

# **Indigenous People and notion of Nation State: Case Study from northern West Bengal, India**

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## *ABSTRACT:*

This paper is going to focus on Indigenous People and notion of Nation State in respect to northern West Bengal, India. Unity in diversity is key theme of India and Nation States still exist in form of State within State but in cognition and pro-Indian forms.

Traditionally, globe is divided into Magical, Buddhist and post-Buddhist world. Innovations occurred during pre-Aryan, Aryan and post-Aryan realms. Agrarian India is more prone to caste, caste-like institutions, agriculture oriented religions, trade-based religions, syncretism and self-sufficient villages.

Little republics, Urban Centers and Indigenous Statehoods are not unlikely in South Asia. On the basis of transnational trade routes, indigenous Statehoods took their shapes. India, however, has mostly accepted the cognate of Shahi and its close ties with Iran and Eurasia. Shahi believes in unification of South Asia in various ways. Commonwealth incorporates India as an important member.

Transnational trade route from Sino-Tibet, Sikkim-Bhutan Himalayas, North Bengal and North East India and Bangladesh to Bay of Bengal as well as river ways there core of emergence of so many indigenous statehoods locally. They, earlier or later, accepted unification with India. Kamtapur and Koch Bihar in the vicinity of Torsha or Amu Chu tributary of Brahmaputra-

Jamuna River mouth in Indo-Bangladesh were gradually included during the Turk-Afghan, Mughal-Rajput and British India.

In this high time of globalization, notions towards these indigenous statehoods formulated by Rajbanshi social fold incorporating so many castes and tribes have revived. Nation States still exist in local cognition and are influenced state policies.

## Introduction

India is a country with 29 states and 6 Union Territories.



MAP: India (Political)

***Tibet and Kushana/Turk-Afghan Shahi:*** Tibet is again believed to be Roof of the World situated on once upon a time famous Silk Route between Far East and the West and also passing some sub-routes into India through mountain passes of Himalaya. These could be again categorized into three zones:

Indus river system,

Ganges river system,

and Brahmaputra river system.

Besides Indian Punjab and Himachal Pradesh in India; the major part of Indus valley from Tibet is now represented by independent country of Pakistan that ultimately reaches into Arabian Sea. Disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir state segregated among India, Pakistan and Tibetan Autonomous Territory of China also falls on the way of Indus valley. That Pakistan region along with Afghanistan have acted as the gateway to India for Central Asian elements once spread throughout the Steppe: Indo-Aryan tribes, Scythians, Kushana, Hun (Chwa Hun), Khan, Turk-Afghans and Turk-Mongol (Mughal) were all followed the same track into India.

Apart from the influences of Central Asia and Indo-Aryan groups; this Pak-Afghan region was highly overlapped with Indo-Iranians from Iranian plateau followed by Macedonian, Greek, Parthian, Bactrian of *Balkh*, Syrian, Egyptian, Abyssinian, Roman, Arab and lastly, Western European elements influential or trying to be influential over this area. These groups have amalgamated with pre-Aryan elements who introduced settled cultivation in Indus valley and formulated Indus valley Civilization. Arabian influence over Pak-Afghan territories up to Central Asia caused people being converted into Sunni Islam, however Iranian influence retained by means of Sufism and Shiite school of Islam. Shahanoshahi concept emerged in Iran during Greek colonies in Irano-Afghanistan and the Kushans from Central Asia to this region and then into

Indian mainland brought the Shahanoshahi concept and its sublime Kushan Shahi for the first time.

That Pak-Afghan pockets during the Kushan (or Kushana) rule of about 2 millennia back was flooded with Buddhist heritage and continued until Hinduism revived back by the hands of Huns and Rajputs as well as Islam entered there with the help of Arabs at Sind and rapid Islamization in Afghanistan, Central Asia and Kashmir valley along with Sufism.

After 1000 AD, Islamic influences started increasing in Indus valley from the side of Afghanistan which was then forwarded up to Kashmir valley, Indo-Nepal foothill regions and other Buddhist, pre-Vedic Aryan pockets, Indo-Greek colonies upto Dinajpur-Rajshahi part of Bengal. The latter has its eastwards extension into Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) known as **Dinajpur-Rajshahi**. This highland region is the birth place of numerous rain-fed rivers and separates Brahmaputra-Teesta river system from Ganges river system. Turk-Afghan elements in India (Hindustan) developed the concept of Turk-Afghna Shahi on the line of Islam.

The concept of **Deccan Shahi** was also influenced by Iran. Actually, these invaders through Indus Valley used up the routes of Rajasthan and Malwa to pierce deep into Central India, Narbada/ Narmada valley, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telengana, Mysore and even upto the extreme south in Indian peninsula. Besides Hindu dynasties from ancient historical timeframe, Deccan had remained a center of Buddhism and Jainism and later on Islam also reached into the place by both Arabs and Irano-Afghanistan followed by Christians in real sense.

Turk Shahi was later on politically replaced by establishments like **Mughal Padshahi** formed by Turko-Mongols again from Central Asia into India after crossing the bars of Irano-Afghans and Indus valley during 16<sup>th</sup> Century AD followed by the British Raj (1857-1947 AD). Mughals were associated with Hindu Rajput Shahi controlling so many estates and states in North-Central

India and also in Rajasthan-Gujarat areas. So, an alliance with the notion of unification of South Asia was developed since mid 16<sup>th</sup> Century AD in the name of **Mughal-Rajput or Mogul-Rajput**.

**Gorkha Shahi Impact of Nepal:** The last Hindu kingdom in North India was of the *Gahadavala Rajputs* who by the way of Badaun-Amroha shifted during Islamic intrusions in North India in 11-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD to Gaharwal hills in today's Uttaranchal state of India (also known as *Devabhoomi*). That was also a door to Tibet. The entire foothill region of Central Himalayas was famous in ancient India history for being association of so many little republics of pre-Vedic Aryans mixed up with local groups. These foothill regions primarily regulated the Central Himalayan polity; but later on hill communities have been united under the common dogma of Gorkha nationality under the Gorkha House of Nepal or the **Gorkha Shahi** from Gorkha-Katmandu area there. Sub-Himalayan terrains of Nepal are shared by Indian territories like Badaun-Oudh-Gorakhpur-Bhojpur-Mithilanchala-Purnia (Uttar Pradesh and Bihar borderline with Central Himalayan country of Nepal). This independent country Nepal has a strip of marginal foothill areas known as the Nepal *Terai* thus shared by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states of India. In these days the Gorkha Shahi has been removed by democracy and ultra-left movement in Nepal of 1990s and first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> Century AD.

Terai region includes entire Sub-Himalayan region of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar

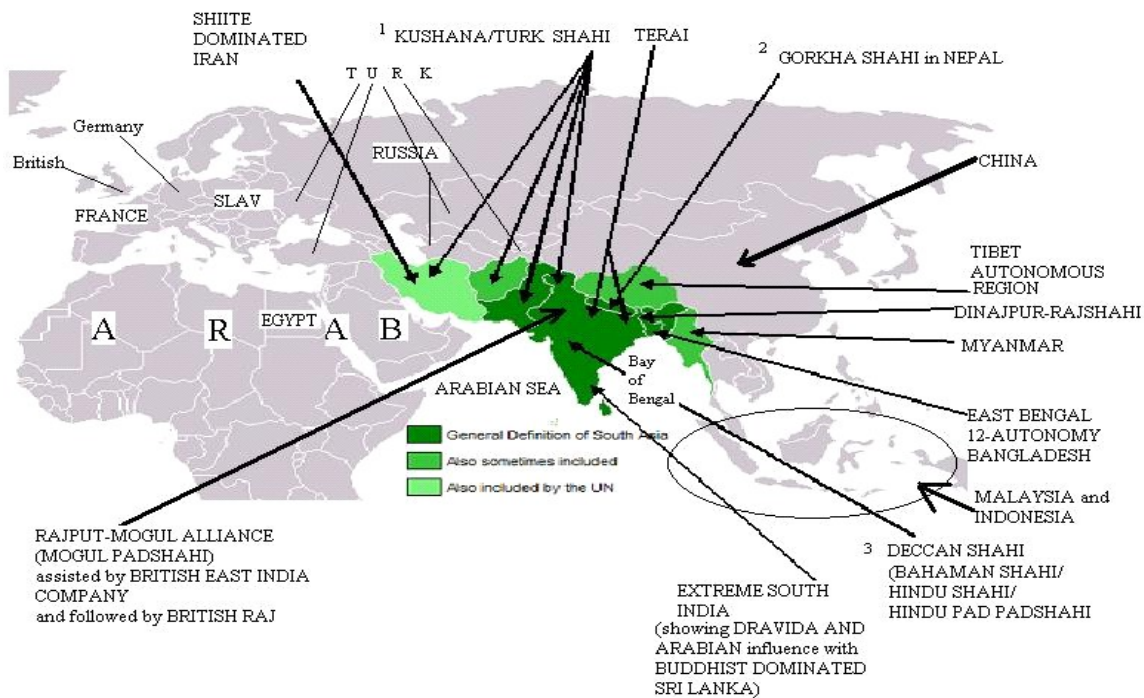
- o Rohilkhand the gateway of *Devbhoomi* land of *Devas* Uttaranchala,
- o Koshal or Ayodhya or Oudh with Lucknow the capital city of Uttar Pradesh state of India and also associated to the Epic of Ramayana,
- o Gorakshpur the birthplace of *Nathism*,

- o Mithila/Trihut the birthplace of Jainism and Buddhism and also associated to the Epic of Ramayana,
- o Madhubani-Drabhanga i.e. door to Bengal from Tibet through Koshi river valley leading upto river Ganges in Purnea-Katihar just before MidBengal/ Malda-Murshidabad and Rajmahal hills of Chhotonagpur plateau.

These pockets at **Terai** with Indo-Greek influence often show consolidation of Vaishnava and Muslim sects. The shahi so far developed there was known as **Lucknow Shahi** having several centers besides Lucknow and Jaunpur.

MAP: South Asia and existence of Shahis (Kushana/Turk, Dinajpur-Rajshahi, Deccan, Gorkha/Nepal, Lucknow/Terai and Mughal-Rajput/Mogul-Rajput)





So, the Shahis cover a huge portion of India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh and Nepal along with various other sub-Shahi princely states and other associates. In Bengal, mostly the East Bengal (presently known as Bangladesh), comprised of twelve autonomous regions famous by the name of *baro bhuiyan* or Twelve-Autonomy besides other frontire states like Koch Bihar, Tripura, Kuchhur, Manipur, Kamrup and Ahom. Extreme south of Indian Peninsula had similar princely provinces and autonomies like Mysore, Coorg, Travancore, Arkot and Tanjore.

But in India there are so many indigenous communities and many of them even formed indigenous states and Nation State similar to today's Sri Lanka and Maldives. What has happened to those nation States? A suitable example is going to be illustrate there in terms of northern part of West Bengal state or North Bengal areas of India.

