

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the problem :

K.M. Panikkar's comment made in 1977 that "any account of the last days of princely rule will sound incredible today" is still very much relevant. Politically the British had divided India into two parts-the British India consisting of directly British administered Provinces and the Princely India consisting of numerous Indian States. Subsection (i) of section 311 of the Government of India Act, 1935 as originally enacted, defined an "Indian State" as including "any territory, whether described as a state, an estate, a Jagir or otherwise, belonging to or under the suzerainty of a ruler who is under the suzerainty of His Majesty and not being a part of British India." In fact, the number of the princely states was 562, according to the Butler Committee and the Simon Commission and they covered an area of 715,964 square miles, which constituted about 45 percent of the total territories of pre-partition India, The total population of the states, according to the census figures of 1941, was 93.2 millions, constituting about 24 percent of the total population of pre-partition India.¹

The Indian Princes' anachronistic situation dated from Britain's haphazard conquest of India when these rulers were allowed to remain on their thrones provided they acknowledged Britain as the paramount power. The system was formalized in a series of treaties between the individual rulers and the British Crown. The princes had recognized the 'paramountcy' of the King Emperor as represented in New Delhi by the Viceroy and ceded to him control of their foreign affairs and defence. They received in return Britain's guarantee of their continuing autonomy inside their states.² These Princes had been for almost two centuries the surest pillar of British rule in India.' It was in their relations with the states that the British had applied most effectively "Divide and Rule" doctrine with which they were accused of governing India. According to Collins and Lappierre, "The inevitable result was a series of grateful and generally reactionary princely enclaves studded like anchors against a revolutionary wind throughout those parts of India ruled directly by the British."³

S. R. Ashton has rightly pointed out that 'during the 19th century the British had deprived the Indian princes of the power to conduct external relations with each other or with foreign powers. Internally the Princes were theoretically autonomous but their sovereignty in this respect was restricted by the paramountcy of the imperial power'.⁴ The British maintained the Princes as an administrative convenience and as a potential source of military and political support. By the opening of the 20th century, however, the British came to regard the Princes as indispensable political allies against the growth of nationalism in India. At the beginning the Princes hardly noticed the rising demands by Indian nationalist leaders for a greater share in formulating and executing governmental policies in British India. The agitation over the partition of Bengal in 1905, revealed the 'political sophistication' of these leaders and of their ability to mobilize various groups to support their programmes. During the subsequent decades Indian nationalist leaders

began programmes that impinged more directly on the future of the Princes and their States.⁵

The outbreak of the World War I allowed the Princes to reaffirm their value as military allies during an imperial crisis. It also sounded the death knell to the longstanding British policy of isolating the Princes from each other and from the outside world. The Chamber of Princes, a deliberative assembly which was formed in 1921, possessed limited powers and demonstrated the lack of administrative and legislative skills among the Princes. It has been argued that the Princes were at the peak of their power at the end of the First World War (1914-1918). As time went by the Princes came more and more to dominate London's strategic thinking about India, 'which culminated in attempts in 1930s to rope them to all-Indian federation as a counterpoint to the electoral power of the National Congress'. Ian Copland has argued that as allies and clients of the British, the ruling Princes were the significant players in that frantic contest between the old world of the States and the new nationalist world of the provinces⁷, which many historians have called the endgame of empire.

As debates between the British and Indian leaders over constitutional reform came to the forefront, the Princes were anxious to seek constitutional guarantees of their authority and position. As a client group the princes might express displeasure but would not openly seek the extinction of British authority. Rather, the Princes continued to demonstrate their usefulness as imperial clients in order to win bargaining points in future constitutional negotiations. Their persistent support for British policies during the 1920s and the Civil Disobedience Movement in the 1930s as well as their resistance to constitutional and political changes within their own States, alienated Indian political leaders both within and outside their States. Consequently, their allies within the all-India arena were narrowing to groups within their own religious communities and conservatives who felt threatened by any political, economic or social change.⁸

The Princes' initial responses to the call for the creation of a federation between British India and the Princely States was affirmative, because they saw federation as a means by which they might escape from the scrutiny of their British overlord and also as a mechanism by which they might achieve a more - defined status protected by legal provisions. But when 'the possibility of an all-Indian federation evaporated because of princely intransigence, British ambivalence, Congress opposition, and the advent of the World War II, the princes had never again been key parties in later constitutional deliberations'. Only the British, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League were the protagonists in the devolution of imperial power.⁹ It is interesting to note that in 1946 the British Cabinet Mission seemed hardly aware of the existence of the Princes, and the last British Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, had little time to consider the Princes. He rather relied more upon the advice and views of Jawaharlal Nehru about them than on that of Sir Conrad Corfield, his Political Adviser on the Princes.¹⁰

