

ADDENDUM / CORRIGENDUM

The thesis entitled "Twilight of the Raj : A Case Study of the History of Cooch Behar under Its Last Three Rulers" was written by me with original archival materials utilized for the first time. At the end of my thesis five Appendices are enclosed. These Appendices, though not directly related to the main thesis, are undoubtedly, I believe, rich additions to a work like the present one. Out of these Appendices, Appendix 'D' entitled 'Position of Islam in Cooch Behar State and Issue of Hindu-Muslim Communal Amity' is required a little more elaboration. Hence, addendum / corrigendum are being enclosed.

(A) As regards the fissiparous tendencies which were active at the time of merger of Cooch Behar, it is important to note that the Muslims constituted about 38% of the population, according to the Census Report of 1941, thereby forming the second largest community in the State. The local Muslims were led by some Muslim leaders who were strongly pro-Pakistani and desired an arrangement which would bring them the maximum possible political influence. These Muslim leaders first advised Maharaja to accede to Pakistan. Later on they wanted to maintain Cooch Behar as an independent entity either as a state or a centrally administered province. Besides, these Muslim leaders felt that they would receive a better deal from the Assam Government as the percentage of Muslims in Assam was higher than in West Bengal. Mr. Sadulla, ex-Prime Minister of Assam and Mr. Tyeb Ali, Minister of Assam, were in touch with Cooch Behari Muslim leaders and advised them to try for merger with Assam. By doing this, Sadulla wished to increase the influence of Muslim group and become the Premier of Assam. The Hitasadhani Sabha consisting of some Muslim leaders and a follower of Jogendra Nath Mandal, the Central Pakistan Minister¹ became the main organization of such fissiparous tendencies¹. It is also important to note that 'the influence of the belligerent Muslim League among the Muslims in Cooch Behar can be traced as early as 1941' from India Office Library documents². The Muslim League, as has been noted in my thesis, was styled in Cooch Behar as '*Sabuj Sangha*' and this association claimed that they had got more than 5000 able-bodied Muslim volunteers.

In order to explain those fissiparous tendencies among the Muslims of Cooch Behar we should find out what compulsive forces were at work during this period of turmoil. Let us first make an attempt to understand the Bengali Muslim psyche in the colonial period. Some scholars have pointed out that the process of Islamization was initiated among The Bengali Muslims by the *Faraizis-Wahhabis* by removing un-Islamic ways of life during the early period of the 19th century³. After the Census of 1872, a controversy arose about the origin and growth of the Bengali race. The Muslim elite were influenced by Khondkar Fuzli Rubees observation that Bengali Muslims came from abroad and therefore, they did not feel any social affinity with the lower orders of Muslims. There were differences between these two classes of Muslims-Urdu-speaking urban elite known as *Ashraf* and Bengali-speaking rural masses known as *Atraf*. The

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1. Menon, V.P.'s Secret Note dated 01.12.1949 on the Merger of Cooch Behar, Govt. of India, Ministry of States, Political Branch, Secret File No. 15(59) – Political / 1949, pp. 1 – 2
 2. Confidential; India Office Library, Acc. No. 356 R. No. 5; No. F. 1(3) – C/41 – 267 Eastern States Agency, Shillong.
 3. De, Amalendu, '*Roots of Separatism in the Nineteenth Century Bengal*', Rakta Karabee, Kolkata, Revised First Edition, 2008, pp. 33-34.

Ashraf were proud of their non-Bengali aristocratic background, showed no respect to Bengali language and culture, and maintained the splendid isolation from the common Muslim Masses¹. By the end of the 19th century, when the Muslims out-numbered the Hindus in Bengal, the Muslim theologians put more emphasis on the process of rapid Islamization. The practices observed by the *Pirs* or by their followers, such as, *urs*, *gi*, *shirni* etc., criticised by the Islamic revivalists as un-Islamic made the Muslim society divided in view of the respectable position of the *Pirs* among the Muslim masses. Again, *Islamic Puthis* and later Bengali literature centering round the Prophet's life had an important part in moulding the Muslim mind and also prepared the ground for the development of the 'Muslim Identity'.