Rather being a Nation-State, often the state of West Bengal seems like a border state. I am not against the Bengali nation, but the state has actually been separated in several occasions and shown under several extensions. West Bengal before India's independence in 1947 A.D. was

associated with today's Bangladesh- an eastwards lying independent country formerly East Pakistan or East Bengal or association of famous 12 autonomies in late Mediaeval period. North Bengal part of West Bengal is a link between North East India and mainland India. It is also a cross border transnational territory surrounded by Tibeto-Myanmar belt, North Western part of Bangladesh (Rajshahi Division), Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and East Indian states like Bihar and Jharkhand. It along with Rajshahi Division is an Indo-Bangladesh transnational territory that consists of portions from both Brahmaputra and Ganges river systems and a watershed associated with a marshland cum floodland known as Dinajpur-Rajshahi in-between. This watershed is also a cut link of Chhotonagpur plateau of Deccan extension in Jharkhand and

Meghalaya plateau of North East India. North Bengal also borders with Assam-Meghalaya region of North East India. The latter is composed of eastern Himalayas, Brahmaputra and other transnational river courses, hills and watersheds. Assam and North Bengal contain included portions of Duars which is the foothill portion of Bhutan Himalayas. So, Duars in India is known as Assam Duars and Bengal Duars. The latter is incorporated in Jalpaiguri district. Southern portion of Sikkim Himalayas and western part of Bhutan Himalayas in close proximity with Chumbi valley of Tibet have been incorporated with Siliguri foothills or Terai to formulate Darjeeling district. Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts are actually frontiers of North Bengal. The place North Bengal has overlapping with neighbouring state Bihar. Sikkim, Darjeeling district and North Bihar have international border with Nepal in the central Himalayas.

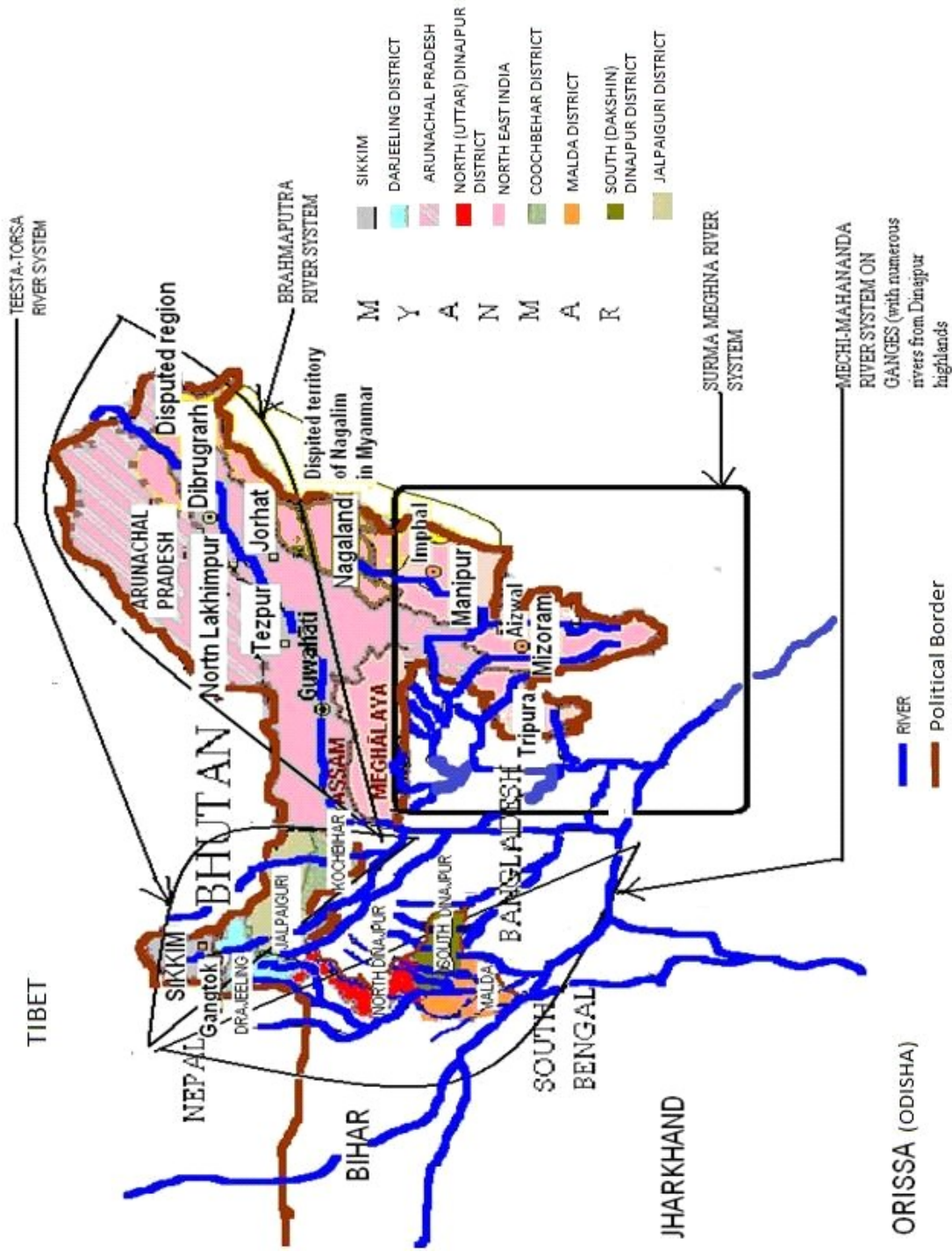
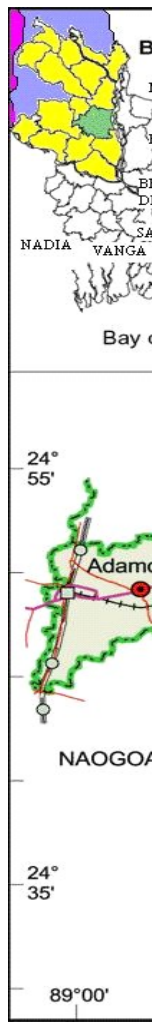
Now the question is what do we mean by saying Nation State? The Nation State is a political and geopolitical entity specified with particular cultural and ethnic identity. It may proclaim a sovereign or a sovereign territorial unit. It usually contrasts multinational state provoking for Unity in Diversity. It may also show similarity with city state, little republic, and confederation. It may be a part of a country or federal structure, subjected to partition and demographic shift, included as autonomy or a dependent territory within an empire, and thriving on a transnational state.

Was North Bengal and Rajshahi in past represented a Nation State that has been changed in course of time into Dinajpur-Rajshahi, Kamtapur-Koch Bihar and lower hills and foothills of Sikkim-Bhutan Himalayas and thereafter as a part in West Bengal and another in Bangladesh?

***Mahasthangarh in Dinajpur-Rajshahi:*** Mahasthangarh or *Pundrabardhana* or Bogra is a place located within Dinajpur-Rajshahi region of present-day Bangladesh being one of the highest

Muslim concentrations over there. *Pundranagara* or the City of *Pundrabardhana* was the place where the old track of Teesta-Karatoya joint river flow (now Jamuneshwari River) met with Jamuna-Brahmaputra River system. Teesta and Karatoya (Jamuneshwari) now flow separately.

#### MAP 1: LOCATION OF MAHASTHANGARH (Bogra) in BANGLADESH



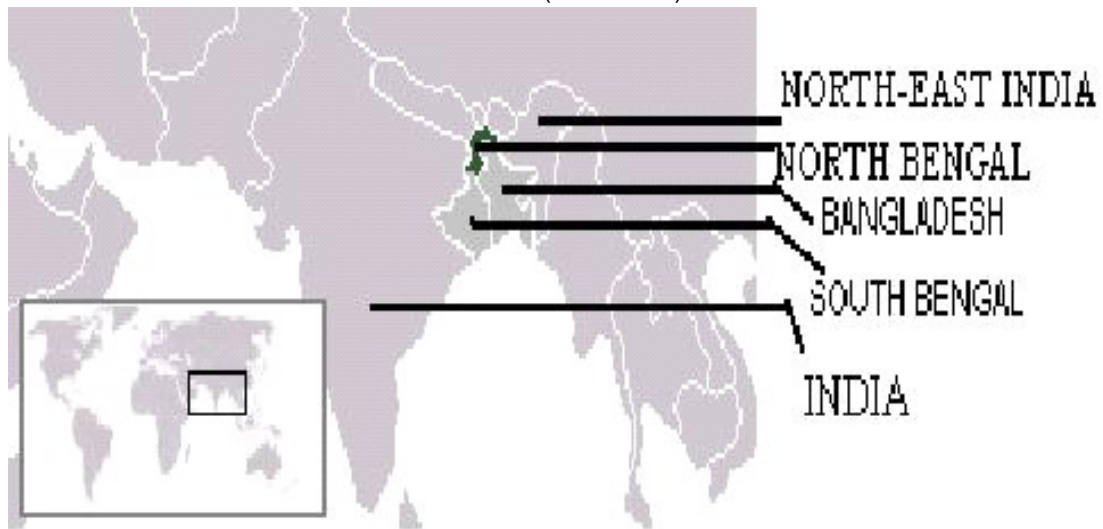
NORTH BENGAL AND NORTH EAST INDIA AND THEIR RIVER SYSTEMS INTO BANGLADESH

**Formation of North Bengal:** North Bengal or northern West Bengal has got its shape incorporating Koch Bihar (Cooch Behar), Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda. North Bengal on the basis of its formation has unique population composition:

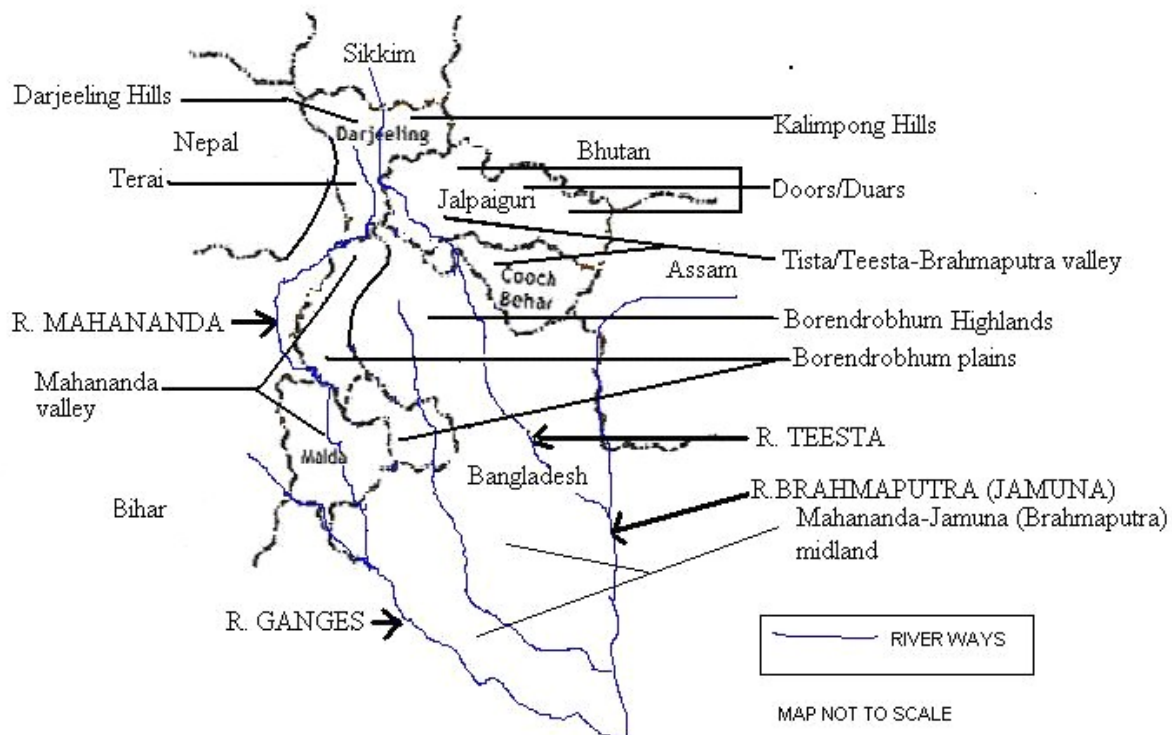
*PaundraKshattriya* to *BratyaKshattriya*, *BratyaKshattriya* to Koch-Rajbanshi groups, Mon-Kamboja-Bhati-Boro overlapping, indigenous groups (aborigine tribe), seven Shahi extensions: Turk-Afghan-Kushan, Rajput, Gorkha, Deccan with the *Adivasis*- aborigines of Central India, Dinajpur-Rajshahi, Mughal, and Lucknow Shahis), Pal-*Kamboja* Pal, Muslim, Buddhist, Caste Hindu, Vaishnava Hindu, Dalit (non-Brahmanical), *Kashyapa* clan holders, *Kayastha* (caste group) and local heads of semi-/self-sufficient villages or village-clusters (generally, *Mondal*).

