

POLITICAL HISTORY OF MERGER OF THE PRINCELY STATES : A STUDY OF COOCH BEHAR

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To begin with, let me submit the fact that my interest in the study of the history of merger developed about a decade ago when I was doing my M. Phil. dissertation on the subject. Later, I was encouraged to take up doctoral research by various scholars like Prof. Jayanta B. Bhattacharya, Prof. Amalendu Guha, Prof. Suranjan Das, Prof. J.K. Roy Choudhury, Prof. P.K. Bhattacharya, Dr. A.G. Ghosh and Dr. Kamallesh Das. But for different reasons the interest never got translated into action. I had almost given up the idea when Dr. Dilip Kr. Sarkar, formerly senior faculty member of Presidency College, Calcutta, suggested that I apply for the U.S.C. minor research project-grants. Fortunately, I was awarded the grant by U.S.C. and here is the work I did for last three years. I am most grateful to Dr. Sarkar for this and to the U.S.C. for providing me necessary financial support.

This doctoral dissertation would not have been possible without the help of a lot of friends. Among them I have the pleasure of especially mentioning the help of Dr. A.G. Ghosh, Reader in History, North Bengal University. I am also indebted to some elderly persons living in Cooch Behar and in some other places who made my academic venture memorable and educative. I should express my gratitude to the following in particular: Late Hemanta Barman, Late Promedendra Narayan, Sri Monoranjan Guha, Sri Tarapada Chakraborty, Dr. Kripendra Nath Paul, for many instances of guidance and hospitality.

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Biman Chakraborty.

Biman Chakraborty

PREFACE

This research venture traces the history of specifics and inherent under-currents of politics of the merger of Cooch Behar State with the Indian union spanning the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial experiences. An attempt has been made to outline the process of multifaceted factors and forces that Cooch Behar had to experience during the period of merger with India. A sincere exercise has been attempted to reconstruct the event of merger of Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union on the basis of historical documents as well as socio-economic, ethnographic data and to explain their need to reconstruct at the present time scale. This incisive study of a region and its people, both marginally placed and lulled in the lap of Himalayas largely silenced through a lack of visitability in academic research, is an outcome of the efforts by the researcher for the last three years. To be precise, the objective of the present study claims to be a part of academic exercise of regional history hitherto unattampted by the scholars of the field.

Studies on Princely India, relationship between Princely States and British India have been many of which mention be made of Lee Warner¹, Ian Copland², and such others. The most celebrated studies so far undertaken on the integration of the Indian States

have been contributed none other than by Mr. V.P. Menon³ and during recently by Urmila Phandis⁴. Writings so far made on these two important areas such as relationship of Princely India with British India and integration of the Indian States have been thoroughly highlighted and referred in different parts of this dissertation work. Most of these writings are of general in nature seeking to establish general conclusions on the history of aggregates rather than history of specifics. The study under reference has been a maiden attempt to identify the factors and forces, events and issues involved in the process of merger of Cooch Behar State into the Indian Union. While doing so the researcher had to gather information and documents from different sources. Such relevant documents in the form of reports, leaflets, official notes and circulations, newspapers, articles, published books, gazetteers and letters etc. had been gathered from the National Archives, New Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru Museum and Library, New Delhi, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata, National Library, Kolkata, Cooch Behar Collectorate Records Room, Cooch Behar, North Bengal State Library, Cooch Behar, Assam Sahitya Sabha, Assam, Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti, Assam, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam and North Bengal University Library.

The present study is comprised of eight chapters and an epilogue. The chapters are intrinsically linked with each other and also are in consonance with the broad design of the study.

The first Chapter is the introduction to the study which initiates necessary issues and information relating to the research problem, objective, research questions and hypothesis, background of the issue of merger and integration of the Indian States.

The second Chapter examines the historical events and incidents and culturo-ethnographic considerations behind the process of State formation in India since time immemorial.

The third Chapter deals with the socio-cultural and historical perspectives of Cooch Behar state in north-east frame. The heartland periphery model has been attempted to understand the history of people and history of region of Cooch Behar in the north-eastern backdrop.

Chapter four details out the issues and events involved in the relationship between East India Company and Princely States in India during 1757-1813 with special reference to Cooch Behar.

Chapter five has been extension of chapter four in the sense that it deals with such relationship established during 1813-1857.

Chapter six presents a detail picture depicting the culmination of relationship during 1858-1919 between British India and Princely India with special reference to Cooch Behar.

Chapter seven deals with the issues and counter-issues in the Chamber of Princes and its bargainings with the British Indian Government ended with the enactment of Instrument of Accession.

The eighth Chapter has been significant in the sense that it has traced in detail the factor and forces, events and issues, involved in to accept or to contest the merger of the Princely State Cooch Behar with the Indian Union.

The epilogue deals with the findings of the study. It has also been attempted to understand a specific event of political history of India (merger of Cooch Behar) corroborated with other general events operated actively at an aggregated scale and to place such regional discourse to understand the background of the dynamics of present political history of this region in particular and India in general.

1. Warner, Lee Willium: *The Native States of India*”, 1910 (earlier 1894 - “*The Protected Princess of India*”), Macmillan and Company Limited, St. Marina Street, London, 1910, PP - 50-51.
2. Copland, Ian: *The Princess of India in the Endgame of Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Brumpton Street, Cambridge Street, Cambridge, 1997, PP- 45-47.
3. Menon, V.P.: *Integration of the Indian State*, Orient Longman, Madras, Reprint 1985, P-7.
4. Phandis, Urmila: *Towards the Integration of the Indian States (1919-1947)*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1968.

PROLOGUE

A discourse on the political history of merger of Indian States with special reference to Cooch Behar warrants the attention to delve into the details of facts and events operating either tacitly or in a manifest manner both at the macro-historical plain as well as at the micro-historical perspective. Since the study under reference has been the State of Cooch Behar, an attempt would not be out of place to analyse the factors and forces operated directly or indirectly behind the process of merger of the Cooch Behar State into the Indian Union. While analysing the political history of merger of the Cooch Behar State, the researcher intends to emphasise on the deductive method rather than the inductive method of analysis which means the history of aggregates must be preceded by the history of specifics. Without taking into consideration so called assembled facts of history made by the Compradore historians or patronised bureaucrats and so called nationalist scholars, the present venture would be to understand the facts and events responsible for the merger of Cooch Behar State by exploring all the possibilities of getting access to the social, psychological, ecological, culturo-historical trends and events with

the help of epistemological and logical scientific reasoning. Although the macro setting would not be ignored, an attempt will be made to look to the fact that the micro local ambience is not overlooked.

Any study of merger cannot and should not ignore the politico historical and ethno-religious factors and forces behind the process of integration of the Indian States into the Indian Union. A treatise on the history of merger of the Cooch Behar State should have to be analysed and explored in the light of the general trends and events of the merger of the Indian States. The merger of the Indian States has neither been a simple story of accession of small Princely States by the greater mighty Indian States, nor it has been a simple delineation of so called bargains between greater and tiny nationalism. In fact, an amalgated factors and forces, trends and events of variegated nature have been taken place during the period of accession of the Princely States with the Indian Union. As a result there has been multiplicity of considerations behind the bargaining process of merger. The strategy of the Government of India while acceding the Princely States had been a plural concept. Thus strategies rather than strategy had been undertaken alleviating the problems and tensions emerged during the time of merger in various Princely States. Above all, the Indian State followed most objectively the policy of persuasion while extending its control over the Princely States for their necessary integration with India.

However, oppression, suppression and use of military power had been other methods pursued by the Indian State, wherever and whenever the strategy of persuasion failed. It would not be a

misstatement to state that a hasty attempt on the part of the Indian State had been manifested in its exercise of persuading the Princely States for their necessary merger into the Indian State. It might be because of the urgency of the acute political situation and need of the time but it did not give much care to the cultural-ethnological issues of the merging states. Thus, in most of the cases, the Civil Societies of the integrating Princely States remained unattended and uncalled for. Here, in fact, lies the necessity of a specific type of historiography by way of exploring the historicity of the trends and events, factors and forces behind the entire process of merger of the Princely States into the Indian Union.

With this background in mind, the present researcher proposes to venture the definite factors and forces behind the merger of Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union both from a micro and macro perspective; i.e., attempting to analyse the political history of merger of Cooch Behar State under the local ambience in the backdrop of a generic setting of the historicity of merger of the Princely States in India. While making this attempt the researcher has attempted to explore the nature and meaning of integration as a politico-administrative concept as well the nature of governance in India through ages.

Any study of merger of Princely States into the Indian Union would have been a story of ultimate surrenderance of the Princely States to the mighty Indian State Authorities. The surrenderance of

sovereignty whether if any, by the Princely States has, ultimately marked the end of the old feudal Raj and the beginning of the era of Swaraj or Parliamentary democracy.

A detailed study of political history of merger of the Cooch Behar thus, has been of high order both conceptually and operationally. The relevance of the study lies in its commitment to explore the history of specifics in understanding the factors and forces behind the process of merger. A study under regional setting will help in building a general framework to understand the trends and events of the merger of the Princely States with the Indian Union. Above all no serious study has so far been undertaken on this important issue of merger of Cooch Behar with India. Such a study will also develop the possibility to provide a new kind of knowledge of this mostly intellectually un-explored region. Even a study will also be a help to the policy planners and policy makers to take logistic steps on any area of development by way of acting as a pragmatic reservoir on regional/local social history.

The primary objective of the study is to delve deep into the details of political history of merger of the Princely States with special reference to Cooch Behar. The study intends to experiment with certain important politico-administrative ideas after placing them on a definite historical settings of global, national, regional/local ambience. The study intends to make a comparative analysis of the trends and events behind the process of merger of

classified princely states. The analysis of the factors and forces behind the merger of the Princely State Cooch Behar will be primary focus of the study.

As has been stated, the study has been undertaken on the basis of deductive method. However, library method both for primary and secondary materials have been pursued. Since the study has been exercise of exploring the social history and history of the specifics, oral methods and method of investigation have been given a special consideration. To give the study an empirical shape participant-observation method has also been followed.

Scholarly discourse on history of integration of the Indian States has not been scarce. Any attempt to conceptualise such academic exercise reminds us the seminal task of V.P. Menon, having both conceptual and operational command on the studies of Indian States¹. Keeping in consideration to most of the important studies so far undertaken a single proposition may seem eluctable that the studies on integration cover in most of the cases a general ambience based on generalistic proposition. In this sense the studies reflect the history of aggregates rather than history of specifics of the integrating states. To begin with, throughout this academic venture, an attempt has been made to understand the underlying forces of the history of aggregates identified by the scholars and to understand the history of specifics by way of

accommodating the factors and forces, events and issues involved in the process of merger lulled in the lap of Himalayas, of the Cooch Behar State – a tiny principality, lulled in the lap of Himalayas situated marginally at the north-east of Bengal. The political history of merger of the Cooch Behar State calls for a detailed analysis of the general trends and tendencies operating behind the merger of nearly five hundred sixty two principalities with the newly emerged independent Indian State. Prof. Ian Copland's observation may well be put: "As the premier event in the history of decolonisation in Asia, the transfer of power in India has deservedly attracted much scholarly attention, particularly since the 1970's when the Government archives for the period began to be opened. However, the vast bulk of this research has focussed on the partition and the establishment of Pakistan, much of the remainder on the imperial debate over decolonisation; very little space has been given to the fate of the States. Similarly as against the vast academic literature that has been produced over the last few decade on 'British' India that is to say, on the provinces – perhaps a score of books have engaged in a serious way with the history of the two-fifths of the sub continent that remained outside the British rule. And, of these, only there grapple substantiality with the issues raised above; Steven Ashton's 'British Policy towards the Indian States'; Barbara Remusack's 'The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire'; and the

volume edited by Robin Jeffery, 'People Princes and Paramount Power'. How can we claim to have developed a sophisticated historiography of Colonial South Asia when the dominant interpretations fail to take so much of the terrain into ^aaccount?"²

Indeed most of the scholastic writings have attempted to identify the issues, worries and interactions of various nature between the Government of India and the Indian Princes while integrating their principalities with the Government of India. Integration had been the principal consideration of the newly independent Indian nation. While realising this notion more than five hundred principalities were contacted to get them integrated with the Indian fold. Basically, tasks were many for the leaders of Indian nation: (a) to bring about immediate and rapid socio-economic transformation and (b) to bring the native principalities under the fold of India. Realisation of the second task had been difficult and complicated. In order to ease complications and lessen difficulties, the Indian State coined the concept of integration.

Integration literally means, "Joining or tying the two or many objects mutually opposed to each other, however, having with an intrinsic homogeneous elements must have some tacit or manifest ingredients with a perpetuity of nearly four hundred fifty years of inducements. Integration denotes three operational processes: (a) functional integration; (b) spatial integration; (c) psychobehavioural integration. While the first two processes indicate legal, political,

administrative and geographical postulates of integration, the third process concerns with the psychobehavioural perception of integration evolving out of within (psychological) while the former processes deals with structural and functional perspectives of integration.

Despite sincere attempts made by the scholars and the historians to present aciduously tested studies on integration of the Indian States with the Indian Union, some important areas still been unattended. The history of integration of the Indian States with the Indian Union had not definitely been a process of integration between two sovereign partners having equal status, it was rather a process of compulsion on the part of the native principalities to integrate with India if otherwise they would have been ceased to exist. Thus during the phase of integration Government of India had played the role of supra sovereign while the integrating principalities had been reduced to infra-sovereign units. Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to pay respect to the proposition that the process of integration with all its ingredients had not been duly attended to. Despite attempts to fulfill the ingredients by way of concluding treaties to legalise integration, it would have been more meaningful to propose that it was not the process of integration rather it had been the process of merger which unravels the politico administrative issues rather than the psycho-behavioural perspectives behind integration. An in-depth

study of political history of merger of the Princely States calls for a clear cut understanding on two definite issues: (1) the newly emerged Indian States emanated from the Government of India Act, 1947 and comprising of provinces used to be administered directly by the British Indian Government; (2) more than five hundred principalities remained out of the ambit of the newly formed Indian States. Thus the centre of gravity had been the Indian State with which the principalities had to be merged. Thus it was not integration in the intrinsic sense of the term, rather it had been the process of merger where the domineering role and control of the Indian States over the merging principalities had been almost absolute.

An understanding of the Princely State or the Indian State or native state seems urgent. Sir William Lee Warner wrote, "A Native State was a political community that occupied defined boundaries within India, subject to a common and responsible rules who has actually enjoyed and exercised, as belonging to him in his own right duly recognised by the Supreme Authority of the British Government, any of the function and attributes of sovereignty. The indivisibility of sovereignty, on which Austin³ insists does not belong to the Indian system of sovereign states. Sir Henry Maine on the other hand expounded the principles of 'divisible sovereignty'. He wrote, "sovereignty is a term which in International Law indicates a well ascertained assemblage of separate powers or

privileges. The rights, which form part of the aggregate, are specifically named by publicists, who distinguish them as the right to make over or place, the right to administer civil and criminal justice; to legislate and so forth. A sovereign who possesses the whole of these rights is called an independent sovereign, but there is not, nor has there ever been, in International Law anything to prevent some of these rights being lodged with one possessor and some with another. Sovereignty has always been regarded as divisible."⁴ Sir Henry Maine then went on to give examples of the German confederacy and the Swiss Cantons. "In fact", wrote Maine, "Europe was at one time full of imperfectly sovereign States, although the current events have for centuries set towards their aggregation into large independent monarchies"⁵. Lee Warner overruling Maine's claims, as not pertaining to the Indian situation, wrote "No native state in the interior of India enjoys the full attributes of complete external and internal sovereignty, since to none is left either the power of declaring war or peace, or the right of negotiating agreements with other states; but the sovereignty of native states is shared between the British Government and the chiefs in varying degrees. Some states enjoys a substantive immunity from interference in nearly all functions of internal administration, while others are under such control that the native sovereignty is completely destroyed. But communities whose rulers

ordinarily exercise ~~may~~, even the smallest degree of internal authority, are classified in India as Native States and excluded from the territories subject to the kings' law⁶. Lee Warner laid emphasis on the treaties, engagements, sanads, and usage when the question of determining the status of the Princely States vis a vis the British Government arose. His interpretations, obviously based on Roman analogy, pushed arguments to the length of claiming undaunted right of authority over the Princely States for the paramount power better described as 'paramountcy'. In fact, his book, 'The Native States of India' though very informative, appears to be in effect a justification of the claims of the Political Department⁷.

Another political definition of Indian State can well be found in the third schedule of Indian Act No. VII of 1871 which defines, "any State in India which is under the protection or political control of Her Majesty's Government or of which the Government has acknowledged the supremacy of the British Crown⁸. The definition had been applicable to the Indian States only after 1858 when all of them except Nepal came to occupy the position as per the mentioned definition. Such a definition had been objectively crafted to understand the changed nature of relationship that existed between East India Company and the States. Soon after the taking over charge of India by British Crown such a new relationship was in order to eliminate the difference in the status of the States and to uphold the theory and practice the paramountcy

of the British Crown over all alike. Thus precisely, the definition of Indian States in a reformulated manner provided a new era of relationship between the British India and the Indian States.

The concept of native state or the Indian State provided the emergence of a concerted concept of Princely States in India. Section 311 of the Government of India Act, 1935 provides a succinct definition thus: "Indian State includes any territory whether described as a State, estate, a Jagir or otherwise, belonging to under the suzerainty of a ruler who is under the suzerainty of His Majesty and not being part of British India."

Nearly two hundred years of British rule in India created a frame work comprising of two distinctive political geographies: (a) directly British administered provinces; (b) Indian States under the suzerainty of the British Crown. The Cabinet Mission in its announcements of 3rd June, 1946 categorically provided the plan for the lapse of paramountcy in India. Such a declaration provided the opportunity for the Indian States covering two fifths of the Indian geography to return to a state of political isolation. Such a situation of potential threat many Indian States within India had been circumvented by the accession of the States. Ultimately, however, provisions were included in the Government of India Act, 1947 which candidly provided the position of the Indian State in future. It was said that the suzerainty of His Majesty over the Indian States would lapse and the latter would have the option either to join India

or Pakistan or remain independent. As a matter of fact accession of the Indian States to independent India had been an issue of considerable importance. To deal with the situation a new State Department was created to function as a single organisation with an objective to resolve differences of opinion by mutual and amicable discussion. Both the British administered provinces and the Indian States were so integrally linked that it was impossible to think an independent India in isolation of the Indian States. V.P.Menon rightly observes, "during the course of a century the provinces and the States had been welded together"⁹.

The edifice of Central Authority had been rested on two pillars, one with foundations in the provinces and the other in the States. Such observations have been true because during the period, important cantonments and military installations were located in the States. For example, the Indian Railway system spanned the territories of the States as well as the provinces. Moreover, one of the provincial capitals was situated in a princely state. In posts and telegraphs, controls of arms and ammunitions, extradition and surrender of fugitives, control of opium and other narcotics, in the overall food policy, to mention only a few matters affecting all India security and welfare, the machinery of the Political Department and the residencies had acted as a co-ordinating agency. Thus it was extremely urgent to have an integrated administration both for Indian provinces and Indian

States. Without understanding the inevitability of accession, the declaration of the British Government regarding the lapse of Her Suzerainty over the Indian States created confusion and discontent and provided for ample room of worries and tensions.

According to V.P.Menon the decision of the British Government on the Indian States had been the result of the consideration of internal pressure of conservative politics in Great Britain rather than well chalked out decision for the future consolidation of Indian State craft. After the stipulated date of August 15th, 1947, the position of the States was one of great anxiety. During British rule the States had been protected from all internal trouble by the paramount power. Indeed few States had the capacity to deal with such a threat and most of them had not the necessary resources to cope with this. Moreover, the States did have no machinery to prevent the deteriorating communal situation. Because of country's partition and the presence of the isolated states the Indian Political leaders had to face immense potentiality of danger. The solution was to bring together Indian States under the fold of the Government of India. The problems were altogether peculiar and in the unsettled state of thing would sometimes demand hectic deliberations with the Indian States and quick decision.

Through a press communiqué, the Interim Cabinet of the Government of India declared the creation of the States Department under the leadership of Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel and V.P.Menon

was appointed as the secretary of the Department. The newly created department while drafting its terms and references had come to the conclusion that, "in view of the disposition of some of the rulers to cede in their lot with Pakistan or a few others to assert their independence, and the keen desire of all to safeguard their sovereignty, some sort of organic bond should be forged between the government of India and the States if the integrity of the country was to be preserved"¹⁰. The States Department argued that the Indian States which were geographically contiguous to India must be made to feel legally and morally that they were part of it. Primarily, it was decided that the Government of India would ask the Indian States to accede only on defence and external affairs without any other commitments. Since these subjects were handled by the paramount power and not by the States, the rulers would not be losing any of the rights enjoyed by them. It was hoped that if this scheme was implemented, a responsible Government for the whole of India would be established at the centre and as such would attract all the principal political elements. Another important subject like communication was added in the deliberation. The biggest advantage for Indian Government had been the absence of any compulsion of complying with the treaties concluded between the British Indian Government and the Indian States while providing suggestions to Patel, the Secretary, States Department

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argued, "We would be writing on a clean slate, unhampered by treaties." ¹¹

In fact no clear-cut terms of references was put before the Indian States, the States Department started deliberation with the Indian States for necessary integration with India. Since the nature and character and the issues involved had varied from state to state, there developed unique situation to be tackled in unique manner. In fact the Prime Minister and the Cabinet gave altogether a free hand to Sardar Patel in dealing with the Indian States. The States Department was convinced that in view of the disposition of some of the rulers to tilt to Pakistan, a few others to assert their independence, and the keen desire of all to safeguard their sovereignty, some sort of organic bond should be forged between the Government of India and the States and the integrity of the country was to be preserved. It was also categorically held that the States which were geographically contiguous to India must be made to feel legally and morally that they were part of it. Thus the emphasis was both on legal, political and psychological aspect of integration. Admittedly, during early forties, V.P.Menon drawn a scheme for the authorities of British India for the establishment of an interim Government as a solution of the then existing political deadlock. The scheme so drawn was an alternative to the federal proposal embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935 calling at a non-practical proposition during the war emergency. The

Government of India Act, 1935 provided such procedures for accession which entailed protracted negotiations for the adjustment of the treaty and fiscal rights and the creation of a new legislature, which again involved difficult administrative arrangement. In fact, all these were too complicated to be embarked upon at such a time. Defence, external affairs and communications had ultimately been the principal points of deliberation with the states for their accession to India. Thus, the tentative plan of deliberation for accession was ~~made~~ based on the important consideration of the security of the country. It was logically assumed that the rulers of the Indian States if acceded on defence, external affairs and communications, the Government of India would automatically have the right of entry into any state where internal stability was threatened on those grounds. Such was the tentative plan drawn by the State Department and was placed before Nehru for necessary approval. The whole thing was put before Nehru and certainly not in a written form because of the fear of leakage and publicity of the plan before hand. After getting green signal from Nehru the State Department went on implementing the plan. Lord Mountbatten was requested to negotiate with the rulers on the question of accession and also with a special task of dealing with Hyderabad and he responded positively. By November, 1949 only six of the 562 States that had acceded to India-viz, Hyderabad, Mysore, Bhupal, Tripura, Manipur, and Cooch Behar remained as separate entities within their old boundaries.¹²

Simultaneously, a preliminary draft of a 'Stand Still Agreement' between individual State and the two successor Governments was circulated by the Political Department. The draft provided for the discontinuance of the payments of cash, contribution and of the continuance of a district administrative arrangement in respect of such matters of common concern. While doing so, importance was given on economic aspect and on external affairs. However, the proposal made in the draft had been superceded by the specified scheme undertaken by the States Department and duly ratified by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. It was made clear that every possible assistance from the Political Department would be welcome, however, the ultimate responsibility of negotiating with the rulers rest with the States Department. The statement for accession was drafted by V.P.Menon, Secretary, States Department and voted by Sardar Patel. To Patel the statement was 'concise and conciliatory in tune'¹³. The statement appealed to the rulers to accede on three subjects. It pointed out, "This country with its institutions is the proud heritage of the people who inhabit it. It is an accident that some live in the States and some in British India, but all alike partake of its culture and character. We are all knit together by bounds of blood and feeling no less than of self interest. None can segregate us into segments, no impassable barriers can be set up between us. I suggest that it is therefore better for us to make laws

sitting together as friends than to make treaties as aliens. I invite **my friends the rulers of the States and their people to the councils of the Constituent Assembly in this spirit of friendliness and co-operation in a joint endeavour, inspired by common allegiance to our motherland for the common good of us all**.¹⁴ It went on, "The States have already accepted the basic principles that for defence, **foreign affairs and communications they would come into the Indian Union. We ask no more of them accession on these three subjects in which the common interests of the country are involved.**"¹⁵

This principle had been the principal mechanism for accession which categorically assured the princely order that the Indian national Congress has never and had never been enemies of Indian States and there would not be any question of the formation of dominant – dependent form of relationship between the Indian Government and the Princely order. The statement reassured that priority would not be domination of a mighty Government over the subordinate units rather it would be a domination of mutual interest and welfare. The statement ended with the appeal: "We are at a momentous state in the history of India. By common endeavour **we can raise the country to a new greatness while lack of unity will expose us to fresh calamities. I hope the Indian States will bear in mind that the alternative to co-operation in the general interest is anarchy and chaos which will overwhelm great and small in a**

common ruin if we are unable to act together in the medium of common tasks."¹⁶

Although the statement was drafted in a very cordial manner, the intention of the statement was very specific and clear. Answering a question on agreements between the states and the Government of India on matters of common concern, Sardar Patel emphatically argued: "whoever denounces such agreements takes the responsibility for the consequences".¹⁷ While the Government of India was advancing with the statement the Indian States, by that time, had been endowed with clause VII of the Government of India Act, 1947. Although the clause provided the Indian States a kind of autonomy on the question of either remaining independent or to be included either with India or Pakistan. The clause ended the suzerainty of His Majesty over the Indian States. This part of lapsing although the earlier treaties had been questioned by the eminent jurists, administrators and political practitioners. As Reforms Commissioner, V.P. Menon raised the question that even of paramountcy lapses, all agreements of a commercial, economic and financial character between the States on the one hand, and the British Government, the Secretary of the State, and the Governor General on the other would cease to be legally effective. It was pointed out by Menon that there were several important agreements which had been entered into for the common benefit of States and British India where paramountcy did not enter, for example, the

agreement of 1920 with Bhawalpur and Bikaner regarding the Sultage Valley canals project and Government of India agreement on salt with Jaipur and Jodhpur. Menon argued, the mutual rights and obligations of parties under such agreements could not be regarded as lapsing on the withdrawal of paramountcy. Thus these agreements should continue to be binding both on the States and on the successor Governments.¹⁸ Ultimately, however, it was resolved that all complications would have left the State and the provinces and the two new Central Governments as incuritors of all rights and obligations not falling strictly within the field of paramountcy and control over the States, thus preserving the status quo until changed by financial and economic agreements without, of course, impeding their future liberties of action. Ultimately, however, sub-clauses (b), (c) to clause VII of the Government of India Act, 1947 had been revised.

The days between July 1st to August 15th, 1947, had been very much hectic. On 10th July, a number of Rulers and States Minister met Sardar Patel. Patel urged that the States which had joined the Constituent Assembly should forth with accede to India on three subjects, and pointed out that such a course would enable them to have a direct voice in shaping the policies of the Central Government. The delegation of the States argued that the matters required careful consideration and a cautious approach. A series of informal discussions with the Rulers and their advisors should be

the requirement. A notice was served on 11th July by the States Department for the conference of the Rulers to be held on 25th July. Agenda to be included in the conference were: (1) Accession of the States on 'defence', 'external affairs' and 'communications', (2) Standstill Agreement; (3) Advisory Council for the States Department; (4) Channels of correspondence and representation of Central Government in the States.¹⁹

The policy of accession of the Indian Government was communicated to Pakistan's State Minister and Jinnah reacted strongly in a negative manner. He communicated a note to Lord Mountbatten stating that it was utterly wrong and publicly announced that he would guarantee the independence of States in Pakistan. Such a statement of the Pakistan premier evoked confusions in the minds of the States Rulers. The resentments against accession got regimented under the leadership of the Nawab of Bhopal. However, on 24th July, 1947, another delegation of Rulers met the Indian States Department and it was evident that they were prepared to come within India.

Meanwhile, the States Department produced a draft Instrument of Accession and revised the original draft of the Stand Still Agreement prepared by the Political Department. These two drafts were circulated to the Rulers at the special session of the Chamber of Princes on 25th July. The special session was addressed by Lord Mountbatten in his capacity as Crown Representative. He

advised the rulers to accede to the appropriate dominion in regard to the three subjects of defence, external affairs and communications. He also made it clear that though the Rulers were technically at liberty to link with either of the dominions, there were certain geographical compulsions which could not be evaded. According to him, out of something like 562 states, the vast majority are irresistibly linked geographically with the dominion of India. Mountbatten stressed the urgency of the situation and said, "If you are prepared to come, you must come before 15th August. You cannot runaway from the dominion Government which is your neighbour any more, then you can runaway from the subjects for whose welfare you are responsible."²⁰ He suggested for a negotiating committee comprising of representative Rulers of the States and Ministers of the Dominion Governments. The negotiating committee, accordingly, was spelt into two sub-committees, one to deal with Instrument of Accession and the other with the Stand Still Agreement. After a detailed deliberations in these two sub committees the drafts were finalized on 31st July, 1947. By the Instrument of Accession, the States acceded to the dominion of India on the three subjects of defence, external affairs and communications, their content being as defined in list one of schedule VII to the Government of India Act, 1935. Accession did not imply any financial liability on the part of the acceding states. This instrument was intended only for the rulers of the fully

empowered one hundred forty States. Besides these one hundred forty States the Estates and Taluks where the Crown exercised certain powers and jurisdictions were also counted as 'States'. These numbering over three hundred. Another Instrument of Accession was prepared for these estates and Taluks. While preserving the form of accession the document vested all the residuary powers and jurisdiction in the Central Government. Subsequently an ordinance was promulgated such as 'extra-provincial jurisdiction ordinance'. Another Instrument of Accession was devised for the States (Seventy in number) in Kathiwar, Central India and the Simla Hills to ensure that these Rulers did not exercise higher powers than they had prior to 15th August, 1947. All these three cases, the Stand Still Agreement was common. It laid down that all agreements and administrative agreements as to matters to common concern specified in the Schedule there existing between the Crown and the State should continue until new arrangements in this behalf were made. The Instrument of Accession together with its subject matter had been criticized in the strongest term because of the absence of financial commitment to it. They regarded the relationship to be evolved out of accession would be too nebulous. However, the critics could not understand the basic position and the urgency of the situation and did not give any thought to what would be the position of the States on 15th August if there were no accession, the States would be independent

and the border states would be at liberty to ally themselves with Pakistan.

Hectic political activities were going on to persuade the non-complying Rulers to accede with India. Some of the Rulers were either hostile to the plan of accession or were sitting on the defence. Some States announced their intention of declaring their independence and Hyderabad and Travancore gave the lead and their lead was followed by some others whose attitude was naturally causing the Government of India some anxiety. Meanwhile, the Muslim League leaders were also active to persuade some of the States to accede and were provoking the Rulers by offering concessions for joining Pakistan. The League leaders concentrating in particular on some border States. Another attempt was made by Nawab of Bhopal by initiating a move to form a third force out of the Princely States. Maharaja of Travancore and Maharaja of Jodhpur continued to be intractable, ultimately, however, put signature on the Instrument of Accession. Maharaja of Indore, Dholpur, Bharatpur, Bhillaspur and Nabha despite reservations ultimately signed on the accession document. In spite of the major success of the States Department under the leadership of Sardar Patel in acceding nearly four hundred forty States with India before 15th August, 1947, but some major States did not sign over the Instrument of Accession before 15th August, 1947. Protracted negotiations had been on to bring all those left before states both

strategically important and non-important within the fold of Indian Government.

Thus prior to independence, the Indian States numbering nearly five hundred sixty joined hands either during July-August 1947 or between 1947 to 1950. Two hundred sixteen States were merged in the existing provinces, sixty one were constituted into new Centrally administered areas, two hundred seventy five were integrated to create new administrative units, Rajasthan, Madhya Bharat, Travencore-Cochin, Saurashtra, PEPSU, Hyderabad, Mysore and Jammu Kashmir. While integrating States, linguistic and ethnic homogeneity or historical traditions were taken into consideration to the extent possible. It should also be mentioned that the Government of India had provided some kind of concessions for smoothening the process of accession. To V.P.Menon, "The grant of Privy Purses to the rulers was a sort of quide-proquo for the surrender by them of all their ruling powers and for the dissolution of their States".²¹ Apart from the Privy Purses, the Government of India permitted the rulers to retain certain private properties and guaranteed them the personal rights, privileges and dignities.

Thus the process of merger of the Princely States by way of accession had been a task of stupendous hazards and continuous perseverance. As the issue and contents of the Princely States had been different, there had been developed multidimensional mechanisms to resolve the heterogeneous hazards in the process of

accession. A thorough investigation with a descriptive note has been attempted to understand the ground realities behind the process of merger.

