

The proxy citizens of North Bengal
A Study on the present condition of the people of Indian enclaves in
Bangladesh*

Dr. Rup Kumar Barman

I

Existence of enclave in different parts of the world is an important aspect of history of the modern world. Being isolated from the 'home country', people of enclaves are facing the question of their national identity in the 'host country'. Their political, civil and cultural rights are being threatened frequently. In this context, South Asia is no exception. At present two South Asian countries like India and Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) have their *defacto* stateless citizens in their enclaves or *chhitmahals* in their common border at North Bengal.

At present 95 Bangladeshi *chhitmahals* are situated in four subdivisions (viz. Tufanganj, Dinhat, Mathabhanga and Mekhliganj) of Cooch Behar district of West Bengal comprising with 71110.02 acres of land. On the other hand, 126 Indian *chhitmahals* are situated in Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts of Bangladesh which collectively constitute 17158.13 acres of land. Except a few tracts, most of the *chhitmahals* have their people of plural characters (in terms of class or income parameters, religion, language, educational attainment). Theoretically they are the citizens of either India or Bangladesh. But in practice they are being deprived from the basic amenities and rights of citizens including civil, cultural and political rights, rights of the children and women, right to citizenship, right to protection from the persecution by any state or non-state actors, etc. However, field survey data show that most of the *chhitmahal*-dwellers have acquired the citizenship of host country with fake address, documents, and even with fake fatherhood. So they are *defacto* stateless people from the point of 'home country' but they are 'proxy citizens' of host country. As 'proxy citizens' they are beyond the preview of law of host country. Lack of law and order has transformed the enclaves into chaotic land tracts. A few of them, however, have developed their own administration with mini-statehood. In this paper I'll highlight all these aspects of present condition of the Indian enclave-dwellers in northern Bangladesh in somewhat objective outlook.

II

Meaning of Chhitmahals

Enclaves (or chhitmahals) are generally referred to those land tracts which are detached from the mainland or its 'home' and surrounded by another country or countries (host) but politically and mentally attached to home country. Enclaves are just like islands surrounded not by water but by the territory of other country or countries. Geographers have conceptualized the enclaves as 'a portion of territory entirely surrounded by foreign domination'.¹ On the other word, an enclave is a 'portion of territory separated from the country to which it politically belongs and entirely surrounded by alien domination'.² It means the enclaves are situated beyond the main land of a country and for maintaining relations with the 'home' they require assistance and permission of the 'host country'. If the people of the enclaves are not allowed to enter into the boundary of the 'host country' they will not be able to survive. If they are not allowed to visit the 'home country' they will not be able to enjoy the taste and rights of citizenship. Enclaves and enclave-dwellers thus have drawn wide attention of the geographers, historians, social scientists, human rights' activists and politicians all across the world particularly after the Second World War (1939-1945) because of their wide-ranging phenomena. There are several countries of Europe such as Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, etc; which have enclaves in their neighbouring country (countries). Among the Asian countries, United Arab Emirate, the states of former Soviet Union, India Bangladesh have also their enclaves.

The detached land tracts or the enclaves of European and Asian countries have been originated for various reasons such as war, military expedition, partition of country, de-colonization, international agreements, etc. All these factors are equally applicable for the origin of 200 enclaves and present existence of 162 enclaves of India Bangladesh which are popularly called chhitmahal.³ These chhitmahals of India and Bangladesh are associated with the historical development of a small kingdom of British India called 'Cooch Behar State'. Cooch Behar was/is main 'host' and 'home' of the chhitmahals.

In the pre-colonial period, Cooch Behar had several detach land tracts in the territory of Bengal called Rajwara or Kuchwara or Chhits. On the other hand, Bengal had a few detached tracts called Moghlan or Chhitmahals. Cooch Behar came under the British control in 1773 and transformed into a 'Native State' having internal sovereignty. So the chhitmahals of Cooch Behar and Bengal was a matter of 'Cooch Behar State - British India relations'. People of chhitmahals were the subjects of either British India or Cooch Behar State. Because of close and friendly relationship between Cooch Behar and British Bengal, management of the chhitmahal tracts and movement of people of chhitmahals did not face any trouble. But after the birth of East Pakistan through the partition of Bengal in 1947, 'chhitmahal issue' was appeared as a subject of tripartite relations between 'India and Cooch Behar' and 'Cooch Behar and Pakistan' and 'India and Pakistan'. Chhitmahal issue was transformed into a matter of true international affair with the merger of Cooch Behar State with India in 1949. Hence, the Cooch Behari

chhitmahals in Pakistan were transformed into Indian enclaves. Similarly the chhitmahals of former Bengal have been transformed into East Pakistani enclaves (and later Bangladeshi enclaves) in Cooch Behar. Condition of people of the enclaves of both India and Bangladesh are full with miseries and atrocities. They are living in the lands of absolute statelessness. In the subsequent section of the paper I'll discuss about the condition of Indian enclaves-dwellers in Bangladesh.

