Sanjukta Dasgupta, “Environmental Change, Health and Disease in Bengal’s Western Frontier: Chota Nagpur between 1800—1950s”, *Journal of the Asiatic Society* vol. LXII No. 4 (2020), p. 1

baihar and Lobtulia stretching towards the borders of Mungher district in the west, there took place a fearful natural calamity due to the lack of water. There was no water even when one dug a well. Satyacharan could witness the agonised cry of the drought—stricken land resounded all around. In the east, the Kushi was the sole source of hope. But the river lay about eight miles away on the easternmost limits of the forest estate. Between the territory and the famous Mohanpura Reserve Forest, a small mountain stream flowed in from the terai region of Nepal, but during summer months the number of streams limited to one for the hope of which girls carried their water pots from far of places. They found a bit of water after digging sand for hours and spent the entire afternoon filtering the sand and water and when finally, they returned home, they found only a half bucket of water in their pots. So, life was very ruthless there in the forest estate where Satyacharan had to walk. Even the vegetation of Phulkia—baihar and Lodhai—tola, soaking up the last drop of sap from the veins and finest capillaries of every blade of green, turning them shriveled husks, searing and burning everything else around them for as far as the eye could see — the first steps of Shiva’s cosmic dance of destruction, a tandav lila. Standing beneath a haritaki tree, Satyacharan could perceive the terrible beauty of the land. He had not seen the Sahara or the Gobi; nor did he see the Taklamakan desert made famous by Sven Hedin; but here — in the fierce noon that had taken on the fiery incarnation of Shiva as Rudrabhairav — some slight impression of those places came alive before his eyes. Moreover, there were hazards of various kinds of poisonous snakes, fearful tigers and wild buffaloes which could even chase one to death. The blue bulls and hyenas abounded the dense forest too. But the jungle which looked suffocating, gradually got inside him so much that he could not think of returning to the dins and bustles of Calcutta leaving aside



the forest environment. He recollects, “Almost three years have gone by. I have gone through many changes in these three years. Nature — in and around Lobtulia and Ajmabad — has so captivated me that I have almost forgotten the city. I am so drawn to the attractions of solitude, of the constellated open sky, that once, when I had gone to Patna only for a few days, I suffered greatly from the narrow tarred roads and longed to return to Lobtulia—baihar”.<sup>592</sup> As days went by, he got increasingly ensnared by the fascination of the forest. The wild jhau (tamarisk) which the setting sun splashed with crimson, the wide expanses of forest land, the wild fragrance of the sun—scorched land, the freedom from the hurly—burly of urban life — all engrossed him so much that he could not imagine returning to his urban life.

### **Nature vs. Culture**

At first, his urban lifestyle revolts against the lonely forest life about which he had no love. He could not imagine a life without the company of friends, reading books in libraries, watching theaters and films and listening to music. Having newly arrived, he could not even understand the speech of the foresters. He only considered them as good as barbarians. He felt the job to be useless and it was better for him to stay half—starved in Calcutta rather than stifling to death in the forest. He found the jungle suffocating and longed to fly back to the city. He felt that he was all alone in the world. He says, “Thus far, I had spent most of my life in Calcutta in the company of friends, and in libraries, theatres, films, and music sessions. I could not imagine a life without any of these pleasures. For the sake of a few rupees — a job — to end up in a place so lonely that I

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<sup>592</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 10

could scarcely imagine it”.<sup>593</sup> It had been a horrible mistake to acquiesce to Abinash’s request and come to this absolute jungle. This was not the life for me. There was a ray of hope, of course in the inspiring words of Muhuree Goshto Chakrabarti who said, “Oh, it was very hard when I first came here — I used to find the jungle suffocating. But now, it’s come to a point, where let alone my home in Bengal. I can’t stick it out for more than two days when I have to go to Purnea or Patna on work”<sup>594</sup> After a few days, the jungle really got inside him. This change in his attitude to nature formed slowly but steadily. It was also a result of his numerous travels into the realm of forest for survey work and his observation of beautiful as well as furious aspects of nature. During his six long years of stay, he came in contact with the foresters who had a long—lasting impression on his mind. Besides his self—realisation of deforesting a land which caused his deep remorse out of a sense of guilt also changed his attitude to nature. It is true that Satyacharan could not stay in the forest forever. But there certainly was a change which he could never shun all through his life. The novel is an exploration of eco—consciousness over the ego consciousness of a city dweller. Living in close proximity with nature, he understood, “This was a different sort of life, I mused, as I rode through the moonlit forest. This was a life for the eccentric wanderer— one who did not care to remain confined within the four walls of his house, did not have housekeeping and domesticity in his blood. When I had left Calcutta and came to this terrible loneliness, to an utterly natural sort of lifestyle, how intolerable the uncivilised life here had seemed: but now, I feel this is the better life of the two. Nature — rude and barbaric here — had initiated me into the mysteries of freedom and liberation; would I ever be able to reconcile myself to a perch in the bird—

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<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

cage city?”<sup>595</sup> The protagonist here would never like to exchange this happiness for all the wealth in the world. But what happened at last? Satyacharan could not stay in the forest forever: he returned to the hurly burly of city life without marrying Bhanumati, forest lass whom he cherished to marry once. His vanity of urbanism forbade him to do so. But what does he get in return?<sup>596</sup> It’s only life—long repentance of his misdeed. On the other hand, the landlord has no respite for the marginal people living in these foresters. After deforestation, the land got captured by the land mafias, the industrialists, the flat—makers making the virgin land impure. Even the original inhabitants are removed of their land. Such violation of nature leads to violence of the left—wing extremists as we see now in the Maoist activities in the Red Corridor of India. Such people are never paid due importance by any government. They are hand to mouth people who taken arms in their hands to defend their right to the forest.<sup>597</sup>

### **Nature and the Supernatural**

Ecocriticism considers nature as a term to be explored, not to be rejected. The human exists not in the void but in nature. As a city man, Satyacharan did not have any idea of the physical environment which is a tremendous force. Nature can also react with human atrocities against her. Satyacharan was hailed with the violent wood fire which engulfed a part of the forest. He says, “We ran out and saw thick coils of smoke and rosy tongues of fire winging their way upwards in the sky. There was a strong west wind that day: long grass and the jungle of wild Juhu, scorched already by the blazing sun, were like

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<sup>595</sup> Ibid., 11-12

<sup>596</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra and Itishri Sarangi, “Rethinking Nature: An Eco—critical Analysis of Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay’s Popular Novels”, *Daath Voyage* 2, no. 4, (2017), p. 112

<sup>597</sup> Ibid., 112

kindling— like dynamite ready to ignite. With a single spark, a whole patch would light up. As far as one could see there were only spirals of thick blue smoke with tongue of fire, and all one could hear was the crackling sound of fire”. It was as though a result of nature’s wrath against the human motive of deforestation. Satyacharan witness the violent fire causing a lot of threat to the humans and the animals. The protagonist narrates the terrible beauty of the forest in the following lines, “What an amazing sight it was! Herds of panic—stricken neelgai broke and crashed their way through the jungle on the west and ran eastwards for their lives. Foxes raced past us as did rabbits, their ears upright, and a herd of wild boar simply trampled through the katcheri compound with their young ones, completely oblivious to where they were going. Domestic buffaloes had worked lose their tether — they ran too, ran for their lives. A flock of red dukes, and then, yet another flock of wild parrots and some silli”.<sup>598</sup> The narrator also had an experience of the supernatural power of nature. During his survey in Bombaiburu jungle he got the evidence of some strange incidents. His Amin Babu, Mr. Ramachandra Singh discovered something strange in the jungle that often disturbed him. He even could not stay alone in the hut. Every night at dead hours a white dog used to enter the hut, disturbed his sleep and when he woke up found that it was not a dog at all, a woman was going away towards the jungle! The same thing happened with the two men from Balia who wanted to rent out the stretch of char that is they wanted to graze their cattle in the jungle by paying revenue. The elder man was the father and another was his son. The father discovered that every night a woman used to come to their hut. He suspected ill motives of his son in his youth. But the boy was not like that. One day the boy was found dead in the jungle.

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<sup>598</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, Mitra & Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., (May 1976): 56

Nothing was resolved of this mysterious incident. People got so afraid that they even stopped venturing into the jungle when it got dark. The protagonist Satyacharan considered the place to be a forbidden one. The moonlight looked like the demoness of fairy tales, who took one who was unaware, seduced him and killed him. These places were not meant to be inhabited by mortals but were the home of some other creatures from strange lands. They had been living here without caring man who intruded suddenly into their secret kingdom. They would not even forgo any chance to avenge themselves. So, nature here works like a cunning seductress who takes revenge due to her exploitation. While surveying a land near Saraswati Kundi, Satyacharan enjoyed a heavenly moonlight that shadowless and full, refracted into a thousand little drops on the surface of the water while the huge tops of trees were illuminated by the white blossoms of the honeybee creepers, like white fluttering garments of spirits and fairies. He heard a legend concerning the spirits of Saraswati kundi, a magical water body of the forest from Raghbir Prasad, an amin accompanying him. That person informed Satyacharan that the spirits really visit this Saraswati Kundi late at night but they do not bear with the presence of the humans. They take off their clothes, drape them over the stones and then go to play in water. If a mortal happens to glimpse them, they lure him to the water and kill him. Once, a head surveyor called, Fateh Singh, had sight of these fairies while returning late at night, he was found dead the next morning in the water of the lake. Thus, nature also reacts violently as found in this mythological story. This creates a sense of awe among man that leads us not to disturb the normal process of nature.

## **Aranyak: The Celebration of Nature**

Ecocriticism considers nature as a source of perennial joy and a mysterious force to enliven our spirit and elevate our thoughts. It celebrates the pristine beauty, nature or physical environment with a view to take care of the earth and to develop ecological literacy among the readers, especially in the first wave. Keeping in tune with the environmental praxis, *Aranyak: Of the Forest* exhales in both celebration and exploitation of nature. The initial chapters are related to the celebration of nature. Satyacharan is the spokesperson of nature lover Bibhutibhushan. He describes the wilder as well as the fierce aspects of nature in this classic prose narrative. Despite initial hesitation of living in the forest, his condition is much like “one who has been long in city pent”.<sup>599</sup> Gradually he grew a maddening passion for the forest. However, the ultimate message of the novel is how a man can lead a happy life in close connection with nature. Satya recollects, “one day I climbed up a tree and made myself comfortable on a branch: an indescribable joy filled me...It is almost as if one can match the heartbeat of every plant and tree with one’s own”<sup>600</sup>. A clear change in Satya’s attitude to nature is seen when he criticises the city people having the lack of imagination exploit forest as a mere picnic spot. “The women were a motley collection, completely devoid of imagination. They ran about gathering twigs for fire on the edges of the forest and chattered endlessly, but not one of them were around to see where they were...Did they know that only a dozen yards from where they sat, the forest spirits danced in the moonlight?”<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>599</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 104

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, 104

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*, 104

### **Hills of Mahalikharpur**

Satyacharan's attitude towards nature gets moulded when he visits the exquisite beauty of the hills of Mahalikharpur. The place was filled with impenetrable forest infested with the dens of the king cobra. Even the wood cutters never ventured to Mahalikharpur out of fear. But the dark blue line on the horizon of the forest was a source of many dreams to Satyacharan, the narrator. It seemed to be a fairyland. The moonlight, the wild flowers, the vegetation and forests, the silence, the mystery and the people—all appeared mysterious. They brought him a strange joy as well as a deep sense of peace that he had never found elsewhere. The Mahalikharpur range and the blue line of the Mohanpura Reserve Forest added to the strangeness in a greater way.<sup>602</sup> The hills resonated with an exquisite beauty and fill his heart with happiness. He felt such an irresistible pull towards the forest for its serene beauty that he even went on a horse ride to enjoy the beauty of the spot. The hills on either side were thickly forested; the path wound its way through thick vegetation in a zigzag way. There were many rocky springs. The forest abounded in wild trees of shefali flowers. The arjuna and piyal, creepers and orchids of various species, an assortment of strange flowers in full bloom gave off a medley of fragrances of such a heady brew as to make people drunk on it like bees. Gradually the forest seemed pressing down upon him from both sides of the path. The branches over his head looked like a green canopy. In course of his journey, he found the green ferns springing from and twirling around the black gnarled roots of unknown trees, and saplings that covered the ground. It was a majestic sight and he continued to climb higher and after some time coming down the hill, he stopped his horse for a rest. Sitting upon a rock for a long time,

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<sup>602</sup> Ibid., 105

he could hark back to the golden incidents of history. The deep silence of the forest was accentuated by the gurgling of a nearby waterfall. He could enjoy the steep rocky peaks all around along with the cloudless sky of the early autumn. He explores, “The forest and hills had been thus for many centuries. So must this forest have been when the Aryans had crossed the Khyber long ago and had entered the land of five rivers; when Buddha had silently left his home at night leaving behind his new—wed wife — on that night, long ago, the mountain peaks must have laughed as they do on this moonlit night... And when so it was, when the poet Valmiki, immersed in composing his epic Ramayana in his hut by the Tamasa river must have started to find that the day was gone — the sun was setting in peaks, cascades of blood—red clouds cast their shadow on the black waters of the Tamasa and the deer had returned to the ashram; on that day from another age, the peaks of Mahalikharpur must have been reddened by the last red streak of light on the western horizon, just as it was now reddening before my eyes. So it had been when Chandragupta first ascended the throne and the Greek King Heliiodorus built the victory pillar with the gouda inscription; when the princess Sanjukta garlanded the statue of Prithviraj as her chosen groom amidst the battle of Samugarh and fled secretly from Agra to Delhi; when Chaitanyadev sang the sankirtan in the home of Sribas, when the battle of Palashi (Plassey) was fought—through all these episodes of history the peak and the forest of Mahalikharpur had stood exactly thus”.<sup>603</sup> The narrator Satyacharan also found some foresters living over there. He even noticed a village consisting of only a few thatched huts and something like an oil press to crush oil out of mahua seeds. He saw an old woman very aged with her skin parched and rough, picking out lice from her hair. The narrator

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<sup>603</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 82—83



finds her as a symbol of the civilisation of the forest. Generation after generation her ancestors had been living in the forest with their own independent culture. Since time immemorial, they had been crushing the mahua seed for oil.<sup>604</sup> Thousands of years ago, they had been capturing birds with their gummy traps and their sat—nali in the same manner as they did now. They had not moved forward an inch in their understanding of the world or of God. Having observed their age—old cultural practices, Satyacharan cannot understand in which races the seeds of civilisation might lie hidden, why some goes by and some others stay fixed in the same place for centuries. The Aryans who came as barbarians composed the Vedas, Upanishads, the Puranas and Epics, developed the sciences of astrology, geometry, medicine, conquered the country, established an empire, created the Venus de Milo, the Parthenon, the Taj Mahal, the Cologne cathedral, composed the raga Darbari, Kannada as well as the Fifth Symphony, and invented the aeroplane, ship, railway, wireless, electricity—all within a space of thousand years, while the natives of Papua, New Guinea and the ancient aborigines of Australia, and the Mundas, Kol, Nagas, and Kukis of India have not moved on in these five thousand years.<sup>605</sup> Satyacharan also imagines that long long ago there was an ocean in that forest of Mahalikharp hills. The ancient ocean must have fallen upon the sandy shore from the Cambrian Age—what has since then been transformed into a huge mountain. Sitting in the forest dreamt of the vast blue ocean from the past. So, nature existed even when nature did not exist. The vastness of nature is unquestionable and immense. The man is the only little organism like others with limited power among the limitless (nature).

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<sup>604</sup> Ibid., 84

<sup>605</sup> Jagdish Chandra Jha, "The Kol Insurrection of Chota Nagpur", *The Archaeological Survey of India*, (1964): 70

## **Lobtulia Forest**

The narrator had a strange experience of spring in the Lobtulia forest. There was neither any bird nor any flower as the one used to find in other regions during this colourful season. “Spring in Lobtulia had a rude, rough and stern visage like the goddess as Bhairavi, undoubtedly beautiful, but lacking in sweetness. It captivated the mind with its immensity and fierceness: like the music without the softness of a komal note, a somber composition like a dhrupad played in the raga malkaus in the chautal measure, leading the mind to its graver and higher reaches”<sup>606</sup>. Having explored alone the still afternoon of Lobtulia baihar on horseback, the narrator could perceive the exceptional beauty of the tall jungle of wild jhau and kash merging into the horizon which entered my consciousness with a sense of mystery. Sometimes, it took on the shape of fear, sometimes, it was a somber mood that made me detached and distant, and at other times it was like a sweet dream or a song of pain endured by men and women all over the world. It seemed like an exquisite unvoiced melody composed on unreal moonlit nights to the rhythm of the faint light from the constellations, the strain of the crickets’ cry, and in the light of the shooting star’s fiery tail. Satyacharan has understood a universal truth that those who have to live within the structures of domesticity will never catch sight of this beauty. Nature, in the guise of bewitching beauty makes man abandon their homes, fills them with wanderlust as it did to Harry Johnston, Marco Polo, Hudson, and Shackleton. In fact, one who has heard the call of the wild and has once glimpsed the unveiled face of

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<sup>606</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 104

nature will find it impossible to settle down to playing the householder. Thus, nature is not inactive; rather it is a potent force that can guide human action.

### **Saraswati Kundi (the mesmerising Lake)**

In contrast, Saraswati kundi, which was at the northern part of Lobtulia, seemed to be composed like ‘thumri’, its sweet and gentle notes transforming the mind to a mellower and dreamier world. It was a huge lake, a place of an unbroken quiet and wondrous solitude. What is more interesting, ‘Saraswati—kundi’ is famous for its sanctuary of varied birds. The protagonist narrates, “An amazing variety it was — magpies, pheasant crows, wild parrots, sparrows, chathares, ghughus, harials, shyamas and harteets. On the top of bigger trees, bajbauris, kullos, and kites, and in the blue waters of the lake, many coloured ducks, sillis, maniks, and other water birds. The upper part of the bushes resounded with the cries of an assortment of birds; their incessant chatter almost deafened the ear. Often, they seemed not to care at all about human beings. They sat unconcernedly on the swaying branches and boughs around me, barely a foot or two away from where they could see me lying on the ground”<sup>607</sup>. The physical environment of the Saraswati kundi was extremely beautiful. From the unenclosed side one could see a vista of far—reaching the blue sky and the distant mountain range. Thick forest enfolded all three sides of the kundi like a half moon. If one sat on a particular part of the shore and looked southwards and to his left, he would have a good look at the kundi; if one looked to the left, he could gaze at the forest and lost himself in the greenery; if one looked southwards across the blue water, he would see the blue stripes of the sky and indistinct outlines of

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<sup>607</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 105

hills — a sight that filled his mind, letting it fly and soar far above the earth like a balloon. The narrator remembers how often he would go to the kundi and found himself a rock to sit on. Sometimes in the afternoon, he would wander in the forest. He used to sit beneath the shade of some huge tree and listen to the birds. Sometime he would gather plants or the flowers of wild creepers. This shows how the narrator built an inseparable passion for Saraswati Kundi.<sup>608</sup>

### **The Forest land of Nara Baihar and Phulkia Baihar**

The narrator found the soil of Nara—baihar extremely fertile. The forest on the edges of the land was very beautiful. He used to have a ride on his horse in the afternoon. In his thought, the forest in Nara—baihar was one of the world's most beautiful places. But after land settlement, the famous beauty spot turned to be a waste land. People used to burn the forest to draw land for cultivation or habitat. It was impossible to clear up such a big forest of one thousand and half bighas without burning the trees. So, the creepers, wild flowers, plants and bushes of all kinds which once filled the stretches of the open land were set fire for clearing the vegetation. This created a sense of loss for the narrator. He would see that from afar as he could not bear with it. From far he could hear the forest crackling as it burnt and experienced a curious sense of pain. He could not reconcile himself to the fact a national resource which might forever have given so much peace and joy to people was being destroyed for a fistful of grain. And the more interesting thing is that he himself was instrumental in bringing about such kind of an ecocide.<sup>609</sup> Satyacharan was enthralled by the deep green serpentine forests of Phulkia baihar, its rocky masses, flocks of wild

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<sup>608</sup> Ibid., 105

<sup>609</sup> Ibid., 106

parrots, and herds of neelgai (Blue bull), the sunrise and the open meadows. Phulkia was a tiny village of about fifteen household. The villagers earned their livelihood by grazing buffaloes in the far spreading jungle land. They worked all day like dogs and in the evening, they had some refreshment with some pinch of sniff or had smoke made of twisted Sal leaves. Egrets came to nest on the topmost branch of the ancient pakur tree. From afar it looked as though the tree has sprouted white blossoms. The place was densely shadowed and lonely. From every angle one could find in the far horizon a ring of blue hills like children holding hands and playing a game. Having observed the strange beauty of the forest and the detached life of a forester Jaipal Kumar there, Satyacharan says, “Of what use was it to run around? What wonderful shade the dark banyan tree gave. Where blue—dark Krishna himself might have played his flute, how placid the waters of the Jamuna, how delicious to be adrift in the currents of time, after walking through a thousand centuries!”<sup>610</sup>

### **Mohanpura Reserve Forest: A standalone land**

Satyacharan also mentions Mohanpura Reserve Forest as a lonely place outside the border of their estate. The place became extremely beautiful during the spring when blood—red palash made a riot of colour. The spring time buds of the Sal filled the air with fragrance and Simul reddened the forest’s horizon. This place was known for its pin—drop silence. Even birds of spring like cuckoo, doel, bou—katha—kau ever sang there. Perhaps birds did not like to sing in forests that were so out of the way or so wild. All these places had an abiding impact on of a city dweller whose mind—set was bound to change in close

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<sup>610</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 108

connection with nature. This helps him to understand what nature actually is and why we should take better care of nature. But the change in Satyacharan was also taken place due to his understanding of human nature interconnection, his understanding of deforestation or ecocide as a crime, his care for nature, his understanding of the marginal foresters and their eco—friendly culture etc. The protagonist’s attitude to nature was modified by his observation of those people who love to live in the dense forest. These foresters are mostly very simple and their code of conduct regarding their living mostly depends on their close attachment with Mother Nature. They can never forget the forest and so ever remain there. They had a tremendous impact in moulding Satyacharan’s attitude to nature.<sup>611</sup>

### **Relationship between Man and Nature**

Aranyak deals with the human nature interconnection which is the true spirit of Ecocriticism. During his survey work, Satya perceives some foresters’ inseparable bond with nature. The men and women depend on the forest for their very sustenance. Kunta, Manchi, Bhanumati, Jaipal, Nakchedi, Dhaturia, Venkatesh Prasad, Dhaotal Sahu, Suratia etc. add to the beauty of the forest for their naturalness. Nandalal Ojha, Chatu Singh are some others who exploit nature for their selfishness. We see a gradual change in Satyacharan’s attitude to nature.<sup>612</sup> The votary of urban life has transformed into a devoted lover of nature in her pristine beauty. He enjoys horse ride in the forest on a moonlit night; he even sends Jugal Prasad with enough money to the impenetrable forests of Jayanti

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<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 109

<sup>612</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 109

Hills to bring saplings of dudhia flower for beautification of Saraswati Kundi where variety of amazing birds like magpies, pheasant crows, wild parrots, sparrows, chathares, ghughus, harials, shyamas and hareets flocked to take refuge after a huge part of the forest becomes a victim of deforestation. He enjoys wondrous solitude in the unbroken quiet of Saraswati kundi, which serves as a heaven to him with its honeybee creepers, wild sheuli, and its supernatural surroundings.<sup>613</sup> A clear change in his attitude to nature is evident in his recollection here in these lines — this was a different sort of life, I mused, as I rode through the moonlit forest. This was a life for the eccentric wanderer — one who did not care to remain confined within the four walls of his house, did not have housekeeping and domesticity in his blood. When I had left Calcutta and came to this terrible loneliness, to an utterly natural sort of lifestyle, how intolerable the uncivilised life here had seemed: but now, I feel this is the better life of the two. Nature rude and barbaric here — had initiated me into the mysteries of freedom and liberation; would I ever be able to reconcile myself to a perch in the bird—cage city? The protagonist here would never like to exchange this happiness for all the wealth in the world. In the jungle—mahal, Satya met with a strange fellow named Raju Panrey. He is poor but happy with the Chinese grass and salt and makai as his food. Satya offered him a few bighas of land to deforest it but Raju has no greed for the wealth.<sup>614</sup> His philosophic bent of mind revels in his contemplation of the forest land — “The forest you see here is very beautiful. The flowers have been blooming for a long time and the birds sing, each with their own call: the gods themselves have merged with the wind and have left their mark on the earth. But wherever there is money or transactions of cash, loan, and receipts, the air becomes polluted. Then

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<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, 110

<sup>614</sup>

the gods choose not to stay on any longer. So, whenever I pick up the cutter and the axe, the gods come and snatch away my tools. They whisper such thoughts into my ears that all thoughts of land and property are driven away from my mind”<sup>615</sup>. Although Satya returns to the city, Raju stays in the forest for his eternal love for nature. Jugal Prasad is a nature loving soul, a faithful companion of Satya to fulfill his design to adorn the forest with flowers. He is a selfless lover of beauty who never bothers to gain from scattering and planting seeds all over the forestland. Although very poor, he has an intense desire for unceasing toil to add to the splendor of the forest. He has an ecocritical bent of mind that could not bear the least exploitation of nature. The novel also shows Satyacharan’s inseparable bond with the non—human world. He vows to remember Saraswati kundi in the middle of crowded bustling avenues of Calcutta like the faint plucking of a vina, sounding notes of days gone by. He will remember the trees around the kundi which were brought from far off places by Jugal Prasad and planted there along the lake; the forest of spider lilies and lotuses; the ghughu crying out in the still afternoon hidden amidst the branches; the gnarled stumps of Moinakata turning red in the late afternoon sun half hidden by clouds; flocks of red geese and silli making a trail in the blue sky over your blue waters; the soft imprint of fawn’s hooves in the muddy banks; and above all, the quietness, the all—enveloping loneliness. The sweet memories of Saraswati kundi will prove to be a solace to his heat—oppressed brain amid the dins and bustles of city life.<sup>616</sup>

### **Ecocide—a view**

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<sup>615</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 76

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, 76—77



The term 'Eco' derives from the Greek word oikos which means 'house' or 'home'. And cide derives from Latin word occidere which means 'strike down'. In tandem, they translate to killing our home, i.e., the earth. So, ecocide is the destruction of the earthly environment which is our home. Ecocriticism worries about the depletion of the earth, and ecocide is mostly responsible for such kind of destruction of the global environment. Mother Earth is the only planet to live in so all life on earth in general and human kind in particular greatly depend on the global ecological system including the landscape, forests, oceans, rivers, lakes, seas, the Arctic regions, the underground waters and many other global commons. Ecocide is the destruction of an ecosystem.<sup>617</sup> It is considered to be equal to a crime against humanity and future generations as it threatens the vital living conditions due to the exploitation of the natural resources. Some examples of ecocide include Agent Orange (Vietnam), Fukushima's Debris, Bee colony collapse, Great Barrier Reef under threat, Bhopal Gas leak in India etc.<sup>618</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's Aranyak is an example of ecocide as it depicts largescale deforestation in the vast landscape of Northern Bihar threatening the ecosystem of that particular region. Satyacharan as an estate manager had to indulge in an ecocide for the interest of his master. His sense of duty forces him to do the act of ecocide which ever haunts his imagination. The protagonist's understanding of ecocide results from his exploration into the wild, his celebration of nature, his act of deforesting a vast range of forest, his understanding of the human nature interconnection and nature—culture relation, his experience of the supernatural aspects of nature, his understanding of the marginal

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<sup>617</sup> Nabeela Siddiqui, "World Environment Day 2021: Advocating for an Ecocide law in India", retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2021, 10am, <https://www.barandbench.com/columns/world-environment-day-2021-advocating-for-an-ecocide-law-in-india>

<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

people's lifestyle, his spiritual awakening and above all due his pangs of conscience. What is more interesting is that Satyacharan was instrumental in bringing about such kind of ecocide. He had to do this for the interest of his employer who had no love for the inherent worth of a forest. All these things led him to take care of nature which may be treated as a call to end an ecocide.