Differences in the modes of integration of the Indian States, as well as the fragmented pre-merger pattern of princely rule, have also had a considerable impact upon the process of merger. The common practice of speaking of the integration of the Indian States as if it were a single, undifferentiated process has tended to cloud and conceal these important differences. In fact there were three major ways in which the Princely States became integrated into independent India. The following table would speak for itself on the different modes of integration.

Modes of Integration

Model 1949 States Union	No. of States	Area	Population (Lakhs)
Rajasthan	18	128,424	152.97
Madhyabharat	25	46,710	79.41
MP&PU	8	10,899	34.68
Vindya Pradesh	35	24,800	35.77
Himachal Pradesh	21	10,600	9.89
Bombay	222	21,062	41.35
Madhya Pradesh	2	9,142	376.03
PROVINCES			
West Bengal	24	27,671	50.39
U.P.	15	31,749	28.34
Assam	144	26,257	57.49
Maharashtra	18	10,870	27.85
U.P.	3	6,276	13.25
Madhya	3	1,592	5.19
Assam	3	370	81
U.P.	2	623	2.05
West Bengal	1	1,321	6.41
Other States			
Jammu & Kashmir	1	84,471	402.16
Hyderabad	1	82,698	163.39
Mizoram	1	29,475	73.29
Kutch	1	8,461	5.67
Bihar	1	453	1.27
Bihar	1	6,291	8.38
Tripura	1	4,049	6.49
Manipur	1	8,620	5.79

Source: 1949: India and Pakistan Year Book and who's who 1949.

The table suggests that the largest numbers were grouped into seven States union and most of the rest were absorbed by

neighbouring British Indian provinces only a handful (Eight in number) retained their earlier political boundaries, either because of the large size or because of other special circumstances. It is also not surprising that different political patterns would emerge in these different political circumstances. It was expected that the States Union tended to be more fragmented politically than the other two types of arrangements. In the non-merged states of Hyderabad, Mysore, Jammu & Kashmir as well as in Travancore-Cochin (which comprised only two states) a concerted political regimentation was observed.

In addition to it there had been so many other occurrences taken place in the different parts of the country about the growing discontents against accession. During 1949-50 urgent measures and hectic attempts were undertaken to bring the different Princely States under the fold of the Government of India, for example, some States like Punjab Hill States, Bilaspur, Tripura, Manipur, Cooch Behar etc. were integrated with India as Commissioner's Province and some small states or estates of Southern and Eastern part of India had been viewed as isolated States and was merged with bigger States like Madras, East Punjab, United Provinces, Assam etc. However, while bringing some states to the fold of India the States Departments had to be much more attentive owing to the continuous discontents among the Rulers of those states to be merged with India. Examples are Hyderabad, Baroda and Jammu &

Kashmir. The events and issues, factors and forces behind the process of merger of the Princely States with India would lead us to certain important conclusions: (a) Integration or merger of the Indian States had been inevitable; (b) The Government of India through the States Department took active and positive role to realise the policy of integration. In fact all kinds of means from persuasion to coercion were used keeping situation into consideration; (c) Despite reluctance and discontents shown by some States Ruler, most of the Rulers had been more or less compelled to join with India. One can see, therefore, that there is nothing natural or immemorial about the territorial boundaries of independent India. They exist as the result of a particular mode of transfer of power from British colonial rule and of political negotiations between the leaders of independent India and the Rulers of independent States.

With this brief description one can well propose to venture the different perspectives of merger of the Princely States with special reference to Cooch Behar, one point is not out of order that while revisiting the merger history of Cooch Behar one should explore the necessary politico-historical canvas on which the State had been based. Since Cooch Behar is the gateway of north-east one can well propose the basic back ground of Cooch Behar State from the perspective of political history of north-east region of India.

The following chapter would necessarily be a study of background of State formation in India which would amply project the relevance of the psychological perspective of integration. A study would systematically be made to analyse the merger history of Cooch Behar on this projected canvas.

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Chapter – II

FORMATION OF INDIAN STATE: AN OVERVIEW

The basis of being India a 'State' in the Western sense of the term with distinctive political boundary has been of recent origin. The inherent implication lies in the fact that unlike state formation in Europe, Indian State formation has a distinctive history to be traced in her traditional and primordial relationships between different centres of power assimilation charged by religious affiliations. One may look back to the basis of Indian civilisation and can well find the nexus between secular authorities and the Brahamanic Hindu religious elites to have the political legitimation in a particular political arena called 'Rajya'. While the political arena in India was characterised by a relatively high level of symbolic and organisational distinctiveness and imbued with strong universal if not universalistic orientations, its sanctity was derivative¹. Thus any attempt to separate the 'secular' aspect to kingship from the 'religious' is to misrepresent the nature of Hindu Social reality. Indeed, the documented social and political history of India proves beyond doubt that the primary stage of politico-civic formation in India under the Hindu Kings did experience the development within India a concept and practice of sovereignty,

which emphasised the multiple rights of different groups and sections of society without the existence of a Unitary concept of State. Concomitantly, a rather specific combination of a tendency to civilisational, universal or imperial expansion with such fractured sovereignty (Rajyas) emerged². Above all in the ancient period India did not experience with any supreme autonomous political centre with strong imperial orientations, such was the experience, barring some exceptions, of both the ancient and medieval Indian history. A quick search of the ancient and the medieval history of India may not be out of place to mention.

Indeed, the term, 'India' as a conceptual frame derived out of the development of Hindu civilisation. This does not however, necessarily mean India had no existence before the formation of Hindu civilisation, ^{As} the breeder of the term India would simply mean that 'India' as a conscious centre had been the achievement of Hinduism after the great assimilation of Aryan Dravidian civilisations³. Before this, civilised communities had been in existence in different parts of Indian geography in isolated manner. The early Hindus should be credited for their contribution to the creation of one civilisation and social structure out of the variegated attributes of population scattered within the Indian geography. The reference of pre-Hindu civilisation had come to the light only after the excavation in the Indus valley. However, the documented history has still been silent to describe how did the Pre-Aryan

culture merge with the Aryans⁴. The assumed history suggests us that the nomadic Aryans had come to India as non violent-peaceful emigrants. But ultimately had come into conflict with the local people, defeated them and established their authority⁵.

With the expansion of the territorial authority the Aryan chieftains had converted them into kings. The expansion of the Aryan settlement in the Indo-gangetic plains did rise a powerful monarchy under the king-ship of Bharatas⁶. In fact one can have a documented history of the Bharata king Sudas. Indeed, Sudas had subordinated ten kings of earlier Aryan settlements in the battle field. Sudas was designated as paramount king and the powerful supra-sovereign feature had come into existence. The dig-vijayas of later times which left the local rulers undisturbed was the logical out come of the theory of the paramount king-the Samrat⁷. Thus the frequent use of the terms Adhiraja, Rajadhiraja, Samrat, Ekkrat etc. and the repeated references to such sacrifices as the Asvamedha, Rajasuya, Vajapeya, show that the idea of universal conquest was a familiar concept to the ancient monarchs and political thinkers⁸.

The 6th century B.C. provided a vacuum owing to the absence of a kind of central political force that could tie up the whole Indian political territory. Kingdoms of various sizes were in constant competition, resulting in a large number of small independent political units. Such a segmented nature of the political collectivities

in India added to the fluidity and instability of the political structure⁹. Such kinds of structures were almost politically vulnerable and the circumstances can be compared with the situation prevalent in Europe throughout the middle ages and the early modern period. However, there have been fundamental differences too. Firstly, in Europe the ideal of political unification manifest in the establishment of Holy Roman Empire, the ideal ultimately transformed into the modern nation states. Such an ideal was very weak in India because of the reason that Indian civilisation has never been defined in political terms¹⁰. The ruler-subject relationship in India was never based on sanctification of political activities. Second, political activities in India had a combination of transcendental orientation with a mundane perspective. Moreover, until modern times India did never experience with wars of religion. Above all, the pre-modern India is devoid of the experience of institutionalising religious force for a greater unified political solidarity.

Of all the states that developed in the 6th century B.C. the Magadha Kingdom was the first of its kind to establish its supremacy over the small kingdoms. During the reigns of Bimbisara and Ajantasatru the political boundary of Magadha was extended to the whole northern India. Indeed the Kings of Magadha had been able to make a strong political centre. This large political centre had

been reigned by a series of kings belonging to different dynasties starting from the Haryanka, Sisunaga, Nandea and the Mauryas¹¹.

In fact during the rule of the Mauryas the Magadha kingdom had further extended its political boundary embracing almost the whole of India. But the undefended and insecured frontier of the North West helped the foreign invaders to take venture of intrusion in India. The invasion of the Persian and the Greeks had been a significant political event of the history of Magadha political system under the Maurya rule. The great Chandragupta Maurya had been able to defend the country from the invaders and concentrated on arrangements for political unification of India by integrating the greater part of India. His empire extended upto Mysore in the south and beyond the natural boundaries of India upto the borders of Persia in the north-west¹². The post Maurya era of India witnessed the intrusion of the foreigners. Among the foreigners the great Kushana emperor Kanishka was able to extend his empire from Bihar in the east to Khorasan in the west, and from Khotan in the north to the Konkan in the south. The fall of the Kushana Empire paved the way for the many tribal and monarchical states in the north, south and western India¹³.

During the reign of the Guptas almost all the parts of India was again united. The mighty Gupta emperor Samudra Gupta extended his empire nearly the whole of Northern India and Orissa with a long stretch of territory along the eastern Coast extending as

far as south. Probably, Samudragupta had a vision of an all India empire. But realising the practical situation he gave up that idea. Samudragupta created a number of independent States and a central block of territory over which he was able to exercise his direct control. Samudragupta suppressed the disruptive tendencies of the small states and by maintaining a good relation with the frontier states of the west he developed the defensive strength of the Gupta empire against foreign enemies¹⁴. The next mighty Gupta emperor Chandragupta II extended his boundary over the whole of North India, including the maritime provinces of Gujrat and Kathiawad. Taking advantage of the death of the last mighty Gupta Emperor Skandagupta the Huns began to penetrate into India and the regional powers rose into prominence. Thus the unification of the country which was established by Samudragupta began to disintegrate¹⁵.

During Mauryan Empire and Gupta Empire, the central political leadership had created an extensive network of personal interrelationships with the traditional local leaders and depended heavily on them to secure loyalty and ensure a steady flow of resources. The political centres so developed in the Mauryan or Gupta Empire were stronger and the territorial scope of the politics was wider than that of the polities that existed before them. However, the centralising tendencies so existed did never lead to the restructuring of relations between the centre and periphery. There

were no attempts to break-through the ascriptive status of the periphery and continued to pursue the dominant caste status base in identifying the local leaders. However, policies pursued by Asoka had a mission to go beyond the existing premises but such attempts were always counteracted by coalition of various forces. Evidently it was an impossibility to achieve anything near unity of the sub-continent. Owing to this absence of any strong political tie up, both the Mauryan and the Gupta Empires had been fragmented into pieces. Kingdoms of various sizes had been developed and they were in constant competition resulting in an overall instability.¹⁶ In the midst of this competitive political culture, there had been the rise of regional political forces in different parts of India.

The Gupta Empire which lasted on and from 275 A.D. to 550 A.D., had, in fact, followed almost identical style in the process of Empire building as usually followed by the Mauryas. While administering the Empire the Gupta kings too depended on interpersonal relationship. Such relationship based on caste status consideration was usually followed in defining the centre periphery relationship. Such relationship purely based on the assumption of the central force used to be thwarted whenever there had been any signs of weakness of strong centralising force or the occasional rise of the strong regional force. During the last phase of Gupta Empire the weaknesses were revealed due to various reasons. Importantly, the relationship between the ruler and the ruled was never

considered from the politico-social and cultural angles. As a matter of fact legitimacy issue was highly questioned because of the weak political ground of political obligation. Indeed there had been no attempts of building nation and forming state-hood in the European sense of the term. Taking advantage of the situation, at the last phase of the Gupta Empire, the Hunas made so many attempts to invade. The political disunity which became manifest provided impetus to the Hunas to invade India. However, occasional Huna invasions were almost successfully prevented by the Gupta Emperors and their allies.¹⁷

The consecutive attempts of the Hunas to invade Gupta Empire created a kind of psychological boost in the minds of the rising regional powers that started considering that it was not an impossibility to strike the edifice of the Gupta paramountcy in India. In different corners i.e. from North to South and West to East the regional powers gradually proved themselves as surrounding force defying the authority and control of the Gupta Empire on them. Indeed, the emergence of the regional forces in different corners of India had, ultimately, put the last nail to the coffin of the Gupta Empire. The decadence of Gupta Empire witnessed the rise of number of regional powers, although regionally strong, but devoid of any attributes to create a greater all India structure and nationalist upsurge. In this sense, political disunity in India had been the rule of the game.

A succinct description of the different regional forces which emerged during the period is not out of place to mention. From the relics of the Gupta Empire there emerged three strong forces settling on a strong political basis in three distinctive regions. The northern regional force established by Harshabardhana, whereas in the east Sasanka established a strong Kingdom and in the south there had been the supremacy of the Chalukyas led by Pulkeshin II¹⁸. All these three regional forces had the distinctiveness to be qualified as strong regional power integrating and subjecting and overpowering the small powers of the respective regions. The regional forces had their distinctive culture, linguistic and ethnological foundations. Despite attempts of these regional forces to subjugate each other cutting across the regional geographical, cultural and ethno-linguistic boundaries, there have been no reflections in the documented Indian History that either of these regional forces could make a greater Indian Empire building. Thus throughout the period of existence of regional power blocks in India, the realization of the ideas of Indian political unity with a distinctive political boundary of her own did remain a far cry.

By exercising the capacity of being a great warrior Harshavardhana could prove himself the most powerful ruler of northern India. He proved his supremacy by overpowering and subjugating Valabhi, Gujrat and a part of Malwas. After establishing his complete domination over northern India

Harshavardhana wanted to extend his kingdom firstly to the east and then to the south, with the intention to overpower the rising eastern power led by Sasanka and take revenge of his brother's assassination, Harshavardhana invaded Sasanka's kingdom. However, his attempt was not completely successful and he could not subjugate Sasanka till his death. After the death of Sasanka, Harshavardhana extended his political boundary by integrating Punjab, Bihar, Orissa and Bengal. With the ambition to overpower the southern king Pulkesin II Harshavardhana had invaded the southern kingdom but ultimately had to retreat because of strong combat from Pulkeshin II¹⁹.

Turning to the south, Pulkeshin II rose into prominence. He overpowered and subjugated the neighbouring state and had an intention to extend his authority to the far south. His success was in his victory over the Pallavs. However, ultimately Pulkeshin II was assassinated by Pallava king Narasimhavarman I, and Pallavas rose into prominence in the south. In the southern part of the Pennas and the Tungabhadra, the Pallavas were able to build up a strong regional power. They were also able to spread their authority over the Ceylon for the time being. Simultaneously, in the far south the Cholas built an empire. The Chola king Rajaraja conquered many territories and made himself the master of the south. With a

powerful navy he was able to conquer Ceylon and Malaya. With the help of the naval power the Cholas made the Bay-of Bengal as a "Chola Lake" for the time being²⁰.

In the east the strong regional political force represented by Sasanka. Sasanka was able in subjugating the chiefs of Midnapore, Orissa, Kangod etc. Sasanka was the first Bengalee Emperor who mooted the idea of a Bengalee empire and this idea was successful during his lifetime. The idea of Bengalee empire of Sasanka came to an end with his death and the political conditions of Bengal was one of disorder and confusions and Bengal was divided into five principalities.²¹ The establishment of the Pala Dynasty by Gopala in the middle of the 8th century A.D. marks the removal of lawlessness and disorder from the country. The Empire established by Gopala reached its supremacy under Dharmapala and the Bengali Empire continued by the later Pala and Sena rulers. The last Sena is Lakshmana Sena was overthrown by the Muslims invaders in the year 1206 A.D. Simultaneously the Muslims also had overthrown the Rajput chiefs from the Northern India and occupied Delhi and gradually created the condition of establishing the Sultanate Empire centering Delhi as its capital. For the first forty years the Emperors and Empress of the Sultanate dynasty had to keep themselves busy to fight out the internal feuds. The overpowerment of Sultana Rajia by her close inmates had ultimately paved the way

for the Khaljis to occupy the Delhi Sultanate. Among the Khalji Sultans, Alauddin Khalji could extend the political boundary of the Sultanate towards both northern and southern India by overpowering the local and regional forces. However, during his time too the political relationship between the centre and the periphery was mostly depended on muscle power based on dominant-dominated relationship. After the end of the Khalji dynasty the ever-biggest Sultanate controlled political territory began to crumble. The Tughluq Sultans did not able to extend the boundary made by the Khalji Sultans.²² The Sultanate dynasty had been ultimately thrown to the oblivion only after the Sayids and the Lodis. The first was at Panipath had ultimately given birth to a kind of Muslim rule in India fundamentally different from the previous rulers. The re-unification of the political map of India under a single central system had gradually been developed of a century by the Emperors.

The Mughal period was an improvement upon that of the period of the Sultanate because the Mughal emperors introduced a conciliatory policy of governance. The Mughal system of administration with all power concentrated in the hands of the emperor was well organised. The Mughal administration has been called "the Perso-Arabic system in Indian setting". Sir Jadunath Sarkar observes, "the principles of the Mughal Government, their

Church policy, their rules of taxation, their departmental arrangement and the very titles to their officials were imported from outside India.²³ The Mughal empire gave political unity to the whole of Northern India and a large of the Dakhin by bringing practically the entire subcontinent of India, except the far south, under the Central Government and giving it a centralised unitary system of administration. All the twenty Mughal provinces had the same system of administration, the one official language, official titles and the same administrative measures. This created a feeling of oneness of the country and made people of one province feel at home in another province.²⁴

On the other side, the Mughal Government was a military occupation of the land and it retained this character till the end.²⁵ The Mughal emperors established powerful garrison in strategic places to overawe the people and keep them in check. It is unfortunate that the Mughal government continued to be in ~~military~~ occupation of the land and performed the duties of ~~maintenance~~ of internal and external peace and the collection of revenue. The Mughal Government failed to perform any kind of ~~social~~ duties and it failed to take any measure for the advancement of the physical, intellectual and moral welfare of the people. The greatest failing of the Mughal lays in a deliberate attempt to keep the Hindus and the Muslims perpetually divided with an exception

of the attempt of Akbar for homogeneity which lasted only for twenty five years.²⁶

Indeed until 1286 Indian Empire or attempts of Empire building were in no way defined in political terms. Most of the Empires so far noted had a cosmological vision but did not necessarily lead to overall sanctification of political activities. Such attempts had a different type of impact on the political dynamics of India. There was no conception of absolutist state and there had been no wars of religion as experienced by Europe during those days.²⁷ The reform movements in ancient and medieval India were anti Brahminical and generally turned their wrath against the social structure and in large part refrained from being political. Admittedly Empires were never treated to be the authority for appeal against structural justice, inequalities, irrationalities of the social process. Empires were short lived to be responsible for any social misdeed.²⁸ Thus the European model of State had been absent in India and the so-called Indian State, if there was any, was never taken into consideration as a social adjudicator. Thus until 1206, theoretically there had been no state in India rather there had been the experiences of the rise of so many Empires used to be tied up by primordial relationship and the primitive theory of force. Indeed there had been no attempt to build institutions for a greater political tie up to be called in the European sense a nation state.²⁹

The Sultanate regime and the Mughal regime had, in fact, largely preoccupied a considerable period of time of the medieval, political history of India and could reign over the Hindi heartland over a long period of time. Some historians have been enthusiastic to call specially the Mughal period of India's real political unification³⁰. Notwithstanding the fact that barring some regions the Mughals could establish their political foot-print on the entire Indian landmass. As a result of such an unprecedented growth of empire in India, one may well argue that the basis of India's political unification was made complete. But such a pre-conceived notion may seem to be over-statement. If some one argues on the Mughal empire building, one has to take it for granted that the basis of integration of Mughal regime was primarily based on force and military power and certainly not on legitimacy of the people. Thus the implied force of politics in Mughal political power was primarily absent. Such an argument can well justify any situation during Mughal regime whenever and wherever there had been military weakness, there had been the witness of the fall of control of the Mughal regime over the area. Thus the authority-subject relationship was never based on any justified grounds, rather it was based on the unilateral relationship between the ruler and the ruled. As a matter of fact there had been no in built nationalist

awakening in India owing to the lack of institutional forces and factors supposed to be engineered and organised by the Mughal rulers. There could have been some sectoral improvements by the personal benevolence of some Mughal emperors, but there had been no concerted action programme in their hands to tighten the basis of nationalist state in India. The policies of the emperors especially Akbar in deconcentrating the administration through the system of Munsabdars had never been treated to be a departure in the nature of governance of different units of the empire. There had been no attempt to decentralize the unilateral centrifuged system of administration built by the Mughal emperors. Moreover, the entire period of Mughal regime did never experience with the organised revival of any subjective or objective forces of national unity. Since the term 'Nationalism in India' had been objectively absent during Mughal regime, any attempt of the historians to terminolise the Mughal period as the age of India's national unification would simply prove to be a venture to create a false consciousness on the issue and may produce a subjective feeling of nostalgia.

An honest search for identifying the location and nature of a nation state in India would prompt us to co-relate Indian experience with the experiences of the nationalist state formation in Europe. There has always been the possibility of errors to make such a

comparative historical analysis unless the historicity of both India and Europe is not properly understood. Such an honest analysis is urgently called for certainly not on a comparative scale but definitely on a scale at the microcosm.

The factors and forces mostly responsible for evolving nationalist state system in Europe during medieval period had been completely absent in the medieval Indian scenario. Feudalism in Europe at its matured stage joined hands with religious, social and economic institutional forces to give birth to the states with concerted nationalist feeling. Such kind of nexus between the socio economic and religious institutions and the feudal lords glorified as king or emperor was not the experience of the people of Indian sub continents. Indeed the evolution of Indian nation state has been the indirect gift of British imperialism in India. It was indeed an anti imperial unity resulted through various subjective and objective forces of nationalism had ultimately provided a formal shape of Indian national state. Thus, to sum up, before the Britishers established their Raj in India, the established and imposed political culture of India down through ages had always revealed a kind of Rajya. (at the regional scale) and Samrajya' (at the cross regional scale) which had never been tantamount with the concept of European state as a legal and political unity.

Historically speaking India had never been a united country in the political sphere. This disunion over through ages facilitated

foreign invasion and the political subjugation of the country to the British. Despite repeated attempts by the British through statutes and administrative reforms it was not possible to present a unified India even during the time of transfer of power. There had been two Indias represented through the directly administered British provinces and nearly six hundred Indian Princely States. Integrating these two Indias under a single political umbrella had been stupendous task. Since there had been no unanimity behind the formation of the State, the newly emerged Indian Statecraft had to face dissensions and discontent while integrating the Princely States within its fold. At the time of merger the Princely States had different levels of institutional developments, particularly, Princely States had no experience with political parties, representative institutions, democratic elections and other attributes of modern state politics, on the other hand the directly administered British provinces had been acquainted with all these experiences. Moreover, the Princely State displayed different level of socio-economic development and specialised and diversified experiences of society, economy and polity formation. These Indian States were generally looked upon as backward compared to the advanced level of development in British India. The Princely States had smaller areas for political activity with a much greater territorial fragmentation (with the exception of few big States like Hyderabad,

Mysore and Jammu and Kashmir). Furthermore, a different social structure existed in most of the Princely States. The rulers themselves were at the apex of the political and social structure which they did not want to lose. Such a generalised presumption would lead us to understand the Princely State Cooch Behar within its specified perspectives. The Cooch Behar State should not be viewed as a principality with certain common identifiable features of the majority of the Princely States of India, rather the Cooch Behar State has to be viewed from the perspective of north east India because of its geographical proximity with the north-eastern states and its age old socio-cultural and ethnic linkages with the north-east. A thorough study in an incisive manner on Cooch Behar State in the north-eastern backdrop would help us to understand the inherent positive currents and counter currents in integrating Cooch Behar with newly independent India.

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Chapter — III

THE COOCH BEHAR STATE IN THE NORTH EASTERN PERSPECTIVE

The northeastern region has remained a unique geographical unit distinctively distinguished from the rest part of Indian State. The history, culture, society, economy and politics of the region have a kind of its own with a non-Aryan and non-Dravidian roots¹. History of the autochthonous people of the northeast suggests clearly that the people of the region do have a definite Austro-Mongoloid tribal origin. Indeed, the panoramic morphology of the north eastern tribes presents a kind of museum accommodating such a kind of unique civilisation operating in diversified socio-cultural milieu in the north east gave birth to a variety of little nationalities fundamentally different from the so called dominant nationality or tradition of Indian state structure. Thus, ever since India's independence the process of integration has been baffled by the ethnic autonomy considerations². A brief background study is not out of place here.

To adumbrate, the Cooch Behar State qualified to be a northeastern variety, experienced with the process of state formation synonymous to other small states of the North eastern

plains. There had been the co-existence and interaction of tribal organisations, chiefdoms, archaic state and larger state system of the precolonial period. Admittedly, the principality of Cooch Behar designated as secondary premodern principality overlain by Colonial rule. Importantly, a very special dimension of such a principality is the domination and emergence of a typical ethnic tribal group sanskritised, Hinduised in the greater process of assimilation and integration. Thus the Cooch Behar principality can not be comparable in a true sense with the definable external models like Rajput-Kshatriya, Taishen or Tibetan. The Cooch Behar State operated in a situation co-related to an ecological base or hill plain contrasts. However, Cooch Behar State is nearer to Ahom- Tai model rather than the Kshatriya Rajput or Tibetan Bhutia models of stimulus diffusion³. Cooch Behar State represents more or less the ~~synonymous experiences~~ of Ahom political system capable of presenting co-relation between the degree of surplus generated through appropriate technological innovations in agriculture and the level of functional differentiation, stratification and centralisation of a polity.

The concentration and expansion of political power depended on the power of the king to extract surplus and exploit the technological productive power of the subjects, the kings were expected to partially redistribute the wealth through the organisation hierarchically situated on a dominance - dependent

continuum. In the hierarchy higher levels of politics were evolved by conglomeration of lineage or clan based units of one or more ethnic groups and by conquest of segmentary tribes by larger principalities or states. In the levels of the polity co-ordination of lineage or clan segments at the level of kingship or chieftancy and also among the lower strata are significant structural blocks. Prof. Surajit Sinha has rightfully presented two models of stimulus diffusion out of which one is essentially the northeastern variety of social and political formations. According to him 'While the social and political formations in north eastern India have been developed on tribe-caste peasant contrast and co-related ecology of hill plains contrast, the principalities or states of the Indian heart land operating in a situation of tribe-caste/peasant continuum correlated to an ecological base of hill-plateau-plains continuity'.

The period from 13th to 16th Centuries saw the emergence and development of a large number of tribal political formations in northeast India. The Chutiya, the Coch, the Dimasa, the Tripuri, the Nuithi, the Khasi – all these tribes crystallised into rudimentary state formations by the end of 15th century. The most developed of them all, the Coches went on elaborating and sophisticating its formations. With these processes were associated also the progressive adoption of wet rice cultivation, the introduction of plough, the subjugation of neighbouring people, the employment of

scribes, a greater or lesser degree of Hinduisation of the ruling families and petty commodity production to a limited extent. Such an experience of civilized polity formation from its immediate root of tribal formation has been unique for the northeastern principalities which can not be comparable with the principalities of northern and eastern India as well as of southern India. Owing to the primary reason that the process of state formation started too late in north east in comparison with Indian main lands.

The Cooch Behar State had thus been 'a product of society at a certain stage of development' in the wake of 'the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with in itself'⁵. Later it continued to undergo further sophistication, and it increasingly admitted non-Coches not only into the position of spiritual guides and preceptors, but also into the middle strata of the bureaucratic hierarchy. Such a fusion was not absolutely unique but had been taken place under such compulsions of circumstances as demographic influx, increased division of labour, demonstration effects of neighboring States, Hinduisation and above all, the need for allies to moderate the conflicting relations and established social equations for that purpose between the Rulers and the Ruled.

Despite being a territory of the present state of West Bengal, the geography, history and society of Cooch Behar can not be properly understood by any standard unless Cooch Behar is viewed

from the north-eastern perspective. While the district of Cooch Behar is a present a part of West Bengal. Cooch Behar was historically linked and culturally connected with the western plains of northeast. In fact the ingredients of natural and social environment of the northeast have shaped the ecology, the lives and society of the people of Cooch Behar. Indeed, Cooch Behar is both historically and culturally linked with the principal northeastern state of Assam⁶. Such a linkage of Cooch Behar with the northeast can well be substantiated by the homogeneities in the symbols of identity. Such an identity provided for the nucleation of cultural zone in which a community concept seemed to have played a considerable role. Such a nucleation of cultural zone has come out of linguistic distinctiveness and that position of Cooch Behar gave support to justify the analysis of viewing the problems and issues of merger of the Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union.

The British had a definite strategic interest in intervening into the north east frontier⁷. In fact Assam was fully annexed by the ~~British~~ British. As a part of extended territory of Assam to the West, the Cooch Behar State had been brought under the control of British authorities⁸. However, as a sequel of British administrative policy true tribal society, the state of Cooch Behar was left free to be administered by indigenous kings or tribal chieftains.

Post independent India's northeastern policy was chaotic⁹ characterised by misinformation about the territory. While the

inexperience of the national political leadership to understand the problems of north east has provided a room for understanding the society, economy and polity as well as history of the north east in an over simplified manner, the northeast including Cooch Behar, Sikkim and Darjeeling still remains ambiguous¹⁰. The main Stream State building force in this region was almost absent and the nation building forces could not have its sway in the northeast¹¹. Thus the so-called Indian nationalism as a concept had been 'constructed' and had never been 'given' issue. The process of state formation in the northeast has been fundamentally different from the process of state formation as experienced by the Indian northern heart land. This is simply because of the civilisational differences between northern India and the northeast India. The religion-ridden society of northern India witnessed a kind of nexus between the religious power elite and the secular power elite. The Brahmanic dominant tradition did have a definite role in the process of state formation in north India. The northeastern India, on the other experienced variegated trends and events in the process of state formation. The Ahom - Tai model, the Cultural intrinsic model. The Jayantia models are some of the references which help understanding the variegated nature of the process of state formation. In fact the development of the civil society of the northeast has been based

upon two important conceptions like Dharmaraja and Devaraja. A blend of these two concepts provides room to understand the basis of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. The simplicities of the tribal society and the tribal perceptions on egalitarianism ■ scarcely found in northern India provided a kind of definite historiography to understand the process of state formation. The northeastern state formation process has been culturally different and ethnically distinctive.

Whatever social tensions threatened the political ignanimity in the region have originated partially from the British policy of northeast. The open competitive electoral politics was first introduced by the Britishers in the northeast historical frame. Such a historical study would unravel the issues and events basically concerned with the integration of a population not only to a nationalist frame decaptivised from the feudal economy, but also to a political system of soft democratic nature in which the entire northeast including Cooch Behar was never a serious partner during prolonged phase of colonial rule. In fact the anti colonial political project engineered and mastered by India's nationalist elites could not touch upon the heart of the people of Cooch Behar due to the reason that anti colonial political moves of any kind were banned by the administration of the princely State Cooch Behar¹².

Thus a brief historical note of the north east is an urgency to have a real understanding of the perceptions of the people of Cooch Behar and the ruler on the issue of integration of the state of Cooch Behar with the Indian Union. A brief survey of historical antiquity of the Cooch Behar State may be in order.

Modern Assam and a part of Bengal forming the old Kamrup were formerly ruled by many tribes¹³. The Danavas, the Kiratas, the Ashuras, the Burmans, the Chutiyas and the palas have overrun either the whole or a part of Kamrup from time to time. The later comes the Ahoms, the Khens and Coches, although brought amongst themselves were practically mixed up through matrimonial and other alliances. The Ahoms occupied the Eastern Zone. The Coches became masters of the Western Zone of Kamrup and ultimately centered round Cooch Behar and Baikunthapur¹⁴.

Information has been scarce and sketchy to indicate the rise of Cooch Behar State as one of the tiny North Eastern polities since the eve of sixteenth century. References of Mlechha king (undignified) in the legends and historical records also point to the existence of some kind of political organisation among the aboriginal people¹⁵. A few local chiefs assumed the royal suffix Pala to their name when this part of north east India was brought under the control of Pala king Gauda. One such feudal Chief was Dharma Pala, relics of whose fortified place had been visited by Francis Buchanan Hamilton. Legends of Mainamati and Gopichandra were

associated with Dharmapala. Mention should be made of another locality chief, king Prithu whose place of residence Prithurajas Gada, had also been described by Buchanan Hamilton. The Assamese historical sources mentioned the existence of local chiefs as Bhuinya Raja from tenth century onwards in the part of Kamrup now with in the Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam¹⁶.

