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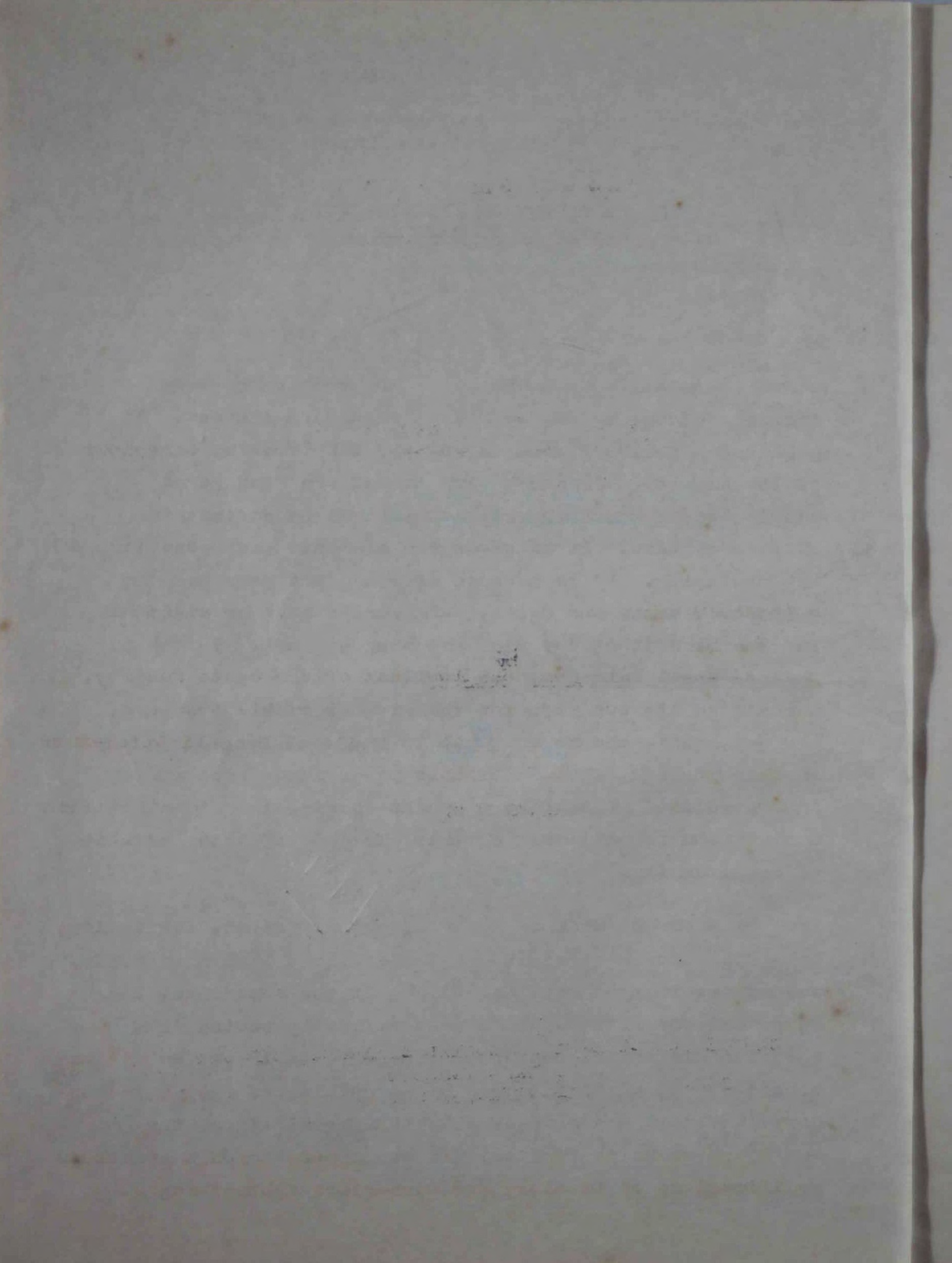
THE MENTALITY OF SUBALTERNITY :
KANTANAMA OR RAJDHARMA

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The aim of this paper is to focus on certain features of the mentality of the subaltern classes. It is well known that defiance is not the only form of behaviour of the subaltern classes. The 'subaltern' can be as submissive to the authority as he might be defiant in another context. It is these two elements that constituted his mentality. It is because of this, the poor and the oppressed, again and again, voluntarily gave up everything for the benefit of the rich and the dominant. In the Dharma-Mangal Kalu Dom, the lowliest of the caste society, sacrificed his own life for the victory of his overlord, Law Sen. This became an ideal in Medieval Bengali Literature. In this context, the aim of this paper is to read and analyse a poem written by a peasant during the mid-nineteenth century and to point out certain elements of this mentality of subalternity.

A few points are to be stressed. First, domination, sub-ordination and revolt are indissolubly linked together, one exists in another. Of course, at the same time, the idiom and the expressions are specifically rooted in a specific historical context. Secondly, desire to submit and acceptance of domination may be as complex as the desire to defy. Even in the case of abject subordination, the subaltern seeks to find out his own space, through countless modifications of ideology and numberless subtueferages.

Hence, there can be **no** blind imitation, no fixed boundary between defiance and subordination. Thirdly, the specific text which forms the basic source of this study may be interpreted differently I do not claim that my interpretation is the only 'valid' one.

I

KANTANAMA OR RAJDHARMA : DEWAN MANULLA MANDAL

In 1320 B.S., Nalini Kanta Bhattasali, while engaged in the search of the punthi of Mainamatir gan in North Bengal, had accidentally discovered this unique text in a obscure village called Fakanda, now situated in Balurghat sub-division, West Dinajpur. The exact transcription of this MSS with all its typical spelling and local usages has been published by the Dacca Sahitiya Parishat. Bhattasali wrote an useful introduction and added notes to the text; but despite the financial patronage of Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandi, he failed to write up a history of the Kassimbazar Raj and biographies of the persons mentioned in the text.¹

The writer of the text is Dewan Manulla Mandal. **In** the own words of the author,

"Please listen the story about my residence, in which area I do live. My own village is Fakanda, name of my father is Gurai Mondal, I, this humble fellow, is his son. Dinajpur is the principal place (Sirasthana), Jobsa² is the Pargana, my Chackla is at Bhograng".

Now, this area was called Kantanagar because the Zamindari of the famous Kasimbazar Raj, was here. The area was named after the founder of the house, Krishna Kanta Nandi. It was also within five miles of Bairatnagar, a place of ancient legends and archaeological remains. It seems that Manulla Mandal was a good writer (Lekhhardar). He copied many texts like Abdur Sukur Muhammad's 'Mainamatir Punthi'. He ~~is~~ wrote a big narrative in verse about the old kingdom of Bairatnagar. The editor was definitive about the fact that the manuscript of the text of the Kantanama has been written in the author's own handwriting. The main text runs upto 60 pages and the date on the last page has been 1250 B.S. On 1252 B.S. Krishnanath Nandi, the then zamindar, died. Hence we may say that 1840 was the rough date for the final composition of the manuscript because the author repeatedly referred to Krishnanath at whose time he felt the urge to write the book. 'Kantanama' and 'Rajdharma' were the names given by the author himself; he referred to these names, though more often to 'Rajdharma', in the text.³

From the text it is evident that the author was a member of the hereditary 'Mandal' family; he referred to his forefathers up to five generations. He belonged to a joint family. At the time of composition of the book, he was an old man and under severe personal stress. He was reduced to economic distress due to a fire which consumed his property and house. He lost almost all his relatives including seven sons.⁴

"Seven sons had been taken away from me and I suffered greatly". Sons died before the father. What a calamity.

