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3. W.H. Morris-Jones, "Pakistan Post-Mortem and the Roots of Bangladesh", *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 18 (April-June), 1972, pp. 187-200.

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## **IMPACT OF SALINITY ON POOR COASTAL PEOPLE'S HEALTH: EVIDENCE FROM TWO COASTAL VILLAGES IN BANGLADESH**

Farhana Zaman \*

### **Abstract**

Despite considerable research activity over a number of years, the actual impacts of saline water intrusion on public health are still far from clear. The current study intends to supplement data to the existing knowledge regarding various types of salinity induced health risks among the coastal people. The study also analyses the socioeconomic impact of ill health on coastal people's livelihood. To serve the purpose, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed for an interview survey. A total of 318 men and women were selected purposively from two coastal villages, Keyabunia and Katabunia of Bangladesh. The results showed that salinity was intimately involved in the causal pathways of many diseases, of which hypertension, diarrhoea, dehydration and respiratory problems were mostly perceived by more than 80 per cent respondents of both the villages. An equal number of respondents of both the villages stated that their income and savings decreased significantly due to their ill health which limited their capability to work and raise treatment expenses. Besides these, indirect costs of poor health such as losing job, withdrawing children from school and migration were also not negligible. Further research is needed to investigate other potential health effects of salinity. However, this study will make the policy-makers aware of the increased risk of saline water consumption on human health in coastal areas in order to incorporate it into their strategic plans.

**Key words:** Coastal people, disease, patriarchy, saline water intrusion, women

### **1. Introduction**

Climate change due to global warming can adversely affect human health.<sup>1</sup> Global warming is expected to raise sea levels by 18 to 59 cm by the end of the 21st century due to the melting of glaciers and polar ice plus the thermal expansion of seawater.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 N. U. Ahmed *et al.*, Reaching the unreachable: barriers of the poorest to accessing NGO healthcare services in Bangladesh, *Journal of Health Population and Nutrition*, Vol. 24(4), 2006, pp. 456-466; J. H. Diaz, The influence of global warming on natural disasters and their public health outcomes, *American journal of disaster medicine*, Vol. 2(1), 2007, pp. 33-42; P. R. Hunter, Climate change and waterborne and vector-borne disease, *Journal of Applied Microbiology*, Vol. 94, 2003, pp. 37-46; M. E. Keim, Cyclones, Tsunamis, and Human Health: The Key Role of Preparedness, *Oceanography*, Vol. 19(2), 2006, pp. 40-49.
- 2 IPCC, *Climate change 2007*, Synthesis Report, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007, pp. 1-52. Available at: [https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4\\_syr.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr.pdf), last accessed on 4th May, 2017.

Rising sea levels will affect the extent of saline (>30 parts per thousand or ppt salt) or brackish (0.5-30 ppt salt) water bodies in coastal areas.<sup>3</sup> The coastal land of Bangladesh is highly threatened by sea level rise and its consequent saltwater intrusion.<sup>4</sup> Department of Public Health and Engineering considers the coastal zone of Bangladesh as the area where salinity intruded into superficial or deep aquifers.<sup>5</sup> Increase in salinity intrusion and increase in soil salinity have serious negative impacts on agriculture which eventually contributes to households' food insecurity.<sup>6</sup> This ultimately results in low calorie intake and chronic malnutrition of coastal people. A random questionnaire survey in six villages from Gabura and Munshiganj union of the Shyamnagar Upazilla found that most of the families of those villages could not afford to eat egg, fish or meat after *Aila* because of low availability of food caused by soil salinity. As a consequence, malnutrition was highly prevalent among the people of those study areas.<sup>7</sup> Besides malnutrition, deforestation and loss of vegetation due to soil salinity may damage both respiratory health as well as mental health of human being.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the effects on agricultural products, availability of fresh water has become highly seasonal in the coastal areas.<sup>9</sup> Coastal populations heavily rely on tube wells, rivers and ponds for their drinking water, cooking and bathing.<sup>10</sup> Food and

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- 3 R. J. Nicholls *et al.*, Coastal systems and low-lying areas. In M. L. Parry *et al.*, (Eds.), *Climate change 2007: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability*, Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 315-356.
  - 4 A. Nishat and N. Mukherjee, 'Climate change impacts, scenario and vulnerability of Bangladesh' in R. Shaw *et al.*, (Eds.), *Climate change adaptation actions in Bangladesh*, Springer, Japan, 2013, pp. 15-42.
  - 5 M. K. Uddin and R. Kaudstaal, *Desalination of coastal zone*, Working paper, WP005. Dhaka, Bangladesh, Program Development Office for the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plant (PDO-ICZMP), Dhaka, 2003.
  - 6 S. M. S. Mahmood *et al.*, Climate change: A study on impacts and people's perceptions- A case study on Mongla Upazila, Bagerhat District, Bangladesh, *Bangladesh Research Publications Journal*, Vol. 4(2), 2010, pp. 153-164; S. Szabo *et al.*, Soil salinity, household wealth and food insecurity in tropical deltas: evidence from south-west coast of Bangladesh, *Sustainability Science*, Vol. 11(3), 2016, pp. 411-421.
  - 7 C. Moumita *et al.*, 'Nutritional Status of Women Living at South-west Coastal Belt of Satkhira Bangladesh', *Journal of Environmental Science & Natural Resources*, Vol. 8(2), 2015, pp. 41-46.
  - 8 A. Jardine *et al.*, Dryland salinity and ecosystem distress syndrome: human health implications, *Ecology and Health*, Vol. 4, 2007, pp. 10-17.
  - 9 M. A. Hanjra and M. E. Qureshi, Global water crisis and future food security in an era of climate change, *Food Policy*, Vol. 35(5), 2010, pp. 365-377.
  - 10 A. E. Khan *et al.*, Salinity in drinking water and the risk of (Pre)Eclampsia and gestational hypertension in coastal Bangladesh: A case-control study, *PLoS One*, Vol. 9(9), 2014, pp. 1-9.

Agriculture Organization (FAO) has set allowable water salinity level for drinking water which is less than ½ gram per kilogram of water (ppt) though recommended levels depend on the iodine status of the concerned populations.<sup>11</sup> Small quantities of salt are essential for regulating the fluid balance of the human body but the consumption of salt higher than the recommended levels is associated with adverse health effects.<sup>12</sup> In some coastal districts of Bangladesh river salinity reaches as high as 4 grams in the rainy season and increases up to an alarming 13 grams per kilogram in the dry season. Extremely harmful saline water contains 35 grams per kilogram of water. Approximately 20 million of the 37 million coastal people i. e. over 57 per cent coastal people is adversely affected by such salinity in their drinking water.<sup>13</sup> A large number of literature has shown significant association between saline water drinking and its possible health risks. For example, a strong association between high sodium in drinking water and high blood pressure was established by Hallenbeck and also Talukder.<sup>14</sup> Based on some secondary sources of data, Rasheed *et al.*, showed a relationship between high salt intake and increased risk of hypertension.<sup>15</sup> Rising rate of hypertension due to drinking saline water was also reported by Khan *et al.* and Vineis *et al.*<sup>16</sup> Ramasamy and Surendran stated that an expansion of brackish and saline water bodies in coastal areas, associated with rising sea levels, can increase densities of salinity-tolerant vector mosquitoes and the breeding of non-mosquito vectors. Krishnamoorthy *et al.* and Hunter also found that sea water stagnation supports profuse breeding of *An. sudaicus*, the local malaria vector, and *Anopheles subpictus*, a vector implicated elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> Mosquitoes transmit many vector borne

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11 C. Nishida *et al.*, The joint WHO/FAO expert consultation on diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases: process, product and policy implications, *Public Health Nutrition*, Vol. 7(1A), 2004, pp. 245–250

12 *Ibid.*

13 Khan *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-9.

14 W. H. Hallenbeck *et al.*, High sodium in drinking water and its effect on blood pressure, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 1981, Vol. 114(6), pp. 817–26; M. R. R. Talukder *et al.*, *Drinking water salinity and risk of hypertension: A systematic review and meta-analysis*, 2016, pp. 1-13.

15 S. Rasheed *et al.*, How much salt do adults consume in climate vulnerable coastal Bangladesh?, *BMC Public Health*, Vol. 14, 2014, pp. 584;

16 Khan *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-9; P. Vineis, Q. Chan and A. Khan, Climate change impacts on water salinity and health, *Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health*, Vol. 1, 2011, pp. 5–10;

17 17 Hunter, *Op. cit.*, pp. 37-46; K. Krishnamoorthy *et al.*, Altered environment and risk of malaria outbreak in South Andaman, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, India affected by tsunami disaster, *Malaria Journal*, Vol. 4, 2005. p. 32

diseases (VBD) including malaria, lymphatic filariasis and dengue.<sup>18</sup> Coastal people especially, women are at higher risk of these diseases. Considerable evidences show that salinity has disproportionate consequences on women's health, especially on pregnant women, and also increase the burden on women and girls associated with travelling further to collect clean water.<sup>19</sup> Khan *et al.* affirmed that salinity in drinking water was associated with increased risk of (pre)eclampsia and gestational hypertension in coastal population.<sup>20</sup> Climate change cell (CCC) also found that women and adolescent girls were affected by gynecological problems for using saline water during menstruation.<sup>21</sup> Women's health risk increases a lot when it is multiplied by patriarchal norms that prevent her from travelling alone to a clinic.<sup>22</sup> Other than women children are also highly affected by climate change induced diseases like diarrhoea and malaria which unduly affect young children in developing countries.<sup>23</sup> At present the worldwide burden of human ill-health from climate change is not well recorded. Despite considerable research activity over a number of years, it must be admitted that the actual impacts of saline water intrusion on public health are still far from clear. Thereby the current study intends to supplement data to the existing literature which propose that the expansion of saline water bodies in coastal areas can increase various types of health risks among the coastal people. The study attempts to support the fact that higher perceived health risk is associated with women. The study also analyses the socioeconomic impact of poor health on coastal people's livelihood which has not yet been explored properly in any literature.

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- 18 R. Ramasamy and S. N. Surendran, Possible impact of rising sea levels on vector-borne infectious diseases. *BMC Infectious Diseases*, 2011, p. 6. Available at: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2334/11/18>, last accessed on 5th July, 2015.
  - 19 A. E. Khan *et al.*, Drinking water salinity and maternal health in coastal Bangladesh: Implications of climate change. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol. 119 (9), 2011, pp. 1328–1332.
  - 20 Khan *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, pp 1-9.
  - 21 Climate change cell, *Environment cost for climate change*. Climate Change Cell, DoE, MoEF; Component 4b, CDMP, MoFDM, 2009, pp. 1-53.
  - 22 WHO, *Gender, climate change and health*, WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data, 2014, pp. 1-44. Available at: [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/144781/1/9789241508186\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/144781/1/9789241508186_eng.pdf), last accessed on 25th Jan, 2016.
  - 23 WHO, *Inheriting the World: The atlas of children's health and the environment*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2004, pp. 1-64. Available at: <http://www.who.int/ceh/publications/atlas/en/>, last accessed on 4th May, 2016.

## 2. Methodology

The study was conducted in two coastal villages: Keyabunia of Mongla and Katabunia of Dacope in southeast and southwest coastal zone of Bangladesh. Both of these villages were highly saline prone due to their geophysical location beside the coast. Katabunia is detached from the main land by the river 'Poshur' and Keyabunia by the river 'Rupsha'. A total of 318 respondents, 195 women and 123 men, were selected from two villages. Data were collected purposively on the basis of the availability of the respondents in the locality. As women are more vulnerable than men in every aspect of a disaster,<sup>24</sup> more women were included in the sample intentionally. The study took the help of sampling calculator for calculating the sample size. Putting the total number of landless households of each village (135 households of Katabunia and 341 households of Keyabunia) in the sampling calculator with 95% confidence level and confidence interval 4, the calculator suggested a sample size of 110 households for Katabunia and a sample of 218 for Keyabunia. In total 328 (110+218) households were taken initially. But after collecting data, 10 were excluded from Keyabunia due to incomplete information. Thus, a total of 318 (328-10=318) households were finally selected as the sample size of the survey. From Katabunia village 75 women and 35 men and from Keyabunia village 120 women and 88 men were selected purposively (see table 1).

**Table 1.** Distribution of sample size

	Keyabunia	Katabunia
Women	120	75
Men	88	35

A single man or woman was interviewed from each household. Based on a semi-structured questionnaire, these coastal people were asked questions about various types of diseases they perceived and experienced during last 10 years. Their experience was taken to identify the most vulnerable groups in terms of health. In addition, the socioeconomic impact of living with diseases was assessed on the following variables: income, savings, expenditure, employment, schooling of children and migration. Data

24 M. Nasreen, *Women and girls: vulnerable or resilient?*, Institute of Disaster management and Vulnerability Studies, University of Dhaka, 2012.

were analyzed with the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software and percentage distribution was calculated to serve the purpose.

### 3. Findings of the study

#### Coastal people's perception of groups at greater health risk

The study found that among different groups, women and children were at greater health risks (see table 2). About 72 per cent men and 63 per cent women of Keyabunia village reported that women used to suffer more from various types of health problems. The same situation was reflected in Katabunia village where 63 per cent men and 78 per cent women identified women suffering more from health problems. Women usually do not seek health treatment for the patriarchal norms. These patriarchal norms do not allow women to play sick role. Maternal health is linked with women's low status in the household and also with their restricted mobility.<sup>25</sup> Women are the last eaters for their low status at home and usually take the leftover food which most often does not contain adequate calorie. This put women to suffer from acute malnutrition. Again, many women are denied of freedom to seek help at health centre because decisions about their health care are usually taken by their husbands or husband's family.<sup>26</sup> The study also observed that the triple pressure of food management, food cooking and food distribution affects coastal women's health a lot.

Other than women, children were also found at greater health risk. More than 80 per cent respondents of Katabunia village reported that children were more prone to health related problems due to salinity. About 74 per cent men and 68 per cent women of Keyabunia village identified children as more vulnerable to diseases like diarrhoea and cholera. Diseases like diarrhoea and malaria disproportionately affect young children in developing countries.<sup>27</sup>

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25 UNICEF, *Women and girls in Bangladesh*, 2010, pp. 1-10. Available at: [https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Women\\_and\\_girls\\_in\\_Bangladesh.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Women_and_girls_in_Bangladesh.pdf), last accessed on 5th March, 2017.

26 UNICEF, *State of the world's children*, 2009, pp. 1-100. Available at: [https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC\\_Spec\\_Ed\\_CRC\\_Main\\_Report\\_EN\\_090409.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_Spec_Ed_CRC_Main_Report_EN_090409.pdf), last accessed on 5th May, 2016.

27 WHO, 2004, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-64.

**Table 2.** Percentage distribution of respondents' opinion on most vulnerable group in terms of health

Groups at greater health risks	Keyabunia				Katabunia			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Number of responses	(%)						
Men	20	22.7	13	10.8	12	34.3	13	17.3
Women	64	72.7	76	63.3	22	62.9	59	78.7
Adult boys	4	4.5	5	4.2	1	2.9	3	4
Adult girls	4	4.5	6	5.0	1	2.9	8	10.7
Children	65	73.9	81	67.5	30	85.7	61	81.3
Old people	39	32.5	39	32.5	6	17.1	25	33.3

Source: Field survey, 2016

Notes: It is a multiple response table where total number of respondents of Keyabunia is 208 and Katabunia is 110.

### Diseases perceived and experienced by the coastal people

Coastal people usually suffer from various types of diseases due to salinity. *Vibrio cholera* is the causing microbe of cholera that survive longer with salinity level ranging from 2.5 ppt to 30 ppt and need Sodium ion (Na<sup>+</sup>) for growth.<sup>28</sup> Around 82 per cent respondents of Keyabunia village and 85 per cent respondents of Katabunia village stated that they used to suffer from diarrhoea and dehydration due to saline water drinking and extreme heat. Decrease in vegetation increases the temperature of an area that may cause dehydration.<sup>29</sup>

28 R. J. Borroto, Global warming, rising sea level, and growing risk of cholera incidence: a review of the literature and evidence, *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 44(2), 1998, pp.111-120.

29 A. Ali *et al.*, Deforestation and its impacts on climate change: an Overview of Pakistan. *Global Change*, Vol. 21, 2014, pp. 51-60.

**Table 3.** Percentage distribution of respondents' experience of various types of salinity induced diseases

Types of diseases	Keyabunia		Katabunia	
	Number of responses	Percentage (%)	Number of responses	Percentage (%)
Hypertension	155	74.51	94	85.45
Diarrhea, dehydration	170	81.73	94	85.45
Gynecological problem, skin diseases etc.	126	60.57	79	71.81
Cough and cold, chest pain, asthma etc.	155	74.51	90	81.81
Malaria, dengue, skin and eye diseases	129	62.01	70	63.63
Death, heat stroke	6	2.88	15	13.63

Source: Field survey, 2016

Notes: It is a multiple response table where total number of respondents of Keyabunia is 208 and Katabunia is 110.

Skin diseases also increased for the increased contact with saline water. One female respondent, said that she had been suffering from skin diseases for the last two years. Her fingers and legs got dry and swollen due to extreme roughness of the skin. Skin between her fingers looked white. Few sentences are quoted here from her interview:

“When itching starts, it becomes unbearable. My pink flesh comes out due to itching. I met a kabiraj who said that this is due to my excess contact with saline water.”

About 75 per cent respondents of Keyabunia village said that they used to suffer from cough and cold. Around 82 per cent respondents of Katabunia village reported that currently cough and cold was a common phenomenon to them whereas the problem was not that much acute in 1990s. Salinity in soil decreases the vegetation of an area. Decrease in vegetation and its consequent wind borne dust may affect respiratory health.<sup>30</sup>

Above 60 per cent respondents of both the villages reported to have suffered from different types of fever. Saline waterlogged area is the most suitable place for mosquito breeding. An association between salinity and vector borne diseases has been shown in a number of studies.<sup>31</sup>

Only 14 per cent respondents of Katabunia and 3 per cent respondents of Keyabunia reported that people also died due to heat stroke. In 2003 around 62 people died due to

<sup>30</sup> Jardine *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 10-17.

<sup>31</sup> Ramasamy and Surendran, *Op. cit.*, p. 6; Krishnamoorthy, *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

heat wave across the country.<sup>32</sup> There has been increased heat-related mortality and decreased cold-related mortality in some regions as a result of warming (medium confidence).<sup>33</sup> The effect of huge salt intake through saline water causes uncontrolled high blood pressure which increases the risk of heat stroke among people.<sup>34</sup>

### Health care delivery system in the coastal areas

**Table 4.** Respondents' experience of seeking treatment from different organizations

Organization for Treatment	Keyabunia		Katabunia	
	Number of responses	(%)	Number of responses	(%)
Upazilla hospital	150	72.11	79	71.81
Local clinic	38	18.26	12	10.90
Unspecialized doctor	166	79.80	85	77.27
No proper health care centre	166	79.80	83	75.5
Kabiraj	9	4.32	7	7.27

Source: Field survey, 2016

Notes: It is a multiple response table where total number of respondents of Keyabunia is 208 and Katabunia is 110.

A majority of respondents of both the villages stated that there was no proper health care facility. Due to lack of proper health care delivery system, they specifically mentioned about herbal (*kabiraji*) treatment usually taken for primary health care purposes.

Table 5 exhibits that around 72 per cent respondents of both the villages went to Upazilla hospital for treatment. Unspecialized doctors were also very popular among the villagers as almost 80 per cent people of Keyabunia and 77 per cent people of Katabunia also visited them for quick response. They said that the number of seats in government hospital was not sufficient to accommodate too many patients of the Upazilla. For this reason, around 18 per cent people of Keyabunia and 11 per cent people of Katabunia sometimes went to local clinic during emergency cases although treatment in these clinics was much expensive.

32 M. A. Rajib *et al.*, Increase of heat index over Bangladesh: Impact of climate change. *International Journal of Civil, Environmental, Structural, Construction and Architectural Engineering*, Vol. 5(10), 2011, pp. 1-4.

33 IPCC, *Observed changes-climate change*. Synthesis report. 2014, pp. 1-32. Available at: [http://ar5-syr.ipcc.ch/topic\\_observedchanges.php](http://ar5-syr.ipcc.ch/topic_observedchanges.php), last accessed on 5th Feb, 2015.

34 Talukder *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-13; Hallenbeck *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 817-26.

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**Socioeconomic impact of illness on coastal people's livelihood**

Socioeconomic impacts of illness were the next most common adverse events to the coastal people. It was found that the poor health condition had negative impact on income and savings. More than 80 per cent respondents of both areas admitted the fact that their income and savings decreased at a noticeable rate due to their less capability to work. Saline water intrusion decreased food production a lot. Consequently coastal people shifted themselves in other alternative occupations such as fishing in deep sea, catching crabs, working as wage labourer and shrimp cultivation, which were not only challenging but also unsafe and risky. Illness does not support a person to earn livelihood with so many challenges. Being incapable of earning livelihood, many people especially men left their place of origin as 32 per cent respondents of Keyabunia and 25 per cent respondents of Katabunia reported this.

About 15 per cent respondents of both the villages reported that they lost their job due to their ill health. They used to work in shrimp farm but had to leave that job for skin diseases.

Saline water intrusion disrupted communication system a lot. Saline water stagnation in an area for a long period of time destroyed rural roads so badly that sick people usually did not seek medical treatment unless the illness was very severe. Around 40 per cent respondents of both the villages stated that transportation cost was very high due to the backward geophysical position of the villages. Transportation cost is an indirect cost of poor health which significantly raises the livelihood cost of the coastal people. Sometimes people die in half way while going to the nearest health care centre which is six miles away from Katabunia village.

A total of 15 per cent respondents of both the villages said with grief that they had to withdraw their daughters from school for helping them in collecting pure drinking water which is one of the major challenges of the coastal people especially of women.

Near about 70 per cent respondents of Keyabunia and 68 per cent respondents of Katabunia said that expenditure for treatment increased a lot for increased prevalence of various types of salinity induced diseases as already discussed. Treatment cost was one of the direct costs which affected coastal people's livelihood a lot.

**4. Discussion**

Literature available on the impact of salinity on coastal people's health reflects different though not comparable situations. However, the current study found two comprehensive features: 1) women and children are at greater health risk due to

drinking saline water and 2) drinking saline water and its consequent poor health has a further consequence on the socioeconomic status of coastal people.

In this paper, health problems particularly hypertension, diarrhoea and dehydration, respiratory problems like cold, chest pain and asthma were highly perceived by more than 80 per cent respondents of both the villages. Soil salinity reduces the number of trees and vegetation in an area and affects the respiratory health of the people of that area.

Stagnant saline water is the perfect habitat of mosquitoes which are responsible for the transmission of various types of fever. In the current study fever like malaria and dengue are particularly perceived by more than 60 per cent respondents of both the villages. Many of them suffered from these fevers even more than twice in their life. Infection even led to the eye and skin problems (rash) as stated by the respondents though vision problems may be an underreported effect of the mosquito-transmitted fever.

Most of the respondents of both the study areas stated that consumption of saline water caused gynecological problems among many coastal women. On an average, 66 per cent respondents of both the villages stated that coastal women and adult girls, who drank shallow tube well water or used pond water, experienced gynecological problems to a large extent. Many of them suffered from urine infection and their sufferings reached at its peak during menstruation period. In addition to other common health problems, gynecological problems cause much suffering to coastal women. Thereby it was found that like children women are also at greater health risk as almost 70 per cent respondents of both the villages perceived women more vulnerable in terms of health. Women's vulnerability in terms of health is again multiplied by the traditional patriarchy and poor transport as well as communication system. Patriarchal norms and household burden restrict women's movement in these conservative coastal societies. As a result, women in these areas do not play sick role unless the condition is very severe. Sometimes the situation goes beyond control and the problems become chronic.

Saline water intrusion disrupted communication system a lot. Saline water stagnation in an area for a long period of time destroyed rural roads so badly that sick people usually did not seek medical treatment unless the illness was very severe. Around 40 per cent respondents of both villages stated this. Total expenditure of treatment increases when transportation cost is added.

Although coastal people perceived heat stroke less in their locality as only a very insignificant number of respondents reported this, it is indirectly associated with saline water drinking. Heat stroke occurs when body gets too hot. Existing literature has shown significant association between saline water drinking and high blood pressure.<sup>35</sup> People with high blood pressure are at greater risk of heat stroke as high blood pressure is the most important known risk factor of heat exhaustion.

Health care facilities are not sufficient in different upazillas in coastal areas. Each upazilla has only one hospital which cannot support a large population. Though around 72 per cent respondents of both the villages visit upazilla hospital, they also visit unspecialized doctors when seats are not available in the upazilla hospital. In addition to the overload of the patients, they have shortage of consultant, doctors and nursing staffs. It is almost impossible to give proper service in the hospital due to these limitations.

The impact of poor health on the socioeconomic status of the respondents is severe. More than 80 per cent respondents of both the villages stated that their income and savings decreased a lot for their incapability to work. Moreover, extra cost of treatment puts additional burden on their livelihood. Agricultural production has become difficult in the coastal belt for the increased level of soil salinity. Most of the people are now involved in some risky occupations like collecting honey, wax and wood from the nearest mangrove forest, Sundarban. These types of occupation are seasonal and require regular physical fitness. If they fall sick during the peak season of collection, their families may need to experience starvation.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study supports the existing literature on the fact that salinity is intimately involved in the causal pathway of many types of diseases of the coastal people particularly malaria, dengue, high blood pressure or hypertension, respiratory problem like asthma, cold and cough, acute malnutrition and skin diseases. Diseases are transmitted either through drinking or through increased contact with saline water. The study also affirms that women are at greater risk of health due to traditional patriarchal norms. Pregnant women were suffering more from gynecological problems due to high salt intake. Economic burden related to ill-health was depending on direct treatment costs, but indirect costs such as losing job, decreased income and savings, and

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35 Hallenbeck *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 817–26; Talukder *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-13.

transportation costs were also not negligible. In order to adjust with the economic burden, coastal people usually reduce food consumption which in turn produces acute malnutrition. Sometimes, they withdraw their children from school in order to get support at household activities. Mainly female children are withdrawn for collecting pure drinking water from distant places when mothers are sick. People most often visit upazilla health complex which consists of only 50 seats. This is insufficient for a large coastal population. Due to the limitation of health care delivery system, the activities of kabiraj and unspecialized doctors have increased manifold. Local people perceived a very limited range of government and non-government organization services to meet their basic health care demands. The need for further research to investigate the other potential adverse health effects of salinity is clearly reflected by the perception of coastal people. However, this study will make the policy-makers aware of the increased risk of saline water consumption on human health in coastal areas in order to incorporate it into their strategic plans. Special interventions should be designed to combat the detrimental health effects of excessive salt intake in coastal communities.







**Table 5. Socioeconomic impact of illness on coastal people's livelihood**

	Impacts	Keyabunia						Katabunia					
		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
		No. of responses	Percentage (%)										
Having diseases	Decreased income	76	86.4	99	82.5	175	84.1	33	94.3	63	84.0	96	87.2
	Decreased savings	80	90.9	99	82.5	179	86.0	30	85.7	58	77.3	88	80.0
	Joblessness	12	13.6	20	16.7	32	15.3	5	14.3	12	16.0	17	15.4
	Out migration	35	39.8	31	25.8	66	31.7	9	25.7	19	25.3	28	25.4
	High transportation cost due to increased disruption of communication	30	34.1	56	46.7	86	41.3	10	28.6	34	45.3	44	40.0
	Withdrawal of the children from school	12	13.6	20	16.7	32	15.3	5	14.3	12	16.0	17	15.4
	Additional burden for bearing the cost of increased expenditure on treatment of different diseases	67	76.1	78	65.0	145	69.7	20	57.1	55	73.3	75	68.1

**Source:** Field survey, 2016

**Notes:** It is a multiple response table where total number of respondents of Keyabunia is 208 and Katabunia is 110.

**CHANGING FACE OF GLOBAL AND LOCAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP:  
A CASE STUDY ON SYLHET TEA PLANTATION**

Ashfaque Hossain\*

**Abstract**

This article examines the expansion of tea plantations in Sylhet– what is today north-eastern Bangladesh. It looks at how big firms and agency houses gradually took over from the individual planters. In particular, it will produce evidence to explain how *James Finlay* dominated the plantation sector in Sylhet. It also explores how European firms involved in the development of tea plantation and how native entrepreneurs were linked to the tea capitalism and global tea trade. Although, the early phase saw only a small indigenous participation in investment in tea, it was nonetheless significant. The desire to become entrepreneurs along with a certain ‘anti-colonial’ feeling was the driving forces that inspired local elites to offer the land and capital. While the native lawyers offered ideas and legal expertise. In late 1920s, the indigenous companies owned 10 percent of tea lands and there were cooperation among the Hindu-Muslim elites and they demonstrated an ability to work together. When tension grew between these elites in the 1930s and 1940s, the potential of a full-blown indigenous entrepreneurship was destroyed. The ‘Great Divide of 1947’ dislodged the Hindu planters from Sylhet. And after 1947, the situation changed as West Pakistan created an ‘Urdu speaking’ monopoly in the Sylhet tea plantation. Tea plantation in Bangladesh is now mostly owned and managed by local entrepreneurs and professionals.

**Key words**

Tea, Sylhet plantation, Planter, James Finlay, Joint Stock Company, Entrepreneurs.

**Introduction**

In the late nineteenth century, the opening of Sylhet for tea plantation and its annexation to Assam – the newly emerged ‘Planters Raj’ – was a new phenomenon. In this new venture European firms had deeply been involved in the development of tea plantation and native entrepreneurs were also partly linked to the global tea trade. In the Sylhet region, the formation of the *Cachar Native Joint Stock Company*, by local elites was the first native venture in the tea sector in South Asia. The historical transformation in Sylhet needs to be reconstructed through studies of global and local entrepreneurship in tea. The growing tea plantations in this region attracted many European firms, and James Finlay played a crucial role in the success of the tea plantations in Sylhet. In the early period overseas firms possessed scientific

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knowledge and they invested huge capital in a favourable setting. Thus, the process of 'globalization' began to take shape as the flow of capital and technological know-how were used by the Europeans for making tea commercially viable across the globe. In the 1880s, this Scottish firm was involved in jute, cotton and shipping and had soon emerged as a global representative of capitalist investment in Sylhet. A small group of indigenous elites was involved in the opening of Sylhet for capitalist investment as a result of nineteenth century globalization. There was a process of technology transfer and management practices that had been adopted by the local elites and a western-educated middle class. In course of time, the European planters and companies faced new competitors, but the local planters did not stand in their way, depending on them for technological know-how.<sup>1</sup> The agrarian roots of capitalism that related to the local Hindu and Muslim elite entrepreneurs in the tea business will also be investigated. The 'Great Divide' of 1947 and the subsequent dislocation of the Hindu elites, paved the way for the dominance of Urdu speaking elites of West Pakistan.

This article explores some specific issues in the light of the evidence available for one plantation enclave, Sylhet. It goes on to examine the interaction of the Europeans and local entrepreneurs following the dominance of overseas planters through power, technology and skill. The native entrepreneurs gradually became involved in the development of the plantations economy and engaged them with the global economy through commercial contacts. The historical transformation of Sylhet needs to be reconstructed from the bottom up, through studies of overseas and local entrepreneurship in tea. What emerges is a picture considerably more complex than one might first imagine. 'Hegemony' in Sylhet plantations appears to be contested between overseas and local people, between Hindu and Muslim and in the Pakistani era between Urdu and Bengali speaking Muslims.