Moreover, the Muslim elite, assisted by the 'Muslim Press', not only highlighted the economic backwardness of the Muslims but also pursued pro-British and anti-Congress policies. They were also attracted to Pan-Islamic concept and this Pan-Islamism gradually nourished separatism. The debates centering round the socio-religious issues brought to light the main cross-currents of conservatism and liberalism through which the Muslim society had to pass by the second half of the 19th Century². According to some scholars, though the Muslim mystics called Sufis 'generated the spirit of love and affection among the people' basing on the teachings of Islam, the *Mujaddidiya* strengthened the process of Islamization on orthodox lines. This conflict between orthodox and liberal trends in theological spheres continued in the colonial period³. In these circumstances, for want of properly setting and adjusting the 'Muslim identity' and the 'Bengali identity', the Bengali Muslim elite could not 'overcome their inherent contradictions. As a result of the controversies between the orthodox and liberal Muslims, the signs of the awakening among the Bengali Muslims were manifested depending mainly on the religious distinctness. In fact, the orthodox Muslim elite, Ulemas and the organizations like Jamaat-e-Islam strengthened the Muslim identity among the Bengali Muslims⁴. The Muslim elite of the Cooch Behar State also seemed to have fallen a prey to this prevalent psyche. P.K. Bhattacharyya held the view that 'it is not unlikely that the orthodox Muslim theologians infiltrated in Cooch Behar and tried to shape the Muslim psychology, perhaps, at the behest of the powerful Muslim lobby'⁵. Because it is learnt from the Fortnightly Report of Eastern States Agency for the second half of March, 1941 that one Moulana Abdul Hakim urged the 'Mohammedans to join the Muslim League' and expressing 'certain objectionable sentiments' in the Mathabhanga. Again, in May, 1941 a party of Mohammedans in a village of Mathabhanga Subdivision 'attacked and dispersed a *Samkirttan* party of Hindus.'⁶

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1. De, Dhurjati Prasad, *Bengal Muslims in Search of Social Identity, 1905-1947*, University Press Limited, Dhaka, 1998, pp. 10.
 2. De, Amalendu, 'The Social Thoughts and Consciousness of the Bengali Muslims in the Colonial Period', *Social Scientist*, Vol - 23, Nos. 4-6, April-June 1995, pp. 17, 25.
 3. De, Amalendu, 'Theological Discourses in Indian History, Presidential Address : 2003 - 2004, the Asiatic Society, Kolkata, pp. 7ff.
 4. De, Amalendu, 'The Social Thoughts, and Consciousness of the Bengali Muslims in the Colonial Period', op. cit, pp. 24-25, 32
 5. Bhattacharyya, Pranab Kumar, 'Merger of Cooch Behar: A Case Study of the Differences of Perspectives of the Governments of Assam and West Bengal.' *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 4, 2006, p. 12.
 6. Confidential, India Office Library, Acc. No. 356 R. No. 5; F. 1(3)-C/41-267 Eastern States Agency, Shillong. Also confer India Office Library, Acc. No. 356 R. No. 5; F.N.R. 1(3)-C/41-115 T Eastern States Agency, Shillong, 20 May, 1941. The evidence is quoted in P.K. Bhattacharyya, op. cit, pp. 16 - 17 ff