MAP 4: LOCATION OF NORTH BENGAL (not to scale)

MAP 5: DIEERENT REGIONS OF NORTH BENGAL (not to scale)



**Separatist Activities:** Demand for separate statehood of Kamtapur by the Rajbanshi people is there. Kamtapur was a state under the Khens during the *Chetia* occupancy over Brahmaputra valley and so reducing the control of Garo hill dwellers over the entire Teesta-Brahmaputra valley. Greater Coochbehar movement is in favor of wider Koch Bihar- the land of Koch Rajbanshis. Koch Bihar state was formed at a time around 16<sup>th</sup> Century AD when there were Ahom occupancy in North East India and Mughal-Rajput proved to be a successful alliance to unify South Asia that was later followed by British rule. Koch Bihar always kept good terms and conditions with Mughal Padshahi and British Raj and as a subsidiary alliance worked in favour of Indian integrity. The six districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, CoochBehar, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda are parts of Kamtapur, Koch Bihar and Pundrabardhana that is also known as Mahasthangarh and Bogra, and



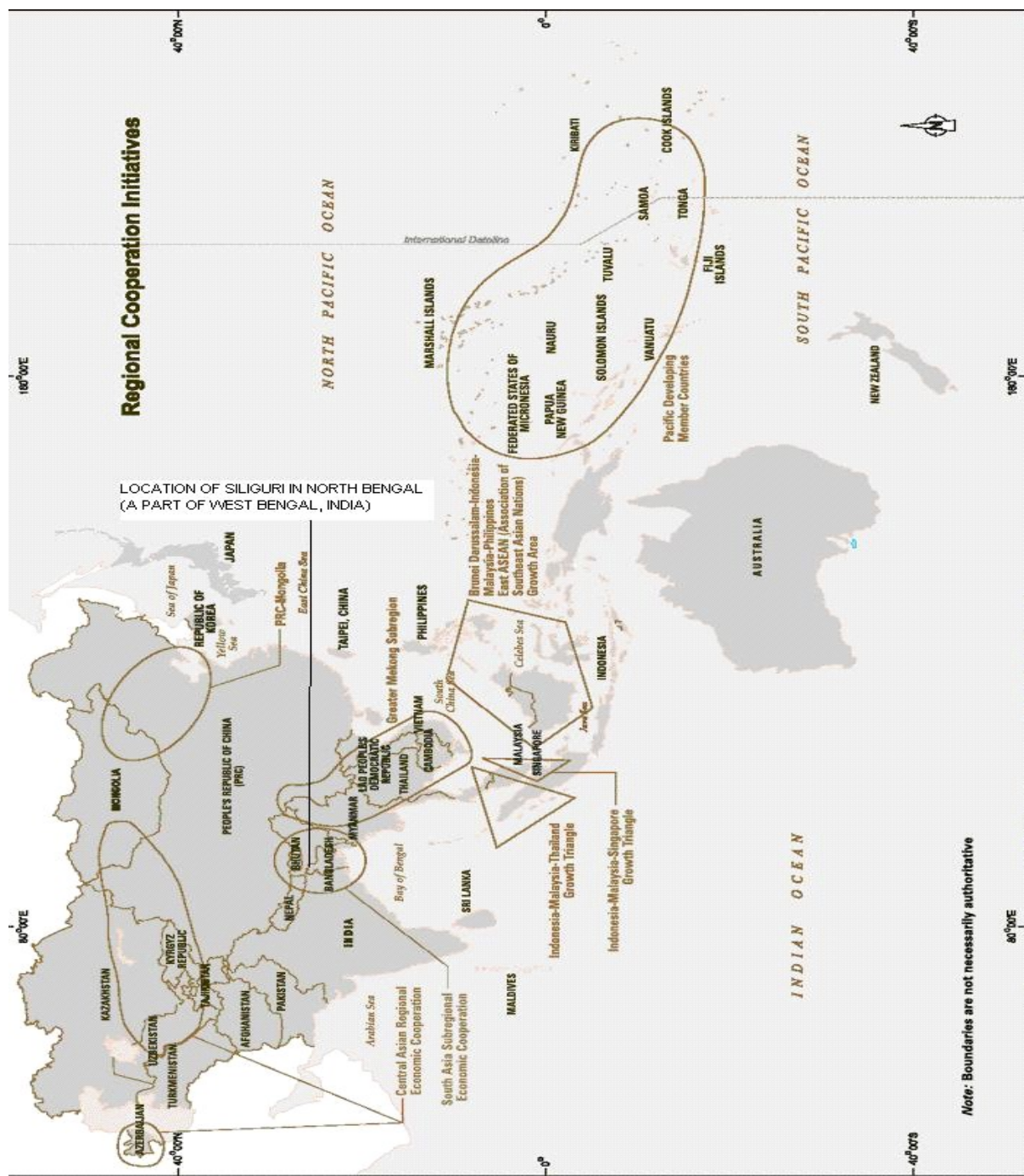
Dinajpur-Rajshahi. These six districts have been developed by the British in colonial period. During independence of India in 1947, partition of Bengal took place and western part of Dinajpur came to India. Adding a few pockets from Purnea region of Bihar, this Indian Dinajpur was named as West



Dinajpur district that in 1990s was divided into North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur districts for administrative purposes. Cooch Behar districts along the Indo-Bangladesh borderline have so many disputed pockets or Indo-Bangladesh enclave. They are all lying along the Lalmonirhat and Kurigram *upazilas* (under Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh). In September 2011, the governments of India and Bangladesh announced an intention to resolve the issue of 162 enclaves, giving the residents a choice of their nationality. Included regions like Duars and hill areas of Darjeeling districts have a demography showing up *Adivasi* and Gorkha dominations respectively. North Bengal has become a

multicultural region at most of its parts. So, a hope of regeneration of a Nation State is tough in this context. But, often the earlier communities and migrated groups in their pockets confirm human shield that is important development in this geo-strategically important region. The entire region of North Bengal contains few urban centers with numerous rururban sub centers. Siliguri Municipal Corporation is the second largest city in the state of West Bengal and it is located in Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling district. At the same time, the Global Market would try to pierce into the local market and expand itself so as to revive from the recession scar. But chief question remains the same that if such neo-urbanization with both advantages and disadvantages can become a cause of separatist movement like recalling Kamtapur and Greater Koch Bihar.

MAP: Regional Cooperation Initiatives in Asia



**Note:** Boundaries are not necessarily authoritative

Two Case Studies: [Geo-political importance of North Bengal with special references to Bidhan Nagar pocket of Siliguri Sub-division and Mekhliganj borderland](#) of Cooch Behar:  
Impact of Globalization

*Case study from Bidhan Nagar (referring the Rajbanshi community of Bidhan Nagar, Siliguri sub-division, Darjeeling district, West Bengal state of India)-*

Application of new varieties and genetically modified items in agricultural sector could often exert a negative impact upon protection of the old varieties useful in sustenance of a biodiversity, an ecosystem, human life and the culture. And again, safe, good quality, local, hygienic, resistant, disease free and easily acclimatizing variety may also grab attention of many especially when as a domesticated crop it has been growing naturally, in a complete organic manner and applying no toxic or non bio-degradable substance in the form of manure or pesticide; therefore often involving the IKS of the local indigenous community. This type of process has found in Bidhan Nagar region of Siliguri Sub-division, Darjeeling District of North

Bengal (northern West Bengal); where the multinational food processing company Calipso India Private Limited provides a permanent market for the pine apple and other vegetables to the local peasants- these producers have now a permanent market where they could sell their products at a fixed price, obviously higher than before. But here the level of profit made by this multinational company remains concealed. The factory provides the cultivators organic manure produced from the waste rubbish of pineapple and vegetables. Many peoples get jobs in the factory at various positions and more other in transportation system. No doubt the standard of life has been increased in Bidhan Nagar region, application of harmful chemicals has been reduced in the field, not even any genetically modified variety has been introduced nor the cost of irrigation and electricity needed in the cultivation of dry season paddy have come to be seen there. But replacement of food crops by pine apple and pine apple economy must cause some sort of socio-cultural changes among the Bidhan Nagar peasants most of which are Rajbanshis followed by Bengali castes and caste like Muslims speaking mixture of local Rajbanshi, Maithili and Bengali dialects. Here, the concept of Indigenous Peoples is necessary for the safeguard of the IKS as well as the overall protection of the Indigenous Community that cultivates the pine apples in their land.

In this same Bidhan Nagar region, establishment of small tea gardens growing parallel with the Tea Estates at the end of 1990s was highly opposed by the local peasants. They were afraid of land alienation. That ultimately led to the initiation of ethnic movement in the name of indigenous statehood Kamtapur and Kamtapuri language. Eventually, a new branch of separatist movements for the very formation of a new state was emerged out. That even got a passive support from the other frustrated peasants of Bidhan Nagar (falling under the Phansidewa Legislative Area). The region is mostly populated by Bengali speaking people, Scheduled Caste Categories including the Namasudra and Rajbanshi along with some religious minorities, tea garden Adivasi laborers and other Scheduled Tribe categories, and fractions of Nepali and Hindi speaking North Indians (chiefly from Bihar). Here, concept of the Indigenous Peoples is needed for protection of the land rights exclusive provisioned for an indigenous tribal community having long time attachment to the land or the region. Here Indigenous Peoples would be applied to overcome the fear of loss of cultural identity, ethnicity, income source, Folk Life and traditional knowledge-belief-faith of livelihood; in order to check any kind of

disharmony; establish proper communication with an effective mode of awareness; understand the Folk Mind and make a bridge between contrasting endowments like traditional and modern as well as local and global. As that were successful; many of the Rajbanshis on their own responsibility have initiated tea-plantation on their soil. However, people there have now been habituated with small scale tea gardens. They supply their products (raw tea leaves) to the local tea factories. Tea is an easy way of income. However, many of these peasants primarily were not in a condition to set up tea gardens. That was an adverse situation because of two basic reasons- knowing nothing about tea cultivation and secondly, lack of funding. Rural bank is there in the block, but many have already taken up small loans and therefore they have to go to local money lenders. Some on contract basis lease their small scale farming lands to the outsiders for five to ten years for tea plantations and thereafter they get back their piece of land with a well established tea plantation. The local peasants now do not sell their lands to any outsider that they did before for an assurance of getting a job in that tea garden. Rather they are more intended to establish tea plantation of their own.

Unlike the tea plantation process, in pine-apple cultivation, the risk of land alienation is absent and therefore its impact remains more or less positive among the folk peoples in Bidhan Nagar area. Rajbanshis of Bidhan Nagar have now become quite detached from their traditional life pattern.