#### **Investment in Sylhet tea estates in the early phase**

Tea as an investment, particularly in Assam and Sylhet, appeared quite lucrative in the 1870s. A correspondent using the name Mr. Hybrid in his letter to the editor of

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1 According to data from 1984, Tea estates in Bangladesh were owned and managed by 'Bangladeshi Companies', 'Sterling Companies' and 'Proprietorship concern'. The term 'Bangladeshi Companies' refers to the companies formed and registered in the country under the *Companies Act, 1913* and earlier Acts. 'Sterling Companies' are foreign companies, mainly originating in the United Kingdom and multinational in nature. The average size of the tea estate of the Sterling Companies was 1648 acres; that of Bangladeshi Companies 669 acres, while that of 'Proprietorship concern' 343 acres. Bangladeshiy Cha Sangsad, *Annual Report*, (Srimongal, 1984), pp. 3-10.

the *Calcutta Statesman* argued that in the 1870s tea was almost thriving business. He pointed out:

It seems to me ...tea to be a most unspeculative investment, and that the steady and gradual increase in value of the shares has simply kept pace with the dividends annually declared. For instance, the average dividend declared in 1872 naturally regulated the price of the shares in 1873, and I find that the 1872 dividend was 5.493 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Hybrid projected a comparative picture of the European investment in India in various fields during the 1870s. He pointed out,

Looking at the several returns upon English capital invested in this country (India), this is not a very out-of-the way average, and it is a pleasing contrast to the fabulous prices given for shares in 1862-63-64; while it certainly seems to indicate that *the tea industry has at last taken its place among the quiet, non-speculative, safe investments of the country (Emphasis added)*.<sup>3</sup>

During the early stages, in the 1860s, tea estates in Sylhet were established and owned by individual planters, almost all of whom were Europeans. The early period was known as ‘tea mania’ because many ‘white’ people thought that it might be seen as a California ‘Gold Rush’ in the Indian context. It was widely believed that anybody could run a tea garden, including retired military officers, medical men, engineers, veterinary surgeons, steamer captains, chemists, shopkeepers of all kinds, even policemen and clerks. As a result of over-enthusiasm, the price paid for the garden was frequently much higher than the actual value. In this atmosphere fraudulent transactions were common. Citing Colonel Money H.A. Antrobus has pointed out that when speculation did start, it ran riot. Often in those days a small garden of 30 to 40 acres was sold to a new company as 150 to 200 acres.<sup>4</sup> Sir Percival Griffiths argues that it was reckless speculation and insane attempts to extend cultivation that led to the crisis.<sup>5</sup> There was a crash in the tea sector in Sylhet and Assam in the 1860s.

However, this crisis was short-lived and the plantations became firmly established as a commercial venture by the 1870s. By the beginning of the 1880s, tea plantations

2 H. Cottam, *Tea Cultivation in Assam: Being a Series of Letters Republished from the ‘Ceylon Observer’*, (Colombo, 1877) p. 75. Mr. Hybrid wrote a letter to the editor of the *Calcutta’s Statesman* under the heading ‘Colonel Money and Tea’. Lieutenant Colonel Edward Money was one of the pioneer planters who later wrote a book under the heading *Tea Cultivation* in 1883.

3 Cottam, *Tea Cultivation in Assam*, p. 75.

4 H. A. Antrobus, *A History of the Assam Company 1939-1953*, (Edinburgh, 1957), p. 144.

5 Sir Percival Griffiths, *The History of the Indian Tea Industry* (London, 1967), p. 101.

entered into the second stage when individual efforts had been replaced by the companies and agency houses. Another important event during this period was the floating of the first *Joint Stock Company* by Bengalis in the Surma (Sylhet) valley in 1876, under the name of the *Cachar Native Joint Stock Company*. It was the first native concern in tea plantations, not only in Assam but also in Bengal.<sup>6</sup>

D. H. Buchanan's study of capitalist enterprises in India during the British period suggests that the tea industry had successfully gathered British capital from the United Kingdom, available between 1880 and 1910.<sup>7</sup> But a later study carried out by A. K. Bagchi argues that largest portion of the capital had been extracted (drawn) from the Indian colony.<sup>8</sup> There may be a debate about the amount of capital accumulated from the metropolis as opposed to the colony. But, there is hardly any doubt that the moving force behind the expansion of plantations was the sustained capital flow from London, Calcutta and even locally available sources and that this radically changed the niches of North-eastern India.<sup>9</sup> Several sources indicate that the amateur and over-ambitious planters soon went bankrupt and lost their property to the *Land Mortgage Bank of India*. In Sylhet, James Finlay and Co. purchased a number of tea estates from this bank.<sup>10</sup>

#### **The dominance of James Finlay in Sylhet**

From the late nineteenth century James Finlay was best known across the mercantile world for the production of tea. A question arises: how did it happen? James Finlay was founded much earlier as a company, in 1745 in Glasgow. The nineteenth century saw the fortune of the company advanced upon the world stage by two men. Firstly, it was under James's second son, Kirkman Finlay, that the company expanded into

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6 The *Cachar Native Joint Stock Company* floated by the Bengalis of Sylhet. It was the first native tea company not only in Assam but also in British India. A famous lawyer from Sylhet, Musaraf Ali, along with his Hindu friends, formed this company. Dewan Mohammad Azrof, interviewed in Dhaka, January 1997.

7 D. H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalistic Enterprises in India* (London, 1966), p. 95.

8 Amiya Kumar Bagchi, *Private Investment in India 1900-1939* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 159 and 173.

9 Ashfaque Hossain, 'Historical Globalization and its Impact: A Study of Sylhet and its People, 1874 to 1971', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2010. See introduction & chapter one.

10 *James Finlay Papers*, Reference Code: GB0248 UGD 091, Title: Records Of James Finlay & Co. Limited, textile manufacturers, tea planters and merchants, Glasgow, Scotland. Date(s): 1789-1912.

markets in Europe, America and India, to become Scotland's 'greatest' overseas firm. A free trader, Kirkman Finlay used his influence as an MP for Glasgow and the president of the City Chamber of Commerce to persuade the government to break the British East India Company's monopoly on trade in Asia. The East India Company's stranglehold was loosened in 1813 and three years later Finlay's 'Earl of Buckinghamshire' sailed to India from the Clyde. With India's demand for cottons, a new market was opened up. Two young assistants of Finlay set up an agency house in 1816 and others followed in Calcutta and Colombo. The company also traded with China in tea and silks. Twenty years after the death of Kirkman Finlay in 1861 John Muir became a partner and soon bought the shares of other partners. Due to the American Civil War, John Muir looked to India, re-established the Bombay office and reopened the Calcutta branch. In 1871 the firm opened an office in London.

Muir was one of the first to realise that tea estates operated best in large groups under central control, rather than as individuals, a management pattern that was eventually to be adopted throughout the industry. He argued, 'tea was a good investment for the surplus and it became his policy to make advances to estates in order to secure agency appointments.'<sup>11</sup> In 1882, John Muir floated two private companies, the *North Sylhet Tea Company* and the *South Sylhet Tea Company* and by 1896, Muir owned many tea estates.<sup>12</sup> Under Muir, the company was renamed Finlay & Muir, but was popularly known as James Finlay. From the 1870s, the company provided a threefold service: firstly, managerial; secondly, financial; and thirdly, merchant trading. The company historian Ernest Ross Stewart has argued that accounting was used as a means of control, rather than having a prominent decision making role. Stewart points out, 'accounting was used to adjudicate distributional issues among the employers and partners and to overcome the distance between the Glasgow the head office and the other branches, especially those in India.'<sup>13</sup>

Capital investment soon transformed Finlay from managing agents to principal. The company was increasingly interested in diversifying into tea growing and sales, and performing agency services for other subsidiary companies in India. The records of Finlay and other associate firms were collected and preserved in a very

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11 Anonymous, *James Finlay & Company Limited: manufacturers and east India merchants, 1750-1950*, (Glasgow, 1951) p. 105.

12 *James Finlay Papers*, Introduction.

13 E. R. Stewart, *Scottish Company Accounting 1860-1920*, (Ph.D., University of Glasgow, 1986), p. 10.

comprehensive way. For example, P R Buchanan & Company was often associated with Finlay & Muir and had many of the same directors. From the early nineteenth century, branches of Finlay were located in Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi and Colombo. So Finlay was able to expand its management of tea estates smoothly. These estates were situated in Sylhet, Cachar, Dooars, Darjeeling, Travancore and Ceylon, and were carried on with a capital of upwards of £5,500,000. By the 1950s, Finlay had 270,000 acres of land of which about 77,000 acres were planted with tea, giving employment to about 70,000 locals, in addition to a large staff of superintendents, managers and assistants sent out from Scotland and the United Kingdom.<sup>14</sup> A global firm of Scottish origin, Finlay was also noted as being a major employer of the young. On 1 July, 1928, *The Assam Review* published a humorous poem. It might be seen as an example of easy opportunity for the youths of metropolis to this distant periphery in Assam:

***Distance Lends Enchantment***

I've failed for the Navy and Army, The Church and The Law, so you see  
The only profession that's left me – my last hope,— an assistant in Tea.  
So I'll pack up my box and make tracks for the docks  
And that heavenly place called Assam.  
I am *told* that commissions run into a lack;  
That the life is – well, – sporting and healthy.<sup>15</sup>

In the early twentieth century, James Finlay also devoted to the introduction of Indian tea to America, Australia, Russia and other parts of the European Continent. Their shipments to the Melbourne and Sydney markets were much larger than those of any other tea exporters.<sup>16</sup> The Indian venture of James Finlay was nothing less than 'a revolution' in the character of the firm and people refer to this company as 'the tea firm', although they had handled a wide range of activities with competence and integrity.<sup>17</sup> In the 1870s, Finlay was one of the biggest Scottish firms in the United Kingdom. Such an expansion had firmly been led by the entrepreneurial and managerial talent of Sir John Muir.<sup>18</sup> For Finlay, the tea sector in British India provided a quest for investment outlet and in the third quarter of nineteenth century,

14 *James Finlay Papers*, Staff Records, 1881-1972, Production records, 1814-1964, UGD91.

15 *The Assam Review*, 1, July 1928. The title of the poem was, 'Distance Lends Enchantment' and writer is J.K.C.

16 *James Finlay Papers*, Production records, 1814-1964, UGD91. Anonymous, *James Finlay & Company Limited*, p. 107.

17 Anonymous, *James Finlay & Company Limited*, pp. 125-126.

18 Stewart, *Scottish Company Accounting*, p. 138.

the company had agents all over the world. Sutipta Sen argues that the British rule in India had successfully secured free avenues of commerce and exchange. It laid out the foundations of a ‘resilient, functional, and structured political and economic organization.’<sup>19</sup> So, Finlay took this advantage of political stability for an economic investment and soon became successful. We have gathered valuable data from the *Taylor Maps of the Tea Districts: Sylhet with Full Index of the Tea Garden* (1910). It provides a clear picture of the domination of European Managing or Agency Houses over the tea estates.

**Table: 1**  
**Domination of European Managing or Agency Houses**

Serial	Name of the tea company and Agency Houses	
01	James Finlay	26,935
02	Octavius Steel	14,776
03	McLeod and Co.	5,337
04	Shaw and Wallace	4,180
05	Barlow & Co:	3,241
06	Planters Stores And Agencies:	3,028
07	King Hamilton & Co	2,095
08	Duncan Bothers:	1,848
09	Barry and Co	1,315
10	Willamson and Magor	1,280
11	J. Mackillican	1,219
12	Macneill	849
13	Andrew Yule	799
14	Grindlay	616
15	Kilburn Co	400
16	Waker	327
17	W. Cresswel	255
18	National Agency	237
	<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>68,737</b>

Source: *Taylor Maps of the Tea Districts: Sylhet with Full Index of the Tea Gardens*; (Calcutta, 1910).

Table 1 shows that James Finlay owned the highest acreage of land in the Sylhet tea district. On the ground, Finlay had established dominance through securing grants of

19 Sudipta Sen, ‘Liberal empire and illiberal trade: the political Economy of ‘responsible government’ in early British India’, in Wilson, K (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660-1840*, (Cambridge, 2004), p. 154.

waste lands from the government, from the Maharajah of Tripura and by purchasing permanently settled estates from very ordinary owners like S.K. Bibee. In the early 1880s, Finlay Muir & Company purchased large tracts of waste land in Balisera, totalling 13,609 acres from the Maharajah, and very soon it was extended to 15,000 acres.<sup>20</sup> The Maharajah claimed his hereditary rights on this wasteland, referring to a vague (not-surveyed) grant from a Mughal emperor. At the time of permanent settlements, these tracts were for the most part covered with forest, bamboos and scrub. Local 'tribes' would clear a patch of land, cultivate it for a few years, and then move on, leaving their fields to return to the jungle from which they had originally evolved. When it was found that the hill ranges possessed a special value of their own, in that they could be excellently adapted for the cultivation of the tea plant, claims were, from time to time, put forward, to hold the land over which these easements (a limited right to make use of a property owned by another) had been assigned, as an integral part of a permanently settled estate. The Maharajah's ownership claim over the Balisera tract was subsequently contested by the government and it became a legal battle. On the aspect of tri-party 'tug of war' B.C. Allen made the following note:

One of the most important of these claims is one which is known as the Balisira case, and which arose out of the action of the Maharaja of Hill Tippera, who, in 1882, entered into an agreement to lease 30,000 acres of lands in the Balisira hills to Messrs. Finlay Muir & Co. The Maharaja was the proprietor of certain permanently settled estates in the Balisira pargana, to which these curious easement rights attached; there were 75 other estates in the same pargana which were in much the same condition and the Government denied that either the Maharaja or any other person was entitled to proprietary rights in the Balisira hills. In 1886, the Government brought a civil suit against the Maharaja to establish their title to the 30,000 acres which formed the subject-matter of the suit; but the case was never tried, and, in 1897, the matter was finally compromised, and the Maharajah withdrew his claims to ownership.<sup>21</sup>

Contemporary records held by Finlay show that a deed of tripartite compromise was signed between the Government, the Maharajah and the *South Sylhet Tea Company Ltd.*, a subsidiary of Finlay in the early 1880s.<sup>22</sup> In the tripartite deed, the total acreage

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20 James Finlay Papers reveals that there was a Bengali Agreement Lease by the Maharajah of Tipperah (Tripura) to Messrs. J. Muir & R. Williamson, dated 31 October 1882. *James Finlay Papers*, UGD91/8/3/6/1/9.

21 B. C. Allen (ed.), *Assam District Gazetteers: Sylhet*, Vol. 2, (Calcutta, 1905), pp. 223-24.

22 In 1882 John Muir and a junior partner arranged to invest capital in the North Sylhet Tea Company and the South Sylhet Tea Company. Finlay Muir & Co., acted as secretary in

of land and demarcation area of seven tea estates of the *South Sylhet Tea Company Ltd.*, were defined and all dispute was declared at an end.<sup>23</sup> A compromise proposal had been drafted within a short period as the Finlay records for 1886 reveals:

Consists chiefly of a plot of 23,609 acres of lands on the East and West of Balisira valley held by the South Sylhet Tea Company under a grant from the Government dated the 29<sup>th</sup> day of June of 1886. The land was originally occupied by the Messrs Finlay Muir & Company under a grant of a large tract of land given by the Maharaja of Tipperah (Tripura) ...but Maharaja's title was subsequently contested by the Government who compelled the Company to take the above named grant for the land of which they were in occupation. Litigation ensued between the Maharaja on the one hand and the Government and South Sylhet Tea Company on the other...A draft deed of compromise was prepared and practically settled. The draft is now before counsel on behalf of Messrs Finlay Muir & Company to advise where certain final alterations agreed upon before the Maharaja and the Government affect the South Sylhet Company. The deed of compromise when signed will confirm the South Sylhet Tea Company in their title to the 23,609 acres and in addition to this grant they will also receive from the Government a grant of 2,520 acres and another grant of 249 acres.<sup>24</sup>

The James Finlay records also reveal that Finlay's chief, John Muir, had bought small plots in the Balisira Valley from several natives of both Hindu and Muslim communities, including women. There is a Bengali Bill of Sale (Conveyance), with English translation from S.K. Bibee (a woman) to John Muir dated 6 August 1884 and another for 100 rupees in payment for three *Kaders* of land in Balisira in the Taluk No. 51355/192. A similar set of purchase occurred between John Muir and local landowners in 1884 and 1885. In November 1884 John Muir bought a plot of land from G.C. Saan for the price of 1000 rupees<sup>25</sup> and in December of the same year he bought a few plots from Shibnath Dutta and Brijo Kishore Sen. Thus, Finlay established a number of tea gardens in the Balisira valley (South Sylhet), which was more than half of its total tea land in Sylhet and even higher than the total tea land of Octavius Steel, the second biggest tea company of Sylhet. In North Sylhet, several gardens had been opened by Europeans in the 1870s, but Finlay eventually took over all of these estates as well.<sup>26</sup>

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Scotland, and Finlay Muir & Co., were agents in India. See James Finlay Papers, Glasgow, UGD91/8/3/6/1/9.

23 *James Finlay Papers*, UGD91/8/3/6/1/9.

24 South Sylhet Tea Company's Estate: Reports on Title & Description of Lands, *James Finlay Papers*, UGD91/8/3/6/2/16.

25 Taluk No. 51170/3, 51302/137 and 51495/337, *James Finlay Papers*, UGD91/8/3/6/1/9.

26 E. G. Foley, *The Surma Valley Magazine*, 1:9 (November, 1927), p. 17.

The participation of Finlay and to some extent other overseas firms in Sylhet in the 1880s radically changed the tea plantations in the region. Several sources indicate that the period up to the beginning of the twentieth century saw the cultivation and production of tea in Sylhet increase with remarkable rapidity. By 1893 the yield amounted to 20,627,000 lbs., which nearly equalled that of Sibsagar, the largest tea producing district in Assam. The upward tendency was maintained, and in 1900, there were 71,490 acres under cultivation, which yielded 35,042,000 lbs. of manufactured tea. This was more than 4,000,000 lbs in excess of that produced in any other districts of the Province.<sup>27</sup> During the period 1904-1905, out of 123 tea estates in Sylhet, as many as 110, were owned by Europeans.<sup>28</sup> According to the information of B.C. Allen in 1905 and the *Taylor Maps of the Tea Districts: Sylhet*, in 1910, Europeans companies owned 95 percent of tea producing land while local people owned only 5 percent. However, by the late 1920s, according to the records of Joint Stock Companies local people owned 10 percent of tea lands.

#### **Scientific progress: cooperation and contestation between overseas and locals**

Tea plantations in general and in Sylhet in particular, were transformed radically by the introduction of new technology and the large scale use of machinery from the 1870s on. Recognizing this fact the colonial officialdom had started to call it an 'industry'. From this period the use of machinery increased, particularly on the large estates. According to an official report of 1876, machinery was imported from Britain, as it reveals, 'Several machines have been invented...there are some 140 engines in the Province, all of which have been imported within the last five years.'<sup>29</sup> The authorities identified at the same time a major difficulty with the fuel supply, and efforts were taken to achieve a breakthrough from 'charcoal'<sup>30</sup>— a traditional fuel supply that planters found locally available. So the Government hoped that the invention of alternative sources of fuel would save large numbers of trees and be a great boon. As the *Report on Tea Operation in the Province of Assam, 1873-4* suggested:

It is obvious that the destruction of the timber must be enormous, and at no distant period it will have to be decided how to manufacture tea with cheaper fuel than charcoal.<sup>31</sup>

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27 Allen, *Sylhet*, pp.135-36.

28 Allen, *Sylhet*, pp. 277-291.

29 India Office Records (IOR)/V/24/4277, *Report on Tea Operation in the Province of Assam, 1873-4*, (Shillong, 1876), p. 11.

30 The production of charcoal was seen as taking place in an area where wood was found in abundance.

31 IOR/V/24/4277, *Report on Tea Operation 1873-74*, p.11.

In this situation, gradually coal and oil replaced charcoal. Modernization of the fuel supply not only increased tea production and improved the quality of the tea but also it dramatically reduced the destruction of forest trees. Completion of the Assam-Bengal railway in the 1890s, and the expansion of waterways, also improved the fuel supply from various parts of Bengal, including Calcutta. The railway also contributed to the expansion of tea production in Eastern India by reducing freight charges for the tea containers.<sup>32</sup>

Scientific research had also advanced soil testing for tea. At the start of the twentieth century Harold H. Mann published a detailed report where he argued that the soils of tella (hillock) and bheel of Sylhet were suitable for top class tea plantations.<sup>33</sup> The officers of the scientific department of the *Indian Tea Association* were constantly occupied in giving advice on how to make progress regarding improvements in the cultivation and manufacture of tea. On 24 July 1911, S.G. Hart, Director of Agriculture, for Eastern Bengal and Assam wrote the following note:

Early in 1911 the publication of a quarterly journal was commenced with the object of keeping planters in touch with the recent additions to the scientific knowledge of tea. Fortunately planters are very keen to experiment and adopt improvements, and steady progress in yield and quality is due to their efforts, guided by the information and advice placed at their disposal by scientific officers.<sup>34</sup>

It appears that scientific progress and management skill created part of the 'supremacy' of the overseas planters over the years. In the early stages, investment in tea was mainly made by the Europeans, and during that period a process of cooperation emerged between Europeans and local elites. The overseas enterprises benefited from local knowledge and cooperation, while indigenous planters benefited from the process of technology transfer and the exchange of ideas. Cooperation came not only from the zaminders but also from the professional classes, particularly from lawyers and *babus*. This 'petty bourgeoisie' invested money in the local tea firms and discovered a new market in tea garden related cases in the local Court. Harrendra Chandra Sinha and Promode Chandra Dutta, were both busy lawyers in Sylhet. They produced a compendium on Labour law under the heading, *The Workman's Breach of Contract Act: Being Act XIII of 1859*.<sup>35</sup> This book was published for the employers

32 IOR/ V/24/4279, *Report on Tea Culture in Assam for 1900*, Published in 1901, p. 2.

33 Harold H Mann, *Tea Soils of Cachar and Sylhet*, (Calcutta, 1903).

34 IOR/ V/24/4279, See the letter of S.G. Hart to the Financial Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, in *Report on Tea Culture in Assam for 1910*, (Shillong, 1911), p. 3.

35 Harrendra Chandra Sinha & Promode Chandra Dutta, *The Workman's Breach of Contract*

or planters who directly dealt with labour in the tea districts of Assam. The act of 1859, popularly known as the ‘coolie’ or Labour Act, was amended from time to time. It became the subject of a considerable body of case law, whose details were reproduced and analyzed in compendia intended to assist employers, courts, and practicing lawyers. Sinha and Dutta compiled details of all cases under this Act, and reported to the four High Courts of British India from 1865 to 1899. These cases dealt with almost all questions of importance under the statute. On the importance of the book, the authors claimed:

The reason why the notes have been given in greater detail perhaps than is usually done is that they will save those for whom the work is primarily intended, namely the employers of labour, the necessity and inconvenience of referring to the original reports, which were not readily accessible to them. It is at the same time hoped that the work will be found useful by courts and practitioners as well.<sup>36</sup>

There were also a few systematic attempts made on the part of local experts who were managers in the native garden or assistant managers in the European gardens to bring together all the methods of tea manufactures which lay scattered in various books and journals. In the early 1930s, an experienced native manager Avinas Dutta wrote a *Handbook* that dealt with the ‘conflicting opinions’ of the scientists. He claimed that his book would be a boost to the empirical knowledge for both native and overseas planters.<sup>37</sup> The *tella babus* (head of a block in the garden) helped Europeans to cultivate the tea plants, take soil tests and understand the weather. Some babus even led the opening of tea gardens for the Europeans. In November 1927 E. G. Foley wrote, ‘The New Sylhet Tea Estates — belonged at one time solely to James Turnbull of Malnicherra. The initial work was done by a babu’.<sup>38</sup> Thus one kind of capitalist ‘enclave’ emerged in Sylhet and this new environment electrified the idea of progress among the native elites, notably, Zamindars and the educated *bhadralok*. These people had neither enough experience of operating commercial ventures nor business experience. However, in the course of time, a tea economy emerged with a ‘new hope’ and the native elites came forward without delay. In this way local entrepreneurs engaged themselves with the global tea trade through commercial contacts and technology transfers.

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*Act: Being Act XIII of 1859, (Calcutta, 1889).*

36 Sinha & Dutta, *The Workman’s Breach of Contract Act*, p. i.

37 Avinas Chandra Dutta, *Handbook of Tea Manufacture*, (Habiganj, 1933), p. 1.

38 Foley, *The Surma Valley Magazine*, p. 17.

There were other dimensions too. For instance, a small job market was also created. Association with Europeans, no matter whether working below the rank of manager or making a small investment in tea, all had a special charm of its own for the local people. G. P. Stewart a District Commissioner of Sylhet in the 1930s, observed that Sylhet was the largest town in Assam. He also noted that throughout the Sylhet tea gardens, managers, officers and engineers were mostly Europeans.<sup>39</sup> *Sylhet Station Club* was established in 1885 which was older than even *Dacca Club*. Thus, Sylhet became the main centre of Assam. But also one of the features of the early twentieth century in Sylhet was that local people dominated the spheres of trade and commerce. In most parts of Bengal and the Bhramputra Valley of Assam, the Marwary community dominated the trade and commerce, while Sylhet was the exception. Data show that in 1901 there were 8,681 Marwary businessmen in Assam, but only 525 in Sylhet. The reason was that the Sylheti tended to be business-oriented. Allen observed, 'The trade of Sylhet has been to a great extent retained in the hands of the natives of the district.'<sup>40</sup> The people who engaged in business were of various groups and religions. Bipin Pal wrote that Saha businessmen did not belong to the 'upper caste' but were wealthy people who owned large houses and properties in Sylhet town.<sup>41</sup> Besides the tea and traditional trades, new shops and businesses started up with western goods, such as looking glasses, umbrellas, cosmetics, shoes, toiletries and cotton goods which made Sylhet a unique emporium. To help the commerce of the district, modern banks and insurance companies were also established. Also Sylhet had substantially more experience with colonial rule, and there was an educated class, good at the English language that could immediately take advantage of opportunities opening up in the new frontier. As in the case of Cachar, another tea district of Assam, the lawyers of Sylhet acted as local solicitors for the tea companies.<sup>42</sup> The Sylheti professional class was also employed in the other tea districts of Assam.

However, in some cases the Europeans clashed with the local elites, not because the two had different understandings of what land ownership meant, but because of

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39 G. P. Stewart was born in 1901 and grew up in Ireland. He served in the Indian Civil Service as a high official in 1930s and 1940s and after his retirement he settled in New Zealand. Stewart, G. P. *The Rough and Smooth* (autobiography), p. 35.

40 Allen, *Sylhet*, pp. 191-92.

41 Bipin Chandra Pal, *Memories of My life and Times*, (Calcutta, 1973, first published, 1932), p. 99.

42 D. Dutta, 'Tea Industry in Cachar- It's Origin', *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. 84, (Calcutta, 1965), pp. 1-9.

power struggle. Beneath the official sources, family histories reveal this dimension of contestation between the elites of ‘two-worlds’. For example, in early 2004 certain Abed Chaudhury wrote about his family history, where he noted:

Abdul Gafoor Chaudhury lived around the time of the war of independence against the British in 1857. He was known to have sheltered many rebel soldiers who were then hiding in the villages after the return onslaught of the British. Later the British forces crushed the freedom fighters completely and we were to remain under occupation for another ninety years. ...Abdul Gafoor Chaudhury had only one son, Ali Gauhar Chaudhury who became a legendary figure in his time. By this time British rule was entrenched and consolidated and vast tracts of our family land was confiscated at nominal price by the British for establishing tea estates. All the land currently comprising the Shamsheernagar and Allynagar Tea Estates used to be owned by Ali Gauhar Chaudhury.<sup>43</sup>

Here aspects of contestation between the elites of West and East are very clear. However, drawing from family sources, Abed Chaudhury also mentioned that the initial contestation ended with one kind of cooperation. Interestingly, it happened in the field of learning the English language. As Chaudhury pointed out:

I have heard that having taken all this land at a low price the British later named one of the Estates in his name, provided him with free English lesson and even offered him a job in one of the Estates. It is not known how he reacted to these propositions, but his five sons...in various capacities learned English and tried to prosper in the situation that they found themselves due to the British occupation of our land.<sup>44</sup>

By contrast, in the early 1910s, S. C. Bhattacharyya, a ‘pro-British’ schoolmaster, termed British rule as a ‘blessing’. He argued that, ‘the establishment of peace and order has increased our commerce and developed the industries of the country. The increase in our home and foreign trade has been phenomenal.’<sup>45</sup> So the important questions are: who were the local planters? And what factors inspired the local elites to invest in tea?

### **The rise of local planters and joints stock companies**

Unlike in England and other European countries, ‘industrialization’ in South Asia was mainly the result of forces generated abroad. Sugata Bose observes that Bengal’s peasants produced commodities for the capitalist world market from the 1820s onward as a result of the commercialisation of agriculture, producing jute as a cash

43 Abed Chaudhury, *A brief history of Kanihati*, <http://www.kanihati.com> (access 1 January, 2015)

44 *Ibid.*

45 S. C. Bhattacharyya, *Material Advantages of India Under The British Crown*, (Sylhet, 1912), pp. 10-11.

crop. Nevertheless, there was continuity rather than change or a big push towards capitalism in rural Bengal.<sup>46</sup> In the late nineteenth century however, the tea plantations were a major shift towards a new form of 'enclave economy' beyond the major cities of colonial South Asia. Historical sources indicate that a 'hybrid' system emerged, encompassing both western capitalist and eastern feudalistic culture. In general, tea estates were modeled on the capitalist system, which led to two separate classes, planters and labourers. In the early decades, the plantations were primarily owned by European individuals or companies. The native entrepreneurs were not absent, but tea estates opened by indigenous firms were normally entrusted to overseas agency firms for management. A.K. Bagchi shows that the concentration of capital in the hands of a few European managing agency houses, created individual or collective monopolies.<sup>47</sup>

The adoption of industrial methods of production and manufacturing in the tea plantations by European capitalists, with some associated changes in transport, and lifestyle for the upper classes in Sylhet, could also be seen as a major change. In this phase, local enterprises gradually emerged through adopting ideas and technology from the Europeans. C. A. Bayly argues that real and rapid changes did occur especially in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century. He points out, 'Up to this point, different systems of hierarchy and localism, many of them surviving in a modified form from the old regimes, showed a striking capacity to accommodate these changes.'<sup>48</sup> It seems interesting in relation to the alleged lack of enterprise on the part of the native in any kind of industry. Historical sources suggest that from the time of the *India Tea Committee* of 1834 to the formation of the *Assam Company*, the first tea company formed in 1839, there were signs of their involvement in the plantations of both Hindu and Muslim indigenous elites.<sup>49</sup> When the tea industry gained steady progress in Assam and Sylhet, with its

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46 Sugata Bose, *Peasant Labour and Colonial Capital: Rural Bengal Since 1700*, (Cambridge, 1993) pp. 63-65.

47 Companies listed in the *Indian Industrial Year Book 1911* (Calcutta: 1911) cited in Bagchi, *Private Investment in India*, pp. 176-77.