Apart from the religious sentiments of the Muslims, some other factors might have also contributed to the outlet of such fissiparous tendencies at the time of merger of Cooch Behar. It has been pointed out that owing to the feudal nature of its economy, land was the only source of production in Cooch Behar State. There was a fair representation of the Rajbansis among the jotedars who secured a dominant position in the local agrarian structure in the State. But the situation began to change from the late 19th century with the migration of upper caste Hindu gentry in the State. These migrated people who were in the state administration, grabbed a large number of jotes. By 1872, in Cooch Behar 54 per cent of the revenue-paying land had passed in the hands of the outsiders. This large scale transfer of land from the Rajbansis to the non-Rajbansis brought about subsequent changes in the pattern of land control in the State and the Rajbansis were gradually pushed out by the non-Rajbansis from their position of eminence. In course of time this phenomenon gave birth to a sense of grievances among the dispossessed Rajbansi gentry.¹ 'The majority of these marginalised Rajbansis,' according to a scholar, 'became shaky with the objective fear of losing their means of subsistence if they were to merge with Indian State'.² These Rajbansi elite, as noted in my original thesis, were in favour of continuing a separate Cooch Behar State at the time of merger.

Towards the end of the Koch Raj in 1949, when the attempt of making Cooch Behar a Centrally administered Province fell through, the Hitasadhani leaders comprising Rajbansi and Muslim elite favoured the merger of Cooch Behar with Assam, 'a province that shares the state's dislike of and apprehensions vis-à-vis the Bengali and with whose people they feel they can compete without fear and favour' 'It is the fear complex,' it has been pointed out, 'that predominates in the minds of Cooch Beharis' as a result of the growth of Bengali influence in the State.³ The Hitasadhani leaders also believed that 'the merger with Assam with large chunk of uncultivated land at its disposal and certain other factors which would be conducive for their settlement and dispel much of their anxiety for which they strongly protested the proposed merger with West Bengal. The Muslim leaders who had migrated to East Pakistan used to come to Cooch Behar off and on to rouse the Muslim community in their struggle for the merger with Assam.' According to P. K. Bhattacharyya, 'thus here also they used religion to mask an essentially economic problem, ...'⁴

As regards the various castes or groups among the Muslims of Cooch Behar State, we have already incorporated them in Appendix-D referred to above. On the other hand, the Muslim population of Bengal was divided into eighty larger and lesser castes in the

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1. Basu, Swaraj, *Dynamics of a Caste Movement : The Rajbansis of North Bengal*, Manohar, Delhi, 2003, pp. 50 – 53.
 2. Chakravarty, Biman, *Political History of Merger of the Princely States : A Study of Cooch Behar*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, North Bengal University, 2001, pp. 200-201
 3. Sri Prakasa, the Governor of Assam's confidential letter dated March 29, 1949 to Sardar B. Patel, Minister of States, Govt. of India, Secret File No. D/4585/1949, P. 2
 4. Bhattacharyya, Pranab Kumar, op. cit, pp.13-14

Census Report of 1911.¹ These castes have also been incorporated in the work of Nirmal Kumar Bose entitled *The Structure of Hindu Society* (New Delhi, 1975). Besides, a few more works came out where the various castes among the Muslims had been discussed and among them mention may be made of Muhammad Yakub Ali's *Musulmaner Jatibad* (Chatugang, 1927), Dhurjati Prasad De's *Bengal Muslims in Search of Social Identity* (Dhaka, 1998), Panchanan Saha's *Hindu – Muslim Samparka : Notun Bhabna* (Dhaka, 2007) But it should be noted here that during our survey all the castes or groups mentioned above could not be found among the Muslim Society of Cooch Behar.

(B) As regards the theoretical background of Islam, it may briefly be pointed out that Islam stands for complete submission to mono-god. The message of Islam is enshrined in the declaration of faith "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger."² The five pillars of orthodox Islam are *Iman* or belief, *Salat* or prayer, *Roza* or fasting, *Zakat* or compulsory poor tax and *Hajj* or pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. No priesthood was recognized in Islam. Not only Islam is known for its strong monotheistic belief in God, but also for its advocacy of equality and brotherhood of man and for its simplicity of belief and acts of devotion. After the demise of the prophet Hazrat Muhammad, revelations to him were collected and compiled in the holy *Quran*. After a long interval Muslims also formalized the sayings and deeds of the prophet and accepted the document as *Hadith* (tradition). *Shariah* (law) and *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) are the original sources of Islamic regulation. In fact, Islamic laws are not distinct from religion, rather they are complementary to each other³. According to some scholars, it is an exaggeration that 'Islam was Arab', and 'the ideology of Islam was based on Arab traditions'. For the ideas of Judaism and Christianity which had earlier intruded into Arabia, definitely shaped the essential elements of the Islamic faith. Islam's link with both Judaism and Christianity is explicitly recognized in the *Quran*⁴.