### **Deforestation: An Ecocide?**

The main theme of Aranyak is the theme of deforestation which takes the form of an ecocide of the landscape of northern Bihar. How can one expect a bird to sing when the groves are removed by axes? In Aranyak Satyacharan is instrumental in conducting an ecocide as he was assigned to do so as a part of his profession. Thirty thousand bighas of jungle land of Nara—baihar and Lobtulia had been leased out. There remained hardly any forests like those of former times. All the shady groves and creeper entwined trees and the secluded paths composed by nature for so many years were lopped off by the ruthless hands of the labourer's. What had taken thousands of years to come up was destroyed in a matter of few days for setting up human habitation. There remained no mysterious green where enchanting fairies might descend on moonlit nights or thick jungle where benign Tarbaro, God of the wild buffaloes put up his hand to save the herd of wild creatures. He had to lease out the land to the peasants and the new settlers for the interest of his employer. Satyacharan laments over the fact that birds had no place now for nesting in Nara—baihar and Lobtulia after these places lost their ancient trees due to deforestation. They added to the beauty of these spots with their unceasing chirps and calls. Now they

had sought refuge in the nearby forests — some near Saraswati kundi, some in the foot of Mahalikharpur and some in the Mohanpura Reserve Forest.<sup>619</sup>

### **Love for Nature**

Ecocriticism positions humans as a caretaker of the earth for our own sustainable future. In this novel, we see Satyacharan as a devoted nature lover despite being instrumental in the ecocide of the forest. He himself admits, “I had come here to settle new tenants in these forests. Having come to destroy the forestland, I have instead fallen in love with the beautiful forest maid.”<sup>620</sup> He even did not let out the exquisite bit of forest by the side of Saraswati kundi. But he realised that nothing would stand in the way of destroying such exquisite grove before human greed. According to him, the settlers did not care much for the majestic trees; they did not have the eyes to see the grandeur of the land; their only concern was to fill their stomach and to survive. He also laments, “If it were any other country, they would have had laws to keep the forests intact and preserve them for nature lovers, as they have done with the Yosemite Park in California, the Kruger National Park in South Africa or the National Albert in Belgian Congo. My distant employers do not care for the landscape: all they understand are taxes and revenue money—the salami, the Irshal and the Hustabood.”<sup>621</sup> He also suspects, “I have sought to preserve the forest around Saraswati kundi...But for how long?”<sup>622</sup> In order to lessen the burden of his sin, Satyacharan did some benevolent works in the forest. Having seen that rice was a luxury to those disposed people, he arranged a feast for them in which they were well—fed. He

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<sup>619</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 114

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*, 114

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, 213

<sup>622</sup> *Ibid.*, 213

gave away some land to the disposed people like Raju and Kunta. He offered charity to Rakhal Babu's widowed wife who felt helpless after his husband's death. He set up a free school with the help of Matuknath near his katchari (office). Satya also left no stone unturned to make the forest beautiful even. For this purpose, he employed Jugal Prasad, a true nature loving soul who planted so many saplings and took care of them until they grew large. He spent a lot of money to buy seeds of different plants. Having understood that the natural environment on the bank Saraswati kundi will be destroyed by human greed, he indulges in a new project of afforestation with Jugal Prasad in the Mahalikharpur hill. All these are the attempts of humane to lessen his sense of guilt.

### **The 'Other'**

Ecocriticism strives hard to protect the rights of the marginal who use to live in an eco-friendly way. Aranyak tells about the indigenous people of India like the Gangotras, the Santhals, the vagrant dwellers etc. whom the Zamindar is not willing to give a settlement. Thirty years ago, the land was swallowed into the womb of the river, surfacing again as char land twenty years later. But those who found their ancestral land broken up by the Ganga, thronged to reclaim them. The landlord deprived them of their right to forest land for earning higher revenue from the new ryots. Satya finds himself to be the representative of the Arians who after invading India deprived the just claim of those marginals. They were very poor, yet they were happy with their limited needs of life. Satya although a descendant of the Aryans, had a close understanding of those people who were no

barbarians but humans. Kunta, Manchi, Raju Panrey are the representatives of those dispossessed class. They never leave the forest as they live there at ease. They add to the beauty of the forest as a child looks beautiful in its mother's lap.<sup>623</sup> The state has not taken their responsibility, nor has taken the so-called civilised society. The novel *Aranyak* centres totally round forests. This forest novel has mention of many individual persons. The author says that Satyacharan after coming to Purnea had coped with the residents of the forest and even they had helped him to get accustomed to the forest environment. The people about whom the author talks here are not separated from the forest, they are a part of the forest itself. The forests have created them. Forest has helped them to survive<sup>624</sup>. The most important forest dwellers in the novel *Aranayak* are Raju Panre, Dhaotal Sahoo, Bhanumati and Jugal Prasad whose life has become a part of the forest itself. They do not differentiate themselves apart from the forest. They are born and brought up in the forest itself. The people who have come from other places and become a part of the forest are Dhaturiya, Kunta, Matuknath Panrey, Venkateshwar Prasad. They have made the forest their own friend and has become a part of the forest. In the novel we find writing about another type of people who are not settlers of the forest. They are more like the nomads. They travel around the country the whole year for work, they settle in different places they exploit the resources of those places and again move to another place to find work. Whenever the harvest of a particular forest is to be cut, they with their family come and settle in those forests, they made small huts for their living and they cut the harvests and got some amount of it with which they could go on with their livelihood. Again, after the harvest is cut, they move to some other place for the same work. They have no

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<sup>623</sup> Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay, 'Palamou', *Bishwasahitya Publishers*, (1989): 45

<sup>624</sup> L.P. Vidyarthi, " Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar", *Punthi Pustak*, (Calcutta, 1964): 130

personal attachment with the forests. They could never become a part of the forest.<sup>625</sup> Satyacharan once got an opportunity to come closer to one of these nomad families where he writes about a particular person named Manchi who was very good at his work and was the only person of the family who earned. Thus, these nomads could never become a part of the forest. By cutting the forest and exploiting the forest lands, the people who used to cultivate in those lands were in grave problem when the lands were being sold.<sup>626</sup> These people were also a kind of nomad who were known as Gangota's. The main motive of their life is to exploit the forest, to cut off all trees and cultivate in those lands. They cannot be called friends or protectors of the forests; they do not want forest preservation. Satyacharan loved forests. He loved nature. He never wanted that the forest lands be divided among others, he could sense what was coming its way when he came to know that the lands would be sold. He tried a lot to see if the selling of the land could be postponed, but all in vain, all the lands were sold. For this the zamindar had gained good amount of wealth. The forest grew up through several years and by selling the forest lands, the nature was destroyed completely.<sup>627</sup> Forests were cut off and living area was made where people settled down. There the people started cultivating and thus was produced the unhygienic and dirty slums. The people who started dwelling there had no concern about the protection of nature and environment and also had no concern about their health. The only thing they had was illiteracy, ill—manner and superstition. Their life was aimless. So, pox and cholera type of epidemics rose their heads. The interesting fact is

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<sup>625</sup> Ibid., 131

<sup>626</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, "The Marginalised Vs. The Civilised: An Ecocritical Approach to Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay's Aranyak", p. 140

<sup>627</sup> D.N. Majumder, "A Tribe in Transition", Longman Green and Co. Ltd., (1937): 180

that the Gangota's had no economic upliftment after this.<sup>628</sup> By the felling of the trees in the forest the climate changed and there was severe draught, no rain and massive famine. This was inevitable because by the felling of the trees the environment and the nature of the forest changed. By this, the civilisation did not flourish but it got ruined and there was massive destruction caused by the cutting of the forests. In the novel, the most important thing that came in the limelight was excessive poverty of the common people. All the common people need to work day and night to make both ends meet. These people are so poor that they cannot even afford to eat rice for any particular meal. The things which they feed to live are seeds, boiled makai or ghato and corns. Satyacharan writes that he was amazed to see how sepoy Maneshwar Singh was overjoyed when he could buy a utensil for cooking where the money was donated to him by Satyacharan himself.<sup>629</sup> Their poverty is unimaginable. But they have adjusted totally with their situation and they do not complain about it. Despite being in grave poverty they know how to be happy, so their characters are good and filled with dignity. The good character formation of the forest residents is visible from the nature of people like Raju Panrey, Venkatesh Prasad, Jugal Prasad and Kunta.<sup>630</sup>

### **The War Culture Of The Tribes**

Satyacharan also experienced the tribal war culture, when the old king took him to their big natural cave. It was their secret fort which protected them from their enemies. There was a heap of huge stones planted crosswise shaped exactly like cowries or grindstones. Beneath them lay huge holes whose entrance was guarded by the clump of sal saplings.

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid., 180—181

<sup>629</sup> Ibid., 182

<sup>630</sup> L.P. Vidyarthi, " Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar", *Punthi Pustak*, (Calcutta, 1964): 150

They entered the cave through this hole. There was impenetrable darkness inside the cave seemed to be frequented by wild creatures like foxes, bats, civets and polecats etc. But once the eyes got used to the lack of light, they felt comfortable. In ancient times it must have been possible to seek shelter inside their ancestral cave to withstand the onslaught of the enemy.<sup>631</sup> The cave had even another entrance which was a top secret to the royal family not to be disclosed to the outsiders. So, nature proved to be the protector of the ancestors. Their burial ground culture, the culture of the marginal people is nourished and nurtured by nature as seen in the novel. The burial ground of the tribal people is an example of that. The place as Satyacharan narrated had “an indescribable mystery and solemnity”.<sup>632</sup> The mysterious burial ground shadowed in the arms of the huge banyan tree created in Satyacharan a strange and wondrous feeling. “The Valley of the Kings” in Thebes<sup>633</sup>, the ancient burial ground of the Egyptians, has now become the sporting ground of the tourists from all over the world. Publicity and massive advertising ensure that the big hotels in the area are filled to capacity with seasonal tourists. But no less mysterious and intensely dignified the burial ground of the kings belonging to the indigenous, non—Aryan people. It has hidden itself in the shadow of the dense forests and would continue to do so. Their burial ground lacked the pretention, the polish and wealth and splendor of the works of wealthy Egyptian Pharaohs, for they had been poor people. Their civilisation and culture, like that of ancient man’s was rude and simple. A child—like mentality had created the place of caves, the royal burial grounds, and planted those poles to mark the boundary of the graveyard. Standing on the hilltop beneath that

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<sup>631</sup> Ibid., 151

<sup>632</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, Mitra & Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., (May 1976): 55

<sup>633</sup> Ibid., 56



immense tree, Satyacharan could glimpse quite another world, in comparison to which the Puranic and Vedic age seemed like time immemorial.<sup>634</sup>

### **God and Nature**

Ecocriticism strives hard to protect the rights of the animals who had no less intrinsic value like any other organism. The marginal people took better care of the animals as seen in this novel. When they hunted, they did so in a sustainable way without disturbing the ecology of the place. They never indulged in the unnecessary killing except the needs of their mouth. They even worshiped a big stone which they considered to be sacred. It was the ancestral god of the royal family. Dobru informed Satya that the name of the god was Tarbaro<sup>635</sup>, the god of the wild buffaloes. The foresters depended a lot on the buffaloes for rich quality of milk which was a useful resource of these people for making sweets and ghee. There is a myth among these people that were it not for him, the hunters in their greed for hide and horns would have surely decimated the wild buffaloes. It is he who preserves the herd. Just before they were about to plunge into a hunter's trap, Tarbaro stood before the herd with his arms spread out and the buffaloes were saved.<sup>636</sup> Much later When Satyacharan had come back to Calcutta, he saw once in Burrabazar in the frightful heat of jaishtha, a cartman from the western regions whip his two bullocks mercilessly with a leather thong. Satyacharan feels, "Alas Tarbaro! I thought that day this is not the forestland of Chotonagpur or Madhya Pradesh: How will your kind hands save these tortured beasts? This is twentieth—century Calcutta, of Aryan lineage. Here, you

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<sup>634</sup> Ibid., 56—57

<sup>635</sup> Moneesha R Kalamder, "Bibhutibhushan, an unlikely adventurer", The Daily Star, (July 23, 2022), retrieved on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2022, 1:00pm, <https://www.thedailystar.net/book—reviews/news/bibhutibhushan—unlikely—adventurer—1934773>

<sup>636</sup> Ibid.

are as helpless as the defeated Raja Dobru”<sup>637</sup>. So there is a definite clash of culture in the two different approaches; the approach of the so called civilised society who uses to exploit the animals and that of the marginal people who use to worship them and protect them.

### **Eating habit**

In the jungle, Satyacharan finds that these people had no rice. Eating rice was a luxury to those marginal tribes. But this does not mean that they had no food. In fact, they had plenty of food to survive. The forest has provided them with many sources of food like fruits and flowers, plants and herbs, animals and birds and so on. They hunted animals and cultivated land in a sustainable way. They never hunted extra except the need of their people. Satya had found a trace of their food culture in a fair as we read the narration of a fair where dried fish, tiny shrimps and ant’s eggs were on sale in packets made of Sal leaves. The eggs of red ants were a local delicacy. In addition, there were tender green papayas, dried berries, kent fruits, guavas and wild legumes etc. Deforestation of the land limits these sources of their food and thus the marginal people are exploited in the name of industrialisation. This also destabilizes the ecosystem of a territory.<sup>638</sup>

### **Their Exploiters**

But the forest people were not all fair. There were also some who took opportunity of the situation. With the land settlement on the rise, there arose some middle men, moneylenders, zamindars, landlords, jotdars and many more who exploited the marginal

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<sup>637</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 159

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.*, 160

people and enriched their property. The common people being deprived by these selfish people of their rights, there was a misbalance in the social ecology of the place. The resulted in the exploitation of the forest also. The marginal people like Gangotas were forced to cultivate the land but in turn they got minimum food. They were lent money at high rate of interest. People like Rashbehari Singh and Nandalal Ojha are the types of exploiters oppressing the poor peasants and the homeless. Having visited these people Satyacharan had an experience of the other side of the coin. Satya strives hard to rescue these dispossessed from their evil clutch. He even provides them with some land. When there took place a riot over land he played constructive role to resolve the dispute.<sup>639</sup>

### **The Tragedy**

Having experienced the culture and customs of these unfortunate and defeated Santhal people, the pages of untold history were unfolded before Satyacharan. These indigenous people though the original inhabitants of their forest land, suffer long—term exploitation which continues even today. Satyacharan in a trance like state could perceive how the nomadic Aryans crossed over the north—west mountain ranges and came down like a torrent into an ancient India ruled by primitive non—Aryan tribes. The novelist laments that whatever history India had become subsequently the history of this Aryan civilisation — the history of the vanquished non—Aryan races was not written down anywhere, or perhaps, it was written only in such secret mountain caves, in the darkness of forests, in the lines of calcified skeletal remains.<sup>640</sup> The victorious Aryan had never been anxious to decipher that script. To this day, the vanquished wretched tribes continue to be ignored,

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<sup>639</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra and Itishri Sarangi, " Role of Literature in Environmental Awareness: An Eco—critical Study of Aranyak (Of the Forest) by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay", *The Criterion* 8, no. 1 (2017), p. 282

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*, 283

shunned and disdained. Aryans proud of their civilisation, had never spared them a glance, never understand their way of life and they do not try to do so even now. Satyacharan and his companion Banowarilal were the representatives of that victorious race. On the other hand, old Dobru Panna, the youthful Jagru and the maiden Bhanumati were those of the suppressed race. Both races now stood together, one facing the other, in the dark evening which over shadowed the tragedy.<sup>641</sup> Satyacharan with the pride of the Aryans, was looking upon Dobru Panna of the royal lineage as an old Santhal, Princess Bhanumati as a Munda coolie woman, the royal palace that they cherished and were so proud of, as an ill—ventilated, ill—lit cave, a den of spirits and snakes. Before Satyacharan that evening was enacted the great tragedy of ancient history. The actors of that drama comprised the defeated, poor, disdained king of non—Aryan origins — Dobru Panna, the young princess Bhanumati, the young prince Jagru Panna on the other side, and on the other, Satyacharan himself with his mate, Banowarilal and his guide, Buddha Singh. Therefore, the present study shows that the marginalized people often become the victim of the so—called ‘sophisticated society’.<sup>642</sup> They take better care of nature, yet they become an easy prey to the evil design of the capitalist society who uses to commoditize nature. The crosscurrents of life also twinkle in deep forest in a splendid way but the civilised society imposes the stigma of barbarism upon the foresters! We see that Nature is at her best when uncontaminated by population, industrialisation, smoke and noises. And the marginal people add to her beauty as they live in harmony with nature without exploiting her. The novelist leaves us with a message that nature has her own right to survive.<sup>643</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> Ibid., 284

<sup>642</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra and Itishri Sarangi, “Rethinking Nature: An Eco—critical Analysis of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s Popular Novels”, *Daath Voyage* 2, no. 4, (2017), p. 201

<sup>643</sup> Ibid., 202

Satyacharan's pangs of conscience are the result of his understanding of deep ecology. He will never be able to forget the people like Kunta, Manchi, Dhaturia, Dhautal Sahu, Bhanumati, Dobru Panna, Jagru and many more who used to live in a sustainable way. His superiority complex of a city man gets demolished in the wilder regions of Lobotulian forest and Nara—baihar killed by his gory hands smeared with blood like Macbeth. So how can he forget his sin? Like the great Shakespearean tragic hero his conscience gets heavy with this line: "You primeval gods of the forest, forgive me"<sup>644</sup>.

### **Satyacharan's Conscience**

An ecocritical understanding is built up when a man realises his self in relation to his atrocities to nature. Aranyak is a self—realisation of the protagonist who has undergone a thorough change in his attitude to nature. Satyacharan was immensely impressed by the beauty of Nara—baihar. It was an abode of a variety of creepers, birds and animals. Nature had bestowed her wealth generously on this stretch of land in whose northern boundary laid Saraswati kundi. Records from the old surveys prove that the Kushi had once its bed there. All that remained of the waters was the kundi; in other parts, the ancient river bed had been swallowed up by the thick forests.<sup>645</sup> In the silent darkness of the night, the forest revealed before him its indescribable majesty. Satya could not but grieved of the fact that such a beautiful forest of Nara—baihar would not stand long before human aggression. He loved the forest so intensely, but his own hands would destroy it. In two years, the entire forest would be settled and would be taken over by ugly tolas and dirty

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<sup>644</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, "Aranyak", translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, 'Aranyak: Of the Forest', *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 254

<sup>645</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra and Itishri Sarangi, "Rethinking Nature: An Eco—critical Analysis of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's Popular Novels", *Daath Voyage* 2, no. 4, (2017), p. 210

hutments. It had taken hundreds of years of fervent meditation of sadhana, to create Nara—baihar. Nature had fashioned it lovingly with her own hands. The exquisite forests and the distant winding open spaces would be completely erased. And in their place what would one be gaining? Thatched houses, unbelievably ugly, fields of maize, gowal and janar, rope—cots, banners flying above temples to Hanuman, an abundance of phanimansa scrub, snuff and tobacco, epidemics of cholera and smallpox. Thus he begs mercy of the forest god as we see in the novel, “Forest, primeval and ancient, forgive me”<sup>646</sup>. Having deforested the land Satya got due punishment from nature. To live in peace and quiet of forest will ever remain a dream now for Satyacharan. To ride a horse through the vast expanse of the forest will ever elude his grasp. To build up a forest hut to live with Bhanumati will never be fulfilled in noisy city life. He will now recollect and repent forever: What do human beings really want: progress or happiness? Was it of any use making progress if no happiness came with it? I knew so many people who had certainly progressed in life but had lost happiness. Excessive indulgence had blunted the edges of their desires, now there was nothing that brought them joy...If I could have lived here... married Bhanumati...in the moonlit verandah of this very mud house, the innocent forest maid would tell me her childish tales as she cooked, and I would hear the hural cry in the forest, the hyena laugh, and wild elephants go stomping by. Bhanumati was dark, but in all of Bengal, you would not find such a healthy lissome slip of a girl or such a vibrant innocent being.<sup>647</sup> She was compassionate, kind and affectionate — how many times had I proof of it...Even thinking about it gave me pleasure. A beautiful vision! What was the point in progress? Let Balbhadra make his way to Sengat and improve his

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<sup>646</sup> Bandyopādhyāya & Bhattacharya 196

<sup>647</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, Mitra & Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., (May 1976): 110

situation. Let Rashbehari Singh improve his. The protagonist here would never like to exchange this happiness for all the wealth in the world. Satyacharan cannot reconcile himself to the fact that not a trace of forest of Lobtulia and Nara—baihar would remain. “Unknown people had come in droves and taken over the land, but those who had lived forever in these forestlands and who were wretched and utterly poor, would they be forever kept out of its bounds only because they lacked the means to rent out the land? I had to do at least this bit of favour to those I loved”.<sup>648</sup> Thus, he provided land to the dispossessed people like Raju Panrey, Kunta, etc. so that they might survive. Satyacharan holds himself responsible for the destruction of pristine wilderness, because it happened under his governance. Even his deep love for Bhanumati could not stop him from leaving Baihar, which mesmerised him with its profound majesty. Satyacharan could not anymore stand the ruination of the forest and decides to leave Phulkia—Baihar. His concluding thoughts are clearly ecological: “There will be a time when people won’t find any wilderness. Only cultivable land, jute mills, chimneys of factories would come to view. Then people would come to this calm wilderness, as people come to a shrine. Hope this forest remains intact for those future days”.<sup>649</sup> As the forest of Lobtulia was disappearing fast, the charm for Satyacharan began to wane. The writer makes a final decision to leave Baihar. He begins his tale of nature seeking forgiveness, and due to the intolerable pangs of his mind, ends it beseeching forgiveness from the devastated Goddess, i.e., Phulkia—Baihar: “You the primordial deity of wilderness forgive me! Adieu!”<sup>650</sup> Satyacharan is now a nature priest who cannot reconcile himself to the fact that he himself was

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<sup>648</sup> Ibid., 110—111

<sup>649</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, Mitra & Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., (May 1976): 130

<sup>650</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra and Itishri Sarangi, “Rethinking Nature: An Eco—critical Analysis of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s Popular Novels”, *Daath Voyage* 2, no. 4, (2017), p. 211

responsible for abolishing the primordial forest. He is the voice of the novelist who denounces the third world style of development where development is meant for only a few and most people are forced to live in the filthy environment. His sense of guilt ever haunts him as his hands are smeared with the blood of forest plants. His condition is much like Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth who having felt a prick of conscience utters — "Out, damned spot! Out, I say!"<sup>651</sup> The Protagonist was punished by his tortured conscience for committing an ecocide.