III

Condition of Indian Chhitmahal-Dwellers

Condition and nature of statelessness and violation of human rights of the Indian chhitmahal-dwellers in Bangladesh is a complicated matter. Atrocities of multiple characters on the people of isolated Indian land tracts have transformed them into a land of absolute lawlessness. In 1991 Shri Amar Pradhan, a Member of Parliament of India (elected from Cooch Behar); had published a monograph about the condition of the Indian Chhitmahal where he illustrated a picture of chaotic condition of the Indians. In his own words:

“About one lakh fifty thousand Indian citizens living in Indian enclaves surrounded by Bangladesh (previously by East Pakistan) are denied of minimum necessities of life, food, clothing, health-care, education and life security for the last 44 years. There is no law and order. Hundred of Indian citizens were butchered and enclaves were treated as slaughterhouses. There is nobody to look after them. Bangladesh Government is having no difficulty in maintaining a link with their enclaves with the help of India, it is a mystery why the Indian Government is apathetic to maintain the minimum civic norms in these Indian enclaves and uphold its territorial sovereignty. It is deplorable that the Indian citizens of Indian enclaves have neither the constitutional rights nor are they under the purview of general Human rights”⁴

This comment of Amar Roy Proadhan signifies that the people of Indian enclaves in Bangladesh are living in a slaughter house where human flesh is available not for the cannibals. This condition has been developed for evicting the Indians from their land and property with whom they are emotionally and economically attached since the time immemorial. In the subsequent part of this article I'll discuss about the practical scenario about the present condition of people of the Indian enclaves.

III.I

Indian Enclaves in Kurigram District

Let us start with the Indian enclaves situated in Kurigram district. Bhurungamari and Phulbari police station areas of this district are hosting 22 Indian enclaves out of

which Dashiarchhara (area 1643.44 acres, J.L.No.150, Thak no of Cooch Behar State - 150), Gaochulka (Bara Gaoachulka, Gaochulka 1+2),⁵ Dighaltara, Sahebganj, Kalmati, etc, are significant. Kurigram district is also the host of an Indian chhitmahal called Dakurhat Dakinirkuthi (J.L. No.156, area 14.27 acres). Total area of Indians enclaves in Kurigram district is 1778.75 acres areas where Dashiarchhara alone is 1643.44 acres. Rest 21 chhits collectively constitute only 135.31 acres. Naturally condition of Dashiarchhara is quite different that other enclaves situated in Kurigram.

The Indian enclaves situated in Kurigram district are attached to Dinjata subdivision of Cooch Behar district. Dashiarchhara (the biggest enclave of this cluster) is situated in Phulbari police station of Kurigram which is just 3 kilometers from the Indian village called Sukarukuthi. There is a Bangladeshi counter enclave called Chandrakona or Chandrakanta (area 34.64 acres, J.L. No. 20). The Nilkumar River (a narrow channel) is still flowing through this land tract. Both the Cooch Behar State and Rangpur district of British Bengal had claimed the Nilkumar River and its dried bed as the integral part of their authority. According to the survey map of 1870-75, the Nilkumar River was beyond the boundary of Dashiarchhara. But during the survey of 1927, it was noticed that the said river had entered into the land boundary of Dashiarchhara. However, the dispute between the Cooch Behar State and Rangpur District was resolved during the survey of 1931-38 for demarcation of boundary of their enclaves.⁶ Dashiarchhara was brought under Purbabha Pargana (situated in Rangpur district) of Cooch Behar. Responsibility of management of revenue and law and order of Dashiarchhara was entrusted to the manager of the Chaklajat Estate of the Cooch Behar State.⁷ After the merger of Cooch Behar State with India, Dashiarchhara was brought under Dinjata Subdivision.