Information relating to northeast history have been sketchy and spreaded over a span of a millenium and found in legendary and quasi-historical process. These have been the pointers to the historical fact that this part of the Indian realm of ancient kingdoms of Kamta Cooch Behar Kamrup were controlled by the local tribal chiefs drawn principally from land owing peasantry. The rise of such politics suggested a socio-economic base of stratified village societies and production and appropriation of surplus depended on the mode of production and quantum of surplus were the degree of stratification of peasant society and level of political organisation.

The geographical area within which the earliest political developments took place can easily be demarcated from the evidences of historical remains place names and areas where legends originated. A sketch of land from the north western corner of the macro region to the tip of lateritic clay of Barind in the south comprising Western part of the piedmont plain of the northern Bengal contained all these remains and antiquities. This tract lies between the broad plains of the Karatoya-Trisrota-Jaldhaka river system.

All these early polities accepted the suzerainty either of the Varman kings of Kamrupa or the central rulers of Gauda. Their allegiance was nominal than real and they exercised control and wielded power like independent rulers in their localities. No sovereign ruler emerged in this area so long these two centrally powerful States held overlordship over them. With the decline of the powerful Pala and Sena rulers of Bengal, a void was created for the time being till it was filled in by the rising Muslim power in Bengal¹⁷.

External influence of the State of Gauda Paundravardhan helped in an indirect manner, the political development of the region under study. Locality chiefs acquired political power by virtue of their relations with the imperial power of these neighbouring states. Each of such chiefdoms or localised political units expanded continuously through colonisation of adjacent territories by the Hinduised peasantry and by bringing the non Hinduised autochthons of the newly annexed territories within the dominant socio cultural fold. One of such polities evolved a supra local political organisation and form among the Chiefs would emerge as eminent one who would be recognised by the rest as the supra local political authority. In such a loosely structured political system characterised by absence of strong military power and bureaucratic organisation against the complementary power of the chiefs, the supra local authority maintained this patrimonial powers by means of ritual sovereignty. The ritual means by which the

supra local authority maintained his sovereign power consisted of deputyship of the sanskritised form of the most influential autochthonous deity, introduction of Brahamanical canons and rituals and establishment of temple institution. By these means popular cults of the autochthonous was elevated to exclusive state cult monopolised by the supra local power.

The Koch tribe under the general Hajo defeated the Khens and ruled the Western portion of Kamrup from 1510 - 1587 A.D. According to some authors Koches had been in Assam since 1205 A.D. It is said that they belonged to great Bodo tribe who came to north eastern Assam through Pathoi range along the Noa-Dihang river. The Kingdom of hajo included western half of Assam, eastern half of Morung (Nepal Terai) and the lands bounded on the east by Dhanewari river, on the west by Konki river, on the north by Dalimkotta hills (formerly in Bhutan now in the district of Darjeeling West Bengal) and on the south upto Ghoraghat (now in Bangladesh). This altogether formed the boundary of Hajo's Kingdom at that time.¹⁸

Thus, genealogically all these tribal groups have had definitely a Austro-Mongoloid origin, which had never been, at least for few centuries experienced with Aryan or mixed Aryan-Dravidian interactions. Ultimately, however, there had been interaction between these civilizations and a kind of cultural diffusion was taken place.

In his search to identify the existence of politics in the north-east since time immemorial, E. Gait sincerely put, "The only Kamta dynasty of which we have any connected account is that of Khyan or Khen kings, whose last representative Nilamvara was overthrown by Hussain Shah in 1498" ¹⁹.

The history of Kamata or Kamrupa before the rule of the Khen dynasty is based not on historical evidences but on the ancient scriptures. The territory known as Pragjyotisha is mentioned in the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Vishnupurana, Harivamsa, Yoginitantra, ~~Kalkipurana~~ etc. The earliest name associated with this territory in Naraka, the son of Vishnu on Mother Earth, who was ordained the king of Prajyotisha by Lord Vishnu in his Krishna incarnation and his son Bhagadatta was made the King, who fought on the side of the Kauravas in the Kurukshetra war. The subsequent rulers of Kamarupa have claimed descent from Bhagadatta. According to tradition, he discovered the skeleton of the arm of Bhagadatta which was carried by a kite from the Kurukshetra battle field and lay buried under a simul tree. Chakradhvaja ensharined the amulet to the arm in the temple of Kamatesvari.

After Bhagadatta comes the name of Bhaskravarman in the middle of seventh as the king of Kamarupa and the name of Dharmapala, the last of the Pala line of kings of Kamarupsa, 12th century A.D. died without an heir and there was anarchy for some time during which the country was overrun by the Koch, Mech,

Garo and Bhot tribes. Niladhvaja somehow acquired power and proclaimed himself king with Kamatapur as his capital, Niladhvaja was succeeded by his son Chakradhvaja, was succeeded by Nilamvara who was the last of this line of kings. In the war with Hussain Shah of Gouda, Nilamvara was taken as prisoner and Kamatapur was captured in A.D.1498. But the Muslim army could not keep Kamatapur Kingdom for long, within seven years, the son of Hussain Shah who was in charge lost the whole territory.

After the expulsion of the Muslim army, the Kamata Kingdom was engulfed in anarchy and split up into petty principalities under small chiefs. This state of affairs continued for a few years and then the Koches under Biswasingha made themselves masters of the country.²⁰

The era of the present Cooch Behar State starts from Chandan in the year 1510 AD, when he was proclaimed king at Chikna. Chandan ruled for thirteen years and after his death his cousin brother Bishu named afterwards Biswasingha became king of Cooch Behar. Biswasingha was a man of unusual enterprise and courage. He defeated the neighbouring chiefs and extended his kingdom from the Brahmaputra in the east to Ghoraghat in the west and firmly established his kingdom making Cooch Behar his capital²¹. In fact, Biswasingha was the first Cooch ruler who embraced Hinduism and Hinduism had a strong hold in Cooch

Behar from the early period. The narrative discourse of the history of Cooch Behar presents the facts that Biswasingha was succeeded by his son Naranarayan, who extended his kingdom in the eastern direction and defeated among others, the chiefs of Dimapur, Jaintia, Khairam, Chachar and Tippera and also the Ahom Raja²². The triumph of Naranarayan was put to a halt when Isha Khan, the Muhammadan Chief of Bhuiya of Sonar Gaon who took prisoner Naranarayan's brother Shukladhwaj, defeated him. The rule of Biswasingha dynasty in Cooch Behar ended on the 12th September 1949 AD under the Cooch Behar Merger Agreement between the Governor General of India and His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. Thus Cooch Behar was brought to the so-called Indian mainstream, which must arouse cynicism, scorn and even fury. Despite the presence of such a psychological state, the State of Cooch Behar had ultimately been merged with India and became a district of the State of West Bengal. This was possible because of political administrative linkages were established since 1773 and the continuous intervention of the dominant cultural tradition and a kind of assimilation. As a result of assimilation, the process of sanskritisation did play a vital role. The dominant Aryan bent of national thinking could accommodate the Dravidian reality and tried to inject the Indian ethos in the minds of the people who

had been under the process of sanskritisation. However, this ethos could not appreciate the Indo-Mongoloid factor in it. Consequently, the northeastern part remained unattended²³. The western part of Brahmaputra and Barak Valley covering the princely State Cooch Behar had undergone a both subjective and objective metamorphosis accommodating and assimilating the so-called Indian ethos super-imposed on them, but the process could not touch upon the Mongolian psyche and cultural tradition distinctively different from the so-called national mainstream, built upon primarily on Aryan and Dravido-Aryan civilisational mix. Even within the region a considerable number of people had not been able to digest the so-called Indian ethos, constituted of a process of accommodation between Aryan bent and Dravidian devoid of Indo-Mongoloid civilisation, remained foreign to them.

Evidently, the mindset and the culture-set of the people of Cooch Behar during the time of India's independence and the integration of the country had been something different both from the culture-set and mindset of the people of India unshackled from the clutches of colonial rule. The reasons are obvious, both historically and administratively Cooch Behar was not an integral part of British Indian mainland. Even during the days of India's national freedom struggle Cooch Behar did have little relationship

with the nationalist mainstream. Neither the Maharaja's administration of Cooch Behar did have interest in India's freedom struggle nor the nationalist leaders had that much of interest to inject nationalist ethos in the minds of the people of Cooch Behar. As a result, barring certain occasional incidents and efforts made by a progressive section of people, Cooch Behar State did not experience with so-called nationalist movement²⁴. Both the Maharajas of Cooch Behar, administrators and local natives viewed the new Indian Government with fear and suspicion. The associates of Cooch Behar Maharaja's administration had a feeling that if the State of Cooch Behar was merged, with the coming of outsiders into their native state they would get slowly alienated both from power and lands. Moreover, a long standing recognition of the tiny State Cooch Behar as a Princely State by the British Government had provided a room for political insulation of the Maharaja's administration with the newly independent India's national state craft. The people of Cooch Behar sans a few educated elites could not be able to identify themselves with the people living in the districts of West Bengal, adjacent to Cooch Behar State. Because, the former did never experience with the liberal democratic political process in Cooch Behar. British policies towards Princely States have played a major role in giving Maharaha's administration a definite separate identity. Because of the prevailing uneven and

under development and less advancement in transport and communication, no greater interaction both social and cultural to remove the distance between the two mindsets was possible. Such a **kind of distinctive historical and culture-set** had provided the ground in ferreting out the paradoxes during the period of bargains to integrate Cooch Behar with India. ✓

A detailed study on the history of the merger of the Cooch Behar State in the forthcoming chapter would unveil the fact that the typical geographical, historical, culturo-political ambience of a tiny State Cooch Behar had shown a kind of apathy of the **Maharaja, the administrators of his court** as well as a section of the native people. In addition to it the common people of Cooch Behar had a degree of possible resistance to the whole issue of merger. The objective reasons behind this apathy may be many, which would be elaborated in the following chapter, but the principal reason may be a kind of compulsion, which has well been argued as a north-eastern compulsion. While viewing the arguments and the counter arguments on the issue of the merger of the Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union, almost all the scholastic writings have either objectively avoided or unknowingly neglected this fundamental perspective of analysing the merger history of Cooch Behar from the northeastern framework. Before putting the history of merger of Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union a detailed analysis may be drawn on the British policy towards Princely States with special reference to Cooch Behar to focus on the **distinctiveness of Cooch Behar as an independent and subjugated Princely territory.**

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Chapter – IV

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS INDIAN STATES

WITH REFERENCE TO COOCH BEHAR

(1757-1813)

The East India Company symbolising imperial interest and power had been able to penetrate Indian soil at a particular phase of history by taking advantage of the apparent disunity and internal feuds among the regional powers in India. Such a situation of disunion, disbelief and distrust among the then existing regional rulers of India had created an opportunity for the British power to enter into and to intervene into the Indian political soil. An overview of the then disturbed political situation is relevant to mention.

After the disintegration of the Mughal Empire, the Marathas **could only be able to regain their power over their lost dominions, which was founded by Shivaji.** But the death of Shivaji left the Marathas between the internal quarrels and dissensions. Intrigue and corruption in Peshwas Court and perpetual wars between the Scindia and Holker disrupted the Maratha unity. Into this arena of confusion and unrest entered the British in the political scene of India. The British domination of India began with the establishment

of trading settlements in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay, which provided the basis for the expansion of British authority. At that time the only interest of the Company was in trade and commerce and they frowned upon wars which added into their profits. During this period the company entered into treaties with Indian States at no more than the maintenance of the company's privileged position in trade against its rivals¹.

This historical growth of the system of Princely States in treaty relationship with the East India Company began when East India Company acquired the Rights of belligerency with non-Christian powers². This gave them the legal authority to negotiate engagements, alliances and treaties. The battle of Plassey laid the foundation of relationship between the East India Company and the Indian States. British policy towards the Indian States had been designed in a well-knit manner. Such an objectified policy design had created the necessary basis of relationship between the British and the Indian States. To analyse the relationship between the former and the later Sir William Warner wrote³, "there were three epochs in British relations with the Indian States till the introduction of the Reforms of 1919". During the preliminary phase the English East India Company followed the "Policy of the Ringfence" and this phase lasted from 1757 to 1813. The second period lasted from 1813 to 1858 and was called as "Subordinate Isolation". The third phase from 1858 to 1919 and was designated

by Warner as the period of "Subordinate Union". Such policies deserve specific mention.

POLICY OF RINGFENCE:

At the beginning one can argue that such a policy was undertaken owing to certain compulsions. During the phase the English East India Company was not very strong. It was not in a position to interfere into the internal affairs of the Indian States. The Company had neither the strength nor the resources to defeat the Indian States. From the granting of the Diwani to the East India Company until the tenure of Lord Wellesley, the Company remained one of the several contending powers in India, whose treaties and alliances were designated only to protect their commercial interests and position against the rivals and it did so on the basis of equality and reciprocity⁴. Lee Warner elaborates, "that, during the period the British endeavoured as far as possible to live with a Ringfence and beyond that they avoided intercourse with the Chiefs"⁵.

While applying the Ringfence policy the East India Company exhibited a soft and cordial relationship with the Indian rulers. Panikkar rightly observes about the policy pursued during the phase thus, "all the treaties, except that with Mysore, are negotiated on a basis of equality. The company did not claim any paramountcy or imperial authority and the treaties themselves merely show that at least the case of those States were not conquered, there was a

spirit reciprocity⁷. Secondly, each of these treaties guarantees in a most solemn manner the absolute authority of the Ruler over his subjects and most unequivocally repudiates any claim to intervene in the affairs of the State⁷.

This policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the States was laid down in Pitt's India Act of 1784. The Act provided that the Home Government did not approved of the intervention of her officers in India into the internal affairs of the Indian States. But in spite of the Act of 1784, it cannot be denied that on certain occasions the company had to interfere in the affairs of the Indian States. But Lee Warner is of opinion that when the events of the Ringfence periods are called to mind, the palpable anxiety of the Company to end both annexation and alliances stands out in the clearest relief. There had been the battle of Buxar in 1764 when Oudh lay at the feet of major Munro, but was not annexed; the Rohila was after which warren Hastings conquered and conferred territories on the Wazir of Oudh; the first Maratha war which closed in the restitution of Bassein and the restoration of the status quo by the Treaty of Salbai and finally four Mysore wars from which the allies of the British derived the main advantages⁶.

The British Government also derived advantage in establishing her relationship with the tiny Princely north-eastern State Cooch Behar. Taking opportunity of the internal feuds of the Cooch Behar State, the neighbouring country Bhutan extended her

powerful hands to extend influence over the Cooch Behar administration. Under the pressure of the Bhutanese Dharendra Narayan of Cooch Behar fled from the country and sought the help of the East India Company⁸.

Thus the opportunity of intervening into the affairs of Cooch Behar State came to the East India Company as an invitation. The importance of Cooch Behar was acknowledged by the East India Company. The control over the administration and the exertions of influence over the tiny state also become one of the most important aims of the British imperialism. The appeal for assistance of the Raja was immediately accepted subject to certain conditions. Accordingly, a treaty was arranged upon between the East India Company and the Raja of Cooch Behar on 5th April 1773.⁹ The substance of the concluding treaty was that the company should expel the Raja's enemies out of his territory and protect it from any inroads of the outsiders in future, the Raja would bear the expenses of the British Army and agree to the subjection of the Company and would pay half of the revenues of the State¹⁰. The detail terms and conditions of the treaty were categorically stipulated. As a result the company's troops expelled the Bhutanese from the Cooch Behar State and recaptured the country from their hands. This treaty of 1773 had shattered the sovereign right of the king of Cooch Behar and ultimately it became a tributary State of the East India Company, though in the first phase the company was mere a contending power.

From the above discussion a question may be raised why did the East India Company interfere into the affairs of a small northeastern State like Cooch Behar? The answer to this question can be given from different angles. It was, in the first instance, **guided by the political interest of the British.** It is evident from the **subsequent report of Walter Hamilton (1820)** that, "the peace and security of the adjacent British territories were more to be considered than any pecuniary advantage to be derived from the new acquisition, as prior to this period the Rungpur District had been much exposed to incursions from Bhutan"¹¹. Thus the maintenance of peace and security became a matter of direct interest and naturally the offer of the treaty proposal of 1772 was forthwith accepted by the company. The political interest, i.e., the protection of the northern flank of the company's expanding empire in Bengal was their main concern¹². The political motive of Warren Hastings, the then Governor General of Bengal is also to be mentioned. "He was glad at the opportunity to annex the territory through the firmly disclaimed remote projects of conquest and stressed that his only aim was to complete the outline of the company's dominations"¹³.

Secondly, the political motive was further strengthened with the commercial interest of the East India Company. The Company's commerce in the Himalayan region was so long carried on through Nepal, but during this time the political atmosphere of Nepal badly

hampered the commercial interests of the English East India Company¹⁴. The company as a result was eager to open trade route to Tibet through Bhutan, Assam and Cooch Behar and Warren Hasting's policy in this regard was to bypass the Gurkhas of Nepal¹⁵. But the relation between the East India Company and Bhutan was not even firmly established and cordial. Naturally, the annexation of Cooch Behar by Bhutan would prevent their commercial interest in this region. To obtain free access for trade routes it was essentially important on the part of the East India Company to clear the trade routes and obviously the war with Bhutan was necessary¹⁶.

Thirdly, the motives of the East India Company are explained by Gayatri Devi, the princess of Cooch Behar and the Maharani of Jaipur. She is of the opinion that "the links between Cooch Behar and the British grew stronger and more diverse. Placed as it was geographically, Cooch Behar was constantly involved in the expansionist schemes and political intrigues of Bhutan, Sikkim and Assam, which in their turn were involved with Nepal and Tibet. It was important for the British to have a foothold in this troubled and strategically important area and when life in the State was further complicated by constant domestic dissension, eventually in 1788, a British Resident was appointed to keep order"¹⁷.

Moreover, the East India Company was perturbed by the activities of the Sannyasis (Saints) who were posing a threat to the peace and security in the neighbouring areas of Cooch Behar. The problem to tackle the 'Sannyasis' became a concern of the British and condition regarding the 'Sannyasis' was referred in the treaty of 1773¹⁸.

One point should be mentioned here that the third article of the treaty of 1773 envisaged the complete subjection of Cooch Behar territory with the company's domination in India, but it was not properly implemented at the beginning of Company's intercourse with Cooch Behar for two reasons. Firstly, the East India Company had engaged their entire attention in extending their sphere of influence in Central and Western India, and secondly, the over simplification of the fact that to the Company the loyalty of this tiny State Cooch Behar, had been above question, to particularly after the re-installation of the captive Raja Dharendra Narayan.

On the other side, we can see that fourteen years after the passing of Pitt's India Act, Wellesley came to India as Governor General. He was given the strictest injunctions to keep the peace, not to meddle with the Indian rulers and to husband the depleted resources of the Company. But Wellesley paid scant attention to these injunctions. As a Governor General in India Wellesley's only intention to make the East India Company as a paramount power

and with this idea in mind he introduced the Subsidiary Alliance System with the Indian rulers, under this system, the State accepting subsidiary alliance was to make no wars and to carry on no negotiations with any other State without the Company's knowledge and consent; the bigger States were to maintain armies commanded by British Officers for the preservation of public peace and their rulers were to cede certain territories for the upkeep of these forces; the smaller States were to pay a tribute to the company. In return, the Company was to protect them, one and all, against external aggression and internal rebellion. A British Resident was also installed in every State that accepted the subsidiary alliance¹⁹.

Internal dissensions, foreign incursions and internal squabbles precipitated the advent of the British in Cooch Behar and they tried to introduce the system of subsidiary alliance in the State. The active interference into administration of the State by the Company came after the death of Raja Dhairjendra Narayan²⁰. At the time of his death his successor to the throne was Harendra Narayan who was just above three years of age which resulted in confusion and troubles. The troubles in the State disrupted the State administration and at the same time revenue also fell to a low ebb which was a matter of grave concern to the East India Company. Because, initially the Company was mainly concerned with the revenue and remained satisfied with the tribute which was agreed upon by the treaty of 1773. In this connection it should be

mentioned here that the half of the revenue was to be paid as a tribute and not as a tax. So, the question of political disturbances and the fall of revenue led the Company to take effective action in the affairs of the State.

In the meantime the situation of the State turned worse. A man named Ganesh Giri (Leader of the Sannyasis) and Bhagabanta Narayan, the elder brother of the then Nazir Deo, made desperate attempts and captured the king and the Queen Regent,²¹ under the circumstances active attempts of interference in the internal affairs of Cooch Behar by the English East India Company became a reality. The Company freed the king and taking account of this disturbed State of affairs in the Cooch Behar State, the Governor General appointed a commission with Lawrence Marcer and John Louis Chauvet ²².

On the basis of the recommendation of the Commission Henry Douglas was, appointed as the Resident Commissioner of Cooch Behar to restore peace and tranquility in this troubled area ²³. Thus for the first time attempts were being made by the East India Company to interfere directly into the affairs of the State administration. The administrative officers, designated either as Resident or Political Agent were instructed to assist the Rulers in solving the problems of the State and at the same time they were entrusted with the duty to promote the Company's interests in this Princely State. As a result the privileges enjoyed by the Raja were

curtailed and in the near future led to the confrontation with the Raja of Cooch Behar.

The appointment of the Commissioner a direct representative of the East India Company for Cooch Behar State Administration, opened a new vista for the Company to institute the British system of administration in every field of State life. The situation affected the indigenous Rulers of Cooch Behar. Consequently discontent and dichotomy between the Company's Commissioners and the native Rulers on issues of policy decision had been at the fore.

From the above discussion we can say that at the time of Wellesley's administration and upto the maturity of Raja Harendra Narayan the Company's authority had been greatly increased in the State of Cooch Behar. After attaining the maturity Harendra Narayan tried to exercise his sovereign powers which led a confrontation with the Raja and the Company. As a result the company did not follow the policy of 'Subordinate Isolation'. Thus the policy of Ringfence persuade primarily in establishing relationship with the Indian States had been observed in breach especially when applied to Cooch Behar. One may observe that instead of pressing Ringfence policy in its relationship with Cooch Behar the East India Company forthrightly followed the strategy of subsidiary alliance in her relationship with Cooch Behar. However, such a kind of strategy deviating from original policy of Ringfence

could not fully effective because of the growing dissensions of Maharaja Harendra Narayan.

As a matter of fact the policy of Ringence pursued by the Company had been undertaken with the primary objective of ensurance of British interests with in the periphery of friendly neighbors who were to act as the first line of defence in the event of enemy attack. This was essentially a defensive measure and it assumed the rest of India to be foreign territory.

A careful observation from the above depiction would reveal that during the phase some protected States had come into being and Cooch Behar is one of those States. In fact, the policy which Clive initiated and Hastings followed towards these States may be said to have laid the foundation of the subsidiary system which was adequately developed at the hands of Wellesley.

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Chapter – V

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS INDIAN STATES: WITH REFERENCE TO COOCH BEHAR (1813 –1857)

This period marked by a tendency of the Company whereby it had made all the Indian States subordinated by compelling them to enter into subsidiary alliances. Circumstances compelled the Indian States to accept the domination of the Company as the paramount power in the country. The States were to give either money or considerable portion of territory so that the company might be able to keep a contingent force either in the State or outside for its protection. The Indian States joining the subsidiary alliance had to turn out all the non-English and European employees from its service. The joining State was not to conduct any foreign relations other than to the British Government. In cases of inter State disputes the joining States in subsidiary alliance had to accept that the British Government was to guarantee the territorial integrity of the State. While implementing this policy Lord Hastings brought into the subsidiary system 145 States in Central India, 145 States

in Kathiwar and 20 States in Rajputana. He enunciated a policy of complete subordination and isolation, but he was against the annexation of the Indian States. His successors did not share his views and annexed Sind, Punjab, Oudh and other minor States. The opinion of Lord Dalhousie was that Lord Hastings was wrong in propping up minor principalities and the only way of preventing misrule in the State was to annex them. He evolved the theory of constructive feudalism and enunciated the Doctrine of Laps and escheat by which he annexed Satara, Nagpur, Tanjore, Jaipur and Jahnsi.

The doctrine of laps implied that on the failure of the natural heir, the sovereignty of the independent States held on a subordinate tenure would be lapsed to the paramount power. The British Government did not recognise the right of those States to adopt heirs, although such a convention had existed for a long time. But the doctrine of laps was not applicable to protect allies. Mentioning to the abuses in the administration of some of the Indian States, Lord Dalhousie declared that, 'the British Government in the exercise of a wise and sound policy is bound not to put side or neglect such rightful opportunities of acquiring territory or revenue as may from time to time present themselves whether they arise from the laps of subordinate states by the failure of heirs natural where succession can be sustained only by the sanction of the Government being given to the ceremony of

adoption, according to Hindu Law. The Government is bound, in duty as well as policy, to act on every such occasion with the purest integrity and in the most scrupulous observance of good faith. Whenever even a shadow of doubt can be shown, the claims should not at once be abandoned"¹.

This phase ranging from 1813 to 1858 is by far the most important in the history of the relationship of the States to the British Government. It witnessed a metamorphosis of the Indian States from a congeries of quasi-independent units, some openly hostile, antagonistic, doubtful and resentful. Step by step the Company had been driven by inexorable fate to abandon its policy of 'Ringfence' and non-interference and passed through the system of subordinate alliance to the generous policy of cooperative partnership².

The period between Wellesley's departure and the arrival of Marquis of Hastings in 1813 is traditionally regarded as an interregnum marked by a reversal of the forward policy. But this period in no sense marked a mere return to the pre-Wellesley days because this was no longer possible although the Court of Directors intended. Indeed, it is from this time onwards that the development of two different schools in Anglo-Indian administration can be discernible. Both these schools holding exactly opposite ideas, had one common ground. This was the realisation of the fact, that the

subsidiary system was inconvenient and that it had entailed upon the company additional responsibility.

Cornwallis came in India for the second time with fullest instruction to reverse his predecessors' policy and it developed upon Sir George Barlow and Lord Minto. Lord Minto tried to avoid treaty engagements with Indian powers with few exceptions, like the case of Kathiawar, Bundel-Khand etc. During the time of Lord Hastings the interrupted policy of Wellesley pushed to its logical conclusion. In his policy he surpassed Wellesley by substituting the policy of subsidiary alliance. Under these policy old treaties of mutual amity, friendly cooperation and reciprocal obligations were replaced by those of subordinate cooperation, allegiance and loyalty. This system had the obvious aim to render the British Government paramount in effect. When Hastings laid the reins of administration and left India, all the Indian powers had either vanished or offered, and the Company's Government had emerged as the paramount power mostly in all of India. With Hastings departure also departed an age, and the period that followed the gradual growth of the authority of the British Residents in matters of internal affairs of States.

The policy of interference in the internal affairs of the Indian States reflected in the events of the Cooch Behar State. The advent of the East India Company in the Cooch Behar State marked a

breach with the past and the relation between the company's authority and the then Raja Harendra Narayan took a serious turn. The personal administrative period of Raja Harendra Narayan (1801 – 1839) is to be remembered, as an era of tremendous resistance to the attempt of the British to introduce reforms in the State and this conflict was not limited to the political scene only. The king's preference of traditionalism accentuated the conflict both in political and in social matters. The roots of the conflict were many and they developed surrounding the powers and functions of the Commissioners.

According to the recommendation of the Mercer and Cheuvet Commission, Henry Dauglaus was appointed as commissioner of Cooch Behar State in 1789. Soon after his resuming the Charge Dauglaus tried to make room for direct participation of the East India Company into the affairs of Cooch Behar State. Taking advantage of the minority of the Raja Harendra Narayan the commissioner wielded the overall authority in the State. After achieving majority Raja Harendra Narayan decided to rule the State with powers which his ancestors exercised before. The commissioners of the State were entrusted with the task of achieving the ends of the Governor General in council in forming a concert with the Raja. But the king expressed his strong resentments to the measures contemplated and insisted on his right as an independent ruler of his own territory. Due to the

resistance from the king the East India Company was compelled to withdraw his commissioner from the Cooch Behar State for the time being.

The presence of the Commissioner at Cooch Behar State had restrained the authority of the Raja. With the withdrawal of the commissioner all checks were removed and duties connected with the administration had all along been performed by the native officers, as a result of which many of the old abuses crept into the Government of the State³. Chaos and anarchy prevailed in the State. The consequence was that the administration became very loose and the revenue collection fell to an alarming stage.

As the revenue was the most vital matter of the British, they did not remain idle for a long time. Besides the revenue, the law and order in this strategically important State had been grave. To remedy the situation, the office of the Resident Commissioner was again revived with the hope that he might introduce proper rules for the collection of the public revenue, and would try to establish Regulations so as to effect speedy and pure administration of justice, but the attempt of the company proved of no avail, in consequence of the Raja's aversion to reform⁴.

During this time the collectors of Rangpur carried on the duties in connection with Cooch Behar State from Rangpur. They were not unprejudicious in their relation with the Raja and the defects and irregularities of the Cooch Behar Court and the

functions of the Raja Harendra Narayan were often sent upto the East India Company's government in a highly exaggerated form which made the matter worse between the Company and the Cooch Behar State⁵. The collectors of Rangpur sometimes interfered into matters of little importance in the internal administration and terms were dictated to the king and thus the patience of the ruler of the State was sorely taxed⁶. In such state of affairs the East India Company determined to exercise a thorough and efficient interference into the internal affairs of Cooch Behar State with an eye to eradicate the evils of the administration⁷. Accordingly, another Resident Commissioner was appointed for the Cooch Behar State and the Commissioner was specially instructed to introduce some reform in the administrative affairs of the State. Administration and judiciary had been solely the internal matters of the State and the rulers were supreme in formulating the systems in these respects, the British Government tried to establish their unseen control over these systems. This led to further complications in the relations with the Raja of Cooch Behar State.

The company tried to bring about certain modifications like, separate systems of the law for the Hindus and the Muhammadans⁸ with the intention to expand the Company's authority after curtailing the judicial power of the king.⁹ Thus, the judicial measures, cherished by the company formed one of the major

sources which laid the foundation for confrontation with the Raja. Controversy arose between the king and the Raja on the issue of printing coin and the succession problem.

The coining of money had become an important issue throughout the personal reign of Raja Harendra Narayan after he attained majority, while the Raja wanted to keep the flag of tradition and long practised coinage system high, the company wanted to bring about changes in the currency system for their own administrative convenience¹⁰. The prevailing medium of exchange in this region was Narayani Mudra¹¹. The Company's Government decided to stop the Narayani coin by putting forward the terms of the treaty of 1773 in which the right of coinage was not acknowledged. The motives behind the desire in stopping the Narayani Mudra were many. It was in the first place that the company was facing difficulties in the shapes of counterfeit coins; and the ultimate aim of the Company was to bring the fiscal system of the State as was prevalent in the company's territory. On the other hand, the Company was eager to introduce Sicca and Farukkabad coins which were the chief medium of exchange in the areas directly governed by the Company¹². The right to coining money was revoked by the Company finally in 1805 AD¹³. Another important issue had been that the right of minting was not restored

to the Raja, he paid the State's 'Tribute' to the Company in Narayani coin to prove his sovereign rights in the financial management of the State¹⁴. But the non-compromising attitude of the Raja was subserved by the conciliatory attitude of Captain Jenkins who was appointed company's agent in North East Frontier and visited the State in the closing years of the rule of Raja Harendra Narayan. He was successful in improving the relations and achieved better result than the strict and uncompromising attitude of his (Jenkins) predecessors¹⁵.

The controversial relation between the East India Company and the Cooch Behar State reached at its height during the time of Lord Dalhousie. Dalhousie gave a new edge to the Company's expansionist policy as this policy is known as the 'Doctrine of Lapse'. In the matter of succession issue which had been developed towards the closing years of Raja Harendra Narayan the company played an active role and exerted its fullest influence over the succession question. Possibly, it was the intention of the company to breach the internal harmony among the inheritors to the throne. The following incidents would substantiate the statement. While Raja Harendra Narayan intended that his son Rajendra Narayan¹⁶ should inherit the throne, the company favoured the claim of Shivendra Narayan over the throne of Cooch Behar State¹⁷. The

attitude of the Company has been manifested from the letter of Mr. Swinton, Secretary to the Government, 22nd October, 1824 to Mr. Scot, the Agent to the Governor General on North West Frontier¹⁸. On the question of succession the Raja's will was thwarted by the desire of the Company and Shibendra Narayan ascended to the throne. This can be mentioned here that for the first time the question of succession over the throne had been settled by an alien; the East India Company, violating the provision of the Treaty (1773), that the Company would not interfere in the internal affairs of Cooch Behar State.

From the discussion it is clear that during the reign of Harendra Narayan the Company did not follow its all India State Policy and tried to interfere into the affairs of the Cooch Behar State. But they could not come out successful due to the strong resistance from the Raja. After the death of Raja Harendra Narayan the Company successfully interfered and established control on Cooch Behar State administration. The authority pursued by the East India company during this phase had also been observed in breach of the State of Cooch Behar .The hegemony of the British paramountcy over Cooch Behar State was almost made complete.

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16. Jenkins mentioned that Raja Harendra Narayan wanted to make his younger son Brajendra Narayan as his successors; Letter of Jenkins, G.G.'s Agent in North East Frontier to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 3rd October 1838, No. 106. SRC, Vol. II, op. cit. P-82, the letter of Jogendra Narayan, another son of Raja Harendra

Narayan reveals that he was another contender to the throne of Cooch Beha. Letter of Jogendra Narayan to Lord Auckland, G.G. of India, 4th October, 1839, SRC, Vol. II, *op. cit.* P-86.