### **A wake of Sprituality**

Ecocriticism gives a call to the spiritual understanding of nature so that man can understand her inherent worth. Nature is a living spirit not to be exploited but to be explored and worshiped for her intrinsic value which is immense. It is true Satya has deforested a vast tract of land as an estate manager of his employer. But Satyacharan is not a ruthless destroyer of nature. He has a living conscience for which he has a self—realisation of his activity. Thus, he now builds up a kinship with nature which is now no more an object of mere beauty or an object of exploitation. Nature is a living entity which can react to any injustice done to her. In nature he finds a divine presence to be worshiped.<sup>652</sup> Like an ecocritic, he has an understanding: "What nature gives to her own devotees is invaluable. However, it is a gift not to be received until one has served her for long...if you lie immersed in her, the greatest gifts of nature— beauty and exquisite peace— will be showered on you so abundantly that they will drive you to ecstasy. By day and night the thousand faces of alluring nature will enchant you, extending the

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<sup>651</sup> William Shakespear, " Macbeth", Act 5, Scene 1, p. 2

<sup>652</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, "Aranyak", Mitra & Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., (May 1976): 100



furthest reaches of your mind, drawing you closer to immortality.”<sup>653</sup> Satyacharan’s spiritual understanding of nature is best expressed in his own words when he was on his way back from endless forest of Phulkia—baihar to katcheri (office), how often, in the short lull between downpours, as the evening thus crept into the vast open fields, I have dreamt of a god. The clouds, the evening, the forest, the chorus of foxes, the water flowers in Saraswati kundi, Manchi, Raju Panrey, Bhanumati, Mahalikharup, the poor Gond family, the sky — all of this — had once been germinating like seeds in his imagination.<sup>654</sup> Like the monsoon rains and the garland of blue water—bearing clouds his benediction now seeped into all life in the universe: the rain—soaked evening was his gesture, his voice was in freedom, the voice which awakens the innermost core of man. A god who need not be feared, who was vaster than this vast Phulkia—baihar and even more unending than the boundless sky — his love and his blessings equally inexhaustible. For the lowliest and the most unimportant was reserved the greatest share of the invisible blessings and compassion of such a generous god.<sup>655</sup> Satyacharan could not anymore stand the ruination of the forest and decides to decorate Saraswati Kundi with herbs of different species. He encourages Jugal Prasad, a nature loving soul whom he met in the jungle to do afforestation. He said, “For those people, yet to come, let the forest stay pristine, undisturbed.”<sup>656</sup> He cannot reconcile himself to the fact that in spite of his growing love for nature, a holy abode of the marginal, he remained instrumental in

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<sup>653</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 95

<sup>654</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, “Down Memory Lane: An Eco—critical Approach to Bibhutibhushan’s Aranyak—of the Forest”, p. 116

<sup>655</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, ‘Aranyak: Of the Forest’, *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 209

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*, 210

deforestation to satisfy the design of his employer. For a long time even after his departure from the forest, he bleeds within and suffers a sense of loss. While describing the story after long years, he even says: “But these memories do not give me pleasure; they are filled with sorrow. By my hands was destroyed the unfettered playground of nature. I know too, that for this act the forest god will never forgive me. I have heard that to confess a crime in one’s own words lightens somewhat the burden of the crime.”<sup>657</sup> Therefore, he is describing this story. He also understands that to ride a horse in the moon—lit night in the forest will ever elude his grasp; to cherish of living with Bhanumati in the forest will ever remain a dream. Rather people like Rashbehari Singh will promote the land to the industrialists and to that huge population rushing hard to buy the land to set up human habitation. The indescribable mystery, solemnity, and purity of the forest will be replaced by the filthy air, smoke and dust.<sup>658</sup> The eternal silence will yield place to the noise of population explosion. The primitive tribal will be disposed of their natural habitat. The eco—system will be violated and Satya will have an, un—preferable dream that Bhanumati is selling coal in a basket on her head losing her luster as a forest princess. Even after fifteen years of his departure from the forest Satya laments sitting beneath the nut tree after his day long hard work in the city, “The almost forgotten forestlands of Nara—baihar and Lobtulia that had been destroyed by me, the wondrous plant life around Saraswati kundi — they come back to haunt me with sadness, like memories of dreams”.<sup>659</sup> He can never forget those dispossessed people whose civility charmed him so much. He is haunted by such questions in quest of these simple, innocent, people living

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<sup>657</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, Mitra & Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., (May 1976): 135

<sup>658</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, “The Marginalised Vs. The Civilised: An Ecocritical Approach to Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s Aranyak”, p. 145

<sup>659</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, “Aranyak”, Mitra & Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., (May 1976): 120

in close proximity with the forest, and in the same breath I wonder how is Kunta? Has Suratiya become a young woman now? Is Matuknath's little school still to be found? What is Bhanumati doing in their hill—ringed forest? Rakhal—babu's wife, Dhruva, Giridharilal, who knows how each of them is keeping after the years...! And Manchi, I remember her sometimes: Has a repentant Manchi gone back to her husband, or does she pick leaves in a tea garden in Assam even now? It has been so long that I have lost touch with them.

Satyacharan is instrumental in conducting an ecocide as he was assigned to do so as a part of his profession. The jungle land of Nara—baihar and Lobtulia had been leased out. There remained hardly any forests like those of former times. All the shady groves and creeper entwined trees and the secluded paths composed by nature for so many years were lopped off by the ruthless hands of the labourer's. What had taken thousands of years to come up was destroyed in a matter of few days for setting up human habitation. He had to lease out the land to the peasants and the new settlers for the interest of his employer. 'Aranyak — Of the Forest'<sup>660</sup> is a story of memorisation and understanding of the ecocide of a forest land. The so—called pristine beauty of physical environment of Lobtulia and Nara—baihar were ravished by human greed. But the wounds of destruction ever remain the inmost core of the heart of the protagonist. It is as though a dream that revives man's lost relationship with nature. Like Wordsworth's (1770—1850) Tintern Abbey (1798)<sup>661</sup>, the poem witnesses a development of the protagonist's attitude to nature, though in a different vein. In case of Wordsworth, love of nature was already there since childhood

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<sup>660</sup> Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, "Aranyak", translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, 'Aranyak: Of the Forest', *Seagull Books*, 2017, p. 40

<sup>661</sup> William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey", (13 July, 1798): 4

and this was refined into a mystical attitude through three stages.<sup>662</sup> But Satyacharan being a byproduct of city culture had no love for the forest. This gradually changed with his interaction with the forest and its living and non—living elements. With the advancement of civilisation, the primeval beauty of nature is being destroyed in the name of progress. But in each brick of modernisation is attached the impression of disappearing nature and the eternal struggle of primitive human society. The thirty thousand Bighas of forest land is not a mere setting of the novel; it has become a living entity in the elevated thought of the protagonist Satyacharan. Sanghamitra Ghosh in her unpublished MPhil dissertation named *Bibhutibhushaner Sahityae Protifolito Samaj, Arthonity O Paribesh: Itihasher Aloy*, has described how Bibhutibhushan had succeeded in writing a novel by looking minutely at everything that is present in the forest land and analysing them in his own beautiful way and giving the readers a clear view of the forest and the Adivasis and the relationship shared between man and nature. The novel has a message that we should live in close harmony with nature and any violation of it would lead to disastrous consequences.<sup>663</sup> We are deeply engrossed with Bandyopadhyay’s love for the forest and his environmental awareness. The novel indicates how to build a deep relationship between the human and the non—human forest. The novelist here pleads for the environmental protection. Every time we read the novel; our heart is filled up with repentance for the loss of green. Herein lays the eco—critical significance of this memory—based novel. The novel shows how the anthropocentric attitude of man gets purged off in close proximity with nature. It makes us learn how we should behave with

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<sup>662</sup> William Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge, ‘Lyrical Ballads’, (London: J. and A. Arch, 1798): 10

<sup>663</sup> Sanghamitra Ghosh unpublished MPhil dissertation, “Bibhutibhushaner Sahityae Protifolito Samaj, Arthonity O Paribesh: Itihasher Aloy, Chapter 3: Bibhutibhushaner Sahityae Prokriti o Poribesh”, Jadavpur University p. 73

Mother Nature and how human atrocities in the name of development and progress of human civilisation are actually robbing us of peace of mind. Satyacharan is the symbol of those people who in the name of the growth of the soil indulge in deforestation for plotting out land for industrialisation and progress. It is very interesting that, like today's eco—critics, Bibhutibhushan could well understand the importance of preservation of natural environment, and his sensitive mind was against harmful practices of man which alienate him from the origin much ago in the 1930s. In short, the novel may be regarded as a pioneering effort creating environmental awareness among the readers.<sup>664</sup> Much like Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, *Aranyak* shows the novelist's penchant cry towards an eco—centric lifestyle long before ecocriticism came into existence. "Like many other nature narrative, but strikingly for a work written in India eighty three years ago, *Aranyak* too ends with a vision of the environmental apocalypse. For all his empathy with those who labour in the forest for a bare subsistence, Satyacharan, according to Bandyopdhyay seems ultimately to be on the side of "deep ecology"<sup>665</sup>, and wilderness preservation. There is much in *Aranyak* that reflects what Maria Mies (1993) has called "the White Man's Dilemma", an urban nostalgia for the aesthetics of an untouched nature, one in which the "natives" appear closer to the nature than the city dwellers but in which too the poor are blamed for not doing enough to honour and protect the wilderness they inhabit. Being a true environmentalist, Bandyopadhyay had to admit with great regret that the imperial influence and capital infiltration could not be stopped in the forest lands."<sup>666</sup> He

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<sup>664</sup> Sandip Kumar Mishra, "Down Memory Lane: An Eco—critical Approach to Bibhutibhushan's *Aranyak—of the Forest*", p. 118

<sup>665</sup> Arne Naess, "The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement. A summary," *Inquiry*, 16:1—4, (1973): 80

<sup>666</sup> David Arnold, "Narrativizing Nature: India, Empire and Environment" ed. by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, Anthony Carrigan, 'Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities Postcolonial Approaches', (2015): 80

did not want the forest to be destroyed by the colonial government for their financial gains rather they wanted to conserve the forest and the environment through the character of Satyacharan which makes Aranyak a highly eco—critical novel and Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay a true environmentalist.<sup>667</sup>

In the recent years of post—indpendence, we see how the government has taken necessary measures to preserve the forest lands of Purnea. According to the Tenth Five Year Plan it is mentioned that, by 1997, eighteen state governments have issued enabling resolutions permitting partnerships with local people. These states have 80 percent of the country’s forest land and 92 percent of its tribal population.<sup>668</sup> The Joint Forest Management programme has now become the central point of future forest development projects funded by the Government of India and the donor agencies. According to government data, it is estimated that 36,130 village committees are protecting about 10.2 million ha of forests (though both quality of protection and its sustainability need improvement).<sup>669</sup> The area comprises 17% of the forest cover in India. With more imaginative policies and innovative silviculture, this area could be increased to 15 million ha in about a decade to cover about a quarter of the total forest cover.<sup>670</sup> According to the Times of India report by Bhavya Mishra, “the environment and forest department is preparing a standard operating procedure (SOP) for preventing deforestation across the state. It had, recently, banned the felling of trees in the name of development works, including construction and widening of roads. Forest department principal secretary

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<sup>667</sup> Ibid., 81

<sup>668</sup> Tenth Five Year Plan, Indian Planning Commission, Ch. 2., p. 492

<sup>669</sup> Ibid., 492—493

<sup>670</sup> [forest and tribes government policies.pdf](#), retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2022, 10:00pm

Dipak Kumar Singh claimed that the ban on felling of trees, on government property, including roads have been imposed.”<sup>671</sup> The days of ‘Aranyak’ were gone forever, but the diverse problems of the tribals of the Purnea district, remain. Few people are protesting against the neo—capitalist intervention of the New World Order in these areas; we only hope that the government will be more sensitive towards the protection of tribal rights in future.

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<sup>671</sup> Bhavya Mishra, “Bihar government measures to prevent deforestation”, Times of India, (July 4, 2019), retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2022, 6:30pm, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/state—govt—measures—to—prevent—deforestation/articleshow/70062679.cms>

## CHAPTER 5

### SITUATING HISTORICALLY: THE SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARD WINNING ECOCRITICAL TRAVELOGUE “MANIMAHESH” BY UMAPRASAD MUKHOPADHYAY (1969)

Travel Writing is a genre of Literature which deals with nature writing, adventure writing, exploration writing, guide books etc. Travelling has always been a basic human urge. Men have travelled with various motives — out of curiosity, adventure, on personal and political errands, on diplomatic missions, for pilgrimage and spiritual satisfaction, on voyages, for business and trade and nowadays as a part of multi — cultural immigration and emigration in jobs. Some travellers with alert and methodological minds recorded their observations and experiences and facts of history, as appeared to them in a kaleidoscopic view of the world, which came to be known as travel writing. In olden times People were familiar with travel books of Chinese pilgrims like Fa Hein (337—422) A.D. and Huen Sang (602—664) A.D., Tavernier (1605—1689), Bernier (1620—1688), Marco Polo (1254—1324), Ibn Batuta (1304—1369) and Al Biruni (973 A.D. — 1048) etc.<sup>672</sup> In modern times interesting Travelogues have been written by such literary celebrities such as Aldous Huxley (1894—1963), Graham Greene (1904—1991), V.S Naipaul (1932—2018), Ved Mehta (1934—2021) etc. The Purpose of this genre of

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<sup>672</sup> Fouzia Hamid, “Travelogues: The Fully Emerged and Innovative Literary Genre”, International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research, Vol. V., Issue I, (2022): 41—42



writing serves as a diary and a receptacle of accurate records of particular peoples, places, customs, and ceremonies etc. They give us an account of the prevalent social milieu and a deep insight into their culture and habitation.<sup>673</sup> The picturesque form of novel was also a type of travelogue, where the author tried to showcase different places and its culture, through the protagonist's travelling journey and adventure, for example the Adventures of Tom in Henry Fielding's (1707—1754) 'History of Tom Jones, a Foundling' (1749).<sup>674</sup> Last but not the least it's a communicative interaction between a writer and the place and its people.<sup>675</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, travel, for colonised Bengali intelligentsia, did not merely symbolise personal enterprise; it had emerged as a communitarian imperative. However this identity between private and community enterprise was not confined to the project of travel alone, many of the contemporary enterprises testify to an indistinguishable continuum between 'self' and 'community', an idea explored by Dipesh Chakraborty (1992), in "Post—coloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian past?'"<sup>676</sup> The Western paradigmatic division of private and public was never so neatly applicable to Bengali consciousness and sometimes it is blurred. Compared to the enormous amount of travel literature produced in the West right from the so—called Classical period, the ancient as well as medieval literature of Bengali Hindus is curiously marked by the absence of the traveller or travel story.<sup>677</sup> Brahmanical orthodoxy, heavily biased in favour of sedentary existence, was not only disinclined

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid., 42

<sup>674</sup> Henry Fielding, "History of Tom Jones, a Foundling", J.M. Dent & Company, (28 February 1749): 30

<sup>675</sup> Smrutisikta Mishra, "Travelogues: An Innovative And Creative Genre Of Literature", 'International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)', Vol. 4, Issue 4, , Trans Stellar, Journal Publication, Research consultancy, (Aug 2014): 45

<sup>676</sup> Dipesh Chakraborty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Past?" No. 37, 'Imperial Fantasies and Postcolonial Histories', *University of California Press*, (Winter, 1992): 10, retrieved on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2022, 8:00pm, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2928652>,

<sup>677</sup> Ibid., 10—11

towards travel or ‘bhraman’, in fact, it clearly discouraged it. It was only in case of pilgrimage that travelling was not only allowed but was considered the supreme—most act of achieving holiness. The notion of travel as an autonomous cultural practice, which emerged only under the influence of a new world view. This phenomenon also coincided with the production of a host of travel literature of various genres by Hindu Bengali literati. It is worthy of note that a similar phenomenon did not emerge among the Bengali Muslims, although travelling was never discouraged or prohibited within the Islamic worldview. In fact, medieval safar—namas (travel accounts of Indo—Persian or Indo—Arabic tradition) constitute a substantial body of literature.<sup>678</sup> Some kind of travel writing within narratives in other genres has existed from Classical times. In our own epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, the self—imposed exile or banishment of the protagonists from their legitimate kingdoms provides the basis for their wanderings and explorations over different kinds of terrain as well as opportunities for encounters with exotic, sometimes strange creatures very unlike themselves.<sup>679</sup> In Classical Greece, Homer’s *The Odyssey* (8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.) describes the amazing adventures of the epic hero on his voyage home from the Trojan wars. Warrior heroes have always been known to move from place to place in quest of extending their kingdoms as well as a kind of self—fulfillment.<sup>680</sup> During the Renaissance and Enlightenment, when voyages of discovery proliferated all over Europe, stretching to all parts of the world, travel once again percolated into the literature of the time. Often, tales about travelling would be

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<sup>678</sup> Simonti Sen, “Emergence of Secular Travel in Bengali Cultural Universe: Some Passing Thoughts”, Somdatta Mandal, ed., *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, “India and Travel Narratives” (Vol. 12, No. 3, 2020): 4—5, <http://rupkatha.com/V12/n3/v12n301.pdf> , <https://dx.doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v12n3.01>

<sup>679</sup> *Ibid.*, 5

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, 5—6

fictitious and fantastic, like in the English classics *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)<sup>681</sup> and *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)<sup>682</sup>. They have, however, been followed by very true—to—life children's stories about extraordinary journeys and trips, like R.L. Stevenson's (1850—1894) *Treasure Island* (1883)<sup>683</sup> and Jules Verne's (1828—1905) *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872)<sup>684</sup>. It is, therefore, a genre with multifarious possibilities. Despite all this, the genre has gained respectability on its own merit only over the last few decades. Travel writing has come to be recognized as a popular genre that is no longer considered as just a recreation for the lay reader but an important part of mainstream literature. It is a literary field that increasingly continues to interest the scholar and the critic, and there is a substantial corpus of academic discourses on the subject. Though always part of popular literature, travel writing was hitherto hardly ever taken seriously by scholars and academics. With the growth of New Historicist criticism over the last two decades, there has been a far—reaching widening of the literary domain, and texts that were once considered outside the mainstream have now come to be accepted as part of the canon. Receiving more and more critical attention, it is a great cultural resource that contributes to interdisciplinary studies combining history, literature, and anthropology, among other subjects.<sup>685</sup>

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<sup>681</sup> Daniel Defoe, "The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an uninhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoke; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pyrates. Written by Himself", *William Taylor*, (25<sup>th</sup> April 1719): 10

<sup>682</sup> Jonathan Swift, "Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World. In Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships", *Benjamin Motte*, (28<sup>th</sup> October 1726): 20

<sup>683</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, "Treasure Island", *Roberts Brothers*, (Boston, 1884): 50

<sup>684</sup> Jules Verne, "Around the World in Eighty Days", *Pierre—Jules Hetzel*, (30<sup>th</sup> January 1873): 33

<sup>685</sup> Jennifer Speake, ed., "Literature Of Travel And Exploration An Encyclopedia" Volume One A to F, (Routledge, New York), p. 30

The Bengali is popularly believed to be the incorrigible traveller. The foremost name in Bengali travel literature is no other than Rabindranath Tagore (1861—1941). He published his travel accounts of Europe in the nineteenth century. This was followed by his experiences in Japan, *Japan Yatri* (1919), Persia, *Parasye* (1936), Russia, *Russiar Chithi* (1930). They document an “Indian understanding of different civilisations and socio—political systems,”<sup>686</sup> as S.K. Das (1936—2003) says in *A History of Indian literature 1911— 1956* (1995). Annada Shankar Ray’s (1905—2002) account of European experience in *Pathe Prabase* (1931) is one the most representative works of literature on Indo—European relations. Prabodh Kumar Sanyal’s (1905—1983) *Mahaprasthaner Pathe* (1933), a narrative on the Himalayas, marks the beginning of a travelogue that is also a fictional narrative. The later part of the century saw the genre of travel writing flourish in Bengal. The exotic and the inaccessible has always fascinated the human imagination. It is exciting to read about far—away places where the geographical terrain, as well as the ethno—cultural communities which inhabit that terrain, are totally different from what we see all around us. In India, our land scape, linguistic and cultural groups are so diverse that one need not venture beyond the country’s frontiers to encounter new and stimulating experiences. Within the national boundary of India, one could potentially go on travelling forever without exhausting ones list of where to go.<sup>687</sup> The writer of this piece, Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay (1902—1997), is one such traveller who does not tire of undertaking journeys to various parts of India. At times, he self—confessedly claims to have visited the same place two or three times,

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<sup>686</sup> Sisir Kumar Das, “A History of Indian Literature: 1911—1956, struggle for freedom : triumph and tragedy Volume 1 and Volume 2 of A History of Indian Literature”, *Sahitya Akademi*, (1995): 20

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*, 20—21

and since his experience is widely different each time, he even writes about them twice or three times over.<sup>688</sup> Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay has specifically written about the Himalayan region in many of his travel accounts. There is virtually no fictitious element in his reminiscences, and aspects of folklore are acknowledged to be as such. He underscores and collates all the mythological, historical as well as socio — anthropological information related to the places and people he visits. While he mostly finds hilly people friendly and contented with their lot, the romantically alluring mountains, rivers and forests of the Himalayas inspire him to write a kind of poetic prose.<sup>689</sup>

### **Pre and Proto History of Himachal Pradesh**

About two million years ago man lived in the foothills of Himachal Pradesh, viz. in the Bangana valley of Kangra, Sirsa valley of Nalagarh and Markanda valley of Sirmaur. The foothills of the state were inhabited by people from Indus valley civilisation which flourished between 2250 and 1750 B.C. People of Indus valley civilisation pushed the original inhabitants of Ganga plains who were known as Kolarian people towards the north. They moved to the hills of Himachal Pradesh where they could live peacefully and preserve their way of life.<sup>690</sup> In the Vedas they have been referred to as Dasas, Dasyus and Nishadas while in later works they have been called Kinnars, Nagas and Yakshas. The Kols or Mundas are believed to be the original migrants to the hills of present day Himachal. The second phase of migrants came in the form of Mongoloid people known

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<sup>688</sup> Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay, “Manimahesh: Award — Winning Bengali Travelogue”, translated by Sanjukta Dasgupta, *Sahitya Akademi*, (Dehi, 2006): 54—55

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*, 55

<sup>690</sup> *Ibid.*, 56

as Bhotas and Kiratas. Later on came the third and most important wave of migrants in the form of the Aryans who left their Central Asian home. These laid the base of history and culture of Himachal Pradesh.<sup>691</sup>

### **Early History of Himachal Pradesh**

According to the Mahabharata the tract which forms the present day Himachal Pradesh was made up of a number of small republics known as Janapadas each of which constituted both a state and a cultural unit.

**Audumbras:** They were the most prominent ancient tribes of Himachal who lived in the lower hills between Pathankot and Jwalamukhi. They formed a separate state in 2 B.C.<sup>692</sup>

**Trigarta:** The state lay in the foothills drained by three rivers, i.e. Ravi, Beas and Sutlej and hence the name. It is believed to have been an independent republic.

**Kuluta:** The kingdom of Kuluta was situated in the upper Beas valley which is also known as the Kully valley. Its capital was Naggar.<sup>693</sup>

**Kulindas:** This kingdom covered the area lying between the Beas, Sutlej and Yamuna rivers, i.e. the Shimla and Sirmour hills. Their administration resembled a republic with members of a central assembly sharing the powers of the king.