According to the census of 1951, total population in Dashiarchhara was 1750. But no census was conducted in the subsequent period. However, Shri Pratap Chandra Barman (50), an Indian inhabitant of Dashiarchhara; has informed us that at present total population of this enclave is in between 7000 and 8000.⁸ But most of the people of this enclave are immigrants of the neighbouring Bangladeshi villages. The original inhabitants of this enclave (mostly Rajbanshi Hindus) were forced to migrate to the mainland of India or to the Bangladeshi soil.

A handful of the original inhabitants have maintained their occupation and lives in this chhit. Around 70% of the population of Dashiarchhara, have posses documents of their Bangladeshi identity in other (fake) addresses. They take the help of their fake identity or proxy citizenship to enjoy medical, educational and economic facilities. A handful of them, however, enjoy political rights as Bangladeshi citizens.⁹

Main problem in Dashiarchhara is non-existence of law and order. There is no security of the ordinary people, children and women. Brutal force determines the fate of the weaker people of this chhit. However, the chhit-dwellers have set up their own administrative system for maintaining peace, law and order, judiciary and defense. Head of Dashiarchhara enclave is called chairman (Pradhan). There are Vice President (Upa-

Pradhan) and village security force (Gram Rakhhi Bahini) too. This administrative unit is no way connected with the Indian village administration. In the recent year, a factional dispute has been germinated in this enclave particularly after the formation of 'India-Bangladesh Enclave Exchange Coordination Committee (Bharat Bangladesh Chhitmahal Binimay Samanyay Committee).' This internal dispute was started in 2010 with question of hoisting of Bangladeshi National Flag at Dashiarchhara. The pro-Bangladeshi people or the Bangladeshi proxy citizens of Dashiarchhara had forced the pro-Indian original inhabitants to participate in their movement to draw the attention of Bangladesh and India to expedite the process of exchange of enclaves. The original inhabitants, who are practically stateless citizens (or *defacto* stateless Indians); do not want the exchange of enclaves. They want "right to passage" or right to enter into the Indian mainland for their official works. They are opposing the process of exchange of enclaves because they apprehend that by exchange only the illegal land owners or squatters would get legal stamp as the owner of land.¹⁰

Although small in size, other Indian enclaves in Kurigram, are not less-important in terms of violation of human rights. According to government and media reports Dakurhat Dakinir Kuthi (J.L. No. 156, size 14.27 acres) is basically a dry-riverbed without population. It was depopulated in 1882 because of erosion of banks of the Dharalariver.¹¹ Boundary of this chhit was demarcated jointly by the Cooch Behar State and the authority of Rangpur district in 1934. Although there was the existence of human settlement before 1947 but at present it is totally unpopulated because of soil erosion. People of this chhit were forced to migrate in safer place as environment-induced-displaced persons. No country knows their present condition.

Among other smaller Indian enclaves at Kurigram, Seutikursha (J.L. No. 142, Thak No. 142, size 45.63 acres) is situated very near to the Indian mainland. It is only 5.4 meter (19 feet) away from the Indo-Bangladesh border. A few families have been living in this chhitmahal since generation. A few smaller Indian enclaves are situated near the Nazirhat-Saldanga Road of Dinhata. Three isolated parts of Gaochulka village (at Nazirhat) are situated in Bhurangamari police station area of Bangladesh. These are Baro Gaochulaka (J.L. No. 143, area 39.99 acres), Gaochulka 1 (J.L. No. 146, area 12.31 acre) and Gaochulka 2 (J.L. No. 147, area 0.90 acres). During the survey of 1931-38, there was a dried river at Gaochulka 1 and 2 and the land was full with jungles. So the boundary of Gaochulka 2 was not demarcated. People of Boro Gaochulka and Gaochulka 1 were earlier allowed to visit Nazirhat market for their economic purposes. But now they cannot enter into Indian mainland. However, they do not want to join Bangladesh through the process of exchange of enclaves. They want the 'right to passage' or unique identity card by which they can enter into India as Indian citizens.¹²

A part of Kalmati village of Dinhata is exists in Bhurungamari as Kalmati chhitmahal (J.L. No. 141, Thak no 691, area 21.21 acres). The survey of the 1930s had recorded this enclave without people comprising swampy land, *beel* (floodplain lake) and

jungle. Even today it is uninhabited. However, Dighaltari (Thak No. 952) and Dighaltari 2 (J.L.No.145, area 8.81 acres) were full with men. They were mainly Rajbanshis. Almost all of them have migrated to the mainland of Cooch Behar. A few of them have taken shelter at Purba Masaldanga (a Bangladeshi Chhitmahal). People, those who have occupied the land at Dighaltari and Dighaltari 2 are basically Bangladeshi citizens. They are enjoying Indian land and also got recognition as Bangladeshi in other addresses. A significant change in population composition has taken place in Chhoto Garaljara 2 (J.L. No. 149, area 17.85 acres), an Indian enclave. Original inhabitants were forced to migrate to other places.

