

## Conclusion

As is evident from the details supplied so far, the sample village has a close relationship with the Hindu kingship through various ritual processes. It is also conspicuous that the dominant landholders of the village were connected with the zamindars in term of the tenurial relationship. Besides, the villagers had a strong relationship with the kingship on the basis of the temple ritual system. Each caste group has the indispensable role and associated duties to perform during the temple rituals. The village social life is systematically integrated in to the kingship through the annual ritual cycle of the Jogadya temple. The supreme authority of the temple is the Maharaja of Bardhaman. This relationship between the villagers and the king is always reaffirmed and demonstrated through various ritual processes in the Jogadya temple.

The rituals of the localities in the village, on the other hand, are held on the basis of the kinship relations and cooperative organizations. In particular, the rituals of the Brahman and the dominant caste have the stratified order with the other service castes in the village society. This ritual hegemony of the Dominant caste seems to be an important element in keeping with their social solidarity and the authority over the other villagers.

### a) The ritual of kingship

The Maharaja of Bardhaman occupies an important role in the temple rituals. The Maharaja is the prime *sebait* of the temple. At the beginning of every ritual process observed in the temple, the Brahman-sebait declare the beginning of the ritual in the name of the Maharaja (i.e., *sankalpa*). It is not only in the big religious occasions such as Jogadyapuja, but also in the daily service (*nityaseba*) to the goddess when the priests announce the name of the Maharaja. The Maharaja himself usually never appears at the site of the temple. But the office in the

charge for the management for the rituals sends a representative to the village to supervise the sacrificial ritual every year at the end of the Joagadyapuja. Every service tenure of the temple was granted to the villagers in the name of the Maharaja and it is regarded as the source of the honor and the authority, by which every member is assured to play the ritual roles of the temple exclusively. Regarding this matter, it can be pointed out from the viewpoints of three major parties, namely the servants of the goddess, the patrons (*jajman*) of the rituals, and the untouchables.

The temple priests are the servants with whom the Maharaja entrusted the services for the goddess on behalf of him. In this sense, every service caste of the ritual is allotted a role in relation with the Maharaja and not in relation to the Brahman. Therefore, the ritual ranking of the temple ritual organization is not always parallel with the caste hierarchy in the village.

The representative from the lineage Datta occupies the seat for the *jajman* in front of the Vedic altar (*Vaidik-hom*). The seat could actually be regarded as the place for the Maharaja. The Datta occupies the highest rank among the nine lineages of the Ugra-Kshatriya of the village and they are one of the dominant landholders of the village. This means that the Datta represents the dominant force of the village in the ritual. At the same time, he plays the role of the delegation of the Maharaja in the rituals.

The untouchables of the village are assigned with definite ritual roles in the same manner with the other service castes. This gives them certain ritual authority in the village. For example, in the Manasapuja (the ritual to the goddess Manasa), even the Brahman priests (*pujari*) pay their respects to the Bagdi priests (*deyasin*).

It thus appears that ritual organization of the local temple provides an important opportunity for the kingship to legitimize its polity and involve the local society into it. The superiority of the Maharaja in the village is beyond question and even above the religious authority of the Brahman as well as the dominant power of the Ugra-Kshatriya. As the Maharaja has the supreme role in the

temple rituals it endowed the Maharaja with the religious authority in the temple ritual organization. It is through the ritual processes to the temple that the image of supremacy of the Maharaja is established established and perpetuated. It evidently provides a counter evidence to the concept of secularized king of L. Dumont. We can point following four points as the features of the ritual process regarding kingship, namely 1)ritual ranking, 2)ritual time, 3)initiation for sacrifice, and 4)fertility and sacrifice.

#### 1) Ritual ranking

The ritual ranking is always emphasized in the ritual of kingship. The order of the *phonta*-giving will provide a good example. While *phonta*-giving by the priests, they address each title of the representatives of the Ugra-Kshatriya and the other ritual posts at the Jogyakundu. Then, they go in procession through the village from the Jogyakundu to the temple. The ranking of the participants in this ritual is as follows. i)Brahman, ii)Datta and Samant, iii)other lineages of the Ugra-kshatriya, iv)Malakar, v)other service castes, and vi)others villagers. All participants including the untouchables, receive *phonta* on their foreheads. Similar ranking is observed in the ritual of offering garland in Durgapuja and *tikra-biri* in *nabannotsab* and *poushalla*, and so on. It is the ritual ranking classified by the ritual posts which is emphasized in these ritual processes.