**Gupta Empire:** Chandragupta slowly subdued most of the republics of Himachal by show of strength or use of force though he usually did not rule them directly. Ashoka, the

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<sup>691</sup> Mian Goberdhan Singh, "Himachal Past, Present & Future" '3: Prehistory and Protohistory', *Directorate of Correspondence Courses Himachal—Pradesh University*, p. 25—26

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid.*, 26—27

<sup>693</sup> Himachal Pradesh: The Official Website, under "About Himachal: History", p. 1 retrieved on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022, 1:20pm, <https://himachal.nic.in/en-IN/gorkha-and-sikh-war.html>

grandson of Chandragupta extended his boundaries to the Himalayan region. He introduced Buddhism to this tract. He built many stupas one of which is in the Kullu valley.<sup>694</sup>

**Harsha:** After the collapse of the Gupta Empire and before the rise of Harsha, this area was again ruled by petty chiefs known as Thakurs and Ranas. With the rise of Harsha in the early 7th century, most of these small states acknowledged his overall supremacy though many local powers remained with the petty chiefs.<sup>695</sup>

### **Medieval Period of Himachal Pradesh**

The small hill kingdom enjoyed a large degree of independence till the eve of Muslim invasions in northern India. States of the foothills were devastated by Muslim invaders from time to time. Mahmud Ghaznavi conquered Kangra at the beginning of the tenth century. Timur and Sikander Lodi also marched through the lower hills and captured several forts and fought many battles.<sup>696</sup> Later on as the Mughal dynasty began to break up; the rulers of the hill states took full advantage. In the eleventh century, the Katoch rulers of Kangra availed of this opportunity and Kangra regained independence status under Maharaja Sansar Chand (c. 1765—1824) in 1789, who ruled for nearly half a century. He was one of the ablest administrators of the region. After he took formal possession of Kangra fort, Sansar Chand began to expand his territory. The states of

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<sup>694</sup> Ibid., 1—2

<sup>695</sup> Mian Goherdhan, "Himachal Past, Present & Future", "4: Early History Upto Harsha", *Directorate of Correspondence Courses Himachal—Pradesh University*, p. 30—31

<sup>696</sup> Ibid., 31

Chamba, Suket, Mandi, Bilaspur, Guler, Jaswan, Siwan and Datarpur came under the direct or indirect control of Sansar Chand.<sup>697</sup>

### **Gorkha and Sikh War**

The Gorkhas, a martial tribe came to power in Nepal in the year 1768. They consolidated their military power and began to expand their territory. Gradually the Gorkhas annexed Sirmaur and Shimla hill states. With the leadership of Amar Singh Thapa, Gorkhas laid siege to Kangra. They managed to defeat Sansar Chand, the ruler of Kangra, in 1806 with the help of many hill chiefs. However Gorkhas could not capture Kangra fort which came under Maharaja Ranjeet Singh in 1809.<sup>698</sup> After this defeat the Gorkhas began to expand towards south. This resulted in the Anglo—Gorkha war. They came into direct conflict with the English along the terai belt after which the English expelled them from the hill states east of the Sutlej. Thus British slowly emerged as the paramount powers in this tract. After the Anglo—Gorkha war the common border of the British domain and Punjab became very sensitive. Both the Sikh and English wanted to avoid a direct conflict, but after the death of Ranjit Singh, the Khalsa army fought a number of wars with the British.<sup>699</sup> In 1845 when the Sikhs invaded the British territory by crossing the Sutlej, the rulers of many hill states sided with the English as they were looking for an opportunity to settle scores with the former. Many of these rulers entered into secret communication

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<sup>697</sup> R K Kaushal, "Himachal Pradesh: A Survey of the History of the Land and its People", *Archaeological Survey of India*, (22.10.1965): 67—68

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*, 68

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*, 68—69



with the English. After the first Anglo—Sikh war, the British did not restore the hill territory vacated by Sikhs to their original owners.<sup>700</sup>

### **Revolt of 1857 and participation of hill people**

The revolt of 1857 originated from the political, social, economic, religious and military grievances that had been accumulating for some time, and needed only a spark which was provided by the mishandling of the greased—cartridge affair. No doubt, the rulers of the Punjab Hill States had some political grievances, but these were different in character, and the fury of disaffection that arose out of the non—restoration of the territories of the hill rulers had long subsided. The people of the hill states, socially and intellectually, were far less advanced than those of the plains and, therefore, political rights did not matter much with them: economic exploitation was more a phenomenon of the native rulers or Jagirdars than that of the supreme overlords i.e. the British. Though the presence of some Christian missionaries cannot be denied, still religious interference was comparatively negligible by the time the revolt started. In the few cases, where trouble arose in Punjab it was more or less the result of attempts to disarm the sepoys.<sup>701</sup> The rulers of the Punjab states had remained loyal, and rendered valuable service to the English. The hill rulers, with the exception of Bushahr, also remained out of the fray. Some of them even rendered some service to the English. We have information about Raja Hira Singh of Bilaspur who was granted a salute of eleven guns and also a valuable Khillat and other gifts in recognition of his services during the great revolt.<sup>702</sup> Sri Singh of Chamba also sent troops

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<sup>700</sup> Himachal Pradesh: The Official Website, under “About Himachal: History”, p. 5, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 11am, <https://himachal.nic.in/en-IN/gorkha-and-sikh-war.html>

<sup>701</sup> K. S. Singh, “The ‘Tribals’ and the 1857 Uprising.” *Social Scientist* 26, no. 1/4 (1998): 76, retrieved on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 1pm, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3517582>.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*, 76—77

to Dalhousie under Mian Autar Singh, and kept a careful watch along the frontier for any rebels who might enter the state territory, many of whom were apprehended and made over to the British authorities. Rana Krishna Singh of Baghal too rendered valuable service to the British in keeping guard over the road from Shimla to Jalandhar, where the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Bengal regiments had revolted.<sup>703</sup> He also sent a party to Shimla under his brother Mian Jai Singh to assist the English. Both the Rana and his brother were rewarded with a Khillat. The title of 'Raja' was conferred upon Rana Krishan Singh.<sup>704</sup> We also know of Rana Govardhan Singh of Dhami who in recognition of services got half the tribute excused from the British. Though Raja Shamsheer Singh of Bushahr acted in a hostile way to the British, yet it cannot be assessed with the material at our disposal how far his sympathies were with the rebels or how far was he inclined to be independent. Undoubtedly he kept back his tribute, offered no aid, treated officials travelling through his territory with discourtesy, and refused ordinary supplies.<sup>705</sup> Lord William Hay, the Deputy Commissioner of Shimla and also the Agent for the Hill States, proposed to send a force to Rampur to coerce him but there were no troops available. Consequently nothing was done until after the great revolt, when Lord William Hay recommended that 'the raja be deposed and the state taken under the direct management of the Superintendent of the Shimla Hill States. This was, however, not deemed advisable by Sir John Lawrence the then Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, and the raja's behaviour during the great revolt was overlooked.'<sup>706</sup> As regards the troops stationed at various places in Himachal such as

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<sup>703</sup> Vijay Saihgal, '1857 The First Challenge: Rebellion in the Hills', *The Tribune*, (10 May 2017): 2

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

<sup>705</sup> S. K. Gupta, "Himachal Past, Present & Future: The Revolt Of 1857 And The Punjab Hill States", 'Chapter Eight From The Anglo—Gorkha War To 1914', *Directorate Of Correspondence Courses Himachal—Pradesh*, 102

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, 102—103

Jutogh, Dagshai, Kasauli and Sabathu, the trouble mainly arose at Jutogh and Kasauli. The Gurkha Regiment known as Nasri Battalion refused to comply with the orders of the Commander—in—chief, General Ason, who was being pressed hard for help by Sir John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of Punjab. The soldiers of the Kasauli Guard numbering about eighty also revolted and marched off with a huge sum of government money to join their fellow—soldiers at Jutogh. The rumour that the Gurkhas had started from Jutogh to Shimla created panic. Many English women and children became nervous, and some of the English army officers also failed to show the courage expected of them. The Raja of Keonthal seemed to have come out to their rescue. He gave the panic—stricken Britishers shelter first in his palace at Shimla and later at Junga, not very far off from Shimla.<sup>707</sup> But this chaotic and panicky atmosphere soon ended when William Hay, the Deputy Commissioner of Shimla and also the Agent for the hill states succeeded in bringing round the Gurkhas somehow, before Kasauli Guard soldiers could join the sepoys at Jutogh. But the submission of Jutogh soldiers on the promise of being pardoned proved fatal to the interests of the Kasauli rebels. They were not executed, and were treated severely for their offence. In short, the nature of the great revolt of 1857 in Himachal is, more or less, akin to the revolt in Punjab. Most of the hill rulers remained loyal and helped the cause of the imperial power. The sepoys stationed in Himachal nowhere succeeded in establishing their authority like their counterparts in Awadh and Rohilkhand.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> Neeraj. D., “Kasauli Guard – And The Revolt of 1857”, ‘Mysterious Himachal: Land of Faith and God’, (1 May 2018): 2

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

## **Freedom Struggle**

The present—day Himachal Pradesh consists of two types of hill areas. There are areas which were ruled by native princes. The people's struggle in these areas, though influenced by the nationalist movement in British India, cannot be characterised as 'freedom movement', since its object was never the overthrow or total elimination of their princely rulers. The main object of the Praja Mandal movement was the democratisation of the administration. The princes were part and parcel of Indian society and the subjects in most of the states were, by and large, attached to the princely houses of their respective states.<sup>709</sup> The other hill areas which joined Himachal Pradesh in 1966 had come under direct British administrative control. The people in these areas participated in the struggle for freedom with the specific object of overthrowing alien British rule. Thus in the hill areas there were two types of movements going on simultaneously, that is the Praja Mandal movement and the freedom movement. This distinction, however, does not imply that there was no overlapping in the personnel of these movements.<sup>710</sup> The Praja Mandal workers participated in the various agitations and struggles launched in the British areas and members of the various political organisations in the British areas crossed over to the state territories to help the Praja Mandal workers in their agitations. In most of the princely states, as in other hill areas, the beginnings of the people's awakening could be discerned in their desire to undertake social and religious reforms. There came to be organised Rajput and Brahman Sabhas, Sanatan Dharma and Arya Samaj Sabhas, Sevak Sanghs and

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<sup>709</sup> Ramesh Chand, "Politics Of Regionalism In Himachal Pradesh: An Outcome Of Spatio-Political Organisation And Voting Cleavages", *Review of Research*, Vol. 8, Issue 3, (December 2018): 2

<sup>710</sup> Basudev Chaterji and Ishrat Alam, ed., 'Dictionary of Martyrs: India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1947)', (ICHR and Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd.), (Delhi, 2012): 28

Sudhar Sammelans, Prem Sabhas and Seva Samitis.<sup>711</sup> These associations undertook to launch campaigns to eradicate such social practices as ‘Reet’ untouchability, child marriage and encouraged widow re—marriage. However, the meetings of these associations were also utilised for the discussion of numerous problems of a political nature. In the erstwhile hill state a pernicious system of service land—tenure (Beth) was prevalent. It worked to the disadvantage of ‘Bethu’ who cultivated the ‘Basa’ lands. Numerous other means of raising money were devised and resorted to by the princes. These included levies at the time of marriages, deaths, accessions to the throne and other religious ceremonies in the princely houses. As these levies were imposed arbitrarily, the associations began to raise their voices for their abolition.<sup>712</sup> Furthermore, ‘Begar’, the practice of rendering services gratis of various types, existed. Describing the lot of ‘Begaries’, Satya Nand Stokes (wrote, ‘He is often cursed, sometimes beaten, his interest ignored. The hillman has gradually been relegated to the position of a beast of burden and a helot. Not only are his rights as a free man denied him and his work seriously interfered with, but the relation in which he stands to those who can force him to give them services is demoralising in the extreme...’<sup>713</sup> The fact that the hill people began to look upon Begar and other levies as unjust, something which they had been tolerating for centuries, indicated the growth of political consciousness amongst them. The abolition of such impositions came to be regarded by the people as a sufficient reason for launching agitations against the rulers of the states. It became one of the important causes for the organisation of Praja Mandal. The age—old poverty in the hills compelled many a hillman

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<sup>711</sup> M.S. Ahluwalia, “History of Himachal Pradesh”, *Intellectual Publishing House*, (New Delhi, 1988): 10

<sup>712</sup> S.S. Negi, “Himachal Pradesh, The Land and the People”, *Indus Publishing Company*, (New Delhi, 1993): 16

<sup>713</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17

to go to the plains in search of petty jobs. There, they had to work in humiliating conditions. They felt aggrieved, exploited and oppressed by the plainsmen.<sup>714</sup> This stimulated amongst their fortunate brethren who had gone to the plains for higher education and better jobs to organize themselves to better their lot. Thus there developed a sense of separate identity which ultimately formed the basis of a demand for a separate hill state. Numerous other factors led to the organisation of freedom struggles and the Praja Mandal movement in the hill areas. Many popular uprisings and constitutional agitations organised within princely hill states were directly influenced by the movements and agitations in the adjoining British areas.<sup>715</sup> The Mandi conspiracy in 1914—15 was the result of the influence of some members of ‘Ghadr Party’ who had returned from America and had been carrying on revolutionary work in Punjab. They had spread themselves out in Mandi and Suket to win adherents to their cause. Extracts from ‘Ghadr—ki—Gunj’ were read out by them to influence the people. Mian Jowahir Singh and Rani of Khairgarhi of Mandi came under their influence and helped them financially. Meetings were held in December 1914 and January 1915 and it was decided to murder the Superintendent and Wazeer of Mandi State and to loot the treasury, blow up the Beas Bridge, seize the States of Mandi and Suket and join up with the Punjab revolutionaries.<sup>716</sup> Except for the Nagchala dacoity, the revolutionaries did not succeed in any of their objectives. They were ultimately arrested, tried and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. During these years secret societies came to be organised in other States as

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<sup>714</sup> Arik Moran, “Kingship and Polity on the Himalayan Borderland: Rajput Identity during the Early Colonial Encounter”, *Amsterdam University Press*, (Amsterdam, 2019): 18

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19

<sup>716</sup> Ram Chandra Pal Singh, ‘Census Of India 1961’, Volume xx, Himachal Pradesh, Part I-A General Report, p. 13

well. But all these were discovered and the authorities took steps to suppress the activities of such societies. Though the conspiracy and other secret societies did not succeed, their activities and deeds became a part of folklore and folksongs and continued to inspire the people to carry on their fight for their rights. As a result of severe repressive measures, political activities came to be either suspended or had to go underground or had to shift themselves to the adjoining British areas. By the end of the thirties, the 'Himalaya Riasti Praja Mandal' was organised and made responsible for directing the activities of the political and social workers in numerous hill states.<sup>717</sup> To rouse the people it undertook to organise public meetings at different places, publish tracts and pamphlets, collect data about injustices and cruelties perpetrated on the hill people, represent their case before the Political Agent and the Rajas and Ranas through deputations and memoranda. They also began to encourage the people to refuse to pay unjust taxes and not to perform Begar.<sup>718</sup> Simultaneously, Praja Mandals were organised in Chamba, Sirmaur, Mandi, Bushahr and other small States. One of the Praja Mandals, i.e., of Dhamsi decided to test its strength. The Praja Mandal of Dhamsi passed resolutions asking for the abolition of Begar, the reduction of land revenue by fifty per cent and the grant of civil liberties. The resolutions further requested for the removal of restrictions on the state subjects and establishment of responsible government in Dhamsi. An ultimatum was sent to the Rana to receive a deputation and concede the demands. The confrontation led to the Dhamsi firing tragedy, killing two persons and injuring numerous others. Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru did not approve of the methods of the agitators nor condone the

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<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, 13

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14

uncalled for firing by the Rana.<sup>719</sup> Whatever the other results of this tragedy, it cannot be denied that it exposed the deplorable state of affairs not only in Dhamsi but in other hill States too. This tragedy is an important milestone in the struggle for the democratisation of the administration in the hill States and their ultimate integration into one unit. The other landmarks of the Praja Mandal struggle include the ‘BHAI DO, NA PAI’ movement (1939), the Pajhota agitation (1942) and the movement for responsible government in the State of Chamba. These attracted the attention not only of the all—India leaders and public but also of the British authorities. The ‘BHAI DO, NA PAI’ movement was started at the beginning of the Second World War in 1939.<sup>720</sup> It was a movement of civil disobedience and boycott. The people were asked neither to make voluntary contributions for the war effort nor to pay land revenue nor supply recruits for the prosecution of war by the British Government. As a result large number of arrests of Praja Mandal workers were made. In Sirmour there had been unrest for some time, but it reached a high pitch when the war efforts of the State authorities began with the object of collecting money and foodstuffs. The authorities resorted to heavy fines for petty offences and there were instances where fines and land revenue was collected twice. Numerous repressive measures were adopted to relieve the farmer of his produce at low and fixed rate.<sup>721</sup> To protect the farmers against the high—handedness of the state officials, a ‘Kisan Sabha’ was organised at Pajhota. It began its protest by starting Satyagraha and began a non—cooperation movement. The Raja was requested to visit these areas and listen to the tale

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<sup>719</sup> Arik Moran, “Kingship and Polity on the Himalayan Borderland: Rajput Identity during the Early Colonial Encounter”, *Amsterdam University Press*, (Amsterdam, 2019): 76

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.*, 90

<sup>721</sup> Rajesh Chauhan, unpublished thesis, “Socio-political movements in Himachal Pradesh during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries”, ‘2: Himachal Pradesh and Outside Powers’, Himachal Pradesh University, 2002, p. 45



of woes of the Kisans. On his refusal to do so a parallel government was established. This open revolt was ruthlessly suppressed by confiscating the properties of some workers, by dynamiting the houses of others and making large—scale arrests. The Pajhota agitation is regarded as an extension of the Quit India movement of 1942.<sup>722</sup> The Chamba Praja Mandal gave a call for the establishment of popular government and for ending the nepotism and the underhand means used by the local Diwan to acquire, retain and concentrate all the powers of the State in his own hands. The agitations launched gathered momentum and a number of arrests were made. Gandhiji called upon the people of Chamba to carry on their non—violent agitation and publish unvarnished facts about the state of things there. The Tribune wrote editorially: ‘There is awakening even in the sleepy hollow of Chamba. Democratic ideas have percolated through the hilly barriers into the state and the people who have readily imbibed them are clamouring for responsible government.’ These Praja Mandals were integrated into the Himalayan Hill State’s Regional Council in 1946, which was an affiliate of the All India State’s People’s Conference.<sup>723</sup> The Regional Council under the enlightened and farsighted leadership of Dr. Y. S. Parmar, and the wise, experienced and dedicated leadership of such stalwarts of the Praja Mandal movement as Sarvashri Padam Dev, Shiva Nand Ramaul, Puma Anand, Satya Dev, Sada Ram Chandel, Daulat Ram etc., took upon itself to fight for the establishment of a separate hill state based on common historical traditions, cultural homogeneity, linguistic unity and geographical continuity.<sup>724</sup> At this stage the hill

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<sup>722</sup> Ibid., 45-46

<sup>723</sup> R K Kaushal, “Himachal Pradesh: A Survey of the History of the Land and its People”, *Archaeological Survey of India*, (22.10.1965): 90

<sup>724</sup> Ranbir Singh, ‘Himachal’s quest for identity: Denzil Charles and Jelf Iffestoin’s Report on the Census of Punjab’, Vol. 1, 1881, p. 2

Princes, for their own reasons, devised a scheme of confederation so as to bring all the hill states into a composite administrative unit. Though the object of setting up of a separate hill state was identical, yet there were differences about the extent of responsible and democratic government for the people and the mode of the affiliation of this hill state with India. Hence, the Regional Council had to establish a Provisional Government of the Himalayan Prant with its headquarters at Shimla and with Pandit Shiva Nand Ramaul as the President.<sup>725</sup> It decided to launch a Satyagraha to achieve its objective of fully responsible government and complete elimination of the Princes. Suket was chosen as its first target, and under the leadership of Pundit Padam Dev, a non—violent attack on Suket was mounted on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1948.<sup>726</sup> According to Dr. Parmar, ‘Never in the history of any Satyagraha movement had people undertaken a struggle of such magnitude in spite of the lack of means of communication and bad weather.’<sup>727</sup> The Satyagraha was a great success. It resulted in the taking over of the Suket State administration by the Government of India and hastened the accession of other hill States to India which were grouped into a Chief Commissioner’s province on 15 April 1949 and named as Himachal Pradesh. The strategic importance of Kangra, Kulu and their subsidiary States had led the British rulers to take them under their direct administrative control after the Anglo—Sikh War of 1946.<sup>728</sup> A few attempts by some of the rulers of the States to regain their independence failed. The stranglehold of British administration gradually tightened and by an appeal to the martial traditions of hill people the British rulers were able to turn these hills into a

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<sup>725</sup> Ibid., 2-3

<sup>726</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>727</sup> Thomas Varkey, “The Myth and Meaning of the Gandhian Concept of Satyagraha”, *Sophia University Junior College Division Faculty Journal*, 2014, p. 176

<sup>728</sup> Ibid., 176-177

fertile recruitment area for their famous Dogra Regiment. The British rulers were very sensitive to any growth of feelings of nationalism in these areas and were extra—vigilant to curb and suppress any national movement.<sup>729</sup> However, all their measures and precautions could not suppress their nationalist feelings, especially after Mahatma Gandhi had taken steps to transform the Indian National Congress into an organization of the masses and had launched his non—violent non—cooperation movement in 1920. A number of hill men studying and doing odd jobs in Lahore and other cities in the plains came under the influence of Gandhi’s call and returned to their native places to organise branches of the Congress.<sup>730</sup> Numerous workers began to be enrolled and Congress committees began to be set up in villages and cities. Conferences were held and processions were taken out. The Conference at Tal in Sujampur (1927) was memorable. Mela Ram Tair and Master Kundan Lal were sent from Lahore.<sup>731</sup> A large number of local workers like Thakur Hazara Singh, Baba Kanshi Ram, Gopal Singh, Chatur Singh, etc., delivered speeches and took pledges to work for the freedom of their country. The ‘Baluchi’ police mercilessly beat the people, snatched their Gandhi caps, and looted the shops and houses. However, the holding of political conferences were kept up. The conferences were held at many places in district Kangra.<sup>732</sup> Consequently, repression was let loose on a large scale and the police swooped to arrest and hunt out nationalist workers from all parts of Kangra. By 1930, the foundation of the freedom movement had been deeply and firmly laid in Kangra and the participation of people in the civil disobedience

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<sup>729</sup> Ibid., 178

<sup>730</sup> Himachal Pradesh Official Website, ‘9: Freedom Struggle’, retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022, 6:00pm, <https://himachal.nic.in/en-IN/freedom-struggle.html>

<sup>731</sup> Sumit Sarkar, “Modern India 1885-1947”, *Palgrave Macmillan*, (USA, 1989): 67

<sup>732</sup> Ibid., 67

was impressive. The contribution made by ‘Pahari’ Gandhi Baba<sup>733</sup> Kanshi Ram and Thakur Hazara Singh was noteworthy. They and their co—workers were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and sent to prisons at Gurdaspur, Lahore, Attock and Multan. Here, it must be mentioned that Thakur Hazara Singh was one of those leaders of Kangra who, as early as 1946, gave a call for the creation of a separate hill state. The freedom movement in Kangra slackened as a result of severe repression, but it picked up again when the Congress decided to contest elections to the Legislative Assemblies constituted on the basis of 1935 Act.<sup>734</sup> Thus in 1937 elections the message of the national movement was spread to all parts of district. The Congress won a few seats. Some independents like Pt. Bhagat Ram joined the Congress subsequently. When the Congress ministries resigned after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and the recruitment for the Indian Army was launched on a large scale in Kangra, the workers of the freedom movement dissuaded the people from joining the army. Once again political leaders began to be arrested. The individual Satyagraha launched by Mahatma Gandhi was conducted in the district very successfully and a large number of Congress workers offered Satyagraha, were arrested, tried and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.<sup>735</sup> The ‘Quit India’ movement of the Congress also received enthusiastic response from the people of this district and, as in other parts of the country, the British Government undertook extensive measures to crush the movement, arrested anyone who was suspected of having any direct or indirect links with the Congress.<sup>736</sup> At this time a freedom fighter from Lahore, Pt.

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<sup>733</sup> Ibid., 68

<sup>734</sup> Bipan Chandra, “Modern India”, *National Council of Educational Research and Training*, 1971: 80

<sup>735</sup> Ibid., 81

<sup>736</sup> R K Kaushal, “Himachal Pradesh: A Survey of the History of the Land and its People”, *Archaeological Survey of India*, (22.10.1965): 80

Amar Nath Sharma, came to Palampur. He had been evading arrest by the police for participation in the freedom movement. On reaching the district, he realised that the climate for any political activity was not favourable. So, a new turn to movement was given by him by opening a large number of educational institutions and medicine shops.<sup>737</sup> By giving a social and educational content to the freedom struggle, he sustained the spirit and served the hill people of this area. In these activities, he was greatly helped by another political worker, Kanahiya Lal Butail, who had gained fame as the large hearted host of national leaders like Jawahar Lal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Jagjivan Ram and many leaders of Punjab. This brief narrative makes it clear that the hill areas which became part of Himachal Pradesh in 1966 made a substantial contribution to the freedom struggle of India.<sup>738</sup> The narrative helps us to understand the historical background of the novel.