However, 'the ultimate solution to the problem of freedom with unity', as said R. J. Moore, 'involved the partition of British India between two Dominions, and the accession of the Princely States to one or other of them. Thus the unity that the Raj had achieved about a century earlier was dissolved in the transfer of power.'¹¹ H. V. Hodson has opined in 'The Great Divide' that "the demise of the princely states seems bound to have followed the withdrawal of the imperial hand which had sheltered and supported them amid all hostile trends and ideals of the age."¹² Within a short span of about two and a half years following 1947 all princely states, geographically contiguous to India, were submerged in the body - politic of the Indian Union. Viewing the gigantic problem of the princely states which threatened the unity of the post-partition India, the integration of these States have been called by some Indian scholars as 'great revolution'.¹³ No doubt the princely states and their demise form an important and fascinating study that has not, so far, received its due from the scholars who have concentrated on the areas of direct British rule and largely overlooked the States ruled by semi-independent Princes.

Cooch Behar State lies between 25°58' and 26°33' north latitude, and between 88°48' and 89°55' east longitude. Cooch Behar, being a native state till 1949 A.D., was situated on the north - eastern part of India bounded on the south by Rangpur district of Bengal, on the north by the Jalpaiguri district of Bengal, on the east by the Goalpara district of Assam and the Rangpur district and on the west by the districts of Rangpur and Jalpaiguri. Geographically it was within the territories of the Bengal Province. Since the conclusion of the treaty of subsidiary alliance with the English Company in 1773, Cooch Behar turned into a tributary state of the British giving them a fixed annual tribute of Rs. 67,700. It had an area of 1,321 square miles with a population of about 6,41,000 and a revenue of about Rs. 10 millions.¹⁴ Out of 562 states of India, only 284 states including Cooch Behar were important enough to qualify for privy purses from the Government of India after integration. Only 83 States received military salutes from the British Government. Cooch Behar was one such State which was entitled to 13 gun salutes.¹⁵ Only Cooch Behar, Gwalior and Patiala were accorded the honour of riding as honorary ADCs beside the royal carriage of Edward VII at his coronation.¹⁶ Apart from this, Cooch Behar was one of 108 States which were members of the Chamber of Princes in their own right. Therefore, it may be said that despite being rather a small State in size, Cooch Behar's political and strategic importance gave it a distinctive status among the array of the Indian States.

The present work proposes to investigate the different aspects of political, socio-economic and cultural history of Cooch Behar State from the time of the death of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan (1911 A.D.) to the merger of the state with the Indian Dominion (1949 A.D.). The year 1911 A.D. is a memorable in the history of Cooch Behar State not only because of the death of Nripendra Narayan whose reign witnessed the full height of Anglo-Cooch Behar relationship as well as colonial modernisation of the state administration, but the years following 1911 A.D. saw also the rise of national upsurge in the country against the foreign domination. Its repercussions were also strongly felt in the native states like Cooch Behar. In spite of the anti-nationalist stand taken by the state administration, there

gradually emerged a strong mass movement in Cooch Behar in favour of independence and democracy as well as the merger with the Indian Dominion and later with the Province of West Bengal under the umbrella of the Praja Mondal Samiti led by both nationalist and leftist groups. Although the Hitasadhani Sabha, another political organisation, led by local Muslim and Rajbanshi elites and also patronized by the state administration, was vehemently opposed to the merger of Cooch Behar with the Province of West Bengal.¹⁷ Apart from this, the period under study also witnessed some significant developments in the domains of socio-economic, cultural and religious affairs of the present State. But no systematic work has, so far, been attempted for the study of the crucial period with which we are concerned.

A brief overview of earlier works :

A large number of scholars contributed much to the studies of the different aspects of the history of Cooch Behar State from the time of its emergence as a kingdom in the early part of the sixteenth century. Though the works of the scholars are not directly connected with the period with which we are concerned, they supply us important information about the context of our work. Among the array of earlier works which are general in nature, a few names may be cited here : W. W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. X, (London, 1876) ; Bhagabatcharan Bandyopadhyaya, A History of Cooch Behar (In Bengali, Cooch Behar, 1884) ; A Claude Campbell, Glimpses of Bengal, Vol. I, (London, 1907) and Khan Chowdhuri Amanatullah Ahmed, A History of Cooch Behar, Part-I (in Bengali, Cooch Behar, 1936) and its English rendering by Sarat Chandra Ghoshal in 1942, which comes to an end with the coronation of Maharaja Harendra Narayan.