48 C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*, (Oxford, 2004), p. 183.

49 In the Tea committee of 1834 Babu Ram Comul Sen and Raja Radhakant Deb were the two native members. Nevertheless the Indian representations were more conspicuous in the Assam Tea Company's Calcutta committee. The members were, Dwarkanath Tagore, Moteeloll Seil, Prossono Comar Tagore, Rustomjee Cowarjie and Hadjee Ispahani. Moteeloll Seil was the directors of the Calcutta committee. See, Antrobus, *A History of the Assam Company*, pp. 16, 39.

ever increasing global market, local elites entered this new arena. Nevertheless, the environment was less advantageous for the indigenous entrepreneur. In the early stages, domestic capital formation was virtually non-existent and therefore, there was a scarcity of capital for the native affluent classes. In rewriting the history of indigenous entrepreneurship there is a deficit of relevant information, particularly in the colonial archives. Nevertheless, an early statistical survey has revealed that a number of wealthy Zaminders from Sylhet made a profit from cash crops such as jute and rice. William Hunter estimated that river-borne exports of jute and rice from the Sylhet district to Bengal for the year 1876-77 carried by steamer were valued at 943,631 rupees.<sup>50</sup>

Historians researching the *permanent settlement*, imposed in the colonial period, argue that the strategy of the Zaminders was to increase income by other profitable means, such as *mahajani* investment in the grain trade, bonds, urban properties and increased rent on *rai-yats* (tenant). In this way, some of them accumulated surplus money, left for the city and became absentee landlords.<sup>51</sup> Other wealthy natives invested their surplus capital in tea. Evidence indicates that the *bhadralok*, the Zaminders and lawyers from both Hindu and Muslim communities were in the forefront in this 'great hope for progress'. The *Cachar Native Joint Stock Company* floated by the Bengalis in the Surma valley (Sylhet) of Assam was the first native tea company not only in Assam but also in British India. A famous lawyer from Sylhet, Musaraf Ali, along with his Hindu friends, formed this company, while Mr. Ali's personal friend and top bureaucrat in the Assam government, Jogesh Chandara Chatterjee, provided official backing. Dewan Mohammad Azrof wrote that the successors of Mr. Ali received dividends from this pioneering enterprise until the partition in 1947. His son Munawwar Ali was elected several times to the Assam Legislature and served as a Minister for a number of terms.<sup>52</sup> This company started its operations in 1876 in Cachar (an integral part of Surma valley). In Sylhet, the first native venture was the *Bharat Samity*, which was formed in 1880. Achyut Charan Chowdhury mentions that in 1910 the local entrepreneurs from both Hindu and Muslim elites owned 16 tea gardens.<sup>53</sup> Raja Grish Chandra and Moulvi Ali Amzad Khan were two famous Zamindaers in Sylhet who in the late nineteenth century invested surplus capital in this modern sector.

50 W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Assam*, Vol. ii, (London: 1879), *Sylhet*, p.306.

51 Sirajul Islam (ed.), *History of Bangladesh 1704-1971, Economic*, Vol. II, (Dhaka: 1997).

52 Dewan Mohammad Azrof, Interviewed in Dhaka, January 1997.

53 Achyut Charan Chowdhury, *Sreehatter Itibritta [A History of Sylhet]*, (Calcutta, 1910), p. 24.

Unlike its European counterpart, the indigenous nascent capitalism had its roots in agriculture as well in savings from the professional middle class. Even in the late nineteenth century local joint companies managed at least two gardens. The Indeswar Tea Garden owned by the *Indeswar Tea & Trading Company Limited* and the Kalinagar Tea Garden owned by the *Bharat Samity*, were two examples of the successful partnership business run by the indigenous entrepreneurs. Their records in the government files indicate that both were able to run their operations for a long period. *The Bharat Samity Ltd.*, registered on 20 August 1895 had an authorized capital of 500,000 rupees, subscribed capital of 177,500 rupees and paid-up capital was 100,475 rupees. The *Indeswar Tea & Trading Company Limited* registered on 10 April 1896 had an authorized capital of 100,000 rupees, subscribed capital of 100,000 rupees and paid-up capital of 88,785 rupees.<sup>54</sup>

The British administration enacted regulations fixing a very high limit for the reclamation of wastelands for plantations, hence most of the local entrepreneurs failed to obtain the concessions. The financial prerequisite was exorbitant even for the local aristocrats and in the early years their participation was marginal in comparison to their European counterparts. The local planters were not discriminated against as such, but the clause which provided that no grant was to be made of an area of less than 100 acres and only to an applicant who was in possession of stock worth Rs. 3/- per acre affected them. This provision excluded most of the native planters from competing.<sup>55</sup> The area under cultivation of each of the native-owned gardens was limited to a few hundred acres at best. H. K. Barpujari has observed, 'Financial constraints prevented most of the indigenous planters from extension of cultivation, and in fact the majority of them have no factory of their own; they had to send their green leaves for manufacture to nearby European gardens.'<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, the emergence of local entrepreneurship and its subsequent progress was a significant feature in the early twentieth century. In 1873, the Collector of Sylhet H.C. Sullivan, pointed out that in a permanently settled district like Sylhet, 'lands can only be procured through the Zemindars, who hold the estates, or from Government in the

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54 IOR/V/24/556, *Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1921-22*, (Shillong 1922), p. 9-10 and IOR/V/24/558, *Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1930-31*, (Calcutta, 1931) pp. 28-29. Information on these companies is also available early local sources. Chowdhury, Achyut. *Sreehatter Itibritta*, p.24.

55 Hossain, *Historical Globalization*, p. 56.

56 H. K. Barpujari, *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. 4, (Guwahati, 1992), p. 368.

case of *khas mehals* (government lands).<sup>57</sup> However, certain areas of Sylhet were not covered by the permanent settlement and it was to such areas that the planters directed their attention. Griffiths shows that two-thirds of the tea land of Sylhet was held on leases from the Government under the old Assam rules. And it was for this reason many tea gardens were established in the *tella* (hillocks) of South Sylhet.<sup>58</sup>

#### **The role of the local elites in establishing tea gardens**

B. C. Allen in 1905 compiled some information on contemporary local planters and their gardens. He found that Hindu elites and aristocrat Muslims owned the native tea estates in Sylhet.<sup>59</sup> The role of the Zaminders in Sylhet appears to be vital as they were granting land to overseas planters as well as opening gardens themselves. Brojendra Narayan Chowdhury described his grandfather, Brajra Nath Chowdhury, as a native planter, who worked closely with an overseas firm and sold his forestland to Duncan Brothers.<sup>60</sup> As a result of this cooperation, Brajra Nath received some valuable consultation from Mr. Machmean of Duncan Brothers, who helped him to open a tea garden in the late nineteenth century. Later Loacknath Sharma, another Zaminder of Sylhet, joined them. Nearly four decades later Brajra Nath's grandson Brojendra Narayan Chowdhury, opened a large Tea Estate at Kamalpur, an area of 1065 acres, situated in the neighbouring Tripura State. It was named as *Maha Bir Tea Estate* after the name of King of Tripura, Maharaja Birbikram Mankkya Bahadur. In 1939 Mr. Chowdhury also opened a factory in this garden. It has proved to be a profitable enterprise.<sup>61</sup> Khan Bahadur Syed Abdul Majid, the first native Minister of Assam in the early twentieth century, launched one of the genuine native ventures in the tea, the *All India Tea Company Limited*, with the help of Hindu elites from Sylhet, on 2 February 1911. The authorised capital of the *All India Tea Company Limited* was 100,000 rupees, subscribed capital was 847,500 rupees and paid up capital was 710,985 rupees.<sup>62</sup>

57 The Report of the Collector of Sylhet H.C. Sullivan submitted to the Government, 13 January 1873, cited in Griffiths, *The History of the Indian Tea Industry*, p. 93.

58 Griffiths, *The History of the Indian Tea Industry*, p.93.

59 Allen, *Sylhet*, pp. 277-91.

60 Brojendra Narayan Chowdhury, *Smriti and Pratiti* [An Autobiography], (Calcutta, 1982), pp. 221-222. *Duncan Brothers* is now the biggest British company operating as a major foreign venture in Sylhet as Finlay sold its tea gardens to a Bangladeshi company in 2006.

61 Chowdhury, *Smriti and Pratiti*, pp. 221-222.

62 IOR/N/24/556, *Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1921-22*, (Shillong 1922) p. 9. For cooperation between Hindu-Muslim elites see Chowdhury, *Smriti and Pratiti*, 122.

The principal zaminder of Sylhet, Nowab Ali Amjad Khan, also opened a tea estate in Sylhet. This family had a link with Persian culture and traditions and the leader of the Shia Muslims in Eastern Bengal and Sylhet. William Hunter, in the 1870s, mentioned that this Nowab family were mighty landlords and B.C. Allen presented them as very 'influential natives'. Nowab Ali Amjad actually took on the British on several different occasions and fought a number of legal battles on the wastelands issue. His father Ali Ahmed Khan had welcomed a delegation of planters led by the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet S.C. Sutherland in the 1870s. One of the delegates later wrote, 'We reached Prithimpasa and stayed as guests of Ali Ahmed Khan at Hingajea Thana for two days'.<sup>63</sup> They were the most influential natives in Sylhet in those days. They established the Rangiachara tea garden, which was the largest garden in terms of area and the third largest in terms of cultivation among the local estates.<sup>64</sup> Besides the Nowab family, other Muslim leaders with 'respectable' and aristocratic backgrounds had modest interests in tea gardens and were government titled holders at different times. They were: Mohammad Bakht Majumder, Karim Baksh, Golam Rabbani, Abdul Majjid Kaptan Miah owned the Brahmanchara tea estate in 1904 with 130 acres under plantations employing 43 labours. Syed Ali Akbar Khandakhar was the owner of the Pallakandi tea estate in Hingajia in South Sylhet. It was the smallest tea garden in Sylhet.<sup>65</sup> Zaminder Abdur Rashid Chowdhury, an eminent Muslim politician of the 1930s also turned entrepreneur in tea. He was a member of the Assam Legislature from 1933 to 1937 and at a by-election in 1937 he was elected as Member of the Indian Central Legislative Agency. His son Aminur Rashid Chowdhury was a prominent tea planter in Sylhet whose tea estates remain a major local venture in Sylhet today. However, as discussed below, until 1947 the stake of Muslim aristocrats in tea was less than one third in comparison with Hindu elites.<sup>66</sup>

Archival, autobiographical and oral sources suggest that native joint stock companies emerged in greater numbers where the elites of Sylhet were in the forefront. For example, 1921-22, in the tea sector, there were 29 native joint stock companies in

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63 E. G. Foley, *The Surma Valley Magazine*, 1:8 (October, 1927), p. 6.

64 Foley, *The Surma Valley Magazine*, p. 17. Rangiachara was situated in the zamindari estates, in the Hingajia Police Station, 21 miles from the South Sylhet subdivision.

65 Although its total area was 250 acres, the area under cultivation was only 60 and the total labour force was only 23. Officially a garden requires at least 100 acres to be called as garden.

66 Interview with A. M. Muhith, July 2008 and Dewan Mohammad Azrof, January, 1997.

Assam. Out of these companies, 23 were registered in Sylhet, 3 in Cachar and only 3 in the tea districts of Assam. Although tea companies were less than one third of the total of 114 native joint stock companies, they contributed more than half of the paid-up capital in the said year. Companies at work on 31 March 1922 were 114, their paid up capital was 4,661,832 rupees and the tea companies' subscribed capital was 2,886,002 rupees.<sup>67</sup> J. Hezlett, Registrar of the Joint Stock Companies in Assam, noted, 'Tea companies contributed largely to the increase in the paid up capital'.<sup>68</sup> Joint Stock Companies also opened in fields such as banking, loans and insurance, transit and transport, printing and publishing, gas, water, electricity, power and telephone, cotton mills, rice mills, saw mills, oil mills, limestone, sugar, poultry and dairy, construction and estate and above all in tea. But it is evident that, in the early twentieth century local entrepreneurs from Sylhet owned joint stock companies operating mainly in the tea sector. Bengalis in Calcutta with the help of Sylheti planters established agency houses. These were trading concerns which involved network and business management. The following table indicates a picture of the early twentieth century agency business between Sylhet and Calcutta where all were natives.

**Table 2**  
**Native agents and owners name with total acres of lands in 1910**

Native owners/agents	Tea Estate	Tea Gaedens
Gagoan Chudra Pual Calcutta (Raja Girish Chandra)	Bidyana Nagar TE	BidyanaNagar, Channighat, Ramnogar, Chunatigool, Krishnanagar
Dutta & Sons ,Calcutta	Duckhingole TE	Duckhingole, Barlekha
N. N. Chowdhury, Calcutta	Gobindapur TE	Gobindapur
Gagoan Ch Dutta, Calcutta	Indeswar Tea Co.,	Indeswar, Kajaldara
Gagoan Ch Dutta ( <i>Bharat Samity</i> ), Calcutta	Kalinagar TE	Kalinagar, Ratbari
Iswar Ch. Dutta & Prasanna K. Dutta	Muddanpore TE	Muddanpore, Latu
<b>Total 05 Agency house</b>	<b>06 Tea estates</b>	<b>11 gardens, 3,229 acres</b>

Sources: Compiled from Taylor Maps, 1910.

67 IOR/V/24/556, *Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1921-22*, (Shillong, 1922) pp. 5, 9-10.

68 IOR/V/24/556, *Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1921-22*, (Shillong, 1922), p. 1.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the professional and the service holders of Sylhet, had a more or less homogeneous economic and caste background. Most of them were upper-caste Hindus and economically-speaking part of the middle class. Muslim planters also had a similar educational and economic background. The emergence of a professional group — mostly Hindu and partly Muslim was the most important social factor in the post mutiny (1857) period. Zaminders saved money from agriculture while professional men such as lawyers saved from their practices. Among these classes, the legal practitioners had acquired social leadership. Bpin Pal's father was a *Munsif* in 1864-5 in Fenchuganj and later he became a lawyer in Sylhet and Brojendra Narayan Chowdhury mentions on several occasions that lawyers were the socio-political leadership in late nineteenth century Sylhet. His grandfather was a lawyer and he himself passed his Bachelor of Lawexams in 1906 and joined the Sylhet Bar for a short period. As middle-class professionals they emerged as the social elite in the districts of Bengal. Sylhet was no exception to this general picture of Bengal society.<sup>69</sup> Both the zaminders and the lawyers could satisfy the condition of the entrepreneur, because the legal profession was at that time an independent profession and Zaminders had always been independent. Employees in the government and private sector could not generally seize the opportunities available because of difficulties imposed by their service conditions, and those in other profession such as teachers, clerks had very little to invest, and they were also few in number.<sup>70</sup>

#### ***Marketing Mix and management of tea companies by the locals***

The *marketing mix* refers to the set of actions or tactics that a company uses to promote its products in the market. The marketing mix is made up by several *Ps* such as price, product, promotion, place, packaging, profit and people etc. Generally, the local entrepreneurs were guided by the profit motive. But questions arise: How far were the native pioneer planters profit-conscious? Were they aware of the expanding market for tea? What was their knowledge about the risk of the investment? There are few sources available on local planters to help answer these questions exactly. Hardly any printed material from the early companies is

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69 Pal, *Memories of My life and Times*, p. 17. Chodhury, *Smriti and Pratiti*, p. 79.

70 Allen, *Sylhet*, pp.191-92, 277-91. For the wider British India context, see B.M. Bhatia, *History and Social Development*, Vol. I, (Delhi, 1974), pp. 82-83.

available,<sup>71</sup> and no information about their estimates of profit is to be found. It has been necessary therefore to analyze indirect sources such as autobiographies and private handbooks.<sup>72</sup> In Sylhet in the mid 1870s the price per kg of tea was four times higher than the price per kg of ghee (clarified butter), the most valuable product in the pre-tea era.<sup>73</sup> In 1897-98 among the tea districts of Assam, Sibsagar had the largest area under tea with 75,945 acres, and Sylhet stood second with 71,660 acres. Sibsagar also had the greatest production, closely followed by Sylhet.<sup>74</sup>

Annual Reports on Tea Culture in Assam from 1896 to 1900 depict an upward trend of tea production in Sylhet and the production per acre at 400 lbs. and above. By 1900 the statistics show that, among the all tea districts of Assam, the largest production of tea was in Sylhet.<sup>75</sup> Achyut Charan Chowdhury, a venerated intellectual, stated that owners of the tea gardens were treated and honoured like Zamindeers, the traditional aristocrats of Sylhet.<sup>76</sup> The local intellectuals were enthusiastic about tea, which they saw as bringing new spirit into the local socio-economic life. So, the local entrepreneurs were actually conscious of the prospects in tea and its expanding market across the globe. Tea appeared to them to be a rewarding investment. The price of tea, as a global commodity stayed high and its profit margins continued to lure its promoters as well as its shareholders.

Next comes the question of how local entrepreneurs gathered information about the initial costs. As residents of the district, the lawyers of Sylhet represented the European companies locally in all legal aspects. In the course of their professional dealings, they came in contact with both the European management and the native employees who had first-hand knowledge of the expenditure side of the European concerns. Some lawyers in Sylhet were famous for their professional expertise in tea-related disputes in Assam.<sup>77</sup> These links and information provided the basis for estimating cost, while personal contact was the single most important source for cost and revenue estimation. It was in this way that local entrepreneurs also gained marketing intelligence. It is clear from reports produced between 1921 and 1935 by

71 It was not, until 1912, the *All India Tea and Trading Company Ltd.* published a short prospectus and we did not able to see it as hardly any copy left.

72 Chowdhury, *Smriti and Pratiti*, pp. 221-222. Dutta, *Handbook of tea manufacture*.

73 Hunter, *Sylhet*, p. 306.

74 IOR/ V/24/4279, *Report on Tea Culture in Assam for 1898*, Published in 1899, p. 1.

75 IOR/ V/24/4279, *Report on Tea Culture in Assam for 1900*, Published in 1901, p. 1.

76 Achyut Chowdhury, *Sreehatter Itibritta*, p. 24.

77 Sinha & Dutta, *The Workman's Breach of Contract Act*.

the Registrar of the Native Joint Stock Companies that the majority of tea companies increased their paid-up capital.<sup>78</sup> In this way, the risk of investment in the tea shares was largely reduced. It is assumed that the local planters made the point that they had relatively small investment and comparatively low operational costs and that the resulting cost effectiveness would ensure more dividends for the shareholders.<sup>79</sup> It is significant that within a short period, local entrepreneurs had gained experience in tea cultivation and had been able to attract respectable and well-known people for the management board and as prominent shareholders. For example, people like Nobab Ali Amjad Khan, Brojendra Narayan Chowdhury and Minister Abdul Majd, Legislative Members as well as lawyers were involved in the management of the tea gardens. Hence, the involvement of aristocrats, zaminders, successful lawyers and even political leaders in the tea plantations was quite common in Sylhet. Also, many shareholders were involved in the management of the tea estates in other ways and therefore were well informed about the profit prospects.

Planters published both Bengali and English weekly newspapers, for example, *Janashakti* and *Jogoverly*. So information about the legal aspects of opening tea estates was easily available. An autobiographical source suggests that the 'spirit of nationalism' was a key factor in the emergence of local entrepreneurship.<sup>80</sup> At an early stage every tea garden had an overseas manager or assistant manager. Below that rank were locals and they gradually learned the craft of operating tea estates. This experienced subordinate staff from the overseas plantations came forward to lend their service to local entrepreneurs. In the course of time confidence built up as they started to feel that the native entrepreneurs were not 'inferior' to the Europeans. Through lawyers gaining experience from their professional interface with overseas planters, and the discourse of new nationalism creating a confidence in native ability to share responsibility with Europeans, the psychological environment for the local elites and professionals to enter the tea industry was produced. In the early twentieth

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78 IOR/V/24/556, *Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1921-22*, (Shillong, 1922), pp. 9-10 and IOR/V/24/558, *Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1934-35*, (Calcutta, 1935), pp. 28-29.

79 The local companies had expenses only in labour. Administrative and overhead expenses were low because the directors or owners themselves controlled the management. For these reasons the earnings of the native companies were always higher than the costs.

80 Chowdhury, *Smriti and Pratiti*, pp. 221-222.

century the government carefully monitored the indigenous capitalist venture in tea plantations. On 24 July 1917, J. McSwiney, Director of Agriculture for Assam noted:

That the general prospects of the industry are believed to be good is shown by the continued opening of new gardens. The investment of Indian capital in tea is reported to be increasing in Sylhet.<sup>81</sup>

It is now evident that in the early twentieth century, inspired to some extent by the spirit of nationalism, elites of the district invested in *Swadeshi* (national) industries. It is quite interesting that except for the tea industry, most of the *Swadeshi* investment was failed. 1 June 1922, J. Hezlett, Registrar of the Joint Stock Companies, declared a non-tea *Swadeshi* venture namely *Shaistaganj Sanmilita Swadeshi Bhandar, Limited* (in liquidation) had failed. He noted, 'I have warned the Managing Director of the Company that if a liquidator is not appointed, action will be taken under the section 247 of the Companies Act. The Managing Director has promised to take up the matter at the Company's next meeting.'<sup>82</sup> Because of the emergence of tea companies, indigenous investment in Assam and Sylhet was high. According to a Government report, 'It is interesting to note that both the number of the Companies and the aggregate paid-up capital, as shown in the statement I (one), this province is ahead of some other Indian provinces such as Bihar and Orissa and the Central Provinces'<sup>83</sup> In Sylhet among the *Swadeshi* enterprises of the 1920s, only the tea companies survived and later flourished. As discussed earlier there was a mutual understanding and cooperation particularly on economic issues between local entrepreneurs and European planters.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the local entrepreneurs played their part in the nationalist movement and some even went to jail. The clash between Europeans and the local elites was a political matter as the latter were seeking independence from the British rule. The local planters not only cooperated but also took part in resistance.<sup>84</sup> It was in 1920 that the *Surma Valley (Sylhet) Political Conference* declared complete, non-violent non-cooperation with the European merchants and planters. One of the goals of this movement was to advise the natives to gradually withdraw their service from

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81 IOR/V/24/4279, *Report on Tea Culture in Assam for 1916*, p. 2.

82 IOR/V/24/556, *Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1921-22*, (Shillong, 1922), p. 1.

83 IOR/V/24/556, *Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1922-23*, (Shillong, 1923), p.1.

84 For the resistance and arrest of the Congress leaders, see B. Chowdhury, *Smriti and Pratiti*, pp. 140-42.

the Europeans.<sup>85</sup> The tea planter Brojendra Narayn Chowdhury was not only a front-ranking leader of Congress over the decades but also a key figure in the nationalist movement in Sylhet. Chowdhury, with help from other Congress leaders, published vernacular newspapers such as *Janashakti* from the 1920s on. From 1920 to 1935, *Janashakti* epitomised the nationalist movement in Sylhet.<sup>86</sup> Some of the Hindu elites had multiple roles. Ramani Mohan Das, for example, was a member of the Assam Legislative in the 1910s, but at the same time a local board leader, a zaminder, a tea planter, a merchant and a banker.<sup>87</sup> Another tea planter Mr. Abdur Rashid Chowdhury was a renowned local politician, who published *Jugoveri* in 1930 which upheld the political and cultural interests of Muslims in Assam. After the death of Abdur Rashid Chowdhury in 1944 his son Aminur Rashid Chowdhury, also a planter, cooperated with the Muslim League in the mid 1940s and supported the Pakistan movement in Sylhet. During the referendum in Sylhet, Aminur and his paper played a key role urging the people to vote for Pakistan.<sup>88</sup>

A significant upheaval took place in the social, economic and political leadership of Sylhet from the nineteenth century. The new world created by the British Raj and the European planters in Assam, the introduction of English as the official language in the courts, the greater access of the Hindu middle class to modern education clearly shifted 'hegemony' in favour of the Hindu elites. According to the survey of William Hunter in 1870-71, land taxes paid by Mohammedans totalled £27,406<sup>89</sup> about 55 percent of the total land taxes of Sylhet while the remaining 45 percent came from Hindu and European land owners. At that time, out of seven major landlords, four were Muslim.<sup>90</sup> Three decades later, when Allen's *District Gazetteers* were published, the new landlords, lawyers and traders were mostly from the Hindu community. Out of twelve local tea estates, only three were owned by Muslims.<sup>91</sup>

85 Amalendu Guha, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj*, (New Delhi, 1977), p. 128.

86 Mohiuddin Shiru, *Sylheter Shatabarser Sangbadikata [Hundred Years of Journalism of Sylhet]* (Sylhet, 1998), pp. 43-45.

87 *Assam Legislative Council Proceedings 1912-1920*, cited in Guha.A.*Planter-Raj to Swaraj*, p. 347.

88 Shiru, *Sylheter Shatabarser Sangbadikata*, p. 67.

89 Hunter, Sylhet, p.302.

90 In the 1870s the principal landlords were Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Kadir, Maulvi Ali Ahmad Khan, Sayyid Bukht Majumdar, Nasrat Reza, Babu Grish Chandra Das, Babu Surjamani Sharma, and Babu Hargobindar Chandra all of whom were residents of the district. See Hunter, *Sylhet*, p. 302.

91 Allen, *Sylhet*, pp. 277-91.

According to the *Taylor Maps* of Sylheti tea gardens in 1910, Hindus owned all five native agency houses controlling 11 tea gardens with a total of 3,229 acres of land.<sup>92</sup> Muslims only owned 416 acres of tea land in 1905<sup>93</sup> and *Taylor Maps* did not mention the small stake of Muslim elites in Sylhet plantations.

In the 1910s and early 1920s secular names such as *The All India Tea Company Limited* and even *The East Bengal Hindu Muslim Planters Limited* were preferred. However, by the mid 1920s and certainly by the 1930s ‘religious’ names such as the *Binapani Tea Co., Limited*, *The Joy-Tara Tea Co., Limited* or *The Daru-Salam Tea Co., Limited* were appearing.<sup>94</sup>

#### **Under the shadow of ‘internal’ colonialism**

After decolonization in 1947, the tea industry in Sylhet entered a new phase, gradually falling into the hands of West Pakistani capitalists, in line with government policy. As a result of these political changes, the distribution of income and wealth changed rapidly until the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971. The *Great Divide* of 1947 resulted in a major dislocation of the Hindu elites and professional classes in Sylhet. Many of them worked in the professions alongside Europeans in schools, colleges, hospitals. Others had clerical jobs on the plantations. The change was biggest for the upper strata of society. The new state of Pakistan had steadily produced new elites who took a bigger share of the total income. Since national capital and the head offices of the civil and military departments were located in West Pakistan, the West Pakistanis received benefits where outlays for the construction of buildings and the employment opportunities generated from construction and supplies were concerned.<sup>95</sup> In the plantation sector, the Urdu speaking Muslim elites clearly benefited, particularly those who were of West Pakistani origin. Nonetheless, overseas planters continued to have the lion’s share as they had before 1947.

92 Ashfaque Hossain, *Historical Globalization*, p. 64.

93 Allen, *Sylhet*, pp. 277-91. Though the production area was 416 acres, the garden area was more than 1000 acres.

94 IOR/V/24/556, Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1921-22, (Shillong, 1922 ), pp. 9-10 *Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1922-23*, (Shillong, 1923). Report on Working of the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913 in the Province of Assam for the year 1934-35, (Calcutta, 1935) pp. 28-29.

95 *Bangladesh Documents.*, Vol., I (Delhi, 1971), *The Pakistan Observer* (Dhaka), 19 June, 1968, *Pakistan National Assembly Debates*, 8 march 1963, and the *Dawn*, Karachi, 1956.

Besides this major dislocation, tea producers had to face difficulties at various stages of production, packing, marketing and export. Owing to the partition of the sub-continent, the usual sources of the supply of seeds and tea chests from India dried up. Fully aware of these difficulties the tea planters held a conference in Sylhet in January of 1949 to discuss solutions for the various problems facing the industry.<sup>96</sup> In this changed setting, the new Pakistani Government soon declared, ‘Among the key products of this zone of Pakistan, jute and tea are known all over the world — and it has been Government’s primary concern to see that the markets for jute and tea are not only maintained but developed.’<sup>97</sup> With this official patronage a new class of ‘Urdu speaking’ businessmen soon emerged. Another important aspect of these changes in the early Pakistani period was that the Hindu elites of Sylhet either sold their gardens or fell in the boundary of the Karimgonj subdivision — now in India. All of these factors caused a number of gardens to be ‘abandoned’. The Pakistan Government responded to these problems in the following way:

The question of rehabilitation of our *abandoned tea gardens* (emphasis added) and fresh plantation is a matter of great concern to the Government. Now that Pakistan has signed the International Tea Agreement it should not be difficult to obtain seeds which may help us in the rehabilitation of our gardens and extending plantation wherever possible.<sup>98</sup>

Due to reshaping of the borders of Sylhet, the new Pakistani authority was seeking a piecemeal solution. For this reason the Government proposed to send a Special Officer to conduct a survey, so that planning might be carried out and an organised effort made to improve the position of the Sylhet plantations. During the early 1960s, ignoring the opinions of the forest and revenue Departments as well as the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet, the ‘Pakistan Tea Development Committee’ unilaterally recommended an expansion of tea cultivation in the Balisra forest. Around 28,000 acres were chosen. Traditionally, local poor people such as, peasants, day labourers, tribal people had been dependent on the resources of this forest. However, the military ruler Ayub Khan favoured the new wealthy class of Pakistanis. So, eight new gardens were opened in this area. This sparked agitation among the local poor and a violent resistance stopped the further expansion of the gardens.<sup>99</sup>

96 *Proceedings of the Tea Conference held at Sylhet on 26 and 27 January 1949*, Ministry of Commerce, Government of Pakistan, 1949.

97 *Proceedings of the Tea Conference*, p. 8.

98 *Proceedings of the Tea Conference*, p. 10.

99 *Weekly Jugoveri*, Sylhet, 26 February, 1963. The whole process was so crude that even planter Aminur Rashid Chowdhury’s newspaper *Jugoveri*, wrote an editorial condemning

What was the nature of ownership of the tea gardens between the 1950s and the early 1970s? Data from the *Pakistan Tea Association* (1954) shows that in the early 1950s only nine to ten tea gardens were owned by Muslim planters — both Urdu and Bengali speaking. In the same period, gardens owned by Hindu elites were either going under receivership as abandoned property or remained under their nominal control. The Pakistani Minister of Commerce, Fazular Rahman, soon became an owner of tea garden.<sup>100</sup> Within a decade the situation had radically shifted in favour of Urdu speaking Muslim elites. By 1966, West Pakistani, Europeans and local people owned 56, 47 and 11 gardens respectively. During the Indo-Pak war (1965) Hindu elites' tea estates were declared as 'enemy property' and Urdu-speaking Muslims bought them. And yet the statistics show that overseas firms remained in the dominant position both in area and production. The gardens owned by foreign firms were generally about three times bigger than the locally owned gardens and continued to produce most of the tea.

Before 1947, there had been no company under West Pakistani ownership, but after that West Pakistani and émigré upper class Muslims formed tea companies who had a big stake in the Sylhet plantations. Evidence shows that the number of foreign companies decreased in the period between 1954 and 1970 as some foreign estates were purchased by Pakistani companies. An official survey of Sylhet conducted by the Pakistan government in 1970, estimated that out of 162 tea gardens, 74 were in the hands of Urdu speaking entrepreneurs from West Pakistan.<sup>101</sup> The big names were the Ameen, Ispahani and Adamjee agencies. Among them Sadri Ispahani the owner of Ispahani tea was the exception. In 1947, Sadri Ispahani had been forced to leave Calcutta and unlike Adamjee, did not settle in West Pakistan; rather he chose Chittagong the hub of the tea business.<sup>102</sup> He then gradually built a business empire of jute, tea, textile, plywood and dockyards. According to a newspaper editor of Dhaka, the Ispahani family had a genuine commitment to the Bengali people and they financed the independence movement of Bangladesh led by Sheikh Mujibur

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the incident.

100 John Alfred Radford, *Tombs in Sylhet*, (London, 2001), pp. 75-78.

101 S. N. Rizvi, *East Pakistan District Gazeeteers: Sylhet*, (Dhaka: 1968) pp. 191-209.

102 Sadri Ispahani's forefathers came to India from Iran in connection with business that dated back almost two hundreds years. His grand father Hadjee Ispahani was an illustrious businessman in British India who had firms in Bombay and Calcutta. Hadjee Ispahani was the only Muslim name on the Calcutta committee of the Assam Tea Company. Antrobus, *A History of the Assam Company*, pp. 16, 39.