### **Post—Independence Period**

On the eve of Indian Independence the area that now forms Himachal Pradesh was almost equally divided between British Indian territory and the territory of the Indian States. The latter, besides a few enclaves of Patiala, was again equally divided between the five Punjab Hill States of Chamba, Mandi, Suket, Bilaspur and Sirmour and the 27 Shimla Hill States. Only five of these states were of some size, thirteen were less than 100 square miles, and three less than ten square miles in area. The people were abysmally poor and backward, and literacy was below five percent, as some of the states were too poor to afford even a primary school. Condition in some of the larger states like Mandi and

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<sup>737</sup> Ibid., 80-81

<sup>738</sup> Ranbir Sharma, "Himachal Past, Present & Future", '9: The Freedom Struggle And The Demand For Reforms In The Hill States, 1914—1947, *Directorate Of Correspondence Courses Himachal—Pradesh University*, p. 109

Sirmaur, however, were somewhat better. Complete ‘rule from above’ prevailed in these states.<sup>739</sup> Even Mandi and Sirmaur, where some sort of assemblies existed, were under the personal rule of the rajas because the assemblies had no real power. There was, however, one limitation on the power of rulers. It was the control of the Political Department of Government of India. The department controlled the Shimla Hill States through a Political Agent and the Punjab Hill States through a Resident.<sup>740</sup> The powers of the agent or the resident were largely undefined and therefore the rulers were not really free even in the internal administration of their states. During the months before Independence, the Political Department played a very mischievous role. It encouraged the princes not to join either Dominion but to declare their independence as soon as the paramountcy lapsed. Some of the rulers, like, Raja Anand Chand of Bilaspur, even declared their intention to do so in so many words. The Political Department, however, realised that the hill states were far too small to continue to exist independently. An attempt was, therefore, made to group them into a confederation. The plan, however, did not succeed. By the end of July 1947 the rulers got panicky and there was a stampede for accession to the Indian Dominion.<sup>741</sup> Between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 all of them signed instruments of accession. Independence brought about a dramatic change in the hill states. With their British protectors gone, the rulers could no longer suppress popular leaders at will nor could they ignore the wishes of the people. The smaller states had no police force at all. The larger states did have what they pompously called ‘State Forces’<sup>742</sup> — they had even commanders—in—chief, but even these would be powerless against a popular

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<sup>739</sup> Ibid., 109-110

<sup>740</sup> Bipan Chandra, “India’s Struggle for Independence: 1857-1947”, Penguin Books, 1988, p. 123

<sup>741</sup> Ibid., 123-124

<sup>742</sup> Ibid., 124

movement of any strength. The rulers, therefore, made a belated attempt to come to terms with their people. In the months after independence, rulers, one after another, declared his intention to introduce 'reforms' or even responsible government within his territory. In one state, Theog, popular ministers actually took over the administration and the ruler became a constitutional head. Later, however, he attempted a *coup d'etat*. But such reform did not solve the basic problem which was how to fit these states into the political structure of independent India. They were too small and too poor to exist as independent states and sooner or later would have to merge in the Indian Dominion.<sup>743</sup> But they were too small to be made separate units of the federation. Therefore, either they would have to be merged in Punjab or some sort of a larger union would have to be created by merging them together. Merger in Punjab seemed to be an easy and a natural solution. Such a merger would create a geographically compact and a fairly large province. The hill states, moreover, had deep political, administrative and economic links with Punjab.<sup>744</sup> The Punjab Government was keen on their merger. But two considerations ruled out this solution of the problem. One was that the princes and the people alike were strongly opposed to merger in Punjab. The middle class people of the area had developed a strong dislike to the Punjabi officials who, in the time of the rajas, had suppressed them, and to Punjabi merchants and traders who had exploited them for centuries. To the princes merger would have meant an end of their power and position.<sup>745</sup> The other reason arose out of conditions in Punjab itself. The partition of the country had completely disrupted its administration and economy and it was faced with the gigantic task of rehabilitating

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<sup>743</sup> Ian Copland, "State, Community and Neighbourhood in Princely North India, c. 1900-1950", Palgrave Macmillan London, 2005, p. 110

<sup>744</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-111

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*, 112

millions of refugees. The hill areas would require huge resources for their development and Punjab, under the circumstances, was not in a position to provide them. Thus a merger with Punjab was not feasible due to political, administrative and financial reasons. Left to themselves the rulers would have favoured a States Union of the Saurashtra type. They decided to call a constituent assembly to get the idea endorsed by popular leaders and to frame a constitution for the union.<sup>746</sup> The assembly met at Solan from 26 to 28 January 1948 under the chairmanship of Raja Durga Singh of Baghat (Solan). But the assembly was confined to the Shimla Hill States only. The Punjab Hill States did not participate. The assembly decided to constitute a Union of States. It was named as Himachal Pradesh and, on 1 March 1948, the Government of India was informed that the union had already been constituted.<sup>747</sup> A determined section of the Praja Mandals, led by Pandit Padam Dev and Dr. Y. S. Parmar, was, from the beginning, against this move of the princes. In a public meeting held at Shimla on 25 January 1948, Dr. Y. S. Parmar had made it clear that the proposed union would be acceptable only if power was transferred to the people and if individual states ceased to exist and a consolidated Himalayan province was created by amalgamating them. These demands were not acceptable to the princes and therefore these two leaders were kept out of the assembly.<sup>748</sup> The latter, however, turned the tables on the princes. They rushed to Delhi and apprised Sardar Patel of the real intentions of the princes. The Government of India, therefore, refused to recognize the union and the attempts ended in smoke. Having frustrated the move of the princes, the Praja Mandals led by Pandit Padam Dev decided to force the issue against the princes and to compel

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<sup>746</sup> Sushila Nayar, "Mahatma Gandhi: Volume VI Salt Satyagraha The Watershed", Navajivan Publishing House, (Ahmedabad, October 1995): 50

<sup>747</sup> *Ibid.*, 50

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid.*, 51



them to merge with the Indian Dominion. A ‘Himalayan Prant Provisional Government’ headed by Shiva Nand Ramaul was established for this purpose.<sup>749</sup> Suket was selected as the first target. After giving a 48 hour notice to the ruler, a batch of thousand satyagrahis marched into the state on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1948. The movement received spontaneous and overwhelming support from the state population. Within six days, without firing a shot, three—fourths of the state had been liberated and the satyagrahis had reached within eight miles of the state capital. The ruler was left with no option but to sign the merger agreement and to hand over his administration to the Government of India.<sup>750</sup> This historic Satyagraha proved to be a turning point in the history of the hill states. Other rulers took their cue from these events and hastened to sign merger agreements. Their states were taken over and, on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1948, were constituted into the Chief Commissioner’s Province of Himachal Pradesh. As a result, Himachal Pradesh came into being as a part ‘C’ State of Indian Union on 15th April, 1948 by integrating thirty one big and small hill States. Himachal Pradesh continued as a part ‘C’ State of the Indian Union till 1956 when the States’ Re—organisation Commission submitted its recommendations to abolish the categorisation of States as part A, B, C, etc. and recommended the merger of all part ‘C’ States either with the adjoining States of higher status or to maintain these independently as union territories till a further decision was taken.<sup>751</sup> Its status as the Union Territory continued till the conferment of Statehood on 25th January, 1971. The territory comprised of five districts: Mahasu, Sirmaur, Bilaspur, Mandi and Chamba. In 1960, the border

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<sup>749</sup> Ibid., 51-52

<sup>750</sup> Report Of The States Reorganisation Commission (1955), p. 240, retrieved on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022, 7:00pm, [https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/State%20Reorganisation%20Commisison%20Report%20of%201955\\_270614.pdf](https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/State%20Reorganisation%20Commisison%20Report%20of%201955_270614.pdf)

<sup>751</sup> Ibid., 240-241

Chini tehsil of Mahasu district was carved out as a separate administrative unit and district Kinnaur was formed raising the total number of districts to six.<sup>752</sup> On 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1966, the then Punjab State was reorganised with the formation of Haryana as a separate State and with the merger of the then Kullu, Kangra, Shimla and some hilly areas of Hoshiarpur district along with Dalhousie of Gurdaspur district into Himachal Pradesh, which constituted the four new districts viz. Kullu, Lahaul—Spiti, Kangra and Shimla in Himachal Pradesh and merging Dalhousie into the Chamba district.<sup>753</sup> With this addition, Himachal Pradesh comprised of ten districts, an area of 55,673 square kilometers and a population of 28.12 lakh according to 1961 census. On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1972, two more districts viz. Hamirpur and Una were created by trifurcation of Kangra district and the Mahasu and Solan districts were reorganized as Shimla and Solan districts. In this re—organisation, Shimla town was re—organised with the erstwhile Mahasu district to form the Shimla district.<sup>754</sup>

### **Forests**

Forests of Himachal Pradesh are an important national resource of the state. Although the area classified as “Area Under Forest” is sixty seven percent of the total area of the Pradesh, yet the effective forest cover is much lower than this area primarily on account of the fact that a very large area is either alpine meadows or is above the tree line.<sup>755</sup> The category—wise break up for the area in Himachal Pradesh is as under:

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<sup>752</sup> Ibid., 242

<sup>753</sup> Ibid., 242-243

<sup>754</sup> R K Kaushal, “Himachal Pradesh: A Survey of the History of the Land and its People”, *Archaeological Survey of India*, (22.10.1965): 113—114

<sup>755</sup> Ibid., 114

Category	Area in sq.km.
Total Geographical Area	55,673
Area under management with the Forest Department	35,427
Area under alpine pastures including area under permanent snow or above tree live	10,262
Balance area	21,081
Area under effective forest cover	12,521

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Although the National Forest Policy prescribes 66 percent forest cover for hill areas, yet it is important to underline that such a prescription should apply to feasible area. In Himachal Pradesh, about 64% of the total area is under the management of Forest Department, of which about 10,262 sq.km. area comprises of permanent pastures etc. and area above the tree live. Therefore only 25,165 sq.km. area that can be brought under effective tree cover.<sup>757</sup> The latest data indicates that 12,501 sq.km. area is under effective forest cover (with density in excess of 10%) and the remaining 12,664 sq.. km. is under scrub forests or forest areas with less than 10% density. It is this area which needs to be targeted for denser plantations than what exists now. The current effective forest area comprises about 50% of the feasible area and it can be substantially raised to near universal tree cover situation over time. Keeping in view the immense significance of Himachal's forests for natural economy, it is imperative that these are treated as a natural resource for all intents and purposes.<sup>758</sup> As per the Champion and Seth Classification of Forest Types (1968), the forests in Himachal Pradesh belong to eight Type Groups which

<sup>756</sup> Indian State of Forest Report Vol II Himachal Pradesh, p. 20

<sup>757</sup> Ibid., 20-21

<sup>758</sup> An Overview Of Planning In Himachal Pradesh: Plan Implementation Division Planning Department Govt. Of Himachal Pradesh, p. 10—11

are further divided into 39 Forest Types. The forests in the State can be broadly classified into coniferous forests and broad—leaved forests. Distribution of species follows altitudinal zonation. The vegetation varies from dry scrub forests at lower altitudes to alpine pastures at higher altitudes. In between these two extremes, distinct vegetational zones of Mixed Deciduous Forests, Bamboo, Chir Pine, Oak, Deodar, Kail, Fir and Spruce are found.<sup>759</sup> More than 95 species are endemic to Himachal Pradesh and characteristic of Western Himalayan flora, while about 5% (150 species) are exotic, introduced over the last 150 years. The State Government aims at bringing 50% of the geographical area under forest cover. Being a forest fire sensitive State, a detailed standard operating procedure called ‘HP Forest Fire Manual – Prevention and Control’ has been published by the State in 2018. Recorded Forest Area (RFA) in the State is 37,033 sq. km of which 1,898 sq. km is Reserved Forests, 33,130 sq. km is Protected Forests, and 2,005 sq. km Unclassed Forests.<sup>760</sup> In Himachal Pradesh, during the period 1st January 2015 to 5th February 2019, a total of 959.63 hectares of forest land was diverted for non—forestry purposes under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (MoEF & CC, 2019). The Protected Area network in the State has five National Parks, 28 Wildlife Sanctuaries and three Conservation Reserves, which cover 15.10% of geographical area of the State. Based on the interpretation of IRS Resources at—2 LISS III satellite data of the period, from October to December 2017, the Forest Cover in the State is 15,433.52 sq. km which is 27.72% of the State's geographical area. In terms of forest canopy density classes, the State has 3,112.71 sq. km under Very Dense Forest (VDF), 7,125.93 sq. km under Moderately Dense Forest (MDF) and 5,194.88 sq. km under Open Forest (OF).

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<sup>759</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>760</sup> *Ibid.*, 12

Forest Cover in the State has increased by 333.52 sq. km as compared to the previous assessment reported in ISFR 2017.<sup>761</sup>

### **Geography of Manimahesh and How to Reach It**

**Manimahesh Lake** (also known as Dal Lake, Manimahesh) is a high altitude lake (elevation 4,080 metres (13,390 ft)) situated close to the Manimahesh Kailash Peak in the Pir Panjal Range of the Himalayas, in the Bharmour subdivision of Chamba district of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. The religious significance of this lake is next to that of the Lake Manasarovar in Tibet.<sup>762</sup> The lake is the venue of a highly revered pilgrimage trek undertaken during the month of August/September corresponding to the month of Bhadon according to Hindu calendar, on the eighth day of the New Moon period. It is known as the ‘Manimahesh Yatra’. The Government of Himachal Pradesh has declared it as a state—level pilgrimage.<sup>763</sup> The lake, of glacial origin, is in the upper reaches of the Ghoi nala, which is tributary of Budhil River, a tributary of the Ravi River in Himachal Pradesh. However, the lake is the source of a tributary of the Budhil River, known as Manimahesh Ganga.<sup>764</sup> The stream originates from the lake in the form of a fall at Dhanchoo. The mountain peak is a snow clad tribal glen of Bharmour in the Chamba district of Manimahesh range. The highest peak is the Mani Mahesh Kailash also called *Chamba Kailash*<sup>765</sup> overlooking the lake. The lake, considered a glacial depression, is sourced by snow—melt waters from the surrounding hill slopes. Towards the end of

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<sup>761</sup> Indian State of Forest Report 2019 Vol II Himachal Pradesh, p. 92

<sup>762</sup> Government of Himachal Pradesh: District Chamba, ‘Manimahesh Yatra’, p. 1, retrieved on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2022, 9:00pm, <https://hpchamba.nic.in/manimahesh-yatra/>

<sup>763</sup> Ibid., 1-2

<sup>764</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>765</sup> Manimahesh Yatra: About Manimahesh, p. 1, retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022, 5:00pm, <https://manimahesh.net.in/manimahesh/>

June with ice beginning to melt, numerous small streams break up everywhere, which together with the lush green hills and the myriad of flowers give the place a truly remarkable view. The snow field at the base of the mountain is called by the local people as *Shiva's Chaugan Shiva's playground*. According to a belief, Lord Shiva stayed here with his consort Parvati.<sup>766</sup>

Manimahesh is approached from three routes:

1. Pilgrims from Lahaul and Spiti pass through Kugti pass.
2. Pilgrims from Kangra and Mandi take the Karwarsi pass or Jalsu pass via Tyari village, near Holi in Bharmour.
3. The easiest and popular route is from Bharmour, Himachal Pradesh. The most popular is the Bharmour – Hadsar – Manimahesh route which involves a *13 KM (8 miles)* track from Hadsar village to the Manimahesh Lake.<sup>767</sup>

“The highest altitude touched in this route is *4,115 meters (13,501 feet)* and it takes two days (Because trek is very steep) with an overnight stay at Dhanchoo. Season to be undertaken is June to October and it has a gentle grade. The path leading to the lake is well maintained. Half way up this track is *6 kilometres (3.7 miles)* of open and flat meadow land to Dhanchoo. Tented accommodation is available here during August–September. Night halt is preferred here. Free kitchens are opened by people (*Sewaks from Self Help Organisations*) to feed pilgrims. But many prefer to go and pitch their tents next to the lake to feel a divine experience. En route, there is waterfall at Gauri nallah known

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<sup>766</sup> Ibid., 2-3

<sup>767</sup> Ibid., 3-4

as the Dhanchoo fall. From Dhanchoo, it is a steep climb. This track has seen lot of improvements over the years. In the past the first climb was first done by crossing Dhanchoo nallah. It was so tough that people used to crawl to get across. Since they used to crawl like a monkey in this stretch it was known as *Bandar Ghati (monkey valley)*. Now this track is much improved and the newly constructed path is used. However, some still prefer to take the old route as an adventure and go through the *Bandar Ghati*.<sup>768</sup> In the past, on the trek from Dhanchoo, the bridge over the Manimahesh River was crossed to reach the left bank of the valley. After 2KM (1.2 Miles), the river was again crossed, over another wooden bridge, to the right bank. From this point, the climb passes through many zigzag paths along flowered meadows. Birch trees are seen in the vicinity, which indicates a gain in altitude as the trek proceeds. Along this stretch of the trek route, there are a number community kitchens (eateries) at about 3,600 meters (11,800 ft) elevation. From this location, the trail to *Manimahesh Lake* could be discerned. The waterfall, flowing from the lake, is also seen at this stage. A further trek of 1.5 km (0.93 miles) through the grassy ridges leads to the *Manimahesh Lake*.<sup>769</sup>

### **Legends of Manimahesh: Myths As History**

According to history facts, it is believed that **Lord Shiva** created **Manimahesh** after he married **Goddess Parvati** (who is worshipped as Mata **Girja, Gori**). There are many legends narrated linking **Lord Shiva** and his show of displeasure through acts of avalanches and blizzards that occur in the region. Legend also mentions

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<sup>768</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>769</sup> Government of Himachal Pradesh: District Chamba, 'Manimahesh Yatra', p. 3, retrieved on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021, 9:30pm, <https://hpchamba.nic.in/manimahesh-yatra/>

that **Shiva** performed penance on the banks of **Manimahesh Lake**. It is also mentioned that Gaddis – the tribes of this region (the people who reside in the Gaddi Valley which is the name of the upper regions of Ravi River where the Mount Chamba Kailash lies) adopted **Lord Shiva** as their deity. Further, according to the legend, the **Shiva**, gifted the Gaddis with a **Chuhali topi** (pointed cap), which they wear traditionally along with their other dress of chola (coat) and dora (a long black cord about 10 – 15 m long). The Gaddis started calling the land of this mountainous region as *Shiv Bhumi* (**Land of Shiva / Abode of Shiva**) and themselves as devotees of **Shiva**.<sup>770</sup> The legend further states that Shiva married Parvati at Mansarovar Lake and became the Universal parents of the universe, Shiva created the Mount Kailash in Himachal Pradesh and made it his abode. He made Gaddis his devotees. Manimahesh was also considered the abode of the three Lords of the universe namely – Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. Manimahesh was considered as the heaven of Lord Shiva. It is believed that the waterfall seen at the Dhanchoo on the way to Manimahesh Lake, emanates from the lake from ‘Vishnuloka’ or ‘Vaikunthadham’ of Vishnu. The heaven of Brahma is cited as a mound overlooking the Bharmaur City.<sup>771</sup> The Gaddis also believe that Shiva resides here in the Mount Kailash here for six months, where after the Lord Shiva moves to the Netherworld (Patal—Lok) handing over the reign to Lord Vishnu. Shiva lives here from start of Spring Season to end of Rainy Season and departs from here from autumn. The day Lord Shiva departs to the netherworld is observed by the Gaddis reverentially every year on Janamashtami. Shiva returns from the Netherworld to Bharmour at the end of February, before the night

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<sup>770</sup> Pallavi Gautam, “An Anthropological Study Associated with Non-Tribes of Gaddi Tribe in Bharmour Tehsil of Chamba District, Journal Issue LJRHSS Volume 22 Issue 14, (28 September 2022): 3

<sup>771</sup> Ibid., 3-4



of his wedding and this day is observed as the Mahashivratri day. Gaddis observe this also as a festive day since Shiva and Parvati returned to Mount Kailash in the Gaddi land. Derivation of Manimahesh signifies a “Jewel (Mani) on Lord Shiva’s (who is well known as Mahesh) crown”.<sup>772</sup> According to a local legend, “the moon—rays reflected from the jewel can be seen from Manimahesh Lake on clear full night (which is a rare occasion).”<sup>773</sup> However, it has been inferred that such a phenomenon could be the result of reflection of light from the glacier that embellishes the peak in the form of a serpent around Shiva’s neck. In fact, the light reflected from the glacier that adorns the peak really looks like a Shiny Jewel on the head of the mountain. A rock formation in the form of a Shiv Ling on this mountain is considered as the manifestation of Lord Shiva. The snow field at the base of the mountain is called by the local people as Shiva’s Chaugan (Play Field). A legend in which Lord Shiva himself is tricked is narrated.<sup>774</sup> According to this narration linked to Dhanchoo where pilgrims spend a night on their way to Manimahesh Lake. Lord Shiva pleased with the devotion of one his ardent devotee Bhasmasur (a demon) bestowed a boon, which gave powers to Bhasmasur under which Bhasmasur touching any one would reduce that person in to ashes. Bhasmasur wanted to try this boon on Shiva himself. He, therefore, followed Shiva to touch him and get rid of him. However, Shiva managed to escape and enter into the waterfall at Dhanchoo and take shelter in a cave behind the rolling waters of the fall. Bhasmasura could not cross the waterfall and Vishnu impressing him with his Mohini rupa (impressive damsel form) killed Bhasmasura near Dhanchoo Waterfall. Since then the fall is considered holy. A rare event

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<sup>772</sup> Government of Himachal Pradesh: District Chamba, ‘Manimahesh Yatra’, p. 3-4, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022, 4:00pm, <https://hpchamba.nic.in/manimahesh-yatra/>

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5

of the first sun rays falling on the *Mani Mahesh Kailash peak* is seen as reflection in the lake like **saffron tilak**. This display in the lake has enhanced the legendary belief of the Gaddis on the sanctity of **Manimahesh Lake** at the base of the **Mount Kailash**, which they visit on an annual pilgrimage. This event has also contributed to the practice of taking bath in the lake on **Janamashtami** or **Radhashtami**.

Umoprasad Mukhopadhyay (1902—1997), the son of Sir Ashutosh Mukhopadhyay (1864—1924) and Smt. Jogmaya Devi, was born on 12 October 1902 in Bhowanipur, Kolkata. He studied English for his bachelor's degree but chose Ancient Indian history as his subject for his master's degree. He also did his L.L.B. He won many academic laurels throughout. After teaching in the university for some time, he practised at the Bar. In 1958, he gave up legal practice, in pursuit of wanderlust, and a spiritual quest for peace, human values and the true meaning of life. This started in the Himalayas, and throughout his life, he was attracted to the Himalayas repeatedly. His passion for travel was an upshot of his restless spirit that was not content to be stationed in one place, and his genuine love of nature. He has written prolifically about his travels, capturing the ambience of the locale and sensitive to everything around. He was associated with the *Bangabasi Patrika* throughout his literary career. His minute observations and the authentic historicity of his narration in his book *Manimahesh* (1969) won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1971. *Manimahesh* is the Second volume of Umoprasad Mukhopadhyay's "Bhromon Omnibus". This travelogue acts as the primary source of the present thesis, and it has been translated by Sanjukta Dasgupta in English in 2006. The name of the translated book is

“Manimahesh: Award — Winning Bengali Travelogue”.<sup>775</sup> Manimahesh has been translated in Hindi, Nepali and Oriya as well. The writers love for travelling has mainly drawn the attraction of the readers towards this specific writing. According to the *Road Transports and Highways, Government of India and National Highway Authority of India*, the road from Chamba to Manimahesh is recorded as one of the deadliest roads which is prone to environmental hazards and often creates problem for the natives and the travellers.<sup>776</sup>

### **The Traveller, Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay**

‘Manimahesh’ is a creative piece on travel from a book—length travelogue which was not originally written in English but Bengali, and is therefore significant as a translated text also. The translation is done by Sanjukta Das Gupta.<sup>777</sup> The full travelogue is in three parts, and deals with the author’s trek over the Himalayas. The first part has fourteen sub – sections. The first part describes the journey from Pathankot to the foot of Manimahesh by the side of a picturesque lake. The second part describes the journey from Khara Pathar towards Chakrata, a high cantonment — area over the Jumna valley. The third part has him starting from Masobra on the outskirts of Shimla and after passing through some legendary mountain village, he reaches the foot of the 22,000 high Kinnaur Kailas, resembling the phallic image of Lord Shiva.<sup>778</sup> The eighth section of the first part has the writer and Himadri walking from Kharamukh, and reaching the village of Lahul. They

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<sup>775</sup> Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay, “Manimahesh: Award — Winning Bengali Travelogue”, translated By Sanjukta Dasgupta, *Sahitya Akademi*, (Delhi, 2006): 57

<sup>776</sup> Road Transports and Highways, Government of India and National Highway Authority of India, p. 11

<sup>777</sup> Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay, “Bhromon Omnibus, A Collection of Travelogues, Vol. II, Manimahesh”, *Mitra and Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd.*, 1984, p. 2

<sup>778</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4

encounter a school master, and a shopkeeper who initially refuses to part with the maize growing outside his shop in fear of a local superstition. They reach Bharmaur, the gateway to Manimahesh where the reader's curiosity is tantalised by the description of a sage who is supervising the repair of a farmland. Section nine describes their meeting with the Range officer Sood, who invites them to sleep for the night in his bungalow instead of carrying on to the Forest bungalow. He introduces them to the local doctor Chatterjee, who lives a reclusive and enigmatic existence. They interact with the doctor about common landmarks in Calcutta as well as shared historical signposts. Section ten narrates well-known stories about the sage, Naga Baba, which have become part of the local lore. The doctor told them some uncanny happenings centered on Manimahesh and its history that defy rational explanation. Section eleven further explores the history, myth and legend surrounding the hallowed site of Manimahesh.<sup>779</sup> A travelogue is a non-fictional account, and by and large true. In Manimahesh, the travel writer articulates himself in a manner that divulges his sincere love of adventure and devotion to the mountains. In the December 1990 issue of *Desh*, the leading Bengali weekly, he had said in an interview with Salil Dutta that he was satisfied with minimal comforts while travelling. Forever eager to be away from the madding crowd, he had always been passionate about the silent sun-kissed Himalayan peaks and completely absorbed in them as if in deep meditation.<sup>780</sup> The writing in a travelogue is always autobiographical to some extent, which means it reports the writer's experiences in the first person, and is coloured by the writer's prioritisation of certain episodes and encounters over others,

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<sup>779</sup> Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay, "Manimahesh: Award — Winning Bengali Travelogue", translated By Sanjukta Dasgupta, *Sahitya Akademi*, (Delhi, 2006): 60