III.II

Indian Chhitmahals at Lalmonirhat District

We'll now look at the condition of Indian enclave situated in Lalmonirhat district of Bangladesh. There are a total 58 Indian enclaves out of which 54 are situated at Patgram. Lalmonirhat and Hatibandha police station areas of this district are the hosts of 4 Indian chhitmahals (2 each). Two Indian enclaves at Lalmonirhat are Banspachai (Thak No. 151, area 217.29 acres) and Banspachai Bhitarkuthi (Thak No. 152, J.L No. 152, area 81.71 acres). Although big in size, but Banspachai at present is not suitable for human habitation. During the survey of 1932-1938, A. C. Hartly recorded that "The chhit has been entirely diluviated and has reformed as low lying uncultivated sandy *char*."¹³ However, Banspachai Bhitarkuthi was full with Rajbanshi agriculturists. There were around 50 families in the 1930s. According to the census of 1951, total population figure of this chhit was 273. But the original agriculturist families have mostly migrated to India or to the mainland of Bangladesh. At present, the people of Banspachai Bhitarkuthi are mostly landless agriculturist living in a chaotic land without minimum facility of a citizen of any country.

Two Indian enclaves at Hatibandha are Gotamari 1 (Thak No. 135, J.L. No. 135, area 126.59 acres) and Gotamari 2 (Thak No. 136, J.L. No. 136, area 20.02 acres). These chhits are attached to Mathabhanga subdivision. According to the census of 1951, total population at Gotamari (1+2) was 239. They were mostly Rajbanshis. They had close economic and emotional attachment with the Cooch Behar State. But with the beginning of Pakistani rule in East Bengal (1947), the people of Gotamari, being afraid of persecution; left their ancestral home. They mostly took shelter in Indian mainland particularly in Cooch Behar district.

Indian enclaves at Patgram (of Lalmonirhat District) are divided into 54 tracts. Home of 22 tracts of this area is Mathabhanga Subdivision while 32 are the detached fragments of Mekhliganj Subdivision. Again 21 fragments of Mathabhanga at Patgram are merely the isolated parts of 'Banskata enclave cluster' of Cooch Behar. Another Indian chhit of Mathabhanga Subdivision at Patgram is Bhogramguri (JL No. 133, area 1.44 acres). There was no man in that chhit. In 1951, it was recorded as uninhabited. So

statelessness is perhaps not applicable in case of the Bhogramguri. So this chhit does not have any country, any man, and any claimant.¹⁴

21 fragments of Banskanta Chhitmahal collectively constitute 1043.11 acres of land (chhit No. 112-132).¹⁵ Here Chhit No 112 (area 315.04 acres) and Chhit No 119 Banskanta (area 413.81 acres) are comparatively bigger in size. These two chhit collectively constitute 728.85 acres. Hence rest 19 parts of Banskanta cluster has only 314.26 acres of land. So the condition of each fragment of Banskanta cluster is not identical.