After the death of the Prophet, the four pious Caliphs, namely, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali successively controlled the power of the Muslim community. The majority of the Muslims accepted the validity of the succession of the first three pious Caliphs, but there were some who felt that the last pious caliph should have been chosen as Muhammad did designate Ali as his successor. The former was known as the Sunnis and the latter known as the Shias. Among the Sunni Muslims there are two groups in

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1. These castes are as follows : (1) Abdal, (2) Ajlaf, (3) Akhunji, (4) Bediya, (5) Behara, (6) Beldar, (7) Bhat, (8) Bhatia, (9) Chatuwa, (10) Churihar, (11) Dafadar, (12) Dai, (13) Darji, (14) Dewan, (15) Dhawa, (16) Dhoba, (17) Dhunia or Dhukkar, (18) Fakir, (19) Gayin, (20) Hajjam, (21) Jola, (22) Kagaji, (23) Kalan, (24) Kan, (25) Kasbi, (26) Kasai, (27) Kaji, (28) Khan, (29) Khondkar, (30) Kolu, (31) Kumar, (32) Kunjra, (33) Lalbegi, (34) Mahiferush, (35) Mahimal, (36) Mallah, (37) Mallik, (38) Masalchi, (39) Mehtar, (40) Meer, (41) Mirja, (42) Muchi, (43) Moghul, (44) Nagarchi, (45) Naniya or Nanuwa, (46) Nasya, (47) Nat, (48) Nikari, (49) Pathan, (50) Pawariya, (51) Peer Kodali, (52) Rasuwa, (53) Saiyad, (54) Shaik, (55) Sonar, (56) Other Lesser Castes : (a) Afghan, (b) Ashraf, (c) Bakli, (d) Bakho, (e) Bari, (f) Bhuiyan, (g) Chaudhuri, (h) Chunari, (i) Dafali, (j) Gaddi, (k) Golam, (l) Halalkhor, (m) Hijra, (n) Hosseini, (o) Kharadi, (p) Koreshi, (q) Lahori, (r) Mangta, (s) Mohana, (t) Meerdeh, (u) Miriyasin, (v) Miyan, (w) Naomoslem, (x) Pateya, (y) Sunni. – Census Report of India, 1911, Table XIII, pp. 191 – 202.
 2. The Holy Quran, II : 136
 3. Islam, Md. Sirajul, 'Islam and Its Compatibility with Change : An Overview of Indian Perspective', in Sukharanjan Saha (ed.) *Religions of the People of India*, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, 2003, pp. 195-96
 4. Ali, M. Athar, 'The Islamic Background to Indian History : An Interpretation of the Islamic Past,' in Irfan Habib (ed), *Religion in Indian History*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 1st Published 2007, 1st Reprint 2010, p. 136-137

matters of Islamic interpretation, one group laid emphasis on the immanence of God and the other gave stress on His transcendence. The Sufi tradition concentrates on the closeness of God to the individual believer and on the mystical or hidden meaning of the Quranic statements whereas the legislative *Ulema* places greater weight on divine transcendence and on the clear and visible meaning of the revelation. Later on, four Sunni schools of Islamic law such as *Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafii* and *Hanbali* emerged as equally authoritative¹. Consequently, there was conflict between the four Sunni schools and frequent clash between the Shias and Sunnis, the major division within Islam. There was also the perennial difference between those known as "*Asharites*" who blindly followed authority (*taqlid*) and others known as *Mutazilites* who advocated the application of interpretation (*ijtihad*), or in other words, between faith and reason². As a result of such differences, Muslims are not able to unite all together in Islam. This is, in short, the theoretical background of Islam before its advent to Indian sub-continent.