And again,

"There fell another calamity, all my houses and property have been burnt; then I dreamt a dream".⁵

Now, here, it is necessary to underline social significance of the two terms, Mandal and Dewan in the context of the rural society of Dinajpur, during the late 18th and early nineteenth century. Mandal was the headman of the rural community and belonged to the family of the original settlers of the village. In the 19th century, Patwaris and Mandals were gradually incorporated in the revenue system of the Zamindars and became their salaried agents. Yet it was suggested that particularly in Dinajpur, where the Zamindars were relatively less powerful, the Mandal retained some of his old autonomy and customary position. He was the representative of "the community", he was "one of the persons, of the village who bear in estimation of the community highest character of responsibility and trustworthiness". His role was that of an arbitrator in the case of dispute and that of a spokesman on behalf of the peasants to the authority. He generally did not get pay from the Zamindar but certainly enjoyed certain privileges in the time of revenue assessment.⁶ In fact, many Mandals in this area belonged to the Khudkasht peasants, prosperous, enjoying 'sir' lands at concession rate. This land was his 'jot' sometimes extending to fairly large areas. Most of them were Missalmans and were hereditary resident cultivators.⁷

Manulla also held the title of dewan. Dewan generally meant the principal officar of a big Zamindari establishment.⁸ But, here, in Dinajpur and Rungpoor, Dewan has a specific meaning. The persons who used to plead the case of peasants in the court and establishment of the Zamindar and were well-versed in laws and regulations of settlement are called Dewan. The various settlement officers had underlined, with a mixed reaction, the social power of these Dewans in forming opinion and in regulating the connection of the rural community with the out side world.⁹

In the context of the above discussion, we may point out that Manulla Mandal himself described his village and talked of his long residence there. Bhattasali also had seen his descendants, engaged in cultivation, living in the same village and having a relationship with the local court. Long residence in a particular village was a social characteristic of a Khud-Kashi peasant. The titles mandal and dewan were indicative of the social as well as economic status of Manulla in the rural society. It may be said that in his public statements, in projecting an ideal, Manulla would most likely talk not only as a prosperous peasant but also as a leader of a community, in terms of the tradition and value of the peasant society. Otherwise his suggestions would not be accepted; nor was that expected from him. In course of discussion, we **shall** see that Manulla himself was also aware of this position.

Manulla wrote this poem within the very tradition of Mediaeval Bengali Panchali of the Mangal Kavyas. Like all other poets, he was asked to write by his destiny or fate (Bidhi) or God (Niranjan) in times of intense personal and

family crisis. His sufferings, as he later realised, were but a trial to prove his fitness to carry out the noble project fixed by the destiny. As he wrote,

"Is it my real worth that I should live in this world for fruitless purposes. I passed the two-thirds of my life in happiness and the last one-third in sorrow. I continue to stay in this world for useless purpose. This has been barren for me, it is full of sorrow for me; I am destined to suffer".

In this context of sorrow and fruitless life, it was said:

"Hearing this, Nirranjan said in his own words, 'O my blue-eyed boy, do not cry. All your brothers and sons are illusion (maya), I meant to be your only boat of salvation at the end of your days. I have judged your mind, you are honest. You are dear to me. Why do you think that your life has been wasted? You would live in heaven, I would not forsake you.

Your name would remain everlasting in this world. You write the exploits of Idic Maharaja (Zamindar)".¹⁰

He, time and again, reiterated that his material and family crisis was due to the fact that he had to write the exploit and glory of the Zamindar at the order of God.

"God began to think in his own mind how the exploit of the King would be propagated in the world. In order to judge his mind he would have to kill the brother and son of that particular man, who would be entrusted with the task of writing the exploit of the glorious King. He who does not forget God's name ever in

time of crisis would write that
This thinking, god had sent his wrath
(gasab) on my head (Manulla) in order to
test my (Manulla's) mind. Being
helpless (Nachar) I (Manulla) have to
write the words of god. Oh my fate, your
heart is made of stone. You have forced
me to write the exploit (Kirti) while
piercing my heart with spears".¹¹

It is to be noted that to any student of the Panchall written in Med. period, this is a well-known theme. From Mukundaram and Manik Datta, well known writers of the Chandi Mangal and the Manasa Mangal to the less known author of Gosani-mangal written in Kuch Bihar, the stress on the inspiration derived directly from the divine order is there. It was a product of a particular social 'mentality'. In this world of poetry, the own writing by an individual does not belong to him but was ordained by god, fate or destiny. Chandi Dharma, Manasa, Vishnu or Allah or Niranjana was the actor, the mortal author was merely his instrument. He was a carrier of a greater will. As a consequence, here the so called notion of "casualty" was entirely irrelevant, the world of 'heaven' and earth here merged together. They were not subject to cause and effect analysis, time sequences, well known to us, they would not fall within the purview of 'rational and scientific' knowledge of enlightenment and tradition. We have to confront this literature on a different place/plane altogether, to understand the significance of their dream and destiny. At present, however, we may say that Manulla was not an upstart. He was communicating his own thoughts, within a well known tradition, using the forms of 'Lachari' and 'Dopadi'. His losses and sufferings were personal. His own experience was the basis of his poem. Yet the author has transcended his own experience, he has tried to

synthesise it in a world of 'religiosity', tried to convey his mood with a consciousness permeated with religiosity. There, every thing was predestined, everything was done by Niranjan or Allah. To write Kantanama was a task to be performed through which he would get his salvation. In his own consciousness, his own writing was not the product of his own initiative, everything belongs to God.

"God has sent information and spoke for me and then began to narrate the truth. Testing the mind of this humble, he forced me to write and began to supply the suitable words. If I do not write those words, then he makes me to realise. Until and unless I again begin to write, I remain extremely unsatisfied".¹²

This type of consciousness is not his alone, not a ploy to deceive the zamindar. We find the existence of similar mentality in the med. literary tradition of Bengal. The Kantanama is conforming to that rule.

At the same time, it is not a pure literary piece. He had the intention of reading it at the court of the zamindar.

"I write Rajdharna as a work of God. When shall I be able to read it before the King? If god wishes, I would read it before the King, otherwise there would be no security".¹³

He also would expect some material benefit from the Zamindar.

At the same time, it is not a pure literary piece. He had the intention of reading it at the court of the zamindar.

"The King began to think^{of} all the sufferings of the writer for writing his exploits. If I give him an elephant loaded with wealth, even that would not compensate for his sufferings".¹⁴ A historian has made a suggestion that Brajonath Hazra, a local village official, had encouraged Manulla to write this poem, though there is no evidence to the effect.¹⁵ It is also not at all clear whether he had ever got any chance of presenting his poem before the Zamindar. But it was certain that the author was a mandal, a headman of the village. Hence his Rajdharma/Prajadharmā was not meant only for himself or for the Zamindar but also for others. He time and again stated :

"The King, the paragon of Dharma, does not talk of levying cess (tol). God is helpful, listen to this on the community of the subjects (Prajar Samaj)".¹⁶

Throughout his writing, Manulla Mandal never forgets this 'prajar samaj'. His own experience, his social role, his own despair and hopes, were all expressed in a language and consciousness permeated with religiosity meaningful to the members of the rural society. Its expression was perfectly in tune with the 'panchali' tradition of Med. Bengali poetry. This is the first evident characteristic of the Kantanamahā. Hence we listen to a very familiar tone :

"With great care Shah Manulla has written this book according to a dream sequence. He who would listen to this with devotion would be saved from all misfortune. He who would plagiarize this writing in his own name would be as much of a donkey as his son's and parents are. He would be poor from his birth and would not have any desire fulfilled through his sons. He would go to hell and his family line would

be extinguished. And he who would keep this book Rajdharma with care, would ultimately go to Baikuntha (heaven)¹⁷.

II

CULTURAL WORLD OF MANULLA

Fokonda is an obscure village in Dinajpur. But it had its own culture and Manulla was aware of that. There was a strong tradition of Pirism among the Rajbangshi and the muslim peasants in Dinajpur. In many cases the Rajbangshis had been converted to the 'pir' variant of Islam and were known as the nasyas.¹⁸ Even in the late 19th century, the Farazis were not able to make a significant dent here.¹⁹ Even after their partial success in the early 20th century, pirism thrived as before. In the early 19th century, it was told by an acute observer that in this district, there was hardly any village which did not contain a pirsthan (place of worship).²⁰ The officials said almost the same thing in the thirties of the 20th century. Along with this, there was spread of Vaisnavism among the Rajbangshis and it survived the onslaught of the 'Kshatriya Movement' led by Rai Bahadur Panchanon Barman.²¹ There is continuous overlap between these two, and the boundary zone of these two cultures is continuously shifting. Both in the Satya pir's song and Manasa's song, the group of the singers remained the same, only the symbols and dress changed.²² In the two big fairs of 'Nek Marad' and of Gopinath, the people belonging to various communities participated without any hesitation or inhibition.²³ As a result, a number of linkages within this culture grew.

Grierson has noted this development in this area of Rungpur and Dinajpur. He has found illiterate minstrels roaming from villages to village among the peasants, singing the ballad of Mainamati and Gopichandra from memory, handed down by their ancestors.²⁴ He has also located in this area the ballad regarding the legend of the birth of Srikrishna adapted from the Bhagvat. His comments are worth quoting :

"The third specimen is the song describing the birth of Krishna. It is by far the most popular song amongst the Hindus of the district. It is not extant complete but I have been able to collect many pieces and to repatch them into something like the original song which no doubt originally existed. I have been able to produce a pretty fair text, as there is hardly a line of which I have not obtained two or three copies. Considering the great distances from each other at which the places were whence I obtained the fragments, it is wonderful how they agree; especially as it is not customary for the reciters to possess written copies or even to be able to read them if they did".²⁵

The unity and similarity of the textual content of the songs current over a vast region of north Bengal itself indicates a vigorous oral tradition. The illiterate singers of village have conformed to that tradition, retaining the structure of the pala.