Before the merger of Cooch Behar State with India (1949), people of Banskanta had close relations with the Cooch Behar State. There was no difficulty in connection with the management of their lives and property. Till 1958, land of Banskanta used to be managed by Cooch Behar district without any problem. But from 1958, right to citizenship and normal rights as citizens of India became a matter of utopian dream for the Rajbanshi inhabitants of Banskanta. Till 2006, they had the right to visit Indian offices at Mathabhanga and Maynaguri for registration of land. But at present they have been deprived from all kinds of facilities as Indian citizens. On the other hand, land of Banskanta is being used by Bangladesh for its economic and administrative purposes. Around 1 km long metal road has been constructed at 115 No Banskanta by Bangladesh. Bangladesh has also constructed around 4 km long dam at the Dharla River at 119 No Banskanta.¹⁶ But the chhit-dwellers of Banskanta are not allowed to enjoy the dam and road. It is a noticeable fact that the distance of Indian mainland from 112 No Banskanta is only one foot and from 119 No Banskanta it is only 100 feet. So these chits could be connected with India through a narrow passage. India could have claimed the 'right to passage' at Banskanta when 'Tinbigha negotiation' was going on. But India did not do. So the people of Banskanta are at present *defacto* stateless Indian people. The Hindu Rajbanshis (original inhabitants) of Banskanta are being forced by the Bangladeshi majority community to migrate elsewhere. Rape of the Hindu housewives and girls, torture, eviction, murder, religious persecution etc; are quite common atrocities as faced by the people of Banskanta. So most of the original land-owners of 'Banskanta Chhitmahal tracts' have migrated to Mathabhanga, Haldibari, Siliguri and other places of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts. They took shelter in India only with their lives without minimum provision of survival. During our field survey we met with Shri Balaram Barman (60 male) who migrated from 130 Banskanta. Shri Barman at present is living at Shivmandir near North Bengal University, Darjeeling District. He describes:

I had my home at Banskanta with 26 bighas (8.66 acres) of land. The Pakistanis had evicted our family from our land. We tried to repossess our land after the emergence of Bangladesh. But we could not get success. There are a few Rajbanshis families at Banskanta those who think their lives and property are totally unsafe. The Bangladeshi goons often come to Banskanta. They destroy our papers and houses. Robbery,

theft, rape, murder, religious persecution, physical tortures are routine matters for the Rajbanshi families. In order to restore my property, I tried to acquire assistance from Bangladesh in 2010. But the goons have tortured on my wife and on my son. Even they forced my son to eat beef. I was too persecuted. So I left for Siliguri in December 2010.¹⁷

Such inhuman experience of the Indian citizens at Banskanta is quite common. The forced migrants from Banskanta are also not getting proper treatment in Indian mainland. In spite of being persecuted, the chhit-dwellers of Banskanta are not in favour of exchange of chhit. They think only the squatters would legalize their property by exchanging the chhitmahals. The forced migrants would lose all claims on their ancestral home.¹⁸

We shall now proceed to other 32 Indian enclaves situated at Patgram which are the detached parts of Mekhliganj Subdivision of Cooch Behar district. From the point of area Lotamari (J.L. No. 14, area 110.92 acres, J.L. No. 20 area 243.53 acres, J.L. No. 22, area 98.85 acres) with 3 parts and total 453.30 acres of land; Panishala (J.L. No. 17, area 137.66 acres), Bhotbari (J.L. No. 17, area 205.46 acres, J.L. No. 8. 36.83 acres) in two parts with 292.88 acres of land; Barakhangir in two parts with 137.93 acres of land (J.L. No. 4 area 50.51 acres, J.L. No. 9 area 87.42 acres), Kharkharia in two parts with 112.36 acres (J.L.No. 15, area 60.74 acres, J.L.No. 5, area 51.62 acres), Kamat Changrabandha in two parts with 58.51 acres (J.L. No. 16A area 42.80 acres and J.L. No. 17A area 16.01 acres) and Dwarikamari (J.L. No. 23 and 25 area 138.29 acres) are comparatively bigger in size. Total area of these 32 chhitmahals is 1742.64 acres what is equivalent to Dashiarchhara alone. Because of scattered and isolated distribution people of this cluster are facing trouble like the Banskanta-dwellers. Because of close and emotional relations with Cooch Behar, they consider India is their real home. But at present they are not allowed to enter into India by crossing the border fencing. Like the people of Banskanta cluster, Hindu Rajbanshi people of Dwarikamari, Bhotbari, Panishala, Lotamari and Kharkharia are migrating to Indian mainland only for survival with proper dignity.¹⁹

III.III

Indian Chhitmahals at Nilphamari District

Nilphamari is one of notable districts of Bangladesh having Indian enclaves. There are four Indian chhits of Haldibari Block of Mekhliganj Subdivision of Cooch Behar in Nilphamari. These are Barakhanki Kharija Gitaldah in two parts (J.L. No. 30, area 7.71 acres and J.L. No. 29, area 36.83 acres), Nagar Jikabari (J.L.No. 31, area 33.41 acres) and Barokhangir (J.L. No. 28, area 30.41 acres). Total area of these four chhits is only 108.36 acres. These chhits were recorded in 1951 as unpopulated. Practically, these chhits were owned by people having their residence in other places. According to a record of Cooch Behar State of 1932 four chhitmahals of Nilphamari were owned by Bhairabdan

Bathera.²⁰ At present people of this cluster of chhitmahals are living in the mainland of Bangladesh as Bangladeshi citizens.