<sup>780</sup> Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay, "Bhromon Omnibus, A Collection of Travelogues, Vol. II, Manimahesh", *Mitra and Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd.*, 1984, p. 4

although they may be insignificant in the eyes of most people. In *Manimahesh*, however, the objective facts like the ‘mighty ruins and mountains of bygone ages’ were not thrown into the distance. All that the travel writer narrates, therefore, is not subjective, but is greatly intermingled with his personal observations. In this travelogue, the narrator’s meetings with Masterji, the ranger Mr. Sood, Doctor Sahib and others have the flavour of a singular interaction that only he is equipped to reconstruct. The protagonist engages in conversations that introduce a range of other characters into the narrative, and the reader is expected to believe that such conversations which apparently transcend any language barrier are recorded rather than invented. Travel writing in the twentieth century tends to focus on the relationship between the individual and the societies through which the writer passes. Depending on the interest of the writer, she writes about the ethno—cultural traits, the socio—economic conditions, the educational opportunities, the proportion of locals versus migrants or anything else. For instance, using dialogue cleverly, the writer describes how his companion Himadri demolishes in one fell swoop the local superstition of the people about not allowing com cobs to be plucked from their farm before undertaking a festive ritual heralding the new crop. By pointing out that bears have eaten some of the com cobs already, Himadri convinces the shopkeeper to imagine that the bear have likewise eaten the same com cobs that he would give to them.<sup>781</sup>

To keep alive our ethnographic interest, it is essential that the author presented the local and tribal people as they are. The description of the tribal people, the Gaddis, are unique, “They had *the same* cords around their waists” and that “They were smoking hookahs”. This is so inadequate that it does not help in speculating the form, physique and

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<sup>781</sup> Ibid., 5

embellishments of a Gaddi, in the way that an urban mind would like to visualize a person from a remote area, belonging to a rare tribal community.<sup>782</sup>

### **Humour in Umaparasad Mukhopadhyay's writing**

Certain incidents, like the one about the corncobs, contribute to humour in more ways than one. The author and Himadri are tempted by the maize in the farm — when they are denied those, their insistence virtually shows them to be greedy and so desperately desirous of the succulent, mouthwatering maize that they will not let go of an opportunity to eat them. However, in the process, a serious subject like the local superstition about when to eat a maize is taken up, and the superstition debunked by Himadri's irrefutable logic that if the bear could have taken away some maize before the ceremony, surely it could be assumed that the bear have also taken the ones that they are going to be offered.<sup>783</sup> The humour is also created out of the juxtaposition of the rationality of Himadri's mind as contrasted to that of the shopkeeper, which is imbued/entrenched in local old wives' tales. In part eleven, after narrating the story of the Brahmini Devi who had to be appeased before doing almost anything that is within her ambit or sphere of influence, the author tells us that he has heard that the plentiful water in Bharmaur will now be used to generate electricity.<sup>784</sup> Hearing of this, Himadri asks Sood in a tongue—in—cheek manner “Has the Devi's permission been taken?” This remark undercuts the traditional belief in the power of the Brahmini Devi. Unconventional characters also

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<sup>782</sup> Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay, “Manimahesh: Award — Winning Bengali Travelogue”, translated By Sanjukta Dasgupta, *Sahitya Akademi*, (Delhi, 2006): 61

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*, 61

<sup>784</sup> David Hardiman, “The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India”, *Oxford University Press*, (Delhi, 1995): 11

account for much of the humour in a travel narrative, which brings us to another major preoccupation of a modern day travel text.<sup>785</sup>

### **Characters in Umaparasad Mukhopadhyay's Manimahesh**

A work of fiction necessarily entails some interaction among various characters in the narrative. But a non—fictional work like a travel tale may or may not have unique 'characters' to liven up its atmosphere or to weave together a story line. This travel account, has some very interesting characters who colour the narrative, and they are both locals as well as those who have migrated to Bharmaur. To begin with, there is the genial Masterji who coaxes the shopkeeper to give the travellers some maize from the farm, although according to the custom of the place, it can only be plucked after appropriately auspicious rituals and ceremonies. The Doctor Saheb is somebody with whom the author and Himadri gain a longer and deeper acquaintance. He turns out to be a mysterious character from Bengal who seems to be alone in the world and yet claims that he has a family whom he never visits and who never visit him.<sup>786</sup> At one point, he even starts explaining why it is difficult for him and his family to meet, but he quickly changes the subject, showing that there is something about it which he does not want to divulge. This puzzle is not solved till the end of Part eleven, and thus remains a matter of unrelieved suspense. He does not socialise with the people in his neighbourhood, although he is perfectly amiable when he meets them. At the end of part eight, the writer and Himadri see a Sadhu in saffron clothes, overseeing and sometimes participating in repairing the damaged portion of a farmland that had crumbled due to the impact of a strong

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<sup>785</sup> Ibid., 11-12

<sup>786</sup> Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay, "Manimahesh: Award — Winning Bengali Travelogue", translated By Sanjukta Dasgupta, *Sahitya Akademi*, (Delhi, 2006): 65

waterfall.<sup>787</sup> He is referred to as an “embodied inspiration”, a kind of “inspiration personified”, part ten, ends with Doctor Saheb’s visit to the ranger Sood’s house, but refusing dinner, which he had promised to have with them. Such eccentricities in a character make the human interactions in the narrative worth reading about, although they are not explained or worked out to a logical culmination as they usually are in a work of fiction. They are actually taken for a ‘darshan’ of the Naga Baba, who seems to be older than the stones and the trees. Not even a blade of grass, it seems, grows there without his instructions. He is responsible for restoration of old temples, construction of roads, opening of schools, building of hospitals and maintenance of dharmasalas. The narrative continues with many stories about the Naga Baba, particularly the one about how he prevented an English commissioner from opening a liquor store in the vicinity of the market and temples. He has no political clout or economic power that makes him so revered among the people, yet the doctor says that he is like a Raja, because the value system of the place is different from that of towns and cities. Throughout his life, although Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay met and interacted with such a wide variety of people belonging to a colourful range of places, he philosophically said to Salil Dutta that one cannot get a greater companion than oneself in this life.<sup>788</sup>

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<sup>787</sup> Ibid., 66

<sup>788</sup> Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay, “Bhromon Omnibus, A Collection of Travelogues, Vol. II, Manimahesh”, *Mitra and Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd.*, 1984, p. 25



## **Description of Nature in Bharmaur—Manimahesh**

In traversing a mountainous region, descriptions of nature are an integral part of the text. As they are going towards Gaderan and Bharmore through the Bhudol valley, the mountain and the river, which is a tributary of the river Irawati, are described in vivid detail. They seem to come alive with the physical attributes of a human being or an animate creature. In paragraph seven, the author tries to draw a contrast between the two banks of the river:

*The road was on the left of the river cut alongside the steep mountain. Black rocks. These were black rocks which looked as if hooded snakes were hanging over our heads. It seemed as we were walking through a tunnel. There was a moist darkness all around. On the other downward side too, the steep walls of the mountain could be seen. The gorge of the river lay in the middle. But the upper areas of the mountain opposite did not seem all that steep, those seemed to have risen more gently. On that side there were a few clusters of trees, green grass and the surroundings were without the overhanging shadows. It looked bright in the morning sun. The two banks of the same river were so dissimilar.<sup>789</sup>*

It is through word—pictures like the one above that the reader can familiarise himself/herself with the mountainous panorama. In part eleven, the village of Bharmaur, nestling amidst the forest, is described in the following words:

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<sup>789</sup> Ibid., 26

*Along the slope of the mountain houses stood in terraced formations. Built of wood and stones. The terrace was covered with slate rocks. Down there, everything was entirely different. A wide table land in the lap of the mountain, 7007 ft. above sea level. A calm and quiet environment. The gigantic deodars had created a dense shadowy canopy. In that half—light, one could see temples scattered here and there. They bore the evidences of the architectural artistry of olden times.*<sup>790</sup>

In the Bengali version, the compound word for ‘half—light’ is ‘alo—chhaya’, which means a more complex and subtle intermingling of ‘light and shade’ than ‘half—light’, and conjures up a visual feast that can be imagined photographically. Although it is a description that combines heterogeneous facets of a rural habitat like living abodes, temples, and the canopy of deodar trees, the reader can holistically visualise the picture—perfect plateau that accommodates all these. A snowy lake nestles in the lap of Manimahesh.<sup>791</sup> This is a metaphorical way of describing the way the mountain and the lake, which are configured in a geographical interlocking with each other, the lake positioned within the mountain. It also personifies them, for the mountain and the lake are visualized as archetypal images of mother and child, and humanises them to that extent. It would help you to look out for other such figures of speech all along the travels — particularly metaphors. In the second paragraph itself, the author describes a wide valley of the river with the mountains far apart, as if Irawati had stretched her limbs and was relaxing.<sup>792</sup> ‘The figurative description of a woman’s body continues here, this time

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<sup>790</sup> Ibid., 26-27

<sup>791</sup> Ibid., 27

<sup>792</sup> Veena Bhasin, “Status of Women in The Himalayas: A Case Study of Gaddis”, *Journal of Human Ecology*, 2:2, (1991), 109-110, retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022, 8:00am, 10.1080/09709274.1991.11907709

not as a maternal icon, but as a woman in indolent repose. A little later, the road which is cut alongside the steep mountains is actually described in the original Bangla version as ‘having been carved out of the mass or the body of the mountains’.<sup>793</sup> Metaphors and similes of the human body lend themselves very graciously to the outlining of a mountainous region with a river between its two ranges. In para eight, we are told that the ‘mountains seemed to be smeared with snow as they raised their heads towards the sky’.<sup>794</sup> On page four, where the travellers see the ravages of a huge landslide in Cheld Ghar, “it seemed as if someone had clawed off a huge portion of the mountain face”.<sup>795</sup> Now, the phrase ‘mountain face’ can be used independently of any resonances of the human face, but when it suggests that part of it has got ‘clawed off’, the resemblance with a human face becomes very obvious in the description of violence that human bodies are sometimes subjected to. The sense of the mountain having undergone some devastation continues in the sentence “Amidst the green trees all around, the mountain stood, with severe wounds; on its body”. At times however an easy shortcut by substituting a word for a phrase has not done justice to the phrase. In part eleven, after the description of Bharmaur village in the next para it says, ‘Brahmini Devi was enraged to find strangers in her territory’. However, the Bangla text says that she was enraged to see this *unauthorised encroachment* into her territory by outsiders.<sup>796</sup> The picturesque descriptions of the mountains and lakes, reveals, how nature is preserved automatically

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<sup>793</sup> Ibid., 110-111

<sup>794</sup> Ibid., 111

<sup>795</sup> Ibid., 112

<sup>796</sup> David Hardiman, “The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India”, *Oxford University Press*, (Delhi, 1995): 14

in those years. Ecological changes occurred in the habit quite unconsciously. As it was very slow in nature, the idea was not reflected in the novel.

### **Gaddi Tribes of Bharmaur—Manimahesh**

Anyone who is not a resident of the hills are outsiders to the native of the hills. The hills of Himachal are mainly dominated by the Gaddi tribes. The Gaddis' are a transhumant tribe of the Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh mainly residing in Bharmaur and Manimahesh area due to their occupation. According to W.H. Newell, Census of India 1961, "The Gaddi are notified as a Scheduled Tribe in parts of Himachal Pradesh. According to Newell, they occupy an area in Chamba district and along certain foothills of the Dhaula Dhar in Kangra district. They frequently describe their own area as Gaderan, the land of Gaddis or as Shivabhumi, the home of Shiva. According to him the term "Gaddi" refers to a territorial group, to a specific class of people wearing special clothes such as the *dhora*, and an isogamous union of the castes of Rajput, Khatri, Rana and Thakur".<sup>797</sup> In a recent account on the Gaddi, K. S. Singh has stated that under the generic name of Gaddi, there are a number of castes of unequal status such as the Brahmin, the Rajput, the artisan and the lowly caste of the area. He is of the view that though all these castes are vaguely referred to as the Gaddi living in the neighbouring areas of Gaderan, yet within the locality the term is particularly applied to the Brahmin and the Rajput castes.<sup>798</sup> The Gaddi Brahmans, according to K.S.Singh, are believed to

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<sup>797</sup> W.H. Newell, "Census of India 1961, Himachal Pradesh, Report on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes", Vol. xx. Part V—B, 1967, p. 1

<sup>798</sup> KS Singh, "People of India, The Scheduled Tribes", *National Series*, Vol. III, 1994, p. 269

have come to Chamba from Delhi during A D. 850—870 to serve as religious priests, while the Gaddi Rajputs were believed to have migrated from Lahore in the wake of religious persecution in the remote past and settled in the Bharmour valley of the Chamba district. Both of these groups speak in Gadiali as their mother tongue and various dialects of Himachali language are used for inter—group communication. Both these languages belong to Pahari group of the Indo—Aryan family of languages.<sup>799</sup> The Brahman Gaddi use Devnagari script, while the Rajput Gaddi use the Tankri script among themselves, with the others, colloquial Hindi and Devanagari script are used. The Gaddi Brahmins are divided into a number of exogamous gotras such as Atri, Bhardwaj, Gautam, Jamdagni, Kashyap, Vashista, Vishwanritra, etc., which are further sub—divided into septs (al) like Adhkaru, Bardan, Bhangetu, Bhingra, Chadha, Chadhu, Dinna, Guna, Jakku, Jiringar, Jua, Kerra, Latte, Misa etc. These als or septs often denote nicknames and also the occupational names which their forefathers may have adopted.<sup>800</sup> The Gaddi Rajput are divided into high and low social categories consisting of Rajput, Khatri, Thakur and Rathi. Gotra or clan exogamy exists. Each of them are further sub—divided into baherla gotra divisions which are of Brahmanical origin such as Bhardwaj, Deval, Uttam etc., and anderla gotra divisions or als which are of territorial origin and are exogamous such as Chakar, Dinran, Kadan, Misan, Pakhru, Ranyan etc. They use Singh as surname.<sup>801</sup> In addition to their traditional and primary occupation of priesthood, the Gaddi Brahmins have taken to agriculture which is supplemented with wage labour and service. While the major economic activity of the Gaddi Rajputs is agriculture, they have taken to

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<sup>799</sup> Ibid., 270

<sup>800</sup> Ibid., 270-271

<sup>801</sup> C. Singh, "A Strategy of Interdependence: Gaddi, Peasant, and State in Himachal." In 'From Tribe to Caste', Ed. by Dev Nathan. Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, (1997): 376

pastoralism as a subsidiary means of livelihood. A few have also taken up teaching, government and private jobs. Newell reports that although the term Gaddi is etymologically connected with the word with the “high pasture” and in common usage refer to shepherds, by no means all Gaddis have any association with the care and pasturing of sheep.<sup>802</sup> The Gaddis are not an egalitarian tribe, as they have a hierarchy of their own. But among those Gaddis who own flocks, there is a definite cycle of activity which repeats itself every year. During the summer, the sheep and goats are pastured in the mountains on the south and west of Chandra Bhaga River in Lahul or in the pastures on the Bam Bangahal. As autumn approaches the shepherds travel slowly down the valley below Kugti to Bharmaur where they remain two or three weeks. As the autumn continues, they travel up the Ravi over nearly all the passes between Holi and Baijnath. They remain in the tops until snow drives them down to the Kangra plains, where they arrive as late as possible. There they pasture their flocks on the fields before the autumn (Kharif) crops are planted and receive payment from the landowners for so doing. They remain in the valley all the winter, until, as the spring approaches, they return to Bharmaur.<sup>803</sup> The Gaddi are Shaivites and believe in Shakti cult. They also worship supernatural powers which they believe prevail in certain natural objects. The gods of Hindu pantheon are propitiated in addition to the regional deity, Mahasu and the family deities. Manimahesh Yatra is a very important fair for them.<sup>804</sup> To the Gaddis, the area around Bharmaur has a religious significance expressed by the few ancient monuments

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<sup>802</sup> W.H. Newell, “Census of India 1961, Himachal Pradesh, Report on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes”, Vol. xx. Part V—B, 1967, p. 30

<sup>803</sup> Ibid., 30-31

<sup>804</sup> Census 1991 Series—9 Himachal Pradesh District Census Handbook Part Xii—A & B Village & Town Directory Village & Townwise Primary Census Abstract Chamba District Director Of Census Operations, Himachal Pradesh, p. 6—7

which had withstood the passing of time. Behind the *maidan*, the square in the middle of Bharmaur, there still remains traces of the rajah's palace in which his wives used to promenade in the tenth century. In front of the square there still stands a well preserved and impressive mountain temple to which certain hereditary Brahmins make a traditional monthly *puja* (worship) on behalf of the whole Gaddi community and to which is attached a number of priests (*sadhu/sage*) supported by the former revenues of temple lands. The importance of the shrine is shown by the annual pilgrimage of Indians from the plains and even from the south, who travel on to the festival held at Lake Manimahesh at the top of the valley.<sup>805</sup> To the Gaddis these pilgrims are a source of income and a long standing proof of the importance of their valley to the larger Indian continent. But to the residents, the importance of the valleys to the gods needs no emphasis. The larger mountains are named after gods. Mt. Kailash is the seat of Shiva and his consort Parvati and his trident, which flashes in the lightning is the national symbol of the valley. At the top of every pass is a shrine at which the herdsmen sacrifice a beast or the traveller presents a small coin.<sup>806</sup> Along the paths are pillars of rock which are either a memorial to some Gaddi killed in a battle with a bear or else a warning to the traveller to look up to some sacred shrine or monument which can be seen from that position. The religious beliefs of the Gaddis can almost be said to have a topography for each monument stands to testify to the manifestation of the gods at a particular spot. Behind Bharmaur at a height of several thousand feet above the town stands the sacred Brahmani spring which gives a perpetual unfrozen water supply to the town. This is the only spring unaffected totally by either

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<sup>805</sup> Anja Wagner, "The Gaddi Beyond Pastoralism: Making Place in the Indian Himalayas", : Berghahn Books, (New York, 2013): 33

<sup>806</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34

snow or drought and there is an appropriate religious myth of origin to validate its performance. These various geographic religious and social features of the valley are connected together and united by various charters, such as the story of Triloknath Dev which joins Manimahesh, the Bud Nadi (now Bramhaputra), the Ravi, the Gods and the Rani of Chamba together into a unity. And many of the local shrines were mysteriously created by *nags* or *devis* who still live in some of the valleys. Injustice would be done to the inhabitants of the valley if an impression was made that the religious beliefs of the valley residents were somehow not separate from their ordinary living. The whole of the valley (with the exception of those few outsiders working within the area) have a common way of thinking and behaviour which is only now gradually weakening. This unity primarily rests on certain fundamental religious values and ways of behaviour peculiar to the inhabitants, preserved by the language and the topography and encouraged by the method of administration of the Rajah before independence.<sup>807</sup> What is so interesting about this unity however is the impossibility of dividing the Gaddi religion into the ‘Great Tradition’ and the ‘Small Tradition’ described by Bernard Cohn (1955).<sup>808</sup> The only gods, *devis* and *nags* found in the Bharmaur tahsil are those found in the Indian continent at large and there are no special local gods found at the village level which are not directly within the main Sanskrit pantheon. The rituals associated with marriage and death (although somewhat elaborated) make use of no special local Gods which are not found in Indian society at large. There are no special features of Gaddi society which cannot be

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<sup>807</sup> Redfield, Robert. “The Social Organization of Tradition.” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1955): 13  
Retrieved on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 11am, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2942099>.

<sup>808</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15



regarded as “purely Hindu”<sup>809</sup> within the wider meaning of the term. Religiosity have made them nature friendly. Their ecology seemed to be bound with preservation of nature in an automatic way.

### **Rituals and Customs**

There is no objection to widow remarriage, the *sudenoj*, the custom of a bride going to her husband’s house one year after marriage, and the well—established prophets (chela) of the Sechuin village are not part of the Brahminical tradition of India although they certainly seem to be well within the Great Tradition as the term is used by Bernard Cohn (1955).<sup>810</sup> But the important distinction in Bharmaur is not between those customs which are found all over India and those which are not but between those customs which are closely connected with the way of life of the people and those which are not so closely connected. To give an example, In Bharmaur there are temples of Shiva, Vishnu and Ganesa. Yet, a Gaddi who wishes to offer thanks to God for some mercy vouchsafed to him will always offer it to the temples of Shiva and the temples to Vishnu and Ganesa are rarely used except at the festival of Manimahesh and there is no special pujari dedicated to their worship. Any pujari family can go to any temple. In accordance with this, in Gaddi tradition, there are many stories and tales about Shiva. Shiva is a Gaddi personality known to everyone but Vishnu and Ganesa, although known to Brahmins and occasionally appearing in the ‘yajna’ at marriage is not a Gaddi god in the same way as Shiva. Yet all three are indubitably part of the Great Tradition as described by Bernard Cohn (1955).<sup>811</sup>

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<sup>809</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, "The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste," in *Village India*, ed. by McKim Marriott, (Comparative Studies in Cultures and Civilizations, ed. by Robert Redfield and Milton Singer) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955): 45

<sup>810</sup> *Ibid.*, 46

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47

This feature of hill culture has also been noted by G. Berreman (1930—2013), where in the village of Sirkanda near Tehri Garhwal, he mentions the special position of the Pandava Brothers in the village culture where the Pandavas (although having two wives) play a special part in the society not found among any of the other Gods. It is thus clear, that to use the words tribes or castes as referring to the Bharmauris is a misuse of the word.<sup>812</sup> It is clear, both from the nature of the society and its known history, that the founders and members of Bharmauri society, have deliberately from the beginning been determined to set up a distinctively Hindu culture tied to the *sutras*, and to the environment in a way, little affected by outside changes in the wider Indian society, although they are conscious of them. During the last 600 years, the Bharmauris have never been compelled by an outside power to modify their beliefs in the direction of either Islam or secularism. The situation is rather one where the only true Hindu State has been that of Bharmaur, many ideas of which have been adopted by the outside society albeit unconsciously. But whereas the outside wider Indian society has changed considerably in the direction of secularism, only within the last fifty years have the Indians from the plains come back as the bearers of the true culture with money to change the Gaddi society from its true allegiance to Shiva and the plain and simple life akin to nature.<sup>813</sup> Thus the Bharmauris are not so much a tribe or caste as a society without definite boundaries which formerly included groups in Billing, the Kangra plains in Dharamsala and Palampur and perhaps in the Bhattiyat but which has gradually become smaller and smaller within the last hundred years driven back by the more powerful Indian semi—secular culture.<sup>814</sup>

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<sup>812</sup> Gerald D. Berreman, "Caste as Social Process." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 23, no. 4 (1967): 351, retrieved on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2022, 3:00pm, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3629451>.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*, 351-352

<sup>814</sup> S. S. Shashi. "The Gaddi Tribe of Himachal Pradesh", *Sterling*, (Delhi 1977): 19-20

There are not launching any scheduled environmental movement, while the nature is kept 'as it is' by them. The wider Indian culture here is referred to as a 'secular culture' only, by contrast, because the aims of the socially mobile in the large Indian society are no longer regarded in terms of religious office but in terms of government service and the making of money. Although the Indian divinity have not disappeared, but, it had lost much of its ethos in the outside world although the rituals associated with it continue to be carried on in a formal fashion. Thus, one has to accept Bharmauri society as essentially a Hindu centered religious group still accepting Hindu traditional values. If present day Indian society's aim is secular, then indeed Gaddi society is backward with few transport facility, great overpopulation and a high degree of illiteracy. It is the Gaddis who have succeeded in blending religion into their everyday affairs in a way not found among many other modern Indian groups.<sup>815</sup> To summarise this chapter, it can be stated that, although the inhabitants of Bharmaur and the surrounding districts belong to a special social group termed Gaddis, they are nevertheless part of the mainstream Hindu tradition and have been so from the beginning of their written history. Their distinctiveness within the Hindu tradition rests on four factors, their history which has been continuous for at least a thousand years, their political system and privileged position in the wider Chamba State which has given them a high degree of self—government, the special position of the Rajah as representative and owner of the national interest in land and their strong connection with the gods especially Shiva who resided on a mountain within Gaddi—land and played

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<sup>815</sup> Government of Himachal Pradesh. Directory of Villages, Directory of Villages, Concentration of Scheduled Tribe Population Excluding Scheduled Areas in Himachal Pradesh (2011-Census), Tribal Development Department, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh, Shimla. 2011, 2. Retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 10am, [http://admis.hp.nic.in/himachal/tribal/Directory of ST Villages 2015](http://admis.hp.nic.in/himachal/tribal/Directory%20of%20ST%20Villages%202015), p. 10

an active part in the ritual and rules of the social system. History, politics, land and religion all form different facets of the national character, of the nature—prone Gaddis.<sup>816</sup>

### **Transhumant Gaddis**

Transhumance is a traditional livelihood practice that is followed by human communities in many mountainous and arid regions of the globe. It involves spatial and temporal movement of herders along with their livestock and has evolved as a strategy that maximises seasonal utilisation of resources between areas that are spatially apart for better environmental management. It focuses on outdoor grazing of animals in natural pastures and ensures the availability of water, fodder vis—a—vis protection from harsh environmental conditions. Transhumance is manifested in two major forms, vertical transhumance, wherein the herders move from lowland winter pasturelands to high—altitude summer pastures, and horizontal transhumance from dry season pastures to rainy season pastures. While the latter is common in arid land areas such as Sahel, in Himachal Pradesh, the former is predominant in high mountain ranges such as the Himalaya.<sup>817</sup> Both these forms vary with regards to distance covered and stay in each location. However, they both are guided by predetermined routes and area—specific practices. Herders’ knowledge and their social networks are important factors in adopting the transhumance lifestyle to ensure a livelihood that goes far beyond the production of market goods such as meat, fibre, wool. In addition to the traditional and cultural heritage, it shapes the rural landscapes and plays an important role in guiding the ecology and