Among some earlier works which deal with either with a particular aspect or a particular period of the history of Cooch Behar, mention may, however, be made of : D. Nath, History of Koch Kingdom, 1515-1615, (Delhi, 1984) delineates the history of the first hundred years of Koch Kingdom from its beginning to the reign of Maharaja Laksmi Narayan ; S. C. Guha Roy, Study of Some Aspects of the History of Kamata - Koch Kingdom, (Ph. D. Dissertation, North Bengal University abbreviated as NBU, 1985), analyses the different aspects of the early history of Cooch Behar; Ratna Roy Sanyal, The Raj and the Princely State of Cooch Behar : A Study of Anglo-Koch Relations during 1772-1839 (Calcutta, 2004), delineates the different dimensions of Anglo-Cooch Behar relation of the above period; Partha Kumar Sen, Some Aspects of the History of Kamata-Koch Behar Since 1772 to the Accession of Sivendra Narayan, (Ph. D. Dissertation, NBU, 1989) analyses the political and other aspects of the history of Cooch Behar of the said period; K. C. Das, The Modernisation of A Princely State : Cooch Behar under Maharaja Nripendra Narayan, (Ph. D. Dissertation, NBU, 1989); evaluates the different dimensions of the colonial modernisation of Cooch Behar State between 1863 and 1911; Shekhar Sircar, Land Settlement, Revenue Administration and Taxation under the Maharajas of Cooch Behar State, (Ph. D. Dissertation, NBU, 1990) reviews the different aspects of the economic history of Cooch Behar; P. K. Debnath, Religion and Religious Establishments of Kamata-Koch Kingdom, (Ph. D.

Dissertation, NBU, 1993) narrates the rise and development of religion and religious establishment in Cooch Behar State; and Biman Chakraborty, Political History of Merger of the Princely States : A Study of Cooch Behar, (Ph. D. Dissertation, NBU, 2001); assesses the history of merger issue and its related problems of the princely states with special reference to Cooch Behar. Rup Kumar Barman, From Tribalism to State : Reflections on the Emergence of Koch Kingdom, (Delhi, 2007) elaborated some important causative factors such as warfare, centralization of political power, peasantisation of the tribes, moneytization of economy, exploitation of surplus, legitimization of power by 'adopted culture' that paved the way for the emergence of the Koch State in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley in the early sixteen century.

In view of this review of earlier works it can now safely be said that no systematic attempt has so far been made in delineating the different aspects of the history of Cooch Behar during the period under our study and its related problems. Hence we felt it necessary to make a thorough probe into the penultimate stage of the Koch Raj and the enchanting drama associated with it with the help of latest known documents from the different archives in India.

Research Questions or Hypotheses :

Since the emergence as a kingdom in the early part of the 16th century, Cooch Behar continued to exist for several centuries through the vicissitudes of fortunes and through the Anglo-Koch treaty of 1773 down to its merger with the Indian Union in 1949. In view of this extraordinary phenomenon, certain questions may reasonably be raised. First, how does Cooch Behar continue to exist as a separate state for a long period since the conclusion of the Anglo-Koch treaty of 1773 to the merger of the state in 1949 ? Secondly, why does the princely rule in the state come to an end along with the British rule in India ? Thirdly, what is the nature of relationship between the British Government and Cooch Behar State ? Robin Jeffrey has rightly pointed out that Indian nationalism spread from British India to the princely states and gradually created an environment for launching the national struggle there.¹⁶ But this state of affairs, however, poses certain problems in respect of the State of Cooch Behar : First, what is the nature of penetration of ideals for which Indian national struggle stood? Secondly, what are the responses of the rulers of Cooch Behar towards this national struggle? Thirdly, how far was the prevailing administration in the state conducive to the growth of political ideals with which Indian national struggle connected? Fourthly, whether there was any noticeable change in the attitude of the communists of the State in their anti-monarchy campaign following the Soviet Union's involvement in the World War II turning the imperialist war into the people's war also requires to be investigated. Lastly, to what extent did the state administration as well as the other political groups exert themselves for ultimate merger of the State with the Indian Dominion?

It is a fact that a religious reform movement popularly known as Rajbanshi Kshatriya movement tremendously

led to the awakening of the stature of the long neglected Rajbanshi people of North Bengal in the early decades of the 20th century. The role of the leaders like Panchanan Barman in this respect requires to be investigated properly. Ian Copland has pointed out that there was greater communal amity in the Princely States than in British India.¹⁹ Cooch Behar was also no exception in this respect. The factors behind the communal amity between the two dominant religious groups in the State and the role of the rulers also require to be investigated. In view of the socio-economic backwardness in the State, impact of the extension of railways and the contact with the colonial power has also to be evaluated. The proposed work intends to be a study with the object of finding out the answers to the questions raised above.