Side by side with these palas and songs there was a tradition of 'Kathakata'. Though it was of ancient origin, it has developed and remained popular from the late 18th to mid-19th century in rural Bengal. They generally recited Vaisnava stories before a huge gathering. It was a performing

art depending on the voice of the speaker. The speaker spoke of stories from the puranas, explaining their moral import and improvising whenever they found it necessary.²⁶ It was stated in the official document that the coming of this type of Brahmins in the particular season of the year used to create great excitement among all categories of people in the villages of Dinajpur.²⁷ A typical description of this type of art has been given by a person, from the rarh area, well-versed in this tradition. His mother arranged this performance for a vow:

"A big setting place has been arranged at the Atchala and the people of village has been invited to listen to the path of the Ramayana. In the evening, the reciter begins to read the text. The village is small. Males numbering fifty to sixtys and the females numbering thirty to forty came to listen. The Pathak (Kathak) at first read out three or four verses from the Ramayana and then began to explain. He interpreted the verses through various means and ways. Sometimes, he acted, sometimes he used strident male language, sometimes he began to lament in a typical female voice. He thus performed for one and half hour. The audience listened with attention. Everyday this type of performance was enacted. It is not that everyday the same person used to come. Among the audience there was hardly any educated person; even their learning was limited upto the course taught at the pathsala (village primary school), yet they were able to grasp the sense of a highly sanskritised language... The audience used to come for two reasons. To listen to the recitation of the Ramayana would confer Punya (merit) on them; they used to come to earn Punya (merit). Secondly, if they do not come, my mother's vow would be broken and she would be sinned. They

could not do that. For that reason also, they used to attend the performance".²⁸

Talking of the importance of the spread of morality and values through the preachings of "black and quite healthy Kathak thakur" among the people Bankinchandra wrote :

"He who ploughs, spins or is engaged in domestic work, he who may or may not have two square meal a day learns that religion is eternal and the pursuit of self-interest is derogatory. There is a thing called pap and a thing called punya, there was both retribution and reward, that life is not meant for self, but for others".²⁹

Thus Kathakata performed certain distinct services. First, it popularised the Brahaminical culture through highly effective fables and stories, upheld certain standards of morality and values derived essentially from the elite culture. It is an intervention from above. Secondly, within its framework, there was ample scope for mutation. Through twists and turns, through emphasis the Kathak continuously hinted at local affairs and incidents through commentary. The text, he used, was to be full of variations. Its range covered from Sanskritised moral tales to the erotic description of a prostitute or humorous description of categories of sweets. His songs were of a mixed bag, sanskrit verses as well as local Bengali songs. For the success of his profession, the Kathak was even responsive to the mood of various types of audience who could be at times highly sensitive and active.³⁰

It is also to be noted that through out the eighteenth and nineteenth century, many local Chieftains for their own interests began to popularise various Vaisnava and sanskrit texts in this region. The Raj family of Kuch Bihar and of Dinajpur took the initiative in this matter.³¹ The panel at the famous temple at Kantanagar in Dinajpur contains the full depiction of the life of Krishna.³²

Thus in this cultural world, we can probably discern two trends. The first was intervention from above, the mingling of classical or 'Marga' with the popular or 'Jana'. In this stage 'Marga' was trying to influence the Jana, to intervene in its flow. Through the Kathakata and through extensive translation of the various texts of the puranas and bhagvats, there might be a conscious attempt on the part of the local Zamindari houses to spread and uphold a kind of value and culture among the lower order. At the same time it is an active and two way process. The culture at popular and folk level continuously changes and absorbs the classical culture in its own way. Grierson has described the perception of the Bhagavata by the people at the villages of north Bengal in this language.

"They have found them in song and it is not their business to alter things written in the Satya-Juga. Sometimes they are unable to explain the whole passages, saying "it is a satyajuger gan, how are we to know it. For otherwords they have a traditional meaning".³³ In comprehension, ambiguity and tradition gave an appreciation of these classical tales at popular level, distinct from that of its sastric ethos. Many local versions of various incidents of these epics and of puranas had been composed, catering altogether to a different

taste of a rustic audience. Angads' Raibar (Abuse of Angad to Ravana) was universally popular among the peasants. It was later expunged from the standard edition of the Ramayana by Kirtibas on the insistence of its famous editor because it was supposed to be vulgar.³⁴ This type of acceptance, and adaptation and rejection are mutual at both levels and are expressions of power-relations between the dominant and dominated. Dominance, subordination, revolt and compromise are the moments through which these types of interaction are possible. It is continuous interaction and tension that determines the contour of the relation between the 'marga' and the jana culture.

As opposed to the vertical, another type of connection was horizontal among the various trends within the popular culture itself. Here, many contiguous local and regional culture groups overlapped each other. In the north Bengal, Sona Rai was such a cult. He was at one place the protector of the field, at another place he was a god of tiger. At one place he was a vaisnava saint and saved the Karon from destruction and at another place he was a pir and saved the vedas³⁵ from destruction. It was almost impossible to distinguish madari pir and the naths in Dinajpur.³⁶

Here the 'Niranjan' of the Naths and the Allah of the Madaris were almost interchangeable. There is, in this area, a large number of small ruined buildings which were jointly used both by the Burhana pirs and the Nath jogis for their worship.³⁷ One of the major features of this type of cultural inter-connection is quick change of names, one image being quickly transformed into another. Among many, one typical example may be cited as an illustration.

"Dharma has taken the image of a Yavan
He has worn a black cap and had a gun in
his hand. He is on a good horse and is
a terror to the world, his another name
is Khoda. Formless Nirajan became an
avatar, uttering 'Dam' through his mouth
..... Brahma became Muhammad, Vishnu
became Paigambar, Siva became Ibrahim,
Ganesh has been transformed into Ghasi
and Kartic into Kazi, all the muni become
Fakirs"38

This type of transformation and mutual existence
has generally been explained as a proof of co-existence between
two cultures or syncretism. However, in this type of trans-
formation and images and names, each element maintains its
distinction and boundary, each element, with all its mutations,
does not lose its identity. Every sect or every local God
has its own zone and area, has its own symbol.; in this process,
appropriation's role is less. There may be overlapping or
juxtaposition of one over another but never loss of identity,
each having its own space. Here, there is not much question
of 'upward mobility', urge on the part of the 'little'.
tradition always to emulate the great tradition. In this type
of horizontal interaction, there may not be a new synthesis in
so far as every element and every name, even in its process of
transformation, maintains its distinct characteristics. And
it is not unnatural that such a swift change from one to another
code is possible here on this popular level. In the cultural
world of people, these popular elements are their own creation,
marginal to or non-acceptable to the 'elite' culture. In this
connection Bakhtin here mentions a pertinent point arguing that
in a feudal society, high culture always remained formal, rigid
and hierarchical, conforming to rules. In the domain of peoples
culture, there is more flexibility and less predictability and

quick movement, one may get into another with rapidity.³⁹ We may probably add that to by-pass power in a hierarchical order, there is such change of forms and names without changing the context and identity of the sect and god through a horizontal movement. This type of space provides the background of the strength and initiative of the culture of the subaltern classes. In our area, Grierson has provided an example.⁴⁰ Side by side with the Bhagvats and the Puranic *alaks*, the people often resort to the rhymes *bawdy* and sometimes unintelligible to point out inconsistencies in this world, where everything has been turned into opposites, where every action leads to an unintended and unconventional end. For example, "he speak in whispers and gets inam land in distant villages. But two villages are waste and another is devoid of people". This type of examples goes on and Grierson has observed that the people used to burst into laughter, while listening to these songs.⁴¹

The imprint of both this vertical and horizontal interaction, of both the 'marga' and the 'jana' culture, can be traced in Manulla Mandall's text. It is the elements drawn from the both that gives the text a complex character. Manulla Mandal begins his poem with an invocation to Vishnu or God Hari;

"Hari is eternal, he is immanated within everything. Without Hari, there is no way of salvation. He who does not know Hari is an ignorant hopeless person and would even go to the hell".

But Hari is at the sametime 'Niranjan', the symbol of the naths and the Burhana pir. Again and again Hari has been replaced by Niranjan.

"He is formless, he has no form, he is Niranjan and Nirakar the light (Nur). He has created the world and has protected the world".⁴²

Manulla Mandal is well aware of the Sanskrit texts and the puranas. He has freely cited instances from those in his own way. He has described Baikuntha, abode of Hari and mentioned to Kalki avatar. He wrote about the court-pundits of Krishnanath.