Rahman.<sup>103</sup> The eminent Urdu writer Qurratulain Hyder suggests that the new elites of Pakistan soon found themselves in a dominant position in the plantation valleys of Sylhet. She depicts the scenario of ‘white collar’ jobs and elitist culture in Sylhet in 1960s:

The Planters Club stood like the Rock of Gibraltar amidst exotic tropical foliage, an imposing Kiplingesque legacy of the Raj. The compound was full of cars, jeeps and station wagons. People seemed to have come from all over the tea country for the weekly film show. We went in. The club was teeming with a motley crowd. Scottish planters -and their wives, German and American technocrats from the industries which had come up in the district during the Ayub regime, Japanese engineers from the new fertilizer factory of Fenchugunj, young Pakistani officials and their ultra-fashionable Begums. Pakistanis had replaced the ‘White Sahebs’ of old. Their jobs on the tea estates were supposed to be among the most glamorous and prestigious in the country. Most of the young men and women were from West Pakistan or were upper-class émigrés from India.<sup>104</sup>

It is evident that between 1947 and 1971, during the Pakistan period, the economy of Sylhet, like the rest of East Pakistan, suffered from the implicitly colonial attitude of Pakistan. Political power was concentrated on the bureaucratic military elite who were the successors of the British Raj. In the 1950s they functioned with a parliamentary facade of politicians drawn largely from landed interests, but there was no genuine election in Pakistan before 1970, and the government had been a military dictatorship since 1958. Unlike India, Pakistan never pretended to be a welfare state. When social questions arose, the official doctrine was one of ‘functional inequality’.<sup>105</sup> It was the elite of West Pakistan that profited with colonial bungalows, cantonment areas, and a large dam. A kind of autocratic dominance had been systematically used to exploit one part of the country (East Pakistan) for the benefit of other (West Pakistan) Gramsci’s writing provided a theory to explain the uneven effects of state development on a regional basis. Members of an internal colony, differentiated by the ethnicity, religion, or some other cultural variable, can be excluded from prestigious social and political positions.<sup>106</sup> In the case of the then Pakistan, the minority did exploit the majority, as Bengalis were 56 percent of the total population of Pakistan. Military bureaucrats emerged as the ‘new sahib’.<sup>107</sup> West Pakistani capitalists controlled the sale of tea from the port of Karachi and also became the agents of local planters. During 1961-62, of 53 million pounds of tea

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103 Enayetullah Khan, *New Age*, 22 January 2004.

104 Qurratulain Hyder, *A Woman’s Life*, (Delhi, 1979), p. 72.

105 Planning Commission, *The Second Five Year Plan 1960-65*, (Karachi, 1960)

106 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, (London, 1971), p. 98.

107 G. F. Papnek, *Pakistan Development*, (Harvard, 1967), pp. 40-6.

purchased, only 12 million were exported directly from Sylhet via Chittagong. The remaining 41 million pounds were bought by dealers from West Pakistan and after packaging a large portion of these teas were remarketed in East Pakistan.<sup>108</sup> The very nature of the production and marketing of tea indicated that Pakistan exercised colonial power over Sylhet in the tea plantations and East Pakistan as a whole.

### **Bangladesh Period**

The Liberation War of Bangladesh of 1971 and subsequent emergence of Bangladesh as independent country is one of the most memorable episodes in the recent history of South Asia. However, the turbulent year of 1971 left the tea industry in shambles. The damage of the property, factories, business and plantations was extensive and in few cases beyond repair. Due to the war and its aftermath all the tea companies — foreign or local-ran into serious financial difficulties incurring heavy loss during 1971-72, 1972-73 and 1973-74 periods. Nonetheless, Bangladeshi tea gradually entered into the global market regained its reputation for its qualities. National consumption for tea in Bangladesh picked up and the business fortunes for tea industry as well.

After the emergence of Bangladesh overseas or foreign companies are known as *Sterling Companies* and these companies were actually leading the sector. This scenario started to change in 1980s when Bangladeshi companies have gradually been replacing foreign firms. For instance, in 1984, out of 153 tea estates, 66 were owned by Bangladeshi companies, 58 under partnership and 29 under sterling companies. However, in the same year, sterling companies produced 49.68 percent of the tea in Bangladesh.<sup>109</sup> Their size was two and half times greater than Bangladeshi companies and five times larger than companies privately owned by local people.

James Finlay Company sold its assets to the local entrepreneurs in 2006. Now the company name is *Consolidated Tea and Land Company (BD) Limited*. Another Scottish tea company Duncan Brothers later becoming the part of the Camellia Plc of the U.K. This company's business has subsequently grown from strength to strength. It has gradually been enlarged and diversified its business into insurance, leasing and some other areas over the last three decades and now employing thousands of people.<sup>110</sup>

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108 Rizvi, *Sylhet*, p. 140.

109 Bangladeshiyo Cha Sangsad, *Annual Report*, pp. 3-10.

110 <http://www.duncanbd.com/content/3.html> (Accessed 04/11/2016)

### **Conclusion**

Overseas entrepreneurs such as James Finlay played a decisive role in the success of the tea industry in Sylhet, as there were too many ups and downs in the local entrepreneurship due to political factors. During the British regime, European firms dictated the proceedings on the tea plantations, not only because they had political power, but also because they had invested huge amounts of capital and possessed scientific knowledge that was unavailable to the locals. Thus, the process of 'globalization' was already taking shape as technological know-how, and different cultures had been exchanged. The extent of intellectual cooperation was broadly visible in legal aspects as well. In the early stages of the plantations, European firms used British advice, yet very soon they turned to local lawyers, not because their services were cheap but because native lawyers were aware of the local culture. Two local lawyers even produced a law notebook for planters to use in the employment of labour. In this way both Europeans and locals did brisk trade in Sylhet while the development of the tea industry injected a new force into the socio-economic and even the cultural life of the district. After the British withdrawal, the dominance of overseas firms, particularly Finlay remained unchanged as the new regime in Pakistan was mostly dependent on overseas firms for technological know-how and for keeping its tea export market alive.

In the late nineteenth century, local elites formed the *Cachar Native Joint Stock Company*, which was the first native venture in the tea sector in South Asia. The native tea companies emerged in considerable numbers in the early twentieth century, where 'hope for prosperity' and anti-colonial feelings were the two driving forces. The Zaminders accumulated capital from agriculture and they had 'readymade' land for tea while lawyers amassed money from their profession and came with ideas and legal expertise. According to the records of Joint Stocks, local companies owned 10 percent of the tea lands in the late 1920s. At first, there was a unique cooperation among the Hindu-Muslim elites and they showed an ability to overcome communal rifts. But the 'honeymoon' period was over soon, overshadowed by complex and multifaceted political developments. Among the locals the Hindu elites had achieved a considerable success in operating joint stock companies, particularly the Bheel gardens of Karimgonj in the 1920s and 1930s. Their dominance was challenged and contested by the political mobilization of the 1940s. The 'Great Divide of 1947' dislodged Hindu planters from Sylhet, but not from the bulk of the tea gardens of

Karimgonj.<sup>111</sup> After 1947, the situation worsened for the local entrepreneurship as emigrant Muslims, from India and West Pakistan created an 'Urdu speaking' monopoly in the tea plantations of Sylhet. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Pakistani planters and professionals left the tea gardens of Sylhet. Thus, Bangladeshi tea lost a 'captive market' in West Pakistan. It created some challenges for Bangladeshi tea in home and abroad. However, James Finlay and Duncan Bothers took this challenge with some Bangladeshi entrepreneurs/ planters/ professionals and became successful. Not only that Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, planters and professionals has now been managing the entire tea industry.

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111 IOR/V/24/2601-2602, Government of Assam, *Annual Report of the Survey Department for the year ending the 30 September 1947*, (Shillong, 1948), pp. 2-5.

## LEADERSHIP FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: ENABLING INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION IN THE CROWDED CLASSROOM

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Janinka Greenwood\*\*

### Abstract

Engaging students in class is a global concern and researchers are increasingly suggesting ways to make lessons attractive and participatory. To motivate students and get them engaged in classes lack of resources is often considered a major issue in many cases. Creative leadership is needed to increase student engagement and to instil a sense of student agency when there are large numbers of students in classes. Although actions for engaging students may vary, due to the availability and type of resources, the principal plays a key role in how they strategically make resources available to support learning and in developing broader social goals. This case study is a success story of a principal in Bangladesh who changed the processes and practices in his school to engage large number of students in classes, even though there were resource constraints. These strategies could be applied in many schools and school systems where teachers find it difficult to manage and monitor individual learning in large classes.

**Key words:** Student engagement, leadership, cluster committee, peer learning, strategic resourcing.

### Introduction

Students are tomorrow's leaders in the workplace, the family, community and in government. Increasingly school have taken on the significant responsibility of nurturing potentials in their students. But engaging students in classroom learning is a major concern in Bangladesh. Research shows that students are physically present in class without psychological presence.<sup>1</sup> This 'virtual or silent exclusion' from engagement in learning is a serious problem that has been little investigated.<sup>2</sup> Although this issue has been identified as a background problem in a few studies,<sup>3</sup>

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1 M. Ahmed, K. S. Ahmed, N. I. Khan, and R. Ahmed, *Access to education in Bangladesh: Country analytic review of primary and secondary education*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Create. 2007; M. Begum and S. Farooqui, *School based assessment: Will it really change the education scenario in Bangladesh? International Education Studies*, Vol 1, No 2, May 2008, pp. 45-53.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

and policy makers in Bangladesh are being concerned,<sup>4</sup> there is a lack of well-grounded examples of how this problem might be overcome. This article addresses this issue and presents some ways of engaging students in large classes that have been initiated by a creative principal in an urban secondary school in Bangladesh.

### **A snapshot from a classroom**

Having a large number of students in one class is usual in Bangladesh; engaging them effectively in learning is a challenge for any school.<sup>5</sup> As a Bangladeshi, the first author was brought up in that country and lived his school life in a suburban location. The classroom scenario did not change much from that he experienced. He can still easily remember his secondary school life where there were around 100 students in a classroom. The students were given sequential roll numbers according to their scores in examinations. Those with rankings of one to ten were considered the ‘best’ students in the class. These students were more engaged in their class work because of their ability to understand the course content and because of the teachers’ positive attitude to brighter learners. Teachers, students, community and even parents recognised them as future leaders for the school, family and society. On the other hand, the majority of students, who were not ranked as best rarely had the opportunity to actively engage in class.

The so-called best students, were considered as elite, and enjoyed reserved seating in the front rows in class. Other students, either from respect or the system or because they knew the teacher would reprimand them with a glance did not attempt to sit in those front seats, even though there was competition for grabbing seats among students. Even the teachers did not feel comfortable if students with lower roll number occupied the front seats since they may not have been able to answer questions. The best students completed their daily homework and that assured teachers who took it as a sign of good delivery of their lessons. Teachers used a lecture method in most courses. They seldom allowed questions from students and presented a rigid front that discouraged any insightful responses from students. So

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4 A. N. M. Salahuddin, *Making a door: A case study of the leadership and change practices of a principal in Bangladesh*. Doctoral thesis, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. 2016.

5 M. O. Hamid, R. Sussex and A. Khan, *Private tutoring in English for secondary school students in Bangladesh*. *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No 2, 2009, pp. 281-308; UNESCO, *World data on Education: Bangladesh*. 2011. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002112/211299e.pdf>

students, except the ‘best students’, rarely talked in class. If there were visitors in a class, only the best students were instructed to answer them, in order to show the best of school performances.

Unfortunately these are still the current common practice in schooling in Bangladesh. It is in such a context that the principal we have studied is making a difference in engaging students. We have given the principal the pseudonym of Nazrul and his school that of Shanjeebon. The school is an urban secondary school of 67 teachers and 3500 students; so a large number of students in classes. Although there are schools that have the facilities to have fewer students in classes only a few parents there have ability to afford those schools. The school is located in a poor community bounded on one by a bazaar, a slum on another and a river on the third. Most of the parents have low income and many are illiterate. Due to social and economical factors, changes for improvement seldom occur in such schools in Bangladesh. However this school is working to improve its practice, mainly through effective student engagement. Therefore Nazrul has had to think creatively to facilitate student engagement within the constraint of larger classes. Thus this article explores how students were engaged in Shanjeebon School within the barrier of limited resources and reports on the ways Nazrul and his teachers overcame the challenges.

### Methods

This case study is qualitative in its approach.<sup>6</sup> Because it particularly examined the creative ideas of Nazrul, the principal, the primary data for examining his actions and ideas was through an extended sequence of conversations, or *professional dialogues*<sup>7</sup>. These dialogues focused on his work in engaging student and the initiatives he has taken to change his school to improve student learning. These professional dialogues created the basis of the information collected. Data was further enriched by observation of the daily school works, interviews with teachers and students, and examination of school documents.

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6 N. K. Denzin, and Y. Lincoln, (Eds.). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. London: Sage, 2003; R. E. Stake, Qualitative case studies. In N.K. Denzin, and Y. Lincoln, (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 443-466). London: Sage, 2005.

7 A. Grey, *Professional dialogue as professional learning*. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, Vol. 8, no 1, 2011, pp. 21-32; K. M. Simoncini, M. Lasen, and S. Rocco, *Professional dialogue, reflective practice and teacher research: Engaging early childhood pre-service teachers in collegial dialogue about curriculum innovation*. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 39 No 1, 2014, pp. 26-44.

The data collection for this study extended over four months. The first author was present in the school throughout the working days over the period and observed daily communications of the principal at work whenever the opportunity arose. A group of five teachers who were involved in the senior management team and who monitor student engagement were participants in interviews. In addition ten student leaders from Grade Nine were included for interviews since they had been at the school for an extended period. Since the school provides education for both girls and boys in different shifts (morning and day), five leaders from each gender, based on their availability, were selected to get comprehensive data from the two school shifts. Pseudonyms are used for all these participants.

### **Engaging students in Shanjeebon school**

Nazrul was determined to explore what blocked student and teacher engagement in class. As mentioned, many Bangladeshi secondary teachers find it difficult to actively engage students with learning due to large numbers of students in a class. Nazrul had to think rigorously about how they could overcome the negative effects of large class sizes. An initial initiative was a modification in sectioning students to engage them more in learning and to break down a traditional concept of 'good' and 'bad' students.

### ***Modifying sectioning in the classroom***

Shanjeebon School used to form the sections in each grade in a similar way to most other schools in Bangladesh. Students are allocated a roll number based on their ranking for their achievement in examinations. The school previously formed two sections for each grade where there were more than 150 students. Prior to Nazrul's arrival students were divided into sections in each year level with those above a certain rank in Section A and those below in Section B. This is a form of streaming.

Nazrul explained how he started his position in Shanjeebon School with a dream to lift the expectations and the performance of the school and noted that students in the Section B were seldom attentive in class and performed poorly in examinations. Neither students nor teachers felt comfortable being in Section B: they all showed their disappointment. The frustration of being a course teacher in Section B is recounted by one faculty leader, Shahrin: "The teachers who taught in Section B received more blame for students failing in public examinations. So students and teachers were not pleased to be in Section B."

There were academic, social and cultural reasons behind their unhappiness. In general, students in Section B were less engaged in class. These students seldom performed well in completing their course work and home tasks. As a result teachers often lost interest in their courses and in teaching them so that the students tended to fail in examinations. Students in Section B who wanted to progress did not get enough attention from teachers due to their negative perception of the ability of those students. The negative attitude deprived families of pride in their children and they tended to lose community status through comparisons with other children and consequently the students themselves were sometimes seen as inferior within their own family. Sectioning in this way might be considered to be a way that determines status in society. Nazrul aimed to get rid of the frustrating factors, "I was conscious about sectioning from my experience and knew how frustrating it would be for teachers and students. So I tried to break it within the shortest time and we did that."

We wanted to know how the principal tried to overcome this challenge. Nazrul changed the system of grouping of students so that students with odd and even ranking numbers were clustered together, thus avoiding a division based on previous academic achievement. This shift in constructing sections did not change student numbers but offered a potentially equal distribution of student achievement in each section. Mahtab, a teacher, endorsed Nazrul's leadership in this initiative, "Our present principal advised that we would form sections by even and odd roll numbers. He motivated us and showed how our students would be equally distributed if we do sectioning in that way." Nazrul thus shifted a 20-year-old traditional custom of forming sections in the school.

While we cannot assert that he is the only principal to make such a change and while the change did not eliminate the problem of large number students in classes, it has motivated both teachers and students to be more engaged in class. Shahrin, one of the school's senior leaders, affirmed the benefit of the principal's action.

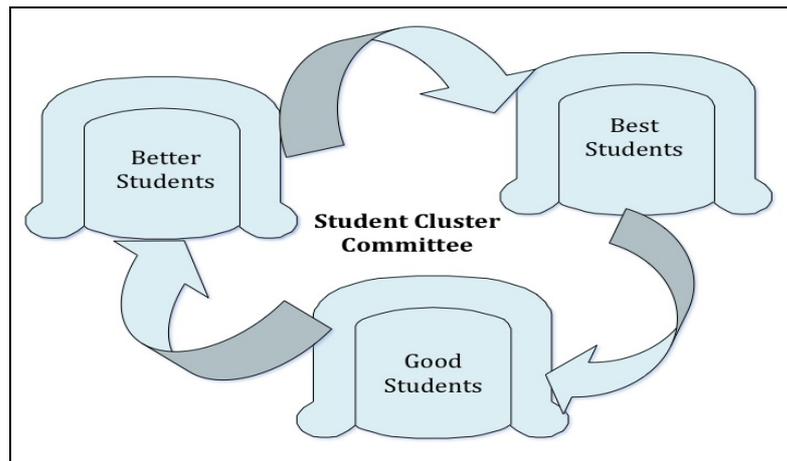
Previously, we would be disappointed whenever assigned as a course teacher in Section B. Now we do not mind since there is no difference in sections. There was an impact on students due to the new policy. Students in Section B are not embarrassed to tell their section's name that used to put them under pressure in families and society. As we both (students and teachers) are out of this mental pressure, we are more focused on learning.

Despite this change, teachers were still challenged to ensure student participation since class sizes are so large. In many cases teachers could not make contact with all

the students in class because of limited time and students could not engage with lessons properly as many of them needed more personalised support in order to understand the content.

### ***Clusters in the classroom***

Since the ‘best’ students used to sit together in the front rows in a class, Nazrul wanted to spread them out so that other students would get the opportunity to collaborate with them. This initiative led Nazrul to introduce the idea of ‘student cluster committees’ to enhance student peer learning and to develop leadership within the classroom. Cluster committees were defined as small groups of ten students of mixed ability within a class. These were set up so that students could help each other in their learning. Considering psychological impact, Nazrul did not label any students as ‘bad’. He and his staff rather referred to students as ‘good, better and best’. The school used the format below to develop cluster committees in the grades.



**Figure 1:** Formation of student cluster committee

There are now seven or eight groups per class. This is a way by which teachers can reach and assist each group rather trying to help each student. Group members sit together so that they can support each other. In order that each group is diversified in abilities, teachers created clusters involving students across the range of academic abilities. Using the roll numbers, every tenth student is selected to form a group. Teachers then nominate a student within each group as their assistant for teaching. This student works as a leader to communicate between the teacher and group members. Teachers and students both report that they benefit from the clusters.

Mahathir, a teacher in the school, explained the problem and the solution that was put into place:

It was impossible for me to reach every student in a class since the class size (number of students) is quite big. I would walk through the class but could watch work at best for ten students. So, many students could not understand the content I taught. Students did not assist each other since they were not used to doing so. Now they sit in a cluster system and help each other. Since the clusters are made of mixed ability students, they can easily help each other.

Clustering can be seen as a shift in culture that has enhanced the engagement of students and teachers in learning. When teachers enter the classroom, they first talk to the cluster leaders to check on the learning status of their groups, based on what the leaders have recorded in a notebook. This means that the teacher does not need to go to each student as students are taken care of by fellow students. Suva, a teacher, discussed the benefits of the cluster system.

There are limited numbers of student leaders in every class who take care of other students. So I can easily reach to them and be informed about other students. When I enter into a class I ask group leaders whether any member needs further assistance for previous content or not. Even during the class time, I do the same. If anyone in any group needs help from me, I can offer assistance with time.

Leadership in the school is now delegated to some extent through the improved connections of teachers with students in class. Since responsibilities have been delegated to student leaders in each class, teachers have been relieved of some of the teaching load. Previously, teachers could not always perform as well as they wanted but this delegation has enabled them to use their teaching skills more effectively and in so doing fosters their leadership and that of students.

In this way a culture of sharing responsibility for learning has been developed in Shanjeebon School, where teachers and students are active participants.

### ***Peer learning and leading***

Cluster leaders supervise the learning of their group members in order to help with their academic development. They maintain a diary to record the daily academic performance of the students in their group. In the diary they write the names of their group members and courses. In each class they note *P* and *A* respectively for presence and absence for each member. When any member is absent, the cluster

leader finds out the reason. If the absence is for more than two days, the leader lets the teacher know and the teacher tries to communicate with the parents. If the teacher fails to communicate, the student leader visits the student's home and finds out the reasons for the absence. This practice helps students to be conscious of their responsibility to attend school regularly. If someone is absent for a valid reason she or he does not face any school penalty. All these efforts improve attendance and assist in developing good relationships between school and home. Below is an example of a student record book:

Cluster Name: Night Queen		Leader: Mohona					
Date: 15/04/2013		Day: Monday					
Roll	Name	Present/Absent	Bengali	English	Maths	Physics	Chemistry
01	Mohona	p	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Mou	p	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
41	Farzana	p	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
61	Nishat	p	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Mukti	A	A	A	A	A	A
101	Sarmin	p	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
121	Sraboni	p	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Signature of Class Teacher:							

Photo 1: Student record book

The leaders monitor and mentor group members to check completion of their daily schoolwork before the teacher enters the classroom. They record whether assignments, in class and at home, have been completed. The teacher also randomly crosschecks to see if students have completed their assigned tasks. Leaders also provide extra content tutoring for slow learners to ensure they keep up with the class pace of learning. Their target is to enhance their group members' learning as Sonia, a student leader, described.

We complete our diary before the teacher enters into class. We check group members' work for assigned class work whether it is ready or not, and put a tick or a cross mark in the diary and show it to teacher. Then the teacher also tests them randomly to check. We also do it even during class time. Since every teacher has a

personal way of teaching, we try to follow our course teacher. Sometimes we give our group some tasks and receive feedback.

After these efforts, if cluster members are unable to complete their assigned tasks, the leader keeps them back after school for a period so they can finish. Every day there are some students from several clusters who work beyond the class hours. This extra work is called 'detention' for those students. The detention takes place under a teacher supervision and one of the leaders monitors it, as Pallob, a student leader, explained.

We put them in detention after school hours. The detention is for if one cannot complete her or his assigned work; she or he has to complete it before leaving school. Cluster leaders do the monitoring job for detention by rotation. If I monitor all of the detained students today someone else leader will do it next. Since it rotates, it does not create pressure on one person.

In this way students cannot postpone their daily work and the close follow-up enhances their regular learning. This is a form of peer mentoring and monitoring that has potential to develop close and trustful relationships.

Student leaders play a role as teacher associates. Monitoring and supervising a large size class may be beyond the capacity of one teacher so student leaders make the job easier by taking on some of the responsibility. The leaders do many things such as mentoring, peer discussion and ensuring homework is completed, but they do not teach the class. Limited class time can reduce the effectiveness of teaching for individual students in many schools but in this school assistance from student leaders makes it more possible for teachers to accomplish their job within the allocated time.

But what if a leader works for his or her self-interest or if a cluster member does not comply with the leader? Class teachers and the principal are aware that these issues could arise and Nazrul explained the action they take: "We keep our eyes open to watch how the cluster leaders lead. If something wrong happens, we notice or other students let us know, instant action is taken. Sometimes we change the leaders. Sometimes we interchange their groups."

In such a way clustering students enables the building of good relationships that fosters teaching and learning in class. The culture of taking leadership and helping peers also provides opportunities for students to learn and develop leadership skills at school. This system allows the leaders to learn from group interactions, particularly

about how different people process ideas and problems and how to communicate with and motivate a team.

### ***Reciprocal learning***

The principal and teachers organise and manage the student cluster committees, which are a major component of the school's plan to develop students' academic achievement. What motivates students to take on these roles? What are the benefits for them? What are the complexities they experience in leading their peers? We were curious to know the answers. When we talked to them student leaders spoke confidently about the benefits of helping and leading others. They explained that helping others to understand something in any course enhances their own learning. Before helping someone they need to prepare themselves first so that they are confident in being able to solve the problem. It pushes them to learn something more quickly and when they discuss it with a peer who needs help, it becomes more significant learning for them, potentially acting as reinforcement for them. Mim, a student leader, explained how she sees it: "When we help weak students to understand, it enhances our learning. Before going to help them in solving any problem we need to understand it clearly. That strengthens our learning."

In the upper grades, Grades Nine and Ten, students take some compulsory courses in common and are also put into streams such as science, arts and business. To make leader's job workable in these streams clusters are formed within the stream and leaders are selected from the same stream so that they can help their members.

Sometimes a leader does not understand particular content well and then will go to a peer leader who does understand it clearly. It seemed there are good relationships and understanding amongst student leaders. As Bristy, a student leader, explained how they go to their teacher to build their own knowledge when it is needed.

Leaders from science group help their peers from science and accordingly the arts group do for arts. When I feel it is a problem to understand, I go to my teacher or another leader who understands it clearly. Of course each person does not understand all courses properly.

Although there are good relationships among students and teachers in the teaching and learning process, in some cases there is still some impact from the nationally prevailing power relationship between teachers and students. A fear of punishment by teachers still operates. Students do not criticise their teachers. This became clear to me when a leader, Keya, spoke about a particular teacher.

The chemistry teacher is not good enough in his subject knowledge. This teacher often faces problems in solving mathematical problems, chemical reactions and so on. He was even in trouble during a practical class when one day he could not do anything for one hour. So it would be better to put him off from this course. There are similar problems in different courses but students do not want to speak out because of fear.

Perhaps student leaders hesitate to tell the principal about these instances because it could make trouble for them if the reaction to the complaint went the wrong way. They became reluctant to tell about such cases even when we assured their anonymity. It could be that they did not want to disclose their teachers' weaknesses to outsiders. In the case where the above comment was made, we were also informed that their principal already knew about the issue in teaching. Mim, a student leader noted, "The principal is already informed about this issue, but cannot change the chemistry teacher yet". It implied that they trusted Nazrul to take action and they found their own way to inform him.

#### ***Leading extra-curricular activities***

Cluster leaders encourage their group members to participate in extra-curricular activities. They do this from a sense of responsibility, and from a motivation to be acknowledged by the principal as the 'best leader of the year'. In the competition, curricular as well as extra-curricular activities are both counted. Tauhid, a student leader, explained how he understands this.

Beside academic assistance, we motivate our group members to participate in co-curricular activities. We also try to encourage them to be involved in social work. Since our school selects best leaders for a year, we try to inspire our group members in the best way.

Student leaders are in competition to develop the curricular and extra-curricular skills of their group members. To be a 'best leader', they compete with each other but the leaders claimed they do not fight. Shimanto, one of the cluster leaders affirmed that, "there is no quarrel between groups, but there is a competition."

Cleanliness of classrooms is a part of cluster leaders' responsibilities. The leaders divide their duty to keep a classroom clean among the clusters. Since there are several clusters in a grade, they do the job on a rotational basis. It sharpens students' awareness of cleanliness that has impact on their family life as Keya, a student leader, explained: "We do clean our classroom by ourselves. We divide the cleaning

job among clusters and each cluster is assigned for specific days. It helps us to learn cleanliness and to keep our home clean as well.”

Practices that impact on improving values, such as cleanliness at school and home, are not addressed in many schools but Nazrul has introduced ways of systematically putting some into practice.

### ***Challenges in leading peers***

Although student leaders are reputed to be doing a good job in advancing learning for the whole class, the system is not running without problems. Pallob, a student leader gave an example:

Sometimes they (students) fall into a quarrel. Sometimes they do not want to follow our leadership. In that case the leader tries first to solve the issue. If the leader is unable to solve it, then she or he reports it to a teacher and the teacher takes action. For example, teacher gives penalty, change her or his group or just discuss why she or he should follow the leadership.

The student leaders take responsibility for resolving issues within their groups. If a problem is not resolved quickly, they report it to a teacher and hand over the responsibility.

Though there are challenges, student leaders believe that their experience will help them to be good leaders in their future workplace and for the nation. They think the skills they learn through working in a team contribute to development of their leadership skills. Bristy, a student leader, confidently shared her beliefs about this.

I believe it will help me in the future. I will be able to control a group of people easily as I have got experience. I know how to work in a team, how to lead team members and what I need to do if there is an issue among team members. For this I hope to be a good leader in future.

Although this shows the confidence of student leaders and their belief in the cluster system, they also appear to be aware of limitations of the system as well its benefits. The cluster system helps the student leaders stay closer to teachers. They have easy access to their teachers and that allows them to discuss any issue with teachers directly. Since everything runs through clusters, the other students have to consult their respective cluster leader before doing anything. It helps the students who feel uncomfortable about asking teachers something to talk more easily to their group leaders. On the other hand, it has stopped those who were willing to talk to teachers directly. Rekha, a student leader explained both aspects of this effect.

Many students in class might like to be connected to teachers in the same way we are. They lack the opportunity since they normally communicate with teachers through leaders. On the other hand weak students are not interested to talk to teachers because of fear usually. When they want to know something from a teacher a leader helps them as a medium of communication.

Overall, student leaders show confidence in handling the challenges in leading peers. They seem to be aware of the negative and positive effects of this system on their peers. Nazrul explained he has taken initiatives such as these because he knows the value of these skills. Students' gain learning and leadership skills in these processes that will help them become the future leaders of society.

### Discussion

Student engagement in learning and leading is highlighted as an important element in the development of student achievement.<sup>8</sup> It is widely recognised in national<sup>9</sup> and international literature<sup>10</sup> that in many different national contexts some students are bored, unmotivated and disengaged from the academic and social aspects of school life. Nazrul has set an example of how to engage his students in curricular and extra-curricular activities in various ways.

Nazrul's idea of sectioning and clustering students within classes differently is innovative and successful because it has changed the culture in the school, playing a strong role in reducing inequity and disquiet among students and teachers. There are examples of strong policy commitment to equity and social justice in schooling in countries such as Australia and New Zealand.<sup>11</sup> A requirement of policy concentration

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8 N. Archard, *Leadership understanding and practice in girls' schools: A review of web-based public documents. Leading and Managing*, Vol. 12, No 2, 2009, pp. 16-30; G. Hine, *Student leadership experiences: A case study. Leading and Managing*, Vol. 19, No 1, 2013, pp. 32-50.

9 M. Begum and S. Farooqui, *School based assessment: Will it really change the education scenario in Bangladesh? International Education Studies*, Vol. 1, No 2, May 2008, pp. 45-53.

10 M. J. Bundick, R. J. Quaglia, M. J. Corso, and D. E. Haywood, *Promoting student engagement in the classroom. Teachers College Record*, Vol. 116, No 4, 2014, pp. 1-34.