17. Foreign Consultation (political), 25th March, 1834, No. 64, (NAI) Proceedings of the Government of Bengal General (Political) Dept. February, 1864, No. 60, P-27.
18. The content of the letter was, 'if the Rajah of Cooch Behar should make any proposition to you or take any measure to set aside his eldest son in favour of any other child, such an act of injustices can not be tolerated, and you will be prepared to inform the Rajah that the British Government is determined to support rightful claims of Sheeb Inder Narain to the succession. Our right of interference in the affairs of Cooch Behar under the treaty of 1772 is in disputable and the figure tranquility of the country, as well as the legal right of Sheeb Inder Narain, demand the exercise of the right if circumstances should arise to render it necessary'.

Chapter – VI

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE INDIAN STATES WITH REFERENCE TO COOCH BEHAR (1858 – 1919)

The British Authority in India had consolidated its base during this phase of colonial rule in India. The control over the Princely States was almost complete and the relationship was that of a superior - subordinate system. The Supra-sovereign British power, over the passage of time, had ultimately converted the Princely order as infra-sovereign agency establishing fullest control over the rulers of Indian States. Such a kind of relationship prompted Sir Lee Warner to depict it as 'subordinate Union.'

The term subordinate union means an objective policy of bringing under servitude implying almost total political subordination of the States under either by compulsion or through persuasion in a manifest or latent manner towards the paramountcy. The period ranging from 1858 to 1919 witnessed fundamental changes following the revolt of 1857 along with other changes, the major changes was that the power to govern India shifted from the East India Company to the British Crown by the Act of 1858. Ever since then a Secretary of State for India aided by

a Council was made responsible for the governance of India, such authority used to be wielded by the Directors of the Company prior to the Act of 1858. The policy of Subordinate Union pursued by the British Government brought important changes in its policies towards the Princely States. The earlier policy of annexation was abandoned and the Rulers of the States were now authorised to adopt heirs. However, this authority of the Rulers over particular territories was completely subordinated to the authority of the British and they were converted into a 'Board of Privileged Dependents'. Through this policy the British Government maintained a close check on the States. No Indian Ruler was allowed to maintain relations with other countries except through the British. The British government in India interfered in day to day functioning of the States through their agents called Residents. British Residents and nominated Ministers were posted in almost all the States. The Residents were to protect the British interests and implemented British policies. The right to recognize the successor was also reserved with the British Government. If any Ruler did not fall in line he was replaced with a person of the British choice. Despite restrictions and limitations imposed on the Rulers by the British Paramountcy the Indian Rulers supported the British to secure their status and privileges.

British policy towards princely India underwent a fundamental change after the Sepoy Mutiny. It was admitted on all

hands that one of the important causes of the Mutiny was Dalhousie's policy of wholesale annexation of the Indian States either in one pretext or the other. The Revolt was suppressed with iron hand. But the Indian Rulers for the most part, not only remained aloof from the uprising but also in certain cases extended active assistance to the British in suppressing it. Lord Canning gratefully acknowledged the role of the States as 'breakwaters in the storm which would have swept over us in one great wave'. The realization that the States could play a vital role as one of the bulwarks of British rule led to a radical change of policy. Which found expression in Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858. It was declared in the Proclamation of 1858 that the British Government further would not annex the Indian States. It was also declared that all treaties and engagements made with the Native Princes under the authority of the East India Company are to be accepted by the British Crown and will be scrupulously maintained. The Act of 1858 announced that the British Government had no desire of extension of their present territorial possessions. The Indian rulers were to be given the right of adoption in case they had no son to succeed them. The Indian States were to be given *Sanads* and they were assured that no harm would be done to them so long they were to be faithful to the Crown.

Old policy of jealousy and suspicion against the Indian States was given up. Instead of keeping them separate, the British Government tried to bring them together. They had become members of the Empire, and the new position was accepted not

unwillingly¹. But this does not mean that the Indian States were given more independence of action than they enjoyed before. It is to be noted that on many occasions the British Government made declarations of their paramountcy over the Indian States. Regarding the paramountcy Lord Canning declared in 1858, 'The Crown of England stands-forth the unquestioned ruler and paramount power in India. There is a reality in the suzerainty of England which has never existed before and which is not felt but eagerly acknowledged by the Chiefs². Similar statements were made by Lord Mayo, Lord Lytton, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Minto and Lord Reading while attempting to describe the position of British paramount power in relation to India.

The next five decades were occupied with the task of evolving a machinery for controlling the States and this was duly accomplished. A Political Department was set up under the direct charge of the Governor General. The Political Department had Residents and Political Agents in all important States and groups of States. The Secretary of State kept a close control over the activities of the Political Department, mainly because of the interest of the Crown in matters affecting the rights and privileges of the rulers³. During this period, the Governor General in council through the Political Department of the Government of India, exercised complete control over the Indian States. As a matter of fact, the Indian

Princes had absolutely no independence of action. They were under the control of the Residents. The Resident watched the British interests in the State and offered friendly advice to the Princes. He acted as the channel of communication between the State and the paramount power. Evidently, he was the real ruler and master of the Princes. Regarding the state of affairs of the States Panikkar pointed out "all those who have direct experience of Indian States know that the whisper of the Residences is the thunder of the State and there is no matter on which the Resident does not feel to give his advice. His advice was usually an order or a command"⁴.

The British Government through the Resident claimed right to control the use and grant of all titles, honour, salutes and matters of precedent. The rulers could not accept foreign title without the consent of the British Government they could not confer any title. The British Government asserted and exercised the right of deposing princes or forcing them to abdicate in certain circumstances. The rulers were not allowed to deal directly with any foreign State or with the subject of any foreign State. They could not receive consular agents in their territories. They could not employ Europeans without the consent of the British Government. All forcing interest of the States was secured through the Government of India⁵. Though constitutionally, the States were not part of British India not were they inhabitants or British subjects and the

British parliament had no power to legislate on the States or their people. But on many occasions the British Crown emphasised their supremacy over the Indian States. In 1876, Queen Victoria assumed the title of Kaiser-I-Hind after the death of the last Mughal Emperor Bahadurshah II. On this occasion, Lord Lytton held a Durbar at Delhi and the rulers of all the Indian States were made to attend this Durbar. It is stated that the rulers of the big States protested against the lowering of their status and dignity but they were made to swear perpetual allegiance to the British Crown and forego their claim to be treated according to the treaties and engagements entered into by them with the company⁶.

A definite pattern of the Government of India's relationship with the States in all its details had been developed by the time the First World War broke out in the year 1914. The rulers failed to fight for the Empire in its hour of peril, offering both their personal services and the resources of their States. Not only did they help British lavishly with men, material and money, but some of them even served as officers in different theatres of war⁷. In welcoming this new development a few of the leading rulers stressed the essential identity between the two halves of India and expressed the hope that what had now become an annual conference would develop into a permanent Council or Assembly of Princes⁸.

During the First World War the tide of national aspiration was rising fast throughout the country. The emergence of Gandhiji and Tilak made the Congress a popular organisation and broadened the hold of the organisation upon the people at large. The Indian National Congress had helped the British on the many theatres of war with a hope that the British Government will introduce some reforms for the Indians. The British Government recognised that the situation needed a fresh handling and that there was an urgent need for a new policy. Accordingly, Edwin Samuel Montague, the Secretary of State for India, made the historic announcement of 1917. It was declared by Montague in 1917 that 'the policy of His Majesty's Government with which the government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire⁹.

Soon after his announcement Montague came to India and met with the leaders of public opinion in British India and with the several leading rulers. The princes of India appointed a committee which presented a memorandum. In 1918 Montague and Chelmsford published a joint report on constitutional reforms which had a far-reaching consequence into the relations of the States with the rest of India and with the paramount power¹⁰.

The report paid glowing tributes to the princes for the part played by them in the war, which had demonstrated their immense value as part of the policy of India. The report observes that the political stir in British India could not be a matter of indifference to the Princes, since hopes and aspiration were apt to overleap frontier lines. So the authors of the Report recommended that the reforms in the States could not be brought about as a direct result of Constitutional changes in British India, they could come only through the permeation of ideas. It was stressed that the rulers of the States and the politicians in British India should respect each other's bonds. It was also suggested that there was some ambiguity and misunderstanding as to the exact position of the States. So the authors of the Report suggested that the Rulers should be assured in the fullest and freest manner that no constitutional changes that might take place would impair the rights, dignities and privileges secured to them by Treaties, *Sanads* and engagements, or by established practice. Moreover, Montague Chelmsford Report felt that the time had come to end the isolation of the rulers and that steps should be taken for joint consultations and discussions by them for the furtherance of the common interests between the States and the Government of India. The Government of India consulted the rulers in regard to these recommendations. The conference of Ruling Princes and Chiefs met in Delhi in December

1919 and with their consent the Chamber of Princes was brought into being by a Royal Proclamation on 8th February 1921¹¹.

On this broad canvas of all India relationship between the British government and the Indian States we may highlight the actual relation between the British Government and the Cooch Behar State. Soon after the death of Raja Harendra narayan, the character of the relation between the British and Cooch Behar Changed and the essence of this change prepared the ground work of making Cooch Behar a subjugatory State under the British influence. The period of the next king Shibendra Narayan can be marked as the starting point of the era of subjugation and thereafter the British made their headway deep into the territory of Cooch Behar.

The opportunity to bring Cooch Behar under complete influence of the Company was offered just after the death of Raja Harendra Narayan. Soon after the death of Raja Harendra Narayan the State of Cooch Behar had been suffering from the crisis of succession question. The rivalry over the succession of Raja Harendra Narayan offered a scope to the Company to interfere directly into the affair of the State and the succession problem was resolved and for the first time the question of succession over the throne of Cooch Behar had been settled by an alien, the East India Company. The decision of the Company had been justified by the

Cooch Behar Court on the ground that the right of the Company selecting the heir to the throne had been an acknowledged fact.

The British Colonial policy to bring Cooch Behar under complete subordination, thus, had been successful on two basic grounds. Firstly, the Raja of Cooch Behar had been a nominee of the Company who had to prove to be a man always liked by the Company and secondly, the growing internal feuds in the royal family and the rising discontents among the nobility on the question of succession helped the Company to intervene into the royal internal affairs of Cooch Behar under the active patronage of the then Ruler who wanted to strengthen his throne with the Company's support.

With the support of the Raja Shibendra Narayan, the Company interfered into the revenue and judiciary system of the State and introduced to accelerate the pace of the capacity of Cooch Behar State to pay tribute with arrears to the British authority. Judicial reforms were brought in Cooch Behar in accordance with the system of judiciary introduced by the Paramountcy of the British superintendent of Darjeeling Mr. Campbell. The British authority had also solved the border issues of Cooch Behar with Bhutan. During the same year a topographical survey of Cooch Behar State was made by the revenue surveyor J.G. Pemberton appointed by the British Government. The survey map so far drawn had been the first of its kind for Cooch Behar.¹² The complete

control and influence of the Company over the total affairs of the Cooch Behar State had been much more accelerated owing to illness of the Ruler. To remove the irregularities¹³ of the native administrative officials, the Company started sending British officials and these officials tried to exercise their powers over the tiny principality. Officials loyal to the Company were immigrated to Cooch Behar, and with the tacit support of the Company's authority, began to hold important posts in the Cooch Behar administration.¹⁴

After the death of Raja Shibendra Narayan, his adopted son Narendra Narayan who was a minor ascended to the throne. During the minority of Raja Narendra Narayan the active interference in the socio-political sphere resulted in the State's complete subjugation. During the period a notable change occurred in the Company's policy towards the State, until then the management of the State was exclusively in the hands of the Rulers of the State, but in those years a shift in the policies took place and the management of the affairs was placed directly under the Government of Bengal and all the questions of any important political bearing were referred to the Supreme Government.¹⁵

During the minority of Raja Narendra Narayan, the Regent was entrusted with the duty of conducting the State's administration. But nepotism and misuse of administrative powers were very much prevalent and the appointments of some inefficient

officials turned the matter to worse. As a result the Company tried to take some integrated policy towards the State affairs. Firstly, they felt the necessity of appointing a Resident Commissioner after a long time; secondly, to take the entire management of the State at their own hands. These policies of the Company accelerated the process of political subjugation of Cooch Behar.

But Raja Narendra Narayan after attaining majority took the control of Government in his own hands and set himself in improving the State administration, however, in accordance with the principles as laid down by the Company.¹⁶ On the other side, the Government of India granted a *Sanad* to the Maharaja conferring on him and his successors the right of adoption failing natural heirs and further the Government of India recognised the title of Maharaja Bahadur¹⁷ and thus, the political subjugation was almost complete.

Another notable change brought in during the period was the introduction of *Sabha* or Council locally known as *Desh Hitaishini Sabha*¹⁸. Creation of such a Council to aid and advise the Ruler had been a British innovation which used to be represented by local land-lords, aristocrats, big businessmen and intellectuals of high standards.¹⁹ The British intention was to streamline the Cooch Behar State administration both from within and without. The internal control was laid through the British Resident. However, such control was abolished within a very short period of time.²⁰

After the death of Narendra Narayan his son Nripendra Narayan was sworn into the throne when he was nearing the completion of his first year of age.²¹ But, there was a controversy within the royal family over the succession issue and the Maharanees (Queens) of the palace except Nistarini Debi sought the help of the British Indian authority to preserve the privileges and the dignity of Nripendra Narayan as the Raja.²² The British authority of India recognised the claim of Nripendra Narayan as the legitimate heir.²³ However, the British authority imposed the condition that the title of 'Maharaja' would be conferred upon Nripendra Narayan after he attains majority.²⁴ The restrictions of conferring the title 'Maharaja' expressed the British intention to dominate the regime with their fullest control. The transitional period of Nripendra Narayan from his minority to the time of his gaining majority would be the harvesting ground for the British and the British did not leave any scope of losing their foot-hold over Cooch Behar and thus the conferring of the title of 'Maharaja' to Nripendra Narayan was deferred.

The British wanted to bring changes in every aspect of State life under the aegis of Commissioner on behalf of the Government of India at a time when Nripendra Narayan was minor. Till Nripendra Narayan achieved majority, he was sent to different educational institutions of both within Indian and abroad under the direct

sponsorship of the British Government. Indeed, this was for the first time that the Cooch Behar State had been experienced with an English educator Ruler. After attaining majority he was conferred the title 'Maharaja' by the British Government. Both in tune and texture Nripendra Narayan was a liberal personality and a strong follower of liberal development policies brought by the British Paramountcy in India.²⁵ The era of Nripendra Narayan witnessed *collaboration and accommodation between the State of Cooch Behar and the British Paramountcy*. Being termed as moderniser²⁶ of Cooch Behar State, Nripendra Narayan, with the active help, initiative and support of British administration, brought important changes in the fields of general civil administration, agriculture and land reforms, judicial system and specially in the field of education.²⁷ Thus one can well conclude the era of Nripendra Narayan (1881-1911) and the following years the princely State Cooch Behar had almost subordinated to the Paramountcy and can be one of the finest operational fields of the policy of 'subordinate union' pursued by the British Government in relation to the Indian States.

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Chapter -- VII

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE INDIAN STATES WITH REFERENCE TO COOCH BEHAR (1919 – 1950): THE PROCESS OF BARGAINING

The year 1857 has been a landmark in the process of inter relations between the British Government and the Indian States. The following years of 1857 had experienced with a fundamental departure in the policies and strategies of the British Government while dealing with the Indian States. A serious insight to this issue would unravel the fact that it had been the compulsion rather than the option on the part of the British Government to introduce certain new policies and strategies to deal with the Indian States. This had been the immediate requirement of the British Government for the continuation, persistence, maintenance and extension of the British rule over this sub continent. Another important consideration had been to the repairment of damage and provision for providing antibiotic for whatever rapture taken place in the relationship between British Government and the Indian States during the period of Mutiny. Indeed the fundamental shift of

British policy in dealing with Indian States had found expression in Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858.

The historic Proclamation categorically stated the objectives of the British Government towards Indian States. The relevant portion of the proclamation may be aptly put here, "We desire no extension of our present territorial possessions; and while we will permit no aggression upon our dominions or our rights to be attempted with impunity, we shall sanction no encroachment on those of others. We shall respect the rights, dignity and honours of native Prince, as our own; and we desire that they as well as our own subjects should enjoy that prosperity and that social advancement which can only be secured by internal peace and good government"¹.

Such a proclamation had been significant in the sense that this had been for the first time the triumphant imperialist power had to express in official form that it would not aggress and accede lands of the native rulers of India. The relationship between British Government and the native ruler would be based upon mutual faith, dignity and honour. A kind of mutually followed policy of peaceful co-existence¹ would be the order of the day. The maintenance of good government in the native States should have been most important for bringing about social developments, peace and security. The Proclamation categorically stated unless the rights and peace as well as integrity of British administered India are threatened, the British Government would not intervene into

the internal affairs of the native States. Thus by virtue of Queen's Proclamation the Indian States were provided a relatively autonomous sphere in the government of their own land and people, however, after being subjugated to the British authorities.

The Queen's Proclamation had brought about certain fundamental changes in the administrative hierarchy to rule British India. The office of the Governor-General had been replaced by the office of the Viceroy. Lord Canning, being the first Viceroy had been vested with the responsibility to carry out the new policy emerging out of Queen's Proclamation. In this despatch of April 30, 1860 it had been categorically made that the integrity of the States should be preserved by perpetuating the rule of the rulers of the Indian States by way of recognising the right to adopt heirs. Thus, by virtue of queens proclamation and the active role played by the Viceroy the Indian States had become the part and parcel of the British Empire in India.

With this given background an academic venture would be in order to understand the British policies towards Indian States from 1919 to the days of the emergence of independent India.

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 ushered in certain subtle changes in the relationship between the British Government and the Indian States. The Political Department, which was created to institutionalise the relationship, had been very much active till the Government of India Act was enacted. The relation of Princely States with the British Government were conducted through the

Political Department which was directly under the control of the Viceroy who used to be assisted by the Political Secretary to run it. After the enactment of the Statute of 1935 the designation of the viceroy was changed as Crown Representative while the political secretary to the political Department became Political Advisor. The Political Departments had Residents and Political Agents in all important States and group of States. The Residents and Political Agents stationed in the Princely States were answerable to the Viceroy or Crown Representative. The Secretary of State kept a close control over the activities of the Political Department, mainly because of the interest of the Crown in matters affecting the rights and privileges of the rulers. Along with the prominent Princely States like Hyderabad and Mysore the Cooch Behar principality had also been brought under the British Resident.

Lord Lytton being the viceroy had suggested for bringing about a new institution to establish a closer relation with the Indian States. His suggestions had been in favour of the formation of an Imperial Privy Council comprising of the rulers of the Indian States. Showing unanimity to the proposal of Lord Lytton, Lord Curzon being the Viceroy had suggested for the formation of a council of ruling Princes. Lord Minto, the next Viceroy after Curzon was also in favour to setup an advisory council of Indian rulers and landlords to counter the nationalist movement in India. However, the suggestions put forward by these consecutive Viceroys had not been materialised. During the period of Lord Herding and Lord Chelmsford Indian rulers used to attend conferences on a regular

basis. The Montague-Chelmsford report categorically recommend for a permanent body known as the Council of Princes after replacing the conferences of the rulers. Such a council of Princes would provide the opportunity of informing the government as to the sentiments and wishes and broadened outlook to the Indian Princes. The Mont Ford report recommended further that the proposed Council of Princes should annually appoint a small standing committee to advise the Political Department on matters affecting the States. The British authorities had consulted the Indian rulers on this particular aspect of Mont-Ford Report. Ultimately the conference of ruling Princes gave a green signal to the formation of Chamber of Princes and such a Chamber of Princes had been brought into being by a Royal proclamation of 8th February, 1921. The Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes was comprised of States, which can be projected through a table.

Table:

Membership of the standing committee of the chamber of Princes, 1921 - 1926

State	Salute (in Guns)	Total Attendance (in Days)	Membership (in years)
Gwalior	21	19	4
Kashmir	19	13	1
Bhopal	19	4	1
Bikaner	17	28	6 (5a)
Cutch	17	13	3
Patiala	17	23	6 (1a)
Alwar	15	28	4
Dholpur	15	28	3
Jhalawar	13	18	1
Nawanagar	13	12	6
Palanpur	13	20	2
Sangli	9	28	2

Notes: a Indicates as Chancellor

Source: India Office note, March, 1931, 10 RL/P & s/13/545

Cited in Copland, Page 47.

Observing the composition of the Standing Committee Copland remarks² "The Chamber of Princes came to be dominated by a group of middle sized, mainly Rajput rulers whose States were situated within relatively easy travelling distance by motor car from Delhi, who were fluent in English, who had acquired political skills in forums such as the wartime Chiefs' Conferences, and who, in the last resort, had little to lose and much to gain by moving into a wider political arena". In fact, the middle class States had crowded in Chamber of Princes whose activities are known to be resented and feared by many of smallest States and to be viewed with dislike by some of the leading Princes.

The Chamber of Princes had been a deliberate, consultative and advisory body, Initially the Chamber of Princes consisted of 120 Princes and obviously Cooch Behar was one of them. It has served to accustom the princes to meet and to investigate questions of common concern with a view to combined action and to arouse in them the realisation of how many and how important those questions are³. The Chamber of Princes had to contain in the first instance, 108 rulers who were to be members in their own rights and enjoyed permanent dynastic salutes of 11 guns. The principality of Cooch Behar since then enjoyed dynastic salutes of 11 guns by virtue of being one of the 108 rulers of the Chamber of Princes. By a system of group booting the Chamber was to include 12 additional members elected by the rulers of 127-non salute

states. However, some important Indian States did not join the Chamber of Princes, which had weakened the basic structure of the Chamber of Princes. The Chamber of Princes had to struggle for influence owing to the absence of a considerable number of big principalities. But the concern of the British Government was not the Chambers⁴ future but the behaviour of its members which would make the Princes more contented and more compliant. Unfortunately or fortunately, however, the British intention had never been realised owing to the growing discontents among the princes and the growing tendency to avoid and ignore the instructions provided by the Resident or by the Political Agents stationed in different principalities.

Ordinarily the Chamber of Princes used to meet once in a year and used to be presided over by the Viceroy. The Chamber had its own elected Chancellor who used to preside over the meeting in the Chamber of Princes in the absence of the Viceroy. The Chancellor was the President of the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes. The standing committee had meetings twice or thrice in every year to discuss the important questions faced by the Indian States.

The Chamber of Princes was to function strictly as a consultative body, its importance lays in the fact that besides ending the long standing policy of isolating the princes from one another, it helped to stimulate corporate feeling among them and to

encourage unofficial co-operation among themselves and their ministers. In the inauguration ceremony of the Chamber of Princes, on behalf of the King Emperor the Duke of Connaught ensured the integrity and autonomy of the Princely States. The Maharaja of Patiala in his speech at the inauguration ceremony recalled his orders undeviating loyalty to the empire. He was confident that the Chamber would make disconnection more enduring than ever. The Princes did not allow the grass to grow under their feet. They asked for statutory protection against the assaults of nationalism and their prayer was readily granted. The Indian States (Protection Against Disaffection) Act XXIV of 1922 was passed. As an active member of the Chamber of Princess any kind of nationalist activity was banned in the principality of Cooch Behar by the reference of the Act.

The Chamber of Princes was essentially created as a forum for advancing the interests of the Princely order and for giving expression to its aspirations that the relations between the State, and the Imperial Government should last forever. However, it has been pointed out that from the very inception the Chamber of Princess had been unpopular and was not supported by such important States as Hyderabad, Mysore and Baroda. The establishment of the Chamber of Princes signally failed to improve the administration of the Princely States.⁵ Writing in the Asiatic Review of October 1926 Maharaja of Patiala expressed openly, "The

result of all our thought and all our work was profoundly disappointing to us." Despite limitations the establishment of the Chamber of Princes helped to emphasise the difference which the Political Department, Panikkar observes, "had conveniently tried to forget between the sovereign and non sovereign States in India"⁶. The Montague-Chelmsford report recognised these differences and admitted that it had been lost sight of. The establishment of Chamber of Princes provided a position to the States in the British Empire. The Princes have gained a new status as autonomous sovereign States of the British Empire. The Indian delegation to the conference always included a ruling Prince as representative of the independent States of India, Panikkar rightly observes, "Thus, while preserving their absolute internal independence and, indeed, strengthening it by a revision or treaty and agreements and the codification of political practice, the Princes have gained a new position as Indian and Imperial personalities who have won collectively a right to be consulted on matters affecting policy and whose voice naturally carries great weight".

The decade of 1920 had witnessed another distinctive shift in the relations between the British Government and the Princely States. This decade was marked by tremendous political upheavals and political upsurge, steered and engineered by the Indian nationalist leaders. The growing discontent of the semi mobilised

and semi regimented Indian mass living in British administered provinces and the subtle and manifest dissatisfaction of the major Princely States about the existing relationship between the British Government and the Indian Princely States had, altogether, been instrumental in weakening the basis of governance giving rise to the problem of legitimate crisis. Such an atmosphere had provided ample room to the British authorities to revisit the different dimensions of relationship between British India and the people of living therein as well as between British Government and the Princely States of India. The British Government thus, under two circumstances, appointed Simon Commission and the Butler Committee; the former was to deal with the issues of governance in the directly British administered provinces, when the latter dealt with different dimensions of relationship between the British Government and the Indian Princes with a special emphasis on the economic relationship to be established between them after revisiting the existing usages, treaties and other legal documents passed and concluded between the British Government and the Indian Princes. In order to make our study relevant and specific venture would be made to restrict our analysis to the Butler Committee delineating relationship between the British Government and the Princely States.

The idea of formation of a committee to review the existing relationship between the British Government and the Princely States had its root at the Simla Conference of the Princely rulers convened by the Viceroy in 1927. It was resolved in the conference that an impartial inquiry into the whole relationship between the rulers and the Paramount Powers should immediately be made for revisiting and the reviewing the existing relationship between them. Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State to Government of India, had, ultimately thought it prudent to appoint a committee for the purpose and accordingly on 16th December, 1927, a three member committee was appointed headed by Sir Harcourt Butler and Professor W.S. Holdsworth and the Hon'ble S.C. Peel as member to inquire into the relationship between the States and the British Government and to suggest means for the more satisfactory adjustment of the existing economic relation between the States and the British India. This committee is popularly known as Butler Committee. The constitution of such a committee had created positive impression among the rulers of the Princely States for the reason that Sir Harcourt Butler was very much familiar to most of the major Princely rulers both as a compassionate friend and as an experienced professional having a long successful career in British administered India. While Sir Butler was invited to head such an important committee dealing with Princely States representing two

fifths of the geography of India, was a retired Governor of the United Provinces. Thus the appointment of Butler as the head of such a committee helped breaking the iceberg, Copland succinctly puts, "At long last, it seemed that the tide had turned." In fact majority of the members of the Standing Committee of the Chambers of Princes received the nomination of Butler with jubilation. Since the Maharaja of Jaipur Jey Singh had welcome such nomination, the ruler of Cooch Behar followed the suit. The ruler of Cooch Behar with his council had sent message welcoming the formation of such committee and the nomination of Butler at its head.⁸

The members of the committee headed by Butler reached Indian in the first week of January, 1928 and visited 16 of the States. The interactions between the committee members and the rulers were held in camera. The Butler Committee had been very much objective and specific. It did not consult with the representatives of the people of the Indian States on the plea that was not within its terms of reference. However, the committee received memorandum from all India States Peoples Conference. Interestingly an important event deserves mentioning. The bulk of the Butler Committee's work in listing or hearing the case for the rulers was made complete in England. Such an event was possible for the Indian rulers who had engaged an eminent British constitutional lawyer Sir Leslie Scot as their councilor. Sir Scot along with his team put forward the demands and suggestions of the Indian rulers before the Butler Committee members.⁹

In its report Butler Committee had identified a distinctive area of direct relationship between the Indian States and the British Crown. According to the report of the committee the Viceroy should be the agent of the Crown in dealing with the States. The relations between the Crown and the Princes should not be transferred without the consent of the Princes to a new government of British India responsible to the legislature. The creation of a State council should be rejected. Intervention in the administration of any Princely order should be appointed in inquire into disputes that may arise between the States and British India. A special committee should be appointed to inquire into the financial relation between the Indian States and British India. An arrangement should be made for separate recruitment and training of political officers for the Princely States and such officers should be drawn from the Universities of England.

The Butler Committee submitted its report to the British Parliament in March, 1929. The report evoked a strong reaction from the Indian Princes on the ground that it did not touch upon the fundamental areas of relationship between the British Government and the Princely States, the report, as well rejected the plea of the Princely orders presented through Sir Scot on the sustenance and effectivity of the usages so far followed in the governance of the Princely States. The rulers of the Princely States exemplified their strong discontent to the report on the ground that

the Butler Committee had reasonably hailed and disappointed the rulers of the Princely States by up-keeping the unfettered discretion of the Political Department in its relations with Indian States. The Indian States had surely in mind that the committee would provide more independence and autonomy after taking away from the Political Department or a kind of status quo would have been maintained. But the content of the report proves amply for the disillusionment of the Princely orders.

The Butler report could not satisfy Indian nationalist leadership. Nationalists found grave apprehension in the recommendations of the Butler Committee. Branding the report as an imperial attempt to preserve and protect feudalism, the nationalist leader rejected the committee report in an unequivocal terms. The Nehru Committee which was constituted primarily to make a draft of the future constitution pointed out that, "an attempt is being made to convert the Indian States into an Indian Ulster by pressing constitutional theories into practice."¹⁰ Pointing out the possible danger to be emerged out from the Butler Committee report Nehru Committee warned, "It is conceivable that the people of the States who are fired by the same ambitions and aspirations as the people of British India will quietly submit to existing conditions forever, on that the people of British India bound by the closest ties of family, race and religion to their brethren on the other side of an imaginary line will never make

common cause with them."¹¹ The Nehru Committee proposed that the whole issues relating to Princely States, rulers and their subjects as well as the representatives of the people of directly administered British India should have been discussed at a Round Table Conference. The similar kind of proposal for listening discontents and resolving multidimensional problems and for bridging the emerging gaps a concerted action programme had been sorted out for settling disillusionment of the rulers of the Princely orders and the worries of the Nationalist leaders of the emerging democratic order.

The Irwin declaration of October, 1929 had played the role of double edged conciliator. Firstly, to deter congress from its intention to embark on a campaign of Civil Disobedience and of Britain to persuade Sir John Simon to suggest to convene a meeting to discuss the question of constitutional reforms in the context of the still to be written report of the Statutory Commission and the Commission's terms of reference should be widened to allow it to make recommendations for the States as well as for the provinces.¹² Simultaneously, the Viceroy announced in India that a Round Table Conference would take place in London towards the end of 1930. Such a conference would be represented both by the representatives of Indian Nationalist leadership and the Princely India, such a proposal of convening a conference at the highest level, at least, temporarily created hopes and aspirations in the minds of the contending groups and rulers of the Princely States.

The First Round Table Conference was held in London on November 12, 1930 and had continued for nine weeks stormy deliberation. In fact, the first Round Table Conference had been the outcome of thorough deliberations in consecutive five plenary meetings to sort out the stand of the Indian Princes in general. The Congress had refused the invitation to attend and Gandhiji's leadership had launched a mass campaign of Salt *Satagraha* and Civil Disobedience. There were fifty-seven political leaders from British India, sixteen delegates from the three British Political parties and sixteen delegates from the rulers of Indian States¹³ including the rulers of Kashmir, Baroda, Patiala, Indore, Bikaner, Bhopal, Rewa, Alwar, Nawanagar, Dholpur, Korea, Sangli, and Sarila, besides Sir Akbar Hydari, Sir Mirza Ismail and Sir Kalias Narain Haksar from Hyderabad, Mysore and Gwalior respectively.

On the plenary session of the Round Table Conference, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, leader from British India, advocated for a federal, not a unitary system of government at the Centre and invited the rulers of India to agree forthwith to the creation of an all-India Federation. Most of the Indian Princes accepted the proposal for the creation of an all-India Federation in which both British Indian provinces and the Indian States were to be brought together. The Maharaja of Bikaner was equally emphatic in asserting that the treaties with the States were inviolable and that their relations were with the Crown of England – a relationship which could not be

changed or transferred to another authority without the Princes expressed consent.¹⁴ The Maharaja of Bikaner, identified himself and the Princely order with the aspirations of British India with, "that passion for an equal status in the eyes of the world, expressed in the desire for dominion status which is the dominant force amongst all thinking Indian today."¹⁵ He gave an assurance that the Indian rulers would come in providing their rights were guaranteed. The Nawab of Bhopal declared, "we can only federate with a self governing and federal British India."¹⁶ On the other side, however, a small group of rulers, were united not to welcome the federal idea. Sir Bhupindar Singh, Maharaja of Patiala led this group and they regarded confederation of States, or 'Indian India' as it was called as a necessary preliminary to any association with British India.

