

Democratic efforts of Karala: A Bangladeshi enclave

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Abstract: *Enclaves' problem of Indian subcontinent after 1947 was one of the major issues between Indo-Pak and Indo-Bangladesh relationship. The history of enclaves is very mysterious. There were total 162 exchangeable enclaves were situated inside Bangladesh and in India. Karala was one of the enclaves of Bangladesh was situated inside the Indian territory, especially in the District of Cooch Behar. Before merged with India in 2015, the socio-economic and political condition of Karala was very worse like the other enclaves of Indian subcontinent. The citizens of Karala had no voting rights. They did not enjoy any state opportunities either from India or from Bangladesh. From 1947 to 2015, was the dark age of the people of Karala. Yet, one thing was most important that the citizen of Karala tried to improve their socio-economic and political situation by forming a small republic like the Vajji and Malla the two prominent Mahajanapadas of six centuries B.C.E.*

Key Words: *Khen Dynasty, Kamatapur, Indian Enclaves, Democracy in Karala, Dashiyar Chhara*

Enclaves' problem of Indian subcontinent after 1947 was one of the major issues between Indo-Pak and Indo-Bangladesh relationship. History of the origin of Enclaves of Indian subcontinent is very old and mysterious to the historians. Avoid the mystery of the history of Enclaves that we could know there were 162 exchangeable Enclaves were situated in the territory of India and in Bangladesh. When 111 Indian Enclaves were in Bangladesh and 51 Enclaves of Bangladesh were in India¹. Total area of Indian enclaves were situated in Bangladesh was 17150.05 acres. When the total area of Bangladeshi enclaves was situated in India was 7110.02 acres². Inside the Bangladesh 111 exchangeable enclaves were the parts of India according to land assessment report. But the people of these Indian enclaves have not gotten any state opportunities either from Indian government or from Bangladesh. Likewise the Bangladeshi enclaves were situated in India have not gotten any state opportunities neither from Bangladesh nor from India. The people the enclaves situated in the both country have not any political life. Socio-economic condition was very low than the people of the main land. The literacy rate of the people of the enclaves was less than 15%. The literacy rate more or less was same in the enclaves of both countries. After 1947 to 2015 different leaders of the both countries were carrying on their effort to develop the condition of the enclaves. Many treaties were signed for solve the problems³. As the result of this continuous effort at last 31st July in mid night enclaves exchanged has been done between India and Bangladesh⁴. After this the people of the enclaves get their freedom like the citizen of mainland.

History of the origin of the enclaves of Indo-Bangladesh was related with the history and expansion of the Native state Cooch Behar. Now Cooch Behar is a district of the northern part of West Bengal. But before 1949, it was a prominent independent state. In ancient times there was no territory named Cooch Behar. In the past, it was the part of different kingdom, such as Pragjyotishpur, Louhitya, and Kamrupa⁵. The western part of the Kamrupa was known as Kamatapur during the reign of the Khen dynasty. Nilambar was the last king of the Khen dynasty was ousted in 1498 C.E by Hussain Shah the king of Gouda⁶. But Hussain has not annexed the Kamatapur but he had appointed his son as the Governor of Kamatapur. During this time a chaotic situation arise in Kamatapur between the supporters of the king and the supporters of the Hussain Shahi ruler. In this situation Hariya Mandal or Haridas Mandal a Mechh leader was come from Chikna Hill region of Kamakshya and occupied the eastern part of the Kamata kingdom. He was the pioneer father of the Koch rules in Kamatapur. The “Chikna” was the capital Harids Mandal⁷. After Haridas Mandal, his son Chandan ascended the throne in 1510 C.E⁸. Chandan died in 1522 without keeping any child. After the death of Chandan, Bishwa Singha the other son of Haridas Mandal becomes the king of Kamatapur in 1522 C.E. Bishwa Singha was the first prominent ruler of Koch dynasty and he had shifted his capital from Chikna to “Hingulbas” near Mahakalguri of Alipurduar⁹. During the reign of Koch dynasty, Kamatapur was known as Cooch Behar Kingdom¹⁰. In fact, Cooch Behar was ruled by the Koch dynasty near about four and half century tills the 1949 C.E. Jagadwipendra Narayan, the last king of the Koch dynasty had merged his kingdom with India by Signing the Instrument of Accession in 1949¹¹. There after by a declaration of 1950 Coochbehar joined with West Bengal as a district¹².

Before exchange the enclaves between India and Bangladesh, there were total 111 exchangeable Indian enclaves were in Bangladesh. The histories of the birth of the Indian enclaves were in Bangladesh is very mysterious and contradictory. Some historians are of the opinions behind the birth of the Indian enclaves were in Bangladesh was the Imperialism between the Native State Cooch Behar and Mughal Bengal Province. Some other historians said that hunting and playing gamble between the kings of Cooch Behar and the Mughal administrators of Bengal. But most of the researchers have supported the views mentioned earlier.