"They know the tantras, the puranas and the great Bhagvata. They know even the Chaitanya-Charitamrita".

He says,

"Whatever I have written in this book has support in the Bhagvata Puran".⁴³

At same-time, he is aware of the local nath tradition. He himself made a copy of Sukur Muhammad's 'Goprehanden Git'. He wrote a poem about Bairatnagar which contained the ballad of 'Ghazi Kalu and Champavati'.⁴⁴ It is not unnatural that his Hari can be easily interchangeable with Niranjan or Allah in his book, god can easily say:

"I am Ram, I am Rahim and I am Hari".⁴⁵

Here, the glory of Hari can easily be expressed in the Nur of Allah.

Thus Manulla's book is within a cross-section of tradition, where 'Baikuntha' is not without 'Behest' where Hari and Niranjan meet each other, change into each other.

Manulla may move in both the cultural worlds and can use the images and arguments borrowing them from two types of cultures and at same time changing them in the process. That gives the text a flexibility and plasticity and also makes Manulla to fashion his arguments more effectively. However, for the time being we may take a short leave from Manulla and may have a look into his times and the world around him.

III

DISTRICT DINAJPUR : PEOPLE AND HISTORY

official

The /history of Dinajpur district has been characteri-
sed by in very clear terms.

"With the breaking of the Dinajpur Raj (1800-1808), the history of the district ceases to be of interest to the outside public. The old saying that "happy is the country that has no history" may fairly be applied to Dinajpur, in which no important events of political nature have occurred to disturb the even tenor of administration and material development".⁴⁶

It is the typical view of the ruler; to him the district is quiet, it has no 'event', therefore, it has no history. But Manulla's Kantanama is full of events, events important for his life and village. His overall concern was with the Cussimbasar Zamindari and its development, underlined with a ryots' concern for extra cess or Abwabs.

In recent literature⁴⁷ it has been argued that in this area, there were few big Zamindaris and families who came from outside the district and maintained control through the Zamindari amlahs' and extensive establishments. On the other hand, in consequence of the breakdown of older Zamindari houses like the Dinajpur Raj family Zamindari officials and substantial peasant proprietors reaped maximum benefit. Through the 'Kutkanidars', they made contact with the Zamindar to pay revenue and transferred burden on the tenants. This class provided the basis of the rise of the big peasant 'Jots' in the later period. In the areas where the land was abundant, it was these big farmers who organised cultivation, controlled the capital and food stock and went on a battle with the Zamindars if the terms were not favourable to them. Buchanan Hamilton has eloquently described their power :

"Whenever one of them is discontented, he gives up his farm and retires with all his dependents to some other estate, where there are waste lands which his stock enables him to clear; the village which he left is then for some years unoccupied unless the landlord can find a fugitive for some kind".

This type of 'Mandal' peasant might create a lot of trouble for the Zamindar, Isaradar and the state; their threat to withdraw from cultivation might take the serious form of defiance from time to time.

Again the small peasants and tenants were in many ways forced, to depend on them, to bow to their will. In another well-known passage Buchanan-Hamilton has underlined the nature of dependance :

"It is true that these large farmers exact enormous profits for whatever they advance to their necessitous dependants but still they are of infinite use to these people, who without their assistance would be instantly reduced to the state of common labourers and often to beggary".⁴⁸

This mutuality of dominance and dependance has also been stressed by later writers. It has also been argued that ordinary ryats did not face outsiders; in fact, they used **to keep away** ~~is~~ the European and native officials.⁴⁹ Only 'Mandals' might be used in making contact with the village people. It seems that Collectors like Grierson and Sherevill were always associated with fresh measurement or tax and as such they were totally unwelcome visitors to the village people. State officials and the Amlahs of the landlords were 'outsiders', a source of potential threat.⁵⁰ In this context of tension and distrust the Kanta-namah, by Manulla Mandal, who belonged to the class of prosperous ryats, has an added significance in projecting the Raj dharma.

One of the major issue in this tense relation is the quantum of Abwab, its justness and its role. In general, abwab is considered as an illegal cess and extra burden on the peasants who, due to their helplessness and due to the superior political power of the landlords, had to pay.⁵¹ In Bengal, there are three categories, abwab, a regular cess to be paid at regular intervals, Mathot (head) payment taken for official need and purpose and Kharcha, payment for the expenses on revenue collection.⁵² Given the situation one may easily be transformed into another. Though the government banned its collection in late 18th century, the peasant had to pay the cess to the Zamindars. An historian has explained it in terms of

'My terious passive sentiment',⁵³ while it seems, that in actual practice, issue to pay the abwab or not has much to do with the social relations between the ryats and the Zamindars. In many cases, in Dinajpur the ryats agreed to pay the abwab, only as a term of compromise. In many areas the Khudkasht peasants used to conceal their actual amount of land under cultivation and opposed any attempt on the part of the Zamindar to measure the land freshly and to reassess the rent. As a result, the ryots agreed to pay some cess as a compensation to the Zamindar provided he did not insist on fresh measurement.⁵⁴ In most of these cases, imposition of the abwabs and 'Mangans' were a 'tacit compromise' between the ryats and the Zamindars, not an easy victory for the landlords. It also varied from estate to estate. It may be found that in an estate where the landlord succeeded in completing a fresh measurement, the peasants of that estate refused to pay any extra cess; in some other estates where the fresh measurement did not take place, the ryats, without any apparent protest, paid various dues in the name of abwab, mangan and Kharcha. There were also reported cases where the peasants themselves took initiative in paying extra to save the prestige of Zamindar on particular occasion and crisis.⁵⁵ At the same time, many Zamindars did not hesitate to take cess from their ryots by force; however, they also in appearance took no pains to show all these dues as 'voluntarily given' by the subjects. They actually called these dues, in local languages, as 'bhiksha' or 'mangan' (a kind of beggary) by the landlord from his subjects.⁵⁶ In other cases, headmen or prosperous ryats had their role in the collection of abwabs. Actually in consultation with them, the Zamindars used to collect abwabs. There are cases when on the occasion of a visit of a new Zamindar to his estates, they big

ryats collected dues from the poorer ryats and offered nazar to the new Master. In lieu of their services, they received Siropa and concessions. The collection of abwabs often became a source of income and of authority of the big over the poor.⁵⁷ However, in all these attempts there was a notion of 'limit', grown out of custom, experience and actual agrarian situation of the area. Excessive collection or continuous imposition of the new abwabs or muthots might well lead to an explosive situation like the 'dhing' against Deby Singh in Rungpur. This has been stressed by a petition of the Zamindars from the area of Rungpur, underlying the role of experience and custom in the behaviour of peasants:

"The ryots of this country objected to engaging for any certain quantity of land and to the revenue being fixed, on account of its being contrary to the custom of country and the never been measured according to ruckba bandundi, they paying revenue only according to the quantity of land actually cultivated by them after deducting majaree or a certain part remitted by them as an engagement. If the settlement be not made with them according to the established custom of the country they desert..... If the bundabast be not concluded agreeably to the customs of the country, the collections will be endangered".⁵⁸ (emphasis mine).

When, there was agrarian disturbance in Baharband against the Zamindar of Kantanagar, the peasant, Zamindar and the government, everybody referred to 'Kanoon' and 'Raj-ul-malk' as a support of their action.⁵⁹ In all these cases, Kanoon or custom does not grow suddenly out of context; it was rooted in the history of that area. The willingness or reluctance to pay Muthat, to allow the landlord to measure the area under cultivation depends on economic logic as well as the

relative position of authority among the landlord, the big ryots and the lesser ryots. On which specific occasion the ryat would pay the 'mathot' voluntarily and on which situation he would oppose it vehemently depends on specific moment. But there was always a 'customary limit' in the relationship between the landlord and the peasant. There is nothing 'written, definitive about it; everybody keeps it vague, judges it within the boundary of 'custom'. Again, the landlords and the cultivators have their own interpretation of the 'Kanoon'. Hence, its boundary is evershifting. In few cases, payment of Mathot happened to be a compromise between two contending groups; in some cases, it was a forced exaction but taken in the name of 'invented tradition'; in some cases it was paid voluntarily owing to a kind of attachment to the overlord, a kind of duty, righty or wrongly felt for the lord in time of its need. But there was always a 'limit', imposed in the name of Canon, custom or religion. Again every region had its own notion and experiences, in the light of which justness of a cess, or the length of a stick or chain for measurement would be determined; its violation might well lead to an explosive situation.