III.IV

Indian Enclaves in Panchagarh District

Main host of Indian chhitmahals in Bangladesh at present is Panchagarh district. Three police stations of this district (such as Panchagarh, Boda and Debiganj) are currently hosting 32 Indian enclaves with 15696.86 acres of landed area. Total area of Indian enclaves in Panchagarh police station is 3115.39 acres. Total land area at Boda and Debiganj is 6085.53 acres and 6415.54 acres respectively.

There are total 21 Indian chhitmahals within the jurisdiction of Panchagarh Police Station of which Garati (6 parts JL. Nos 75-80, total area 1121.17 acres), Sakati (JL.No. area 130.85 acres) and Binnaguri (JL No.61, area 763.30 acres) are very much significant. According to the land records of Cooch Behar State of 1932, major *jotedars* at Sakati were Purna Chandra Mitra, Charukamal Barmani, Ajimuddin Sarkar, Safiruddin Muhammad, Raibahadur Sarju Prasad Singha Ray, and Sarbati Bewa.²¹ In 1951 total population of Garati was 352. Population composition of this enclave has been changed considerably after the birth of Bangladesh. Most of the original habitants of Garati have been migrated to Indian mainland because of atrocities committed on them. We can get an idea about the population at Garati from the population of Bangladeshi counter enclaves called Teldhar (1+2) situated at Garati. Here 70 heads live in 14 acres land. So the population at Garati at present would be around 2000. There is an administrative council at Garati. It deals with the internal administration of the Chhit. However, chhit-dwellers of Garati have been deprived from all kinds of opportunities and rights as citizens of either India or Bangladesh.

Condition of Sakati and Binnaguri is not different. From 1932 to 1947 *jotedars* of Sakati were Purna Chandra Mitra, Akshyay Narayan Bakshi, Hemanta Kumar Naha, Babedali Muhammed, Tajlimuddin Pradhan, and Amirulla Pramanik. On the other hand, Sibendra Narayan Nandi, Brajendra Narayan Nandi and Gopal Prasad Chakraborty were the *jotedars* of Binnaguri.¹² In 1951, population of Sakati and Binnaguri was 300 and 307 respectively. At present population has been increased considerably in these two chhitmahals of India.

There are 28 Indian chits within the jurisdiction of Boda of Panchagarh district of Bangladesh. Total area of these 28 chhits is 6085.53 acres. Here Daikhata (area 2108.59 acres.), Najirganj (358 acres), Kajaldighi (area 1188.93 acres), Nataktaka (area 933.7 acres), Beuladanga (area 862.86 acres) and Salbari (area 499.29 acres) are considerably big. Fertility of land had drawn large number of agriculturist in these chhitmahals. Before the merger of Cooch Behar State to India (in 1949), main *jotedars* of Daikhata were – Shyammohun Biswas, Samiruddin Pramanik, Gamiruddin Pramanik, Guruprasad Chakraborty and Mahunimohun Dutta. Cultivators were basically Rajbanshi Hindus. Till

1960 people of Daikhata had maintained close relations with Indian mainland. They had access to Indian offices. But with the outbreak of Indo-Pak war in 1965 (and after the birth of Bangladesh) people of Daikhata lost their pre-merger status.

According to census of 1951 population of Kajaldighi was 789. They were mostly Rajbanshi Hindus. Jotedars of this chhit were Thakur Shew Mangal Prasad Singha, Saryu Prasad Singha, Krishnamohun Das, Mathura Das, Chitramohun Roy, Bhagwan Ray, Dhaneswar Paul, Dharendra Narayan Barman. Dacoity, theft, physical torture and pressure of Bangladeshi goons and land mongers have transformed Kajaldighi into a slaughterhouse without any law and order. So the original cultivators and landholders of this enclave were forced to migrate to the Indian mainland. In an interview Shri Biren Roy (50) a dwellers of Kajaldighi; has described the miserable condition the Indian people at Kajaldighi.²³ According to him "murder, torture, destruction of houses and properties, rape and eviction have become common phenomena at Kajaldighi". Condition of Beuladanga is almost identical. Thus experience of Shri Hriday Nath Ray (50), a farmer dweller of Beuladanga, is no way better than the people of Kajaldighi. In an interview Shri Ray told us that, 'mental, physical, political and religious atrocities are compelling the chhit-dwellers to migrate from their land of encestars.'²⁴ Condition of Salbari is more acute. 67 persons were murdered only in 1995. Around 3000 persons took shelter in Indian mainland from Salbari.²⁵