Between the fourteenth (beginning of the rule of independent Sultans in Bengal) and eighteenth centuries (disintegration of the Mughal Empire) three distinct trends in Islamic thought emerged in India. The first trend was conservative as its upholders were the exponents of orthodox Islam and demanded strict adherence to the Islamic laws and institutions as propounded in the *Quran* and *Sunnah*. Its chief advocate was Shaikh Ahmed Sarhandi (1563–1625). He fiercely opposed any compromise with Hinduism. The second school of Islamic thought attempted to effect a compromise between Islam and Hinduism by practising toleration and maintaining a kind of peaceful co-existence. The policy of most Muslim rulers was guided by this school of thought. The third school was deeply influenced by the Sufi and Bhakti movements, and did not believe in the external formalities of religion. "For them the essential of religion lay in the love of God and man, devotion to Supreme Reality, search for perfection, master for self and inner illumination".³

The majority of the Bengali Muslims belonged to the Sunni section, which was further divided into two major subsections, i.e., Hanafi (named after Abu Hanafi) and Mohammadi. There was hardly any difference between Hanafis and Pirs. In fact, the *Pirs* often called themselves Hanafis and the Hanafis also did not discard Pirism altogether. The Mohammadis, on the other hand, were more fundamentalist. Like early *Ahle-Hadith*, they sought guidance in matters of religious faith and practice from the authentic *Hadith* and the *Quran* which, according to them, were the only dependable guide for the Muslims. They put emphasis in particular on the reassertion of *tawhid* or the unity of Allah on the one hand, and rejected the miraculous powers of the saints or *pirs* and the veneration paid to them on the other. The Mohammadis also wanted to eradicate customs that might be traced either to the innovation (*bida*) or to Hinduism, or other non-Islamic systems. For their reformist programmes, Mohammadis were often nicknamed as *Wahhabis* of Arabia. The Hanafi-Mohammadi conflict was the most striking feature of Bengali Muslims' socio-religious behaviour and thinking during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁴

The factors that succeeded in influencing the attitude of the Koch kings and his

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1. Islam, Md. Sirajul, op. cit., pp. 195-96
 2. Ahmed, A.F. Salahuddin, *History and Heritage*, University Press Limited, Dhaka, First Published 2007, p. 28
 3. ibid, pp. 26-27
 4. De, Dhurjati Prasad, op. cit., pp. 14 – 15.

subjects towards Islam, have more or less been discussed in Appendix-D noted above. It may, however, be added here that the Koch Maharajas earned fame for their catholicity in matters of religion and it was natural that throughout their rule they pursued a liberal policy towards other religions, particularly to Islam, the followers of which constituted 38% of the total population in the State as noted above. The Koch kings had reverence for the Muslim Pirs or saints, to whom money-grants or '*pir-bhata*' and land-grants or '*pirpal*' were given by them. Pirs were idolised not only by the Muslims, but also by the Rajbansi Hindus and other communities. In fact, their belief of *Pirism* strengthened the inter-community relations in Cooch Behar¹. The majority of local Muslims were the converted Muslims popularly known as '*Nasyas*,'² who belonged to the same racial stock as the Rajbansis. Again, Rajbansi Hindus claimed to be kindred of the royal family. Both the Rajbansis and Muslims held the Koch rulers in high esteem. The orthodox Islamic doctrines had little influence on the common Muslim masses of Cooch Behar during the period under our study. It is also not unlikely that Muslims were invited to Cooch Behar for their specialized services. The Koch royal family encouraged migration of Muslims to this State from nearby districts to facilitate extension of cultivation as they were primarily cultivators and applied better methods of cultivation.³ The Muslims received social recognition and enjoyed the opportunity to hold high administrative positions and titles of distinction during the rule of the Koch Maharajas. Their economic, cultural and political contributions were thus duly recognized for the growth of Cooch Behar.