Coverage / Paradigm :

After the fall of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa by the end of the 12th century, many new kingdoms emerged from their tribal bases in the north-eastern India during the 13th-16th centuries. Amalendu Guha has opined that these kingdoms represented not only dynastic changes but also new state formation. The transition from tribalism to statehood along with Hinduisation occurred when these kingdoms attained a sufficiently large production base through the introduction of advanced agrarian system and or through extension of territories by conquering the neighbouring countries. The Ahoms, Dimasa (Kachari), Jaintia and Koch kingdoms were such formations.²⁰ The Koches, a section of the Indo-Mongoloids, rose to a political power on the ruins of the Khen kingdom in the early part of the 16th century under the leadership of their chieftain Visvasimha and maintained its identity through the vicissitudes of fortunes.

The Bhutanese invasion of the Koch Kingdom compelled the contemporary Koch ruler to sign a subsidiary treaty of 1773, according to which, it became a feudatory state of the British. The question arose in the subsequent decades whether Cooch Behar should pass into a zamindari of Bengal more than once, but it was due to the credit of its rulers that it continued to exist as a separate State. During the 19th century the British laid the foundation of the process of colonial modernisation in Cooch Behar. K. C. Das has argued that the reign of Nripendranarayan was particularly remarkable, for his interaction with the British as well as with the socio-religious movement like the Brahmo Samaj and the influence of the Bengali intellectuals contributed a lot in building the modernity and Cooch Behar became the model State among the contemporary Princely States of India.²¹

Nripendranarayan was succeeded by his eldest son Raj Rajendranarayan who evinced a dynamic attitude towards administration of the State, though his reign lasted for two years only (1911-1913) on account of his premature death. Soon after the accession of Jitendranarayan, the next ruler, to the throne, the First World War (1914-1918) broke out. The king provided the British Indian Government with military as well as financial assistance. During his reign the Non

Co-operation movement launched by Gandhiji spread into Cooch Behar and created a great commotion among the people.²² The revolutionary activities had made headway into the State as well. The king, however, turned a stern attitude to these developments and introduced repressive measures to suppress them. It is during the time of Jitendranarayan that Cooch Behar had admitted into the Chamber of Princes as a member state and thereby identified itself with an all-India Princes' organisation which largely shaped the politics of Indian princely states in the following decades.

Jitendranarayan was not blessed with a long life and succeeded by his eldest son Jagaddipendra Narayan during whose minority period (1923-1936) a Regency Council was established under the Queen Dowager Indira Devi, a daughter of Sayaji Rao Gaikwar of Baroda State, to administer the State. The Regency Council was embarrassed by the revolutionary movement as well as all-India Civil Disobedience movement which had penetrated into the State. The world-wide economic depression of early 1930's made its impact felt in Cooch Behar. The Regency Council had to tackle with this problem of great magnitude by introducing a new land revenue policy. Besides, The constitutional and political development in India such as the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission in March, 1927 to make recommendation regarding further constitutional progress of India; appointment of the Indian States Enquiries Committee to report on the relationship between the Paramount Power and the Indian States; formation of All-India States People's Conference in December, 1927, Round Table Conferences which were held in London between 1930 and 1932 and the Government of India Act of 1935 which provided for an all-India federation to be consisted of British India and the Indian States (though this federal scheme had not come into being) played a vital role in shaping the destinies of both the British India and the Indian States.

The Regency period was followed by the coronation of Jagaddipendranarayan whose rule (1936-1949) was full of historic events and marked a new era in the history of Cooch Behar. Within three years following the assumption of full royal authority by Jagaddipendranarayan, the Second World War (1939-1945) started. The king actively co-operated with the British Indian Government by offering them military and financial assistance. He vehemently opposed the Quit India movement which succeeded in arousing a great response among the people of Cooch Behar.²³ The early years of 1940s witnessed the infiltration of the Communists into the State who gradually undertook the task for launching the movements directed against the monarchy as well as the British. The Tebhaga Peasant Movement also penetrated into Cooch Behar and eventually gave rise to a peasant movement there. Besides, the Prajamandal Samiti (a branch of All-India States Peoples Conference) was formed in the State in full co-operation with the Communists with a view to launching mass movements in favour of independence and democracy in the post World War II period. In order to countercheck the activities of both the Communists and the Prajamandal Samity, the Hitasadani Sabha, the only legal political organisation in the State, was founded in collusion with the king. The Hitasadhani Sabha endeavoured to divert the attention of the people from anti-monarchy movement to Coochbehari Non-Coochbehari