#### 2) Ritual time

Another element is the control over the ritual time by the court of the Raj. The ritual of *lagna-utsab* on the fifteenth of the month of Baishakh is a good example of this matter. Before the *lagna-utsab* every year, the deb-seba-office sends a Bengali almanac to the villagers, which gives a list of every occasion to perform the temple ritual. The yearly cycle of annual ritual, rite of passage, and daily life of the villagers are fundamentally based on the ritual cycle of the Jogadya temple. It is, therefore, clear that the village life was synchronized with the ritual in the court of the Raj through the ritual of the temple. In those days,

it is possible to suppose that the standard almanacs of the kingship ensured the unified and synchronised ritual cycle in various temples all over the kingdom. It leads towards the assumption that the regional variation of the folk culture of Bengal, such as Rarh area and Barendra area, is based not on the geographical difference, but rather on the former political composition of various indigenous kingships of the state. For example, the ritual of Doljatra (*holi*), which is famous for its uproar with colour water and powder, is commonly observed on the day of full moon of Caitra (*puṇima-upahas*), but in the district of Bardhaman it is celebrated after one day.

At any rate, it seems to be an efficient way for kingship to regulate the ritual time of the kingdom through the almanac, who is regarded by the local priests as a fundamental authority to find out the auspicious occasions to perform the various rituals for their jajmans. In other words, the permeation of the printed almanac from Calcutta all over Bengal ushers the beginning of formation of the so-called "popular Hinduism", in which the modern Bengali almanacs give an uniformity of ritual cycle and its style beyond the regional differences over rural Bengal.

### 3) Initiation for sacrifice

The third topic is about symbolism regarding death and initiation observed in the ritual sacrifices, especially in *ugalpuja*. It is an important matter for the patron of the ritual to keep enough number of the members to allot them appropriate posts in the ritual and to make them carry out their duties. In the ritual of *ugalpuja*, the descent of the jati or the lineage belonging to the specified ritual family is not a sufficient condition as the membership to participate in the sacrificial ritual. It is only after his initiation that a youth of the ritual family is admitted to enter the place of the altar of the sacrifice on the bank of Kshirdighi. The young man must offer a goat to the goddess when he participates in *ugalpuja* for the first time. After the sacrifice of the goat, which means a substitute for himself, he becomes a full-fledged member of the

ritual organization. The symbolism of death of a scapegoat and its regeneration is a necessary condition to qualify them to participate in the rituals of *ugalpuja*, and this is commonly observed in the rituals of initiation [see, Bloch 1977; Turner 1969; van Gennep 1960]. All the participants must acquire eligibility for the ritual no matter whether they belong to the Brahman or the Bagdi caste.

#### 4) Fertility and sacrifice

The fourth point is about the ritual of fertility and sacrifice. As already discussed in chapter-1, the fertility of crops, control of sexuality, and sacrificial ritual are interrelated under the complex ritual system of the goddess Jogadya. Among the plentiful ritual traditions centering the Jogadya temple all through the year, the ritual of fertility is always observed in various stages of ritual processes. In rural Bengal, every stratum of the society depends on agricultural productions, and the native farming techniques have been handed down for generations along with the ritual traditions. It is natural that various rituals of agricultural affairs are associated with the sacrificial rituals through an idea of fertility in Bengal.

In this respect, there seems to be a scope for reevaluation of the study by J. Frazer in order to reconsider the rich tradition of agriculture in South Asia. Only one example will be illustrated here.

The story in the first part of the *Jogadya-bandana* tells about human sacrifice to the goddess. The legendary king: Hari Datta had seven sons and he had to offer them to propitiate the goddess one after another for seven years. After sacrifice of all his sons, the king allotted the responsibility for supplying a child for sacrifice every year from the families of the village by turn (*pala*). This story seems to support the logic of the escaped king (regicide) presented by J. Frazer. According to J. Frazer, the fertility of the kingdom is ensured by the sacrificial rituals performed by the king, who is an embodiment of the cosmological order of the kingdom. The condition of the king's health is identified with the order and prosperity of the kingdom. In the crisis of the kingdom, even the king

is sacrificed to regenerate the kingdom. This concept can provide another view to interpret the relation between a rural society and the kingship through the ritual of fertility in Hindu society.

#### **b) Organization of the caste and the kinship**

The Durgapujas among the Ugra-Kshatriya are organized through a rotation system called *sola-anna-puja* by each lineage. This is a ritual organization to perform the puja among the members of the lineage by turn on the basis of traditional calculation unit, viz., *sola-anna*. This idea enables to recognize easily the kinship relation of each member to his lineage (*bangsha*). In this ritual organization, every head of the family is regarded as a cooperative patron of his lineage rituals. Hence, Durgapujas among the village Ugra-Kshatriya strengthen the unity of the member of the lineages through kinship relations within the lineages.

Besides, each Durgapuja in the village is integrated into the Durgapuja at the Jogadya temple through every ritual step. The Durgapuja at the Jogadya temple control all the other Durgapujas, which are organized by the village dominant castes. The Maharaja of Bardhaman is the main patron of the Jogadya temple. It is, therefore, clear that the supreme authority of the Maharaja over the villagers is embodied in the ritual process of Durgapuja. The Durgapuja in the village intensifies the stratified order of the village social structure as well as the egalitarian unity of the kinship relation.