Analysing the trends and events in the form of deliberation of the first Round Table Conference Professor Kulkarni observes, "There was a surfeit of speeches, enlivened by a profusion of framing a Dominion Constitution for India finding nearly no place in the deliberation."¹⁷ Ultimately, however, the first Round Table Conference ended with a sterile results because of the objective absence of the representatives of the Indian National Congress in the Conference. The whole deliberation in the first Round Table Conference, thus, had been proved unreal and far short of relevance and devoid of operationalisation.

The Gandhi-Irwin pact signed in March 1931 had provided room for the representation of the Indian National Congress to the proposed second Round Table Conference. The second Round Table Conference which began on September 7, and lasted till December 1, 1931 had felt the dominant presence of Mahatma Gandhi as representatives of the Indian National Congress. Gandhi attended the conference with a conviction to demand complete independence, but he was prepared to close in with any offers that gave the substance of freedom to Indians. Nothing of the kind was ever contemplated.

Gandhiji was not opposed to the federal idea but he was against dyarchy at the centre even for the transitional period. He asked for complete control over defense and external affairs. Gandhiji stood for full responsible government at the centre. Naturally, the British Government did not accept Gandhiji's demand. So the second Round Table Conference ended without any result. Though at the end of the conference Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald declared, "The great idea of an all India Federation still holds the fields. The principle of a responsible federal government, subject to certain reservations and safeguards through a transition period, remains unchanged. And we are all agreed that the Governor's provinces of the future are to be responsibly governed units, enjoying the greatest possible measure of freedom outside interference and dictation in carrying out their policies in their own spheres."¹⁸

There were divisions in the Princely ranks too. The main lines of differences were in regard to representation of the States in the federal legislature and the financial liabilities of the federating States.¹⁹ On the question of finance and representation the rulers gradually started turning their backs on federation and the outlook at the conclusion of the second Round Table Conference was far from being roseate. Some of the rulers now began to hope that nothing would come out of the conference and that they would be able to continue their sheltered existence while Hindus and Muslims pursued their differences in British India.

The British Government had a mind to give a concrete shape to the Indian problems and convened the third Round Table Conference. The third Round Table Conference was convened in London on November 7, 1932 and lasted till December 24, 1932. The Conference was attended by forty-six delegates and there had been the objective absence of the major Indian rulers. The important question considered at this short session was the composition of the federal legislature. The form of the States' Instrument of Accession was also discussed. But the conference could not settle the size of the federal Chambers, the proportion of British India and States' representation and the allocation of States' seats. Under the circumstances the Viceroy was asked by the Secretary of State to explain to the individual rulers the federal scheme and to secure some indication of their views in order to prepare a favourable atmosphere for the reception of the contemplated white paper containing His Majesty's Government's proposals for constitutional advance.

In 1933, the proposals of His Majesty's Government in the light of the three sessions of the Round Table Conference and subsequent negotiations with the rulers and leaders of various quarters, were published in a White Paper, and in April 1933, a Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament was appointed to consider the future government of India with special reference to the White Paper proposals. The Committee was authorised to call into consultation delegates from British India and the States. The Joint Select Committee submitted its report in October 1934. In December of the same year a Bill based on the Joint Select Committee's report was introduced. The Chamber of Princes appointed a committee of fifteen States' ministers under the Chairmanship of Sir Akbar Hydari to examine the Bill.²⁰ The Committee of the rulers proposed a number of amendments and alterations and declared that, "without satisfactory amendments on the lines indicated, it would not be possible for them to recommend to their rulers and to the States generally the acceptance of the proposed scheme. The rulers of Patiala, Bhopal and Bikaner addressed a note to the Viceroy detailing certain amendments. The proposed amendments of the rulers were thoroughly examined by the Secretary of State for India and on 4th August, 1935, the government of India Bill received the Royal Assent.

The most important landmark in the constitutional history of British India has been the Government of India Act, 1935, which

provided for a detailed constitutional relationship between the Indian States and the British India on a federal scale. The Government of India Act, 1935 had two important dimensions, such as, (1) providing provincial autonomy to the directly British administered provinces, (2) making provisions for providing an all-India Federation composing of both the British administered area and the Princely India. The proposed federation provided for a scheme stating that Indian States should have been given more representation in the proposed federal legislature on the basis of their population and size. Following these criterion two hundred fifty six (256) seats were allotted to British India and the allotment for Indian States had been one hundred twenty five (125) seats in the council of States. Moreover, the Indian States were given the right to send one hundred four (104) members out of total of two hundred sixty (260) members of the Lower House of the federal legislature. It was proposed that while the representatives from the directly British administered provinces were to be elected on communal basis, those from the States were to be nominated by the rulers of the Princely States concerned. Thus the representation proposal evoked a mixed reaction attempting to accommodate the opposing principles of parliamentary democracy and monarchic ambition. Altogether, the issue of universal adult suffrage irrespective of caste, creed and religion had been restricted in the representation principle even from the directly administered provinces.

Furthermore, the proposed federation made adequate arrangement for safeguarding the interests of the rulers of Indian States. While the inclusion of the provinces into the federation was to be automatic or compulsory, the Indian States were given the option to join the federation or not. Justifying the case for providing option to the Indian States the Joint Select Committee²¹ reported, "The main difficulties are two: that the Indian States are wholly different in status and character from the provinces of British India, and that they are not prepared to federate on the same terms as it is proposed to apply to the provinces on the first point the Indian States, unlike the British Indian provinces, possess sovereignty in various degree and they are, broadly speaking, under a system of personal government. Their accession to a Federation can not therefore take place otherwise than by the voluntary act of the ruler of each State, and after accession the representatives of the acceding State in the Federal Legislature will be nominated by the ruler and its subjects will continue to owe allegiance to him. On the second point the rulers have made it clear that while they are willing to consider federation now with the provinces of British India on certain terms, they could not, as sovereign States, agree to the exercise by a Federal Government in relation to them of a range of powers identical in all respects with those which that government will exercise in relation to the provinces on whom autonomy has yet to be conferred."

While attempt was made in the proposed federation exert control of the Federal Government over the provinces in an uniform manner, the policy varied in the case of Indian States according to the terms of the Instrument of Accession signed by a particular ruler at the time of joining the federation and accepted by the Crown. Another effort was there in the proposed scheme of federation to safeguard the relationship of the rulers with the paramount power by creating a Crown Representative in addition to the existing Governor General. It was proposed in the conduct of their affairs, as members of the federation, the States were to deal with the Governor General as head of the Federal Government, but in their relations with the Paramount Power, they were to deal with the Crown Representative.

The Chairman of the Joint Select Committee Lord Linlithgow came to India as Viceroy in 1936 with a determination to inaugurate the federation during his tenure of office. His view that a direct personal approach to the Indian rulers would help him to persuade most of them to join the federation. It was with that object in view that he sent his emissaries to the rulers of the Indian States. The three emissaries to the various States met the Indian rulers and their advisors. In 1937, the emissaries submitted their reports to the Viceroy. From their reports it became clear that what was worrying the Indian rulers was not whether the proposed federation would enable them to contribute to the glory of India as a

whole but whether their own position would be better and safer inside the federation, than outside it. Their attitude could be summed up in these words²², "we are being given the opportunity of entering a federation from which when once we are in, there is no escape. Nor since the ultimate interpreter of the federal constitution in the Federal Court, can the Government of India or any one else predict the course of future events or anticipate the use which federation will make of its powers. We owe it, therefore, to ourselves and to our successors to safeguard to the utmost our own position inside the federation. That is the light in which you must regard the limitations which we have proposed and if they seem unduly numerous and too widely drawn, remember that we have good reason for making them so."

Lord Linlithgow was very serious about his work, but the Political Department of the Government of India was creating hurdles in the way by putting emphasis on the loss which they were to incur as a result of joining the federation.²³ Although many occasions were offered to the Indian rulers, they could not be persuaded to join the Federation. While all this was happening the Second World War broke out in September, 1939 and the Empire needed the help of the rulers in men, money and material. So on 11th September, 1939, Lord Linlithgow declared that whole federation remained, as before, the objective of His Majesty's

Government, "the compulsion of the present international situation and the fact that, given the necessity for concentrating on the emergency that confronts us, we have no choice but to hold in suspense the work in connection with preparations for Federation"^{24 (a)}. Thus the contingency of the situation had put to halt to the entire efforts of making an all India federation comprising of British India and the Princely India. The proposal of all India federation had been sent to the cold storage and was never realised.

The late 1930's and the beginning of 1940 had been hectic in the sense that the war second had broken up and political turmoils and upheavals had been the common Indian scenario. The rulers of the Indian States were very much ambitious to preserve and protect their autonomy and to realise the end of a meeting of the Chamber of Princes was held in March 1940 declaring the determination of the rulers to render, every possible assistance to His Majesty's Government in the prosecution of the war and their complete approval to give side to the allied powers^{24 (b)}. The rulers in return demanded the preservation and protection of their autonomy and safeguards their rights in the future constitution of India, if there was any. In response to the rulers demands and in keeping with the political developments into consideration Lord Linlithgow gave his historic August offer of 1940 put forwarding certain proposals on behalf of His Majesty's Government with a view to securing the co-

operation of the people of India. One such proposal was to constitute a war Advisory Council consisting of the representatives of British administered provinces and the Indian States. The August offer declared that after the war, a body representative of the principal elements on India's national life would be called upon to devise the framework of a new constitution. The August offer was out rightly rejected both by the Indian National Congress and Muslim League. Despite rejection a National Defence Council consisting of twenty-two members from British India and representatives of Indian States was set up. However, such a council had been proved futile with-in no time. Towards the close of 1941 the war situation had turned into a critical juncture and political weather in India had experienced with high degree temperature. To tackle such situation, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared that the war cabinet was sending out Sir Stafford Cripps with a set of proposals. Sir Cripps arrived in India on 22nd March, 1942 and expressed his proposals in clear terms. The Cripps Mission offered a set of proposals comprising of two parts. However, while dealing with the Indian States Cripps offer was very brief. According to the terms of the Cripps Mission "whether or not an individual State elects to adhere to the constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as this may be required in the new situation^{25(a)}.

Furthermore, the States were appointed representatives to the constitution making body in proportionate to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole enjoying level power as British Indian members. The States were to give free hand to adhere to the new constitution. Responding to Cripp's proposal the delegation of Indian States resolved, "The Indian States will be glad as always, in the interest of their motherland, to make their contribution in every reasonable manner compatible with the sovereignty and integrity of the States, towards the framing of constitution for India. The States should be assured, however, that in the event of a number of States or group of States so desiring, would have the right to form a union of their own, with full sovereign status in accordance with a suitable and agreed procedure devised for the purpose."²⁵ (b)

In short both the Indian political parties and the Indian States were not happy with proposals of the Cripps Mission. The Indian political parties led by Indian National Congress had outrightly rejected the Cripps proposals and the rulers of the Indian States had shown their dissatisfaction. In totality Cripps Mission had been proved to be a failure. Failing to get any satisfactory assurance from the British Government, the rulers of the Indian States realised that their future was not safe. The realisation of the ruler was that if the interests of the Indian States came into conflict with those of British India, the British Government was to tilt its

balance towards British India even at the cost of the Indian States. The anxiety of the rulers had got ignited while Jawaharlal Nehru declared that "treaties with the Indian States must be scrapped and those who talked of those treaties were lunatics, knaves or fools."²⁶

Thus circumstanced the rulers of the Princely States had devised plans to safeguard their own interests in future. The Nawab of Bhopal urged upon the Political Department to take all those measures which were necessary to safeguard their position in the event of changes taking place in the constitutional set up in the country. Lord Wavell assured the Indian Princes that no changes in their relationship with the Crown or the rights guaranteed to them by treaties and engagements would be initiated without their consent.

By the end of 1944 the Nawab of Bhopal was elected Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes. He infused new life into the Chamber and forged that body into an effective instrument for developing the rulers into a 'Third Force' in Indian politics. He was an advocate of a loose centre with residuary powers in the States. The Nawab of Bhopal now started taking vigorous steps with the Political Department to safeguard the position of the States in any future constitutional changes. At a meeting of the Standing Committee held on 18th September, 1944, the Chancellor gave notice of his intention to move the following resolution as the session of the Camber to be held in December.²⁷

The Chamber of Princes considers it necessary to reiterate in the most unequivocal and emphatic terms that the Crown's relationship with the States and the Crown's power in respect of the States can not and should not be transferred to any third party or other authority without the consent of the States concerned. The Chamber requests His Excellency, the Crown representatives to be pleaded to convey to His Majesty's Government the grave misgivings and apprehensions aroused in the States, by the recent tendency to alter the States' relationship with the Crown and to qualify the observance of the Crown's obligations, by unilateral action without the consent of the States, notwithstanding the solemn Royal pronouncements that these Treaty Rights shall be maintained unimpaired and the recent assurance conveyed to the Indian Princes by His Majesty's Government that the fulfilment of the fundamental obligations arising out of their treaties and sanads remains an integral part of His Majesty's Government policy.

On the opposite on 26th November, 1944, Lord Wavell, as the President of the Chamber, disallowed this resolution on the ground that it would be undesirable at any time to ventilate in public the subject matter of the resolution with the very delicate issue which arose out of it, more so at a time when the matter had already come under discussion between the rulers and the Viceroy. The rulers were dissatisfied with the reply of the President of the Chamber and on protest they resigned in a body. Lord Wavell, the

President of the Chamber, met with the Chancellor of the Chamber, and gave an assurance that there would be no future transference of relationship of the States with the Crown to any other authority without their consent, provided the rulers on their part gave the assurance that their consent to any changes which emerged as a result of negotiations would not be unreasonably withheld. The Standing Committee there upon decided to withdraw their resignation.

On 19th February, 1946, Prime Minister Atlee announced the decision of the British Cabinet to send three Cabinet Ministers to India to settle with the Indian leaders, in association with the Viceroy, the procedure of framing a new constitution for the country. It was decided that the Mission should interview (1) the Chancellor, (2) the rulers of Patiala, Bikaner and Nawanagar jointly as representing the middle-sized States, (3) the rulers of Durgapur and Bilaspur jointly as representing the smaller States and (4) the Nawab of Chhatari (Hyderabad), Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar (Travancore) and Sir Mirza Ismail (Jaipur) individually.

In his interview with the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy held on 2nd April, 1946, the Nawab of Bhopal pointed out that the Indian States wanted to continue their existence with the maximum degree of sovereignty. They desired no interference in their internal affairs by British India. He suggested the formation of a Privy Council of the Indian States of British India. The Nawab urged that

Paramountcy should not be transferred to an Indian Government in the event of Indian becoming independent. In the same afternoon the members of the Cabinet Mission met the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes. The rulers were told that if British India became independent, Paramountcy would end, the British Government did not contemplate keeping any troops in India for the maintenance of internal order. The Crown would not be in a position to carry out treaty obligations and hence the Indian States would also be released from their obligations under their treaties.

On 16th May, 1946, the Cabinet Mission announced its proposals with regard to the future set up of India. About the States, it was declared that with the attainment of independence by British India, whether within or without the British Commonwealth the relationship which had hitherto existed between the Indian States and the British Crown would come to an end. Paramountcy could neither be retained by the British nor transferred to the new Government. The statement went on to say that the rulers had assured the Mission that they were ready and willing to co-operate in the new development of India. The form of co-operation was to depend upon the result of negotiations between the Indian States and the future Government of India. In their broadcast on 16th May, 1946, both the Secretary of State of India and Sir Stafford Cripps asserted that Paramountcy could not be handed over to any one

and hence it must cease. They left future relationship between the States and British India for negotiations.

On 12th May, the Cabinet Mission handed over a memorandum to the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes and it came to be known as the 'Memorandum of 12th May, 1946; though it was actually released to Press on 22nd May. The memorandum affirmed that when a new fully self-governing or independent Government or Governments came into being in British India, the influence of His Majesty's Governments with these Government would not be such as to enable them to carry out the obligations of Paramountcy. The British Government had no intention of keeping British troops in India for that purpose. The result was that Paramountcy would come to an end. The existing political arrangements between the States on the one hand and the British Crown and British India on the other were to come to an end. The void was to be filled up by the States entering into a federal relationship with the successor Government or Governments in British India. The memorandum referred to the desirability of States forming or joining administrative units large enough to enable them to be fitted into the constitutional structure.²⁸

On 17th May, 1946, the Nawab of Bhopal wrote to Lord Wavell asking for further clarification of certain points in the Cabinet Mission plan particularly regarding the independence of the Indian States.²⁹ The reply of Lord Wavell was that the settlement of most of

the matters raised by the Nawab did not rest with him or the Cabinet Mission as they related to the terms which the States were free to negotiate for their own association with the new constitutional structure. To the Nawab, the letter of Wavell was disappointing and he wrote to him again asserting that the States were entitled to claim that the Crown should not leave them at the mercy of British India. He pointed out that it could never be the intention of His Majesty's Government to leave the States as "a sort of no man's child" without any effort on the part of the Crown to protect their legitimate and reasonable rights and claims. Regarding the matter Wavell suggested the Nawab to seek advice from Sir Conrad Corfield, the Political Advisor to the Government of India. The view of Sir Conrad was that the decision regarding the laps of Paramountcy at the end of the interim period placed the Indian States in the best bargaining position possible for the purpose of fitting themselves in the future constitutional structure. He advised the States to set up a Negotiating Committee. The points made by Sir Conrad provided material for the resolution adopted by Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes on 10th June, 1946.³⁰ Therefore, the Standing Committee set up by a Negotiating Committee and authorised the Chancellor to arrange discussions with the corresponding body of the British Indian Constituent Assembly as contemplated by the Cabinet Mission. On 21st

December, 1946, that the Constituent Assembly passed a resolution appointing a Negotiating Committee to negotiate with the Negotiating Committee already set up by the Indian States.

The following months of 1947 had been politically hectic to India's perspectives. The Prime Minister from Labour Party, Clement Atlee, happened to be the friend of India, openly declared on 20th February, 1947, that the British Government would ready to transfer power to responsible Indian hands within a stipulated period of 1948. On the issue of the future of the Indian States Atlee categorically observed, "As was explicitly stated by the Cabinet Mission, His Majesty's Government does not intend to hand over their powers and obligations under Paramountcy to any Government of British India. It is not intended to bring Paramountcy, as a system, to a conclusion earlier than the date of the final transfer of power, but it is contemplated that for the intervening period the relations of the Crown with individual States may be adjusted by agreement."³¹

Such an observation produced double reaction. Jawaharlal Nehru apprehended that it would be the advantage of the States if their representatives joined the Constituent Assembly during the April session of 1947. The Nawab of Bhopal, the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes pointed out the difficulty in doing so in a urgent manner without a meeting of the Indian rulers. To bring all democratic elements in the representation system for the Indian

States to be represented in the Constituent Assembly, it was decided that fifty percent (50%) of the representatives of the Indian States should be elected and efforts should be made to increase the quota of democratically elected members from the States, as far as possible. The Indian National Congress under Nehru's leadership, invited the representatives from the Indian States to function forthwith of some of the committees set up by the Constituent Assembly. But such an offer had been turned down by the Chancellor of Chamber of Princes, on the plea that such an invitation can only be accepted provided the rulers of the States gave consent. The stand of the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes evoked a mixed reaction among its members. For example the Maharaja of Bikaner did not approve the policy of wait and see adopted by the Chancellor. He favoured the immediate joining of the States in the Constituent assembly. The Maharaja of Patiala, Jaipur, Cochin and Rewa held the similar opinion on the question of participation of the representatives of Indian rulers in the Constituent Assembly. The Maharaja of Cooch Behar was also interested to join the Constituent Assembly. Thus majority of the Indian States had started sending their representatives to the Constituent Assembly. Evidently, the Nawab of Bhopal, Chancellor of Chamber of Princes, resigned from his post as a mark of protest. The Maharaj of Patiala filled up the post of Chancellor of Chamber

of Princes. With the coming of the Maharaja of Patiala to the leadership of the Chamber of Princes a kind of democratic ethos had started prevailing in the proceedings of Chamber of Princes.

Despite efforts of the Maharaja of Patiala, the rulers of Travancore and Hyderabad had decided to become independent sovereign States. Such a claim of a section of the representatives of the Chamber of Princes had been outrightly rejected by the Indian National Congress. The Congress system claimed for the people of the States the dominant voice in giving final decision concerning them. The all India Congress Committee declared that it did not admit the right of any State in India to declare its independence and to live in isolation from the rest of India. Jawaharlal Nehru also declared that the claim of the States to remain independent could not be sustained, as independence did not depend on a mere declaration by a State but rested fundamentally on recognition by other States. The lapse of Paramountcy of the British Crown did not make the Indian States independent.³¹ Moreover, the All India Congress Committee declared that the Princes who had not joined the Indian Constituent Assembly were invited to do the same and co-operate in the building of the constitutional structure of free India in which the States will be equal and autonomous shares with other units of the federation.

The political topsy-turvy in India corroborated by series of prolonged numerous meetings, conferences, debates, proceedings,

plans, offers, arguments and counter arguments had ultimately been consolidated and got sedimented by the announcement of Mountbatten plan of June 3rd, 1947. The plan unequivocally declared that the power to be transferred to the hands of the Indian much earlier than June 1948. The Mountbatten plan proposed for the division of India and provided for certain concrete agreements for the Indian States. The Mountbatten plan got legitimised by the consent of the leaders of Indian Political parties and legalised by the Act of 1947. The Government of India Act 1947 or the Indian Independence Act provided that the suzerainty of His Majesty over the Indian States lapses, and with it all treaties and agreements enforce on that date. As a result of this provision, the Indian States became completely independent, (without international character) and the Governments of India and Pakistan did not inherit the rights of authority of the former Government of India. The Act did not attempt a solution of the problem of the States and left the same to be tackled by the new Indian dominion. The result of the new policy was the fusion of the freedom movement in the States³² which evolves the history of the later period.

The relation of the newly born independent Government of India with Native States were determined by the Stand Still Agreement which meant the maintenance of Status-quo. The result

was that except in matters of foreign policy defense and communication, the Indian States enjoyed the fullest autonomy over their administration like pre-independence days.

In fact, the Stand Still Agreement was a stop gap arrangement between the lapse of the British Paramountcy and the "Instrument of Accession." It is to be mentioned here that the "Instrument of Accession" also provided the same powers to the Indian Princes. This extraordinary internal autonomy whetted the political ambition of some of the Indian States. In the name of internal autonomy, some States even indulged in anti-India unity conspiracy. The situation further deteriorated when Jinnah announced that Pakistan was ready to concede the demand of each State separately.

Thus a problem arose whether the States would join into the new Indian union or not. Taking advantage of this situation the Maharaja, the Gaikwad of Baroda, formed the West Indian Federation consisting of the States of West India which complicated the integration process of India. It is to be noted here that Indira Devi, Dowager Maharani of Cooch Behar was the daughter of Gaikwad of Baroda. The formation of the West Indian Federation inspired the Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan and the Dowager Maharani Indira Devi of Cooch Behar to maintain the separate identity of their State. But, finally, the State of Cooch Behar joined with the Indian Union and became a mere district of West Bengal.

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Chapter- VIII

A DETAILED STUDY OF MERGER OF A TINY PRINCELY STATE: COOCH BEHAR EXPERIENCE

Micro studies to understand the macro perspective of India's integration with five hundred odd Princely States have re-invited the attention of the contemporary scholars to understand the intrinsic realities of challenges involved in the merger process. Such challenges of contemporary kind have been rooted deeply in the process of merger during late forties and early fifties of the 20th Century. The integration of the Princely States with the greater Indian State structure has, indeed, prevented the possibility of having so many Indias within India. The sovereignty issue or the independent legal structural consideration has been diluted by the process of integration of the Princely States with the Indian Union. However, the seperative identity perspective of the Princely States as community had been underestimated and to some extent ignored by the Indian nationalist leaders. The ethos of state building and institution building had received primary consideration in the national agenda and the local community aspirations of the merging States had been provided a back seat. Under such circumstances the assurances provided in the merger documents

have got diluted resulting in a kind of dissensions and aggrandisement. Keeping this perspective in mind a discourse on the merger story of tiny Princely State marginally situated in far north east of Bengal has been dealt herewith.

Such a kind search to understand the underlying forces behind the process of merger may provide a kind of micro level experiences and if such micro experience can be placed on a macro dimension may reveal a kind of experience which would help understand the factors and forces behind the process of merger of the Princely States in general and Cooch Behar in particular. Any discourse on merger of the Princely States with the Indian Union has been the analysis of ultimate surrenderence of the Princely States to the mighty Indian State craft. Despite the assurances made in the Government of India Act, 1947 for the Princely States to remain independent or either to merge with India or Pakistan, the non-viability factor had ultimately compelled the Princely States either to join India or Pakistan. The age old evolving relationship between the Princely States and the British India followed through ages helped building a kind of situation where the Princely States could have no options rather joining either of the two dominions. In this sense the administrative integration between British India and the Princely States was completed long before India's independence. However, independent India completed the process of political integration by merging the Princely States within its fold. On the

basis of the issues, a systematic search of the factor and forces of the issue, a systematic search of the factors and forces behind the merger of Cooch Behar may be highlighted.

Although tiny in form, the Cooch Behar State, having a legacy of nearly five hundred years, and ruled by a single dynasty, had been able to extract recognition and respect only during 19th Century when the Maharaja of Cooch Behar had come with a closer contact with the British Government. During the days immediately after independence, the rulers of Cooch Behar could well understand their possible future destiny like most of the Princely States. An amount of activism had been manifest in the soil of Cooch Behar. Such kind of political activism in fact gave birth to different kind of issues raised by the rulers, political and social elites on the question of future locus-standi of Cooch Behar. All these issues constitute the ingredients behind the process of merger of the Cooch Behar State. Such a kind of concerted process was consisted of three sub processes: (1) Process of remaining independent; (2) Process of merging with Pakistan; (3) Process of merging with India. An analysis of these processes can well present a true picture behind the merger of this tiny Princely State.

ISSUES REMAINING INDEPENDENT:

The independence of India registered the birth of a kind of sub-continental empire consisting of the major part of the British

administered provinces and nearly six hundred Princely States of different size and political content produced a kind of transplanted nationalist state formation which has indeed been the product of an anti-colonial political project. Such kind of a transplanted nationalist state had to confront with competing collective imaginings. Such imaginings had been the indispensability for a sub-continental state like India marked by intermittent tension between the Nationalist State and the Princely Kingdoms. It was, indeed, in a situation the tiny Princely State of Cooch Behar experienced with multidimensional forces and events operating in tacit or manifest manner. The demand of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar to remain independent came out of three major considerations. First, the Government of India Act, 1947 provided the right to the Princely States to merge with either of the two dominions or to remain independent. Second, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar had been a party to that section of the Princely States which voiced for sustaining their independence. Third, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar wanted to make a balance between the opposing forces within the local political elites propagating either that Cooch Behar should join India or merge with Pakistan. Moreover, Maharaja of Cooch Behar had never been a direct party to the anti-colonial political movements. Thus the so-called Indian

nationalist consciousness could not touch upon the minds of the Maharajas of Cooch Behar. The State Praja Mandal (a local democratic nationalist group) in a telegram¹ to Sardar Patel, depicted the inherent objective tendency and the purpose of the Maharaja and his associates to remain independent. To the view of Prajamandal, "His Highness, in collusion and collaboration with his favourite Muslim pro-League and scheduled castes ministers, thinks that he can still now play the same reactionary role as was done previously during the British era." Not only the Maharaja of Cooch Behar was atypically apathetic to join India or Pakistan, a section of his State Council favoured Cooch Behar to remain independent. Satish Chandra Singha Roy, the Education Minister of the State expressed his opinion in a meeting at Mekliganj, (a subdivision of the State of Cooch Behar) that he wanted Cooch Behar to remain independent of India.²

Despite, the presence of the opinions and forces favouring Cooch Behar to remain independent, the argument could not achieve foothold. The active presence of the pro Indian political forces in fact dominated the political scene. The State Projamandal, Cooch Behar People's Association, a considerable number of members of the State Council and the leading intellectuals of the region had urged the Maharaja of Cooch Behar to change his attitude to remain independent. It is not out of place to mention

that Swai Mansing II, Maharaja of Jaipur and brother-in-law, Maharaja of Cooch Behar, had played an instrumental role in changing the mind of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar³. Ultimately, the attempt which generated a kind of process of remaining independent had been thwarted by the dominant will of the socio-political agents propagating in favour of merging Cooch Behar with Indian State.

ISSUES MERGING WITH PAKISTAN

When it was all set that Cooch Behar be merged with India a reasonably strong force argued in favour of merging Cooch Behar, with Pakistan. This pro-Pakistan propagandists in Cooch Behar, mostly constituted of the Muslim political elites in Cooch Behar State Council.¹ This elite group was primarily influenced by the Muslim League created aspirations to join Pakistan and the anxieties of the Muslim elites on the issue of their future position and possible role to be played and profits to be accrued if Cooch Behar be merged with India. In fact, most of the Muslim administrative elites working in different administrative positions of Maharaja's administration migrated from adjoining areas of Pabna and Rangpur. Naturally, when they have had an understanding that these adjoining areas were going to be included in the political map of Pakistan, the Muslim elites in Cooch Behar attempted to adjoin Cooch Behar with those merging districts of East Pakistan.

Apart from the Muslim elites migrated from the adjoining areas of Cooch Behar, some of the top political and administrative positions were distributed to some Muslim personalities brought directly from Baroda and its adjoining areas.⁵ Such an occurrence was taken place due to the fact that Maharani Indira Devi, the King's mother was held form the palace of Baroda. Although minority in form, the migrated Muslim elites from Baroda to Cooch Behar joined hands with the local Muslim administrative elites. Such a move favouring Cooch Behar be merged with Pakistan had received acceleration when the Hitasadhani Sabha (State patronised organisation) launched its movements for merging Cooch Behar with Pakistan. The positional advantage of Khan Chaudhury Amantullah being the president of the Hitasadhani Sabha helped the Pro-Pakistani movement in Cooch Behar. As the Revenue Minister of the State Khan Chaudhury Amantullah tried for importing Muhammadans in Cooch Behar from the neighbouring districts of Rangpur, Maymensingh and Pabna, so that the Muslims could occupy majority to the total population of the Cooch Behar State.⁶ Such a move witnessed a considerable increase in the number of Muslims population in Cooch Behar. The Maharaja of Cooch Behar remained passive in response to such move for he was more interested in earning revenues from this new settlement. Khan Chaudhury Amantullah has had also a greater design to transplant some

influential educated Muslim in different administrative position of the Cooch Behar State. Ansur Uddin Ahmed having British education was made the Finance Minister of Cooch Behar⁷. Ashadullah Siraji, leader of the Mujahid Fauj and a strong supporter of Pakistan was invited to Cooch Behar to free this tiny state from the Hindus.⁸ Not only the Muslims political and administrative elites a section of Muslim pleaders and businessmen was also involved in the design of Khan Chaudhury Amantullah for turning Cooch Behar to Pakistan.

When the design crafted by Amantullah for merging Cooch Behar with Pakistan was about to fail, he demanded plebiscite to solve the problem.⁹ Supporting the claim of Amantullah, Hekim Ahmed Hussain, S.D.O. Mathabhanga (a sub-division of Cooch Behar Administration) delivered a speech emphasising the merger of Cooch Behar with Pakistan. The Indian National Flag was dishonoured in Mathabhanga by the Pro-Pakistan supporters under the insistence of Hekim Ahmed Hussain.¹⁰ The role of Maharaja of Cooch Behar was very much conspicuous in preventing the Pro-Pakistan move in Cooch Behar, rather Maharaja's administration in Mathabhanga was deployed to obstruct the celebration of Independence Day, 15th August, 1947. People of Tufanganj celebrating the Independence had also received worst kind of treatment by the Maharaja Administration.¹¹ The State authority of

Cooch Behar had gone to the extent of arresting and extorting the leader celebrating Independence Day from the State. Moreover, Muslim elites having administrative position in Cooch Behar State Administration had started forcing people to voice against merger of Cooch Behar with India and support of Pakistan. Despite the presence of vigorous pro-Pakistan move the Maharaja's administration maintained a low profile while communicating necessary information to Mr. K.N.Katju, Shri Himmat Singh K Maheswari, a U.P., Civil Service cadre stationed in Cooch Behar pointed out that the reports regarding pro-Pakistan move were completely baseless.¹² There was absolutely no infiltration of Muslims of any kind and pro-Pakistani movement of any description. Such a misinformation was because of the fear of mighty Indian State and there is no ground in recognising the argument of Mr. Maheswari owing to the fact that a number of references has already been made to analyse the pro-Pakistan move of a section of ministers of Maharaja's Council and the tacit support of Maharaja to the move. Maharaja had, in fact, a kind of weakness to such move because of the fact that he was psychologically fixed to get rid of Bengal if ultimately Cooch Behar was to join with Indian union and probably he had a vision that Cooch Behar would ultimately a part of Bengal. Maharaja's weakness to pro-Pakistan move can be well justified by his activities even during the period of

signing the Merger Agreement. Prior to the signing of the Merger Agreement Maharaja of Cooch Behar made several appointments with Surwardy, the prominent Muslim League leader of Pakistan.¹³

ISSUES MERGING WITH INDIA

Despite repeated attempt of the pro-Pakistani moves in Cooch Behar and a tacit support of the maharaja to such move, the pro-Indian moves in Cooch Behar had ultimately gained currency. The political, social and cultural canvas of Cooch Behar was such that it provided a congenial atmosphere with such compelling reasons which produced in turn a majority voice for turning Cooch Behar into India. The Indian national political elites, the Bengal political elites have had also a deep seeded root in turning Cooch Behar towards India. The local, social and political groups, which formed the majority, voice and the intellectuals of the region favoured the merger of Cooch Behar with India. Certain examples of such pro-Indian moves would not be out of place to mention.