It can be particularly a sore point with the Zamindari family like the House of Cassimbasar. The case of Krishna-Kanta Nandi, the bania of Warren Hasting was typical. Through political connections and through the manipulations of 'izara' contracts and 'benami' transactions Krishna Kanta Nandi slowly built up his extensive landed property all over Bengal since 1764. He soon defeated Rani Bhawani in a series of legal and political games and consolidated his position in Dinajpur by buying two most prosperous contiguous pargana Baharband and Bhitambar in

Rungpur.⁶⁰ Gradually his Zamindari in Kantanagar, in Northern Bengal, developed, as an observer later put it, "having an illegitimate origin in the obscure depths of 18th century politics and intrigues".⁶¹ However, after the death of his son Lokenath Nandi, the Zamindari went under the management of the court of the Wards from 1804 to 1820 during the minority of Harinath Nandy. Harinath Nandy was also involved in prolonged law suits with his relatives and died shortly. And due to the minority of Krishna nath Nandi, the Court of Wards took the charge of the Zamindari (1832-1840). The Amlahs took up the administration and the managers on behalf of the Court of Wards took their share of spoils. They themselves became izaradars. The Zamindari House was vertically split due to the unsavoury tussle between Krishnath Nandi and his advisers on the one side and Rani Susarmayi and Rani Haro Sundari, his mother and grand mother on the other.⁶² Due to two parallel administrations and 'uncontrolled gatherings of the Muffassil Umlahs',⁶³ the condition of the ryots became worse and the income of the estate fell. Even, when Krishnath finally became Zamindar in 1840, the situation did not improve much because of his intemperate behaviour and reckless administration. Finally, in the face of a charge of a wilful murder, he committed suicide in 1844.

Thus there was no less tension and conflict in this 'so-called' peaceful district. It is only the myopic view of the ruling class that failed to recognise it within its limited parameter; Manulla, however, did not forget to recognise some of the events; hence he wrote Kanta-namah, a book to interpret Rajdharma as well as to chronicle the 'events' (not all) during the rule of the Zamindars belonging to the Cassimbasar house.

IV

Rajdharna : The Face of Terror

The source of Rajdharna lies in terror and coercion. Manilla never forgot that he was a ryat, a subject and the Nandi family was the Zamindar. He was asked by God to write the text in a dream but as soon as he woke up, he thought :

"I am terribly afraid to write the exploit of the King, who knows, the King may terribly dislike it; after all I am a subject and he is the King. He would think me a bad subject, a despicable person".⁶⁴

He, time and again, made this announcement that on his own initiative he would not have written this.

"I am a helpless person, so I have to write according to the dictates of God", because,

"I am not sure of the position, my mind is impure. I am writing the exploits of the King seeing a dream. I am extremely afraid; with great fear, I am writing".⁶⁵

"With great fear I am writing" is a sentence, recurring time and again in the first half of the poem. He was also aware of the distance between the ruler and ruled. "Would the King understand my sufferings? The King would understand only his work, how would he recognise my grief?".⁶⁶

Thus throughout his praise and laudatory submission to the landlord, there was a sense of terror in his devotion; that terror was expected from the power of the Zamindar. In all the praise devoted to the overlord, terror was the mark of recognition and by that mark the subordinate differentiated himself from the dominator; it was his basic mark, the essence of the Praja-dharma that he should be terrorised; hence, he, time and again invoked the authority of God, superior to that of the Zamindar. "A cry suddenly has been heard in the sky. If he calls you bad hearing the ballad of his exploits, I myself would judge him there". Hence,

"I began to write the words of God according to his order".⁶⁷

Hence, there is a superior authority over the landlord; he has the power to judge him; and with the support of that superior authority Manulla could dare to write a piece; even in that remote area, the power of the Zamindar was quite visible. As an official wrote about their power in Dinajpur :

Every village, has, it is true, an Officer attached to it called a cotwal Besides the Kotwals, the landholders entertain the pykes, but these men never quit the threshold of the Zamindar's sudder catchery during the night and their duties by day are confined to seizing the ryats and committing all sorts of villence under the orders of their Masters in the prosecution of most objectionable extortion and the most cruel oppression.

..... The proportion of pyke entertained by the Zamindar averages about one per village If a Zamindar has twenty villages, he has but one catchery, at break of day he sends forth his twenty paiks to levy his rents, who towards the close of the day return with the sums, they may have collected, bringing also with them, all such, as either may not have been able to meet suddenness of the demand, or who may have had courage enough to dispute the justness of the claim. This the sum of the pykes' duty".⁶⁸ Buchanan-Hamilton and his own description of the elaborate establishments by which the Zamindar extorted rents and coerced the defiant peasants and had particularly commented upon the power and authority of Zamindari Amlah in Kantanagar.⁶⁹ A peasant like Manulla, however prosperous, had to take cognizance of the power of this established and defined/ deified it "like the moon of the heaven sitting along with his stars, the Zamindar sits with his amlahs ... He has a canopy over his head.... The Chief Diwan is Herkelats sahib... The chief Nasir is gangadhar Ghose, a name dear to god... Durgacharan Babu is the head of the Catchery, he is sheristadar - of the King... Everybody is in his place, the king in his darbar, the whole Sabha is radiant".⁷⁰

The very presence of the Zamindar with all the paraphernalia of power and trappings of the establishment was designed to impress a peasant like Manulla, by creating a halo around authority. The outward expression of the authority overawes the sub-ordinate, making him feel his subordination.

The association of Rajdharm with this terror of power has been stressed through out literature of high-tradition, from the Manusamheta to the Mahabharata, from the Mahabharata to the localised Purana like the Bridhamma Purana,

written and current in mediaeval Bengal.⁷¹ In a typical passage of the Mahabharata, Arjuna, the legendary hero, speaks :

"Oh King, Danda protects and rules the subjects. Even when everybody sleeps, Danda remains awake.

The hise was described as the principal dhamma (Dandan Dharman Bidurbhuda). Most of the sinners do not commit crime in fear of Rajdanda, some sinners desist because of the fear of Yama-danda, some in fear of the other world and some in fear of others. It is the natural world of this world; everything in this orderly world is dependant on Danda (Ebam Samsidhiki Loke Sarvam Danda Pratisthitam)".⁷² In this Marga tradition, Rajdharma and power creating terror, has been indissolubly linked; Danda was a symbol of that link. However, danda doesnot merely mean right to punish. Here, danda was fused with a moral order. Disruption and withdrawal of danda means the **breakdown** of social order, crisis in caste society, even, total reversal of existing pattern of domination and subordination. Everybody is within the pale of the danda, no subject is beyond it. The exercise of danda is natural and good, its abeyance is unnatural and bad. In the clock of moral and immoral, natural and unnatural, danda and dharma becomes synonymous, 'dandan dharman Bidurbhuda'. This type of identity places Rajdharma in the dual world of morality and terror, one has been associated with the other in such a manner that it becomes impossible to draw a boundary between the two.⁷³

This picture is present in the Kantanamah but with a difference. Here, not the King like Arjuna or Bhisma are speaking; there they themselves are the wielders of danda; in Kantanamah, the peasant himself is the subject of terror. Here, Rajdharma has been, in a way, transformed into Prajadharma, the whole exercise of terror by the King has been explained through the behaviour of the peasant. The story begins with the terrorised subject. Krishna-Kanta establishes his Zamindari and his rule.

"Kantababu became King in year seventy-two; he has been declared the Zamindar in 1872 B.S. God has favoured him in disguise... the two annas of the area has been given in the name of Kantababu. The Maharaja has circulated his parwana throughout his bhum or area. He has named the Pargana after his own, Kantanagar".⁷⁴

In this way Manulla has described the establishment of a new Zamindari, exercise of a new power through the parawanas, through the measure of renaming an old name. With all the support from god, because of good work in previous life, Kantababu was able to establish his order (Dohai) in this area. Everyone bowed to him:

"The Pargana belongs to Kantababu. The name of the pargana is after his name. All the subject recognise that and salute (Salam) him".

Again, "Kantababu became the ruler of the Dowani Pargana. He has easily collected the rents from his area". This is possible to an extent because Krishna Kanta plays according to rules and norms, he does not go beyond the limit.

"He takes the rent with ease; he never talks of abwab. All the subjects (Prajas) remain in great happiness, the King is dharma-raj, does not talk of bab. OH, listen, the community of Prajas (Prajar Samaj), god is kind to you".