It is very mysterious that the Indian Enclaves were situated only inside the greater Rangpur and in greater East Dinajpur of East Pakistan later in Bangladesh. Greater Rangpur farther divided into five districts; (i) Lalmonirhat, (ii) Nilfamari, (iii) Rangpur, (iv) Kurigram, and (v) Gaibandha. On the other hands Greater East Dinajpur farther divided into three districts; (i)Panchagarh, (ii) Thakurgah, and (iii) Dinajpur. Locations of the Indian enclaves were in the districts of Bangladesh given below by a table.

Table no. 1

Locations of the Indian enclaves were in Bangladesh¹³.

Name of the District of Bangladesh	Number of Enclaves	Area of total land (Acre)	Total population
Lalmonirhat	59	17150.05	37369
Nilfamari	04		
Kurigram	12		
Panchagarh	36		
Total	111		

Before the exchange in 2015, there were 51 exchangeable Bangladeshi enclaves in India. One thing is important that the Bangladeshi enclaves were situated only in the district of Cooch Behar of West Bengal. Before 1949, Cooch Behar was neither the part of West Bengal nor the part of India. In the colonial period Cooch Behar was a prominent native state of eastern India. During the rules of Jagadipendra Narayan, the last king of the state by the merger agreement of 1949, between Cooch Behar and India, Cooch Behar merged with India. Then by a declaration of West Bengal Government in 1950, Cooch Behar merged with West Bengal as a district. Many historians are of the opinions that the annexation and reoccupation between Cooch Behar and Mughal Bengal were gave birth the Bangladeshi enclaves in Cooch Behar¹⁴. Though, this is the contradictory matters among the historians. Any way the location of the Bangladeshi enclaves were in the police stations of Cooch Behar given below by a table.

Table no. 2

Locations of the Bangladeshi enclaves were in the different police station in Cooch Behar¹⁵.

Name of the police station of Cooch Behar	Number of Enclaves	Area of total land(Acre)	Total population
Kuchlibari	09	7110.02	14221
Mekhliganj	02		
Mathabhanga	12		
Shitalkuchi	06		
Dinhata	19		
Tufanganj	03		
Total	51		

Out of 51 enclaves of Bangladesh in Cooch Behar district, 19 enclaves were located in Dinhata¹⁶. Most probably the Rangpur Road connected Dinhata from Rangpur through Lalmonirhat. "Karala" was one of the major and largest enclaves of

Bangladesh which was situated in the police station of Dinhata. List of the 19 enclaves of Bangladesh in Dinhata were given below by a table.

Table no, 3

Name of the 19 enclaves were situated in the police station of Dinhata¹⁷.

Serial No.	Name of the enclave	Area of the enclaves(Acre)
<u>1</u>	Kismat Batrigach	209.95
<u>2</u>	Durgapur	20.96
<u>3</u>	Banshua khamar Gitaldah	24.54
<u>4</u>	Poyatur Kuthi	589.94
<u>5</u>	West Bakalir Chhara	151.98
<u>6</u>	Madhya Bakali Chhara	32.72
<u>7</u>	East Bakalir Chhara	12.23
<u>8</u>	Modhya Mashaldanga	136.66
<u>9</u>	East Mashaldanga	153.89
<u>10</u>	East Chhit Mashaldanga	35.01
<u>11</u>	West Mashaldanga	29.39
<u>12</u>	South Mashaldanga	571.38
<u>13</u>	Shivprashad Mustafi	373.20
<u>14</u>	Karala	269.91
<u>15</u>	Batrigachh	577.37
<u>16</u>	West Chhit Mashaldanga	7.60
<u>17</u>	Kachuya	119.74
<u>18</u>	North Mashaldanga	27.29
<u>19</u>	Madhya Chhit Mashaldanga	11.87

“Karala” was one of the important and largest enclaves of Bangladesh in India. It was situated on the right hand side of the Dinhata to Dhapra road and near about twelve kilometres distance from Dinhata¹⁸. In Dinhata police station there were 19 enclaves were situated. Out of 19 enclaves the Karala enclaves also deserves special attention of the researchers. J.L number of Karala was 09 and total area was 269.91 Acres¹⁹. Though it is smaller than traditional villages of India or Bangladesh; yet - 242 families were living in this enclave and total population was 810’ in 2011; and when the total population was 1110’ by the census of 2015²⁰. The people of Karala have suffering in different ground from long time, especially after 1947. Because, the problems of enclaves become very acute, only after the creation of India and Pakistan in 1947. According to land assessment of India and Pakistan Karala was the part of Pakistan and after 1971 karala become the part of Bangladesh. But it was situated inside the territory of India, especially in the Dinhata police station of Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. So it was known as enclave. Karala was the part of Bangladesh but the people of Karala had not gotten any state opportunities

from the Government of Bangladesh; even the people did not enjoying the voting rights. On the other hands the people of Karala like the other enclaves of Bangladesh in India, did not have any Government opportunities from India²¹. So, the people of Karala before 2015 were neither the citizen of Bangladesh nor the citizen of India.