The Prajamandal later re-named as State Peoples' Conference was established in July, 1945 as a reaction to the State directed terrorism used against the students and teachers of Victoria College, Cooch Behar. Shri Umesh Chndra Mandal, a pleader of the locality and Shri Ramesh Roy were its President and Secretary respectively.¹⁴ The member of the State Peoples' Conference were mostly educated youth of the area with a bent towards Indian

nationalists and throughly against the feudal state administration. This organisation, from its inception was favouring the issue of merging Cooch Behar with Indian State and was also interested against the designed move of Hitasadhani Sabha to divide the people of Cooch Behar on the principle of the son of the soil. The ouster move of Hitasadhani Sabha on the principle of Deshi (local people) and Bhatia (the outsiders migrated to Cooch Behar) was highly condemned and criticised by the State Peoples' Conference of Cooch Behar. Terming the Hitasadhani Sabha "a most reactionary group" although patronised by Maharaja of Cooch Behar, the State Peoples' Conference, in its resolution unequivocally resolved that "for the safety and interest of the people of Cooch Behar and also for the solidarity of the Indian Union, the State of Cooch Behar be at once merged with such a province which is indissolubly connected with Cooch Behar State culturally, economically, geographically, and linguistically."¹⁵ The said organisation was also highly critical towards Maharaja of Cooch Behar, because, the Maharaja in collusion and collaboration with his favourable Muslim Ministers tried to play the Pakistan card. The Cooch Behararis (Deshi) and non Cooch Beharis (Bhatia) division was objectively designed to divide people on the issue of merger of Cooch Behar which ultimately would drag the State to be Pakistanised. Such a move was criticised by the said organisation i.e. the State Peoples' Conference. In a letter to Sardar Ballabh Bhai Patel, the Secretary

of the organisation, sought the help of Sardar Patel for merging Cooch Behar with India.¹⁶

Another organisation, 'The Cooch Behar State Congress' was established in 1947 as a branch of Indian National Congress. The Cooch Behar State Congress had no hesitation in arguing for Cooch Behar State to be merged with India. The Cooch Behar State Congress was also only critical about the role of Hitasadhani Sabha playing with the son of the soil card. In its resolution taken at various times during 1947-48 the State Congress emphasised the urgency of merging Cooch Behar on several occasions.¹⁷ The town Congress Committees and Thana Congress Committees under the jurisdiction of the Cooch Behar State Congress were also in favour of merging Cooch Behar with India. In a telegram sent to Sardar Ballabh Bahi Patel, the Secretary Bamanhat Thana Congress urged for immediate intervention of Sardar Patel into the affairs of Cooch Behar. The message of the telegram was, "Cooch Behar State authorities forcing people to sign against merger and making propaganda against Indian Dominion. Take action".¹⁸ The Haldibari Town Congress Committee in an unequivocal terms pleaded for merger of Cooch Behar with India.¹⁹

The Cooch Behar Peoples' Association, a social organisation, actively worked for the interest of the people of Cooch Behar, however, remaining outside the territory of Cooch Behar State. The Association was formed in Calcutta by the educated elites having

Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri background. From the very beginning the Association insisted for bringing Cooch Behar to the Indian fold. In its meetings mostly taken place in Calcutta, the Association for time and again supported the urgency of merger of Cooch Behar with India. The Association received patronisation and support from most of the Bengal's political and social elites viz, Dr. B.C.Roy, Dr. S.P. Mukherjee, Shri Sarat Bose, Shri Probodh Sanyal, Dr. R.C. Majumdar, Sir J.N. Sarkar and others.²⁰ The Association was not only in favour of merging Cooch Behar with India, it also justified the claim of bringing Cooch Behar to the fold of West Bengal State. An analysis of the justification of their claims would be dealt elsewhere.

All the opposing forces operating in Cooch Behar soil during the days of merger had, ultimately, been put to a halt soon after the newly independent Indian State craft could able to persuade Maharaja of Cooch Behar for signing agreement determining the tying of the fate of this tiny Princely State with India. An analysis of the background of Merger Agreement between Maharaja of Cooch Behar and the Government of India would not be an exaggeration.

While persuading the Maharaja of bring Cooch Behar to the fold of Indian polity the Government of India assured that Cooch Behar would be given a special administrative status as a centrally administered area under a Chief Commissioner. Even after the

merger of Cooch Behar with India the prevalent contracts and agreements would duly be honoured subject to the non-repugnancy of the prevailing contracts and agreements with the laws of and general policy of the Government of India.²¹ The material interests of the royal family would be protected with honour and the personnel of the royal administration and military force of Cooch Behar would be automatically converted to the Indian administration and military force. The Cooch Behar State sponsored temples and religious properties would be managed and administered by a religious trust to be headed by the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. Moreover, interests, honour and prestige of the royal family of Cooch Behar would be ascertained and a principle of equality of treatment to be provided to the Maharaja of Cooch Behar along with other merging princely states with India. In addition to the assurance the Government of India had tried to persuade the Maharaja of Cooch Behar by exerting the influence of Swai Man Singh II, the Maharaja of Jaipur, as well as brother-in-law of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. Ultimately the Maharaja of Cooch Behar had to digest the proposal of merger of Cooch Behar with India and finally the Merger Agreement was taken place on 28th August, 1949. Although the Maharaja of Cooch Behar as a signatory to the Agreement was apparently satisfied with the provisions (altogether nine in number) of the Agreement, an insight to the whole issue

would provide the scope to state that there had been wider gaps between the assurance provided by the Indian Government and the provisions enumerated in the Agreement of Merger. Soon after the Agreement had been concluded Cooch Behar was designated as a Chief Commissioner's province and was placed in the Part-C-of the First Schedule of the original constitution of India (1949). However, entry relating to Cooch Behar was omitted by the Constitution (amendment of the First and Fourth Schedule) order, 1950 (C.O.-3 dated the 25th January, 1950). Such a kind of move of re-arranging the administrative status of Cooch Behar provided a kind a complex political process that was prevalent in the Cooch Behar soil during 1949-50.

Soon after the merger of Cooch Behar State with the Dominion of India and the placement of the former as the Part C Category of State, political leaders in power of the adjoining states such as West Bengal and Assam were deeply interested to include Cooch Behar in their respective provincial territories. Indeed, it was apparently made clear that inclusion of the princely states (mostly minor) in Part C Category had been a compulsion for the necessary compliance of the condition enumerated in Article 290-A of the Government of India Act, 1935 which clarified the future administrative locus-standi of the princely States merging with the dominion. Such a kind of transitory situation gave birth to a

process of bargaining between the political leadership of Assam and West Bengal during the whole year of 1949 for establishing their respective claims to bring Cooch Behar to their respective folds.

The claim of West Bengal over Cooch Behar received adequate support from important social and political organisations excluding Hitasadhani Sabha. The Cooch Behar State Congress, the State Peoples' Conference, the Cooch Behar Peoples' Association and the emerging leftist groups whole-heartedly supported the demand for integrating Cooch Behar with the state of West Bengal. To support their claim these groups tried to raise the issues of long standing affinity and cultural assimilation of the Cooch Behar State with Bengal. In addition to this, the linguistic homogeneity and the geographical proximity were emphasised to justify the claim of West Bengal to include Cooch Behar within its fold. The above mentioned political and social organisations took strong exceptions to the move of Assam political leaders and the members of the Hitasadhani Sabha for their urge to include Cooch Behar in Assam.

To be specific, the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee demanded the merger of the Cooch Behar State with West Bengal without any delay on the following grounds²². The grounds were: (i) geographical contiguity, (ii) cultural and linguistic homogeneity and close political relationship till independence; (iii) eligibility and equality of the Cooch Behar subjects in respect of Government's services in Bengal but not in other provinces; (iv) use of Bengali

language in speech and education in all spheres and in courts; (v) Calcutta is the main source of supply not only of foreign goods but also many goods produced in other parts of India, and at the same time Calcutta is the main outlet for the raw materials and other goods produced in Cooch Behar; (vi) Commercial life of Cooch Behar is indissolubly bound with the contiguous district of Jalpaiguri in West Bengal; (vii) The Cooch Behar State Congress is affiliated to the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee; (viii) The Pradesh Congress Committee also demands that the general election in Cooch Behar which is going to take place in course of next fortnight be stopped immediately as the verdict of the so called representatives elected thereby cannot reflect the real voices of the majority of the Cooch Behar people, because, the election rules have been framed with the deliberate objective to exclude a large number of people from participating in voting and also in standing as a candidate for election to the legislature and being exercised by the State sponsored party influencing the people to vote in their favour. The verdict of the legislature elected under the ensuing election will be a colossal fraud on all outsiders and the Indian States Ministry who are not familiar in the real situation in Cooch Behar State.²³

While substantiating its argument in favour of the inclusion of Cooch Behar with West Bengal, the West Bengal Pradesh

Congress Committee argued for the existing linguistic homogeneity and the prevalence of Bengali as the official language of the Cooch Behar Court since 16th century. Moreover, the culturo-linguistic affiliation of the natives and non-natives living in Cooch Behar may be an important area to be considered for the inclusion of Cooch Behar with West Bengal ²⁴.

The various daily newspapers supported the demands of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee ²⁵. To prove that Cooch Behar had always been inseparably bound with Bengal, 'The Nation' cited example of the treaty of 1773. It was decided in the treaty that the Raja will acknowledge subjection to the East India Company upon his country being cleared of his enemies and will allow the Cooch Behar country to be annexed to the province of Bengal and ever since Cooch Behar has been looked upon as an integral part of Bengal. Moreover, during the partition of Bengal in 1905, the British Government affixed Cooch Behar with newly born Bengal province without recognising the separate entity of the latter. While arguing the case for Cooch Behar to be merged with West Bengal Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal an eminent social worker of the region emphasised on the point of administrative linkage by citing the fact that when the adjacent Jalpaiguri district had been created on 1st January 1869 it was tagged with the Cooch Behar division and placed under the supervision of the Divisional Commissioner of Cooch Behar. Such an occasion amply proves that Cooch Behar

had been a part and parcel of Bengal. To gather support in favour of his agrument Dr. Sanyal published an editorial in his regional newspaper 'Janamat' and distributed leaflets supporting the cause for Merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal ²⁶.

Besides the Congress organisation, the State Peoples' conference demanded the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal for the safety and interest of the people of Cooch Behar. Cooch Behar peoples' Association propogated the merger of the State with West Bengal on grounds of cultural and linguistic homogeneity. It also demanded immediate establishment of the peoples' Government in Cooch Behar. It further emphasised that it was the duty of the government to get back the Bangalee speaking areas to the province, and if it was necessary they should make agitation for the inclusion of those areas to West Bengal. The citizens of Calcutta voiced their opposition against the 'sinister movement' made by the vested interested parties elsewhere to take away Cooch Behar from the bosom of West Bengal. They strongly urged the Central Government to resolve the deadlock by immediate merging of the Cooch Behar State with West Bengal ²⁷.

Different other popular organisations operating in Cooch Behar and outside sent telegrams ²⁸ to Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India and the Congress President, stating the unanimous demands of all sections of the people of the State for merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal. They also claimed that

there was absolutely no opposition on the merger issue with West Bengal amongst the Cooch Behar people only exception, the ruler and his satellites. An eminent administrator with a profound research experience of the region Nari Rustomji, the advisor to the Governor of Assam, interestingly, commented that while Cooch Behar had close affinities it should logically be merged with West Bengal²⁹.

The visit of Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, Ex-Premier of Bengal to Cooch Behar during 1948 generated hope and enthusiasm among the political and social organisations favouring its merger with West Bengal. Dr. Ghosh was objective in his mission enabling the people of Cooch Behar to understand the prospect if this area be merged with West Bengal. He cautioned those organisations playing the native card. As a result, people of Cooch Behar favouring merger with West Bengal got boosted. Moreover, Dr. B.C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal had whole-heartedly supported the cause for merger of Cooch Behar with the state of West Bengal for the greater unity and integrity of the newly emerged Indian Nation³⁰.

The parallel force actively operating in Cooch Behar argued for and supported vehemently the cause for merger of Cooch Behar with Assam. The Hitasadhani Sabha, a selected group of elites in Cooch Behar Court and few other social groups were interested in tying the fate of Cooch Behar with Assam. This group of people

mooted a different kind of option urging for joining in proposed Uttarkhand State comprising of Darjeeling, Sikkim, Jalpaiguri, Dooars and Cooch Behar or Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar³¹. However, such an attempt proved futile and the idea of remaining a part of proposed Uttarkhand State was abandoned³². Such a move in Cooch Behar was sincerely welcomed by the political leaders of Assam cutting across the political boundaries. The Assam State Pradesh Congress Committee raised voice for the immediate merger of Cooch Behar with Assam³³. It unanimously resolved further to make no stone unturned for getting Cooch Behar within the fold of Assam State. It justified its argument by way of showing close affinity of Assam with the people of Cooch Behar in dialect, customs, manners and their immortal association as a part and parcel of the old kingdom of Kamrupa (Assam) since time immemorial³⁴. The provincial Congress Committee of Assam sent a memorandum to the Government of India urging not to merge Cooch Behar with any state without ascertaining the will of the people of Cooch Behar by democratic method.

The eminent leaders of Assam State countered and curtailed the arguments of the West Bengal leaders asking³⁵ for merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal. The Assam leaders tried to prove the arguments of West Bengal leaders as cocktailed, designed and lofty without having any definite social base. To substantiate their arguments the Assam Congress leaders sharply pointed out the

linguistic, cultural, ethnological and religious affinity between Cooch Behar and Assam. They referred the example of the deep seeded influence of the Assamese religious prophets such as Shankar Dev, Madhav Dev and Shreedhar Kandali on the minds of the people of Cooch Behar through ages. Thus to deprive Assam from getting Cooch Behar in its fold would be an attempt to distort the history and to get the people of Cooch Behar stabbed right from back³⁶. To accelerate the move and to boost the people in Cooch Behar demanding merger with Assam, the Chief Minister of Assam Shriu Gopinath Bordoloi had made a hurricane tour in Cooch Behar³⁷. To expedite the merger with Cooch Behar and Assam some administrative higher officials of Assam also came to Cooch Behar and met with the officials of the Cooch Behar State. Various organisations of Assam, like Assam Pradeshik Kshatriya Samity, Assam Jatiya Mahasabha demanded the merger of Cooch Behar with Assam without any delay.

Nilmoni Fookan and Sarat Chandra Singha, eminent personalities of Assam came to Cooch Behar during this time and met with the Maharaja³⁸. Mr. Fookan argued that Cooch Behar be merged with Assam and if it is merged with Bengal that will be harmful to the Indian Union. He further expressed that taking advantage of the troubled situation the communists will infiltrate in this region and the Central Government will be responsible for this.

An important point to be mentioned that Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan, could not remain impartial on the issue of merging Cooch Behar either with West Bengal or Assam. He tilted favouring the cause of Assam and openly state that the States merger with Assam would be preferable to that with West Bengal for strategic importance for the State was cut off from West Bengal by Pakistani territories. As a result communication to Calcutta was difficult. On the other Cooch Behar is directly connected by road with Guwahati, the capital of Assam State ³⁹. He further blamed that people from Bengal exploited the country for many years. Maharaja was confident enough that if there is a plebiscite, the people of Cooch Behar will vote in favour merger with Assam or any other province but not with West Bengal. The cultural homogeneity, Maharaja argues, between Assam and Cooch Behar justifies amply the basis of being Cooch Behar to be merged with Assam. The arguments of Maharaja clearly proved his reservations on the issue of merging Cooch Behar with West Bengal. However, Maharaja's stand was vehemently countered by various active social and political groups in Cooch Behar.

Rejecting the claims and blames of Maharaja the local congress leaders firmly argued that the Maharaja's arguments have been baseless and charged with emotions. Such a kind of comment is a sinister design of a negligible group of landed aristocrats and compradore bureaucrats living around Maharaja. The Cooch Behar

Congress leaders had been of the view that the objective propaganda and his associates bracketing Bengalees as exploiters was primarily designed to keep distance between the natives and Bengalees harmoniously living in Cooch Behar through ages. To the Cooch Behar Congress⁴⁰, the exploiters have been the banyas and traders and not the Bengalees. Further, if the adjacent districts of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling can be connected by road and rails with Calcutta, Cooch Behar would not have to suffer much with the feeling of geographical isolation.

'The Nation' a leading newspaper published from Calcutta opposed firmly the views of Maharaja of Cooch Behar on the issue of merger. Countering Maharaja's argument, 'The Nation' observes, "Is there any country in the world where cultural affinity grew independently of linguistic affinity? The Maharaja Saheb overlooked the fact that like Bengal, Cooch Behar is also guided by Daibhaga School of Hindu Law which does not extend to Assam or any other Indian province. This is enough to demolish the Maharaja's fantastic theory that the people of Cooch Behar had cultural and social link with Assam⁴¹. The State Peoples conference mostly dominated by left wing political leaders strongly refuted the justification of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar favouring Assam⁴². The leader argues that the interest of the Maharaja and his associates in merging with Assam lies in the inherent objective of satisfying the vested interests of the landed aristocracy and a sublime hope in

retaining loyalty over the people of Cooch Behar, if it was associated with a state still experiencing and championing the traditional authoritarian society. Such a possibility of non resistance against the existing authority structure might have influenced the Maharaja to associate Cooch Behar with Assam in preference to associating Cooch Behar with West Bengal – a State which has already rejected the bastion of any kind of authoritarian regime and always upholds the democratic values. The fear of democracy and the fear of losing control over the people might have influenced Maharaja to speak for Assam⁴³.

Another important event was taken place during the period on the issue of appointment of Akbar K. Haidari as political agent of the governor of India in Cooch Behar after violating the previous conventions⁴⁴. During British regime, the Commissioner of Rajshahi Division acted as the Ex-Officio political agents of Cooch Behar. But after independence, the old order was suddenly changed and Akbar K. Haidari was appointed as political agent which the Bengalee people scented something wrong about Cooch Behar and its future. Sri Akbar K. Haidari and his successor Shri Prakash thought fit to encourage or connive at the integration of Cooch Behar with Assam. Akbar K. Haidari wrote a letter⁴⁵ to Sardar Patel pointing down the fact that, 'The danger of the situation lies in Cooch Behar on the fact that the Bengal Congress leaders are lending themselves to propaganda that Cooch Behar should be merged with West Bengal

and this made the Congress unpopular in Cooch Behar". Further he argued 'any attempt to bring Cooch Behar under the wing of the Bengal Provincial congress committee would be violently resisted and in the present state of feeling the Congress would find few Cooch Behari adherents'. To him 'The best would be let it be affiliated to the Assam provincial Congress', Haidari's observation might have been influenced basically by two factors (a) The enthusiasm of the Muslim elite of Cooch Behar Court for merging Cooch Behar with Assam and (b) the outright rejection of Bengal's claim to have Bengalee speaking areas of Bihar within the fold of Bengal by the Government of India. To react against Haidari's comment, Sarat Chandra Bose, President, Socialist Republican party, sent a telegram to Ballabh Bhai Patel in the following words, 'Reported attempts being secretly and insidiously made for merging 99% Bengalee speaking Cooch Behari with Assam which has to be thwarted for providing justice both the Bengal and Bengalee speaking Cooch Behar'⁴⁶.

Haidari's pro-Assam stand provoked the members of the Hitasadhani Sabha to make immediate connection with the Assamese leaders demanding the merger of Cooch Behar with Assam. Such a move of the leaders of Cooch Behar, Hitasadhani Sabha comprising mostly of educated upper class Rajbanshi, landed aristocrats was whole heartedly supported by the Muslim political and administrative elites of Cooch Behar Court⁴⁷. Such a

kind of nexus for the cause of merging Cooch Behar with Assam called for certain immediate aspirations to be satisfied. These are; (a) realisation of distancing policy pursued both by the Muslim elites and a group of Rajbanshi Kshatriya vis-à-vis Bengal, (b) immediate tying up with the transplanted Muslim population in Assam nearly 4.5 Lacks in number; (c) linking up with the domicilled Rajbanshi Kshatriya in Assam Living mostly in lowerpart of Assam such as Goalpara district of the state; (d) satisfaction of the interests of the landed aristocrats comprising both Muslims and Rajbanshi Kshatriyas inhabiting in the districts of Assam adjacent to Cooch Behar⁴⁸.

Amantullah Khan Choudhury, the Revenue Minister of Cooch Behar had been a strong proponent for merging Cooch Behar with Assam. To realise his zeal, he managed the Maharaja to appoint one Mr. Fookan an influential, political elite of Assam as Police Commissioner of Cooch Behar⁴⁹. Such a move consolidated the aspiration of the pro Assam political and administrative elite of Maharaja's Court. In order to provide an emotional religious flavour to such a design, the death anniversary of Shri Shankar Dev, a celebrated religious saint of Assam was observed under direct state patronisation⁵⁰. The pilgrims of Assam were cordially invited to observe the anniversary with an objective to have a huge gathering of Assamese and pro-Assam supporters at Cooch Behar. Moreover, again in a straightforward manner demanded for organising

plebiscite in Cooch Behar on the issue of merger either with Assam or Bengal.

At this scorched time, the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, came to Calcutta and announced in a public meeting that the question of merger of Cooch Behar should be settled by a plebiscite as there is a division among the people of that state⁵¹. Such an announcement evoked mixed responses. Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, Assam Jatiya Mahasabha and other popular organisation of Assam gave thanks to Nehru for the announcement. Gopinath Bordoloi, the Chief Minister of Assam expressed his pleasure for Nehru's keeping of promise to declare a plebiscite for determining the future fate of Cooch Behar⁵². But the announcement of Nehru for plebiscite in Cooch Behar had been strongly resented by the pro-Bengal movement makers. The leader of the Cooch Behar peoples' Association argued that when the future of the other States in India had been settled without any plebiscite the same principle too should be applied in the case of Cooch Behar⁵³. The Association also earnestly asks the Central Government not to inflict any further blow to the cultural and economic unity of West Bengal already groaning under the agony of many wounds by keeping Cooch Behar State separate from West Bengal. Expressing his anxiety Dr. B.C. Roy informed Sardar Patel that the State of West Bengal had been and still has been in firm conviction to have Cooch Behar with its fold for Cooch Behar has been an inseparable part of Bengal's history and culture.⁵⁴

In the wake of this new situation the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee sent a memorandum to Sardar Patel, ⁵⁵ urging for the immediate realisation of merger of Cooch Behar with Bengal without observing anything either against or for the so called plebiscite. Sardar Patel assured the pro-Bengal moves that after considering the whole issue proper justice will be done on the issue.⁵⁶ Patel was firm enough to convey Mr. Sarat Bose, the impossibility of merging Cooch Behar with Assam and the Bengal's claim for Cooch Behar's stands valid on the ground that the neighbouring States of the provinces should be merged with proper justifications. At the meeting of the All India Congress Committee presided by Sardar Patel resolved that Cooch Behar should be brought under the wing of West Bengal.⁵⁷ The recommendation of the All India Congress Committee was accepted by the Government. The Government of India announced finally on 28th December, 1949 that Cooch Behar should be merged with West Bengal.⁵⁸

The announcement of the Central Government regarding the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal was widely greeted by the people of West Bengal, different political parties, organisations and individuals. Such an announcement was countered by the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee. It stated that after clear pronouncement of the Prime Minister of India in a Calcutta meeting, the question of merger of Cooch Behar would be decided according to the wishes of the people, but at present the merger of Cooch

Behar is going to be made with Bengal despite vehement protests of Cooch Behar people. The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee urged strongly the Government of India to stay the question of merger immediately and direct a plebscite on this issue as proposed by Nehru.⁵⁹ Assam Jatiya Mahasabha in a telegram⁶⁰ to Patel urged for stopping the merger of Cooch Behar with Bengal. Lilakanta Barak, the secretary of the Assam Pradeshik Krishak Sammilani argued that the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal is a proof of the Central Government's autocratic attitude and he gave a call to the people of Cooch Behar and Assam to launch a joint movement against the Central Government.⁶¹

Amidst the protests of pro-Assam protagonists, a public meeting was summoned in Cooch Behar to complete the process of merger with West Bengal as announced by the Indian Government. Dr. B.C.Roy and the Maharaja Jaggaddipendra Narayan delivered their complements for the people of Cooch Behar and thus by virtue of Section 29 (1) of Government of India Act 1935 Cooch Behar became a district of West Bengal with effect from 1st day of January, 1950.

The historical narratives on the merger of Cooch Behar State as presented in the paper, lead towards a set of conclusions of bias free nature. Such conclusions would call for a deep insight to understand the fate accomplice of a Princely State. There had been conspicuous absence of any mass movement in Cooch Behar for

either remaining independent or merge with India or Pakistan. Simultaneously there had been no people movement in Cooch Behar for joining Bengal or Assam. Thus whatever kind of forces operating actively in Cooch Behar or outside had always been devoid of any mass base social and political support. Indeed the people of Cooch Behar were given a back seat to decide upon their future political position. The indigenous landed aristocrats, local political and administrative elites and a section of intelligentsia had actively participated in the process of merger. The weak level of political socialisation of the local inhabitants because of the restrictive political policy of Cooch Behar Raj might have been a part of their weakness. In this sense the general people remained apathetic in participating in the merger movement. The general people of Cooch Behar had simply shown their acquiescence to the ultimate decision of merger without making any hue and cry. Thus the merger movement in Cooch Behar has been a saga of cleavages between the opposite forces comprising of mostly vested interested middle class and upper middle class people.

Despite the option provided by 1947 Act enabling Cooch Behar to remain independent the viability and potentiality of Cooch Behar to remain independent had broadly been questioned due to its tiny geographic configuration. It had been a compulsion on the part of Cooch Behar to take side of India for its strategic compulsion and the nature of demographic composition.

Despite the negation of Maharaja of Cooch Behar to join West Bengal, the issue of joining with Assam could not receive well attention of the national political leadership owing to the fact that the national leadership had a preconceived notion that while reorganising states no caste group dominated a particular territory. The potential solidarity of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas as a strong caste group living in the area, if merged with Assam might have created a greater form of caste consideration in association with the Rajbanshis living in the Assam territories adjacent to Cooch Behar. Such a doubt might have made the mind of the national political leadership to include Cooch Behar with West Bengal where such a considerable configuration of caste would not have been taken place due to the heterogeneous composition of the districts of West Bengal.

The response and the reaction of the ruler and the administrative elites as well as the landed bourgeoisie of the Cooch Behar State had been conducive to the general sentiments of peripheral rulers and landed aristocrats of not responding positively to merger with greater Indian union. Such a kind of negative attitude arose out of the fear of identity crisis of a tiny state vis-à-vis the greater political system. Notwithstanding the immediate negative response of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, it had to merge with India owing to circumstantial compulsion. The role of Maharaja Swai Man Singh II of Jaipur in persuading the Maharaja

of Cooch Behar for finally signing the treaty of merger with India has been a significant point of reference. Even after the merger, the issue of merger with the state of West Bengal or the state of Assam had been volatile. Again there had been resistance posed by Maharaja and his allies to join West Bengal on the point of that the state of West Bengal would have made Cooch Behar its internal colony and Cooch Behar would simply be monopolised by the Bengalees from Calcutta. Despite prejudices Cooch Behar has been part of West Bengal since 1st January, 1950. Indeed, the saga of merger of Cooch Behar State has been the history of the region and the feuds between intra regional and inter regional politico-economic and administrative elites and has never been the history of the general people of the region fighting for or against the merger. Thus, the fate accompli of Cooch Behar State had been to merge with West Bengal followed by sectional dissent and general acquiescence.

The detailed discourse made above on the different political factors and forces on the issue of merger of Cooch Behar State into the Indian Union evidently proves beyond doubt that the Cooch Behar State was not at all at once ready to herself merged with the Indian Union. A deeper insight to this issue lead us towards a logical conclusion that the atmosphere so far built in Cooch Behar State provided a kind of compulsion in extending fears, worries and doubts towards newly built India State. Such compulsions had

emanated from a definite socio-cultural, economic ethno linguistic distinctiveness apart from distinct political identity which the Cooch Behar State had inherited as a legacy from a long standing definitive past. Without understanding these different areas of distinctiveness, it would not be justifiable to come to a conclusion that the Feudatory State of Cooch Behar entered into the Indian Union on a particular date and time. The Uniqueness which Cooch Behar State was having should be elaborated in detail to understand the logic behind the discontent of the ruler of Cooch Behar to merge with Indian Union on the one hand and the present day political upheaval in a concerted and regimented form demanding for a separate State under the new constitutional order, on the other. An analysis in brief of the different distinctive areas in worth mentioning.

ETHNOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVENESS:

The indogenous populace of the erstwhile Cooch Behar State had formed an identity distinctively different from the populace living in Bengal, with the passage of time over years there had been a continuous interaction between the native people of the Cooch Behar State and the Hindus and Muslims of the bordering districts of Bengal. Cooch Behar had also witnessed Bengali intellectual infiltration since the last two decades of 19th Century. As a result of

assimilation and cultural fusion witnessed by the people of the Cooch Behar State.

Scholars, historians and administrators of different rank and file of British administrative structure have contributed in identifying the origin of the indigenous populace of the Cooch Behar State⁶². In brief most of the scholars are of the opinion that the Rajbanshis, the most dominant ethnic group of Cooch Behar State has their origin in Bodo stock which in its course reflects Austro-Mongoloid tradition. The Bodo stock gave birth to different tribal formations such as Coch, Mech, Rava, Tharu and other subtribal formations. The Rajbanshis of Cooch Behar have their origin in Coch tribal formations. In the process of civil formation the Rajbanshis of Cooch Behar got sanskritised and this dominant ethnic group had experienced a closer touch with two distinctive alien culture sets like Hinduisation and Islamisation resulting into a culture mix giving birth to a distinctive mixed variety of cultural fusion⁶³. All these interactions have provided a kind of distinctiveness to the Rajbanshi populace of the Cooch Behar State claiming autonomy and originality as a distinct ethnic group.

Such a kind of above proposition has been outrightly rejected by the scholars belonging to Rajbanshi sect. The indigenous scholars have denied the so-called main stream writings depicting the indigenous tribal source of the origin of Rajbanshis. These scholars after denying the source of Rajbanshis in Coch Tribal

origin and inheritance of Bodo stock as identified by the main stream scholars has emphasised on a complete different proposition after tracing the pre-historic origin of the Rajbanshis with the help of mythological scriptures. According to indigenous scholars ⁶⁴ the Rajbanshis have been the direct descendents of king Prithu who happened to be a dominant ruler of the Aryan heartland of present north India, with the support of the mythological scriptures of the Hindus, scholars of this region have been of the opinion that the policy of Parasuram (a mythological king termed saint) of dekshatriyaisation had augmented the ouster of a good number of population having distinctive Aryan origin and this groups of Aryan population after being fled away from the Aryan mainland due to fear of Parasuram had started settling down in the far northeastern part essentially surrounded by forests and ditches. This fled away group had to accomodate the indigenous culture, language habits, of the tribal populace living in forests. Thus the group, with the passage of time had to experience with the Sudraisation process. These group for got the culture of their ancestors and have to accommodate the culture of the forest people. Thus the present Rajbanshis have a definite Kshatriya origin, however, they can be well designated as bhunga Kshatriya, because of the fact that they have not been able to perform Kshatriya rituals even along period of time due to compulsions. So the Rajbanshis have never been a

cultural outfit of Cooch Behar having an Augro-Mongloid background rather the Rajbanshis have a distinctive Kshatriya past⁶⁵.

From the discussions made above conclusion seems ineluctable that neither the so-called British and main stream scholars nor the indigenous scholars have been able to come to a unanimous conclusion. On the issue of the origin of the local people the first group of scholars hold contradictory arguments on the issue of the origin of the Rajbanshis and had attempted to a kind of tentative conclusion that they have a Coch origin having a legacy of Bodo stuck or have been rooted in Austro-Mongoloid tradition. Such a tentative conclusion does not provide many footholds because it is devoid of scientific genealogical studies. On the other hand the argument of the indigenous scholar emphasising their claim of having a Kshatriya origin does not stand on the ground that it is based on mythological scriptures. Thus a serious research venture is indeed required to reach a conclusion by using mobile methods of techniques and research and by way of forming and identifying accurate genealogical table.