Most significant cluster of Indian enclaves is situated at Debiganj of Panchagarh. It comprises with Balapara Khagrabari (1765.44 acres), Kotbhajani (2012.27 acres), and Dahala Khagrabari (2650 acres). They collectively (6414.71) constitute one-third area of Indian enclaves in Bangladesh. According to the census of 1951, population of Balapara Khagrabari Kotbhajani and Dahala Khagrabari was 363, 864 and 1446 respectively. However, it is a significant fact that the successors of *jotedars* of Balapara Khagrabari like Shibmohini Debya, Bipradas Chakroborty, Dharnidhar Chakroborty, Motilal Chakroborty, and Monmohun Singha, could not maintain their hold in these tracts. The cultivators (mostly the Rajbanshis) were not agreed to migrate to Indian mainland. But they lost their hope and dreams of happy days.

Being a big chhitmahal of Cooch Behar, Kotbhajani had drawn wide attention in the early twentieth century. There was a police outpost of Cooch Behar State at Kotbhajani. Except Bibi Tarimunnisha, Gayesuddin Patwari and Tasilmamud, all other *jotedars* of this enclaves were Hindu Brahmin. But the cultivators were Rajbanshis and local Muslims. The Rajbanshis however, have been evicted from their ancestral home. So a trend of forced migration has developed at Balapara Khagrabari, Dahala Khagrabari and Kotbhajani. During our field survey we met several people those who migrated to Haldibari and Siliguri from their homs in Indian enclaves.²⁶

IV

Conclusion

Formation of enclaves in the India-Bangladesh border has a long historical background. In the pre-colonial and colonial period, enclaves of this reign (called chhitmahals) were not considered as a problem for Bengal and Cooch Behar. Rather, under the colonial rule, a proper administrative tradition was developed regarding the demarcation of boundaries, revenue collection, maintenance of law and order and general administration in the chhitmahals. But the birth of India and Pakistan in 1947 (as two separate 'Nation State') had radically changed the colonial setup of the chhitmahals. The pro-Indian attitude of Cooch Behar State and its merger to India in 1949 had transformed the chhitmahals and their people as the matter of international and bilateral relations between India and Pakistan.

The post-partition 'forced-migration' of people from both sides of the border and 'border disputes' forced India and Pakistan to think about the possibility of resolution of the problems of enclaves of North Bengal. During the period between 1950 and 1971, inspite of positive gesture of India and Pakistan, the people of chhitmahals did not see any positive outcome. Rather, the Nehru-Noon Agreement of 1958 had generated a serious problem at Jalpaiguri-East Pakistan border with the adjustment of territory at Berubari where a few chhitmahals are located. After the birth of Bangladesh, people of only two Bangladeshi chhitmahals (Dahagram and Angarpota) got relief from the course of statelessness when the Tinbigha Corridor was opened for them in 1992. But the people of other chhitmahals are still *defacto* stateless people from the perspective home country. However, in the host country, most of the chhitmahal-dwellers have acquired citizenship of host country with the help of corruption and falsehood. So they are proxy citizens of both 'home' and 'host' countries. In spite of it, they are still facing question in enjoying educational, medical, political and administrative facilities. They are being deprived from enjoying welfare policies of both home and host countries.

Although before the partition of Bengal (1947), the land-holders and cultivators of the Chhitmahals of Cooch Behar were mostly Rajbanshis, but post-partition changes had forced them to migrate to Indian mainland. The Rajbanshi cultivators those who did not have option of migration, they tried to live there. But being failed to tolerate physical, mental, and religious torture, they are also migrating to India. They are being evicted from their land and homes by the goons. But in India they are not being recognized as Indian citizens. So inspite of being natural citizens of India they are not citizens. They are being considered as infiltrators as Bangladeshi proxy-citizens.