Of the lineages of the Ugra-Kshatriya, the Datta enjoys the highest status in the ritual ranking. The legendary story of the goddess recited by the villagers adds legitimacy to the status. It is a belief that the king from the Datta ruled the village in the legendary period of *tureta*. Another name of the Raja Bharat Datta is also addressed in the ritual of *guyadak* in every *sankranti*. These ensure the ritual post of the Datta as the chief representative among the Ugra-Kshatriya. This ritual status might reflect his former status as a regional chief, in which he ruled over the territory. It is quite important to suggest the existence of a little kingdom in this region, a concept of which is presented by Cohn[1962].

In this connection, it is further important to notice the ritual roles of the Dom especially in the ritual of *domacoyarikhera*. In this ritual, the Dom is considered as the original worshipper of the goddess. Besides, the name called first in the ritual of *guyadak* is "*Phopal mashay*", who is thought as the chief of the Dom at one time. These rituals correspond to the village folklore that the people of the Dom caste were the original residents of the village but later gave away to the rule of the Datta and the Brahman. In this respect, it is possible to suppose that the ritual course of *domacoyarikhera* reflects certain historical facts. These ritual performances are regarded by the villagers as a basis of authority, which paradoxically ensures their legitimacy regarding legendary origin of specific posts in the rituals.

### c) Untouchable

The above mentioned rituals have the character of well regulated organization and affects the ranking order in the ritual course. There is, however, another important point to be discussed regarding ritual performances. It is well known that V. Turner [1969] proposes to analyze a ritual in two aspects, namely structure and anti-structure. It seems to be useful to analyze the rituals performed by the Bagdi caste from this point of view, because the rituals such as boisterousness in the procession of buffalo in Jogadyapuja and Durgapuja stand as contrasts to the usual orderly and decently observed temple rituals. It is easy to point out the character of anti-structural aspect in the rituals mainly performed by the Bagdi youth in contrast to the structural aspect, which has a character of normative behaviour and consequently reinforce the order of existing social relations.

For example, the procession of buffalo by the Bagdi towards the Jogyakundu is in marked contrast with the procession of the pot of the goddess by the Datta towards the Jogadya temple. The excited youths of the Bagdi drag the buffalos to the altar of sacrifice with furious roll of drums. Most of them get drunk before they start from the Jogadya temple and some get too drunk to follow the procession.

They dance and romp around the buffalos to the beats of the drums. Over-excited, someone even lose consciousness.

It is obvious that the Bagdi youths lead the procession in contrast with the procession of the pot, which the Brahman-sebait and the Datta lead. It is an egalitarian order which is emphasized in the procession of the Bagdi, while a hierarchical order is stressed in the procession of the pot. In the egalitarian order, every member participates equally as an independent individual in the chaotic ritual which is a state beyond the ordinal social relation and even transcending self. Similar examples are abundant.

#### **d) Kingship and Sacrifice**

It is clear that the ritual system of the temple has been controlled by the stratified organization which is based on the granted lands, the assignment of roles, and the allotment of offerings and sacrifices. Although this organization is ultimately grounded on the authority of the Maharaja, the lineages of the Ugra-Kshatriya hold their own legendary origin which provides legitimacy to their ritual roles. The Dom caste also has own legendary history in relation to the temple ritual. This ritual system of the temple, therefore, includes these castes and lineages having their own legendary origin and the legitimacy of the ritual roles in which each caste and lineage has been ensured its peculiar status in the organization. But the rituals of the temple as a whole put them into a classified organization in terms of relations with other castes and with the kingship.

As Quigley [1993: ch.6] adequately suggests, the theory of Hocart has potentialities to see the Hindu society from the view-point of a combination between kingship and caste. His stand enables to explain Hindu society as a process of interaction between the kingship and the village society which is based on caste and kinship. In opposition to the attempt to legitimation by kingship, the dominant caste always tries to establish its hegemony over the service castes in the village through rituals within the locality. This interactional process could appear again between the dominant caste and the lower castes.

The rural society of Bengal has retained rich agricultural tradition, which is often associated with the sacrificial rituals especially in connection with the rituals of fertility. This is the reason that the kingship attempts to establish his legitimacy through sacrificial rituals in the rural areas. This sacrificial ritual is further appearing from every stratum of the rural society. The dominant caste organizes its own rituals of sacrifice showing their authority and power over the other castes in the village. Even the lower castes have the own rituals of sacrifice through the interaction with other castes, though these rituals are ultimately integrated into the rituals held by the dominant caste and the kingship. These sacrificial rituals, therefore, suggest the continual rising rivalries around the hegemony of power and authority in rural society. It is the sacrificial rituals which are performed always within the dynamism of powers and symbols between the kingship and the local dominant forces, the landlords, the tenants, the village dominant caste, the service castes, and so on. In brief, the formation of sacrificial organization can be understood as a consequence of interaction of power and authority in the Hindu society.