Rajbanshis are now more focusing on vegetable cultivation, mushroom production, floriculture, fruits and areca nut, alternative crops, and poultry rather than their traditional jute and paddy oriented conventional production system and animal husbandry. Even the local farmers are now doing mixed and complex type of vegetable cropping. Many of them prefer to use vermicompost and organic manure. Rajbanshi indigenous knowledge on biodiversity would help them to set up such intensive vegetable cropping. Rajbanshis are even using fallow lands and doing alley cropping. They are now demanding for cold storage. Vegetables, leafy vegetables and areca nut propagation as well as fishing in local water bodies are common here in Bidhan Nagar area. Many of the local people are now attached with alternative jobs in town, suburb and their own rural pockets. Small scale irrigation projects and Teesta-Mahananda canal are really helpful in vegetable propagation in uplands that were once covered up with bamboo bushes and sandy lowlands full of grasses, marshes of cane and

arum, and moist slopes with arum. Pulses in winter are more profitable than wheat and maize. Experimentally, the area can be selected for brinjal, betel leaf, lemon grass, shorea, teak, catechu, silk cotton, and even orange. Bidhan Nagar is a sub-Himalayan Terai belt in Mechi-Mahananda basin. The cold wind coming down from hills is good for cultivation of exclusive garbera flower. Many peasants are also earning money by production of vegetables in off-season. Potato in winter and autumn is being produced reluctantly. Many leafy herbs also grow up in the same potato field and assure extra income. Pointed gourd or *potol* is also grown up in huge quantities on lattice- this vegetable is planted twice a year and yield is available throughout the year. Radish and potato of so many kinds are available. Many peasants are now yielding jute seeds. Winter and monsoon vegetables are produced in huge quantities and these have good demands in local market. Vegetable production has altered the socio-economic situation of the countryside. For disease control however, they are using pesticides and herbicides. Jute and maize are also grown up in huge quantities simultaneously now-a-days.

So, the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) of the Rajbanshi Social Fold (progressing on the track of modernity) is very essential to work out and in this process the non-functional domains could play an important role and ultimately the basic pattern of the folk life would therefore reveal out in front of us. And the most important thing is that only after getting this IKS, we could properly apply the modern knowledge upon the folk life and the nature in which it resides. From proper adjustment between traditional and modern technologies as well as between IKS and advanced knowledge system we could achieve actual way of conserving the bio-diversity, because from this biodiversity the indigenous community maintains its folk life and therefore protects it in its own indigenous feed back management system. To do it appropriately, the community needs a banner like Indigenous Peoples and aid from indigenous rights. Correct adjustment among folk life, proper management programs and indigenous rights could postulate a sustainable development. And this adjustment could only be achieved when there is a definite balance between traditional and modern knowledge systems. Impetus is also needed from the domain of intellectual property rights and patent laws especially to check bio-piracy and illegal technology and knowledge capital transfer.

These measures in agrarian sector from traditional to modern and from tea garden to tea-pineapple mixed cultivation followed by vegetables, maize, banana, jute, floriculture and

processing industries are very crucial here to pace down the peasant agitation often in the form of separatist movement and on ethnic line. Such things have deep local sentiments and be used and misused by so many factors.

*Case Study from Mekhliganj block, Mekhliganj Sub-Division, Cooch Behar District, West Bengal state of India*

Mekhliganj subdivision of Cooch Behar district contains of two community development blocks, namely Mekhliganj and Haldibari; and the former again consists of eight village governing bodies (panchayat [\[1\]](#)) that are Bhotbari, Nijtaraf, Bagdokra-Fulkadabri, Kuchlibari, Changrabandha, Uchalpukuri, ranirhat and Jamaladaha. Nijtaraf and Bhotbari situated side by side have shown 98 percent of the population being associated still with agricultural activities and other agro-based economy. Bhotbari has a Bengali speaking Muslim majority; whereas Hindu caste Rajbanshi ethnic group is more concentrated at Nijtaraf. These peoples are basically peasants and the most of them possess small-scale landholdings with a few even falling within landless labour category. There are only 4 families and altogether less than one percent of entire Bhotbari-Nijtaraf region possessing cultivable land of more than 15 Bigha [\[2\]](#).

That small or medium scale land-holding pattern is because of land reformation programme [\[3\]](#) taken by the government of West Bengal during 1970s onwards.

This land reformation might be illustrated as a parallel approach along with Green Revolution [\[4\]](#). Population increase has reasoned into further slicing off of the reformed patches of land into even smaller pieces. It creates immense pressure on land and in this era of globalization, many people would have to choose alternative ways of income. Many of them have shifted to the urban areas in search of job. Nijtaraf-Bhotbari is not an exception. The situation is as such that the peasants there have 3 to 8 Bighas of landholdings in average. And for the Rajbanshis, the matter is far more critical as they have been further marginalized with average landholding of just 1 to 3 Bigha per family. Many have even become landless.

Cooch Behar district is rather conventionally known for paddy in monsoon and winter-autumn in addition to jute in summer, potato of various types in winter, winter and monsoon vegetables, off-season vegetables, date and betel and tobacco in some pockets, areca and other fruit plants in the homestead, bushes of bamboo and cane, fish ponds, poultry and animal husbandry, cottage



industries like jute cloth and bamboo-cane-wooden handicrafts, *bidi* making (local cigar), compost manure production, jute seed production, production of pulses and wheat and maize to so amount, production of cattle feed, silkworm and their carrying plants as well as floriculture.

But in Mekhliganj there we could see the eastern extension of Barind highland (Varindland ridge) which was traditionally good for vegetable cultivation and bamboo propagation. It is not suitable for jute rather than paddy in upland. Neighbouring Haldibari is rather a vegetable hub. Areas of Mekhliganj next to Haldibari also produces vegetables to a higher quantity, but the location of Bhotbari-Nijtaraf and other far flung pockets have developed an alternative agrarian system. Ponds are lacking needed for post-harvest processing of jute fibers. Local streams are used to collect local fish varieties. Summer paddy no longer exists in this pocket of Cooch Behar district that was known to be “Aush”. Winter paddy “Boro” and monsoon paddy “Amon” are still grown up there. High yielding “Sona” is usually cultivated, rather than the local varieties like *Dudhkamal*, *Muta* and *Maharaj* growing faster than *Aguripak* and *Dhepi* taking longer time span. *Kalonunia* variety is still cultivated in pockets and noted as richman’s paddy (*boroloker dhan*). It is known for its taste and fragrance. Paddy seed coat is black in colour. Muslims call it as *pulao* and use it in making delicious food items during festivals. Similarly, Hindus (Rajbanshis and non-Rajbanshis) treat it as the *Bhogdhan* and offer it to their Gods and Goddesses. Tobacco cultivation is also absent in Mekhliganj. Production of pulses, potol (*Trichosanthes dioica*) and other vegetables, bamboo and cane are decreasing day by day at rapid pace. Maize and wheat are not encouraged as the alternative crop so far. Besides paddy, people are more indulged in potato and tea yield. The soil type is also good for oilseeds including sunflower and soybean and nuts; but these items are generally propagated in neighbouring landscapes in Bangladesh (notably, Mekhliganj is an Indo-Bangladesh borderland).

Mekhliganj is a far flung area from Cooch Behar district town and connected through Mathabhanga town. It is again close to Mainaguri settlement in Jalpaiguri district at the juncture of three important municipalities like Jalpaiguri town towards Siliguri-NJP, Dhupguri town towards Falakata-Alipurduar, and Malbazar towards Doors and Kalimpong hill subdivision of Darjeeling district. Kalimpong was a juncture of Chumbi valley, Sikkim and Bhutan. So, no doubt the area of Bhotbari-Nijtaraf at Indo-Bangladesh borderline was on a transnational trade route, probably Silk Route. This block contains Bangladeshi pockets. Such pockets exist in both

sides of Indo-Bangladesh borderline. This type of situation has emerged due to the historical fact that some villages or hamlets and even households of formerly Koch Bihar princely state have been fallen into Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts of greater Rangpur area of Bangladesh and *vice versa*. These disputed pockets or enclaves are locally known as the “Chitmahal” or “Chhit Mahal”. The Tinbigha corridor is also located in Mekhliganj block. It is given to Bangladesh government in lease on September 2011 so that the latter could access to Dahagram–Angarpota enclaves again falling within Mekhliganj block. Mekhliganj town is located at Bagdokra-Fulkadabri panchayet region that is directly connected to Bhotbari and Nijtaraf. But, the problem arises when we talk about Kuchlibari that has been cut off from the direct road connectivity due to this corridor. It is the furthest village panchayet of the block and Adivasi community is a characteristic feature over there. Actually, Oraon and Santhal (also spelt off as Kurkhu/Kurux and Santal) originally from Central Indian plateau and Chhotonagpur-Rajmahal areas of Jharkhand spread over different parts of Bengal and North East India, including Barindland ridge and included areas of Terai and Duars. Interestingly, they have still some diaspora in Bangladeshi part of the ridge including Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Nilphamari and Dinajpur zilas (districts). Kuchlibari pocket of Mekhliganj (including its Dhapra settlement) is not an exception to this in Indo-Bangladesh border area.

This has been already stated that Bhotbari-Nijtaraf region is situated on a traditional trade route that is again attached to the Bangladeshi enclave of Dahagram–Angarpota. However, this transnational business is still going on but through the Changarabandha region of Mekhliganj. On the other side, Dahagram–Angarpota is now directly connected to Lalmonirhat district of Bangladesh by Tinbigha corridor. Changarabandha has a rail station also, but it is basically used for trade purpose and people of Mekhliganj have to depend on Haldibari of the same district and Mainaguri of Jalpaiguri district for rail service. Haldibari is a regular supplier of vegetables to Siliguri, but for this trade access Mekhliganj crop producers have to cross the Teesta River that flows in-between Haldibari and Mekhliganj blocks of Cooch Behar district and forms river bed in some portions of Kuchlibari and Nijtaraf. This Teesta river bed is commonly known as *Teesta Nadir Payasthi*. There the Rajbanshi cultivators however yield lowland paddy, jute and other vegetables and watermelon. But they have no easy access of their production to outside market as the Haldibari peasants do have. Actually, Haldibari is the only block in Cooch Behar district

that is situated on the western side of Teesta River. Indian enclaves towards Haldibari are situated in Nilphamari and Panchagarh districts of Bangladesh, whereas other such Indian “Chhit Mahal” areas have been fallen inside Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts. There is also a demand of adding this Haldibari subdivision into Jalpaiguri district. In colonial period, Nilphamari, Panchagarh and Thakurgaon were dependent on Jalpaiguri district and used as direct connectivity between Jalpaiguri and greater Dinajpur. Whereas, rest part of CoochBehar district including Mekhliganj block were much familiar to today’s Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts. These five districts on Bangladeshi side however now belong to the Rangpur Division there.

Mekhliganj name has been derived from the term *Mekhla* that means traditional clothing prepared from jute fiber through handlooms. This cottage industry still persists in some pockets of Mekhliganj. If we see the Bhotbari, Nijtaraf, Bagdokra-Phulkadabri and the most remote Kuchlibari of this block along with the Bangladeshi enclave and Mekhliganj town, then we would find that places like Changrabandha, Ranirhat, Uchalpukuri and Jamaldaha have better connectivity with both Jalpaiguri and CoochBehar districts.