conflict.²⁴

The Indian Independence Act, 1947, released the States from all their obligations to the Crown and made them technically independent entities. It posed the threat of further balkanisation of the post-partition India. However, with the assistance and co-operation of the rulers and the helpful efforts of Lord Mountbatten, all the States, barring Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagarh, geographically contiguous to India, had acceded to the Indian Dominion on the three subjects such as defence, foreign relations and communications by the 15th August, 1947.²⁵

For a period of two years following the attainment of India's independence, Cooch Behar Raj Durbar pursued a policy of masterly inactivity concerning the issue of integration of the State. Meanwhile, it is believed that the Hitasadhani Sabha, with the tacit support of the Maharaja, became active and tried either to keep Cooch Behar as a separate independent entity or to get it merged with Pakistan. However, under the pressure of strong public opinion created by the Prajamandal Samiti and other political groups, the king eventually agreed to sign the Merger Agreement with the Indian Dominion on 28th August, 1949. According to the provisions of the agreement, the administration of the State was taken over by a Chief Commissioner on behalf of the Indian Government on 12th September, 1949. Then a heated controversy arose in Cooch Behar over the question whether the State should either be merged in West Bengal or in Assam. The issue became a bone of contention between the Governments of West Bengal and Assam.²⁶ After careful consideration of all factors the Government of India decided to merge Cooch Behar in the Province of West Bengal. This was done with effect from the 1st January, 1950 by means of an Order under Section 290 A of the Government of India Act.²⁷

Administrative set up of Cooch Behar State as laid down by Nripendranarayan was followed by the next two kings. In dealing with the affairs of the State, the king was assisted by two nominated bodies i.e. the State Executive Council and the State Legislative Council. The reign of the last king, however, witnessed some overhauling changes in the formation and functioning of the Executive Council as well as the Legislative Council as a result of which a form of dyarchic government was established in the State.²⁸ Apart from political and constitutional aspect, changes were also brought about in revenue, judicial and local administration.

Cooch Behar was purely an agricultural kingdom and its agriculture was carried on in traditional method. In industries, the State was backward as well. According to the census figures of 1931, industry supports only 2.6% of the total population of Cooch Behar.²⁹ Indigenous industries and trade could not prosper owing to the gradual penetration of colonial economy into the State. In spite of the establishment of the railway lines connected the capital of Cooch Behar with outside centres of British India, the system of communications in the interior of the State remained in bad shape.³⁰ The State owned 78 miles metalled and 1021 miles non-metalled roads and a metre gauge railway about 35

miles long connected with the Bengal Assam Railway system.³¹ The economic condition of the people was backward and their standard of living was low. Despite the welfare activities initiated by the kings, the pitiable conditions of the people remained practically unchanged in the existing (feudal) structure of society and this resulted in increasing unrest among the poor peasantry in the State. That is why, the Tebhaga Peasant Movement penetrated into Cooch Behar and eventually gave rise to a peasant movement there.³²

Since the birth of the Koch Kingdom, the kings and their followers embraced Hinduism and thereby the process of Hinduisation started onwards. The Hindus were in general divided into three sects, i.e., The Saivas, Saktas and Vaishnavas. The Brahmo religion, which later penetrated into the state, however, made little headway. In the Hindu caste hierarchy the Brahmanas, Kayasthas, Vaidyas etc. occupied the highest position while the Rajbanshis, a Hinduised tribe, who constituted about 60 percent of the total population and 87 percent of the Hindu population, according to the census figures of 1891, thereby forming the largest community in the kingdom, occupied the lowest position.³³ Hence a religious reform movement was launched by Thakur Panchanan Barman for upgrading the Rajbanshis into the status of kshatriyas and this movement for kshatriyaisation, it is believed, made a tremendous contribution to the awakening of the Rajbanshis in respect of their social and political life.³⁴ It is also the fact that in spite of such efforts for Sanskritisation, the major portion of the Hindu population of the State was not deeply attached to the classical form of Hinduism. Their belief was rather deeply embedded in the indigenous religions and folk deities.³⁵