Everybody is not capable of understanding the goodness of 'Dharmaraj' Kantalu. Every community of the Praja is not ^{the} same. There is both ^a good and loyal as well a bad and defiant praजा. They do not even accept a 'Dharma Raj':

"Rajah got a kingdom (mulk). The name of it is Baharband. To talk about this area would seem to you as puzzling (dhandha). That country is wicked, its people are wicked. There none pays rent, none accepts any authority".⁷⁵

In the official documents, the area of Baharband is known for its tradition of recursive rebellion. There was a revolt against rent-collection during the period of Mirkshir. Later, Rani Bhawani of Natore faced same kind of difficulty. Through manipulation and in face of severe opposition Hastings entrusted the farming of this area in perpetuity from the Rani to Baisnabcharan Nandi, benamdar of Krishna Kanta Nandi. Later he made his own most lucrative Zamindari due to "scientific administration". He and his son Lokenath took the step of measurement of the area under cultivation. The dominant and prosperous Khuckasht ryots of this area sent a strong petition to the authority insisting on their customary rights.

"From ancient times we have had our habitations in the purgunnah of Baharband being the descendants of the original cultivators of the spots we occupy. The former Zamindars taking into consideration the unprofitable quality of the soil

of our purgunnah.... adjusted the revenues of lands held by each of us in the mode known then under the denomination of Bhutwary (for the extent of territory and annexed to each family and house) on the footing of a khudkasht..... during the whole Issassie [sic] of time from Chund Roy to Rani Bhowanny comprehending the succession of five Zamindars never has measurement taken place of the lands of the (?) Khudkasht ryots who have always paid according to their ancient settlement which parties continued. They sent an open threat saying that they had foiled the similar attempt of Rajah Rankantah in a not too distant past. They claimed to be 'Talookdars'. Reacting sharply the Zamindar made his own interpretation of 'Raj-ul-mulk' and universal law of empire. That was that the Zamindar was superior and the ryat inferiors. In his opinion "they are not partners in the Zamindari that they should call in question the increase or decrease" in revenue. "The Zamindar", in his opinion "is answerable and master of good and evil in the Zamindar Mahal" and as such he had the unquestioned right "to enquire into his concerns". Besides, his measurement would make to expose the fraud of big ryats and would relieve small ryats by exempting them from various dues collected from them by the superior peasants. Revenue demand would be more equitable. "Artful ryats" of Baharband under the leadership of Hargovind Bakshi, Mohan Bakshi and Maniram Hazra stopped payments, organised armed bands and drove the agents of the Zamindar from the pargana.⁷⁶ The forces under Goodlad, collector of Rungpur and suppressor of the 'dhing' also crushed the resistance against Krishna-Kanta and his son.⁷⁷

In Manulla's Kantanamah, all these debates round custom and economic logic are absent. The whole story of rebellion has been presented to glorify Rajdharm/Prajadharm by a negative example. Baharband is a counterpoint, an abode of wicked subjects as against good and subjects, stressing the age-old division of villages in the Mughal documents, Mewasi vs rasti.

"It is a very wicked Kingdom and its subjects are wicked". The subjects of Baharband are not poor but rich. "The asset of each ryat is about two to four thousand. Every body has an elephant in his shade. None takes water from other's tank, none walks across others field. The ryots are happy/^{and}not at all misery-stricken. But none accepts Kantababu as Rajah".

In the official document, it is sometimes said that some ryats of this pargana hold far more than thousand acres. Their refusal to pay revenue and accept outside authority is also proverbial. Manulla has underlined the 'innate' defiant nature of these ryats.

"They do not accept the king and do not pay the revenue. They forbade everybody in organised way to pay revenue. They do not know any method except raising/rasing troubles. They gave answer to the Raja : we do not recognise you".

Kanta Babu himself went to the pargana and the ryats retreated and went into hiding.

"The King sent summons to the subjects. From a distant place, they sent answers, we do not recognise you nor would we pay revenue. Return to your own house for your own benefit. If you press much, the consequence may be worse. Then you will not be allowed to return to your house with life".

In the eyes of Manulla, the king ought to be patient, ought to be kind-hearted.

"Even hearing this, the king refused to be angry. He became kind to them because they were the subjects. He repeatedly received such answers". The subjects were relentless, they were "compulsive trouble-mongers", hence, the landlord remained without provision for twenty days. None met him, none recognised him as a landlord. Everything has a limit. The king became angry.

"Hearing this the King became extremely angry and looked like a fire-god. With armed retainers he went there. As a king he had to chastise the pargana sufficiently. Under his authority. Even if he dies in war, he could not relinquish his authority. But who can kill the king because god helps him, With elephants, horses and a large number of soldiers, the king went to war in Baharband".

He gave a fitting reply to the strength of organised peasantry, a reply known to everybody through the ages.

"He could not get hold of any subject; he hence order to burn their house; the whole country had been pillage and burnt. He punished the subject with a right measure. He punished them as they behaved badly. He collected the due rents for three years within one instalment. Thus he

established his authority over the whole area. All the subjects came to senses, remain quiet and return to their own houses".

To burn the houses, to beat the subjects, to take all the due rents within a single-instalment were outcome of the exercise of danda. In Manulla's opinion, this is the only recourse open to Kanta-Babu. His subjects refused to obey him, they did not respond to his rightful summons. By doing this, they have transgressed the limit of Prajadharna, violated the code of behaviour sanctioned for the subjects. In order to rectify this lapse, it is but necessary on the part of the King to use power. Without danda, the bad praja can not be good, can not be restored to the right path. Kantababu was the greatest upholder of dharma, and dharma raj, hence :

"He punished them as they behaved badly".

To establish authority is the beginning of Raj dharma and to punish the subject, deviant from his own dharma, is its sacred duty. In the last resort thus through the exercise of terror, danda, prajadharna was restored to its rightful place, Rajdharna's quality has been fully vindicated.

"Everybody henceforth accepts his order; every body paid rent even cess on the grazing land. But the king is kindness personified. He with justice (inself) forbade to take cess for ever. Thus through this measure he collected his rent, renamed the pargana as Kantanagar. In the pargana of Kantanagar, every body accepts the name of Kantababu by saluting him".

Because of the judicious use of Rajdharma and danda, "the name of Kantababu would remain for ever as long as sun and moon would rise". He who would not understand the glory and significance of Rajdharma "is" according to Manulla "a thoroughbred savage".⁷⁸

Refusal to be terrorised by the danda is a crime on the part of any subject. The price for this violation is costly. Yet, the danda of the King is not arbitrary or blind.

Krishna Kanta gave the subjects a chance for rectification, he condoned their initial defiance. His exercise of power is tempered by kindness, is limited by justice or insaf. In the eyes of Manulla, the refusal of the subject to follow the norms of Praja dharma, to obey the just order of the King deserves to be punished. His challenge to the power of the authority on its own was not to be tolerated. At the same-time, the judgement of the subject would be done according to 'insaf', would be moderated by kindness. Hence there are limits both to Praja-dharma and Raj-dharma though to terrorise and to be terrified are essential to these. These limits to Raj danda, right to coerce on the part of the ruler and duty to obey on the part of subject have been expressed in the notion of Insaf, in the act of imposing or opposing abwabs.

V

Limit to Rajdharm : Nature on Insaf

Though Rajdharm belonged to the world of moral order, it had a practical side. In the day-to-day existence payment of rent regularly is a point around which the relation between a landlord and his peasants revolve round. To collect rent is the right of the Zamindar and in the opinion, the peasants are duty bound to pay. But to measure the land, to collect revenue and then to ask for abwab and muthot are ^a clear ^{instruct of} oppression, be-insaf, zulm. Bab, time and again, limits the quantum of rent, this is the principle which Manulla holds. We have seen how the issue to measure land vis-a-vis to collect abwabs became bone of contention between the landlord and his powerful substantial peasants in the late 18th and early 19th century in Dinajpur and Rungpore. In the late 18th century Lokenath rejected the demand of his Khudkasht ryats for non-measurement of land and instead to take some cess as compensation. In 1818 the powerful ryots of Baharband and Gayabari refused to accept Patta and ultimately Rani Swarnamayi's relentless pressure broke the back in the late nineteenth century. However, in other areas Khudkasht ryots were not so powerful; they were losing their ground on the issue of measurement earlier. Hence, gradually collection of abwabs became the main issue, issue of measurement of hidden land under cultivation loses its importance relatively. At least in Manulla's mind, abwab was all important, here the Zamindar transgresses his limit. After praising, Nal, Harischandra, Karna, Bali and Yuddhisthir, all well known mythological heroes, Manulla introduced a King called Srischandra, his own

creation "Srischandra was a King and a great archer ... None was able to match him ... He passed his so many days happily. Then he became a victim of a bad intention after a long period". What is this bad intention? He began to take muthots for the annaprasam ceremony of his son, for death-ritual of his father and for the marriage ceremony of his son. As a consequence, "God became angry with him. The peasants suffered much for the payment of abwab. God in his own hand made the King sinner".⁷⁹ Srischandra's name can not be found in any Purana. To make a counter-image to good kings like Bali, Nal and Yuddesthir, Manulla created this character. To collect muthots on all these ceremonies are clearly oppression. In the structure of Puranaic tales, he depicted his own experience of an oppressive landlord. With same breadth he places Krishna Kanta and his successors within that puranic tradition.