Bhotbari is a common name to the place as we could find Bhotbari proper, Bhotbari east, and Bhotbari south within Bagdokra-Phulkadabri; Bhotbari little, Andaran Bhotbari, Bhotbari central, and Bhotbari west within Nijtaraf; and only the North Bhotbari within Bhotbari GP. Again, Nijtaraf proper, Nijtaraf south, Nijtaraf small, Nijtaraf big, Nijtaraf central and Nijtaraf east are situated within Nijtaraf GP; whereas Nijtaraf west, Nijtaraf north, Andaran Nijtaraf and Chhit Nijtaraf (Nijtaraf enclave) within Bhotbari. There are many locations by the name of Fulkadabri within Bagdokra-Phulkadabri as well as the most remote Kuchlibari. Again Kuchlibari is composed of so many enclaves by different names like Kuchlibari, Bajejama Kuchlibari, Jikabari, Andaran Kuchlibari, Upenchowki Kuchlibari and their east, west, south, north, central, big and small hamlets. Even, Kuchlibari contains pockets of Jamaldaha (e.g. Jamaldaha Balapukuri). So, this concept of “Chhit Mahal” or enclaved hamlets were always there in that region and in post-colonial period, some of them have been fallen in other country (now, Bangladesh). “Kharkharia” is also a common name to many such places; however Kharkharia proper belongs to Kuchlibari. There are hamlets of “Pukurdabri”, “Hemkumari” and “Panishala”. Throughout CoochBehar, there are names with the prefix “Brahmattar” or “Debottar”, which reminds us the place was once under a Hindu Princely State and its

relationship with priestly category (-ies). There are also places having names with terms like “Bas” and/or “Bakshi” (such as Daribas and Bakshiganj) indicating to the influence of pre-colonial Muslim rule in Bengal over there.

Rajbanshis have developed agrarian division of labour like the caste system and Muslim peasants not fully out of this social institution. Muslims of Bhotbari-Nijtaraf mostly belong to the Other Backward Class (OBC) category as they are mostly fallen under the Nashya Saikh [5]. Some say that these people were working category and even servants of Bengal Nabob in pre-colonial period. And now almost all the Muslim there, especially youth, are trying to be notified themselves under this Nashya Saikh category. May the OBC certificate would help them to get nay job opportunity or government loan for education or small-scale business establishment. Poramanik and Lammojabi Hinifi are two important mosques for Bhotbari north (Uttar Bhotbari) and 117 Niztarof (Nitaraf proper); whereas Hindu Rajbanshis also pray to mother Goddess like *Kali* and *Manasha* as well as go or Jalpesh Shiva temple nearby. Jalpesh-Bhotpatti is a settlement o the road in-between Mainaguri and Bangladesh mor at Changrabandha. Bangladesh mor or Bangladesh turn is a square of four lanes- one going towards Bhotbari-Mekhliganj-Tinbigha corridor, other towards Mathabhanga-CoochBehar proper, third one towards Changrabandha rail station and international check post, and the fourth one to Mainaguri from where one could go to Jalpaiguri, NJP, Siliguri and mainland India; towards Malbazar and entire Duars and Bhutan; and also towards Dhupguri-CoochBehar-Alipurduar and Assam at the center of North East India. Jalpesh [6] is a sacred place for the Rajbanshis and other Shavian. Many myths and stories related to the origin of Rajbanshi community are linked up to this Jalpesh temple. Even many coined out the term “Bhot” with Bhutan Himalayas and also the “Jalpesh” with pro-Kushan [7] king Jalpa, Indo-Greek [8] symbol Jalpai (olive), Jelep-La [9] mountain-pass to Chumbi valley and origin of Jalpaiguri town and the district. Out of many Sarkar is a common surname for the Muslims, Rajbanshis and non-Rajbanshi Bengali Hindus in Mekhliganj. However, Roy and Barman are often used by Rajbanshis. The Bhotbari north market ground is the location where in every year Bhandani festival was organized by the Rajbanshis and peoples from all the sects and religious groups participate. This place has a small Bhandani temple also and this is actually a Hindu female cult probably meant for good agricultural crop production. It is surrounded by place held for weekly market, some permanent shops owned by men belonging

to Muslim community, health sub center, primary school, the bus stop and Bhotbari panchayet office. A high school is also located nearby and at Mekhliganj “town” contains a college also. Madrasha [10] or Muslim education center is also there. But these countryside people have special interest in folk literature and those who are educated express their special interest in Bengali and English literature. Many of the college students are interested in honors degree in English.

Illegal cross border cattle smuggling is a problem in this pocket and at the same time easy way of money making. Many use this Tin Bigha corridor as the Bangladeshi hamlet is attached to Teesta river bed sharing it with Nijtaraf and Kuchlibari. It is also close to Mekhliganj Township and different Bhotbari pockets. There is a proposal of building up of a flyover at Tin Bigha corridor to connect this Bangladeshi enclave with mainland Bangladesh for 24 hours. Many Indian political parties and social units are protesting against this. They rather accuse that such situation would create Teesta bed of Nijtaraf a center for illegal human trafficking. However, Border Security Force [11] (BSF) camps have been deployed in this border region as well. Despite of all these facts, local people prefer to maintain one to two cattle, gottery and small poultry as the sandy river bed and upland areas are not suitable for choosing agriculture as the only alternative. Agricultural cost and problems related to agriculture have compelled the local inhabitants to think more about small scale tea gardens as a better alternative along with some paddy, few bamboo bushes and vegetables like chilly, potato, btinjal, tomato, mustard, local spices (e.g., *radhuni*), cauliflower, cabbage, carrot, radish, potol, gourds, beans, and local leafy vegetables (e.g., *dheki*, *dhebua*, *dhemsi*, spinach/ *palong*, *lafa* and *bathua*).

There are few more Bangladeshi enclaves within Kuchlibari and Bagdokra-Phulkadabri (also written as Bagdogra-Fulkadabri). There is camp of Bangladesh Rifles [12] (BDR) inside Dahagram-Angarpota that is connected with Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat district through Tin Bigha corridor open for 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and at the same time shares Teesta Riverbed of Nijtaraf (also written as Niztaraf or Niztarof) and Kuchlibari. Flag meeting is often held between BDR and BSF. At a time, people of this “Chhitmahal” came into Indian Territory and use weekly markets in Mekhliganj as other minor pockets still do. Burimari of Patgram is an important settlement near the Bhotbari GP. Many Indian pockets are also there in Patgram that have to depend and only depend on Bangladesh. Dahagram-Angarpota though connected

to Bangladesh now is absolutely a backward region lacking both medical facilities and electric connection. After opening up of the corridor many mainland people from Bangladesh have entered into this pocket and eventually the older inhabitants have turned in minority. Hindus once living there have fled to India. Religious tension was an eminent feature in this Bangladeshi enclave comprising of a huge landscape of over 4,000 acre. There were attempts between India and the counterpart to resolve this enclave problem through mutual exchange with the exception of Angrapota-Dahagram (AGDH) and Berubari (falling under Jalpaiguri district of India on the Jalpaiguri-Haldibari road). It is alleged that Bangladeshi people could try this AGDH to trespass into Indian Territory where there is an increasing demand of construction workers and other workforce in rapidly expanding urban sector. Also, it might be transformed into paradise for cattle smugglers. Even if an over bridge is built upon over there in Tin Bigha, the situation would become the worst. That might put a wrong impression among the borderside people and they might commit wrong doing as an easy source of income. Notably, Tin Bigha corridor has made Kuchlibari cut off from mainland India by direct road connectivity and made this land itself an enclave. Bangladesh government is too sensitive regarding AGDH and President Ershad in 1986 AD has first visited the place on behalf of Bangladesh government. Ershad was born at Dinhaba of Cooch Behar district. There is a proposal that if both the government could lease the enclaves if not exchange at all in reality. In this context also, alternative economy of tea gardens followed by land lease might be a new approach. People in Mekhliganj block are living with religious harmony and they do not want any volatile situation there. People there want more security from the government. They do not want to be convicted by Indian law. They know about different acts like TADA [\[13\]](#), POTA [\[14\]](#), etc.

People in Mekhliganj area have access to drinking water, electricity, center for mother and children, SSK, primary and upper primary schools, high schools, college, market, health sub-centers and centers, and so forth. There are some self-help groups also. Community fishing may be an option, but not so much prevalent among the locals. However, there are big fishing ponds in Uchhalpukui and some pockets of Jamaladaha, Ranirhat, Phulkadabri and Kuchlibari. Fishing is also practiced in Bhotbari-Nijtaraf area. Daily in the afternoon, fishermen come in the market and sell the local varieties like punti, darika, kholisha, tangta, bacha, bata, pabda, rohu, catla, catfishes and many others. They do not depend on ponds, but also catch them from Teesta and

small streams initiated in Nijtaraf and Bagdokra-Phulkadabri areas. Such a stream is Saniajan and it bears ample of small fishes known collectively as *Nadiali*. Crabs, shrimps and prawns are also consumed occasionally.

#### **BLOCK-WISE P.F.C.S. Ltd. in Cooch Behar district (upto January, 2012)**

<i>Sr. no</i>	<i>Name of the Co-operative Society</i>	<i>Block</i>	<i>Reg. No. &amp; Date</i>	<i>Total Members</i>
42.	Bhetbari F. C. S. Ltd.	Mekhliganj	28, dt: 18/03/1958	215
43.	Mekhliganj Anchalik M. S. S. Ltd.	Mekhliganj	15, dt: 04/05/1951	137
44.	Ranirhat Anchalik M. S. S. Ltd.	Mekhliganj	37, dt: 10/03/1977	110

<http://www.coochbehar.gov.in/Fishery/HTMfiles/Fishery2.html>

Changrabandha has so many pockets in the name of Panishala and river Jaldhaka or Dharala River (also termed as *Dhoro laor Dholla*) after crossing Bhutan and Duars and district of Jalpaiguri has entered into Patgram through this Changrabandha. Later, this river along with Singimari River enters again into CoochBehar and spread throughout Sitai-Sitalkuchi [15] and Mathabhanga to meet with old track of Torsa [16] River at Dinhata before reentering into Bangladeshi area at Kurigram. New flow of Torsa that holds the CoochBehar district town also flows into Bangladesh along with Kaljani and Raidak [17] water systems. All these rivers through CoochBehar are actually part of Teesta-Torsa basin that unites with Brahmaputra-Jamuna mouth in Bangladesh. Forest has been nearly abolished in Mekhliganj block despite a few pockets in Jamal daha. In other parts, only one could find some patches of bamboo. Now, a new trend of tea plantation is an addition to this. Plan is also there to establish tea tourism (as a part of eco tourism) developed near Tin Bigha corridor on the bank of Saniajan. This is nothing new as in many parts of Jalpaiguri Barindland such small scale tea gardens and tea-tourism have become a new trend. And that has also spread into Mekhliganj. Museums, picnic spots, boating, gardens, deer parks, water bodies and marshlands are newest attractions of Duars, Jalpaiguri and CoochBehar.

Irrigation is a direct scheme that is meant for common peasants. There are about nine small irrigation projects in Mekhliganj block area of which only four are now functioning. Irrigation department is accused of charging double tenancy from the irrigated cropland. So, there would be no such benefit from government irrigation project and hence local peasants prefer to use

rental pumps. That they could use when irrigation is necessary. In rainy season, irrigation has no use than proper drainage. Present government of West Bengal has taken the policy of implementing 100 days guaranteed work scheme under the scheme of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act [\[18\]](#) (MGNREGA) in countryside and building up of local roads and water tanks helpful for untimely irrigation. This is called the “Jal dharo, Jal bharo[\[19\]](#)” mission of present West Bengal Government (since 2011). Now-a-days, the cost of agriculture has been increased considerably in the context of seed, fertilizer, pesticide, labour cost, carrying cost, cold storage and still there are risks like of natural calamities and fall in the market price or even unexpectedly higher yield. Irrigation is not required here throughout the year as this is not an arid or semi-arid drought prone zone. Irrigation may be required at the time of land preparation, growth of the saplings and two to three times during ripening of the crop. Lending tractors, power tillers and diesel pump-sets are good business for well-to-do families who might be a non-cultivating owner, doing any government job in panchayet or BDO office, local broker and moneylender. A rate of INR 130 has been charged per hour for borrowing the pump-set.