11 R. Bishop, *Education leaders can reduce educational disparities*. In T. Townsend, & J. MacBeath (Eds.), *International handbook of leadership for learning*, pp. 89-102. London: Springer. 2011; N. Dempster, *Leadership and learning: Making connections down under*. In T. Townsend, & J. MacBeath (Eds.), *International handbook of leadership for learning*, pp. 89-102. London: Springer. 2011; C. Wylie, *The development of leadership capacity in a self-managing schools system: The New Zealand experience and challenges*.

in this regard is identified within Bangladesh for better student participation in secondary schools.<sup>12</sup> Nazrul has demonstrated his courage on how a leader can overturn a traditional practice that embedded inequity and make changes that address the reasons for disengagement of teachers and students in his school. Blankstein and Noguera (2015) argue that, “[for principals] pushing for excellence through equity requires great courage and conviction”.<sup>13</sup>

Although other concerns such as large numbers of students in classes and short duration of lessons are often mentioned in reports on education and in literature about education in Bangladesh<sup>14</sup> as obstacles to engaging students in learning, the psychological impact of sectioning had not previously received attention. Dialogues with teachers and students in Shanjeebon School indicate the powerfulness of the change in sectioning and of clustering in classes. Teachers are now able to provide individual support to students because of the strategic management of time in class. Students are encouraged to help their peers in learning. The most effective part of this idea is the practice of shared responsibility between teachers and students. Teaching in Bangladesh secondary schools is usually teacher-centred and students seldom get the chance to participate in a class. This is in contrast with Shanjeebon School where practices have now been developed to increase participation in teaching and learning.

The accounts above illustrate how Nazrul set up strategies to improve student learning in class. Often, due to national practices and social attitudes, many principals feel powerless to override the prevailing culture of class grouping and student status based on roll numbers even though that hinders learning progress. This principal tackled the problem and created an environment where students are grouped together across the range of academic achievement. By taking responsibility for their

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In T. Townsend, & J. MacBeath (Eds.), *International handbook of leadership for learning*, pp. 653-671. London: Springer. 2011.

- 12 M. Ahmed, K. S. Ahmed, N. I. Khan, and R. Ahmed, *Access to education in Bangladesh: Country analytic review of primary and secondary education*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Create. 2007.
- 13 A. M. Blankstein and P. Noguera, *Introduction: Achieving excellence through equity for every student*. In A. M. Blankstein, P. Noguera, & L. Kelly (Eds.), *Excellence through equity*, pp. 3-30. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin. 2015.
- 14 M. Ahmed, S. R. Nath, A. Hossain, and M. A. Kalam, *Education watch 2005: The state of secondary education: Progress and challenges*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Campaign for Popular Education. 2006; M. O. Hamid, R. Sussex and A. Khan, *Private tutoring in English for secondary school students in Bangladesh*. *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol 43, No 2, 2009, pp. 281-308.

group members' achievement and by reporting back to teachers, cluster leaders are contributing to the overall learning achievement in the school.

Researcher advocates that improving student learning achievement should be the main focus of student engagement at school<sup>15</sup>. While many teachers and schools see the mandate by the Bangladesh government to develop a participatory learning approach through building relationships between teachers and students as difficult or even illusionary, Nazrul's initiative in developing and facilitating student clusters shows a pathway to how effective participation in class can be achieved. If students are more engaged in the classroom, they are likely to perform better in learning including getting higher grades.<sup>16</sup> Both the students' active participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities and their growing results in examinations testify to improved student engagement in Shanjeebon School.

Nazrul recounted how he puts effort into encouraging students to build relationships among themselves and with teachers to support their learning. In the classroom context, the close seating arrangement of the members in a cluster and their engagement in peer discussion provides a platform for development of relationships within the group. The processes of mentoring and monitoring of learning within the group enhance the building of trust in the relationships. Whereas strong competition among high achieving students is evident in many secondary schools,<sup>17</sup> as is separating the elite achievers from the rest of the students, Nazrul has found a way to successfully engage the achievers in helping others to achieve. Communicating with teachers and parents regarding problems within clusters, such as difficulties in understanding a concept or absenteeism, promotes the development of relationships. In cases where cluster leaders might develop a dominant or unfair manner, careful monitoring by teachers and the principal allows remedial action, and in most cases, reduces the probability of abuse of the role. So trustful relationships have developed among students that promote collaboration in learning.

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- 15 B. Mulford, *Recent developments in the field of educational leadership: The challenge of complexity*. In A. Hargreaves, A. Liberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Second international handbook of educational change*, pp. 187-208. London: Springer. 2010; L. Taylor, and J. Parsons, *Improving Student Engagement. Current Issues in Education*, Vol. 14, No 1, 2011, pp. 1-32. Retrieved from <http://cie.asu.edu>
  - 16 J. J. Appleton, S. L. Christenson, and M. J. Furlong, *Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. Psychology in the Schools*, Vol. 45, No 5, 2008, pp. 369-386.
  - 17 L. Ilon, *Colonial secondary education in a global age: Economic distortions in Bangladesh. Asia Pacific Education Review*, Vol. 1, No 1, 2000, pp. 91-99.

The cluster system and improved relationships enhance co-operative learning in class and that makes it easier for students to understand course content. The textbook content is often criticised for not meeting the practical or applied needs of students because the curriculum is centrally prescribed.<sup>18</sup> Teachers do not have time to carry out individual mentoring in a large class so there is little scope for curriculum content to be well understood by students. Although all secondary teachers receive in-service pedagogical training and are expected to deliver content effectively, in many cases their initial educational background, poor physical facilities and lack of professional rewards make it difficult for them to engage students in class. If students “do not feel efficacious and their academic self-concept is low, they are likely to feel less invested in and more anxious about their performance”.<sup>19</sup> The system that now offers peer support in learning in Shanjeebon School is an example of how students can develop their confidence in subject content and feel connected to it. It also allows teachers to offer more time for individual mentoring through assistance from student leaders.

Mariam and Farooqui and Ahmed et al. argue that the majority of students in secondary schools in Bangladesh are physically present in class but intellectually absent.<sup>20</sup> Such disengagement is identified in a number of countries round the world.<sup>21</sup> Arguably, studies show that effective peer relationships can improve student adjustment at school and active participation in class and that these will in turn enhance academic achievement.<sup>22</sup> Many students feel too shy to talk in class and consider themselves as incapable of talking to teachers in order to query anything, but now the system of peer support for learning offers a comfort zone allowing these students to learn from their friends. Ryan and Patrick stress that students actively engage in learning when they feel encouraged to seek knowledge, get comfort though

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18 *Ibid.*

19 M. J. Bundick, R. J. Quaglia, M. J. Corso, and D. E. Haywood, *Promoting student engagement in the classroom. Teachers College Record*, Vol. 116 No, 4, 2014, pp. 1-34.

20 M. Begum and S. Farooqui, *School based assessment: Will it really change the education scenario in Bangladesh? International Education Studies*, Vol 1, No 2, May 2008, pp. 45-53; M. Ahmed, K. S. Ahmed, N. I. Khan, and R. Ahmed, *Access to education in Bangladesh: Country analytic review of primary and secondary education*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Create. 2007.

21 M. J. Bundick, R. J. Quaglia, M. J. Corso, and D. E. Haywood, *Promoting student engagement in the classroom. Teachers College Record*, Vol. 116 No, 4, 2014, pp. 1-34; J. D. Willms, *Programme for International Student Assessment, OECD, & Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Student engagement at school: A sense of belonging and participation: Results from PISA 2000*. Paris: OECD. 2003.

22 T. J. Berndt, and K. Keefe, *Friends' influence on adolescents' adjustment to school. Child Development*, Vol. 66, 1995, pp.1312-1329; N. Dempster, *Leadership and learning: Making connections down under*. In T. Townsend, & J. MacBeath (Eds.), *International handbook of leadership for learning*, pp. 89-102. London: Springer. 2011.

interacting with each other and when teachers value their ideas<sup>23</sup>. Nazrul has enabled his students to experience active learning by changing the classroom culture from individualistic to collaborative.

### **Conclusion**

This article has examined a number of innovative ways of the principal of Shanjeebon school that has engaged students in learning and leading. Whereas nationally students are considered to be disengaged and policy does not provide a process to motivate and develop social and cultural values, Nazrul has involved his students as active participants in classroom learning. There is a clear indication of developing a strong relationship among students and between teachers and students to facilitate students' ability to engage students more in class.

Strategic resourcing has enabled Nazrul to provide facilities that are needed but it may initially seem unavailable to many principals. While all principals in Bangladesh work within the limitations of physical and human resources, setting priorities and allocating existing resources strategically can enable them to maximise the usefulness of what they can develop in their schools. For example, re-organising students into groups allowed teachers in Shanjeebon School to dedicate time to taking better care of individual students in class, and students got more opportunities to work collaboratively in a group. This suggests one way of resolving the problem of learning in classrooms with large numbers of students.

This article has provided examples of principal leadership in fostering student engagement within a secondary school in Bangladesh. An examination of Nazrul's ideas and the ways they were translated into action is of particular interest for determining future directions in policy and for content of principal leadership. Developing policy based on local research may be more useful than prescriptive programmes from donor agencies that follow examples from other international contexts that may not transfer or adapt easily to the Bangladesh situation. Principals can break the boundaries of traditional schooling within the limitations of the centralised education system in Bangladesh. This study is focused on the particularities of one specific school in Bangladesh and it is recognised that other schools will need to modify and adapt to draw together unique details of strategy according to their specific contexts, the change initiatives and leadership qualities.

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23 A. M. Ryan, and H. Patrick, The classroom social environment and changes in adolescents' motivation and engagement during middle school. *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 38, No 2, 2001, pp. 437-460.

**‘NINEVEH’ IN BOMBAY AND HISTORIES OF INDIAN  
ARCHAEOLOGY**

Sudeshna Guha\*

**Abstract**

My choice of the topic is to some extent driven by considerations of presenting a lecture to the members of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. The devastating erasure, in March 2015, of the archaeological site of Nimrud, which Austen Henry Layard excavated as the Biblical Nineveh, between 1845 and 1847, provides the poignant value of recalling this history. The histories of ‘Nineveh’ in Bombay show us the importance of reckoning with social memories in historicising the past. They present the critical need for interrogating the analogical methods through which an absent past is ontologically fashioned, and inform us of the ways in which antiquities are made to ‘work’ for establishing archaeological knowledge. They implore us to see the many meanings which objects deemed as archaeological accrue at specific times and throughout their lives. In addition, the ‘travails’ of the exhibits reveal the infinite possibilities of historicising the archaeological scholarship outside the existing practices of seeking ‘disciplinary’ developments through lists of excavations, explorations and ‘founding fathers’. The topic draws us to engage with our history writing, and see the importance of engaging with the histories of curation, collections, museums and learned societies. As they all document the co-production of archaeological knowledge, and show us the intertwined nature of all historical sources.

A little known history of the exhibitions of antiquities of the ancient Assyrian civilization within the city of Bombay during the late 1840s encourages us to reflect upon the manner in which we recall and historicise the practices of archaeology. One of the exhibitions was organised by the Asiatic Society of Bombay, and the objects exhibited were from the excavations at Nimrud (Iraq) in 1845-46 that were undertaken by Austen Henry Layard (1817-94), the British diplomat and pioneering explorer of Persia. A history of the reception of the first public exhibitions of the ‘arts of Assyria’, in Bombay, provide a rare glimpse of the dissemination of the Ancient Orient within the colonised Orient, and add to the corpus of unquestories about the ‘birth of archaeology’. However, I draw upon aspects of the histories for demonstrating the importance of noting our endowments of historicity, and nurturing transdisciplinary and transregional perspectives while writing the histories of a

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discipline and regions, be they of a particular archaeological scholarship of a terrain within South Asia.<sup>1</sup>

The presence of ‘Nineveh’ in Bombay documents the heuristic value of regarding the ‘connected histories’ of the world, and provides reasons for engaging with our acts of visualization in the creations of archaeological evidence. In addition, the histories of the exhibitions inform us of the importance of reckoning with the life-histories of collections, curatorial practices and museums for historicising the practices and scholarship of archaeology. They encourage us to regard the early curatorial practices of the learned societies in South Asia, which informed the early scholarship of archaeology. Furthermore, the viewing of the exhibits by the residents of the city informed the demands for a ‘local museum’ to store the ‘foreign’ objects, which bespoke of the attendant politics of knowledge making, imperial displays and colonial pedagogy.

In searching for the histories we are reminded of the declarations of William Jones, who in establishing the Asiatic Society of Bengal, in Calcutta on 15 January 1784, had hoped that the fellow members would not ‘be displeased occasionally to follow the streams of Asiatick learning a little beyond its natural boundary.’ Jones had declared that

‘since Egypt had unquestionably an old connection with this country, if not with China [...] the language and literature of the Abyssinians bear a manifest affinity to those of Asia, and the Arabian arms prevail along the African coast to the continent of Europe you may not be displeased occasionally to follow the streams of Asiatick learning a little beyond its natural boundary.’<sup>2</sup>

Jones had hoped that the ‘useful researches’ of the ‘Asiatick’ could be ‘inclosed’ through that which we qualify today as trans-regional views, and the presence of ‘Nineveh’ in Bombay shows us the epistemic promise of his vision.

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1 I have left the contents as I had delivered my lecture at the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, on 28 March 2017. The main subject of the talk is published in the chapter “‘Nineveh’ in Bombay” in my book *Artefacts of History: Archaeology, Historiography and Indian Pasts* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2015). Regarding some of the ways in which the colonialist and recent nationalist historiography of Indian archaeology mutate, I have drawn upon two articles. They are both by me. One is published: 2012, ‘Material Truths and Religious Identities: The Archaeological and Photographic Making of Banaras’, in M.S. Dodson, Ed., *Banaras: Urban History, Architecture, Identity*, London: Routledge; the other is forthcoming: ‘Antiquities for a Nation: The Harappa Gallery of the National Museum of India’, in S. Klamm and E. Hoffman, eds., *Transformations of Antiquity*, Berlin: De Gruyter.

2 W. Jones, ‘The Third Anniversary Discourse (delivered at the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 24 February 1785)’, *Asiatick Researches*, Vol. I, 1788, pp. 415-35, p. xii.

## I

Between 1846 and 1848 Bombay received at least three shipments of antiquities of Ancient Assyria from Basra. They were en-route to London, to the British Museum. Of the shipped consignments two were sent by Layard, who following the 'French' excavations at Khorsabad (near Mosul in 1843) by Paul Emile Botta (1802–70) had begun to excavate at Nimrud (also near Mosul) in July 1845, in the firm belief that the site was the Biblical Nineveh (Fig. 1).

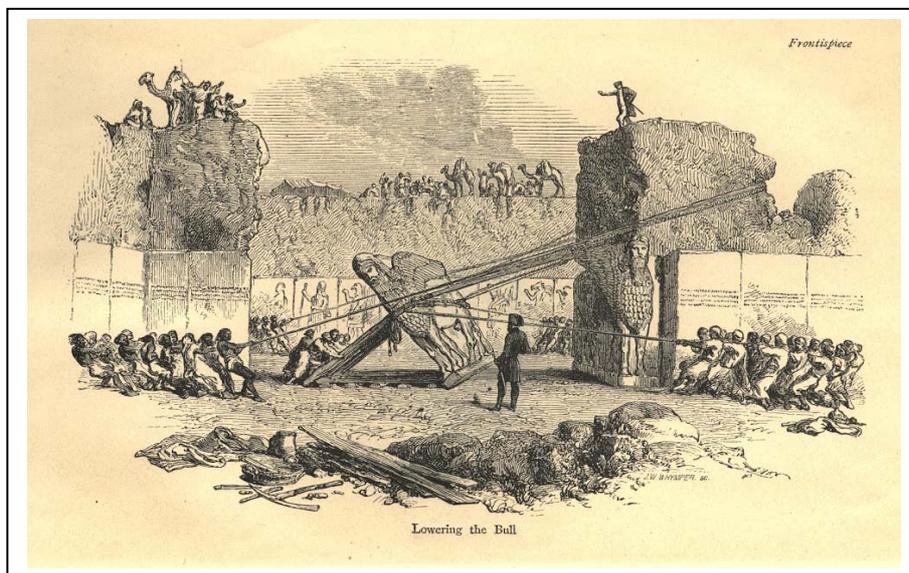


Fig. 1. 'The Assyrian Bulls at Nineveh'. Woodcut from Drawing, 1845-47, George Scharf Jr. Frontispiece in A.H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains: A Narrative of an Expedition to Assyria* (1873)

Layard's cargoes for the British Museum were simply spectacular. The objects included massive obelisks, winged bulls and winged lions, fragile alabaster vases, and large relief panels with scenes of wars and royalty, many with inscriptions. Layard had pondered over the fate of his shipments in his book *Nineveh and Its Remains* (1849) that proved to be a nineteenth-century best-seller, where he had ruminated that:

'I could not forbear musing upon the strange destiny of their burdens; which after adorning the palaces of the Assyrian kings [...] were now to visit India, to cross the

most distant seas of the southern hemisphere, and to be finally placed in a British Museum. Who can venture to foretell how their strange career will end?’<sup>3</sup>

Layard subsequently claimed that his second consignment was opened in Bombay unofficially, and that its contents were locally vandalised. His rage about the loss, in Bombay, of ‘valuable ruins of a great city and of a great nation’ enshrines all subsequent histories of the 19<sup>th</sup> century archaeology of Ancient Assyria.<sup>4</sup> Even present day archaeologists inform us that ‘the cargo sat on the quays in Bombay’s harbour for some time [...] the British residents in Bombay had opened the precious cases out of curiosity. Some pieces had even been stolen, but the British Museum did not care.’<sup>5</sup>

However, as the letters and press cuttings in *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce* document, Layard’s claims of vandalism were not true. Many objects of his two consignments, which reached Bombay in December 1846 and February 1847 respectively, were locally displayed on the explicit orders of the Governor of Bombay. In fact, in 1849, the Bombay Government felt compelled to defend itself against Layard’s, and by then also the British Museum’s, charges, and declared that the ‘only specimen which have suffered are those which were packed at the place where they were excavated [i.e. Basra], and which were not when here interfered at all.’<sup>6</sup>

At the time of their respective excavations, both Layard and Botta had very little idea of what they had unearthed at Nimrud and Khorsabad. Their finds acquired semantic and historical meanings in Europe through receptions of the displays in Britain and France. The Biblical association which attended all meaning making ventures of the European scholarship of the objects were to pose a challenge in the interpretations of the imagery, and therefore the obelisks, alabaster vessels, human heads, and carved tablets came to be, to quote, Mirjam Brosuis ‘misfit objects’ of the British Museum and Louvre.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in recalling the exhibitions of ‘Nineveh’ in Bombay we are

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3 A.H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains: With an Account of a Visit to the Chaldean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezdis, or Devil Worshippers; and an Enquiry Into the Manners and Arts of Ancient Assyrians*, Vol. I (London: John Murray), 1849, p. 105.

4 *Ibid*, Vol. II, p. xii

5 B. Fagan, *Return to Babylon: Travelers, Archaeologists and Monuments in Mesopotamia* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press), 2007, p. 130.

6 *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 14 March 1849, Editorial Article No. 8, p. 172.

7 M. Brusius, ‘Misfit Objects: Layard’s Excavations in Ancient Mesopotamia and the Biblical Imagination in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain’, *Journal of Literature and Science*, Vol. 5, 2012, pp. 38–52.

shown a history of reception that preceded the vexation of the European world with the exoticism of the Assyrian artefacts.

We know that 29 items from Layard's first cargo were exhibited by members of the Asiatic Society of Bombay at the Society's headquarters in Colaba in December 1846, and the display was quite specifically aimed for the 'benefit of the community' of the city. A journalist of *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce* who saw the objects also saw 'on the arm of a male an armllet corresponding exactly with those now in use with the lower classes of male Hindoos', and was of the view that the 'finely executed heads of horses with trappings were a better representation of the horse dressing of the Rajahas and Sirdars of the Deccan' and the swords which many figures held were quite similar to the ones that were in use in pre-colonial India by the 'Mahomedans and Marathas'.<sup>8</sup> The descriptions are a notable example of the analogical method which we instinctively use in making sense of the unknown. Since the reviewer enigmatically signed his name as JBZZ, we do not know for sure if he was British. However, through his review of the exhibition he illustrated the importance of the Assyrian Empire for the histories of the World, and declared it to be the 'first recorded empire after the Flood.' So it is obvious that the reviewer was schooled in the Biblical history of Ancient Mesopotamia, whose dictates directed his seeing 'rosaries in the hands of some of the male figures.'<sup>9</sup>

The above exhibition was the second exhibition of Assyrian objects in Bombay. A few months prior to Layard's consignment, a cargo of Assyrian antiquities belonging to a British merchant, a Mr Hector, had arrived at Bombay, and the collections included objects, which the latter had picked from a mound near Baghdad that had been formed through the discarded debris from Botta's excavations at Khorsabad. We are informed of this exhibition retrospectively. It was held in the Grant Road Buildings sometimes after July 1846, and the venue was described as a swamp theatre, in which half a lakh of public money was thrown away, and although 'called a place of public amusement [...] no one ever went there to be amused.'<sup>10</sup> The two exhibitions in Bombay that were held in 1846 bespoke of two curatorial hands, and the one by the Asiatic Society was certainly academically inclined. The first

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8 *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 19 December 1846, Article 2, p. 894.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 9 July 1851, Editorial Article 13, p. 449.

exhibition, in the Grant Road Buildings, however, alerts us to the possibilities of the many different collections histories of archaeological finds from a single archaeological site, especially those that are deemed sensational. Such histories contribute to the histories of the archaeological pedagogy, although they are seldom recalled by practitioners when they trace the history of the development of their subject.

The two exhibitions cajole us to ask: what did the native residents of Bombay who saw the objects on display know of Ancient Assyria? The question directs us to search for history books that were prevalent in the Indian schools by the 1840s. Possibly one of the earliest such text-books is *An Epitome of Ancient History Containing a Concise Account of the Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Grecians and Romans* (1830) which was printed in a bilingual format, with a page of translation in Bengali facing the English text. The Bengali title for the book is *Prachin Itihasa Samucchai* (Fig. 2) and the translations were undertaken by a select group of students of Hindu College, Calcutta. The contents of the book show us the manner in which the moral-values of the discipline of History were fashioned within Europe, which made History a ‘useful science’ within the politics of imperialism.<sup>11</sup>

In five chapters the book provided an account of all the ancient civilisations that were known to the early-nineteenth-century European world, and the bilingual nature of the text facilitated the targeting of the intended ‘native’ audience. Each chapter concluded in a section called ‘reflections’ (which was translated into Bengali as *upadesh*, or advice), and as we may anticipate, this section illustrated the lessons from History which Indian students were required to learn. The introduction reminded its young readers that ‘History’ provided ‘various advantages’, of which one was that it ‘led to amend our lives [...] Observing the actions which are there recorded, it is our duty to reject what is evil, and to adopt that which is good.’<sup>12</sup>

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11 See J. Allbut, *Elements of Useful knowledge in Geography, Astronomy and Other Sciences; Compiled for Young Persons* (15th edition, much enlarged and improved, London: Jackson and Walford), 1835, p. 81. The other useful sciences mapped by then were: Natural Philosophy, Botany, Geology, Chronology, Grammar and Arithmetic.

12 L.P. Anquetil, C. Rollin, J. Prinsep and J.D. Pearson, *An Epitome of Ancient History Containing a Concise Account of the Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Grecians and Romans; Prachin Itihasa Samucchai* (Calcutta: Calcutta Book Society Press), 1830, p. 64

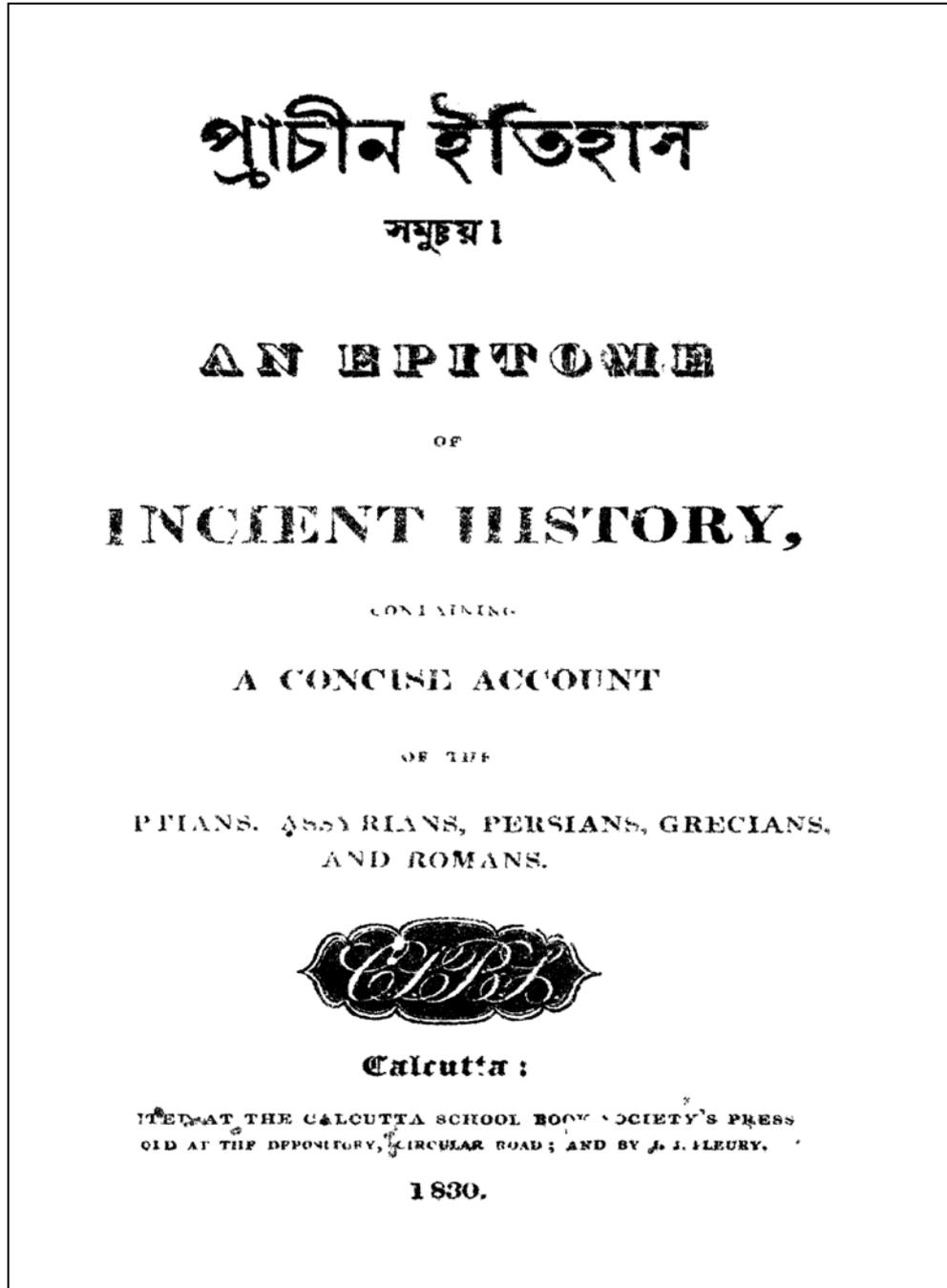


Fig. 2. Title page, *Prachin Itahasa Samucchai*, 1830

Significantly, the chapters drew upon the ruins and historical landscapes in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia, which had been surveyed and studied by the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century European antiquaries of the Orient, such as Louis-Pierre Anquetil du Perron, Claudius Rich, Charles Rollins, and James Prinsep, for embellishing the morals of the historical pedagogy. With respect to the Assyrian Civilization students were told that ‘even the walls and gates and bars of Babylon proved of no avail, when the period appointed’ for the destruction of the powerful Assyrian empire ‘had arrived.’<sup>13</sup> The chapter listed the ‘catalogue of crimes’ of the Babylonian kings that had, supposedly, led to their downfall, and the section on ‘reflections’ reasoned that ‘whereas the beast of forest preys not upon his own species, myriads of the human race have been slaughtered by the hands of their fellow men.’<sup>14</sup> The potential propaganda value of the history of the Assyrian civilization is apparent, as the advice was meant to sow seeds of suspicion within communities. However, the life-histories of the Assyrian antiquities in Bombay tell us precious little about the consumptions of the ‘useful’ pedagogy by the Indians. Instead, the histories of viewing allow us to note the agency of the antiquities in subverting efforts towards their cultural, moral and political valuations.

## II

Layard’s second cargo reached Bombay in February 1847, and ten months later, in December 1847, the city was given a ‘unique gift of ten beautiful Assyrian slabs’ by Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810–95), who by then had gained great renown as a philologist and military commander of Persia.<sup>15</sup> Rawlinson had started his spectacular career in the East India Company in Bombay in 1827, and therefore his gift to the city does not appear extra-ordinary. The sculptures were put on display in the Town Hall and inventoried as the infant collection of the Central Museum of Natural History, Economy, Geology, Industry and Arts, or the Economic Museum as it was locally known, which was being planned for Bombay at the time.

Unlike the museum of the learned Asiatic Society in Calcutta, the economic museums, which the British hoped to institute in all major cities and mofussil towns, were aimed as references for the tappable local economic resources, and were built upon the mandate that:

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13 *Ibid*, p. 118.

14 *Ibid*, p. 120.

15 *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 15 December 1847, Editorial Article 5, p. 989.

'the more we know of India, the more valuable it will become; and there is nothing that we can see more likely to conduce to this desirable acquaintance with this country and its resources than the general establishment of Museum.'<sup>16</sup>

Rawlinson's gift did not qualify as a suitable sample of the local wealth of the Bombay Presidency for which the Economic Museum was being conceived. However, the 'foreign' objects played a significant role in the political economy of the ascendant international port-city of Bombay, and they were persistently used throughout the 1850s for raising the latter's cosmopolitan profile. Thus, the first curator of the building-less Museum, George Birdwood (1832–1917), declared that

'a read and shrewd traveller recalling the story of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, Jerusalem ... would naturally anticipate the highest manifestation of intellect within the gates of such an active mart as Bombay.' But, lamented Birdwood, 'such a visitor would search in vain for stately streets, theatres, markets, fountains, public offices museums, and art galleries.'<sup>17</sup>

In his 1859 annual report, Birdwood listed the antiquities of Assyria as the only specimen of fine arts in the holdings of this virtual institution, and we note that his evaluation differed quite radically from contemporary judgements in Britain, where the architect of the British Museum Richard Westmacott had declared as early as 1853 that 'if we had one tenth part of what we have of Nineveh art it would be quite enough as specimen of the arts of the Chaldees, for it is very bad art.'<sup>18</sup>

Returning to the contents of Layard's second cargo, we know that the members of the Asiatic Society of Bombay had demanded plaster casts of select artefacts, because, as they said, 'few of us are ever likely to see it in the British Museum.'<sup>19</sup> They possibly proposed the making of plaster casts because of the abundant presence of the raw material, gypsum, in Bombay, and noted in retrospect that 'had the other specimen now complained as being broken or destroyed, been similarly treated, they might have been readily restored.'<sup>20</sup> Their plea of securing replicas, therefore, touched upon issues of preservation, and attended to the logic of meeting the hopes of the Indians who had funded the British government's expenditure of moving the Assyrian

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16 *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 16 July 1845, Editorial Article 3, p. 466.

17 G. Birdwood, 'The Annual Report of the Bombay Government Central Museum for the Year Ending 30th April 1859', *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 25 June 1859, p. 406.

18 In F.N. Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2003, p. 210–11.

19 *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 14 March 1849, Editorial Article 8, p. 172.