Kantababu followed the rules of Rajdharma because "he does not even utter the word Abwab, he is dharma raj". Under the rule of his son Lokenath the subjects were very happy because "he never made oppression in the name of abwab".⁸⁰ Krishnath also belonged to the same category. Yuddhistir in the Mahabharata belongs to the same tradition.

"Yuddhisthir was famous in this world for his truthfulness. He never uttered ~~the~~ the word 'abwab' in his mouth".⁸¹ In the Mahabharata, obviously, no discussion about abwab was there. But Manulla had transformed Yuddhisthir in the image of a just Zamindar at Dinajpur. The expressive sign of that justness or insaf was not to collect illegal cess and abwabs from the peasants. But this figure of the King was quite present in the ballad of Mainamati and Gopichandra, so popular with illiterate Muslim peasants, weavers and Yugi agricultural

labourers and lime-makers of northern Bengal. Through the work of Sakur Muhammad Manulla was quite familiar with it. In the kingdom of 'Manikchandra', 'the great righteous king', the tax was per plough and everybody was prosperous. The images of prosperity were identical with those used by Manulla to describe Baharband ryats. The bad Amlah came from outside and advised the Rajah, among other things, to take abwabs. The whole estate went astray. The ryats made appeal to god and according to his advice, they collectively cursed him.

"The King became greedy after wealth (Dhan-Kangali). Dharma Niranjana would judge it". Ultimate the half-naked peasants uttered 'death' through their curse and caused his death. Through this, the anger the distaste against the 'dhana-Kangali', greedy king reverberates like an echo.⁸² Manulla, here, in its description, is close to Gopichander yet rather than to any sastra literature.

In Manulla's Kantanama, this oppression has been done by the officials of the Zamindar. Their presence was immediate and real to the peasantry; the landlords used to remain in a far off places, Cassimbasar and Calcutta.

"His one house is in Banjita, Cassimbasar. The King has another house in the city of Calcutta". In the mahals, the amlas are all in all. During the time of the minority of the King, of the management by the Court of wards, their oppression increased. Manulla gave a typical description of the situation during the period of minority of Rajah Harinath.

"The amlahs became defaulters in revenue-payment and took debts. Putting all the blames on the ryats, he took izara and also incurred the losses of the Zamindar. In the auction beat for payment of revenue, they took izara in the city and totally ruined the estate. They took up abwabs in so many heads and sold and resold the pargana".⁸³

These are all Manulla's own experience as a peasant. It was amply confirmed by official documents. Ijaradar's oppression was perhaps, even greater. During the time of minority of Krishna-nath, the izaradar got hold of the Pargana.

"Krishnanath was a minor. He does not know anything the Sahibs became the representative of the King. They have entrusted the Prajas with yaradar. Shyamkishor made arrangement in the collectorate".⁸⁴

According to official document, Shyamkishore was an active patron of a faction of local amlahs and was "a man of business and is well acquainted with and engages in speculations".⁸⁵ He was a typical product of the permanent settlement, a relentless pursuer after profit from rent and land grabbing. Manulla gave an eloquent description of this man and his activities.

"He knows only the language of whipping. No body dares to **say** anything to him. With a single summon he demanded "all the rents, current and due. The Pargana trembled before him. With an order ~~from the~~ Collectorate he collected three years' due rent within a three month. He took abwabs from the ryots in **guise** of many issues. He sold everything, even the utensils. He does not pay heed to anything even to honour (Burumat)".

Izaradar did not pay respect to any custom, any natural calamity, invocation to izat or Hurumat cut no ice with him. The peasants fled.

"There was no rain. There was no cultivation, there was no prosperity. For three years rainfall was less, the cultivation was hampered, the position of the peasants became worse. The people desert and fly away (Palataka) from the pargana".⁸⁶

It is a day-to-day experience of the peasant of rural Bengal. There was nothing new in it, in their selling of essential to meet the excess demand from rapacious farmers and agents of the Zamindars and to desert the estate after a limit. In the songs of Gopichandra, the singer says :

"The peasants sell their ploughs, their yoke and all the agricultural implements, to meet the demand of rent, they even sale their own infants".⁸⁷

In the contemporary documents,⁸⁸ there was numerous appeals by the peasants to the Zamindar against various types of oppression done by their local agents and the farmers.

In this context of actual experience of the activities of the immediate local oppressors, the image of izaradar and local amlahs had been constructed. In this way, the peasants had a distaste of immediate authority and had an expectation from higher, distant authority. Their devotion to higher authority had, in many times, been strengthened by the oppression of lower authority. Manulla made this distinction throughout his writing. Amlahs and izaradars were not the King but they are their had agents because they do not conform to the dictates of 'honour' or 'hurumat'. They merely took

the opportunity of the minority of Rajah Harinath. "The king is not in his kingdom, hence they took cess by cheating the ryats and made them suffer. ... If they were the King, they, due to law of kindness, would have protected the subject. But they are outsiders, hence, cruel and take much from the ryats".

Shankishore was not a King. Hence, "only King has the quality of kindness. Others are devoid of it".

Something happens with Krishnath. He was also a minor, hence there was no end to the suffering of the subjects.

"Krishnath was minor, there is no king in the reins. The whole kingdom is in disarray, the ryats are helpless". What is the way out of this misery? Time and again, Manulla said that the subjects should pray to God for a King in the Kingdom.

"We are flying and do not think of God. How many days after would we get a King? Saying this the subjects began to pray collectively that let the King be major and let him take the charge of the kingdom".⁸⁹

But why is this that the king is more just, responsible and kind than the izaradar and anlah? To answer this question Manulla went beyond particular, he postulated a general principle around which Raj-dharma **revolves** round. To take abwab or not, to be generous or not, to obey the preceptors or not, are merely outward expressions of a general principle of dharma. They are the specific signs, there may be numerous variations in those signs in a specific situation. From now on, Manulla went beyond specific situation and enters into a general notion of religious order.

"The king as a father looks after his kingdom with kindness. Others oppress you with injustice and do not know the kindness. Without a father, the son becomes helpless like a destitute in Nadia. He has no parent, who would ask for him? In exactly this way, the praja is son, the king is the father. If the father leaves him, the praja becomes miserable. The father is both preceptor and friend to praja, he is equivalent to god Niranjan. The king becomes father, the praja becomes son. Who else would understand the worth of the Praja as son?"⁹⁰

The crucial feature of Rajdharma is this relationship of father and son, imposed on that of the King and his subject. It is a relationship, in colloquial language, of 'ma-baap'.⁹¹ The father at the same time punishes and looks after his son. This duality of chastisement and protection is the basis of Rajdharma. The authority of the father and submission of the son is matched by the helplessness of the son in the absence of the father. Manulla cited examples one after another from the Puranas in support of his theory. Nal, Bali, Karna and Yuddhistir all went to heaven directly because of the fact.

"They look after their subjects as sons (Putra Bhava Palan Kaila),⁹² on the other hand, Srishchandra was rebuked by the messengers of Yama in the hell "being a king, you did not care for your subject as your son".⁹³

All the Zamindars of Cassimbazar Raj were made in the model of mythical heroes, their exact replicas. Krishna Kanta, Lokenath and Krishmath, every one looks after subjects as their own sons.⁹⁴ In this way, the kings of the

puranas and the good Zamindars of Nandi family all became dharmaraj, time and space merged them together, there could be no difference between the Satya-Jug and the eighteenth and the nine-teenth century. In the Mahabharatas and the Puranas, the same ideas and same epithets are expressed to explain Rajdharma, to explain the relation between the ruler and his subjects.⁹⁵ In the Bhagvata, it has been said, the Prajas, being sons, were even entitled to offer Pindas, after the death of the King. Again they remain before the king as "children before a father".⁹⁶

In this notion there was a fusion, a compromise between two opposing ideas of dominance and subordination. In the consciousness of the peasant, the king or lord is duty bound, engaged in looking after him. As a father is essential to a family, so a king is to his kingdom. Without father the family is broken, so without king, the subjects became helpless. The authority of the father to his son in a family is taken as 'given', as 'natural'. So the lord's authority over his domain, by this analogy, becomes 'natural' and 'everlasting'. This analogy from family to society, from the society to the state captures and comprehends various levels of authority and submission and makes it a part of a whole order. Hence a landlord or King may be bad but monarchy and landlordism are good and beneficial. The king has certain duties towards the peasant, duties not as a part of the legal right of the peasant but derived from general moral and social order. The peasant had duties towards the King. Everybody, belonging to this hierarchical order, accepts chains of duty from inferior to superior, accepts his responsibility as a part of moral obligation rather than anything else.