Government assistance and fertilizers at subsidized price are often expected. But that is not possible as before. High yielding varieties have already replaced the traditional seeds. Bhotbari and Nijtaraf panchayets have one godown each and flood rescue centers altogether three in number. In 1998, a local seed farm was established in order to provide free seeds and fertilizers to marginal and small farmers. They rather have to depend on local seed and fertilizer shops privately owned by non-cultivating owners and brokers, as the seed farm has stopped functioning in 2002. This block seed farm was established on 75 acres. About 25 people were employed there as labourers on daily wage basis. Many of them have been promoted to the post of peon and with their retirement, these posts would be abolished. This is nothing but to many simply wastage of government money. There are some posts in panchayet office like village level worker (VLW), Job Assistant (JA) and Krishi Prajukti Sahayak (KPS). The latter is for helping the peasants by providing important information and other technical support. Examination of soil fertility and water quality are important among these. But for that the KPS has to go to Mathabhanga office. This type of work is not for a single day, but he has to up and down for whole week. In Bhotbari GP, these three posts still exist, but they have never been proved themselves helpful in real sense to the peasants rather than doing other official works and as a



result of this official-peasant gap, these posts perhaps are going to be withdrawn permanently without any future appointment. Further, the peasants have to buy pesticides of so many companies and medicines for their livestock. New strains are emerging day by day and old pesticides could not be reused for the same infection of plant body part. They also indicate to a unfair understanding between agriculturist/animal doctor and medical representatives of multinational companies (MNC). They still remember the application of cow dung, organic manure, natural insecticides, net and light trap, and neem oil. But it is not possible for them to turn around from hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and branded pesticides of so many types.

Ration shop are also there in these two panchayets where essential food commodities are available on behalf of Government of India at subsidized rate. Black-marketing and extra price charging are two allegations in rationing system of India. Ration dealers however here say that they used to charge extra cost due to local transport. People are now much aware here. Government of West Bengal is categorically saying that 98 percent of its revenue is going into payment of interest and paying salaries of its employees. This is also a reason for inflation in local vegetable markets that the producers in countryside could not guess from before and hence middleman and stock raiser groups buy the crops at relatively cheaper price and buy them at higher price. Government has nothing to do but increase the tax rates. However, there are so many other reasons behind inflation and price rise.

There is a long demand that if the local block officials and government agricultural office regularly provide them the weekly wholesale price list. Some newspapers and some television programmes obviously do this, but that is not adequate information. They are not only demanding for price list in print media, but also description, usefulness, price and subsidy of fertilizers and pesticides. They could give it even in internet and the villagers have no objection to e-governance. People here are of opinion that government planning is no doubt good to their interest, but the problem is in implementation, red tape, administrative delay, lack of political will-force at the local level, other issues, rapidly changing economic situation in India, peoples' shift to other sectors and lack of supervision. Often many projects are just inaugurated and even initial works begun, but no further improvement or very slow rate of work is coming to see in. That might be any financial crisis or lack of will-power or any misconception regarding the local people, any conspiracy or even corruption. Local people often do not know about the

government schemes and they are not properly informed. Sanctioned money is often returned back. Sometimes, local government at village level has been accused of partiality and spending the money in other sector. There is a demand to defunct the local village level governance that the supporters of power decentralization strongly oppose. Direct sanction of project money from Central Government to the public through government officials is another instance; this they say as direct contact from PM to DM (Prime Minister to District Magistrate). Middleman system is also accused for these wrong doings. There are also layers of money lenders and brokers. However, the three tier panchayat system is still going on in West Bengal; many others see it as a role model of grass root development and power decentralization upto the village level. Though, they admit that this may not be the last option and free from drawbacks. Lack of peoples' awareness is also responsible to such situations. The best example may be the sanitation. People still believe that sanitation in open air is better and hygienic rather than set up of a latrine within their homestead. People often misuse the money that they are getting from the government in alcoholism, gambling, domestic spending, social occasions like marriage and even disease treatment. Sometimes, this money has been wrong handled and the beneficiary could not get the actual amount. Often the people are misbehaved. Sometimes, people think off that old days were better and all the reforms are absurd and in vain. They also feel attracted to other alternatives.

Bhitbari GP has one upper primary and a high school, whereas Nijtaraf has two upper primary schools and no high school. Rate of female literacy is higher here in Mekhliganj as the common people told me; but overall expectation from this formal education such as getting any job is not so high. People here go for self-employment and other outside works. Nijtaraf has 75 percent electricity availability, whereas Bhitbari has the lowest reach (around 40 percent). People there have the internet access and wide range use of mobile phones. They not only collect news through electronic media (such as radio and television) and print media, but also check internet sources and mobile phone connectivity. Illegal Bangladeshi SIM cards are also available there; however people there prefer Indian SIM cards. Bus service and man pulling van service are the major public transport. People also use bicycles and motorbikes for personal use. State Bank of India and Central Bank of India have their branches in Changrabandha and Uchhalpukuri, whereas Uttar Bangal Kshettriya Gramin Bank (UBKGB- facilitating rural banking) and

Agricultural Co-operative Bank have their branches at Jamaldaha, Ranirhat and Kuchlibari, besides Changrabandha. Nijtaraf and Bhotbari have not a single bank of any type.

Nijtaraf and Bhotbari have a total population of 12, 672 and 14,792 according to the 2011 Census of India. Both the places have on health centers unlike other village areas of this block and only two health sub centers (HSC) each. However, in these two areas, there are SSK, Mid-day meal programme and Center for Mother and Children (*Anganwari Kendra*). For these reasons, people here have to depend on other village areas. Changrabandha contains most of the offices (BLLRO, BDO, JCI, etc). For Labour Commissioner, people have to go to Mathabhanga via Changrabandha.

Marginal peasants are basically agricultural day labourers with a small patch of land. Small scale peasants possessing land amount of 1-3 Bighas and middle scale with 3-8 Bighas hardly get any surplus. Small scale peasants yield paddy for self consumption that goes maximum up to half a year. Middle scale owners could sell the surplus in local market. Cultivation of vegetable and potato is rather beneficial to them. But they could not make similar profit as the Haldibari peasants could do. Because of these reasons, peasants have to go to money lenders, mortgage their land, (or) lease their own land to big scale peasants who possess land upto 15 Bighas in post-land reform era. In this way, in season time their informally increase their land possession up to 30 to 40 Bighas. Big landholders and rich non-cultivator owners generally take these lands on lease in season time for agricultural purpose by their own or giving it in tenancy. Obviously, these transactions are all done on temporary and verbal basis. And the original land-holder work there as share cropper. These things depend on mutual trust. Often neighbours and relatives exchange their labour to one another. This shows involvement social strata on the basis of land holding, class, lineage and even caste or religious domination in pockets. This is the way of how leasing one's own land has been introduced in Makhliganj consisting of AGDH enclave of Bangladesh that could not be exchanged but only leased (if such situation arises). This culture of leasing land has been further established in this Indo-Bangladesh Barindland pocket with AGDH and many more exchangeable minor enclaves and further become cognate within the indigenous agricultural knowledge system of the local peasants of all categories; when they have been shifted over to small-scale tea plantation. Tea plantation is maximum profitable in this pocket and small peasants now feel no hesitation to lease their lands for tea plantation on

temporary basis.

Local people of Mekhliganj did not know how to cultivate tea, but they were eagerly searching for certain alternatives. Big tea company of Bajoria group set up tea garden there over 25 acres who also established the tea processing factory. Many sell their lands in the hope for permanent job in the tea garden. On ground reality, this is even INR 55-65 per day. In big tea gardens of Duars and Terai, a permanent labourer get daily wage between INR 90-100. Many of them were even not made permanent. There is no such provision for Provident Fund (PF) or contributory PF or medical facilities or quarters. Some were even promised to provide permanent job in the factory that in many instances was actually a false assurance. So, local people are not interested in selling their land to the big Tea Companies any more, but give them their land in lease. These marginal and small scale peasants lease their land to this tea company. This lease stands for 5 to 7 years; after that they get back their land but with a well established tea plantation. In the meantime, they would work in that garden and learn how to cultivate tea in Barindland ridge. If a person has Bigha land in lease, then he will work as a temporary labourer and learn how to cultivate tea with INR 60-80 wage on daily basis. If the amount of land is approximately 6 Bigha, then he would be appointed supervisor of two labourers. The initial wage for a labourer was INR 28 per day that has now increased up to the range of INR 60-80. And at the same time he would get some capital in form of lease money. This is generally INR 20,000 for a 3-Bihga land at the initial stage. This training, some capital and a well-established tea plantation would be not bad for initiating a small-scale tea garden. In this manner, Bajoria group was successful to acquire many more land in temporary basis.

Middle landholders and big-scale non-cultivating owners (however, not more than one percent) are therefore interested to set up tea plantation on their land following the policy of the Bajoria. All these land transactions and lease were done on verbal basis and mutual trust. There is no risk of mortgaging their own land and one could keep the mutation papers in safety. For instance, a middle scale landholder with about 8-10 Bigha cropland can use portion of the highland area in producing tea whereas a few in yielding vegetables, raise a small patch of bamboo bush and the low land portion for rice or paddy.

A broker class is also developed in between the independent tea producers and the factory. They might from a non-cultivating owner family, wealthy family having enough capital to buy a

tracker and capable of immediate payment, and those who do not possess much land as they have already shifted to other occupation. Actually, if a producer directly sells his products to the factory, there might be delay in payments; whereas from broker he is getting immediate payment that might be few less than the actual price value. The reason is that most of the marginal and small-scale peasants are defaulters and could not access to the bank loans. On the other side, big scale peasants, non-cultivating owners, people in other profitable income and government job as well as wealthy families have good terms with BDO, panchayets and banks. They could get loan with special compound package and 50 percent subsidy. During the time of Indira Gandhi Government [20] in 1970s; when banks were become nationalized, then people got huge amount of loan but could not use in a proper way. A local proverb is there “*koto dine khaichhi doi, er kotha ayjo koi*” which means “how could we forget those golden moments?”...However, in V.P. Singh Government [21] many of these loans were reconsidered. But, there are still many loans without any proper paperwork. Further, the loans that were reconsidered were actually cattle loans and not the agricultural loans that the small scale and marginal peasants had taken for gottery, plough, fishery, or husking machine. So, these people have burdened by interest over interest. They perhaps be ever capable to get any loan facility from the bank. Whereas the big landholders and wealthy non-cultivator owner cum service person and businessmen could avail this facility from bank, establish tea garden on their own, lend money even at a higher interest upto 20 percent, or serve as a broker. Now, new schemes like minority loan, education loan for backward people and Farmer’s Credit Card (*Kishan Credit Card* [22]) are new policies launched so far and people are desperate to get these facilities. They are opposing any policy through which government so desperate for investment and industry can accrue land without any formal discussion with the peasants and local influential personalities. Peasants are generally in favour of sustainable development, development that does not cause much hamper to the nature, and they are categorically against any political hidden agenda or anti-democratic policy. They are in favour of food-processing industry, wider food market, easy connectivity, cold storage, new policies and their implementation, alternative agriculture, advice from agronomists, and direct investments like Bagoria in Mekhliganj or Calypso in Bidhannagar at Siliguri Terai Subdivision of Darjeeling district. In highland pockets within Mechi Mahanandabasin of Siliguri subdivision as well as Chopra block of Islampur subdivision of Uttar Dinajpur district, people agitated