The Muslims constituted about 38 percent of the total population, according to the census figures of 1941, thereby forming the second largest community in Cooch Behar. They were mainly divided into four sects, i.e., the Sayyads, Mughals, Pathans and Sheikhs. In the social hierarchy of the Muslims, the first three sects who constituted the Ashraf community, a fringe of the Muslim population, possessed the highest rank and the fourth group, i.e., the rural Sheikhs and other Muslims were placed in the lowest rank.³⁶ These lower classes of the Muslims who formed Ajlaf or Atraf Community descended from the lower classes of Hinduism and other indigenous population and belonged to the same stock as the Rajbanshis. They were not affected by dogmatic theology of Islam. The Muslims of Cooch Behar were predominantly of Sunni Barelvīs and hence the influence of Pirism was all pervading in their socio-religious life. The belief in Pirism was not only shared by local Muslims but also shared by local Hindus and other communities.³⁷ Hence there existed communal amity between the Hindus and Muslims in rural society. This amity between the two principal communities had further been strengthened by the liberal policy pursued by the kings in matter of religion.

According to the 1941 Census, Cooch Behar State with an area of 1318 square miles, had the population of 640,842 in number, of which 26,821 were urban persons and 6,14,021 were rural persons. The density of of the state's population was 486 per square mile.³⁸ The number of towns and villages in the State was 6 and 1400 respectively. The total number of occupied houses in the state, was 125,353, of which 5,180 were in towns while 120,173 were in

villages.³⁹

The State's population, which was 566,974 in 1901, has increased to 671,158 in 1951. there was little spectacular increase in any decade between 1872 and 1951. It has rather been noticed that several decades in the past have registered decreases, notably the decades 1881-91, 1891-1901 and 1921-31. Even in the decade 1911-1921 there was a small reduction in the population. There has been no industrial development in the state in the last 100 years and agriculture has remained pretty much on the same level throughout. Consequently, there has not been any large increase by immigration, except by way of bands of agriculturists migrating into Cooch Behar from Mymensing, Rangpur and Pabna (now in Bangladesh).⁴⁰ The following statement shows the growth of population in Cooch Behar state between 1872 and 1951.⁴¹

Population of Cooch Behar State with variations from 1872-1951.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Population	Variation	Population	Variation	Population	Variation
1951	1941-51	1941	1931-41	1931	1921-31
6,71,158	+30,316	6,40,842	+49,956	5,90,886	-1,603
7	8	9	10	11	12
Population	Variation	Population	Variation	Population	Variation
1921	1911-21	1911	1901-11	1901	1891-01
5,92,489	-463	5,92,952	+25,978	5,66,974	-11,894
13	14	15	16	17	
Population	Variation	Population	Variation	Population	
1891	1881-91	1881	1872-81	1872	
5,78,868	-23,756	6,02,624	+70,059	5,32,565	

The following statement shows percentage variation in population of Cooch Behar State, 1872-1951.⁴²

Percentage Variation

1901-51	1921-51	1872-1921	1941-51	1931-41	1921-31	1911-21	1901-11	1891-1901	1881-91	1872-81
+18.4	+13.3	+11.3	+4.7	+8.5	-0.3	-0.1	+4.6	-2.1	-3.9	+13.2

The last but certainly not the least is the following statement that shows the growth of population of Cooch Behar State in comparison to those of the neighbouring districts of Jalpaiguri and Rangpur from 1872 to 1941.⁴³

	<u>Cooch Behar</u>	<u>Jalpaiguri</u>	<u>Rangpur</u>
1872-81	+13.2	+39.0	-2.6
1881-91	-3.9	+17.3	-1.5
1891-1901	-2.1	+15.7	+4.3
1901-11	+4.6	+14.8	+10.7
1911-21	-0.1	+3.7	+5.1
1921-31	-0.3	+5.0	+3.7
1931-41	+8.5	+10.7	+10.9
<hr/>			
1872-1941	+20.3	+161.8	+33.9
1881-1941	+6.3	+122.8	+36.5

The above mentioned table shows clearly that the Jalpaiguri district occupied the highest place in respect of the growth of population with 161.8 per cent from 1872 to 1941, while the Rangpur district occupied the second place with 33.9 percent and the Cooch Behar State, the third place with 20.3 per cent.