20 *Ibid.*

objects from *insitu*. It was also fully conceived upon procuring the objects for the local residents of Bombay, and subsequently a section of the city's elite who may have seen the exhibition, and who may have subsequently seen, or been told of the spectacular topographical maps of Nineveh which were made for the British Museum in 1851, demanded civic amenities for their city. They declared, in 1855, that:

‘we desire no less for Nineveh, but should like to see the streets and alleys of the metropolis of Western India surveyed and laid down with something like the fullness and precision with which the capital of Assyria is represented.’<sup>21</sup>

We can build upon the above sentiments of Bombay's antiquaries and citizens for exploring whether there was an oppositional aesthetics in their approaches towards the antiquities of ‘Nineveh’ vis-à-vis the British establishment of London. The aesthetic, which has been consciously bred by African-Americans from the mid-twentieth century, grew in opposition to the intellectualisation of art within the West, and it conveys resistance and protest. The histories of the aesthetics demonstrate the epistemic values of the histories of visualisation, and in establishing such histories for India we would enrich the scholarship of the cultural politics of anti-colonialism.

The displays of Rawlinson's gift in the Town Hall inspired many large public lectures—at times accompanied by harmoniums—and they were all advertised as ‘the highest intellectual treat of the highest order.’<sup>22</sup> Many were, no doubt, Christian in content, although they all facilitated the collection of a large sum of money towards a building for a local museum for Bombay (now the Bahu Daji Lad), the bulk of which was donated by the rich Indians of the city, of whom many were Parsi and Marwari businessmen. The agency of ‘foreign’ objects towards the cause of a museum that aimed at showcasing local wealth for serving the interests of British businesses, provides many reasons for reflecting upon the transnational and culturally hybrid nature of all antiquities—a theme that has been very well developed by James Cuno. In this respect, the histories of collecting the Orient, which include the histories of ‘Nineveh’ in Bombay, prevail upon us to see the flaws of historicising a totalising Orientalist scholarship.

In tracing the histories of the consumption of Ancient Assyria in India, we are able to get rare glimpses of their significant local influences. For example, the Albert Hall in Jaipur, which was established in 1876 to mark the visit of the Prince of Wales to the

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21 *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 2 April 1856, Editorial Article 3, p. 210.

22 *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, 17 January 1855, p. 37.

state, was embellished with a mural of the Assyrian winged bulls (Fig. 3). The outer façade of the Hall was also decorated with murals depicting the ancient Egyptian, Chinese, and Greek civilizations, and they were all meant to inspire the local artisans to improve their skills, and 'not least' as Thomas Holbein Hendley, the British surgeon of the Maharaja who conceived the building as an industrial arts museum had hoped, 'to amuse and instruct the common people.' Within the milieu of the antiquarian scholarship in Bombay, the exhibitions of Ancient Assyria fed the curiosity of the Indian scholars, of whom many were Parsis. And thus, it was a Parsi antiquary, Rustomji Karkaria, who, in 1891, noticed some Assyrian looking sculptures lying neglected in the corridors of the Asiatic Society, and realised that none of the current members knew anything about them. Karkaria's exposure led to the eventual transfer of the sculptures to the Prince of Wales Museum (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, or CSMVS) when the institution opened its doors in Bombay in 1922. From valued specimen of fine art the antiquities now came to be publicly imagined as just another, albeit important, archaeological collection (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 3. Assyrian Murals in the First Room of Albert Hall. Author's Photograph, 2016**



**Fig. 4. Display of Assyrian Collections, CSMVS, Mumbai. Author's Photograph, 2013**

### III

The supposed pedagogical value of Ancient Assyria for the Indians, inform of the 'subterranean' presence of Christianity within the British archaeological scholarship of Ancient India. The value spoke of the nineteenth-century European attempts to historicise the ancient Orient through, to quote Edward Said in his *Orientalism* (1978) 'the moral exigencies of Western Christianity.'

We get an early glimpse of the British efforts in the declarations of a young Alexander Cunningham (1817--93), who was to become the first director general of the Archaeological Survey of India (1871--85). Having undertaken a few archaeological explorations within north India and an excavation at Sarnath (1835), Cunningham authored an article in the *Benaras Magazine* in 1848, which he titled 'On the Bearing of Archaeological Study and its Application'. In it he declared that

'Archaeology is a subject, the interest in which need not be confined to the mere antiquarian and historian. . . . An accurate study and analysis of the records of the past, will tend to raise or depress our hopes as to future prospects of success in our endeavor to convert the heathen of all denominations to the religion of Christ.'

Cunningham concluded the article by asserting that:

'We must educate the rising generation, and thus let the first glimmering of light reach them. They must be taught to reason on what they see, to contemplate every thing before them, as the work of that Almighty power [...] whom they should look

upon as the Merciful Father of white men as of those of different shades of color, and of other countries.'<sup>23</sup>

It is significant that Cunningham wrote the above article in a magazine that was meant quite specifically for the history and culture of ancient Banaras, and at a time when The Benares Religious Auxiliary Bible Society was establishing itself within the city. The Society was formed in July 1844 in Banaras because the city was judged by the British Christian missionaries to be quintessentially Hindu. Since the latter saw Banaras as their primordial *Tirtha*, the city provided the missionaries ample scope 'for exertions in the Bible cause' and during the 1840s it became the commanding centre for the translations of the Bible into Hindi and Urdu.<sup>24</sup> Although the young Cunningham's hope that archaeology would serve the gospel in India is dismissed by present-day historians of South Asian archaeology as 'mere polemic,'<sup>25</sup> the archaeology of a 'Buddhist Banaras' which was undertaken by Mathew Sherring, of the London Missionary Society, together with Charles Horne, a judge of the city, between 1863 and 1865, allow us to retrospectively see Cunningham's aims.

Sherring and Horne excavated in the northern parts of the city (present Rajghat) and claimed that the ruins at the site—of mosques and a Muslim graveyard—provided evidence of ancient Buddhist architectural features, and comprised remains of a Buddhist Vihara with 'shrine pillars from the time when the Pali language was spoken' (Fig. 5).

They staked their claims also through photographic evidence and declared:

'It is a matter of much interest to the archaeologist, to try and save from total oblivion these few traces of the past, when the Buddhists, who long ages since were expelled from the country, were still famous, if not powerful, and were already engaged in that tremendous struggle with the Brahmins, which eventually terminated in their own utter extinction in India.'<sup>26</sup>

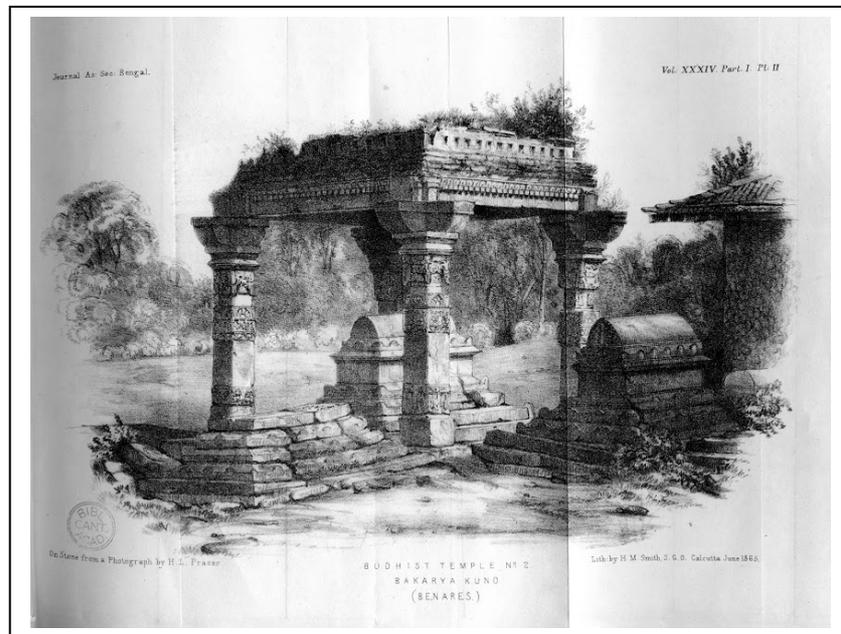
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23 A. Cunningham under the pseudonym 'Archaeologist', 1848, 'A Few Remarks on the Bearing of Archaeological Study and its Application', *Benares Magazine*, December, pp. 91–2, and 96–7.

24 See Guha, 2011, pp. 42–76.

25 U. Singh, *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology* (New Delhi: Permanent Black), 2004, p. 37.

26 M. Sherring, and C. Horne, 'Description of Ancient Remains of Buddhist Monasteries and Temples, and other Buildings, recently discovered in Benares and its vicinity', *Archaeological papers of Charles Horne*, compilation volume in Asia, Pacific and African Collection, British Library, London, 1865, p. 11.



**Fig. 5. 'Ancient Buddhist Temple at Bakariya Kund near Benares', ca. 1863-4, photographed by H.L. Frazer, lithograph in Sherring and Horne 1865, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 34.**

Thus, Sherring and Horne used archaeology for scientifically demonstrating the inevitable decline of the Hindu religion, and concluded that just as Buddhism could perish despite being the national religion of India for over 500 years, so eventually could Hinduism. Sherring subsequently asserted that 'religious ideas are, of all ideas, the most tenacious and powerful . . . they will, as they retire, nevertheless, fight every inch of the way, and continue the contest even when reduced to absolute weakness. Thus, it took several centuries for Buddhism to expire in India.'<sup>27</sup>

The archaeological evidence of a thriving Buddhist Banaras in ancient times fed the labeling of the nineteenth-century photographs of the *ghats*, and I quote from a letter press authored by the Revd Mullins, also of the London Missionary Society, which is in the photographic album that was created by Bourne and Shepherd, perhaps the most successful nineteenth-century commercial studio in India, for the visiting Prince

<sup>27</sup> Sherring, *The Sacred City of the Hindus: An Account of Banaras in Ancient and Modern Times* (London: Trubner & Co.), 1868, p. 267.

of Wales. The label is for photograph no. 11, which depicts an area of the *ghats* where the mosque that was built under the orders of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb looms prominently, and it stated that:

'It was Buddhism, and the splendid colleges of monasteries belonging to that faith, which gave celebrity and sanctity to the district which Brahmanism inherited after the expulsion of the Buddhists.'<sup>28</sup>

However, the hopes of the missionaries of converting the Hindus of Banaras into Christianity by showing them through archaeology the young-ness of their religion began to fade away by the 1880s, when we hear them complain that 'the Indian Christian community numbers about 800 [...] numerically this does not appear to be a great achievement for nearly a century.'<sup>29</sup>

The British uses of the archaeological practices for promoting Christian causes within India have seemingly left no traces within the official archives. This might be because archaeology was quite specifically promoted by the colonial government as a rational and scientific method for showcasing the British feats of giving back to the Indians the material relics of the glorious ancient civilization which the latter had, supposedly, squandered away. Yet, the occasional glimpses of the personal faith of individual British archaeologists within their personal archives, encourage us to ruminate whether the systematic erosion of the histories of plural worship of monuments and sites by British explorers was to some extent a reflection of their understanding of the dispositions of all religious practices through knowledge of their own.<sup>30</sup>

#### IV

Layard's excavations at Nimrud was recalled by the two most well-known nineteenth-century field surveyors of Ancient India, namely, Alexander Cunningham and James Fergusson (1808–86). Cunningham invoked Layard to aspire the latter's status as among the pioneering British archaeologists of the Orient. Fergusson, however, used the antiquities, which Layard excavated for establishing his status as the pioneering historian of art and architecture.

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28 Bourne and Shepherd, *Royal Photographic Album of Scenes and Personages Connected with the Progress of H.R.H. The Prince of Wales*, 1876,

29 J. Ewen, *Benares Handbook*, 1886, p. 50.

30 On this see Guha, 2015, p. 21.

Fergusson wrote about the universal history of art and declared that this history would allow the British ‘public a better standard by which to judge the merits of art’, and would allow the British nation to create ‘an art that will be worthy of the nation, and worthy of engaging and employing the highest class of intellects that exist among us.’<sup>31</sup> Of the aesthetics of the arts of Ancient Assyria he was of the opinion that ‘it marks a lower grade of civilisation and of mind than the Egyptian’. He traced historical paths for the developments of art and architecture in the World, and perceived the cultural geography of Ancient Assyria as the historical corridor that connected Asia and Europe. Thus, he declared that one route of development, which resulted in the supreme aesthetic achievements of the ancient Greek Civilization, went through Ancient Egypt, Ancient Assyria, Asia Minor and the Etruscans into Greece, and the other which led to the ancient architecture of the Hindus that comprised ‘monstrous many-limbed and many idols, and still more monstrous doctrines’ went from Ancient Assyria and Persia into the Indian subcontinent.<sup>32</sup>

Fergusson also challenged the antiquity of the ‘Sanskrit- speaking people’ through the archaeological discoveries of Ancient Assyria, and in his book *The Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis* (1851) reminded his readers that because the ‘language’ of this group ‘is the only one studied, the literature in consequence is the only one known in Europe, so that they are generally, but most erroneously, looked upon as the only people of India.’ He insisted that ‘so closely were they indeed allied to the Assyrians on their southern and western frontiers, that [...] some light must be thrown on them by these discoveries.’ Thus, he declared that ‘even if the Brahmins had passed into India at ‘too early a date and by too direct a route, the Vaishnave religion was certainly closely allied to the Assyrian’. So too, he stated, were the Buddhists, who were ‘closely allied to the Magian [and] came from this fertile source’. It is worth noting that in ascertaining that the ‘Hindu races’ of India had no ‘primeval antiquity’ Fergusson offered no visible proof to distinguish his hypothesis from the ‘wild imaginations’ of the Hindus, which he so sardonically dismissed.<sup>33</sup>

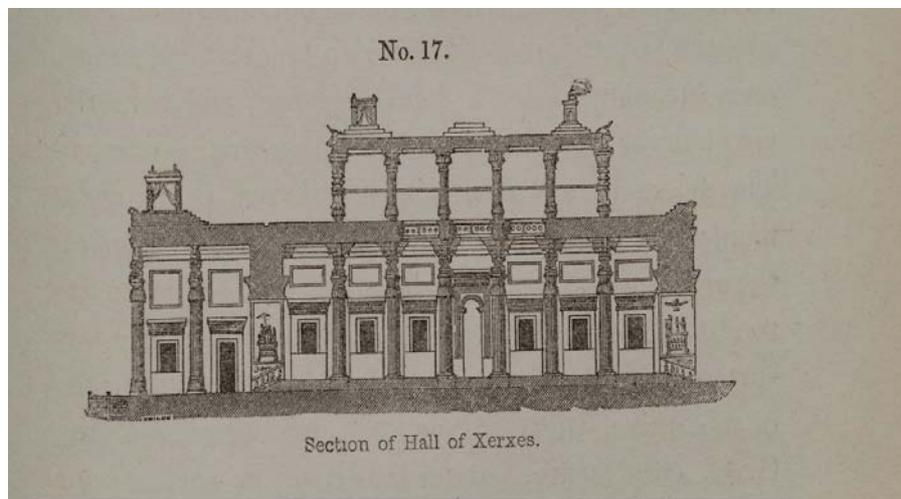
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31 J. Fergusson, *An Historical Enquiry into the Principles of Beauty in Art, More Specifically with Reference to Architecture* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans), 1849, p. xvi; See Guha, 2015, for a detailed history of Fergusson’s perceptions and uses of the arts of Ancient Assyria.

32 *Ibid*, pp. 267–68.

33 J. Fergusson, *The Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis Restored: An Essay on Ancient Assyrian and Persian Architecture* (London: John Murray), 1851, pp. 267, 358.

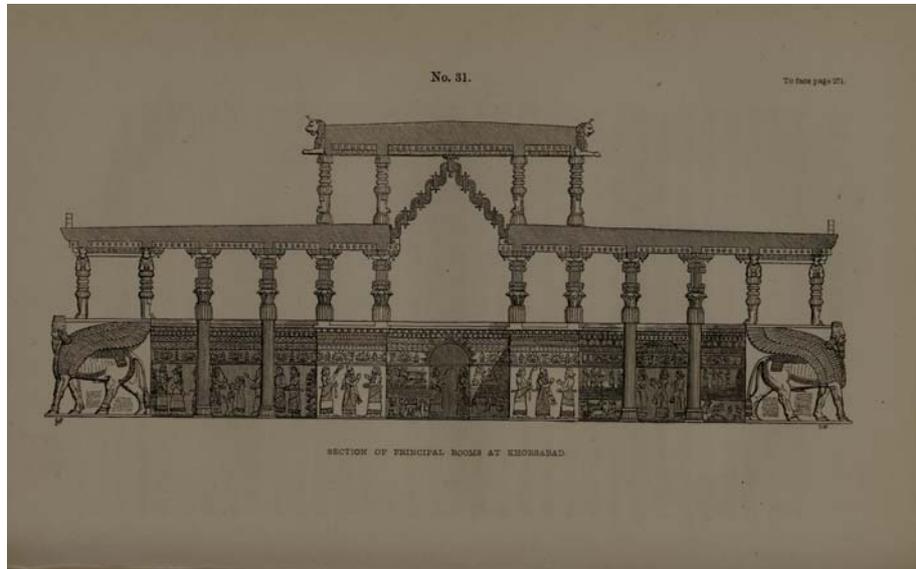
Fergusson, however, propagated seeing as the only means of obtaining historical truths. He believed that 'even if we should not be able to decipher the inscription, the details of art will be suffice to point out the affiliation of almost all the primitive nations of Asia.' Yet, as he himself stated, he wrote the history of the arts of Assyria on the basis of a 'few plates' from Botta's and Layard's excavations, 'without either texts, or plans or references of any sort that could make them intelligible.'<sup>34</sup> In this respect, the absence of 'hard facts' in Fergusson's theories of the manner in which the ruins of Nineveh and Persepolis may have once received natural light is quite striking. He assumed stylistic similarities between the roofs of the Assyrian and Persian palaces with those of the Muslim tombs in Ahmedabad and Bijapur and Mughal mosques in Delhi and Agra, and concluded that the mode of light is admitted between the rows of two columns, and not placed on a solid wall. Through section drawings of some of the above monuments (Fig. 6a, 6b, 6c), he showed the visible truth of his inferences, and concluded through the comparative study that the 'Asiatic mind was not capable of anything much higher than oscillating towards perfection which it never reached.'<sup>35</sup> The systematic method by which Fergusson derived his evidently visible evidence was quite blatantly premised upon his inferences of the architectural shapes of non-existing buildings in Nimrud, Khorsabad and Persepolis.



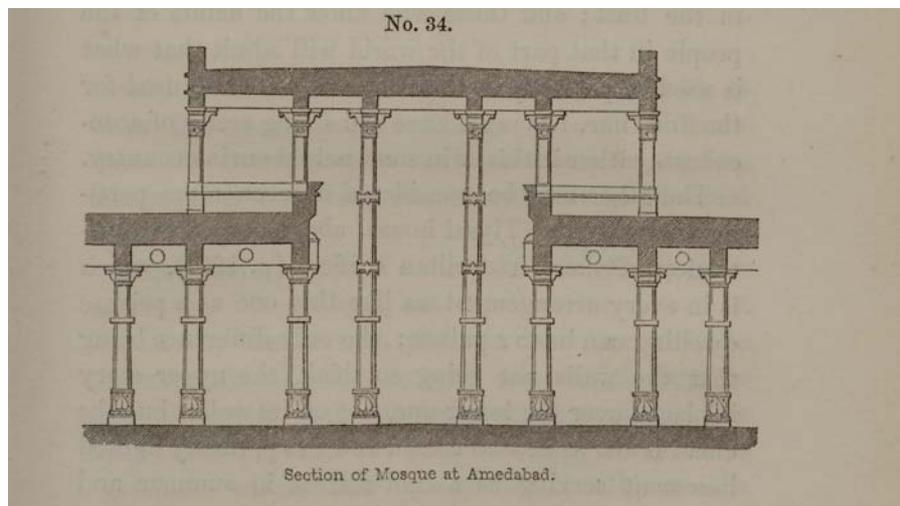
**Figs. 6a. 'Hypostyle Hall of Xerxes, Persepolis'**

34 *Op. cit.*, 1849, pp. 267-68.

35 *Op. cit.*, 1851, pp. 290-91.



**6b. 'Palace at Khorsabad near Mosul'**



**6c. 'Jami Masjid, Ahmedabad'**

Drawings, c. 1850, James Fergusson, in *The Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis Restored* (1851), Plates 17, 31 and 34 respect.

Histories of 'Nineveh' in Bombay and Fergusson's provide many examples of the ways in which ideational notions are seen and given physical forms, and in this they implore us to see our acts of visualisation through which we consider the ontology of

the non-present past. The field surveys of the colonial lands illustrate rather well that the colonisers saw things, whereas the natives were prone to seeing, or imagining. But, perhaps, more importantly the histories show us that even the British did not equate 'correct' seeing with the correct reading of evidence. Richard Carnac's dismissal of the views of John Goldingham, an astronomer of the East India Company, regarding the presence of a 'Hindu temple' at Elephanta (near Bombay) is one example.

Carnac had stated that

'I have had from Mr Goldingham (one of the Honourable Company's astronomers at Fort Saint George, a person of much ingenuity, and who applies himself to the study of antiquities) some drawings taken from the cave of Elephanta. They are the most accurate of any I have seen, and accompanied with correct description. This gentleman argues ably in favour of its having been a Hindu temple; yet I cannot assent to his opinion.'

Carnac presumed that the caves, which we know today to have Saiva imagery, were built by the 'Abyssinians, who', he declared, 'inhabit the country on the west side of the Red Sea, opposite to Arabia.'<sup>36</sup>

The British histories of visualising India, therefore, illustrate rather well the futility of historicising a unique colonial gaze. For the construct, and the perception, erodes the nuances that matter to history writing.

## V

The pernicious colonial historiography of India has established a religion-orientated national patrimony, whose characteristics seep into the classifications of relics and landscapes as Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and etc., and of which the inferences of the uses of the Dhamekstupa at Sarnath provides an example. Here, the Hindu communities made offerings to the stupa even as late as the nineteenth century. But this fact remains obliterated from the notices for the monument that are created by the Archaeological Survey of India, which mark it as quintessentially Buddhist, for the consumption of tourists and Buddhist pilgrims alike.

The British had highlighted the merits of their archaeological scholarship of India for developing a history of the cultural benefits of their imperialism. The nation-serving

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36 Letter to John Shore, Governor General and President of the Asiatic Society, by Richard Carnac, 26 July 1795, *Asiatick Researches*, Vol. 5, pp. 406-07. On a history of the nineteenth-century theories about the cultural affinities between Egypt and India, see Guha, 2012.

academic archaeology of India, which has been developed quite consciously by many professional Indian archaeologists during the post-colonial era creates a similar utility value, in establishing through archaeology India's national heritage for sustaining the imperial politics of nationalism.<sup>37</sup>

From the dawn of Indian independence, Indian archaeologists began to systematically fill in the historical profile of the new Indian states, and search for an Indian prehistory. The latter specifically sought the presence of Pleistocene man within the national boundaries of India, as the new nation had lost to Pakistan its most promising terrain, namely the Acheulean sites of the Soan River valley. However, the archaeological researches since 1950 allowed the 'doyen' of Indian archaeology, H.D. Sankalia (1908-89) to declare a decade later that 'Early Stone Age Man roamed at will along the small and large river valleys almost everywhere in India.'<sup>38</sup>

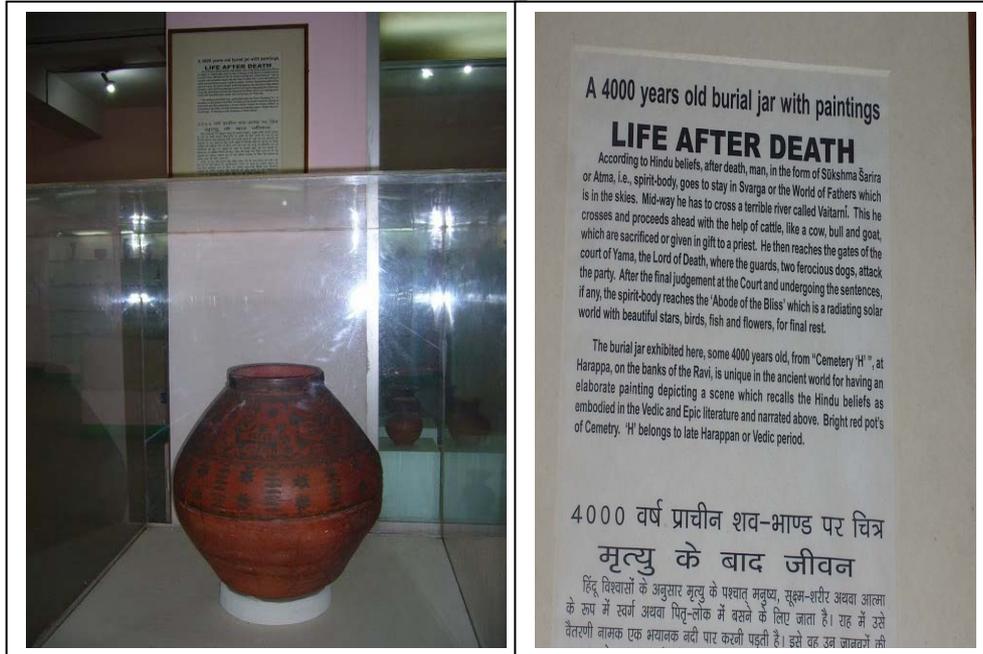
As we now know, the discoveries of the Bronze Age Indus Civilization within India which also began from the early 1950s furnished the young Indian nation with a prehistoric civilization. By the 1980s India could boast of many unique features of this Bronze Age, such as a dockyard and ploughed field. Over the last two decades the Indian government and also many Indian archaeologists have extensively mined into the artefactual repertoire that is considered representative of the Indus Civilisation for seeking the origins of India's ancient civilizational traditions. In this respect, the Harappa Gallery of the National Museum presents India's long history of 'nationing' a bronze age, where visitors are shown a primordial Hindu culture in the making (Figs. 7a, 7b). Additionally, the absence of prehistory within a gallery that is administered by the Museum's Prehistory section informs us of the conscious curation of modern Hinduism that quite notably traces its ancestral lineage through an urbane, achieving, sophisticated, but a hoary past.<sup>39</sup>

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37 See Guha, 2015, pp. 236–39.

38 H.D. Sankalia, *Prehistory and Protohistory in India and Pakistan* (Bombay: Bombay University), 1962–63, pp. 35–36.

39 Guha, forthcoming, 'Antiquities for a Nation: The Harappa Gallery of the National Museum of India'.



**Figs. 7a and b: Text panel and Cemetery H Jar, National Museum, New Delhi. Author's photograph, 2013**

The archaeological curation of a Buddhist Banaras, Indian Prehistory and the Indus Civilization of India, bring home to us the creative uses of ancient civilizations for developing history-lessons for a nation. As the histories of 'Nineveh' in Bombay remind us, museums and collections contribute to the above nationalist histories, and create national archaeology's academic and public spaces. In this respect, the enigmatic antiquities also inform us that we would lose a vast amount of intellectual histories if we simply endow antiquities the status of scientific data, and forget that their archaeological context is just one of their many contexts and not even the original one.<sup>40</sup>

40 *Ibid*, for a detailed discussion of the errors in scholarship for neglecting the multiple contexts and aesthetics of an 'archaeological artefact'.

## **CHANGING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFORMATION SOCIETY AND LIBRARIES: A REVIEW**

Kazi Mostak Gausul Hoq\*

### **Abstract**

Information society, characterised by the proliferation of information and communication technologies, increased use of information in all spheres of life and the widespread impacts of globalisation, has brought about considerable changes in how we seek, acquire, use and share information. Libraries, which have been serving humankind as collectors and providers of information, have undergone many changes in recent times in order to cope with the challenges of information society. Based on a review of relevant literature, this paper explores the challenges faced by modern libraries and the steps taken by library and information professionals to overcome these challenges and make the libraries useful and effective in this turbulent time. It also touches upon the present state of libraries in Bangladesh and their attempts to improve and diversify their services in response to the changing needs of their users.

### **Introduction**

Much of the modern discourse on information society is focused on how information is playing an increasingly central role in the lives of people in modern times. Starting from the late 1970s, particularly with the emergence of information and communications technologies (ICTs), the role of information in various spheres of life became a major issue of discussion. Since information has a pervasive nature and affects all kinds of human endeavours, the discussion on the impact of information is also multi-dimensional and cross-cutting - thereby giving birth to new ideas, opinions and debates. One such stream of discussion concerns itself with the way information society is influencing libraries as an institution and librarianship as a profession. There is little doubt that libraries have changed irrevocably in the wake of recent developments on the technological, social and intellectual fronts. How are these changes affecting libraries and their position in the society? Do libraries have any place in the emerging information society? And if so, what changes the library

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professionals must bring not only in their *modus operandi*, but also in their perceptions and work ethics? These are the major questions the library and information professionals of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are facing every day.

### **Methodology and Study Design**

The study aims to offer insights into the way libraries have been transforming in response to the evolutionary process of the information society. The information society, characterised by new modes of information generation, organization and diffusion – has been influencing the libraries to assume new roles and responsibilities to meet the changing demands of the modern information users. This paper aims to portray these changes. It is based on an in-depth analysis of relevant literature covering various aspects of information, information society and the new generation of library and information services. The author has analysed around 40 papers representing topics like:

- i) the emergence and gradual development of the information society,
- ii) the nature and scopes of the information society,
- iii) changing roles of library and information centres in the light of the demands of modern information users, and
- iv) the changing landscape of the libraries and information centres of Bangladesh in the evolving information society.

The paper is designed as following. First, a discussion on the emergence and subsequent development of information society will be made. Second, an analysis will be undertaken about how the libraries and information centres of the Twentieth century are trying to respond to the forces shaping the information society. Third, the changing role of the libraries and information centres will be described followed by a discussion on the impacts of the information society on libraries and information centres in Bangladesh.

### **Information society: emergence and development**

The concept of information society, although a relatively modern one, has its roots in the industrial revolution as well as in the post World War II development in the field of science and technology that created an urge among the newly industrialised nations to ensure sustainable development through innovative ways. This ushered in an era of experimentation, sharing and diffusion of knowledge in myriad ways. In the 1970s, phenomenal advancements in the field of computing and, subsequently, telecommunication, made technology a central focus in our quest for development.

This, along with the forces of globalization ushered in an era where information was increasingly being considered as *the most* important driver of change, thereby inspiring the use of the term “information society”. The rise of individualism, increasing importance of freedom of expression, democratic movements and spread of education also had significant impacts on the development of information society. In view of Alvin Toffler<sup>1</sup>, information society is the third wave of society, the first two being the “agricultural society” (replacing the nomadic way of life practised by the hunter-gatherers) and the “industrial society” resulting from the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries.

IBM Community Development Foundation, in a report published in 1997, defined “information society” as ‘a society characterised by a high level of information intensity in the everyday life of most citizens, in most organisations and workplaces; by the use of common or compatible technology for a wide range of personal, social, educational and business activities, and by the ability to transmit, receive and exchange digital data rapidly between places irrespective of distance.’<sup>2</sup> Therefore, prevalence and importance of information in all spheres of life, extensive use of modern technologies and an attitudinal change among people from cross section of life to utilise information for solving their livelihood problems seem to be the common traits of an information society.

In the 1960s, the writings of Fritz Machlup inspired many economists to explore the issue of information-industry, focusing on the economic power of information. Machlup<sup>3</sup> argued that, education, research and development, mass media, information technologies, information services constitute the information industries and, in his estimate, in 1959 29% per cent of the GNP in the USA had been produced in these industries. Subsequently, Marc Porat refined Machlup’s ideas and wrote extensively on the economic dimension of information society. In the 1970s, the concept of post-industrial society promoted by Daniel Bell energized the information society discourse significantly. Bell<sup>4</sup> observed that, information was the defining resource of a new ‘post-industrial’ phase of economic development, just as raw materials were the core resource of the agricultural society and energy of the industrial society. In

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1 Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave*, (New York: Morrow, 1980).