against rapid spread tea gardens in highland vegetable ground by the outsiders and encroachment of land. Local Adivasis and Rajbanshis agitated against that process and that issue was again politicized in so many ways. As a result to this, pineapple has been grown up as another alternative along with small scale tea gardens and diverse types of vegetables and floriculture. Calypso is an international brand and it generally deals into pineapple juice, fresh organic vegetables, pickles, biomass and organic compost. Returning back again to Mekhliganj, we could see that maximum small scale tea gardens there are owned by Muslim community, but few also be Rajbanshis like Bakul Roy Ishore. Jul Jalaj Sarkar is a Muslim youth who has established tea garden on seven Bigha; that was previously a jungle area; his father was in government service. Siraj Hossain Sarkar have tea garden of this type along with a cropland and he is also in a private service in Siliguri area and time to time comes to Dagapur Tea Estate area in the Siliguri suburb. These small tea growers of Mekhliganj have together established a welfare society (Mekhliganj Apanjan Tea Producer Welfare Society with registration number S/IL/90520 of year 2012). However, this is also a fact that Rajbanshis are more marginalized and even many of them are day labourers. They are still attached with traditional agriculture. They say that about 80-90 mound [\[23\]](#) of rice they can produce from one Bigha. They also cultivate potato and vegetables. The main problem with potato cultivation is the storage facility. There is a cold storage at Rajarhat turn where they have to pay INR 170 per quintal besides packaging and bearing charges separately. Still they have to depend on nearby weekly markets like Bairagi Haat at Mathabhanga or Jalpesh. They are not so much blessed as Haldibari or Dhupguri peasants. They nearly totally shed off tobacco cultivation due to the rust disease and anti-tobacco campaign. However, they expect from the government for supplying of good tobacco varieties, scientific analysis of local *Motihari* tobacco variety, aid in this labour intensive production, alternative use of tobacco in medicine or food oil, and even intensive for alternative crops like maize or wheat. Various social schemes for aged, widow, education loan and short term loan are of common interest of the local people. But many of them could not access to this for being defaulter. This opportunity is taken by several NGOs that are involved in money lending business and associated with insurance agencies and real estate business groups like Bandhan Financial Services and Clench microfinance foundation [\[24\]](#). These are also of great concern here as different people maintain different opinion to these organizations.

No doubt this North Bengal region which is also known as the chicken neck of India connecting mainland Indian body and North East India cut off by the independent country of Bangladesh and surrounded by Sino-Tibetan, eastern Himalayas and Burmese-Arakan belt is obviously an important geopolitical region. And Mekhliganj is an important pocket of it. The problems which this area usually face should have some sorts of solution deeply rooted within political, economic, social and religious issues in the context of globalization[25] that provides us easy communication, faster mobility and wider exposé to new opportunities on behalf of Global Market Economy with both positive and negative features.

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[1] The panchayat raj is a South Asian political system mainly in India, Pakistan, and Nepal. It is the oldest system of local government in the Indian subcontinent. The word "panchayat" literally means "assembly" (ayat) of five (panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. However, there are different forms of assemblies. Traditionally, these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and villages. Modern Indian government has decentralized several administrative functions to the local level, empowering elected gram panchayats. Gram panchayats are not to be confused with the unelected khap panchayats (or caste panchayats) found in some parts of India. 3-tier Panchayati Raj system - Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level, and Zila Parishad at the district level was adopted by state governments during the 1950s and 60s, as laws were passed to establish panchayats in various states. It also found backing in the Indian Constitution, with the 73rd amendment in 1992 to accommodate the idea. The Amendment Act of 1992 contains provision for devolution of powers and responsibilities to the panchayats both for the preparation of economic development plans and social

justice, as well as for implementation in relation to 29 subjects listed in the eleventh schedule of the constitution. The Union Cabinet of the Government of India, on 27 August 2009, approved 50% reservation for women in PRIs (Panchayati Raj Institutions). The Indian states which have already implemented 50% reservation for women in PRIs are Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. As of 25 November 2011, the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Tripura also reserve 50% of their posts for women.

[2] The Bigha is a unit of measurement of area of a land, commonly used in Nepal, Bangladesh and in a few states of India including Uttaranchal, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Gujarat, Rajasthan etc. The precise size of a bigha appears to vary considerably. Sources have given measurements that range from 1,500 to 6,771 square meters, but in several smaller pockets, it is as high as 12,400 square meters. In West Bengal, the Bigha was standardized under British colonial rule at 1600 sq.yd (0.1338 hectare or 0.3306 acre); this is often interpreted as being 1/3 acre (it is precisely 40/121 acre). In Metric units, a Bigha is hence 1333.33 m<sup>2</sup>. Again, in Bangladesh one Bigha is twenty times of one Katha (also spelled Cottah) that has widespread use in West Bengal and Bangladesh. One Katha means 720 ft<sup>2</sup> or about 66.89 m<sup>2</sup>. In that case, one Bigha or 20 Katha means 1337.8 m<sup>2</sup>. And therefore three Bihga or *teenbihga* (also *tinbihga*) mean one acre (4800 square yards).

[3] Land reform or agrarian reform involves the changing of laws, regulations or customs regarding land ownership in order to transfer the same from the more powerful to the less powerful through a government-initiated or government-backed property redistribution. That might be with or without compensation considering token value or the full amount on the basis of market price or after proper evaluation. Generally, it takes place from a relatively small number of non-cultivating owners with extensive land holdings (e.g., estates, plantations, large ranches, or agribusiness plots with or without the provision of equity investment in their farm house) to individual ownership by those who work in that specific land. This leads to small-scale farming. This may happen due to immense pressure on land as a result of high concentration of population within a specific region. It might be as because of some sorts of revolt against colonial powers and other collabourators. Some agronomists believe that intensive cropping in small scale farms give a higher production than large scale farm and so a probable solution to food crises varying from place to place. However, this might be subjected to other social, economic, political and religious aspects besides mode of production, mode of exploitation of nature with or without feedback, and energy-cum-nutritional requirement of a given population size. Agrarian land reforms took place in Roman Republic and passed then by Roman Senate in 133 BCE, but resulted into civil war and end of that republic. Landholdings by Hindu temples, Buddhist monasteries, Roman Senators, European Catholic Church, Egyptian priestly categories, zamindars in



colonial Bengal as a result of permanent settlement system, and consumption immense wealth by those groups in different historical era were probable reason of socio-economic protests, religious transformation, foreign attacks, finding out of alternative economic options (such as trade) and change in political system. In the aftermath of colonialism and the Industrial Revolution, land reform has occurred around the world, from the Mexican Revolution (1917; the revolution began in 1910) to Communist China to Bolivia (1952, 2006) to Zimbabwe and Namibia. Land reformation process might be too strict or not. It may be used as a weapon against macro-economy and ultimately result into land scarcity with further increase in the population, increase in landless labour category, co-operatives, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), shift from rural to urban sectors and micro-financing. It is good to many, but not a permanent solution like a Self-Sufficient rural system or Welfare state. Therefore, it is not universal in every peasant society. In many cases, joint-extended family systems could maintain a huge amount of cultivable land. Lack of capital to perform agricultural activities and defend natural calamities often compelled the marginal farmers to depend on estate holders. They could sell their land or mortgage it or lease it to big farm houses and money lenders. Many landless labours have no option rather than work as temporary or permanent employers in big farm houses. Green revolution and Nationalized Banking System is also supporting big farmlands. Land reformation movement may be a part of class struggle or peasant agitation or movement against a big house or revolution against existing system and even an identity issue. It is related to African Socialism, Arab Nationalism, Cuban struggle in Latin America, events in Vietnam and Indonesia as well as some Indian states including West Bengal. Land reformation does not always oppose capitalism and globalization. It even ensures economic development in many developing countries since the post-World War II period, especially in case of the Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Malaysia. However, economic reforms can cause rapid industrialization, urban expansion, emergence of big business houses, privatization, inflation, price rise, economic disparity, stagflation, movement in favour of pro-people policies, demand of sustainable development, political turmoil, and options like neo-liberal policy or public-private partnership or state control (directly or by means of nationalized institutions) or even a closed party structure often going against the democratic values. Whether the so called reformed land is privately owned or leased from the state is also crucial factor. If the land is just leased to the farmers and actual ownership is still in the hands of the state or landlords, then the situation of the agriculturalists would be not like a peasant, but tenant. And chances would be there to again bring them back to the condition of landless labour or bonded labour or serf or slave. They might protest against the state or landlord, if they are oppressed. They may demand for restoration of democracy, end of state atrocities, land reformation, and land reformation along with actual ownership of the land (instead of lease system for a prolonged time period). Management of the reformed land is also an important issue that is often

neglected. Crop rotation, mixed cropping, organic farming, utilization of effective indigenous knowledge (supported by indigenous knowledge system) and controlled application of scientific information are among these.

[4] Green Revolution refers to a series of research, development, and technology transfer initiatives promoting high-yielding varieties. But application of chemical compounds in the form of fertilizer, pesticide, etc. For a prolonged time and even in unscientific way in hope of excess yield can deteriorate the soil fertility after a few decades. So, this is not the final solution of the global food crises. It has developed during a time span of 1940s to late 1970s. It began in United States of America (USA) and followed in many parts of the globe. It is criticized for negligence to the local varieties, erosion in the gene pool, addition of pollutants and non-biodegradable compounds into the food chain, loss of bio-diversity, excess mechanization of the cropping system, seldom adverse effect on the food nutrition values, probable negative impact of genetically modified food generating the types of protein, natural and man-made disasters as well as devaluation of indigenous knowledge (and systems) of the folk agriculturists. They reside closer context to nature and develop nature-friendly farming units and sustained use of biodiversity with a notion of conservation. They still perform informal experimentation, store them within their culture, transfer them to other people formally and informally, and finally, build up their entire social system on this. These people often favour traditional techniques like shifting cultivation, production in group, and small-scale settled cultivation. These people rather accuse Green Revolution as a type of 'neo-colonial' system of agriculture wherein agriculture was viewed as a commercial sector than a subsistence one. The complex cropping systems based on the food web in the entire ecosystem may have been affected adversely. Some complex agrarian systems may be exemplified in the forms of rice-cum-fish, rice-cum-fish and crab, duck-cum-fish, jute-rice-vegetable-tobacco-vegetable even adding wheat/maize/winter rice/rapeseeds and potato, sacred grove-bamboo-vegetable, betel-areca-snail-lime integrated to pond and agriculture management, floriculture, fruits and food processing, and further more.

[5] The Nashya Shaikh or Nashya Sekh are a Muslim community found in the state of West Bengal in India. A small number are also found in the neighbouring state of Bihar, where they are known as the Bengali Shaikh. They are also known as Rajbongshi Muslim or Uttar Bangis Muslim. The Nashya are considered to be an important indigenous group found in northern West Bengal.

[6] The Jalpesh Temple is about three kilometres from Mainaguri 26°31'32"N 88°52'1"E, dedicated to Lord Jalpeswara (Siva). The temple was built in a style akin to Islamic architecture. Inside, there is a Shivling called Anadi. Shiva, (Sanskrit: "Auspicious One") also spelled Śiva or Śiva , one of the main deities of Hinduism, whom Shaivas worship as the supreme god.