Methodology :

We, thus, propose to make a thorough study of an interesting and difficult phase of the history of Cooch Behar. Books so far published for the period under study are mostly pamphlets and uncritical writings. Hence we have to build up thesis mainly with the help of archival materials lying scattered in the different archives of India, most important of which are West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata, National Archives, New Delhi and abroad (India Office Library, Bowring Album Section of India Office Library, London). But informations that have been forthcoming from Cooch Behar Annual Administrative Reports, English Correspondence of Council's office, English Correspondence of Governor's Report, Cooch Behar State Gazetteers, Sardar Patel's Correspondences are no less important for further understanding the important phase of history of Cooch Behar State. In addition, Memoirs like Autobiography by Suniti Devi, Sabitri Debi, Nirupama Devi and Gayatri Devi, biographies like Jitendranarayan Bhup Bahadur by S. Sanyal and Thakur Panchanan Barman by Upendra Nath Barman and personal diaries of politicians and revolutionaries of Cooch Behar undoubtedly formed important source materials for our study. Some of the periodicals published from Cooch Behar State during our period like 'Cooch Behar Darpan' also reflect prevailing socio-economic and political situation in the State. In some cases, interviews of the eminent personalities of erstwhile Cooch Behar State fill up the lacunae in our understanding of the history of the state, otherwise unknown.

Besides, my efforts at collecting information included the perusal of scholarly and interesting accounts or books by both British and Indian writers. I have so far carried out my field work to National Archives of India, New Delhi, West Bengal States Archives, Kolkata, National library, Kolkata, Directorate of Census Operations, Kolkata, North Bengal State Library, Cooch Behar and Cooch Behar Record Room and collected such archival materials which have enriched me in understanding the difficult and fascinating phase of the history of Cooch Behar. The proposed work has used all available sources to give a critical and comprehensive account of the different aspects of the history of Cooch Behar State during one of the most crucial periods in modern Indian history.

With all source materials at our disposal we feel inclined to discuss the present work in the following chapters: **In Chapter I** an endeavour has been made to present the historical background of the Cooch Behar State prior to the accession of Maharaja Raj Rajendranarayan (1911 A.D.) with special reference to the nature of the Anglo-Cooch Behar relationship. **Chapter II** has dealt with the political history of Cooch Behar since the accession of Raj Rajendranarayan (1911) to the end of the rule of the Regency Council (1936 A.D.). The reigns of the two Maharajas, i.e., Raj Rajendranarayan (1911-1913) and Jitendranarayan (1913-1922) along with the rule of Maharani Indira Devi as the Regent and President of the Regency Council (1923-1936) during the minority period of Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan have formed the theme of this chapter. **Chapter III** has dealt with the political history of Cooch Behar since the assumption of ruling power by Jagaddipendranarayan (1936 A.D.) to the accession of the State with the Indian Union (12th

August, 1947). Chapter IV has dealt with the penultimate phase of the Cooch Behar Raj and Cooch Behar as the Chief Commissioner's Province and its problem of merger (12th August, 1947-31st December, 1949). The constitutional and administrative system of Cooch Behar State has been analyzed in Chapter V. Chapter VI has highlighted the economic condition of the State. The last chapter is an observation in the form of summary and conclusion derived from the analysis of the previous chapters. In addition to this, the chapters appended in the appendices have thrown light on the trends of the political and constitutional developments in India, particularly in Princely India, which eventually led to the abolition of the princely system and also analysed some significant aspects in the arena of social, cultural and religious affairs of the Cooch Behar State. Lastly, an adequate care has been given to the bibliography, and finally some maps at the beginning and some rare historical documents and few relevant illustrations at the end have also been appended and these, we believe, will be helpful for the proper understanding of the problem with which we are concerned.