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<sup>816</sup> Ibid., 10-11

<sup>817</sup> William H. Newell, “Census Of India 1961 Volume Xx—Part V—B Himachal Pradesh Report On Scheduled Castes And Scheduled Tribes (A Study Of Gaddi—Scheduled Tribe—And Affiliated Castes)”, (The Gaddi And Affiliated Castes Of The Western Himalayas, ‘1: Introduction And Background’), p. 13

economy of the region. This requires deep knowledge of locations as well the availability of natural resources along the respective migratory routes. Thus, traditional knowledge of the communities allows them to adapt to local conditions along with their livestock and ensure sustenance. Despite being acknowledged worldwide; the practice of transhumance is now being reported to be at risk because of increasing social and biophysical challenges that include market, land use transformations, and farmer—herder conflicts.<sup>818</sup> State policies on forest and farming also affect the movement of transhumant communities. Similarly, the fast—spreading weeds and the changing climate are noted to be affecting transhumance. These challenges increase the vulnerability of the transhumant communities and their livelihood. Diversifying income sources is, therefore, a key strategy to reduce vulnerability. However, it is argued to result in declining traditional knowledge of the transhumant communities that is so critical for transhumance as it not only guides their movement, but also dictates the use of natural resources on way. Therefore, transhumance and traditional knowledge run hand—in—hand. Most of the Gaddis are transhumant sheep and goat herders that derive their name from Gadderan, the Bharmour region of Himachal Pradesh.<sup>819</sup> They own permanent houses in Bharmour and practice farming too. While the males migrate, their family stays at their permanent settlements and manages agriculture. The importance of livestock in their life is reflected by the fact that they call it “Dhan” meaning money,<sup>820</sup> which is primarily because of the economic benefits they derive from the sale of livestock (for meat), wool, and other

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<sup>818</sup> Veena Bhasin, “Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh: Himalayan Ecology, Transhumance, and Social Organisation”, *Kamla-Raj Publications*, (Delhi 1987): 44

<sup>819</sup> Mahesh Sharma, “Ritual, Performance, and Transmission: The Gaddi Shepherds of Himachal Himalayas”, *Oral Tradition*, 29/2 (2015): 271

<sup>820</sup> *Ibid.*, 271-272

products. To sustain these, they migrate to and fro the mountain passes in search of greener pastures. In winter, the Gaddis move to lower altitudes while in summers they camp in high altitude pastures along with their flocks. As Gaddis continually use the same trek across years, their knowledge of trekking and the available resources is immense. From treating livestock ailments to self—care, they often use the available resources.<sup>821</sup> Their knowledge of wool, dyes and their processing is also noteworthy.<sup>822</sup> The practice of Gaddi transhumance is primarily dependent on agricultural and pastoral activities. It is a male—dominated occupation and the responsibility of herds of entire village is given to four to five people of the same village. Rest of the male and female population is engaged in agriculture and other associated activities. Transhumance is a very risky and tough practice due to difficult terrain and adverse climatic conditions. From different surveys, it is clear that with the availability of new means of livelihood, younger population of Gaddis are not eager to continue this traditional occupation. One clear inference we can draw from this is that transhumance is no longer the preferred choice for the next generation of Gaddis.<sup>823</sup> The educational structure and penetration of basic education is very poor among the tribal communities of Chamba in general and of Gaddis in particular. Out of many respondents, more than 50 percent were illiterate and were not aware about any welfare scheme and policy provided by the government. The respondents aged more than fifty were all illiterate. There were eighteen percent people each of whom had attained primary and secondary level education and worked as shopkeepers, farmers,

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<sup>821</sup> Alpy Sharma, Om Parkash and Sanjay Kr. Uniyal, "Moving away from transhumance: The case of Gaddis", *Environmental Technology Division, CSIR— Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology Palampur, India*, p. 1

<sup>822</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2

<sup>823</sup> A Village Survey of Brahmaur. Census of India, 1961 Vol. 20, Part 6, No. 5, New Delhi: Government of India, 1964, Press, p. 55

anganwadi workers and caretakers in power project. Out of the total number, nine percent people had either attained education till senior secondary level or were graduates, and were working as teachers in local schools or had some basic accountancy jobs in Chamba city. There are four major livelihood activities for Gaddi's in the study area, namely transhumance, agriculture, shopkeeper, and services.<sup>824</sup> Out of the surveyed population of 46,14 persons practice subsistence farming. Most of the Gaddis possess apple orchards, the single cash crop among the survey participants. However, due to lack of market availability, they are forced to sell their products to middleman, depriving them of a good earning. None of the farmers were engaged in any other activity. There were twenty one people (largest share) engaged in transhumance activity or used to work as permanent shepherds. This category also includes the ex—shepherd, who used to perform this practice earlier but have discontinued due to age—related issues. As a result, they assist their families in agriculture and run small shops in the nearby areas for sustenance.<sup>825</sup> More educated Gaddis have moved away from farm activities and are employed in service sector as teachers or anganwadi workers. 'Transhumance is not the only source of their livelihood, although it is one of the main source of their capital.'<sup>826</sup> Other than transhumance, agriculture is another major source of livelihood. Gaddi's practices subsistence farming and produce for their own consumption, not for commercial purposes. During surveys, it has been found that there were six major crops in study area, namely wheat, rajma (kidney beans), potato, rice, black gram, and millet. There was

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<sup>824</sup> Ibid., 55-56

<sup>825</sup> Himanshu Mishra and Bindhy Wasini Pandey, "Navigating the Impacts of Social and Environmental Changes to Traditional Lifestyle: A Case Study of Gaddi Transhumance of Chamba District in Himachal", *The Oriental Anthropologist A Bi—annual International Journal of the Science of Man*, p. 4

<sup>826</sup> Ibid., 4-5

evidence of production of some other crops but on a very small scale. Out of total respondents, all were producing wheat, rajma and potato while sixty percent people cultivated rice and black gram (maahdaal) and forty percent were producing millet.

### **Climate Change and its impact on the Gaddis**

The Gaddi community is severely affected due to climate change, loss of pastureland, encroachment in forest area, different types of new diseases for their cattle, less enthusiasm in present generation regarding this practice, loss and theft of cattle during vertical migration, inaccessibility to market, low educational profile, and lack of non—governmental organisations (NGOs).<sup>827</sup> Climate change in Himachal Pradesh is affecting the transhumance population in a variety of ways. The grazing ground of livestock population is susceptible to shifting to higher latitude due to warming of Himalayas. This would mean more arduous journey for Gaddis through some of the steepest mountains of the world. This could cause an already waning interest of younger generation to transhumance to fall even further. Moreover, there are researches that suggest that global warming associated with climate change could also alter the metabolic system of livestock animals and their production system. Surrounding environmental conditions directly affect mechanisms and rates of heat gain or loss by all animals. Since livestock are conditioned to particular environmental demands, sudden change in environment can lead to catastrophic losses in the domestic livestock industry.<sup>828</sup> The potential risk associated with livestock production systems due to global warming can be characterised by levels of vulnerability, as influenced by animal performance and environmental

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<sup>827</sup> Chamba District Gazetteer, 1961. Simla: Government Press, p. 31

<sup>828</sup> Chamba District Gazetteer, 1904. Lahore: Government Press, (1910): 11



parameters. When combined performance level and environmental influences create a low level of vulnerability, there is little risk (e.g., rate of gain, milk production per day, etc.). However, combining an adverse environment with high performance pushes the levels of vulnerability and consequent risk to even higher levels. Inherent genetic characteristics or management scenarios that limit the animals' ability to adapt to or cope with environmental factors also puts the animal at risk. It also affects the feed intake of the animal because ingestion of food is directly related to heat production, any change in feed intake and/or energy density of the diet will change the amount of heat produced by the animal. The ambient temperature has the greatest influence on voluntary feed intake.<sup>829</sup> Interviews with different Gaddis tribesmen also revealed that “during the entire course of journey, there is absence of a veterinary hospital, and most of the time several cattle in their herds suffer from different diseases”.<sup>830</sup> In such situation, one member of the group has to carry the cattle on shoulder and reach the nearby hospital, which is generally 35 km away from their current location. To avoid all these difficulties, they generally provide treatment to the cattle by themselves with common medicines without knowing the actual disease and, thereby, risk losing their cattle. For Gaddis, their cattle is a vital source of money and, hence, even the loss of a single cattle means economic stress. However, every year, the community loses eight to ten cattle, either by disease or by thieves or attack by wild animals.<sup>831</sup> The Gaddis were not aware about scientific terms such as climate change, market accessibility, etc., they were conscious of the challenges faced by them in their traditional system of living. In total, 85 percent of the respondents

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<sup>829</sup> Ibid., 11-12

<sup>830</sup> Aayushi Malhotra, Sailaja Nandigama and Kumar Bhattacharya, “Food, fields and forage: A socio-ecological account of cultural transitions among the Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh in India”, (2021), p. 10

<sup>831</sup> Ibid., 10-11

were very clear that temperature in grazing land is increasing and 95 percent felt that the grasslands are decreasing. Furthermore, 95 percent of respondents had previous experience of cattle loss. Market accessibility is another different attribute directly affecting the livelihood options of Gaddis. The interviews revealed the presence of surplus milk, which could not be sold and hence fed to lambs. Thus, Gaddis are aware of challenges that transhumance face in contemporary world and are eager to move to new opportunities if their traditional lifestyle is safeguarded.<sup>832</sup>

### **Threat of Transhumance among the Gaddis**

Traditional Gaddi practice of transhumance is under severe stress due to climate change and other factors. It is necessary for the community to develop new livelihood opportunities that can help them modernise their economy and at the same time preserve their traditional way of living. One of the sectors that can be exploited is woolen textile. The lambs and goats that the Gaddis own have rich hair and can be sheared for commercial wool production. Currently, the Gaddi community produces fair amount of wool in a year and have all the primary units and instruments for the production. However, they use all the wool for their own use and store them for future needs. Despite producing the best quality of wool, they are unable to use it for sale due to lack of markets. Market accessibility for selling their products made from wool can provide for an alternative livelihood for the Gaddi community in general and women in particular.<sup>833</sup> Another alternative opportunity can be provision of dairy facilities at different points in the route of vertical migration. This can be very helpful for the better source of income for Gaddis,

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<sup>832</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>833</sup> Nandita Singh, "Emerging Problems of Ownership & Exploitation of Communal Land in Tribal Society," *Man in India*, 77(2 & 3), Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd. (Delhi, 1997): 35

Similarly, specialised market for the sale and purchase of their cattle would help Gaddis get a good and competitive price of their cattle and help them escape middlemen. Gaddis spend considerable time in the abode of nature and possess indigenous knowledge of herbs and medicinal plants, which they find during their upward and downward migrations. There are so many other things related to climate change, glaciers, forest, and different routes, which can be fully utilised by research scientists for the human welfare with the help of Gaddis' indigenous knowledge and experiences.<sup>834</sup>

### **Gaddi Women of Manimahesh**

The family structure followed by Gaddi tribe is patriarchal. However, they give importance to women empowerment for development of their society. The social empowerment of Gaddi women was quite encouraging even to the level of spending money as a part of social and family affairs, that too without the permission of the male members. Women have no right to inheritance as per the traditional laws. But, her social position is regarded as equal to that of the husband. She is equal with her husband in agricultural work. She is additionally accountable for home keeping with the support of her husbands and takes care of the running of the family with necessary precaution throughout the year.<sup>835</sup> Women keeps herself involved with the work inside the house but educated women have the provision to work outside in order to support the family with her income. This doesnot mean that she keeps herself completely far away from all social, religious and ritual activities. Women's involvement in democratic process has been usually restricted to cast votes in elections. But an active involvement of women in

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<sup>834</sup> Ibid., 35-36

<sup>835</sup> Keya Pandey, "Socio-economic status of tribal women: A study of a transhumant Gaddi population of Bharmour, Himachal Pradesh, India", *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. (2011): 190

governance seems to be developing in the light of the increase in education to women.<sup>836</sup> The decision—making powers of Gaddi women extend from spending and healthcare to educational planning for their children. It is also significant that Gaddi women are not solely literate and educated but, socially empowered. Education of girls has led to change in attitude towards women as weak partners. Gaddis have started adopting the practices of transferring property rights to women. Some Gaddis have welcomed the introduction of educating for girls and breaking the traditional social taboos. The educated people of Gaddi tribe have also joined government jobs and have intermixed with other communities as well. The state's policies have encouraged the Gaddis for modern education by various incentives which are effective also. The exposure to TV and various other sources of media have helped the people to change their attitude.<sup>837</sup>

### **Status of The Gaddis: The problem continues**

The Gaddis are considered the paradigmatic pastoralists of the Western Himalayas, their notional heartland resting in Bharmour, in the Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh, a constitutionally—protected tribal area. Many Gaddis traditionally practiced transhumance, their seasonal migration routes extending between summertime Chamba highland pastures and wintertime Kangra lowlands. A sizable contingent of Gaddis permanently settled in Kangra along the southern spurs of the Dhauladhar Mountains. At that time, Kangra existed as a part of the Punjab, an area that British colonisers administered on the assumption of being tribal free (while simultaneously notifying several Punjabi castes as so—called Criminal Tribes). As a result, Gaddis living in

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<sup>836</sup> Ibid., 190-191

<sup>837</sup> T. S. Negi. "The Tribal Situation in Himachal Pradesh: Some Socio-Economic Considerations." In K.S. Singh (1972): 150

Bharmour, Himachal Pradesh, received designation as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) at the first constitutional tribal scheduling in 1950 while Gaddis living in Kangra did not.<sup>838</sup> The Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966 shifted Kangra into Himachal Pradesh, and the Mandal Commission reforms in the 1990s created favorable conditions for Gaddi ethnopolitical mobilisation. In 2002, after a multi—decade effort, Gaddi Rajputs and Gaddi Brahmins (often called Bhatt Brahmins) living in Kangra petitioned for and finally received ST status. Alongside a raft of new constitutional protections, political representation, and economic opportunities, ST Gaddis in Kangra now legally held status akin to their ST Gaddi kin in Bharmour. The bureaucratic loophole that had divided Gaddis based on seemingly—arbitrary geographical locality now closed. Gaddis joyfully paraded in the streets of Dharamsala.<sup>839</sup> But the story is more complicated. While Kangra Gaddi Rajputs and Gaddi Brahmins celebrated their hard—won ST status, Gaddi Dalits lamented their exclusion from the petition for reclassification. They felt used by Gaddi leaders who led state ethnologists, during their tribal survey to ascertain if Gaddis living in Kangra were ‘authentically tribal’, into areas inhabited by impoverished Gaddi Dalit but then ultimately excluded these same Gaddi Dalits from the petition. These Gaddi Dalits—five castes in total, encompassing Sippi, Rihare, Badi, Dhogri and Hali—have variable degrees of Gaddi consciousness in how they self—identify as Gaddi, speak Gaddi language and exhibit various aspects of Gaddi culture and spirituality. They live in Gaddi villages and, in many cases, lived earlier in subordinate *jajmānī* relations or labored under a system of unfree agricultural bondage called *hālīprathā*. Over centuries, they went

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<sup>838</sup> Ruchi Saini, “The Gaddi Tribe: Struggling to preserve its Identity”, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022, 4:00 pm, p. 20-21, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341215940>

<sup>839</sup> *Ibid.*, 22

through a process of tribalisation to partially—integrate into Gaddi life, but still they faced systemic casteism from Gaddi Rajputs and Brahmins in the domains of caste commensality, highland pastureland restrictions, caste endogamy and ritual exclusion. Some of these practices continue through today, although grassroots mobilisations seek Dalit inclusion as Gaddis and some mainstream Gaddi civic organisations broadly count SC Gaddis as authentically Gaddi. An ongoing social contestation in Kangra weighs whether the Gaddi tribe includes only ST Gaddis or embraces self—identifying SC Gaddis, as well.<sup>840</sup>

### **Initiative taken by the Government to protect the Gaddis**

The Forest Rights Act [Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights)] notified on January 1, 2008, forged new grounds and brought fresh hopes for the battered Gaddi community. The Act conferred rights over natural resources in order to secure a living, coupled with the responsibility of using forest resources sustainably. By combining livelihood with use and conservation of natural resources, the Act opens up the possibility of sustainable pastoralism. The Gaddi need legally sanctioned and managed access to forest commons to protect the traditional means of conservation of Himalayan flora and fauna. The Forest Rights Act confers access rights, but procedural delays remain. With increased technological upgradation, monitoring the movement of Gaddi and other transhumant tribes can be undertaken through GPS and participation interlinked with tangible biodiversity improvement

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<sup>840</sup> Stephen Christopher, “A State, Union Territory and Three Political Classifications: The Gaddi Sippis of J&K and Himachal Pradesh”, p. 10

studies.<sup>841</sup> Research on carrying capacity and changing mindsets of forest and wild biodiversity experts can enhance the role of the Gaddi in establishing sustainable environments. Experiences from other countries should be analysed for their applicability to India and the Gaddi could gain much from exposure to such programmes. With various employment schemes and other benefits offered by the government, it is odd that the Gaddi have preferred to bear various levels of hardship in order to continue their traditional vocation. But, times are changing – lucrative short term employment schemes in the offing coupled with reduced long term rights to forage are slowly pushing herders out of business. Agriculture now holds more promise, the Gaddi feel and their future depends on the political decisions made by state and central governments. A more participatory and inclusive approach by the forest authorities in grazing and herders' rights would be effective for long term conservation, management of forest resources and sustainable grazing practices. On the downside, the Act perpetuates what the colonisers had set up – individual/household permits in lieu of community rights. As sustainability concerns are community driven, perhaps conferring community rights would have been an appropriate option. As of now the Gaddi herders are applying to village/community committees already set up, or are in the process of constituting a village committee.<sup>842</sup> It was stated by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur while addressing the Sheep Breeders Conference organised by HP Wool Federation at Banuri in Palampur area of Kangra

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<sup>841</sup> Anja Wagner, "The Gaddi Beyond Pastoralism: Making Place in the Indian Himalayas", *Berghahn Books*, (New York, 2013): 33

<sup>842</sup> Ruchi Saini, "The Gaddi Tribe: Struggling to preserve its Identity", retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022, 4:00 pm, p. 25, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341215940>

district on Saturday after inaugurating the Tribal Community and Training Centre building constructed by spending an amount of Rupees one crore that:

“The Himachal Pradesh government is committed to the welfare of Gaddi community and would initiate new schemes for making sheep rearing more profitable. It was in the year 2000 during the tenure of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at the Centre as well as in the state, when the Gaddi community was accorded tribal status. The state government has directed Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police to ensure strict action against the offenders involved in theft of sheep and goats of the Gaddi people. As a result the Gaddis would be provided Rams of good breed so as to get high quality wool. The people of the State had given massive mandate to the present state government in the recently concluded elections of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies. Out of 63 Block Development Committee (BDC) results which were declared, the BJP supported candidates have won 57 BDC seats. The people of the state have also ensured that the BJP won all the elections held during the last three years including the Lok Sabha as well as the by—elections. The people of the state were supposed to be satisfied with the developmental and welfare oriented policies and programmes of the state government. The present state government during the last three years has initiated several welfare schemes for upliftment of the poor and downtrodden. The Himachal Grihini Suvidha Yojna had been launched to provide free gas connections to households devoid of the same. As many as 2.90 lakh free gas connections under this scheme have been provided, thereby making Himachal Pradesh a Smoke Free State of the country. The Union Government had started Ayushman Bharat Yojna to provide health cover of Rs 5 lakh to every family. To cover the families left out from Ayushman Bharat Yojna, the



state government started ‘Him Care’ scheme. Till date as many as 1.50 lakh families have derived benefit of this scheme and an amount of Rs 150 crore have been spent on this. The state government has also started Sahara Yojana, under which the families with chronically ill patients are provided financial assistance of Rs 3000 per month. As many as 15 thousand people have been benefited under this scheme. Under the Mukhyamantri Swavalamban Yojana the state government is providing a loan of Rs 40 lakh to the youth to start self—employment ventures. Twenty five percent subsidy was being provided to the youth under this scheme, whereas women and girls were being provided 30 percent subsidy. Thousands of youth had come forward to avail the benefit of this scheme and had become job providers instead of job seekers.”<sup>843</sup>

Though the Gaddis have started getting some of the benefits of a welfare state initiated in India after independence, many of their problems are yet remaining unsolved. In this context, it can be said that the novel Manimahesh has worked as an eye opener for a common researcher on the nature—based beliefs of the Gaddis. The novel is a wide exposure of this tribe and reveals its ecological sustainability in a world of consumerism. The basic reading on the Gaddis found from the novel has created newer understanding of the Gaddi tribes’ accommodation with the forests and mountains and nature, in general. Their ‘spirituality’ and indigenous knowledge system can teach us a lesson towards preservation of environment.

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<sup>843</sup> “HP government committed to welfare of Gaddi tribals: CM,” Statesman News Service, Shimla, February 7, 2021

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

To sum up the whole thesis, what we can derive from this work is very unique in nature. Literature has always been written in a very romantic way, mainly focussing on the beauty of nature and its surroundings. In most instances, novels which are based on environment, mainly forests, portray the beauty of the environment and while doing so, to some extent, the novelists tend to overlook the situation of the surrounding people of that particular geographical area. The novelists get so much engrossed in the beauty of nature that 'living being' does not trigger their consciousness. Though, there are some exceptional works, where the novelists try to absorb themselves with the people of the place, where the story of the novels are situated, and try to understand their world and their sufferings through their eyes. But, that is very rare, compared to the vast genre of literary works, which are accessible to the readers. So, my main work is to situate the eco-critical novels historically. With this work, new interest of literature reading and researching can be created, because, this kind of work has not been done before where core literature is being situated in a historical time zone, by making it a historical narrative of the interdependency between man and nature. People, their history and their socio-ecology which are found in the novels are essential for a study of environmental history. In this research, issues of political and social history, beliefs in nature based spirituality and environmental degradation are intertwined for the necessity of a historical narrative.

The three novels that I have taken into account are 'Palamau' by Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay, 'Aranyak' by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay and 'Manimahesh' by Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay. These three novels are absolutely unique in its character from their individual story writing perspective. The novels 'Palamau' and 'Aranyak' are situated in more or less similar landscapes in the Bihar, Jharkhand, Chota Nagpur plateau area, and in a colonial environment, but their visions are absolutely different from each other. 'Manimahesh' on the other hand is situated in the Himalayan coniferous forests of Himachal Pradesh in a post-colonial environment. The novelists in these three novels had made forests their main theme, where they also, talked widely about the forest dwellers, little knowing that this analysis of forest and forest dwellers would someday open a wide area for historical research.

A very important part of my thesis are the forest dwellers whom we refer to as the 'Tribes'. The Tribes whom we come across in 'Palamau' and 'Aranyak' are the Kols, the Santhals, the Oraons, the Mundas, the Hos etc., who are distinct in their characteristics, they are the aboriginals fighting for their rights in their own lands. In contrast to them in 'Manimahesh' we see the Gaddis who are the worshippers of Lord Shiva and have a very different life, not the one we read or assume or see about the tribal people. The Gaddis are class based tribals, they have divided themselves into upper class Gaddis and the lower class Gaddis, the upper class Gaddis have succeeded in getting their tribal rights, whereas the lower class Gaddis are still struggling to gain their rights from the Government. The Himachal Pradesh Government calls the Gaddis a 'community' and not a tribal class. So, the study of all the tribes have also helped in making a comparison of the lives of the tribals of different parts of India. While the Kols, the Santhals, the Oraons and other tribes

took active part in revolts and agitations against the British, the Gaddis on the other hand were peace loving and they tried to maintain their ancestral lineage as their history traces back to that of the Rajputs.

Amalgamating the relationship between nature and man, that is, the forest and the forest dwellers, and exploring the wider aspects of the effects of outside encroachment in the forest, posed a threat to the lives of the forest dwellers. This led them to revolt against the government, and demand for a separate social status. Seeing this through the eyes of literature and interpreting it on a historical perspective have made my research different in its own way, making way for further research in this genre.

State	No. Of Hill Districts(2011)	Geographical Area(km <sup>2</sup> ) [GA](2011) under Hilly Terrain	Total Forest Cover Area(km <sup>2</sup> )(in Hill Districts)(2011)(TFCA)	(TFCA)% of [GA]	Change (2011-2009)
Arunachal Pradesh	13	83,743	67,410	80.5	-74
Assam	3	19,153	12,985	67.8	-18
Himachal Pradesh	12	55,673	14,679	26.37	11
Jammu & Kashmir	14	222,236	22,539	10.14	2
Karnataka	6	48,046	23,200	48.29	0
Kerala	10	29,572	13,687	46.28	-13
Maharashtra	7	69,905	15,502	22.18	-6
Manipur	9	22,327	17,090	76.54	-190
Meghalaya	7	22,429	17,275	77.02	-46
Mizoram	8	21,081	19,117	90.68	-66
Nagaland	8	16,579	13,318	80.33	-146
Sikkim	4	7,096	3,359	47.34	0
Tamil Nadu	5	22,789	6,372	27.96	5
Tripura	4	10,486	7,977	76.07	-8
Uttarakhand	13	53,483	24,496	45.8	1
West Bengal	1	3,149	2,289	72.69	0
<b>All States</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>707,747</b>	<b>281,295</b>	<b>39.75</b>	<b>-548</b>

*Image (1) Total Forest Cover in Hill Districts of India as per Census of 2011.*



SANTAL WOMEN CARRYING PITCHERS FROM THE WELL.