[7] The Kushan Empire was an empire in South Asia originally formed in the early 1st century AD. The Kushan

dynasty had diplomatic contacts with the Roman Empire, Sassanid Persia and Han China. The Kushans were one of five branches of the Yuezhi confederation, a possibly Tocharian belonging to Rong people from the northern and western borderlands of China, and Indo-European nomadic people spread into Central Asia and Pak-Afghan region (centering on ancient Bactria). They entered into eastern Iran and Kashmir and a large part of South Asia; they worshipped mythical Goddess Nishi and various Indo-Greek deities and also Sun, Shiva and Buddha. They spread throughout Indo-Scythian and Indo-Greek regions in South Asia as well as sub-Himalayan region up to North Bengal. Tocharians have close contacts with Tibetans. They brought Buddhism to China. Buddhist texts were then translated into Sanskrit.

[8] The Indo-Greek Kingdom or Graeco-Indian Kingdom was a Hellenistic kingdom covering various parts of the northwest regions of the Indian subcontinent during the last two centuries BC, and was ruled by more than 30 kings, often in conflict with each other. Bactria and Parthia along with Sogdiana and Fergana valley on Amu Darya were the most crucial among these. Bactrian and Indo-Parthian Suren entered into India in post-Mauryan era in ancient Indian history. Many of them praised Vaishnavism and Buddhism alongside Christianity. They and Indo-Scythians were defeated by Kushan Dynasty who established a widespread Empire in India around 1st Century A.D.

[9] Jelep La (also spelled Jelep-la) (el. 4,267 m or 13,999 ft) is a high mountain pass between India and Tibet in East Sikkim District of Sikkim. The famous Menmecho Lake lies below the Jelep La Pass. Jelep-la, a Tibetan name, means 'The lovely level pass, so called because it is the easiest and most level of all the passes between Tibet and Sikkim.' (from the Bengal District Gazetteers Darjeeling, 1907, by L.S.S.O'Malley, Indian Civil Service.) The pass is in Sikkim and the route connects Lhasa to India. The pass is 46 meters (151 ft) in length. On the Indian side there are two routes to Jelep La, one through Gangtok and the other through Kalimpong. The Kalimpong route is an ancient one which was responsible for the boost in the local economy due to the trading of wool and furs early last century. The pass was closed after the Sino-Indian War in 1962. The route is scenic with forests of rhododendrons blooming in spring. Numerous hamlets dot the bucolic surroundings which give a traveler a sybaritic experience. On the Tibetan side the pass leads to the Chumbi Valley of the Tibetan Plateau.

[10] Madrasa is the Arabic word (of Semitic origin; viz Hebrew midrash) for any type of educational institution, whether secular or religious (of any religion). It is variously transliterated as madrasah, madarasaa, medresa, madrassa, madraza, madarsa, medrese etc. In English the word normally specifically means any type of religious school or college for the study of the Islamic religion, though this may not be the only subject studied. Today, 20,000 Madrassas educate over 1.5 million students per year.

[11] The Border Security Force (BSF) is a border guarding force of the Government of India. Established on

December 1, 1965, it is one of the Central Armed Police Forces. Its primary role is to guard India's international borders during peacetime and also prevent trans border crime. Like all paramilitary forces of India, the BSF is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs. It is one of the many law enforcement agencies of India.

[12] Border Guard Bangladesh (formerly known as Bangladesh Rifles) is the oldest uniformed force in Bangladesh. It is a paramilitary force under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

[13] Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, commonly known as TADA, was an Indian law active between 1985 and 1995 (modified in 1987) for the prevention of terrorist activities in Punjab. It came into effect on 23 May 1985. It was renewed in 1989, 1991 and 1993 before being allowed to lapse in 1995 due to increasing unpopularity due to widespread allegations of abuse.

[14] The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002 (POTA) was an anti-terrorism legislation enacted by the Parliament of India in 2002. The act replaced the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) of 2001 and the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) (1985–95), and was supported by the governing National Democratic Alliance. The act was repealed in 2004 by the United Progressive Alliance coalition.

[15] Sitai (community development block) is an administrative division in Dinhata subdivision of Cooch Behar district in the Indian state of West Bengal. Gram panchayats of Sitai block/ panchayat samiti are: Adabari Ghat, Brahmattar Chhatra, Chamta, Sitai I and Sitai II. Sitalkuchi (community development block) is an administrative division in Mathabhanga subdivision of Cooch Behar district in the Indian state of West Bengal. Gram panchayats of Sitalkuchi block/ panchayat samiti are: Bara Koimari, Bhawerthana, Chhoto Salbabari, Golenaohati, Gosairhat, Khalisamari, Lalbazar and Sitalkuchi.

[16] Torsa River (also spelt Torsha and also known as Machu and Amo Chhu) rises from the Chumbi Valley in Tibet, China, where it is known as Machu. It flows into Bhutan, where it is known as the Amo Chu. It has total length of 358 km, out of which 113 km in China and 145 km in Bhutan before flowing into the northern part of West Bengal in India. It flows past the important border towns of Phuntsholing (in Bhutan) and Jaigaon (on the Indian side of the border) and past the great tea estate of Dalsingpara and the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary. The beautiful landscape here is ideal for family picnics, and the wildlife sanctuary has tigers, rhinoceros and deer of many varieties. a tributary known as Buri Torsa meets Jaldhaka. Ghargharia river meets with Torsa in the Tufanganj subdivision, near Deocharai and Balarampur Torsa meets with Kaljani and it then flows into Bangladesh by the name of Kaljani and meets with Brahmaputra in Bangladesh.

[17] The Raidak River (also called Wang Chhu or Wong Chhu in Bhutan) is a tributary of the Brahmaputra River, and a trans-boundary river, flows through Bhutan, India and Bangladesh.

[18] The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an Indian job guarantee scheme, enacted by legislation on August 25, 2005. The scheme provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage of INR 120 (US\$2.18) per day in 2009 prices. If they fail to do so the govt. has to pay the salary at their homes. The Central government outlay for scheme is INR 40,000 crore (US\$7.28 billion) in Financial Year 2010–11.

[19] The 'Jal Dharo, Jal Bharo (Preserve Water, Reserve Water)' initiative of Govt of West Bengal tries to provide a replicable framework as a solution to this ecological inequality in the face of looming impacts of climate changes.

[20] Indira Gandhi, in full Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi (born November 19, 1917, Allahabad, India—died October 31, 1984, New Delhi), politician who served as prime minister of India for three consecutive terms (1966–77) and a fourth term from 1980 until she was assassinated in 1984.

[21] V.P. Singh, in full Vishwanath Pratap Singh (born June 25, 1931, Allahabad, India—died Nov. 27, 2008, New Delhi), politician and government official who was prime minister of India in 1989–90.

[22] The Kisan Credit Card is a credit card to provide affordable credit for farmers in India. It was started by the Government of India, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) in 1998-99 to help farmers access timely and adequate credit.

[23] The maund is the anglicized name for a traditional unit of mass used in British India, and also in Afghanistan, Persia and Arabia: the same unit in the Mughal Empire was sometimes written as mun in English, while the equivalent unit in the Ottoman Empire and Central Asia was called the batman. At different times, and in different South Asian localities, the mass of the maund has varied, from as low as 25 pounds (11 kg) to as high as 160 pounds (72½ kg): even greater variation is seen in Persia and Arabia. In Bengal it is about 82 pounds that is approximately 37 Kg.

[24] Bandhan Financial Services is a wide-spread NGO based on money lending business. It has a 3505 crore rupee business all over India. Clench microfinance foundation is also in real-estate and service sector; they have built up a eye hospital in Canning, Sundarbans; a hotel management college in Habra and a market complex in Sonamukhi, Bankura. Both of these groups have connections with real-estate companies like Rose Valley and Tower group of industries who have set up their offices in Mekhliganj and are busy in making profit out of the land transactions in the disputed Indo-Bangladesh border area.

[25] Globalization is the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture. It involves social, political, economic and religious issues as well. In 2000, the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) identified four basic aspects of globalization: trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, migration and movement of people and the dissemination of knowledge. Further, environmental challenges such as climate change, cross-boundary water and air pollution, and over-fishing of the ocean are linked with globalization.

### **Conclusion**

Politicians, policy makers and investors have to re-decide what to do and how to do!

Formation of a new state in such a hilly terrain with so important trans-national strategic location might not be the proper solution. Pro-people Development strategies in the hills and foothills as well as accommodation of the local people with this global market economy could perhaps be the only solution.

This should also be kept in mind that India is the overlap of several economies: traditional, mixed, macro, microfinance, and global economy.

USSR fell down in post-cold war situation (1990s). Iran showed abrupt political transition. Global economic cake was shared by the West, the Arabs and the Chinese. We have now some options to be opted- banking, stock exchange and party control in decision making. We face terrorism, separatist demand, ultra-left activities, religious turmoil, criminal activities, mafia and even private army. On the other side, there we get instances like police, law, administration, cultural groups, sports, corporate lobbies, and education and health sectors. We often speak on global terrorism, state-sponsored terrorism, urge for sustainable development, subaltern politics, and mass corruption. Socially we have seen caste, dominant caste and dominant community. Indian politics is now leading to a bi-party system, although an option of third front could not be totally overruled although becoming more and more intrinsic. Small states have been yet formed in such terrains that are full of mineral ore or once performing as a knot in transnational trade routes. People compare globalization with gold and also categorize it broadly into two parts-

native and outside India. That could be Shrine and non-Shrine. That might also be dealing with concepts like Buddhist and Arab and Latino gold speaking out for alternatives. That may also be in the form of Roman Gold in symbolic way. Revival of ancient Silk Routes and Spice Routes are also recalled. But, Indians also possessed options like crop, cattle, and human resource that

they could never shed off. Conversion of property and kind into cash, credit and gold are also deliberately attempted. Army and bureaucracy are two important and influential institutions. Press and media are playing crucial roles in building opinion and sharing information. Disparity is increasing between natives and global collaborators. Many people after getting struck in competing global market, they are increasingly turning towards localization and beginning from the primary stage. In that case, demand for separate state could also raise its hands. Revival of Nation State or such demand could be a tactic in timely approach towards globalization in an alternative way in a fishy situation. People were always there but not always claiming for separate statehood. Such demands are made to express grievances, oppose existing situation and finally in favour of revival or ancient trade routes and trade pockets that are highly needed in this era of globalization. But such demands are generally made in a controlled way keeping in mind the local, national and international situations. Such demands are more politically motivated and therefore, simultaneously causing obstacles and favouring interest of the other. These are more than just a question of identity or cultural survival or resource utilization. That might be a demand from within the bi-party system or beyond. Actually we could not comment on that that an indigenous community has to be pre-agriculture or agrarian and only satisfied with meeting psychobiological needs. The community can use its culture as psychic unity of mankind and could raise upto the level of civilization by its own way creating mega-structures and producing certain advanced technologies. But at the psychic level, they could not shed off their traditional values and norms, especially when attached to the religious institution. People becoming more scientifically advanced, would leave staying on hypotheses, superstition, magic, Supernature and ethnoscience based on informal experiments by chance and trial and error methods. Advancement can often cause people detaching to nature and unfair exploitation of the resources



without feedback. People may even lose their traditional values and customs. If they could not retain the pace, they often find themselves in such a situation without resource when they could not get back and lead to extinction, erosion, transformation or incorporation within another way of life and social system bearing new polity, economy and values. Only same resource availability and circumstances can provide their life back. But that would be really hard to regain the lost heritage in the same condition. After all, time has crossed away a long course and many new experiences have gathered in the mean time.

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