Before 2015, karala was “untouchable” from any Government services and plan. In every ground like education, health, communication and electricity they were deprived. They did not have any ration. They have no Identity Card of citizenship of any country. So, often the people of Karala like the people of other enclaves of Bangladesh were harassed by the people of India and by the police or B.S.F²². The Socio-economic conditions of the people of Karala were very worse. Agriculture, fishing, domestication of animal was the source of Income of the people of Karala²³. Sometimes it was seen that some people of Karala had engaged themselves in forbidden cultivation such as marijuana and poppy²⁴. Apart from this like the others enclaves Karala day by day become the centre of antisocial people. Many Indian antisocial took shelter in Karala after done any crime in main land. On the other hand due to low socio-economic condition many people of Karala had engaged themselves in smuggling²⁵. In this way like the other enclaves of Bangladesh in India Karala Become the danger zone and it was too dangerous for the local people of Karala and also for the Surrounding people of India.

Although, Karala was an enclave of Bangladesh yet it was surrounding the territory and environment of India. The people of Karala always followed the culture and polity of India. So, for their multi angle development, the people of Karala try to give a democratic shape to their enclave. After every three years the every adult people of Karala usually meet in a general gathering or summit for selection their administrative body of the enclave²⁶. Not by election but by the selection ten members or M.P were selected by the people assembled in the summit. Out of ten members or M.P, one member selected as president and other one selected as secretary by the selected member or M.P²⁷. In this way Karala try to maintain democracy in that enclave. In fact these political activities of Karala could be comparing with the political activities of Vrijji and Mallya, the two most important republican state of the age of sixteen mahajana padas of the six century B.C.E.

Any way this administrative body was formed by the people for three years. The administrative body looks after the different affairs of the enclave. Such as, education, road making and repairing, health issues and the different issues related with socio-economic and culture²⁸. For the progress of education the local government established a primary school in the enclave. They appointed there a teacher from Indian Territory. The name of the teacher is Ujjwal Bhattacharya. This teacher usually provided books from India with the help of different S.I circle. The salary of the teacher’s had been given by the local government of the enclave²⁹. The local administrative body was usually making and repairing roads for the use

of the people of enclave. One thing is most important and remarkable that in every year a pomp and glamour sports and cultural programme had been held in the field of the primary school³⁰. Apart from this any conflict related with any socio-economic issues had been solved by the local government.

Very beginning in the twenty first century the movement related with the exchange of enclaves was created a conflict between the inhabitants of the Karala. Some people have opinion that they never join with India, but majority of the population were interested to merge their enclave with India³¹. In this time especially in 2005, a special committee was formed for conducting the movement. In fact this committee was formed consisting with eleven members. The name of the members were, (i) Nurjamal Mia, (ii) Sattar Mia, (iii) Nuru Mia, (iv) Ansar Mia, (v) Jamal Mia, (vi) Madhu Mia, (vii) Dilip Barman, (viii) Chhader Ali, (ix) Joynal Mia, (x) Affan Mia, and (xi) Mosharef Hossain. NurJamal Mia was selected as secretary of this committee and Sattar mia was joint secretary. Nuru Mia was selected as communicative member³². According to Sattar Mia, the joint secretary of this committee, the last ten years before the exchange without any change this committee was conducted duty as administrative and also working for the “enclaves’ movement”. In this situation the previous administrative body was inactive³³.

Now the question is that, every government has needed economic fund for conducting and maintained the state affairs; but what were the sources of economic fund of the local government? In Karala, there was a “Chhara” (dead river), that was the main sources of income of the local administration. This chhara is very important area for fish cultivation in the enclave. Every year the local government has earned two to three lakh Indian rupees by the auction of that chhara³⁴. Apart from this land sale agreement, marriage agreement also has given money to the local government. Every year had been held a budget session in the field of the primary school. In this budget session not only the member of the local government were participated but also the senior and educated citizen of the enclave were participated³⁵. The session ended with their long discussion and decision making.

In this way the people of Karala had been carrying their democratic effort in the outcast land. Though the works and activities were not sufficient for the citizen yet this small effort of the people of Karala was more significant and magnificent for the democracy. We also have seen the same democratic effort in Dashiyar chhara, the prominent Indian enclave in Bangladesh³⁶. The effort of Dashiyarchhara was something better than the effort of Karala. Because, the people of Dashiyar chara divided the enclave into four wards or four states and they setup their capital and administrative office in Kalirhart, a bazaar or ganja of the enclave³⁷. In fact Dashiyar chhara was bigger than karala and the population of Dashiyar also were much more than Karala³⁸. So, before 2015, in the crisis period of enclaves, the

democratic effort and the effort of development by the people of Karala and Dashiya chhara is remarkable in the history of enclaves in India and Bangladesh.

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