*Image (2) Picture of some Santhal Women of the Chota Nagpur region.*



A MUNDA YOUTH.

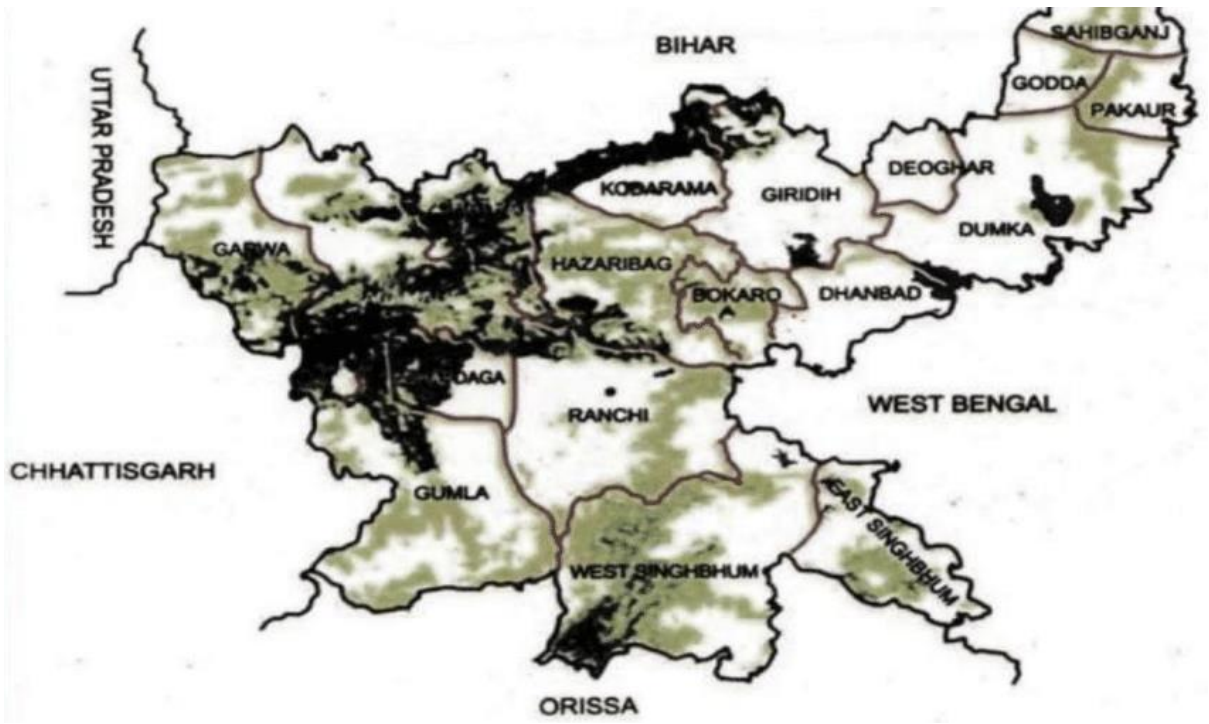
*Image (3) Picture of a young Munda boy captured by F.B. Bradley Birt while his stay in Chota Nagpur.*



A HO FAMILY (THREE GENERATIONS).

*Image (4) A Ho tribal family of Chota Nagpur*





*Image (5) Forest Area of Jharkhand*

CASTE.	DISTRIBUTION.			REMARKS.
	Male.	Female.	Total.	
1	2	3	4	5
Agaria ...	71	69	140	Iron smelters of Palamau
Asur Agaria ...	369	295	664	
Babhan ...	1,871	1,932	3,803	
Baidya ...	168	178	346	
Bainab ...	192	149	341	
Baniya ...	3,735	3,549	7,284	
(1) Kasarwani ...	211	211	422	
(2) Khatri ...	253	185	438	
(3) Hauniar ...	1,141	482	2,123	
Baruk ...	860	805	1,665	
Barhi ...	1,824	2,008	3,832	
Barai ...	281	307	588	
Bhat ...	2,314	2,551	4,865	
Bhuniya ...	9,752	9,478	19,230	
Birjia ...	269	263	532	
Brahman ...	7,647	8,043	15,690	
Chasur ...	8,219	8,543	16,762	
Chero ...	6,976	7,089	14,065	
Chik ...	3,555	3,406	6,961	
Dhanuk ...	1,188	1,292	2,480	

CASTE.	DISTRIBUTION.			REMARKS.
	Male.	Female.	Total.	
1	2	3	4	5
Dhoby ...	2,805	3,093	5,898	Sub-caste of Kherwars. Ditto. Ditto. *I believe that the majority of these are Oraons and not Mundas. The latter caste are seldom met with in Palamau, whereas Oraons are found in considerable numbers throughout the district.
Dom ...	1,042	1,005	2,047	
Dosadh ...	12,570	12,174	24,744	
Gayeri ...	2,394	2,669	5,063	
Ghasi ...	1,227	1,180	2,407	
Goala (Ahir) ...	12,171	12,383	24,554	
Gond ...	342	207	549	
Gosait ...	103	92	195	
Gosain ...	615	548	1,163	
Gulguliya ...	218	227	445	
Hajam and Napit ...	2,988	3,213	6,201	
Halwai and Maira ...	1,055	906	1,961	
Hari and Mehter ...	302	249	551	
Hindustani ...	386	433	819	
Jaiswar ...	91	103	194	
Jhora ...	14	22	36	
Kabar ...	12,049	13,569	25,618	
Kalwar and Sunri ...	2,693	2,700	5,393	
Kandu ...	3,255	3,209	6,464	
Kansari ...	289	269	558	
Kayasth ...	1,778	1,577	3,355	
Kawat or Mallah ...	25	13	38	
Kharia ...	11,258	11,401	22,659	
Kherwar ...	20,394	21,393	41,787	
(1) Bhogta ...	6,453	6,327	12,780	
(2) Gounju ...	825	877	1,702	
(3) Manjhi ...	109	64	173	
Kissan ...	2,326	1,998	4,324	
Koiri ...	11,115	11,229	22,344	
Korwa ...	3,213	3,156	6,369	
Kumhar ...	3,014	2,960	5,974	
Kurmi ...	5,342	5,734	11,076	
Lohar and Kamar ...	4,585	4,900	9,485	
Mahili ...	1,408	1,353	2,761	
Mallar ...	4,085	4,373	8,458	
Malkar or Mali ...	310	287	597	
Manda ...	27,002	27,277	54,279*	
Nagesia ...	3	1	4	
Nuniya ...	455	486	941	
Oraon ...	23,799	24,747	48,546	
Parhaiya ...	3,172	3,163	6,335	
Paik ...	148	184	332	
Pasi ...	894	431	1,325	
Patar ...	66	58	124	
Rajput ...	12,827	12,993	25,820	
Rajwar ...	1,880	897	2,777	
Rautia ...	71	116	187	
Sarak ...	838	865	1,703	
Sonar ...	1,040	1,165	2,205	
Tanti ...	548	606	1,154	
Teli ...	6,410	6,452	12,862	
Thatera ...	164	325	489	
Turi ...	1,575	1,568	3,143	
Others ...	5,044	8,359	13,403	
Muhammadians—				
(1) Pathans ...	2,958	3,112	6,070	
(2) Sayyad ...	633	582	1,215	
(3) Sheik ...	20,051	19,489	39,540	
(4) Jolaha ...	1,246	1,227	2,473	
Total ...	2,94,320	3,02,450	5,96,770	

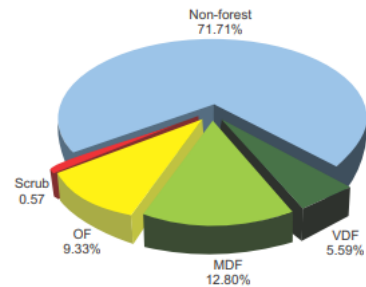
Image (6) Distribution of people according to caste in Palamau District Census

Handbook, 1981.

State	No. of committees	Total Forest Cover	Area under JFM	JFM area as % of total forest sector
Andhra Pradesh	6575	43290	16322	37.70
Arunachal Pradesh	10	68602	53	0.08
Assam	101	23824	31	0.13
Bihar	1675	26524	9350	35.25
Gujarat	706	12578	910	7.23
Haryana	350	604	607	100.50
Himachal Pradesh	203	12521	620	4.95
J & K	1599	20440	793	3.88
Karnataka	1212	32403	128	0.40
Kerala	21	10334	40	0.39
Madhya Pradesh	12038	131195	58000	44.21
Maharashtra	502	46143	947	2.05
Mizoram	103	18775	58	0.31
Nagaland	55	14221	6	0.04
Orissa	3704	46941	4193	8.93
Punjab	89	1387	390	28.12
Rajasthan	2705	13353	2356	17.64
Sikkim	98	3129	22	0.70
Tamil Nadu	599	17064	2244	13.15
Tripura	157	5546	162	2.92
Uttar Pradesh	197	33994	345	1.01
West Bengal	3431	8349	4906	58.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>36130</b>	<b>591217</b>	<b>102483</b>	<b>17.33</b>

*Image (7) State wise forest cover under Joint Forest Management*

Class	Area	% of GA
VDF	3,112.71	5.59
MDF	7,125.93	12.80
OF	5,194.88	9.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,433.52</b>	<b>27.72</b>
Scrub	315.28	0.57



*Image (8) Forest Cover of Himachal Pradesh*

District	Geographical Area (GA)	2019 Assessment				% of GA	Change wrt 2017 assessment	Scrub
		Very Dense Forest	Mod. Dense Forest	Open Forest	Total			
Bilaspur <sup>H</sup>	1,167	21.70	190.72	168.28	380.70	32.62	5.70	1.70
Chamba <sup>TH</sup>	6,522	767.89	1,012.51	674.76	2,455.16	37.64	12.16	20.97
Hamirpur <sup>H</sup>	1,118	38.91	102.84	213.15	354.90	31.74	41.90	12.31
Kangra <sup>H</sup>	5,739	298.76	1,288.65	766.78	2,354.19	41.02	157.19	15.66
Kinnaur <sup>TH</sup>	6,401	79.81	329.28	236.90	645.99	10.09	22.99	60.37
Kullu <sup>H</sup>	5,503	586.08	879.25	510.96	1,976.29	35.91	-10.71	23.88
Lahul & Spiti <sup>TH</sup>	13,841	15.00	30.87	114.48	160.35	1.16	-32.65	15.37
Mandi <sup>H</sup>	3,950	368.51	756.98	647.53	1,773.02	44.89	12.02	19.96
Shimla <sup>H</sup>	5,131	745.74	1,090.30	583.37	2,419.41	47.14	20.41	30.37
Sirmaur <sup>H</sup>	2,825	130.22	689.96	570.69	1,390.87	49.23	3.87	56.98
Solan <sup>H</sup>	1,936	41.44	444.54	404.31	890.29	45.99	24.29	49.38
Una <sup>H</sup>	1,540	18.65	310.03	303.67	632.35	41.06	76.35	8.33
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>55,673</b>	<b>3,112.71</b>	<b>7,125.93</b>	<b>5,194.88</b>	<b>15,433.52</b>	<b>27.72</b>	<b>333.52</b>	<b>315.28</b>

*Image (9) District Wise Forest Cover in Himachal Pradesh (2019 Assessment)*



*Image (10) District Map of Palamau with geological reference.*

8

O.S.

O.S. is aware that Mr. Gandhi has cancelled his visit to Orissa and is coming to Bihar direct from Madras. His visit to Bihar is in connection with earthquake relief work and not in regard to the Harijan movement.

The instructions to District Officers relate to Mr. Gandhi's visit in connection with the Harijan movement. It is for orders if any fresh instructions should be issued to Bihar districts in connection with his visit on relief work.

T.S.S.  
2-3-34.

In D.O. of Bihar no. 802/12 C.G. B. 3-34  
 To Commissioners of South Bihar & Bihar  
 D.O. no. 813/15 C.G. B. 3-34

From the office of the Secretary to the Government of Bihar  
 नविमंडल सचिवालय विभाग  
 (बिहार राज्य अधिलक्षणीय निदेशालय)

Perusal.

HE.  
 Perusal of the Madras [S. Govt.]

2. I had intended to show the letter to HE. in the form of a draft, but it has been signed before I intended. This is the letter which was sent to Orissa.

In Madras 6/3/34

14  
 11/2

**Image (11) Report of Gandhi's visit to Bihar on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1934**

कार्यालय: मुख्य वन संरक्षक एवं क्षेत्र निदेशक, पलामू ब्याघ्र परियोजना, डालटनगंज।

## इच्छा की अभिव्यक्ति।

पलामू ब्याघ्र आरक्ष में वन्यप्राणियों के अन्य पर्यावासों से कनेक्टिविटी और कॉरिडोर का अध्ययन, मूल्यांकन एवं स्थल विशिष्ट योजनाओं के सूत्रण हेतु इच्छा की अभिव्यक्ति का प्रस्ताव।

मुख्य वन संरक्षक एवं क्षेत्र निदेशक, पलामू ब्याघ्र परियोजना, डालटनगंज के क्षेत्राधीन पलामू ब्याघ्र परियोजना के उत्तरी प्रमंडल एवं दक्षिणी प्रमंडल के अन्तर्गत वित्तीय वर्ष 2019-20 में वन्यप्राणियों के अन्य पर्यावासों यथा संजयडुमरी, अद्यानकमार (छतीसगढ़) इत्यादि से कनेक्टिविटी और कॉरिडोर का अध्ययन, मूल्यांकन एवं स्थल विशिष्ट योजनाओं के सूत्रण करने का निर्णय लिया गया है। इच्छुक मान्यता प्राप्त सरकारी एवं गैर सरकारी संस्थाओं से अनुरोध है कि वे अपना प्रस्ताव दिनांक 31.10.2019 को अपराह्न 4:00 बजे तक निम्नवत् अभिलेखों/शर्तों के साथ समर्पित करें-

1. संस्था का निबंधन पत्र की छायाप्रति।
2. नियमानुसार ईनकम टैक्स, रजिस्ट्रेशन/जीओएसटी/टैन नं० आदि का प्रमाण एवं अन्य आवश्यक कागजात।
3. संस्था/ट्रस्ट/कम्पनी का बैंक कार्ड।
4. संस्था/ट्रस्ट/कंपनी का अनुभव प्रमाण पत्र।
5. विगत तीन वर्षों का ईनकम टैक्स रिटर्न।
6. संस्था के बैंक में शामिल विशेषज्ञों की सूची।
7. अपने प्रस्ताव के लिए संस्थाओं को Time Table/ Time Frame समर्पित करना होगा एवं उनके कार्यों की Mid-term समीक्षा अधोहस्ताक्षरी एवं प्रधान मुख्य वन संरक्षक, वन्यप्राणी एवं मुख्य वन्यप्राणी प्रतिपालक, झारखण्ड, राँची द्वारा की जाएगी।
8. Mid-term समीक्षा में दिय गए सुझावों को सम्मिलित करना संस्थाओं के लिए बाध्यता होगी। अपने प्रस्ताव के साथ संस्थाओं एवं कंपनी को **1000 शब्दों** में कार्यों की रूपरेखा एवं कार्यप्राणली (Methodology) का उल्लेख करना आवश्यक होगा।
9. संस्थाओं के चयन में उनके द्वारा समर्पित संलेख एवं संस्था का Reputation विशेषज्ञों की सूची एवं कार्य अनुभव को प्राथमिकता दी जाएगी। चूंकि यह किसी सामग्री का क्रय नहीं है अतः संस्थाओं के चयन के न्यूनतम दर का प्रस्ताव देने पर उनका चयन करना कमिटी की बाध्यता नहीं होगी।

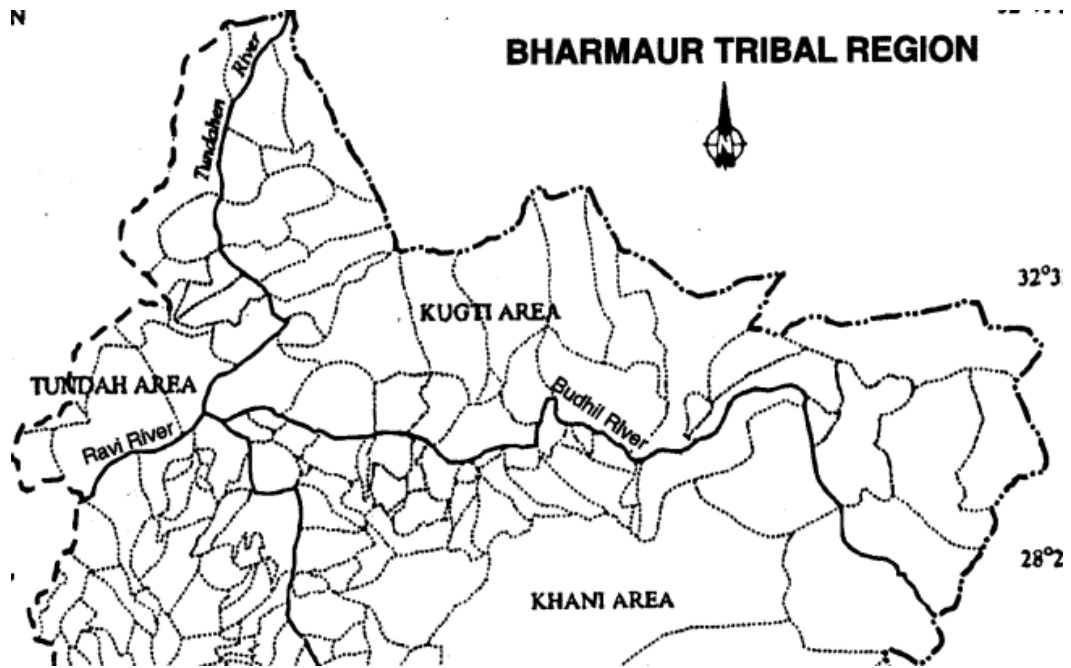
इस अध्ययन का उद्देश्य कार्यों की गुणवत्ता एवं उनका वन्यप्राणी प्रबंधन में प्रभाव एवं भविष्य की योजनाओं की आवश्यकता के संबंध में रिपोर्ट तैयार करना होगा।

नोट:- अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा बिना कारण बताये किसी भी वक्त इच्छा की अभिव्यक्ति रद्द की जा सकती है।

मुख्य वन संरक्षक एवं क्षेत्र निदेशक,  
पलामू ब्याघ्र परियोजना, डालटनगंज।

E-Drive/CCF & FD 2018/ Account Section/ Vacancy Chk ki Abhwaki

**Image (12) A notice for Forest Protection Schemes of the Palamau Tiger Reserve Forest.**



*Image (13) Tribal Area of Bharmaur, Himachal Pradesh*



In so far as land related issues are concerned, the Ministry of Rural Development, Department of Land Resources (DoLR), is the nodal Ministry at the Centre, which plays a monitoring role in the field of land reforms. Land and its management fall under the exclusive legislative and administrative jurisdiction of States as provided under the Constitution of India (Seventh Schedule I, List II (State List), Entry No. 18).

The Scheduled Tribes (STs) have been the most marginalised, isolated and deprived population. To protect and safeguarding the land rights of STs and to address the issue of Land Acquisition and displacement of tribals, following Constitutional and legal provisions have been put in place:

- I. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA) in short, in sections 4(5) states that save as otherwise provided, no member of a forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes or Other Traditional Forest Dweller shall be evicted or removed from the Forest Land under his occupation till the recognition and verification procedure is complete.
- II. Under Section 5 of FRA, Gram Sabha is, inter-alia, empowered to ensure the decision taken in Gram Sabha to regulate access to community forest resources and stop any activity which adversely affects the wild animals, forest and the biodiversity are complied with.
- III. Government has enacted the 'Right to fair compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR Act, 2013 in short). The purpose of the said Act is to ensure, in consultation with institutions of local self government and Gram Sabhas established under the Constitution, a humane, participative, informed and transparent process for land acquisition with the least disturbance to the owners of the land and other affected families and provide just and fair compensation to the affected families whose land has been acquired or proposed to be acquired.
- IV. Under Section 48 of RFCTLARR Act, 2013, a National Level Monitoring Committee for Rehabilitation and Resettlement has been constituted in the DoLR vide DoLR's Order No. 2011/04/2017-LRD dated 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 for the purpose of reviewing and monitoring the implementation of rehabilitation and resettlement schemes and plans related to land acquisition under the RFCTLARR, 2013 and National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007.
- V. By way of safeguards against displacement special provisions have been made for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes under Section 41 and 42 of the RFCTLARR Act, 2013 which protect their interest. As per Section 41 (1), as far as possible, no acquisition of land shall be made in the Scheduled Areas. As per Section 41(2), where such acquisition does take place, it shall be done only as a demonstrable last resort. As per Section 41(3), in case of acquisition or alienation of any land in Scheduled Areas, the prior consent of the concerned Gram Sabha or the Panchayats or the autonomous District Councils, at the appropriate level in Scheduled Areas under the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution, as the case may be, shall be obtained, in all cases of land acquisition in such areas, including acquisition in case of urgency, before issue of a notification under this Act, or any other Central Act or a State Act for the time being in force. The RFCTLARR Act, 2013 also lays down procedure and manner of rehabilitation and resettlement.
- VI. The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, also provides that the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be consulted before making the acquisition of land in the Scheduled Areas or development projects and before resettling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects in the Scheduled Areas, the actual planning and implementation of the projects in the Scheduled Areas shall be coordinated at the State Level.
- VII. Constitutional provision under Schedule-V also provide for safeguards against displacement of tribal population because of land acquisition etc. The Government of the State which has scheduled Areas is empowered to prohibit or restrict transfer of land from tribals and regulate the allotment of land to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such areas. Land being a State subject, various provisions of rehabilitation and resettlement as per the RFCTLARR Act, 2013 are implemented by the concerned State Governments.
- VIII. The Scheduled castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989<sup>0</sup> has been introduced to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, to provide for the trial of such offences and for the relief of rehabilitation of the victims of such offences for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. Wrongfully depriving members of Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes from their land or premises or interfering with the enjoyment of their rights, including forest rights, over any land or premises or water or irrigation facilities or destroying the crops or taking away the produce there from amount to offence of atrocities and are subject to punishment under the said Act.

Apart from the above, a 3 judges' bench of Supreme Court in *Oxide Mining Corporation Vs. Ministry of Environment and Forest & C&W* (W.P.(c) 180 of 2011, held that forest approval cannot be granted for a development project without the informed consent of the Gram Sabhas, given after proper consideration in a duly convened Gram Sabha and passed by resolution. The Court stated that the Gram Sabha is also free to consider all the community, individual as well as cultural and religious claims.

The Ministry of Mines, vide their letter dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2017 sent a letter to all State Governments regarding signing of conditions in the lease deed in regard to FRA compliance in the cases covered under Section 10(A)(2) (c) of the Mines & Minerals (Development & Regulation) Act, 1957. In the said letter, it has been, inter-alia, mentioned that execution of lease deed shall not be construed to dilute any provision of FRA.

Further, the Ministry of Environment and Forests vide their letter dated 03.08.2009 has informed all State Governments regarding diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. This letter includes that a letter from the State Government certifying that proposals for such diversion (with full details of project and its implication, in vernacular/local languages) have been placed before each concerned Gram Sabha of forest dwellers, who are eligible under the FRA.

FRA is an Act to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation in forest land in forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose right could not be recorded.

The recognition and vesting of such forest rights under FRA is subject to the condition that such Scheduled Tribes or tribal communities or other traditional forest dwellers had occupied forest land before the 13<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2015.

The State Governments/UTs have been issued advisories by this Ministry from time to time to carry out the strict and speedy implementation of provisions of the Forest Right Act, 2006 and Rules there under and to ensure that while processing the claims of Forest dwellers under the Act, no eligible claim is rejected. In addition, recently a letter dated 26.03.2019 was also issued to all States/UTs indicating various directions issued by Ministry of Tribal Affairs regarding the implementation of FRA, 2006 circulated, to facilitate necessary action by the States/UT Governments.

I. FRA is an Act to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation in Forest land in forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose right could not be recorded.

II. The recognition and vesting of such forest rights under FRA is subject to the condition that such Scheduled Tribes or tribal communities or other traditional forest dwellers had occupied forest land before the 13<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2015.

III. As per Section 4(6) of FRA "where the forest rights re-recognized and vested by sub-section (1) are in respect of land mentioned in clause (a) of sub-section (1) of section 3 such land shall be under the occupation of an individual or family or community on the date of commencement of this Act and shall be restricted to the area under actual occupation and shall in no case exceed an area of four hectares.

## ***Image (14) Land Rights of Scheduled Tribes, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India***

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