Despite limitations of the studies so far made it can be well be argued that Rajbanshis as an ethnic group does have its distinctive characteristic. Rajbanshis are a ethnic group resulting out of multidimensional cultural fusion taken place over a long period of time. This distinctiveness as an ethnic group has provided a kind of

mindset which was distinctively different both from neighbouring Bengal and Assam.

LINGUISTIC DISTINCTIVENESS:

The local inhabitant of the erstwhile Cooch Behar State used to speak a language of their own with a striking similarities and dissimilarities with the Bengali language and nearly similar to the Assamese language. The inhabitants of the Cooch Behar State majority of them, who are called Rajbanshis speak a language, to their term which is called Rajbanshi Kamtapuri language. However, most of the linguists are of the opinion that Rajbanshi or Kamtapuri is a dialect of Bengali language. Dr. Grienson proposed to call it Rangpuri or Rajbanshi dialects. Some scholar suggested the language spoken by the people of Cooch Behar is a form of Bengali language with important local or tribal variations. Some scholars have argued, 'Having many words in common with the Bengali language a part of the vocabulary of this dialect is indisputably its own, and forms one of the several points which mark it out from the standard Bengali ⁶⁸. The language of Cooch Behar had close affinities with Assamese language although certainly there had been differences. Thus the language which the people of Cooch Behar State inherited used to be the Spoken language and for its written form it had to depend on the Bengali alphabets. Thus the linguistic

distinctiveness provided a kind of difference between the Rajbanshis and the Bangalees and Rajbanshis and Assameses were a question of cultural contention among the natives of Cooch Behar and Bengal and Assam in the period of merger.

SOCIO-CULTURAL DISTINCTIVENESS:

Understandably, the indigenous people of Cooch Behar State had undergone a massive cross-cultural fusion over a long period of time. Such a kind of overwhelming interaction between the indigenous society and culture and the alien culture in Cooch Behar State with similarities and variations with the infiltrating culture and society. It has been observed by the scholars that the society and culture of Cooch Behar State had undergone a massive process of Hinduisation and Islamisation. Under the impact of the two processes the indigenous people of the Cooch Behar State adopted a new outlook to life and society as well as got sanskritised. The influence of Vaishnav cult under the aegis of Sankardeb had also exerted considerable impact on the life and society of the indigenous people of Cooch Behar State. Based on the principle of egalitarianism the indigenous society and culture of Cooch Behar had got transformed and societal hierarchical system began to develop. The varno system which was absolutely absent had started getting shape under the impact of the above processes. Despite

having tremendous similarities with the dominant Hindu culture steered by Brahmanic cult, the indigenous people, still practise certain social and religious rituals of their own which are absent in the Brahmanic tradition. The claim of the indigenous scholars of having direct Hindu Kshatriya origin does not hold much value while one observes the commonly followed non Hindu Kshatriya rituals observed by the indigenous people. However, arguments favoring the indigenous scholars may be extended by way of pointing out that the one Hindu Kshatriya social practices and rituals had to be observed by the fled away people belonging to Kshatriya category settled in a non Aryan geography had to accommodate the non-Aryan culture and rituals ever since the mythological age. The marital or nuptial relationship between the origin kshatriya people settled in 'Kiratbhumi' and the indigenous local tribal groups, since time immemorial, had yielded a mixed variety of society and culture for the people of Cooch Behar which is similar to the dominant Hindu culture as well as distinctively different from it, such a socio cultural setting, undoubtedly, had given rise to a definite and distinctive socio-cultural identity for the people of Cooch Behar State.

ECONOMIC DISTINCTIVENESS:

The feudal nature of the Cooch Behar State corroborated a maligning feudal economy purely based on agriculture. The agriculture based feudal economy correspondingly produced a

feudal society and authoritarian social structure. Evidently, the inhabitants of Cooch Behar State reflected a society, politics and culture fundamentally based on feudal economy since land was the only source of production. People had no option other than joining agricultural avocation. The land man relationship had never been balanced and lands were mostly occupied by a dominant section of the society. The general people were mostly agriculturist in the way that they used to be the small holder of land, agriculture laborer, land less marginal labourers. Since the condition of the economy had been bleak, technology to develop agricultural production was out of question. The people of Cooch Behar used to live a life below the level of subsistence even the natural growth of population had become mismatch with the land yielding. However, a particular section used to hold total control of land and could able to live an extravagant life. There had been no land settlement in Cooch Behar till the seventies of 19th Century⁶⁷. There had been attempts afterwards to establish a balance between land man ratio. But those were failed miserably because of the interests of the upper section people of the Cooch Behar State. In addition to this process, there had been the process of migration experienced by the people of Cooch Behar since the late 19th Century. The migrated people, by virtue of their intellectual and material capacity had started taking control over land. Such an incident pushed the general Rajbanshi population to the extent of marginality. This majority of the marginalised people became shaky with the objective fear of losing their means of subsistence if they were to merge with Indian State. Thus the nature of the economy usually reflected a distinctive

character quite different both from the economy of Assam and Bengal.

Such distinctiveness might have compelled a section of the people of Cooch Behar to think for a while whether they should join India and merging with Bengal or Assam or to remain independent. Even if they had to merge with India whether they should join with the province of west Bengal or Assam or they should remain as a province under Indian State had been the principal questions in their minds.

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EPILOGUE

Precisely, the entire exercise so far made in the preceding chapters has provided a scope to understand the uniqueness of the political history of merger in the backdrop of a general ambience. Such an attempt has definitely helped to understand the sophisticated historiography of colonial South Asia in general and India in particular. To put in a different way the study of the history of relationship between the newly born Indian Union and the Princely States helps to understand the compulsions of the emerging post colonial democratic regime in India and the declining feudal political authorities of the Princely States.

The compelling reasons behind the active interest of the newly born Indian Statecraft had been to integrate all the Princely States who occupied at least, two fifth of the Indian sub-continent. Such an accommodation of the Princely States would help to strengthen Indian political geography both from strategic and politico-economic viewpoints. The consolidation of the political culture in the name of democracy and Indian nationhood had been of high order during those days immediately after independence. The need for the extension of social roots of our political democracy

and the replacement of the aristocratic feudal authoritative power structure had compelled the newly born democratic political regime to provide a general call to the Princely Indian States to be integrated with India. The result of such call had created mixed responses and reactions among States of Princely India which can well be categorised as under.

The first category of Princely States was deeply interested to join India almost unconditionally. The second category of States had shown their interest to join Indian Union subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions of socio-economic relevance. The third category of States denounced joining India and had been interested in joining Pakistan. The fourth category of State had been reluctant to join India or Pakistan and intended to remain sovereign independent State with the commitment to keep their distinctive political identity in the sub-continent either as a single political unit or as a confederate union of the Princely order. The fifth category of State while intending to merge with India claimed for separate provincialhood under the Indian State structure.

The politics of under currents, the factors and forces actively operating behind the process of bargaining between the Indian states and the Princely India are many which have been broadly discussed both in general and in particular terms in the principal body of the dissertation. Presumably one can logically argue that the results of such bargaining have ultimately questioned the

primary edifice of both the political and economic theory of feudalism. The newly emerged democratic political regime had an objective purpose to establish a sovereign national or supra-sovereign state structure where the merging units get marginalised and can not even play the role of quasi-sovereign or infra-sovereign units of the sovereign national state structure. While dealing with the Princely States and getting them merged with the Indian fold, the economic theory of feudalism had remain completely uncared for. To be precise, economic theory of feudalism rests upon the justification of the existence of multilevel governments in the federation division of functions and financial resources between various levels of governments and provision of various types of federal financial assistance to reduce vertical federal imbalances. In fact, no uniform policy based on a definitive economic and political theory had been applied for while the units of Princely order had been merged with the newly evolved Indian democratic political order. Thus one may logically argue that the politics of expediency had played principal role during the bargaining process of merger of the Princely States with the Indian Union.

The objective denouncement of the claims of Princely States by the Indian Union had been due to the fact that the Indian leaders intended to ignore completely the erstwhile political status of the feudal rulers. This had been essential for the reason that the process of democratic nation building and state building had been

of high order. With this clear-cut objective in mind the Indian Statecraft carefully subsided the term merger and replaced the term by bringing the concept integration the functional, spatial and psycho-cultural aspects of integration, had been given importance. However, the academic exercise so far made on the subject in the preceding chapters had failed to understand the issues of psychological and cultural integrity of the merging Princely States and the Indian Union. Indeed, such kinds of psychological gap and cultural difference have produced worries and constraints in different parts of Indian political soil in the form of regional ethnic assertions. Thus one may argue the process of integration with its ramified ingredients had not been duly attended to. It was not the process of integration rather it had been the process of merger under compulsions which unravels the politico-administrative issues rather than psycho-cultural dimension of integration. This is germane to mention that the Indian Princely States had been given a kind of relative autonomy by the British Government during early forties due to the internal pressure of conservative politics in Great Britain rather than well chalked out decision for the future consolidation of Indian State. Since late forties the position of the Indian States was one of great anxiety. Their security and political integrity had been in jeopardy. Neither the Princely States did have

machinery to combat the deteriorating communal situation. The immediate solution was to bring the Princely States under the fold of Indian Union. Such a compelling situation demands a hectic political deliberation and quick decision. As a result the politics of expediency had started playing the principal role and consideration of other theories and issues had been given a backseat.

Colonial India had been experienced with two distinctive political geographies; (a) Directly British administered provinces; (b) Indian States under the suzerainty of the British Crown. The Government of India Act 1947 while creating two dominions candidly provided the position of the Indian States in future providing them independence of either remaining sovereign or joining India or Pakistan. The British administered provinces and the Indian States were so intrinsically linked and welded together that it was impossible to think an independent India in isolation of the Indian States. The States Department was created to settle the issues which claimed for a kind of organic bond to be forged between the Government of India and Indian States, after taking into consideration, the preservation of the integrity of the country. The hectic initiatives taken by the Head of the States Department, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, provided no room for deliberation for the Princely States geographically contiguous with India. Thus the option provided in Government of India Act 1947 had ultimately turned into compulsion for the Princely States to join India. One

can, therefore, argue that there is the territorial boundary of Independent India. They exist as a result of a particular mode of transfer of power from British Colonial rule and of political negotiations between the leaders of independent India and the rulers of Independent States.

The study on the dynamics of state formation reveals the fact that Indian State like her counterpart in Europe and Asia does have a history distinctively of her own. It has been shown in the study how the Indian State has come to be what she is and what might be expected of her. The study has sought to do about trajectories of state formation in India, a unique political entity facing major uncertainties, crisis and challenges. The study has provided a general background to the deeper understanding of what is possible in development and what are her historical conditions and limit. It should logically be concluded that Indian State (not Rajya or Samrajya) is relatively a modern construction, its institutional forms and trajectories differ but also within her Asian counterparts.

While venture to understand the fundamentals of the relationship between newly emerged state, one should appreciate the nature of the dominant state and its relationship with the civil societies essentially agrarian and feudal by nature. Such a study is partly connected with social theory and partly with the domain of existential politics. There is a consensus among social scientists that conventional wisdom about the State and its nexus with

society, whether it draws upon liberal theory or its relates to radical theory, seems to be totally inadequate to the immensity of the problems which challenge the edifice of the modern state. The anguish and unfulfilled aspirations of the Princely order and their people provide a compelling reason for a re-consideration of a kind of ideological understanding of the state and the same time as one re-examines the institutions which provide the operational framework of such relationship in an era of popular democracy. The study so far made on state formation has either placed India as a 'civilisation state' or a 'native state'. However, such a nomenclature does not call for any change in the formal and informal structure of the political system devised by the Constitution or grow as a natural phenomenon. Nevertheless, such an over reaching identity provides a liberal space necessary for the articulation of diverse social identities within a single political system.

Notwithstanding the fact that the diversified and variegated nature of the development of civil societies in India (Erstwhile British administered provinces) and many 'Indias' (Big and small principalities geographically contiguous to India), the unanimity so far reached during late forties had been to consider the urgency of building a strong Indian State ignoring the separate processes of State formation experienced by the Indian Princely order. Thus, integration of the India states had been a sine-quo-non. The

constitutional rhetoric of the new Indian State placed emphasis on three distinctive principles of modern state system: Sovereignty, political democracy and a bounded form of socialism. Evidently, despite irredeemable triteness, these principles seemed to convey some important truths about the nature of the Indian State. Thus, three distinct tasks the Indian State had accomplished during the process of integration of the Indian State. The first had been the task of creating a Weberian monopoly of violence bringing the process of Princely States under the disciplining control of the dominant State. The second was the task of making the integrated State responsive through institutions of popular participation. The third had been the conversion of the State and its bureaucracy into a major instrument of social change and distribution of welfare. The newly born Indian State had sought to telescope all these objectives into a single process and into a relatively short period of time. The historical efforts of the Colonial State and its nationalist successors accomplished all these tasks. However, experience and dissatisfaction with the performance of the Indian State have given rise to an interesting debate about what should be done on its various failures while integrating both functionally and spatially the Indian Princely States to the fold of Indian State. The declining tendency of the centrality of the Indian State prompts us to suggest to evolve certain basic apertures and insulators^{to} sub serve tensions

started ^{fl} following sublimely at different erstwhile integrating parts of the present Indian State structure.

The study of Cooch Behar in the northeastern canvas has amply proved that the principality of Cooch Behar had been and still has been a periphery of the Indian State. Since the region and her people have a common distinctive trait, it has its own historical antecedent too. The people of Cooch Behar, to be specific, are Rajbanshis who shared common cultural emblems such as race (Indo-Mongoloid distinctively different from Aryans or Dravidians of the Indian main stream), Language (dialect), dress (unlike of northern or southern people of India), diet or a combination of them. The people of Cooch Behar have a self-ascribed awareness or distinctiveness which altogether lead to mobilisation through the use of ethnic symbols for socio-cultural and politico-economic purposes.

Keeping in view the Indian context, the region under study can well be designated a periphery of Indian mainland, periphery of productive organisation of the country, periphery of dominant political economy of the country as a whole and periphery in terms of being different from the dominant races of the country as well as politico-administrative perspective in particular. Such kind of peripheral studies resulted into psychological insecurity, emotional alienation and a feeling to be left out in the power sharing arrangement. All these constraints had directly or indirectly

influenced the mindset of the ruler not to join the Indian State structure but to live in isolation as a separate autonomous political entity. In fact, these deeply rooted causes have been manifested in the form of assertions of social movements even after the fifty years of merger of Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union.

Historically, Cooch Behar was not an integral part of the directly British administered India and did not have much strong political and legal relationship with it. The rulers and native aristocrats of Cooch Behar viewed the Indian Government with fear and suspicion and it is this that eventually took the shape of a political issue. The Rajbanshis the local natives of Cooch Behar forming majority of the population can be easily distinguished from the outsiders by their physical appearance. On the other hand, the newly evolved Indian State craft did nothing to remove the fear in their minds that taxes and an alien culture would be imposed upon them. The local aristocrats along with the ruler had a feeling that with the merger of their State into India they would get slowly alienated from their lands and that Indianisation of the area would take place. All these issues are important areas of concern, which have still remained unattended and unanswered. No political leader of national stature had been serious and displayed an enlightened sense of commitment and duty to this merged periphery.

All these unsettled areas during or immediately after the merger of Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union have ultimately

given birth to a form of ethnic unrest in the recent years to achieve a better life materially and culturally aggregated in a group. In fact, historical factors have a major role in giving shape to unrest. The Indian system with its institutions and policies has not quite been able to cope up with the diverse demands of a pluralist society and has not been able to satisfy the rising expectations of the people. Thus the urgent need is that the political leaders and administrators both at the centre and the State level become serious and displayed an enlightened sense of commitment and duty towards the periphery composing of erstwhile principalities. The fundamental postulate of integration of the Indian States had been to tie up the heterogeneous socio-political forces by a single thread of nationalist main stream. Methodologies applied in doing so had not been proper and the obvious result has been alleviation of the merging units towards the national development process. The essential need is for greater psychological and emotional integration of the merging principalities with that of mainland India.

The study of relationship between East India Company or later on the British Indian Government with the Princely States provides a unique historiography to understand the nature and character of the imperiums under the direct or indirect control of strong imperio. The East India Company began their stride without a strip of Indian Territory. To quote Meson, 'A warehouse was

expanded into province; a province into an empire." However, such development did not take place over night. Treaties entered into with Indian States in the early stages aimed at no more than the maintenance of the Company's privileged position in trade against its rivals. It was in the process of protecting its commercial stake in the country that the Company under the leadership of Clive actually laid the foundations of the British Empire in India. The policies taken by the East India Company and later on by British India Government had certainly been perused for the extension of their area of influence and ultimate subordination and subjugation of the Princely States to the altar of the British authority.

Thus the relationship between the East India Company or later on British India Government with the Princely States corroborates the fact that the British undertook policies and strategies vis-à-vis the Princely States for the best satisfaction of economic and political interests of the British in India. The British interest in Cooch Behar had been essentially political. The protection of the northeastern flank of their expanding empire was their principal concern. However, the economic interest was also not negligible during the late eighteenth century. The Princely State Cooch Behar was identified as an alternative trade route to Tibet through Bhutan and Assam via Cooch Behar. In order to obtain free access it was essentially important on the part of the British to exert hold and command on this tiny State Cooch Behar. Thus even

since the dawn of British Indian empire this tiny state was considered as a principal element in the British expansionist agenda. The internal feuds with in the rank and file of the Royal family of Cooch Behar helped the East India Company to gain a smooth access to the internal administration of the Cooch Behar State. It has been shown in our study that since the period of Wellesley's administration the authority of the Company had been greatly increased and during the period of King Harendra Narayan confrontation between the king and the East India Company had been on the rise and with in a passage of time the entire state of Cooch Behar was brought under the complete control when Harendra Narayan's heir occupied kingship. It has been shown in the study that the East India Company had purused certain policies following a consequential design, however, when applied to Cooch Behar the policies observed in breach and Cooch Behar state had come under total control of the British administration with little autonomy and authority left for the Maharaja of Cooch Behar.

The policy of subsidiary alliance pursud by the East India Company ~~had~~ ultimately helped to bring most of the Princely States under its complete control and command. In addition, the policy of complete subordination and isolation accelerated the pace of subordination of the Princely States to the mighty East India Company. ^{The period} From the early nineteenth century till the mid of nineteenth century witnessed the most important changes in the

relationship between the Princely States and the British authority. The entire period had experienced a metamorphosis of the Indian States from a congeries of quasi-independent units, some openly hostile, antagonistic, doubtful and resentful. In response to such assertions the East India Company had to abandon its policy of ringfence and non-interference as well as system of subordinate alliance and by replacing those policies by a generous policy of cooperative partnership. However, such policy was not maintained while we study the relationship between the British authority and the Princely Cooch Behar. In fact, after the death of Maharaja Harendra Narayan there had been hardly any attempt undertaken by the rulers of Cooch Behar to express their resentments and worries against the growing control and dominations of the British authority over this tiny Princely State.

British policy towards the Princely States underwent a fundamental transformation after the Sepoy Mutiny which the modern historians termed as the 'First War of Independence'. It was unanimously concluded that the most fundamental cause behind such upsurge had been the policy of wholesale annexation of the Indian States with one pretext or other. Indeed, the realisation that the Princes could play as one of the bullworks of British rule led to a radical change of policy which found expression in Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858. Under such proclamation the

Indian Princely rulers were proposed to be given the right of adoption of child and they were assured that no harm would be done so long they were to be faithful to the Crown. Thus the politics of friendship had replaced the erstwhile British policy based on politics of coercion. Old policy of jealousy and suspicion against the Indian States was given up and States were brought together by providing them room to act an active agent of the British Empire. However, this does not mean that the Indian States were provided with much authority and freedom of action. Moreover, the British paramountcy over the Indian States was unquestionably established and strengthened by the declaration of Lord Canning in 1858, "The Crown of England" stands forth the unquestioned "ruler in India".

The following years were occupied with the task of evolving a new machinery for controlling the States and this was duly accomplished. A Political Department was constituted under the direct charge of the Governor General. This new Department had Residents and Political Agents in all States or group of States on behalf of the Governor General. The Political Department exercised complete control over the Indian States. The role of the Resident was so enormous in deciding and settling issues in the Princely State of the concerned Resident had led Prof. Panikkar, a celebrity on the affairs of the Indian States, to comment that, "all those who

have direct experience of Indian States know that the whisper of the Residencies is the thunder of the State and there is no matter on which the Resident does not feel to give his advice. His advice was ususally an order or a command”.

After the First World War, a high power committee was constituted for bringing about possible reforms and changes in Indian administration. The Committee was chaired by Montague and membered by Chelmsford. The Montague-Chelmsford report submitted in 1918 had paid glowing tribute to the Princes for their support to British authority in the First World War. The report suggests that, “The political stir in British India could not be a matter of indiffence to the Princes, since hopes and aspirations were apt to overleap frontier lines. So the authors of report recommended that the reforms in the States could not be brought about as a direct result of constitutional changes in British India, they could come only through the permeation of ideas. It was stressed that the rulers of the States and politicians in British India should respect each other’s bounds”.

The British intention had been to form a nexus with the Princely Rulers to have a strong foothold against the growing democratic assertions taking place in the directly British administered provinces. During this period British policy towards Princely States had resulted a kind of cordial relationship. The Montague Chelmsford ^{Report} assumed that rulers be ensured that no

constitutional changes could take place ^{which} would impair the rights, dignities and privileges secured to the Princely order by treaties or by established conventions. In fact, Montague report had provided scope for the Princes to revitalise their political position. During December 1919, the conference of ruling Princes gave birth to the historic organisation of Chamber of Princes and such organisation was recognised by a Royal Proclamation on 8th February 1921. Thus during this phase of relationship between the British Government and Princely India had been that of a cordiality rather than supremacy and domination. The British conservative mind down through ages have had always a weak corner for the Princely aristocracy developed in India and the reflection of such weakness can well be corroborated from the fact that despite liberal democratic ethos cherished by the British people in bringing constitutional reforms in Indian State structure, the British authority intended to make a balance by considering the interests of the feudal aristocracy and liberally educated rising democratic forces in India. The attempt to make such balance had been primarily because of the fact that the British authority intended to strengthen the imperial edifice in India. To make their mission a success the British authority had played a kind of concessional politics to keep the feudal elements in India under control and to

use them as and when necessary against the potential anti imperial force in India.

The following years since 1857 have certainly witnessed fundamental departures in the policies and strategies of the British Government while dealing with the Indian States. Such a change in the British policy towards the Indian States had been due to the compulsions of the imperial power to maintain the imperial domination over the Indian sub-continent. With the intention to repair whatever damage made in the earlier relationship with the Indian States, the British authority had been cautious to exert control over the Princely States and to achieve this they preferred to follow the policy of the politics of friendship rather than the policy of taking coercive measures.

The establishment of the Chamber of Princes in the early twenties provided ample scope for the Indian Princes to bargain with the British authority in order to gain status and prestige. The Chamber of Princes had been a consultative body whose importance laid in the fact that besides ending the long standing policy of isolating the Princes from one and another, it helped to stimulate corporate feeling and to encourage cooperation among them. Being a member of the Chamber Cooch Behar State had been able to establish such relationship both within and without. Under the joint claims of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and Jaipur as well as Baroda for the necessary arrangement of statutory protection to

combat nationalist upsurge in Princely India, the reaction of the British Government was very prompt. The Indian States (Protection against disaffection) Act XXIV, 1922 had been passed. Immediately after the passing of the Act nationalist activities were completely banned in Cooch Behar. Thus one may argue that the British relationship with the Princely States during the year had provided a new position to the Princely States with the objective notion to combat the anti imperialist forces in India.

During the late twenties the British Government appointed a specific committee headed by Butler to review the existing relationship between the British Government and the Princely India. Along with majority of the Princely States the ruler of Cooch Behar had welcomed the nomination of Butler by sending greetings to Mr. Butler. The bulk of the Butler Committee's work was done in England and Sir Lesley Scot was appointed by the rulers of the Indian States as their councillor to interact with the Butler Committee. However, the report of the Committee did not touch the mind of the rulers rather the rulers were completely dissatisfied with the contents of the report. The Indian States had surely in mind that the Committee would provide them much more independence and autonomy, however, they had been in vain. On the other hand, the Indian nationalists outrightly rejected the content of the report of the Butler Committee for its imperial design and attempt to satisfy the feudal interests.

The rejection of the report of the Butler Committee by the Princely States compelled the British Indian authority to provide some new arrangements. The recommendation of Nehru Committee had ultimately provided a possibility to call for Round Table Conference to be represented both by the Indian nationalist leaders and the rulers of the Indian States. The consecutive Round Table Conferences, however, had not been able to provide any positive solutions. The protracted negotiation between the rulers, leaders of India and the British authority had ultimately proved to be a failure. Following years had experienced a tremendous political upheavals in India and in the mid forties the Indian Independence Act had ultimately come to a kind of solution to all kind of bargainings. The Act intended to satisfy both the nationalist, communal and feudal interests in a single package. By way of creating Pakistan Dominion, the Act of 1947 intended to satisfy the communal elements in India and by way of providing full options either to remain independent or to join either of the Dominions to the Princely orders, the Act designed to satisfy the feudal elements. The protracted negotiations and bargaining soon after the creation of the Indian Dominion had ultimately subjugated the feudal force to the altar of democratic force.

With the passage of India's Independence in 1947, the territories of British India were partitioned on the basis of award of the Radcliffe Commission which undertook the task of drawing the

lines of division on the map of British India. There had been nearly six hundred Princely States over which the British exercised paramountcy without actually incorporating those territories into the provinces of British India. As it has been stated in the structure of the dissertation that according to the terms of the Transfer of Power the lapse of British paramountcy meant that the rulers of those States regained full sovereignty with the option of either joining India or Pakistan. There had been tremendous diplomatic activity on the part of the new political authorities of India and Pakistan in the days immediately preceding independence to get the Princes to sign the Instrument of Accession to their respective dominions. Under the leadership of Vallabhahi Patel an attempt was made to put together a single consolidated territorial entity over which the newly independent Indian States would exercise sovereignty.

As depicted in the study, the Princes were first asked to concede to the Indian Union only without the power of defence, external affairs and communication. Merging States were invited to continue participation to the Upper House of the Dominion Legislature under the new Constitution. Ultimately, however, most of the rulers of the states contiguous to the territory of India (Five Hundred Fifty Four in ~~Number~~^{the}) agreed to join. From ~~an~~ depiction

in the preceding chapters it has also been shown that the Princely States were scattered over many regions - in Kashmir and in Punjab, in Rajasthan, in Gujrat and Saurashtra, in the Deccan, in the Vindya regions of Central India, in the Chattishgarh area in Orissa, in Travancore, Cochin and Mysore, on the borders of Bengal and in the Khasi hills. Immediately after accession, a concerted attempt was made by the leadership in Delhi to consolidate the territories of the State into larger administrative units similar to the Provinces. The legal form of seeking the consent of the ruler was maintained in each case, but the political argument of the inevitability of popular democratic rule was frequently used, often with falling effect. The ruler of the small Princely territories were persuaded to allow their territories to be merged with the neighbouring British administered Indian provinces. Nearly two hundred and twenty Princely States were merged into provinces in this manner. The bulk of the States were, however, clustered in several contiguous areas in Kathiawad, Rajasthan, Punjab, the Vindhya and the Central India. Six such unions were formed by integration, viz., Saurashtra, Vindhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, Patiwala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU), Rajasthan, and Travancore-Cochin in incorporating nearly three hundred ten States. Mysore one of the largest States became an administrative unit on its own, as did a few others. Each Union had its own Constituent

Assembly to draft a Constitution for a responsible Government, and most rulers though they would prefer some kind of federal arrangement within their Unions. However, some of the States had active democratic movements, often allied with the Indian National Congress which played an important role in shaping the political relations of the State with the Indian Union. Ultimately, however, with the making of the Constitution of India in 1950, all of the Constituent States of the Unions resolved to adopt the Indian Constitution.

There had been difficulties and problems with accession in many areas including Cooch Behar as has been depicted. Some of the important cases may be mentioned, for example, Junagadh, a tiny State in Kathiawad surrounded by Indian territory, the ruling Prince signed up for Pakistan. The neighbouring ^{states} had all joined India, the population was predominantly Hindu and there was an active Congress movement in the State which demanded unification with India. Such issues still raise the crucial question of whether independence was to be seenⁿ as the result of a legal Transfer of power from one authority to another or of the assertion of the democratic will of the people. On this question Pakistan insisted that with the lapse of the British paramountcy each ruler had the right to join India or Pakistan irrespective of the geographical location of the State or the ethnic composition of its population. On the contrary India's argument was that if negotiations with rulers

did not produce a satisfactory results, the most fair and democratic way of resolving the matter would be to hold a plebiscite among the people of the State. However, India had not always been firm to this principle while one can observe that despite declaration of Jawaharlal Nehru plebiscite was not held in Cooch Behar. One can see, therefore, that there is nothing natural or immemorial about the territorial boundaries of independent India. They exist as the result of a particular mode of transfer of Power from British Colonial rule and of political negotiations between the leaders of independent India and the rulers of the Princely States.

While undertaking a postmortem of the history of merger of the Princely State Cooch Behar, one can well identify after necessary dissection that the people of Cooch Behar, in the general sense of term, did neither evoke interest in merger issue nor they were seriously attended either by the local decision makers or by the Indian Government. In fact, the ethos of nationalist state building and institution building had received primary consideration in the agenda and the local community aspiration of the Cooch Behar State were not given importance.

It has been amply proved, thus, that any discourse on merger of the Princely States with the Indian Union has been the story of ultimate surrenderance of the Princely States to the Mighty Indian State Craft. The merger of Cooch Behar with the Indian Union had been the outcome of such contention. It has been shown that both

the objective and subjective condition behind the process of merger varied from one geography to the other and respective socio-economic and cultural background of the Princely States. For Cooch Behar the merger study has had three important constituents; (a) the bargaining for remaining independent; (b) the option of merging with Pakistan and (c) the ultimate merger of Cooch Behar with India. These distinctiveness of Cooch Behar has given birth to different kind of events and issues which have been delineated in the principal portion of the study. The small tiny State had been more or less administratively linked with British authority, the merger process has completed the aspect of political integration. It has also been identified that despite politico-administrative linkages, the tiny Principality of Cooch Behar belongs to northeast from the socio-cultural considerations. Such a unique kind of identity registered tensions in the form of pressure while the bargaining process of merger had been at its culmination. Ultimately, however, the principality of Cooch Behar had merged with India and become a part of district of West Bengal.

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Appendix-I

ARTICLES OF TREATY BETWEEN THE HON'BLE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY AND DURINDIR NARAIN RAJAH OF COOCH BEHAR (1773)

“Durindir Narain Rajah of Cose Beyhar having represented to the Hon'ble President and Council of Calcutta, the present distressed state of the country, owing to its being harassed, by the neighbouring independent Rajah who are in league to dispose him. The Hon'ble President and council from a love of Justice and desire of offering the assistance have agreed to send a force, consisting of four Companies of sepoy and a field piece for the protection of the said Rajah and his country against his enemies, and the following conditions are mutually agreed on:

1. That the said Rajah will immediately pay into the hand of the Collector of Rungpur 5000 Rupees to defray the expenses of the force sent to assist him.
2. That if more than 5,000 Rupees are expended the Rajah will make it good to the Hon'ble East India Company but in case any part of it remains unexpended that it be delivered back.

3. That the Rajah will acknowledge subjection to the East India Company upon his country being cleared of his enemies and will allow the Cose Beyhar Country to be annexed to the province of Bengal.
4. That the Rajah further agreed to make over to the East India Company one half of the annual revenues of Cose Beyhar for ever.
5. That the other moiety shall remain to the Rajah and his heirs for ever provided he is firm in his allegiance to the Hon'ble East India Company.
6. That in order to ascertain the value of the Cose Beyhar country the Rajah will deliver a fair *Hust-boond* of his district into the hands of such person, as the Hon'ble the President and Council of Calcutta shall think proper to depute for that purpose upon which valuation the annual *malquzarry* which the Rajah is to pay, shall be established.
7. That the amount of *malquzarry* settled by such persons of the Hon'ble the East India Company shall depute, shall be perpetual.
8. That the Hon'ble English East India Company shall always assist the said Rajah with a force when he has occasion for the defence of the country, the Raja bearing the expenses.
9. That this treaty shall remain in force for the space of two years, or till such time as advices may be received from the

Court of Directors, empowering the President and Council of Calcutta to ratify the same forever. (Sic)

Source: Proceedings of the Revenue Department, Vol. I, 13th Oct.- 30th Dec. 1772, No. 136, pp- 367-368.

Appendix-II

THE FIRST TREATY WITH BHOOTAN (1774)

“Articles of a treaty between the Honourable East India Company and the Deva Raja, or the Raja of Bhootan.

1. That, the Honourable Company, wholly from consideration for distress to which the Bhooteahs represent themselves to be reduced, and from the desire of living in peace with their neighbours, will relinquish the lands which belonged to the Cooch Behar, namely, to the eastward of the lands of Chichacotta and paglahaut, and to west-ward of the lands of Kyrantee, Marraghaut and Luckeepoor.
2. That, for the possession of the Chichacotta province, the Deva Raja shall pay an annual tribute of five Tangun horses to the Honourable Company, which was the acknowledgement paid to the Cooch Behar Raja.
3. That, the Deva Raja shall deliver up Durjind Narain, (Sic) Raja of Cooch Behar, together with his brother, the *Dewan*, who is confined with him.
4. That, the Booteahs being merchants, shall have the same privileges of trade as formerly, without the payment of duties, and their caravan shall be allowed to go to Rungpore annually.