Notes and References

1. White Paper on Indian States, Government of India, Revised Edition, New Delhi, 1950, p. 17. N. L. Kolkata.
2. Collins, Larry and Lapierre, Dominique : Freedom at Midnight, Vikash Publishing House, New Delhi, Fifteenth Impression 1977, pp. 130-31.
3. *ibid*, p. 141.
4. Ashton, A. R. : British Policy Towards the Indian States, London, First Published, 1982, p. IX.
5. Ramusack, Barbara N., The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire: Dissolution of a Patron - Client System, 1914-1939, The University of Cincinnati, 1978, pp. XVII-XIX.
6. *ibid*, pp. XVIII-XIX.
7. Copland, Ian : The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947, Cambridge University Press, First South Asian Edition, 1999, pp. 1-2.
8. Ramusack, Barbara, N., *op. cit*, pp. XVIII-XIX.
9. *ibid*, p. XX. It should be stated that regarding the proposed all-India federation, R. J. Moore held the view that the 'paper federation' would have been an incompatible mixture of provincial democrats and princely autocrats, satisfying the minimum requirements of neither. — Moore, R. J. : Endgames of Empire : Studies of Britain's Indian Problem, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 2.
10. Ramusack, Barbara, N., *op. cit*, p. 233.
11. Moore, R. J. : *op. cit*, p. 6.
12. Hodson, H. V. : The Great Divide, London, First Published 1969, p. 543.
13. Majumdar, R. C. et al : Struggle For Freedom, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, Second Edition, 1978, p. 790. See also Handa, R. L. : History of Freedom Struggle in Princely States, Delhi, 1968, p. 6.
14. Ganguli, Karali Charan : Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the Cooch Behar State (1913-1927), Cooch Behar State Press, 1930, p. 5, and also confer White Paper on Indian States, *op.cit.*, p. 45. Confer also Mitra, A : West Bengal District Census Handbooks : Cooch Behar, 1951, Calcutta, 1953, p. V.
15. Jeffrey, Robin : People, Princes and Paramount Power, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1978, p. 8.
16. Collins, Larry and Lapierre, Dominique : *op.cit.*, p. 142.
17. Letter No. 110, dated the 8th August, 1949 from Amanatulla Ahmed and Satish Chandra Roy Singha of Cooch Behar to the Adviser, the State Ministry, Government of India, New Delhi. File No. 15(8) - p/49, 1949 (secret). NAI.
18. Jeffrey, Robin : *op.cit.* pp. 12-13.
19. Copland, Ian : 'Communalism in Princely India,' in *Modern Asian Studies*, No. 22, 1988, p. 783.
20. Guha, Amalendu : 'The Ahom Political System : An Enquiry into State Formation in Medieval Assam : 1228-1800,' in Surajit Sinha(ed.) Tribal Politics and States System in Pre-Colonial Eastern and North Eastern India, Calcutta and New Delhi, First Published 1987, pp. 143-144, 151.
21. Das, Kamalesh Chandra : The Modernisation of A Princely State : Cooch Behar under Maharaja Nripendranarayan, unpublished Ph. D Thesis, NBU, 1990, pp. 4-8.
22. Annual Administrative Report of Cooch Behar state (Henceforth abbreviated as AARCBS), 1922-23, pp. 30-31, NBSL.
23. AARCBS, 1942-43, p. 3, NBSL.
24. Das, Durga(ed.) : Sadar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. 7, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, First Edition 1973, pp. 551-552.
25. White Paper on Indian States, *op.cit.*, pp. 32, 36.

26. Das, Durga(ed.) : Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. 8, op. cit., p. 517.
27. White Paper on Indian States, op. cit., p. 45.
28. Cooch Behar Gazette, January 6, 1939, Part-I, p. 9.
29. Roy, Satyendranath : Cottage Industries in Relation to Bengal's Industrial Progress, Cooch Behar, 1941, p. 133.
30. Ganguli, Karali Charan : op.cit., p. 8.
31. AARCBS, 1944-45, Chapter I, p. 4.
32. A Source Report (secret) dated 7th August, 1949, Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Ref. No. D-7491-p/49. NAI.
33. Choudhury, Harendra Narayan : The Cooch Behar State and Its Land Revenue Settlements, Cooch Behar, 1903, p. 123.
34. Singha, Kshetra Mohan : Roy Saheb Panchanan Barmar Jibani (in Bengali), Cooch Behar, 1939, p. 10.
35. Dutta, Jatindra Mohan : 'Janatathya Sambandhe Kayekti Katha' in Cooch Behar Darpan, Bengali Fortnightly Journal, 9th Year, No. 10, Magh, 1353 B.S.
36. Ahmed, Rafiuddin : The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906. A Quest for Identity, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981, p. 2.
37. Mandal, Sekh Rahim : 'Muslim Minority of Cooch Behar : Their History and Culture', in P. K. Bhattacharyya(ed.), The Kingdom of Kamata-Koch Bihar in Historical Perspective, Ratna Prakashan, Calcutta, 2000, pp. 122, 124. It should be noted here that the Bengali Muslims were generally divided into two sects : the Sunnis and the Shias, but the majority of them belonged to the Sunni sect. On the other hand, the Shias were a microscopic minority and principally concentrated in some urban areas. Their number hardly exceeded five percent of the total Muslim population of Bengal. - Ahmed, Rafiuddin : op. cit., pp. 33-34.
38. Census of India, 1941, Vol- IV, Bengal, Tables by R. A. Dutch, Govt. of India Press, Simla, 1942, p. 71. DOCO.
39. *ibid*, pp. 2-3.
40. Mitra, A : op. cit., p. V.
41. *ibid*, P. XXXVII. It should be noted that the Census of the Cooch Behar State started with 1872. The above-mentioned statement shows that there was a substantial increase of population in 1881 chiefly due to more accurate counting - *ibid*, p. XXXV.
42. Loc. cit.
43. Dutta, Jatindra Mohan, op. cit., p. 144.