2 IBM Community Development Foundation, ‘The Net Result: Social Inclusion in the Information Society’, 1997. ([www.local-level.org.uk/uploads/8/2/1/0/8210988/netresult.pdf](http://www.local-level.org.uk/uploads/8/2/1/0/8210988/netresult.pdf))

3 Fritz Machlup, *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962).

4 Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: a Venture in Social Forecasting*, (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

his view, storing, processing, managing, distributing, communicating and interlinking information will be the most important skills of the information society. Other writers who have made significant contributions to information society research in the 20<sup>th</sup> century include Alain Touraine, Jean-François Lyotard and Nico Stehr. Lyotard<sup>5</sup> envisaged a society where the traditional centralised social structures will be destroyed by the diffusion of information and technologies in all strata of the society and human endeavours in various spheres of life will be characterized by a transformation of knowledge and information into commodity. The idea of an information-focused “post industrial” society shaped Touraine’s social view and he forecasted about the replacement of material goods by symbolic goods, i.e. commodities produced by experimentation and intellectual exercises. Stehr highlighted the importance of knowledge inputs in an information economy, which outweighs the importance of material inputs. In Stehr’s view, “Contemporary society may be described as a knowledge society based on the extensive penetration of all its spheres of life and institutions by scientific and technological knowledge.”<sup>6</sup> Authors like Manuel Castells add a new dimension in the information society discourse by stressing the idea of “network society”, implying that, the driving forces of the information-age is the spread of networks linking people, institutions and countries. Castells<sup>7</sup> argues that, the information age started in the 1970s, with the restructuring of capitalist enterprises where an urge to explore new sources of income led to innovative use of information, which he termed as ‘informational mode of development’, relying on the proliferation of information and communication technologies. Chris Batt<sup>8</sup> maintains that, information society has a few distinguishing features, foremost of which are: information, connectivity and social capital. He argues that, in order to be successful in today’s challenging times, information scattered across various media should be unified and consolidated and made available to the people who need it with the help of various tools of Internet. He also stresses the importance of accumulating social capitals, the actual and potential resources collected from various networks and institutional relationships that an individual maintains.

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5 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, (Manchester University Press, 1984).

6 Nico Stehr, *Knowledge and Economic Conduct: The Social Foundations of the Modern Economy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p.18.

7 Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society. Vol. 1 of The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

8 Chris Batt, “I have seen the future and IT works”, *Library Review*, Vol. 48 (Issue: 1), 1999, pp. 11-17.

Since information is multi-dimensional, it exerts influence on all spheres of human endeavours. There are different dimensions in thoughts and practices concerning information society. Webster<sup>9</sup> identifies these dimensions as technological, economic, occupational, spatial and cultural, which can also be deemed as five distinct schools of thought with regard to the theory and application of information society. The technological dimension stresses the impact of information and communication technologies on the transformation of industrial society into information society. The economic dimension addresses the economic implications of information and how information-focused activities are playing a dominant part in world economy these days. The occupational dimension suggests that, information society is mainly characterised by a preponderance of occupation in information related works. The key emphasis of the spatial dimension is on information networks that connect locations, having far reaching impacts on the organisation of time and space. Lastly, the cultural dimension focuses on the cultural changes happening as a result of free flow of information which in turn is affected by globalisation. Webster remarks, ‘We exist in a media-saturated environment which means that life is quintessentially about symbolisation, about exchanging and receiving – or trying to exchange and resisting reception – messages about ourselves and others.’

The preceding discussion gives us a fair idea about the nature, scope and distinguishing features of information society, which can be presented in the following table:

**Table 1: Different facets of information society**

<b>Information society</b>	
Also known as	Knowledge society, Network society, post-industrial society
Emergence	1970s
Causes	Technological development, research and innovation, spread of education, rise of individualism, democratic movements
Common features	Central role of information in all human endeavours; Increasing reliance on technologies, especially ICTs; transition from manual to mental labour and material goods to symbolic goods; Connectivity; Social capital
Requirements	Reliable infrastructure; Free flow of information; Information focused policies; Adequate content reflecting the needs of users; Collaboration and partnership
Dimensions	Technological; Economic; Occupational; Spatial; Cultural

<sup>9</sup> Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society (3rd ed.)*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 20.

However, the notion of information society is disputed by some theorists like Webster, Giddens<sup>10</sup> and Harvey<sup>11</sup>. To them, information society does not mark the beginning of a completely new era, rather, a step in the evolutionary social system, albeit with a greater focus on information. In spite of acknowledging a few important traits of this new age (such as globalisation, information explosion, etc.), they argue that, these are attributes of overall capitalist structures, rather than the elements of a fundamentally different age in human civilization.

### **Libraries in the information society: In search of new roles**

Masuda<sup>12</sup>, in his seminal work on the role of libraries in the information society, forecast the changes to take place in the arena of libraries and information centre in the forthcoming information society. He remarked that, the diffusion of information technology, the transformation of societal system and changing human needs will bring about transformational changes in the libraries. He also indicated that, library automation, electronic publishing, and convergence of computers and communications technologies will be the major changes taken place in libraries as a result of information society. Indeed, in less than a decade, all of the changes forecast by Masuda did take place and also many more. Consequently, libraries of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are strikingly different from what they were just two decades ago and Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals are striving to cope with these changes in different ways. Today's libraries are facing many challenges on different fronts, which is creating increasing pressure on their resources. Rasmussen and Jochumsen<sup>13</sup> contend that, increased competition from other services and alternative means of provision mean that libraries will have to fight for resources, including through the development of strategic approaches and partnerships.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has been in the forefront of conducting research and raising awareness in the library community about the changing library landscape in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In collaboration with the United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it has been organizing World Summit on Information Society to help LIS professionals cope with the changing realities of modern times. In IFLA's view, today's libraries, in

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10 Anthony Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1987).

11 David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

12 Yoneji Masuda, "The Role of the Library in the Information Society", *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 1 Issue: 2, 1983, pp. 143-147.

13 C.H. Rasmussen, and H. Jochumsen, "Strategies for public libraries in the 21st century", *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 9 (1), 2003, pp. 83-93.

addition to their age-old role as organizers and providers of information, also play multifarious roles, including:

(i) place of wide-eyed discovery, (ii) tool for life-long learning, (iii) support for political and social enquiry, (iv) bank of ideas and inspiration, (v) source of answers to factual questions, (vi) place to acquire new skills, (vii) community centre, (viii) local studies resource, and (ix) a place of sheer pleasure and enjoyment<sup>14</sup>.

The above list shows that, libraries the world over are trying to play a wide array of roles for satisfying their clients and making themselves more relevant in the society. This is not an easy task and LIS professionals are compelled to enrich their skills and capabilities in order to play these roles. Libraries are no longer considered only a storehouse of knowledge where the information seekers find their required information; rather, today's libraries are being considered as a gateway (and a platform) from where information seekers could undertake their quest for knowledge from myriad sources. In the last 50 years or so, sources of information have changed dramatically. The world of learning, long dominated by print materials, especially books, now relies on a wide variety of information media both print and electronic. As Masuda predicted, the nature of information seeking has also changed considerably, with today's users looking for completely new kinds of services to the libraries. Foo<sup>15</sup> discusses how various internal and external factors have brought about major changes in libraries worldwide. He identified technological (computers and telecommunication, digital libraries, etc.), economic (budget cut, higher costs of providing services), international (standardization at global level, use of Machine Readable Cataloguing, metadata and other standards), legal and political (issues affecting intellectual freedom, privacy, intellectual property, etc.), socio-cultural (changing attitude of library users, impact of globalization) and other elements that have made profound changes in the way libraries are serving their diverse users. To cope with these changes and challenges posed by the information society, libraries are pursuing wide ranging strategies, which are shaped by the specific socio-politico-economic-cultural contexts in which they are operating. Some key strategies (against corresponding changes/challenges), identified by analysing some relevant literature

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14 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), "Information for All: The Key Role of Libraries in the Information Society", *Report prepared for the World Summit on Information Society, 2003* ([https://www.unige.ch/biblio/ses/IFLA/rol\\_lib\\_030526.pdf](https://www.unige.ch/biblio/ses/IFLA/rol_lib_030526.pdf))

15 Schubert Foo, "Building an information society for all: The library environment and stakeholder roles", *Proceedings of International Conference on Libraries, Information and Society (ICoLIS 2007)*, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, June, 26-27, pp. 1-12.

(Waller and McShane<sup>16</sup>, Oghenekaro and Olakunle<sup>17</sup>, Ajibero<sup>18</sup>, Johnson<sup>19</sup>) could be summarized in the following table:

**Table 2: Library strategies for overcoming the challenges of information society**

Change/challenge	Strategies
Rising cost of services, budget cut	Replacing print materials by electronic materials; Assigning more tasks to the existing employees, Encouraging staff to attain multiple skills, Increased focus on professional development and multitasking, Deployment of advanced technologies, Fewer new recruitments, etc.
Changing demand of users	Library networking and resource sharing, Cooperative acquisition, processing, circulation, preserving, etc., Proactive information services – Selective Dissemination of Information, Current Awareness Services, Library outreach programmes, Advocacy and policy lobbying, Greater community involvement, Innovative use of library space, etc.
Proliferation of new technologies	ICT-based services, Use of mobile platform, Use of Web 2.0 technologies, Constant research and development, Robotics and artificial intelligence, Large scale library automation and digitization, etc.
Proving the libraries' worth in a changed society	Building partnerships with public and private organisations; Greater social involvement; Effective use of library funds; More collaboration and cooperation among libraries and allied organisations, Diversification of library roles, Capacity building of library professionals, etc.

16 Vivienne Waller and Ian McShane, Analyzing the challenges for large public libraries in the twenty-first century: a case study of the state library of Victoria in Australia, *First Monday*, Vol. 13, No. 12 (Accessed from <http://firstmonday.org/article/view/2155/2060#author>)

17 Adeniran P. Oghenekaro and Alabi S. Olakunle, "Clients Retention in a Competitive Environment: The Information Professional Perspective", *Pyrex Journal of Library and Information Science* Vol. 1 (1), June, 2015, pp. 1-4

18 M. I. Ajibero, "Strategies and Tools for Information Services Delivery in the New Millennium", In Compendium of Papers presentations at the 2000 NLA Annual National Conferences and AGM, 25th-30 June, Abuja, 2000. pp. 63-68.

19 Ian M. Johnson, "Challenges in Developing Professionals for the 'Information Society' - and some responses by the British schools of librarianship and information studies", *Library Review*, 47(3), 1998, pp. 152-159.

This is IFLA's view that, by building a more active mutual relationship, the public libraries and their respective communities could successfully face the challenges of the information society. It has identified five major trends which require urgent responses from the libraries and their communities. These are:

- (i) New technologies, that will both expand and limit the access to information;
- (ii) Online education, that will democratize and disrupt global learning;
- (iii) The boundaries of privacy and data protection, which are going to be redefined;
- (iv) Hyperconnected societies, that will listen to and empower new voices and groups;
- and (v) The global information economy, that will be transformed by new technologies.<sup>20</sup>

One particular role of libraries has drawn much attention in context of information society and that is lifelong learning. It is believed that, libraries can play a pivotal role in lifelong learning through various innovative services and by making diversified use of library space. Many libraries in the West have been redesigning their spaces, services and capacities to allow more and more people to receive learning in different forms. Makerspaces has been a recent addition in many libraries where library users, especially young people are being supported to apply the knowledge gained from libraries by way of innovation and experimentation. For this, library spaces are being redesigned to allow both learning and innovation. Another new initiative is Tool Libraries, which are allowing people to borrow various tools and equipment from libraries along with books and other library materials. Libraries have a rich tradition of being used as community centres, which has taken a new dimension in recent times. Library as a meeting place where exercises like group learning, brainstorming, idea generating and other forms of socialization are becoming more and more common<sup>21</sup>. The role of libraries in consultancy and counseling has also been proved effective. Rural information centres set up in rural and far-flung areas of the country are being used as one-stop centres where people are getting much needed advisory and consultancy services on key livelihood issues like health, disaster management, agriculture, employment, education and so on<sup>22</sup>.

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20 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions [IFLA], *Riding the Waves or Caught in the Tide? Navigating the Evolving Information Environment*, Trend Report, 2013 ([http://trends.ifla.org/files/trends/assets/insights-from-theifla-trend-report\\_v3.pdf](http://trends.ifla.org/files/trends/assets/insights-from-theifla-trend-report_v3.pdf))

21 Namita Pareek and Anita Gangrade, "Role of the Libraries as Information Resources in Globalization", *International Journal of Librarianship and Administration*. Vol. 7, Number 1, 2016, pp. 13-23

22 R.Dutta, "Information needs and information-seeking behavior in developing countries: A review of the research", *The International Information and Library Review*, 41(1), pp. 44-51.

### **Libraries and information society: the Bangladesh scenario**

The impact of information society has not been the same in all regions of the world. While most of the developed countries were quick to realize the potentials of a new world order based on the innovative use of both information and information technology and took immediate steps to strengthen their infrastructural capabilities, most of the developing countries were slow and, at best, tentative in their approach. This created a massive gap between the developed and developing world in terms of infrastructural (both IT and information service) facilities.<sup>23</sup> As a result, while the developed countries are reaping the benefits of an information-centered society, many countries, especially those in Asia and Africa are still struggling to make a foothold in the evolving global knowledge society. Bangladesh is no exception. Like other institutions, libraries are also lagging behind in forming a clear-cut agenda of action with regard to information society. However, there has been a general consciousness among the library professionals about the necessity of redefining as well as redesigning their roles in a fast changing society. Although there have been no comprehensive effort either from the professional associations or from the individual researchers to explore at length the effects of information society on the libraries of Bangladesh, a number of writers have attempted to highlight the impacts of ICT on libraries and have also tried to propose new library service models for the libraries. Shuva<sup>24</sup>, in his assessment of non-government public libraries, identified that, in spite of their potentials, libraries in Bangladesh suffer from financial crisis, lack of government support, poor infrastructural facilities, lack of capacity building initiatives, lack of support from local authorities and so on. This fact is corroborated by other studies conducted by Islam et al<sup>25</sup>, Rahman<sup>26</sup> and others. The British Council conducted a comprehensive Library Landscape Survey in 2015 that focused on library service provision in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. The assessment

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23 Jacques Berleur and Chrisanthi Avgerou, *Perspectives and policies on ICT in society*, (New York: Springer), 2005, pp. 205-218.

24 Nafiz Zaman Shuva, "Status of Non-Government Public Libraries in Bangladesh", *The Eastern Librarian*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2012, pp. 91-104.

25 Muhammad Mezbah-ul-Islam, Rowshan Akter and Mohammad Sawad bin Shahid, "Problems and prospects of college library personnel in Bangladesh: An analytical study, Paper published at International CALIBER Conference-2008 (<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/7781785/problems-and-prospects-of-college-library-personnel-in-dspace->)

26 A. Rahman, "Access to Global Information: A case of Digital Divide in Bangladesh", *Proceedings of the IATUL Conferences*. Paper 25 (<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/iatul/2007/papers/25>)

ascertained that, although the services of libraries are highly valued by their users, they are more keen to seek informational help from sources other than library, for instance-centres run by public and private organisations<sup>27</sup>. It also revealed that, socio-cultural services are scarce in libraries while book-centric services dominate (only 10% library users informed that they visit libraries to attend cultural functions, exhibition, training session or any such programmes). Other research conducted by Iqbal<sup>28</sup>, Islam<sup>29</sup> and Akanda and Roknuzzaman<sup>30</sup> have argued that libraries, especially community information centres, could play a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh by providing much needed information to the people living in the far-flung areas. They advocated for significant improvement in library services, capacity building of the LIS professionals and a pro-active role to be played by the LIS professionals in order to help libraries play their expected role in the society.

In Bangladesh, technology-focused information services have gained a lot of attention in recent years. This has been manifested by the setting up of more than 4,500 Union Digital Centres (previously known as Union Information Service Centres) all across the country. This initiative, supported by the Access to Information programme of the Prime Minister's Office and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are run by two local entrepreneurs (one male and one female) with assistance from local government representatives. The centres leverage ICT tools for providing both free and fee-based services like land records, birth registration, telemedicine, passport and overseas job application, mobile financial services, insurance, vocational training etc (Access to Information Programme)<sup>31</sup>. This initiative is being supported by a number of non-government

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27 The British Council, *Library Landscape Assessment of Bangladesh*, 2015 ([http://www.britishcouncil.org.bd/sites/default/files/library\\_landscape\\_interim\\_report\\_-\\_draft\\_5\\_may.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org.bd/sites/default/files/library_landscape_interim_report_-_draft_5_may.pdf))

28 M. N. Iqbal, *Building a knowledge society: The relationship between information and development in Bangladesh* (Doctoral dissertation, Curtin University of Technology), 2004 ([http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au/R?func%4dbin-jump-full&local\\_base%4gen01-era02&object\\_id%415610](http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au/R?func%4dbin-jump-full&local_base%4gen01-era02&object_id%415610))

29 M. S. Islam, "Status of rural library and information services in Bangladesh: Directions for the development", *The Social Science Review*, 1(11), 2006, pp. 15–21.

30 A. K. M. E. A. Akanda and M. Roknuzzaman, "Agricultural information literacy of farmers in the northern region of Bangladesh", *Information and Knowledge Management*, 2(16), 2012, pp. 1–11.

31 Access to Information Programme, "Union Digital Centres: Reaching the unreached through an innovative public-private entrepreneurship model", 2017 (<http://a2i.pmo.gov.bd/innovation-brief-union-digital-center/>)

initiatives, many of whom are run under the name of ‘*telecentres*’, and are providing information and technology support in the rural areas of Bangladesh.<sup>32</sup>

In response to the growing demand from their users, libraries in Bangladesh have been successfully utilising wide-ranging technological tools in order to beef up their services. One notable initiative is the digital library, which helps libraries provide electronic information services to a wider number of users, resulting in greater user satisfaction, saving of cost and resources. Majority of libraries located in the urban and semi-urban areas have been using ICTs in the form of library automation, institutional repository and digital information services. Authors like Islam<sup>33</sup>, Alam<sup>34</sup>, Islam and Akter<sup>35</sup> have written extensively on this topic. They agree that, in spite of bottlenecks like infrastructural weaknesses, lack of funding, lack of skilled manpower, lack of collaboration etc., the prospect of technology use in the libraries of Bangladesh is bright, with more and more libraries availing themselves of digital technologies for reaching out to a wider audience with a new range of services.

However, the libraries in Bangladesh still need to go a long way for playing a dominant role in the information society. In fact, the responsibility lies not only on the libraries to play their part, rather, all other institutions must play a decisive role in order to realise the potentials of a true information society. This calls for concerted efforts from public and private organisation, spearheaded by the government, that will help build a society where information truly plays a central role. By leveraging their information resources and information-related capabilities, LIS professionals could put the libraries in the centre of our quest towards an information society.

### **Conclusion**

Information is now widely considered a basic ingredient of sustainable development, and libraries are relied on by a huge number of people to provide it. Free access to the resources preserved by libraries is viewed as one of the main cornerstones of a

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32 K. M. G. Hoq, “Rural library and information services, their success, failure and sustainability: A literature review”, *Information Development*, 2015, 31(3), PP. 294-310

33 Md. Shariful Islam, “Status of Rural Library and Information Services in Bangladesh: Directions for the Development”, *The Social Sciences*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2006, pp. 15-21

34 Md. Saiful Alam, “Digitization and developing digital library and information support in Bangladesh: professional challenges”, *Bangladesh journal of library and information science*, Vol. 2 No. 1, 2012, pp. 57-66.

35 M. A. Islam and R. Akter, “Institutional Repositories and Open Access Initiatives in Bangladesh: A New Paradigm of Scholarly Communication”, *LIBER Quarterly*, Vol. 23 No. 1, 2013, pp. 3-24.

democratic society.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, especially for the people who cannot afford to access information for a variety of reasons (poverty, disability, lack of skills, lack of opportunities), libraries continue to act as a beacon of hope. This is more so in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where, in spite of massive proliferation of information and communication technologies and greater opportunities of accessing information, the gap between the information-haves and have-nots is increasing rapidly. In view of this growing inequality in terms of access to information and ICTs, libraries could play a vital role not only by providing access to information and ICTs, but also by building capacity of the people and inspiring them to become responsible and effective members of the evolving information society.

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36 E. Morozow, "Censoring cyberspace", *RSA Journal*, Autumn, 2009, pp.20-22

**Short communication**

**URBAN LIVELIHOODS: GOOD DEVELOPMENT VERSUS  
SPECIFIC ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

Sheikh Shams Morsalin\*

**Abstract**

In the backdrop of the obvious impacts of climate change, adaptation to climate change is considered to be an apparent and urgent need for the low- and middle-income countries. Again, it is argued that climate change will present additional challenges to these countries where the poor are already the victims of a broad range of political and economic conditions and development processes. Under such context, a dichotomy between 'development-based' approach and 'climate change-based' approach persists among both the policy makers and implementation bodies. This paper primarily focuses on the debate between good development and specific climate change adaptation efforts in urban settings of the developing countries and identifies an array of conceptual and operational challenges associated with these standpoints. Rather supporting any particular approach, the paper urges to broaden the analytical framing to address different levels of vulnerabilities associated with urban livelihoods under climate change conditions and suggests to accommodate the whole range of people's needs and priorities by placing context-specificity at its heart.

**Introduction**

Although it is almost certain that the impacts of climate change will affect people's lives and livelihoods around the entire world,<sup>1</sup> adaptation to climate change is particularly important for the low- and middle-income countries which have limited resources, poor physical infrastructure, and fragile governance system.<sup>2</sup> However, depending on the livelihood dynamics, vulnerability to climate change in urban areas will be different from that of rural places. Thus, specific adaptation needs will be imperative for many urban contexts.

For many developing countries, the vulnerabilities of the poor are well recognised as a consequence of a broad range of political and economic conditions and

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1 S. Eriksen, T. H. Inderberg, K. O'Brien and L. Sygna, 'Development as usual is not enough'. T. H. Inderberg, S. Eriksen, K. O'Brien and L. Sygna (eds.), *Climate Change Adaptation and Development*, (Routledge 2015).

2 J. Ayers and S. Huq, "Supporting adaptation through development: What role for ODA?", *Development Policy Review*, Vol. 27(6), 2009, pp. 675-92.

development processes<sup>3</sup> which have nothing to do with the climate.<sup>4</sup> In such circumstances, climate change may act as an additional factor that potentially increases the exposure of the poor and thus can worsen their pre-existing vulnerabilities.<sup>5</sup> This has laid the foundation for a new development approach in which researchers and development organisations have increasingly addressed climate change as a threat to development efforts and poverty reduction.<sup>6</sup> For them, development, which traditionally incorporates poverty alleviation measures through economic growth,<sup>7</sup> is the key to successful adaptation. In practice, such narrower version of development understanding is far from “good” development that must prioritise the reduction of vulnerability and building of resilience and adaptive capacity of the actors within a system. However, such ‘development first’ approach may not be adequate for some urban places which are particularly at high risks of climate change due to their locations and settlement patterns, such as cities in cyclone-prone coastal areas and on floodplains.

Although the recent widespread recognition of the implications of climate change for urban places in developing countries resulted in academic and policy actions towards making cities more resilient, this has remained a challenging task for the implementation bodies where a ‘development-based’ versus ‘climate change-based’ dichotomy persists.<sup>8</sup> This paper primarily focuses on the debate between good development and specific climate change adaptation efforts in urban settings of the developing countries and identifies an array of conceptual and operational challenges associated with these standpoints. Rather supporting any particular approach, the paper concludes that under climate change conditions there is an urgency to broaden the analytical framing to address different levels of vulnerabilities associated with

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3 A. Sen, ‘Food, economics and entitlements’, J. Dreze and A. Sen (eds.) *The Political Economy of Hunger*, (Clarendon 1990); M. J. Watts and H. G. Bohle, “The space of vulnerability: the causal structure of hunger and famine”, *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 17, 1993, pp. 43-67.

4 P. M. Kelly and W. N. Adger, “Theory and practice in assessing vulnerability to climate change and facilitating adaptation”, *Climatic Change*, Vol. 47, 2000, pp. 325-52.

5 W. N. Adger, S. Huq, K. Brown, D. Conway and M. Hulme, “Adaptation to climate change in the developing world”, *Progress in Development Studies*, Vol. 3(3), 2003, pp. 179-95.

6 J. Ayers and D. Dodman, “Climate change adaptation and development I: the state of the debate”, *Progress in Development Studies*, Vol. 10(2), 2010, pp. 161-68.

7 T. Cannon and D. Müller-Mahn, “Vulnerability, resilience and development discourses in context of climate change”, *Natural Hazards*, Vol. 55(3), 2010, pp. 621-35.

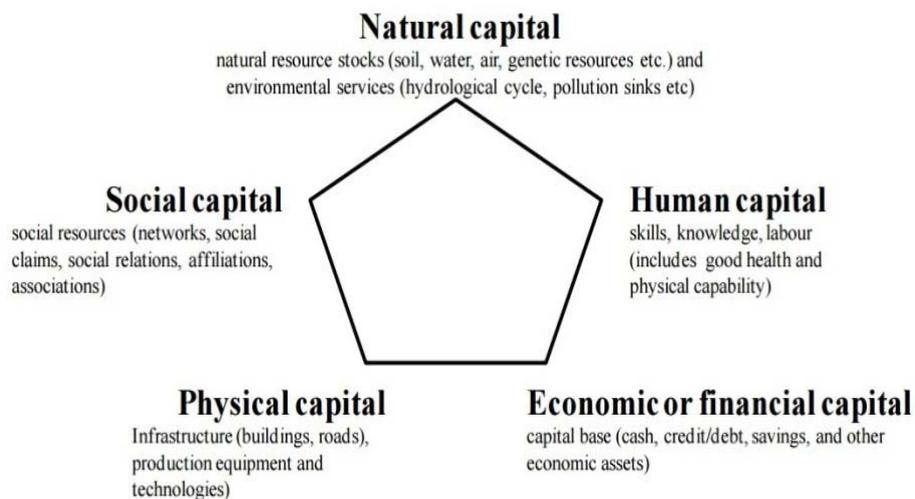
8 J. Ayers and D. Dodman, “Climate change adaptation and development I: the state of the debate”, *Progress in Development Studies*, Vol. 10(2), 2010, pp. 161-68.

urban livelihoods and to accommodate the whole range of people's needs and priorities by placing context-specificity at its heart. The remainder of the paper begins with a comparative analysis of rural-urban livelihood dynamics informing both overlapping employment patterns and some general distinctions between them. The following section provides the pre-existing vulnerabilities combined with urban poor's livelihoods in developing countries and highlights both direct and indirect climate change impacts on them, which sets platform for the central contradiction the paper deals with.

### Comparative Livelihood Dynamics in Rural and Urban Settings

While development actions aim to reduce existing socio-economic, political and cultural vulnerabilities and ensure the wellbeing of poor, climate adaptation strategies are directed to minimise vulnerability to climate-induced change and to sustain and enhance the conditions of poor.<sup>9</sup> To realise the effectiveness of these strategies in urban setting, it is worthwhile to apply livelihood framework and explore the uniqueness of urban livelihood and its linkages with that of the rural in first place.

**Figure 1: Five Capitals of Sustainable Livelihood**



**Source:** Adopted from I. Scoones, *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis*. Working Paper 72. (IDS 1998).

9 IISD, IUCN and SEI, *Livelihoods and Climate Change*, (IISD 2003).

The concept of livelihood is widely-used to focus on how people organise their lives within any specific context that offers opportunities and generates constraints.<sup>10</sup> According to the most widely-accepted definition given by Carney, “livelihood system comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living”.<sup>11</sup> Gaillard and others add that “livelihoods rarely refer to a single activity. It includes complex, contextual, diverse and dynamic strategies developed by households to meet their needs”.<sup>12</sup> In this way, urban livelihoods are supposed to be different from the rural ones.

The rural-urban division and linkages are not only complex on spatial and temporal scales but also problematic. However, the livelihood approach permits relatively neat conceptualisation of rural-urban dynamics based on different types of productions, associations, and occupations.<sup>13</sup> The rural places may be characterised by primary production and agriculture, and thereby, with occupations and livelihoods associated with farming and other primary productions, where as the urban places are dominated by manufacturing and industry, and likewise, occupations and livelihoods are shaped by these facts.<sup>14</sup> Again, in terms of livelihood strategies, the five vital capitals – human, natural, financial, physical and social capitals<sup>15</sup> (see figure-1) determine how livelihoods work, and in particular, propose the basis for understanding how people will respond to vulnerabilities caused by climate change. The importance of these capitals is divergent based on the context. For example, natural capital, i.e., resources such as land, water, forests and pastures are considered critically important in rural places. In urban areas, on contrary, these are less relevant as compared to physical capital such as basic infrastructures of energy, water and sewerage, transport along

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10 L. J. de Haan, “The livelihood approach: a critical exploration”, *Erdkunde*, Vol. 66(4), 2012, pp. 345-57.

11 D. Carney (ed.), *Sustainable rural livelihoods: What contribution can we make?*, (DFID 1998), p.2.

12 J. Gaillard, E. Maceda, E. Stasiak, I. Le Berre and M. Espaldon, “Sustainable livelihoods and people’s vulnerability in the face of coastal hazards”, *Journal of Coastal Conservation*, Vol. 13(2), 2009, p. 121.

13 J. Rigg, *An everyday geography of the Global South*, (Routledge 2007).

14 K. V. Gough, J. Agergaard, N. Fold, and L. Møller-Jensen, ‘Conceptualising and performing comparison of rural-urban dynamics’, J. Agergaard, N. Fold and K. V. Gough, *Rural-urban dynamics: livelihoods, mobility and markets in African and Asian frontiers*, (Routledge 2010).

15 I. Scoones, *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis*, Working Paper 72, (IDS 1998).

with shelter and production equipment.<sup>16</sup> The significant portion of rural and urban livelihoods also relies on income diversification strategies and on the combination of agricultural and non-agricultural income sources. Moreover, households' livelihoods may incorporate both rural and urban elements.<sup>17</sup> For instance, many urban enterprises depend on the demands from rural consumers, while access to urban markets and services is crucial for most rural agricultural producers. Apart from the mobility of production inputs and commodities, migration is another significant aspect that dictates complex socio-economic and cultural linkages between rural and urban livelihoods. Above all, urban livelihoods, though not directly climate-dependent, have close connections and complex interdependency with the rural livelihoods.

#### **Urban Livelihoods: Existing Vulnerabilities and Potential Impacts of Climate Change**

Majority of the global population already lives in towns and cities, and the number is ever increasing because of rapid urbanisation.<sup>18</sup> Most of this growth in urban population is currently taking place throughout the developing world where governments struggle to meet the basic needs of their citizens.<sup>19</sup> At present, more than a billion of urban residents, which constitute around three-fourths of the developing country poor, live in slums or informal settlements and their livelihoods are constrained by insecure land tenure, low levels of assets, and lack of access to basic infrastructure and utility services.<sup>20</sup> Although these “socially constructed”

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16 L. J. de Haan, “Globalization, localization and sustainable livelihood”, *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vol. 40(3), 2000, pp. 339-65.

17 C. Tacoli, *Bridging the Divide: Rural-Urban Interactions and Livelihood Strategies*, Gatekeeper Series 77, (IIED 1998).