(C) This thesis obviously has become a voluminous work in view of incorporation of a large number of unutilized archival materials which are copiously quoted for the purpose of illustrations in support of the points raised by me at different places. It is needless to say that at the time of publication the work may be condensed to make it more attractive even to the general readers.

(D) As regards 'a few minor typing errors' that have occurred in the thesis, I would like to state that these errors will certainly be corrected before publication. As of now, an 'Erratum'⁴ has been attached herewith for the convenience of the readers of my thesis.

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1. 1.Ray, Girijasankar, *Uttarbange Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Puja-Parvana*, N.L. Publishers, Dibrugarh, Assam, Second Edition 1999, pp. 211 – 212.
 2. 2.Choudhuri, Harendra Narayan, *The Cooch Behar State and Its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar State Press, 1903, p. 120.
 3. One example may be cited here. The printed handbills in Bengali were issued by one Kumar Charu Narayan of Nutan Bazar, Cooch Behar, a distant relative of the Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan, inviting the Muslim immigrants of Rangpur, Bogra, Pabna and Mymensingh for settlement in his land. The English translation of the Handbill is as follows : "The poor Muslims are hereby informed that I have got arable lands at Kaljani under Sadar (within a mile from Baneswar Station). I require immigrant Muslims for cultivation of this land. I shall give them food which will be required for them for 6 months. But they will have to pay this after cultivation. I shall also supply them with houses to live in, ox for ploughing and a cart with a pair of oxen. The cart will have to be set to work in half-share system. Those who wish to work on the above conditions should see me immediately..."
"It may be mentioned here that my relation has got about 200 bighas of land attached to my land. Many other poor immigrant Muslims will be required if they can satisfy me by cultivating my land." – Extract from Daily Summary of Information of Assam, No. 12, dated 18.06.1949, received from Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs by Ministry of States, Govt. of India, on 25th June, 1949. File No. 15(8) – P/19 (secret), 'P' Branch, p. 68.
 4. See pp. 7 – 8

Errata

Page	Paragraph / Line	Printed as	Read as
(9)	2/12	Urgrading	upgrading
(38)	2/5	Brahma	Brahmo
(43)	18	the governments of West Bengal	The Governments of West Bengal and Assam
(44)	/3	meseum	Museum
(49)	/44	Sanyak,R.R.L.	Sanyal,R.R
(50)	/4	Prul, in the Revenue Dept.	Proceeding of the Governor General in the Council in the Revenue Dept.
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(73)	4/2	Maharaja Sayaji Rao, Gaekwar	Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwar
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(103)	/ 17	Charu Rayer Darogairi	Charu Rayer Darogagiri
(152)	/15	Sketsh	Sketch
(158)	/19	Dass,Rakesh Bhan, op.cit.,p-81	Dass, Rakesh Bhan, <i>Maharani</i> Delhi, 1973, p-81
(191)	3/3	sState	State
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Page	Paragraph / Line	Printed as	Read as
(366)	/6	Country	country
(374)	64	Confield	Corfield
(375)	3/2	Country	country
(376)	1/1	Country-side	country –wide
(396)	3/1	occurances	occurrences
(399)	1/3	James Major also said "...princely india"	James Major also said, " long before 1947 princely India
(432)	/ 1	upon	upper
(439)	2/7	spititual	spiritual
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(443)	1/9	the basic pattern condemned	the basic pattern of rural culture remained virtually the same. The practices condemned
(444)	1/4	it is also	(b) Its is also
(444)	1/6	the local Muslims	(c) the local Muslims
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(451)	/31	1944	1994
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Nurul Islam
12. 12. 2011



All pages (pp. 1-8) have been checked.
Pratik Kumar
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