5. That, the Deva Raja shall never cause incursions to be made into the country, nor in any respect whatever, molest the *ryots* that have come under the Honourable Company's subjection.
6. That, if any *ryot* or inhabitant whatever, shall desert the Honourable Company's territories, the Deva-Raja shall cause them to be delivered up immediately upon application being made to him.
7. That, in case of Bhooteahs, or any one under the Government of Deva Raja, shall have any demands upon, or disputes with any of the inhabitants of these or any part of the Company's territories, they shall prosecute them by an application to the Magistrate who shall reside here for the administration of justice.
8. That, whatever *Suniasses* (a sect of Faqueers or hereditary mendicant priests) are considered by the English as an enemy, the Deva Raja will not allow to take shelter in any part of the districts now given up nor permit them to enter into the Honourable Company's territories, or through any part of his; and if Bhooteahs shall not of themselves be able to drive them out, they shall give information to the Resident on the part of the English in Cooch Behar, and they shall not consider the English troops pursuing the *suniasses* into these districts as any breach of this treaty.

9. That, in case the Honourable Company shall have occasion for cutting timbers from any part of the woods under the hills, they shall do it duty free, and people they send shall be protected.

10. That, there shall be a mutual release of prisoners.

"This treaty to be signed by the Honourable President and Council of Bengal, and the Honourable Company's Seal to be affixed on the one part, and to be signed and sealed by the Deva Raja on the other part". (Sic).

Source: Bibliothical Himalayica, Series I, Vol. 5, Bhootan and the Story of Doar War; David Field Rennie; Edited by H.K. Kulóy, Manjushree, New Delhi, 1970, pp- 383-384.

Appendix — III

ASSURANCES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO THE MAHARAJA OF COOCH BEHAR ON MERGER ISSUE

A process of negotiation thus started between the Government of India and His Highness the Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan. After a prolonged negotiation the Government of India gave certain assurance to the Maharaja. The assurances are:

1. It is the intention of the Government of India to administer for the present the territories of the Cooch Behar State as a Centrally administered area under a Chief Commissioner.
2. All contracts and agreements entered by Your Highness before the date on which the administration is made over to the Government of India will be honoured except in so far as any of these contracts or agreements is either repugnant to the provisions of any law made applicable to the State or inconsistent with the general policy of the Government.
3. The allowances at present drawn by Her Highness the Rajmata will be continued for her life time and will be paid

out of the revenues of the State. Your Highness' brother and other members of the ruling family will also be paid allowance from the revenues of the State as per list attached.

4. The responsibility for the Cooch Behar State Forces will be taken over by the Government of India from 12th September, 1949. If these forces are disbanded or any of the men discharged they will receive the pension or gratuity or compensation to which they may be entitled under the rules of the State.
5. Adequate guards will be provided for the protection of Your Highness' person and palace.
6. No land or building by Your Highness' private property shall be requisitioned or acquired without your consent and without payment of full compensation.
7. Electricity from the State Power House for the main residence of Your Highness and family within the State will be provided at the fixed rate in existence immediately before the transfer of administration to Government of India. Water supply will be provided free of charge to the main palace of Your Highness and family within the State.
8. The management of the temples and Debutter properties in the State may be entrusted to a Trust which shall consist of Your Highness as President, 3 nominees of Your

Highness and 2 nominees of Government. this trust will be in-charge of all temples in the State and will also administer the properties of the temples both inside and outside the State. In the event of the abolition of the Zamindaris which are Debutter property, Government will ensure that the Trust has adequate resources to fulfill its object.

9. Your Highness may create a Trust for the Marriage of the son and daughter of Isharani of Cooch Behar with a corpus of Rs. 1 lakh. The Trustees will be besides Your Highness, Their Highness' of Jaipur and other Dewas junior.
10. The civil list Reserve Fund of Rs. 10,60,900/- shall be Your Highness' private property and shall be held by Your highness in Trust for meeting expenditure in connection with Your Highness' marriage or special repairs to the Palace and any unforeseen expenditure.
11. The administration of the Maharaja Kumar Trust Fund with a corpus of Rs. 4,86,900/- shall be formally vested in a Trust of which Your Highness and Their Highness' of Jaipur and Dewas Junior shall be trustees.
12. Your Highness will be entitled to hold customary Durbars and troops present at the Capital will take part in the Dasserah and other celebrations.

- 13.** Your Highness will retain your present rank in the Indian Army.
- 14.** Government will endeavour to associate the name 'Narayan' with the Cooch Behar State Forces even after their absorption in the Indian Army.
- 15.** The Ministry of states has issued a Memorandum on the privileges and dignities which has been finalised in consultation with the Rajpramukhs of Unions and other States. Your Highness will see that the memorandum deals adequately with the various suggestions made by the rulers from time to time regarding their rights and privileges.

Source: D.O. No. F. 15 (19) - P/49.

Appendix — IV

MERGER AGREEMENT SIGNED ON 28TH AUGUST 1949, BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND THE MAHARAJA OF COOCH BEHAR

ARTICLE: I

His highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar hereby cedes to the Dominion Government full and exclusive authority, Jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to the Governance of the State and agrees to transfer the administration of the State to the Dominion Government on the 12th day of September, 1949 (hereinafter referred to as "the said day").

As from the said day the Dominion Government will be competent to exercise the said powers, authority and jurisdiction in such manner and through such agency as it make think fit.

ARTICLE — II

His Highness the maharaja shall continue to enjoy the same personal rights, privileges, dignities and titles which he would have enjoyed had this agreement not been made.

ARTICLE — III

His Highness the Maharaja shall with effect from the said day be entitled to receive for his life-time from the revenues of the State annually for his Privy Purse the sum of Rs. 8 lakhs 50 thousand free of all taxes. After him the privy purse will be fixed at Rs. seven lakhs only. This amount is intended to cover all the expenses of the Ruler and his family, including expenses on account of his personal staff, maintenance of his residences, marriages and other ceremonies etc. and will neither be increased nor reduced for any reason whatsoever.

The Government of India undertakes that the said sum of Rs. eight lakhs fifty thousand shall be paid to his Highness the Maharaja in four equal instalments in advance at the beginning of each quarter from the State treasury or at such treasury as may be specified by the Government of India.

ARTICLE — IV

His Highness the maharaja shall be entitled to the full ownership, use and enjoyment of all private properties (as distinct from State properties) belonging to him on the date of this Agreement.

His Highness the Maharaja will furnish to the Dominion Government before the 15th September 1949 an inventory of all the

immovable property, securities and cash balance held by him as such private property.

If any dispute arises as to whether any item of property is the private property of His Highness the Maharaja or State property, it shall be referred to a Judicial Officer qualified to be appointed as a High Court Judge, and the decision of that officer shall be final and binding on both parties.

ARTICLE – V

All the members of His Highness' family shall be entitled to all the personal privileges, dignities and titles enjoyed by them whether within or outside the territories of the State, immediately before the 15th day of August 1947.

ARTICLE – VI

The Dominion Government guarantees the succession, according to law and custom, to the gaddi of the State and to His Highness the Maharaja's personal rights, privileges, dignities and titles.

ARTICLE – VII

No enquiry shall be made by or under the authority of the Government of India, and no proceeding shall lie in any Court in

Cooch Behar, whether in a personal capacity or otherwise, in respect of anything done or omitted to be done by him or under his authority during the period of his administration of that State.

ARTICLE – VIII

1. The Government of India hereby guarantees either the continuance in service of permanent members of the Public Services of Cooch Behar on conditions which will not be less advantageous than those on which they were serving before the date on which the administration of Cooch Behar is made over to the Government of India or the payment of reasonable compensation.
2. The Government of India further guarantees the continuance of pensions and leave salaries sanctioned by His Highness the Maharaja to servants of the State who have retired or proceeded on leave preparatory to retirement, before the date on which the administration of Cooch Behar is made over to the Government of India.

ARTICLE – IX

Except with the previous sanction of the Government of India no proceedings, civil and criminal, shall be instituted against any person in respect of any act done or purporting to be done in the

execution of his duties as a servant of the State before the day on which the administration is made over to the Government of India.

Source: D.O. No. F. 15 (19), P- 149.

Appendix – V

ADDRESS BY:

THE HON'BLE DR. B.C. ROY

PREMIER OF WEST BENGAL

ON THE OCCASION OF THE MERGER OF:

THE STATE OF COOCH BEHAR WITH

WEST BENGAL

ON JANUARY 1, 1950

Citizens of Cooch Behar,

On the first day of the year in which the Indian Union is going to declare itself a republic, I desire to convey you a message of welcome on your admission into the Province of West Bengal as also into the constitutional set up of the Indian Union.

Nineteen years ago, the Butler Commission reported that although geographically India was one and indivisible, yet politically there were two India – the British India governed by the Crown, according to the laws and statutes of the British Parliament and the enactments of the Indian legislature, and another India composed of the Indian States which recognised the British Crown as the Paramount Power, though for the most part these States were under the personal rule of the Princes. The Butler commission

stated that "the principle of statesmanship is to hold the two together". The Butler Commission could not then realise that a time will soon come when the two could not only be held together but could be "integrated" one into the other. The territories of Indian States are in many cases dovetailed into and are closely interwoven with these which are under the Indian Union. Ethnically, racially and linguistically the people of the States and those the rest of India closely linked, the main difference being the before August 1947, while the Indian Union accepted a democratic Constitution and a popular Government, the States were still enjoying a monarchical system of Government subject to the Paramount Power. In many cases the Indian States were under foreign subjugation not only in matter of external policy but were also under the control of the British Crown, even with regard to their internal administration.

In the early part of 1947, when the question of withdrawal of British authority from British India being seriously discussed, it became evident that India was not only "One" from geographical and cultural point of view but it was so also from economic and political aspects. The real problem was to devise a plan by which all people whether in the States or in the Union, could work together for common will for joint endeavour to raise India to her fullest structure.

With the advent of Independence of India, on the 15th of August 1947, the forces responsible for bringing this freedom

travelled to and affected the people of the states. Fortunately, the Rulers, on their part, recognised the charges that were coming on and adjusted themselves to these forces. Therefore, we have witnessed the fact that within a few months of our independence, smaller States have been consolidated into sizeable units and democratic institutions and responsible governments have been introduced in them. Thus it was possible for the Government of India to utilise those forces for purposes of integration and bring about a United India in which the Indian Union and the States and their respective citizens will have full scope to cooperate and develop the country as one Unit.

The partition of India was regarded as a blow to the political and geographical integrity of India. The position of States, therefore, under such circumstances was a problem which the Government of India felt they must solve. This necessarily meant that a common programme had to be adopted by which the entire country, including the States could function on unison in matters of all-India concern.

On the 5th of July, 1947, the Hon'ble Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister of India, issued a statement on behalf of the States Ministry, asking the States to accede to the Indian Union with regard to three subjects, Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications as these matters were of common concern to the whole of India. The autonomous existence of the States was

ensured and it was declared that there would be no domination of the Indian Union over the States.

The declaration of the State Ministry was very well – received by the Princely order, and all the states, except Hyderabad, Kashmir and Junagarh, accede, on its basis, to the Indian Union within a very short time. Thus it was that after hundreds of years India became welded into one unit, and this revolution was brought about without violence, bloodshed or coercion on either side.

Along with this accession, two other changes continued to operate, one was the consolidation of smaller States into big units and the other was the introduction of democratic Institutions and Responsible Govt. in the States so integrated. But it was soon found that this could not make many of the States viable, and so in December 1947, after the discussion with the Rulers of Orissa and Chattishgarh, it was decided to merge these States with the neighbouring provinces in the interest of the Rulers and their subjects. In this process there is no doubt that the approach of the Rulers was very helpful. This was the first occasion when 39 states, with an area of 56,000 square miles, a population of 7 millions and with a revenue of Rs. 2 Crores merged into the neighbouring Provinces. Then came the merger of the Deccan and the Gujrat States with Bombay and some small States with East Punjab.

These smaller States were integrated into one viable and sizeable Union having their own administration, while bigger States

were either merged into Provinces or remained under the direct control of the Centre. Cooch Behar has been one such unit. It was but natural that States in which Representative Government had been introduced would soon become part of the new set-up established by the Constitution which had been adopted by the Constituent Assembly. Under this arrangement this Union of States would be regarded as corresponding to the existing provinces in the Indian Union.

We thus find that in place of 600 odd individual States there are now nearly 20 States or Union of States. With the lapse of the Paramountcy of the British Crown, every unit has fully functioning democratic administration where the powers have been or are about to be transferred to the people. Even Hyderabad has been no exception. We may thus call the Rulers Co-architects in building India as a free and democratic State enjoying the fruits of freedom.

Cooch Behar covers an area of 1,318 square miles. The State of Cooch Behar lies in the plains at the foot of the Bhutan Hills, it has a border of 100 miles in contiguity with West Bengal and about 30 miles between the State and Assam, separated by the river Sankosh. The State was founded in the early part of the 16th century and at one time its suzerainty extended from Mahananda in the West to the middle of Assam in the East. Early in the 18th Century Bhutan began to interfere with the affairs of the State and by 1772, they had taken possession of the Capital of Cooch Behar.

The then ruler, Raja Daridranarayan, sought British aid and signed a treaty with the East India Company, in which the following appears:

“The Raja represented to the Hon’ble President and Council in Calcutta the present distressed condition of the country owing to its being harassed by the neighbouring independent Rajas who are in league to depose him. The Hon’ble President and the Council, from a love of justice and a desire of assisting and distressed, have agreed to send a force consisting of four Companies of Sepoys and a field force for the protection of the said Raja on condition that the Raja will pay all the expenses for this help and also will acknowledge subjection to the East India Company upon his country being cleared of his enemies and will allow the Cooch Behar country to be annexed to the Province of Bengal”.

Today there is no question of annexation. It is a voluntary merging of the state of Cooch Behar with the Indian Union.

According to the latest census, the population of Cooch Behar is about 60,000. It has five sub-divisions. The State besides its indigenous population have a good proportion of Bengalees, Beharies and Marwaries who have resided here for generations. The Court Language of the State is Bengali. Socially and ethnologically the people of Cooch Behar have close affinities with the people of Jalpaiguri area. The State had a Cabinet composed of Chief Minister and three other members with a Chief Secretary, who

practically ran the State. On the 12th September last it ceased to be a separate State and became a centrally administered area.

On this occasion I am desired by the Government of India to make a few announcements:

- 1) That Cooch Behar would be maintained as a separate district with head quarters at Cooch Behar for historical as well as for sentimental reasons. Cooch Behar is a fairly compact area and is equal in size and population to one of the districts of West Bengal.
- 2) That representation would be given to the people of Cooch Behar in the Provincial Legislature on the basis of the population as soon as possible by means of nominations, which should be done in consultation with the Administrator of Cooch Behar.
- 3) That all the State servants in Cooch Behar would be absorbed in West Bengal Government Service on terms of not less advantageous than these under the State regime. In case it is found necessary to discharge any person, adequate compensation will be paid to him.
- 4) That the dearness allowance, INTERIM and AD-INTERIM relief of all State servants would be brought to the level of West Bengal with effect from the date of the merger. The question of revision of pay scales of Government servants in Cooch Behar, so as to bring them in line with those

prevailing in West Bengal, would also be taken up as early as possible.

- 5) That the balance in the State treasury on the date of merger would be retained by the Central Government to be spent by the Government of West Bengal on nation building schemes for the benefit of the people of Cooch Behar.

We, on behalf of the West Bengal Government, assure you that we shall do all we can to ameliorate the condition of the people and bring about such improvements in the State as are found necessary and as are compatible with available funds.

Before I conclude, I desire to strike a personal note. For nearly forty years, both as a medical practitioner and as a private individual I have been closely associated with the Ruling family of Cooch Behar. Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur and his family, his children and grand children, have been my friends, and I welcome this opportunity of acknowledging my intimate association with them. With your administration also, headed by Rai Kalika Das Dutta Bahadur onwards, I have close association. I acknowledge my personal ties of friendship with them. Personally speaking, I appreciate this opportunity of Welcoming you.

I welcome you, the people of Cooch Behar, and ask you to join with the people of West Bengal and say -

:JAI HIND:

Source: Compliments of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. Printed Material Circulated on January 1st, 1950.

Appendix – VI

**HIS HIGHNESS MAHARAJA JAGADDIPENDRA NARAYAN
BHUP BHADUR ON THE OCCASION OF THE MERGER OF THE
STATE OF COOCH BEHAR WITH WEST BENGAL ON JANUARY
1, 1950**

On this solemn occasion which marks the end of long and happy association, my mother and I send you our very best wishes, my beloved people.

Wherever we may be, we shall never forget you, your loyalty, and your devotion, we hope you will always maintain the peace, goodwill and harmony which has been our common heritage.

We shall always watch with keen interest your moral and material welfare and always pray for your happiness and prosperity.

May God Almighty bless you all

Jagaddipendra Narayan

Source: Compliments of His Highness, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar.

Printed Material Circulated on 1st January 1950.

Appendix – VII

LIST OF RULING PRINCES AND CHIEFS WHO HAVE BEEN ADMITTED AS MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVE MEMBERS OF THE CHAMBER OF PRINCES

MEMBERS.

Salutes of 21 guns

Buroda, The Maharaja (Gaekwar) of –
Gwalior, The Maharaja (Scindia) of –
Jammu and Kashmir, The Maharaja of –
Mysore, The Maharaja of –

Salutes of 19 guns

Bhopal, the Begum (or Nawab) of –
Indore, The Maharaja (Holkar) of –
Kolhapur, The Maharaja of –
Travancore, The Maharaja of –
Udaipur (Mewar), The Maharana of –

Salutes of 17 guns

Bahawalpur, The Nawab of –
Bharatpur, The Maharaja of –
Bikaner, The Maharaja of –

Bundi, The Maharao Raja of -
 Cochin, The Maharaja of -
 Cutch, The Maharao of -
 Jaipur, The Maharaja of -
 Jodhpur (Marwar), The Maharaja of -
 Korauli, The Maharaja of -
 Kotah, the Maharao of -
 Patiala, The Maharaja of -
 Rewa, The Maharaja of -
 Tonk, The Nawab of -

Salutes of 15 guns

Alwar, The Maharaja of -
 Banswara, The Maharawal of -
 Bikaner, The Maharaja of -
 Dewas (Senior Branch), The Maharaja of -
 Dewas (Junior Branch), The Maharaja of -
 Dhar, The Maharaja of -
 Dholpur, The Maharaj-Rana of -
 Dungarpur, The Maharawal of -
 Idar, The Maharaja of -
 Jaisalmer, The Maharawal of -
 Khairpur, The Mir of -
 Kishangarh, The Maharaja of -
 Orchha, The Maharaja of -
 Partabgarh, The Maharawat of -
 Rampur, The Nawab of -
 Sikkim, The Maharaja of -

Sirohi, The Maharao of -

Salutes of 13 guns

Benaras, The Maharaja of -

Bhavnagar, The Maharaja of -

Cooch Behar, The Maharaja of -

Dhrangadhra, The Maharaja of -

Tripura, The Maharaja of -

Jaora, The Nawab of -

Jhalawar, The Maharaj-Rana of -

Jind, The Maharaja of -

Junagadh (or Junagarh), The Nawab of -

Kapurthala, The Maharaja of -

Nabha, The Maharaja of -

Nawanagar, The Maharaja of -

Palanpur, The Nawab of -

Porbandar, The Maharaja of -

Rajpipla, The Maharaja of -

Ratlam, The Maharaja of -

Salutes of 11 guns

Ajaigarh, The Maharaja of -

Alirajpur, The Raja of -

Baoni, The Nawab of -

Barwani, The Rana of -

Bijawar, The Maharaja of -

Bilaspur (Kahlur), The Raja of -

Cambay, The Nawab of -

Chamba, The Raja of -

Charkhari, The Maharaja of -
 Chhatarpur, The Maharaja of -
 Faridkot, The Raja of -
 Gondal, The Thakur Saheb of -
 Janjira, The Nawab of -
 Jhabua, The Raja of -
Maler Kotla, Tnawab of -
 Mandi, The Raja of -
 Manipur, The Maharaja of -
 Morvi, The Thakur Saheb of -
 Narsinagarh, The Raja of -
 Panna, The Maharaja of -
 Padukkottai, The Raja of -
 Radhanpur, The Nawab of -
 Rajgarh, The Raja of -
 Sailana, The Raja of -
 Samthar, The Maharaja of -
 Sirmur (Nahan), The Maharaja of -
 Sitamu, The Raja of -
 Suket, The Raja of -
 Tehri (Garhwal), The Raja of -

Salutes of 9 guns

Balasinor, the Nawab (Babi) of -
 Banganapalle, The Nawab of -
 Bansda, the Raja of -
 Bariya, The Raja of -
 Chhota Udepur (Mohan), The Raja of -

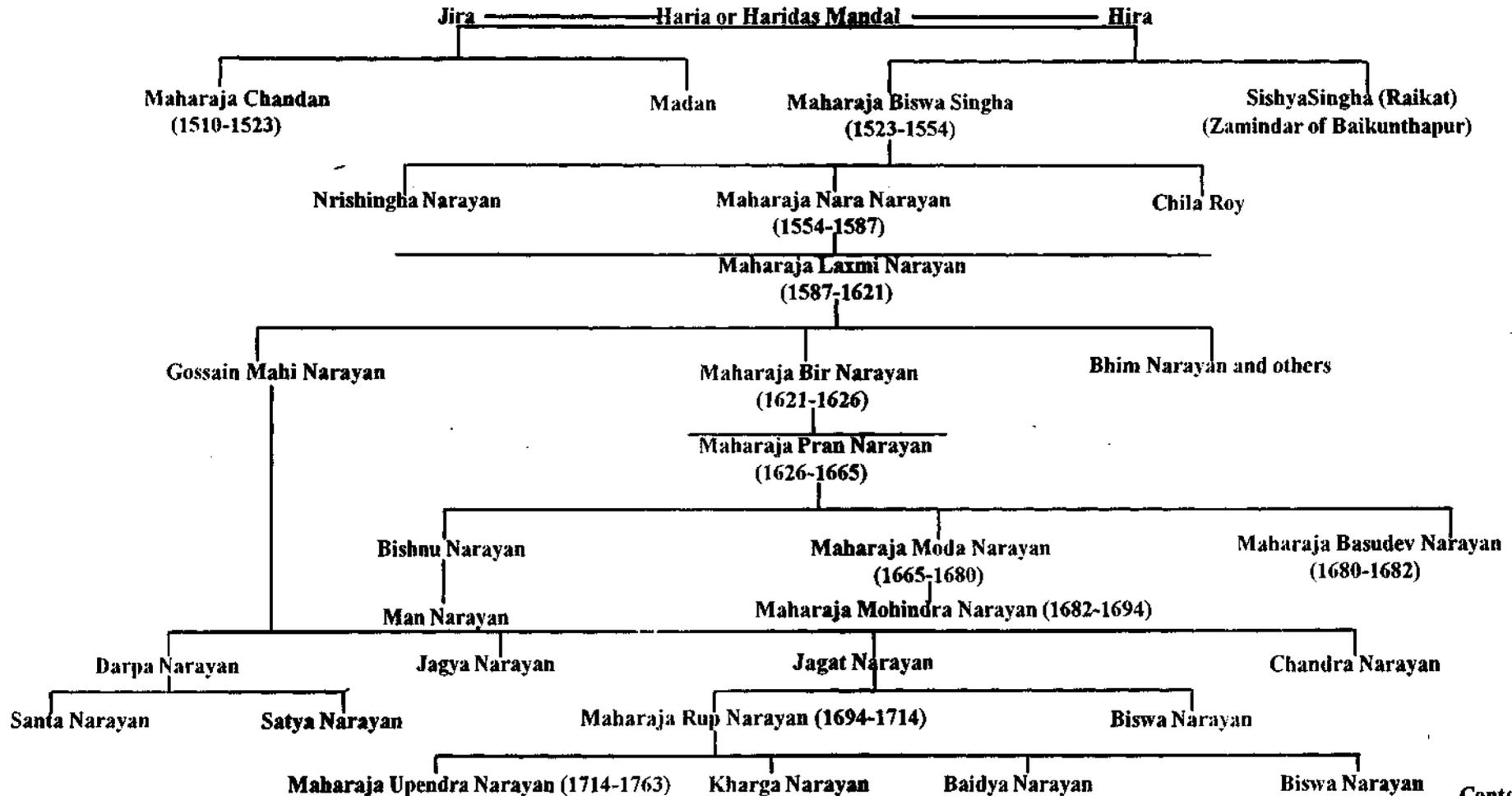
Danta, The Maharana of -
 Dharampur, The Raja of -
 Dhrol, The Thakur Saheb of -
 Jawhar, The Raja of -
 Khilchipur, The Rao of -
 Limbdi (Limri), The Thakur Saheb of -
 Loharu, The Nawab of -
 Lunawada (or Lunawara), The Raja of -
Maihar, The Raja of -
 Mudhol, The Chief of -
 Palitana, The Thakur Saheb of -
 Rajkot, The Thakur Saheb of -
 Sachin, The Nawab of -
 Sangli, The Chief of -
 Savantvadi, The Sar Desai of -
 Sart, The Raja of -
 Vankaner (or Wankaner), The Raja Saheb of -
 Wadhwan, The Thakur Saheb of -

Representative Members

Alipura, The Jagirdar of -
 Dujana, The Nawab of -
 Hindol, The Raja of -
 Jubbal, The Raja of -
 Kadana, The Thakur of -
Sonpur, The Maharaja of -
 Surguja, The Chief of -
 Talcher, The Raja of -
 Sarangarh, The Chief of -

Source: *National Archives of India, New Delhi.*

Appendix -- VIII
GENAEOLOGICAL TABLE OF COOCH BEHAR ROYAL FAMILY



Appendix -- IX

**LETTER OF SARAT BOSE TO M. GUHA ROY,
JT. SECRETARY, HALDIBARI CONGRESS
COMMITTEE**

Cainp: Gidhapahar

Kurseong, 19th April, 1949

Dear Mr. Guha Roy,

Your letter dated 13th ist. was to hand on the 16th along with the enclosure.

I have carefully gone into the facts regarding the Cooch Behar State which you have given in your letter. They have been put in the form of a new-letter and sent today for publication in "The Nation", at 8E Dacres Lane, Calcutta -1, as from our Special Coorespondent. It is expected to be published within three or four days.

I may inform you further that agitation on this issue will be started soon in Calcutta. If you can gather any more facts pertaining to this issue, please send them to me at 1 Woodburn Park, Calcutta-20.

Thanking you.

Mr. Manoranjan Guha Roy
Jt. Secretary, Haldibari
Congress Committee
P.O. Haldibari, Cooch Behar

Yours sincerely,
Sd/ Illegible
(Sarat Chandra Bose)

Appendix - X

PROCEEDINGS OF A PUBLIC MEETING OF COOCH BEHAR PEOPLES' ASSOCIATION, 35, CHITTARANJAN AVENUE, CALCUTTA

A largely attended public meeting held on Tuesday, the 10th 1949, at the Mahabodhi Society Hall, College Square, Calcutta under the auspices of the Cooch Behar Peoples' Association, Shri Atul Chandra Gupta President. The following resolutions were passed unanimously:

1. This meeting of citizens of Calcutta held under the auspices Cooch Behar Peoples' Association feel deeply that the establishment of the Peoples' Government in Cooch Behar State no longer brooks delay, special whenafter India's attainment of independence feudalism has become an anachronism. Therefore, this meeting urges upon the authorities concerned to take relevant steps such as preparation of fresh electoral rolls based on adult franchise followed by election making there people's Government a reality with immediate effect.

2. This meeting protest against the farce in the name of election which is going to be held in the Cooch Behar State to keep the powers of administration in the hands of some reactionery groups which have no support from the people of Cooch Behar in general, a majority of whom has no franchise in the proposed election. So this meeting earnestly request H.H. The Maharaja Bhup Bahadur of Cooch Behar to stop the ensuing election immediately.

3. This meeting is of opinion that having regard to the cultural and linguistic homogeneity of the people of Cooch Behar State to the

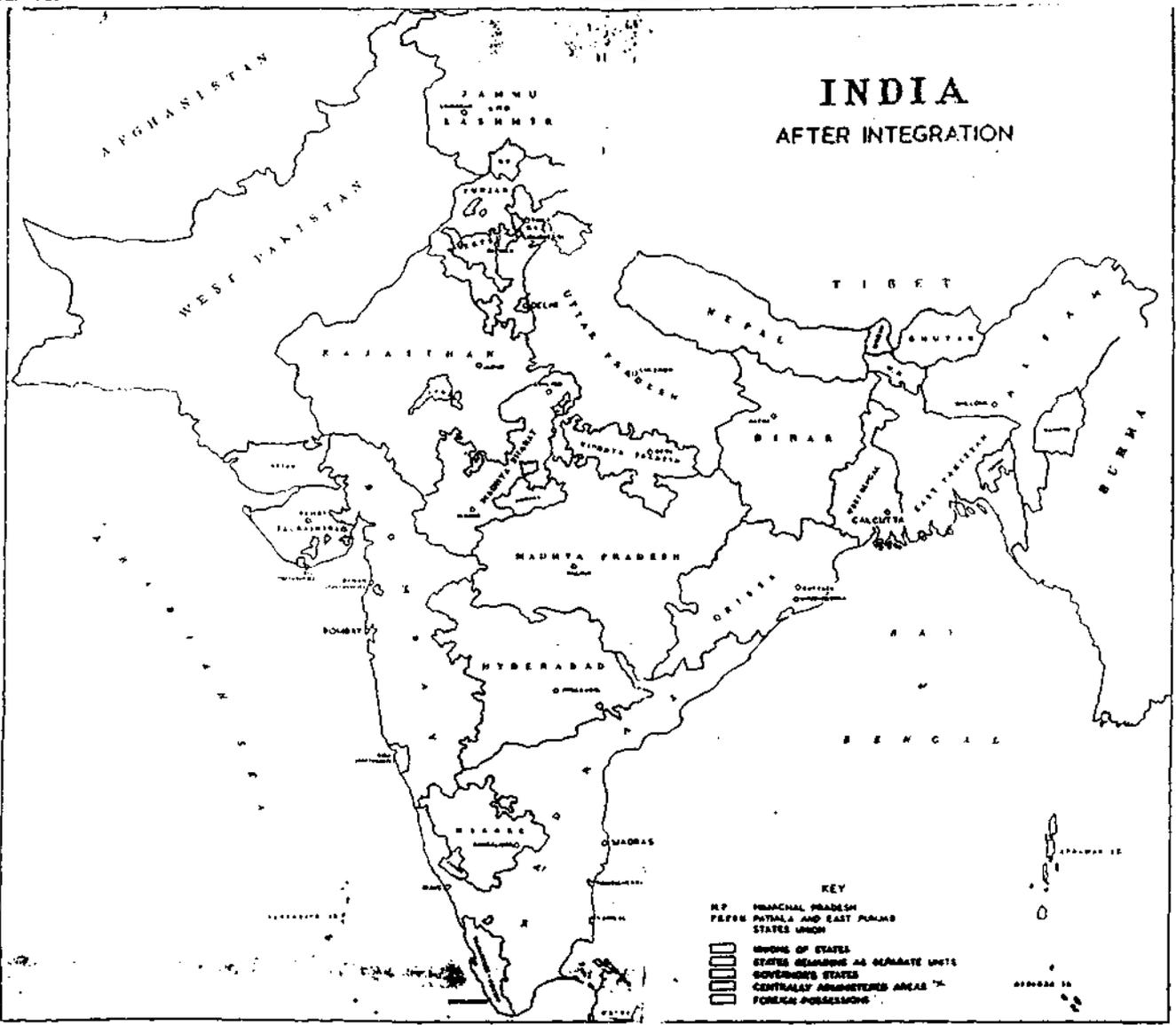
people of West Bengal there can be no question of the merger of the State of Cooch Behar with any other Province of India than the State of West Bengal. The meeting demands that the merger should be effected without any further delay for the progress of the people of Cooch Behar.

4. This meeting further resolves that the copies of these resolutions should be sent to the Ministry of State, Government of India, President & Secretary, A.I.C.C., Maharaja of Cooch Behar, Governor of Assam, President, West Bengal Congress Committee, Prime Minister, West Bengal and Prime Minister, Cooch Behar State.

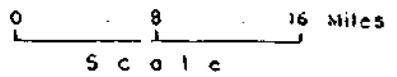
Sd/- Atul Chandra Gupta
Chairman of the meeting

Dated, Calcutta,
The 10th May, 1949.

INDIA AFTER INTEGRATION



SKETCH MAP —
 COOCH BEHAR AFTER —
 1773.



(Source : Ahmed Amanatulla, *Cooch Behar Itihās*, 1935, p.371)