18 D. Dodman and D. Satterthwaite, “Institutional capacity, climate change adaptation and the urban poor”, *IDS Bulletin*, 39(4), Vol. 2008, pp. 67-74; A. Revi, D. Satterthwaite, F. Aragón-Durand, J. Corfee-Morlot, R. B. R. Kiunsi, M. Pelling, D. Roberts, W. Solecki, S. P. Gajjar and A. Sverdlik, “Towards transformative adaptation in cities: the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment”, *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 26(1), 2014, pp. 11-28.

19 UN-Habitat, *Cities and Climate Change: Global Report on Human Settlements 2011*, (Earthscan 2011); T. J. Wilbanks, P. Romero Lankao, M. Bao, F. Berkhout, S. Cairncross, J. P. Ceron, M. Kapshe, R. Muir-Wood and R. Zapata-Marti, ‘Industry, settlement and society’, M. L. Parry, O. F. Canziani, J. P. Palutikof, P. J. van der Linden and C. E. Hanson (eds.), *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, (Cambridge University Press 2007).

20 World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report 2013: Rural-Urban Dynamics and the Millennium Development Goals*, (World Bank 2013); A. V. Bahadur and T. Tanner,

vulnerabilities<sup>21</sup> have no direct links to climate change, they have the potential to increase people's risks and exposures to extreme climate events.<sup>22</sup> The following section, therefore, highlights key vulnerabilities of urban poor from livelihood perspectives and explores how climate change might exacerbate those vulnerabilities in developing country contexts.

***Risky Settlement Patterns and Locations:*** The poor typically settle in those urban places which are unattractive to others for residential purposes and but quite affordable for themselves. This comprises densely populated fragile, informal, and temporary settlements or slums on unsafe, undeveloped or polluted lands. Such settlements usually concentrate in floodplains, storm drains, steep slopes, footpaths, rail corridors or areas close to toxic urban and industrial wastes.<sup>23</sup> For instance, with around 430 acres of area Dharavi in Mumbai (India) is one of the world's largest and most densely populated slums with almost a million inhabitants.<sup>24</sup> Thousands of other slums in Mumbai are also dangerously situated on hill slopes that sometimes kill and injure hundreds of people in landslides which may be exacerbated by climatic events.<sup>25</sup>

In Bangladesh, the 2005 Census of Urban Slums (CUS) found that nearly 35% of the urban populations located in the six biggest city centres lived in slums which covered a total area of only about 4 percent of these cities.<sup>26</sup> The report also suggested that these marginalised urban dwellers lived with low levels of assets, food insecurities, and unstable land tenure. They also suffered from health stresses, lacked basic infrastructure and utility services. Numerous studies ascertain that climate variability

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"Policy climates and climate policies: Analysing the politics of building urban climate change resilience", *Urban Climate*, Vol. 7, 2014, pp. 20-32.

21 W. N. Adger, S. Huq, K. Brown, D. Conway and M. Hulme, "Adaptation to climate change in the developing world", *Progress in Development Studies*, Vol. 3(3), 2003, pp. 179-95.

22 J. L. Baker (ed.), *Climate Change, Disaster Risk, and the Urban Poor: Cities Building Resilience for a Changing World*, (World Bank 2012).

23 UN-Habitat, *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*, (Earthscan 2003).

24 J. L. Baker (ed.), *Climate Change, Disaster Risk, and the Urban Poor: Cities Building Resilience for a Changing World*, (World Bank 2012).

25 R. Shetty, "Mumbai: 32 hills with 10,000 slums dangerously balanced on slopes", IBN-CNN 2013, available at: <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/mumbai-32-hills-with-10000-slums-dangerously-balanced-on-slopes/404693-3-237.html> [Accessed: 30.04.2016].

26 Centre for Urban Studies (CUS), National Institute of Population Research and Training, and MEASURE Evaluation, *Slums of Urban Bangladesh: Mapping and Census, 2005*, (CUS 2006).

will sharpen these existing adverse conditions of urban poor. For instance, majority of Bangladesh's entire settlements are in the Low Elevation Coastal Zones (LECZ), areas less than 10 metres of elevation from sea level, making mainly the urban poor exposed to the potential hostilities of climate change - like frequent and increased levels of flood, storm surge, water-logging, salinity intrusion, sedimentation, riverbank erosion and so on.<sup>27</sup>

***Tenure Insecurity and Poor Infrastructure Services:*** Mostly due to lack of affordable lands in urban places, over one fourth of the world's urban populations suffer from various levels of tenure insecurity, ranging from some level of legality to full illegality.<sup>28</sup> This puts the settlements under constant risk of forced eviction. As a result, government, NGOs, donors and even the dwellers are often reluctant to invest in these settlements to ensure permanent infrastructure services like electricity, water, sanitation, roads, transportation etc. For instance, above 50 percent of urban population in Sub-Saharan Africa and 40 percent in South Asia do not have access to safe sanitation, while many more live in these urban areas without proper sewerage and drainage facilities.<sup>29</sup> Due to poor roads and transport services in urban slums, mobility to jobs, markets, health, and education are severely hampered, which is exacerbated during extreme weather events like floods. Moreover, insecure tenure coupled with socio-spatial exclusion can potentially reduce urban poor's access to receive information and financial assistance in case of climate change-induced hazards, which has obvious implications on urban poor's livelihoods.<sup>30</sup>

***Employment and Financial Challenges:*** Although urban economy provides greater employment and income opportunities, the poor tend to be marginalised in many ways. They often face low incomes, limited sources of livelihood that are mostly informal and based on physical labour, lack of social insurance and job security, and restricted access to credit markets.<sup>31</sup> Urban economies are also characterised by a greater degree of commercialisation as most basic goods or services such as food and

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27 P. Feiden, *Adapting to Climate Change: Cities and the Urban Poor*, (International Housing Coalition 2011).

28 UN-Habitat, *Enhancing Urban Safety and Security: Global Report on Human Settlements 2007*, (Earthscan 2007).

29 WHO and UNICEF, *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-Water: 2010 Update*, (WHO 2010).

30 S. V. Lall and U. Deichmann, *Density and Disasters: Economics of Urban Hazard Risk*, Policy Research Working Paper 5161, (World Bank 2009).

31 D. Mitlin and D. Satterthwaite, *Urban poverty in the global South: Scale and Nature*, (Routledge 2013).

accommodation must be bought or rented through the market. Thus, unlike rural counterparts who usually have access to free or common property resources, urban poor need higher cash incomes to survive.<sup>32</sup> Health hazards due to unhealthy living conditions, low-levels of assets and tenure insecurity, and negative stigma associated with living in certain neighbourhoods are some additional barriers to employment and financial security for urban poor. A study on 10 nations of Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, revealed that the proportion of urban population with energy deficiencies was above 40 percent in all but one nation and above 60 percent in three – Ethiopia, Malawi and Zambia.<sup>33</sup> Climate change conditions have the potentiality to affect health and assets of urban population, ultimately limiting the employment opportunity and financial capacities of urban poor. Competitive labour market due to rural-urban migration and volatile food market due to crop-loss are some other significant outcomes of climate change that can bring similar consequences.<sup>34</sup>

***Social Networks and Dynamics of Power Relation:*** In most cases, cities are characterised by social tensions, cultural diversity and fluidity causing conditions of social disintegration and erosion of community that urban poor suffer from.<sup>35</sup> However, a large number of urban poor, if not all, are rural migrants who support their families living in rural areas.<sup>36</sup> This creates a social network through which urban contacts are often called on for financial support in times of difficulty in rural places. The network also works as a migration channel. In case of changing weather patterns and extreme events, such social networks may create further pressure on the livelihoods of these urban poor.<sup>37</sup> Again, the lack of power relations across economic, political, social and cultural fronts also dictates the livelihoods of urban poor. Critics of the capitalist system, for instance, have observed that slums enable undervalue

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32 E. Wratten, “Conceptualizing urban poverty”, *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 7(1), 1995, pp.11-38.

33 M. T. Ruel and J. L. Garrett, “Features of urban food and nutrition security and considerations for successful urban programming”, *Journal of Agricultural and Development Economics*, Vol. 1(2), 2004, pp. 242-71.

34 J. L. Baker (ed.), *Climate Change, Disaster Risk, and the Urban Poor: Cities Building Resilience for a Changing World*, (World Bank 2012).s

35 E. Wratten, “Conceptualizing urban poverty”, *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 7(1), 1995, pp.11-38.

36 C. Tacoli, G. McGranahan and D. Satterthwaite, *Urbanization, rural-urban migration and urban poverty*, IIED Working Paper, (IIED 2015).

37 C. Raleigh and L. Jordan, ‘Climate Change and Migration: Emerging Patterns in the Developing World’, R. Mearns and A. Norton (eds.), *Social Dimensions of Climate Change: Equity and Vulnerability in a Warming World*, (World Bank 2010).

labour which generates capital and sustains an exploitative system.<sup>38</sup> Thus, poor urban dwellers remain in the frontline when hit by floods, cyclones, sea-level rise or other climatic events, and suffer to fight back after the hazard.

Analysing the existing conditions of urban poor it is evident from above discussion that the capitals critical to a sustainable livelihood are already under severe threat in developing countries and climate change will further increase the risk and exposure of livelihoods of urban poor. However, it is difficult to generalise the levels of climate change-induced livelihood vulnerabilities given the variation in scale of existing vulnerabilities of different urban places and their probability of being affected by any particular climatic event, which urge for context-specific measures.

### **Good Development versus Specific Adaptation to Climate Change**

While urban places have historically been perceived as places of refuge and as buffers against environmental change, they are better described as hotspots of climatic risks and hazards at present.<sup>39</sup> In spite of many uncertainties around the frequency and magnitude of climate induced hazards, there is an emerging consensus that climate change will inevitably augment the vulnerability of urban societies, particularly in developing countries, if no effective adaptation measures are taken.<sup>40</sup> As a response, urban authorities and development partners are increasingly facing the challenge of finding ways to accommodate climate change adaptation with ongoing development efforts.<sup>41</sup> However, there are two distinct perspectives on how to approach adaptation in developing country contexts. One perspective focuses on responding to specific predicted climate impacts and managing risks, while the other is more concerned with reducing vulnerability and building resilience and adaptive capacity through “good” development.<sup>42</sup> In reality, there exists a continuum of

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38 UN-Habitat, *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*, (Earthscan 2003).

39 M. Pelling, *The Vulnerability of Cities: Natural Disasters and Social Resilience*, (Earthscan 2003).

40 IPCC, *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, (Cambridge University Press 2007); UN-Habitat, *Cities and Climate Change: Global Report on Human Settlements 2011*, (Earthscan 2011).

41 C. Wamsler, E. Brink and C. Rivera, “Planning for climate change in urban areas: from theory to practice”, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 50, 2013, pp. 68-81.

42 H. McGray, A. Hammill and R. Bradley, *Weathering the Storm: Options for Framing Adaptation and Development*, (World Resource Institute 2007); Here specific adaptation to climate change is referred to as a response to the impacts of climate change that does not consider the existing vulnerabilities of the society it deals with. Good development, on

challenges, as discussed in the following, which informs the necessity of actions to be derived from specific contexts rather intervening from ‘pure’ adaptation or from ‘pure’ development standpoint.

**Challenges of Conceptualisation:** While the contribution of urban places to climate change mitigation is well established in academic, policy and practitioners’ spheres, the conceptualisation of adaptation and its linkages to development are still not sufficiently clear.<sup>43</sup> Apparently, the crux of the concepts of climate change adaptation and development are similar as they both stress on vulnerability and adaptive capacity. This led some commentators to argue that adaptation is simply an extension of good development practices.<sup>44</sup> Again, some have suggested that adaptation can be considered as an expansion of existing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) approaches<sup>45</sup> or may be considered interchangeably.<sup>46</sup> However, there are also some fundamental differences between the concepts of adaptation and development in relation to time frames, objectives and backgrounds. For instance, development activities usually focus on the transformation of present vulnerabilities associated with poverty, access to resources, education, malnutrition etc., whereas adaptation is usually anticipatory as it prioritises future by addressing emerging and often unknown problems caused by climate change.<sup>47</sup> A report published by World Resource Institute reviewed over a hundred case studies to explore the links between adaptation and development and concluded that climate change adaptation and development are mutually reinforcing.<sup>48</sup> According to the report, any given action intended to promote

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the other hand, supposed to reduce the existing social vulnerabilities, which in effect increases the resilience and adaptive capacity of that particular society.

- 43 D. Satterthwaite, S. Huq, M. Pelling, H. Reid and P. Lankao, *Adapting to climate change in urban areas: the possibilities and constraints in low- and middle-income nations*, Human Settlements Discussion Paper Series – Climate Change and Cities, (IIED 2007); T. Tanner and T. Mitchell, “Entrenchment or enhancement: could climate change adaptation help to reduce chronic poverty?”, *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 39(4), 2008, pp. 6-15.
- 44 N. H. Stern, *The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review*, (Cambridge University Press 2007); T. Tanner and L. Horn-Phathanothai, *Climate Change and Development*, (Routledge 2014).
- 45 J. Mercer, “Disaster risk reduction or climate change adaptation: Are we reinventing the wheel?”, *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 22(2), 2010, pp. 247-64.
- 46 D. Satterthwaite, “Editorial: why is community action needed for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation?”, *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 23(2), 2011, 339-49.
- 47 T. Cannon and D. Müller-Mahn, “Vulnerability, resilience and development discourses in context of climate change”, *Natural Hazards*, Vol. 55(3), 2010, pp. 621-35.
- 48 H. McGray, A. Hammill and R. Bradley, *Weathering the Storm: Options for Framing Adaptation and Development*, (World Resource Institute 2007).

adaptation to climate change usually achieves other development objectives at the same time, while many development activities that help reduce vulnerability to non-climatic problems are often the same ones used to address climate change-related stresses.<sup>49</sup> However, many adaptation activities do not address the underlying factors of existing vulnerabilities and some development activities also contribute to increase the vulnerability to climate change.<sup>50</sup> For instance, several research findings acknowledge that development as economic growth increases people's exposure to hazards and add to the vulnerability of poor by degrading the environment.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, conceptualisation of any particular effort as adaptation-focused or development-focused has been a challenging job.

**Stakeholders' Perception and Priority:** The stakeholders of climate change adaptation and development are almost similar. Adaptation involves huge number of developing country poor who are already the object of development strategies for many governments, donors and NGOs that makes it difficult to distinguish adaptation from development interventions.<sup>52</sup> Studies suggest that governments, NGOs, and donor agencies have diverse perception of adaptation and development. In case of a number of developing countries of Asia, for instance, Resurreccion and others observed that government stakeholders usually understood adaptation as primarily a technical means to reduce the impacts of climate change rather focusing on existing climatic and non-climatic factors contributing to people's vulnerability.<sup>53</sup> Fankhauser and Burton, on the other hand, found in their study that NGOs usually took softer approaches to address adaptation by integrating existing development challenges and emphasising on cost-effective measures.<sup>54</sup> Another study by Adaptation Knowledge

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49 *Ibid.*

50 E. L. F. Schipper, *Climate Change Adaptation and Development: Exploring the Linkages*, Working Paper 107, (Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research 2007) ; OECD, *Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation: Policy Guidance*, (OECD 2009).

51 B. Winsler, P. Blaikie, T. Cannon and I. Davis, *At risk: natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters*, (Routledge 2004); UNDP, *Reducing disaster risk: a Challenge for development*, (UNDP 2004).

52 T. Cannon and D. Müller-Mahn, "Vulnerability, resilience and development discourses in context of climate change", *Natural Hazards*, Vol. 55(3), 2010, pp. 621-35.

53 B. P. Resurreccion, E. E. Sajor and E. Fajber, *Climate Adaptation in Asia: Knowledge Gaps and Research Issues in South Asia*, (Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET)-International and ISET-Nepal 2008).

54 S. Fankhauser and I. Burton, "Spending adaptation money wisely", *Climate Policy*, Vol. 11(3), 2011, pp. 1037-49.

Platform identified some practical reasons on ground, such as: intangible nature of adaptation, lack of existing adaptation models, difficulties regarding impact evaluation of adaptation actions, complexities in distinguishing climate change impacts from unrelated development problems etc. that often influenced the implementers to inappropriately label development projects as adaptation.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, stakeholders' priority and vested interest regarding the implementation of different projects may also make it difficult to distinguish between outcomes of adaptation and development actions. For example, in case of Mozambique's Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience (PPCR) Phase-1 project, which was actually aimed at integrating climate change adaptation into government's policy considerations, the donor agencies involved in the project selected those implementation sites where they already had other development projects going on.<sup>56</sup>

***Difficulties associated with Financing:*** Under the additionality principle of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) developed countries aim to ensure adaptation funds to be utilised specifically to reduce vulnerability to climate change in developing countries and not just for development in general.<sup>57</sup> Although the wisdom of such rigid differentiation has the potential to put more emphasis on climate change impacts, this has actually slowed down the process due to lack of understanding of what adaptation really means. In order to access to the climate-related funding, practitioners also reframe development projects with climate change components. Such re-labelling of development projects as adaptation has relatively been a common practice since it is difficult to determine the extent to which a project is contributing to adaptation versus development.<sup>58</sup> A study by Smith and others, for instance, implied that about three-fifth of the funding for projects under the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), which were

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55 Adaptation Knowledge Platform, *Adaptation or Development? Exploring the distinctions (or lack thereof) through case studies in Bangladesh and Vietnam*, Partner Report Series No. 8, (Stockholm Environment Institute and Regional Climate Change Adaptation Knowledge Platform 2013).

56 A. Shankland and R. Chambote, "Prioritising PPCR Investments in Mozambique: The Politics of 'Country Ownership' and 'Stakeholder Participation'", *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 42(3), 2011, pp. 62-69.

57 S. Fankhauser and I. Burton, "Spending adaptation money wisely", *Climate Policy*, Vol. 11(3), 2011, pp. 1037-49.

58 W. N. Adger, N. W. Arnell and E. L. Tompkins, "Successful adaptation to climate change across scales", *Global Environmental Change*, Vol. 15(2), 2005, pp. 77-86.

prepared by developing countries to identify their most ‘urgent’ adaptation needs, appeared to be for development.<sup>59</sup> Again, many climate-sensitive sectors in developing countries presently have no or inadequate protection from current climate, what Burton termed as ‘adaptation deficit’<sup>60</sup> (also referred to as the ‘development deficit’).<sup>61</sup> Thus, under such circumstances it is also the matter of concern for financing bodies whether adaptation deficit is a problem of adapting to climate change or is a concern of development.

***The Challenges of Scientific Uncertainty:*** Although the warming of the climate system is unequivocal, scarce data on local climate and uncertainties surrounding climate change projections imply that successful adaptation measures cannot be guaranteed.<sup>62</sup> For instance, what climate change adaptation means for people in the coastal tropical areas is poorly understood, as some climate scientists predict an increase in intensity and frequency of tropical cyclones in a warmer climate, while others predict no significant change in near future.<sup>63</sup> In such cases, a specific adaptation measure against tropical cyclones and the associated severe floods is likely to prove costly and ineffective and may associate the risk of mal-adaptation as well.<sup>64</sup> Although climate change is likely to threaten long-term sustainability of already achieved development progress in developing countries, it is almost impossible to measure the actual cost of socio-economic impacts of climate-induced

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59 J. B. Smith, T. Dickinson, J. D. B. Donahue, I. Burton, E. Haites, R. J. T. Klein and A. Patwardhan, “Development and climate change adaptation funding: coordination and integration”, *Climate Policy*, Vol. 11(3), 2011, pp. 987-1000.

60 I. Burton, ‘Climate Change and the Adaptation Deficit’, E. L. F. Schipper and I. Burton (eds.), *The Earthscan Reader on Adaptation to Climate Change*, (Earthscan 2009).

61 World Bank, *The Costs to Developing Countries of Adapting to Climate Change: New Methods and Estimates*, (World Bank 2010).

62 IPCC, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Summary for Policymakers*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (Cambridge University Press 2014); Adaptation Knowledge Platform, *Adaptation or Development? Exploring the distinctions (or lack thereof) through case studies in Bangladesh and Vietnam*, Partner Report Series No. 8, (Stockholm Environment Institute and Regional Climate Change Adaptation Knowledge Platform 2013).

63 I. Grossmann and M. G. Morgan, “Tropical cyclones, climate change, and scientific uncertainty: what do we know, what does it mean, and what should be done?”, *Climatic Change*, Vol. 108, 2011, pp. 543-579.

64 H. McGray, A. Hammill and R. Bradley, *Weathering the Storm: Options for Framing Adaptation and Development*, (World Resource Institute 2007).

change over these regions given the limitations of data and uncertainties associated with scientific models along both climatic and socio-economic parameters.<sup>65</sup> However, the availability of reliable climate change information does not necessarily enable decision making easier or better. Even if scientific uncertainties could be removed, how to undertake an effective measure to protect a particular region from future climate change impacts still would have no straight forward answer.

**Context-specific Challenges:** While most of the urban places in developing countries require supports for good development to reduce people's existing vulnerability and thus increase their adaptive capacities, some urban places have priority demands for specific-adaptation measures. Many small islands, coastal and low-lying cities, for example, are particularly at risk from coastal, river and rain-induced flooding, tropical cyclones and storm surges. There is a very high confidence that these places will increasingly experience vulnerability due to the effects of climate change, sea level rise and extreme events.<sup>66</sup> However, a study on the towns and cities of 84 developing countries suggests that there is huge asymmetry in the burden of sea-level rise and storm intensification as only 3 of 577 cities account for 25 percent of future coastal population exposure and only 10 cities account for more than 50 percent of future exposure.<sup>67</sup> This means many other coastal cities will not experience any substantial change in population exposure due to climate change, while some urban places will definitely require special support for adaptation. Again, it is also difficult to prioritise adaptation measures over development needs or in the other way around, since many urban places of developing countries have deficits in both development and climate change adaptation. For instance, the city of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), which shares many of the social and economic characteristics of other cities in sub-

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65 N. H. Stern, *The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review*, (Cambridge University Press 2007); J. da Silva, S. Kernaghan and A. Luque, "A systems approach to meeting the challenges of urban climate change", *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development*, Vol. 4(2), 2012, pp. 125-145.

66 IPCC, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Summary for Policymakers*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (Cambridge University Press 2014).

67 S. Dasgupta, B. Laplante, S. Murray and D. Wheeler, *Climate Change and the Future Impacts of Storm-Surge Disasters in Developing Countries*, CGD Working Paper 182, (Center for Global Development 2009).

Saharan Africa, has huge development deficit and inadequate provision for infrastructure and services with around 80 percent of its population living in informal settlements located on sites that flood frequently.<sup>68</sup> The city is also prone to climate change impacts including sea level rise, rising temperatures and increased occurrence of extreme weather events. Under such circumstances, it is irrational to intervene from outside without realising the local priority needs. Based on the experiences from DRR measures, which may be paralleled with climate change adaptation or development efforts, an analysis of hundreds of vulnerability assessments carried out by many national societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent suggests that communities have a different set of priorities compared to those of outsider organisations who aim to protect them from extreme risks.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the way people adapt with the climate change is also dictated by their socio-cultural orientation and the political and economic settings.

Thus, it can be concluded at this point that supporting any particular approach, either good development activities or specific adaptation measures, will be inappropriate and misleading given their conceptual and operational vagueness. What is required for developing country towns and cities is a broader framing of the issue which will enable to realise context-specific needs and challenges faced by urban poor.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Although urban livelihoods are not directly climate dependent, this paper identifies complex interdependence between rural-urban dynamics, which informs urban population's exposures to climatic risks. Given the existing vulnerabilities in towns and cities of developing countries, the sustainable livelihood framework suggests that climate change impacts are likely to affect the conditions of urban dwellers, particularly the poor, to a further extent. However, drawing from the key vulnerabilities already existing in urban settings of developing countries, the paper indicates possible variations in the level of climate change-induced vulnerabilities across spatial and temporal scales. As a response, it calls for context-specific measures to deal with livelihood vulnerabilities of urban poor under conditions of climate change.

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68 R. Kiunsi, "The constraints on climate change adaptation in a city with a large development deficit: the case of Dar es Salaam", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 25(2), 2013, pp. 321-37.

69 T. Cannon, "Vulnerability, 'innocent' disasters and the imperative of cultural understanding", *Disaster Prevent Management*, Vol. 17(3), 2008, pp. 350-57.

The paper builds its argument mainly around the debate between good development and specific adaptation efforts to climate change in urban settings of the developing countries. As opposed to the proposition often put forth by many that good development is more appropriate in urban settings to deal with climate change rather assisting specific adaptation measures, the paper showcases a number of conceptual and operational challenges regarding the two seemingly unique efforts. It is primarily noted that both the approaches share an overlapping grey area where it is difficult to draw any dividing line. The paper further argues that supporting either of the approaches without prior realisation of the context can potentially lead to inappropriate and unsustainable conclusions. In essence, the paper urges for a broader framing that looks beyond 'pure' development or 'pure' adaptation efforts to accommodate context-specific challenges. It also highlights the necessity to address the priorities of local population which is expected to guarantee sustainable conditions for urban livelihoods in the developing countries while confronting the effects of climate change.

### Book Review

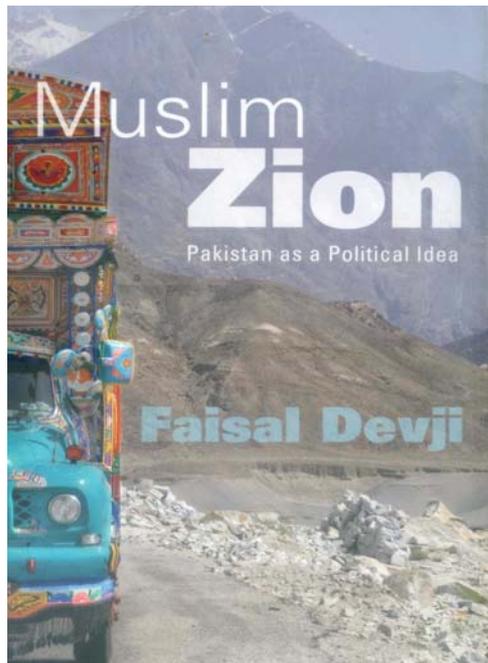
Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2013 (ISBN 978-0-674-07267-1; Price: \$ 21.95), 278 pages including Index.

Faisal Devji, a Reader in Indian History and Fellow at St. Antony's College at the University of Oxford has offered a brilliant discourse on the analogy between ideologies of Zionism and Pakistani/Muslim nationalism and at the same time a nuanced historical exploration of the idea of Pakistan. There is some novelty in his thought-process and thus his *Muslim Zion* provides a thought provoking reading. He thinks 'Pakistan is both the embodiment of national ambitions fulfilled and, in the eyes of many observers, a failed state? *Muslim Zion* cuts to the core of the geopolitical paradoxes entangling Pakistan to agree that India's rival has never been a nation-state in the conventional sense, but instead a distinct type of political geography, ungrounded in the historic connections of lands and peoples. He finds Pakistan's ideological parallel in the state of Israel, established in 1948. It is interesting to note that 'just as Israel is the world's sole Jewish State, Pakistan is the only country to be established in the name of Islam.'

Faisal Devji, with historian's traditional skills focused on the Muslim League's demand from the 1930s for a separate homeland for the Muslims of India, has attempted to show that, despite their vast differences, Pakistan and Israel share the strange coincidence of birth: they were both created to resolve the status of minorities defined partly by religion.

Faisal Devji, in explaining the formulation of his main contention has quoted Pakistan President Zia ul-Haq's interview with *The Economist* in his introduction: "Pakistan is, like Israel, an ideological state. Take out the Judaism from Israel and it will fall like a house of cards. Take Islam out of Pakistan and make it a secular state; it would collapse." Devji, asks in his introduction: "What are the implications of founding a country on nothing but an idea, one that represented a desire both to join and reject the world of nation states? The rhetoric of exceptionality that marks the politics of Israel and Pakistan not only serves as an illustration at this contradiction, but it also links both countries to settler societies in the New World and the

ideological states.” Devji argues in his book that in the creation of both Israel and Pakistan religion takes on a new meaning.



The book is divided into six chapters and the chapter headings and their order provides us a broad idea about the gradual development of the thought process of the author. The chapters are: 1. Another Country; 2. The Problem with Numbers; 3. The People without History; 4. The Fanatics Reward; 5. To Set India Free, and 6. The Spirit of Islam. Opening his first chapter with an interview between Gandhi and Sydney Silverman, President of the World Jewish Congress’s British Section, Devji tried to explain the similarity between these minority nationalisms that managed to create the first two religious states of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The author’s contention that ‘religious nationalism that gave rise to Pakistan and Israel, took shape in an international arena and cannot be studied as part of regional histories alone. It is not simply a coincidence, therefore, that the Jewish State and Islamic Republic share so much in the way of ideology and even politics, despite the narratives of exceptionality within which they have hitherto been mired’, has been very exhaustively dealt with in the first chapter. The explanation has been placed in the contemporary international perspective.

The second chapter deals with the concept of minority nationalisms that found their fulfillment in Pakistan and Israel, both emerged within empires rather than nation states; the Ottoman empire in case of Israel and the British empire in case of Pakistan. In this chapter the author has very elaborately dealt with the politics of the Muslim League from its birth to the creation of Pakistan by intensive research from the Muslim League archives to which he had access. Side by side Devji has put the Zionist view of minority homeland and its development. By the time, when the World War II began, the identification of India's Muslims with Europe's Jews had become so generalized that the British journalist Patrick Lacey could compare India under Congress to Europe under the Nazis in his book *Fascist India*. This fear forced the Muslims and Jews into a most ambiguous form of nationalism.

In the third chapter Devji dealt with the way in which Muslim nationalists exhibited an ambivalence as far as history was concerned, which led them to conceive of a novel and remarkably abstract form of political unity premised upon a paradoxical rejection of the past. In the subsequent two chapters Devji delved into the archival sources to demonstrate that Pakistan was a reward to the Fanatic Muslims as was Israel to the Fanatic Jews, without any historical basis for the creation of both, Or it was, rather a rejection of historical past and creation of a religions nationalism.

In the last chapter 'The Spirit Islam', the author dealt with the various interpretations of Islam. He showed that how a letter from Ameer Ali and the Aga Khan, in support of the Caliphate, that persuaded the Turkish Assembly to abolish this most Sunni institution. He analyzed the writings of both the Shia and Sunni Muslim writers (Ispahani to Iqbal) and going right up to Maududi, who proposed an ideology that might address the problem of hegemony and popular will. Devji concluded, "Indeed, Maududi's idea can even be seen to represent a bizarre version of Lenin's thesis about the 'withering away' of the state under Communism, just as the Balshevik leader's notion of the party as a vanguard was explicitly adopted by the former for his own Jamat-e-Islami". (p. 237)

Devji, in his 'Conclusion' started his summarization with a quotation from Hegel about the Crusades: 'It [the Crusades] signaled a desire to grasp the deity in sensuous form, and thus to unite the secular and the eternal. But to seek God in the Holy Sepulcher was a vain enterprise, for a grave cannot be the site of new life.'" The author argues very strongly to prove that Pakistan appears to possess no history, properly speaking. His remark that 'Islam in Pakistan has become, like Judaism in

Israel, a national religion in such a strong sense as to take the place of citizenship' appears to be realistic in the context of present day situation.

Devji's concluding remarks: "But instead of protecting Islam as an abstract idea, Pakistan has only nationalized it. Its true home remains with the Muslim minority of India, which thus portends the future of Islam itself as a global entity, one that can no longer be brought together in some traditional way, whether as a caliphate, empire or indeed a set of nation states"— may appear to be debatable. Throughout the entire book Devji's prime concern appears to initiate a debate on various conceptual matters. So the book is a very interesting piece of work, which is expected to put lot of novel ideas among his readers, who would tend to 'rethink' many of the accepted notions.

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