Notes and References

1. Brendan R. Whyte: *Waiting for the Esquimo: A Historical and documentary Study of the Cooch Behar Enclaves of India and Bangladesh* (Melbourne, University of Melbourne Press, 2004), p. 2.
2. There are several geographical studies which have dealt with the definitions of enclaves. Here we can mention the works like ----- G.W.S Robinson: *Exclaves, Annals of the American geographers*, 49 (September) 1959, pp-283-95; Honore Mark Catudal: *Sreinstuken: A study in Cold War politics*, (NY, Vantage Press, 1971); Honore Mark Catudal: "Berlins New Boundaries", *Cahiers de Geographic de Quebec* 18(43) 1974: pp. 213-36; Honore Mark Catudal: *The Exclave problems of Western Europe* (Ala b, University of Alabama Press, 1979); Raton: *Less Enclaves, Annuaire francais de Droit International*, (1958), pp. 186-95; C.D.O Farran: *International Enclaves and the Question of State Servitudes, International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 49 (April 1955), pp. 297-307; G.W.S: Robinson: *West Berlin: The Geography of an enclave, Geographical Review*, 43(1953), pp. 540-57; P.P.Karan: *A Free access to Colonial Enclaves, Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 50 (June, 1960), pp. 188-90; N.J Pounds: *Political Geography*, (New York, McGraw -Hill, 1972); Pradmyumna P. Karan: *The India-Pakistan Enclave problem, Professional Geographer* 18(1966), pp. 23-25; Brendan R. Whyte: *Waiting for the Esquimo: A Historical and documentary Study of the Cooch Behar Enclaves of India and Bangladesh* (Melbourne, University of Melbourne Press, 2004); etc.
3. Although the English term of the 'Chhitmahals' is enclave but India and Bangladesh have retained the old nomenclature as Chhitmahals. So I have used the term chitmahals as the Bengali meaning of Enclave.
4. Amar Ray Prodhon: *Rule of Jungle*, (Calcutta, Sanchayeeta Roy Pradhan, 1991)
5. *The Cooch Behar Gazette*, 16th August, 1946.
6. A.C. Hartly: *Final Report of the Rangpur survey and settlement operations 1931-1938* (Calcutta, Government of Bengal, 1940).
7. Letter from K. Evan Garden; Esq. Vice President; Regency Council; Cooch Behar State; to the Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, date 30th July, 1931.
8. Interview with Pratap Chandra Barman, Vice President (UpaPrdhan) of Dashiarchhara, 20th November, 2013.
9. Interview with Nazrul Islam of Dashiarchchara, on 20th November, 2013.
10. Interview with Najrul Islam and Pratap Chandra Barman, 17th October, 2013.
11. Debabrota Chaki: *Bratyajoner Brittanta*, (Kolkata, Sopan, 2012), p.6
12. Field survey at Gaochulka on 17th October 2012.
13. A.C. Hartly: *Op.cit.*

14. Rup Kumar Barman: *Chhitmahal Brityantaya: Uttar Banger Chhitmahal O Chhitmahal Basiganer Prantikatar Bibaran*, Antarmukh, Vol-3, No. 1, (July-Sep ISSN 2249-3751, p.65).
15. *Ibid.*
16. Debabrata Chaki, *op.cit.*, p. 14.
17. Interview with Balaram Barman on 19th February 2013 at Raja Rammohunpur (University of North Bengal, Gate No. 2).
18. Interview with Balaram Barman on 19th February 2013. Also interview with Debabrata Chaki, 5th June 2013.
19. Data provided by the Indian Enclaves Refugee Association, Haldibari, Cooch Behar. Also, interview with Biren Ray and Hriday Nath Ray on 8th July 2013.
20. Rup Kumar Barman: *Chhitmahal Brityantya*, p. 67.
21. *The Cooch Behar Gazette*, 6th June 1932.
22. *The Cooch Behar Gazette*, 6th June 1932, *The Cooch Behar Gazette*, 1947.
23. Interview with Biren Roy on 8th July 2013.
24. Interview with Shri Hriday Nath Ray on 8th July 2013.
25. Brandan R. Whyte, *op.cit.*
26. Interview with Biren Roy (on 8th July 2013), Hriday Nath Ray (on 8th July 2013), Jagodish Ray Prodhan (on 8th July 2013), Promod Barman (on 1st August 2013), Subal Chandra Barman (on 31st July 2013). All interviews were conducted by Ankan Ray, Project Fellow, MAKAIAS sponsored Major Research Project on *Stateless citizens in South Asian Border: A Study on the history of Enclaves (Chhitmahal) of India and Bangladesh*.