It is just not a fiction of the mind of Manulla. In her own way, Rani Bhavani may harp on the same theme. In 1775, her petition, against the izaradar to the company, deserves attention.

"I am an old Zamindar and not being able to see the griefs of my ryots. I agreed to take the country as farmer. The high ground of Rarh yielded nothing for want of water and in Bhaduria, which is very low the gentlemen (the officials of the company) took the poolbandi and in August 1773, the banks broke and the ryats' ground and their crops failed being overflowed with water. I am a Zamindar; so was obliged to keep the ryats from ruin and gave what ease to them by giving them time to make up their payments and requested the gentlemen would in same manner give me time when I would pay up the revenues but not crediting me, they were pleased to employ Dulal Roy as Sezawal These two men (Dulal Roy and Paran Bose) ... have depopulated and destroyed the country. I am an old Zamindar. I hope I have committed no fault. My country is plundered and the ryats are full of complaints. For this reason I am ready (to offer the same amount and will take care that the sircar suffers no loss".⁹⁷

It is, here, irrelevant to judge the genuineness of her concern for the ryats. The language of the petition and the invocation of duty as an old Zamindar is the thing to be noticed; it is in this specific role Rani Bhavani communicated to the superior authority; the rationale was the demand of duty for her subjects. Again, in the history of Dinajpur Raj, an anecdote expressing some kind of mutual responsibility has been reported. When Raja Radhanath was going to be almost bankrupt, the headmen of all villages came

forward, sought a meeting with King for an arrangement so that they were able to assist the landlord in this acute crisis. The King agreed, pitched a tent and called a 'solomn ceremony' and dressed himself accordingly. But at the last moment he cancelled it at the instigation of bad and designing amlahs.⁹⁸ In this anecdote again, the mutuality of the duty has been stressed and that was made legitimised through ceremony and dresses. It is the King's discretion to fix the moment of chastisement and kindness. The subject as son was dutybound to obey it. Again like father, the ruler ought to remember, without the ruled, he did not exist, he coerces only to do good. Two opposing interests thus appeared to be complementary, cemented by the ideology of duty and dharma. In a famous passage in the Mahabharata, it was thus expressed "The first body of the subject is king, the subject is also like the body of the king. Without the king, there is no country, without the country there is no king".⁹⁹ In this ideology, the complementariness of the ruler and the ruled upholds the existing order and through this, the ideology of the ruler influences that of the ruled.

But more than this, in this process, in the Kantanamah, the specific day-to-day grievances of the peasant expressed finally in terms of a moral language, permeated by religiosity. To take abwab or muthot have been judged in the scale of the relationship between a father and a son, their duties as exemplified by the action of local Zamindars. What is transitory appears to be eternal, what is specific appears to be general, what is ephemeral appears to be transcendental. For this, all references to the traditions, the smritis the puranas and the saying of the wise men are given. The specific role of myth and tradition is this that

it transforms mundane into heavenly, natural into supernatural; the personal and historical experience of Manulla became generalised beyond space and time.¹⁰⁰ Rantanamah is a 'history', written in the tradition of namahs, the Shahnamah, the Alangir-namah or the Akbarnamah. But the specific history of Rantanamah intends to be key to eternal order-Rajdharma; the life of the Cassimbazar Raj family is **merely a** manifestation of it. Hence, the name of Rantanamah can be interchangeable with Raj dharma, Bali, Karna or Yuddhistir can easily take place of Krishna Kanta, Krishnanath and Harinath. There seems to be no contradiction in it; from its own daily experiences, the peasants' view extends to, as if, an eternal 'dharmic rule'.¹⁰¹ From the specific figure of a Zamindar refusing to take cess to the image of a ruler behaving like a father is a transition through which the peasant express his view of righteous king in language of religiosity where a deviation would not lead not only to physical oppression but it would be also a violation of 'dharmic' law. Beyond the extration of surplus and the quantum of rent, the issue became one of religious and righteous act or sacrilege of an order.

In this scale of sin and merit, sacrilege and benediction, Manulla finally speaks of Rajdharma/Prajyadharna, the function of supreme authority over the higher ones "There was a dharma-raj over everybody. He is aware of every manifestation, of Adharma. He is always in favour of Hid (truth) and against Nahug or untruth. To claim anything without right or untruthfully is tantamount to death".¹⁰²

'Insaf', 'Iman', 'Hurumat', 'Huq', all these are frequently used by Manulla in his discussion on Rajdharma. All these have a moral connotation beyond mere economic grievance. If the subject does not pay rent or his dues to the king, he is morally punishable, he is doing adharna. He is answerable not only to the king but to God also.

"He, who, being subject, cheats/^{the}king of his due is thoroughly be-iman. The king may not know his loss but god, sitting above, notes it. The Niranjana in his hand apportions punishment for the fault".¹⁰³

Manulla also speaks of disruption of Rajdharma by the ruler himself and its consequences. There we enter into the world of heaven or Baikuntha and of hell.

VI

Transgression of Rajdharma : Story of Harinath

In the consciousness of Manulla, Baikuntha, abode of Hari and Marak or hell are two distinct worlds meant for two distinct kind of people. Those who ruled according to Rajdharma go to Baikuntha and those who violated his norms go to hell.

"If you do good, your place would be ~~zxx~~ Baikuntha. If you do other-wise, you would be fit for hell". There is a clear distinction between the world/word of dharma and adharna, sin and merit.

"The place in opposition to dharma was narak or hell, ruled by yama. The king of Baituntha is Dharmaraj nath Niranjan".¹⁰⁴

Brishchandra and Shyamkishor went to hell for ever and were rightly tortured. From Yudhisthir to Lokenath, everybody goes easily to heaven because they acted according to Rajdharma.

The life of Harinath, son of Lokenath Nandi and father of Krishnath, is not so simple. Harinath was a righteous king and got a son like Krishna-nath. But during the last days of life he deviated from the principles of Rajdharma. This incident is crucial for the narrative of Kantanamah and Manulla, at least, twice described the event. A peasant went to Harinath and complained against the oppression of izaradar. Harinath listened but did not answer. For thirteen days he waited but the king failed to come to his darbar. The peasant became penniless. On the last day the determined peasant found the landlord sitting in his darbar. Manulla then wrote :

"The sentry did not allow him to enter into darbar. Being forbidden, he made a cry for the king. The king heard the cry of the peasant but did not respond... Being a king he refused to listen to the complaints of the subject. The sentry forbade his entry. The Braja returned while crying".

The peasant had an expectation, had a demand for justice from the superior authority against the immediate oppressor. That hope has been belied. The subject cursed his own fate, not the landlord.

"The praja said, the king does not listen to my complaints. Nath Miranjan probably has apportioned sorrow for me. Oh fate, what shall I do, what shall we do. Being a king he does pay heed to my sorrow... I am finished".

He was also penniless and hungry. None has provided food in the house of landlord "I am craving for food because of hunger That subject remain starved for days He began to beg for food and then was able to walk".

Thus Manulla brought two specific charges against Raja Harinath.

"Being a king he does not attend his darbar everyday. He does not listen to the complaints of the subject. It is fault number one. The subject had to take food in the house of king through his own expenses. He remains starved. It is also another fault". As a consequence,

'Niranjan wrote gunha (sin) in the name of the righteous king". Harinath went to Baikuntha. He remained there with unease.

"He does not get cool wind, he is always suffering from summer heat. He is in extreme unease. He is sweating, he cannot withstand summer heat any more. He is suffering and began to pray to god at Baikuntha itself". The god came in the disguise of a Brahmin and started a dialogue. He explained the cause of suffering and said that this duration of the suffering for this sin is without limit (be-miyadi). The king pleaded for some remission. With kindness god said "well, something will be remitted but ten-annas of (sin) would remain for the cause of the subject. As soon as the Brahmin said this, six anna of suffering has been lessened. The king realise that the Brahmin itself is g^o

'Paap' and 'Punya' are the theme, discussion is going on in Baikuntha between the zamindar and God. Yet the peasant measured that sin in terms of the quantum of rent. As the king used to respond kindly to the petition and occasionally used to remit a portion of rent, god, in response to Harinath's petition, did the same. The relation between landlord and peasant has been replicated at Baikuntha as a relation between Hari and Harinath.

In the peasant consciousness ^{the} otherly world is a replication of this world in an alienated form. The hell is physical, the torture in the hell can be felt sensuously. As the peasants suffers from the physical torture at the zamindar's establishment, the bad king suffers similarly at hell. ¹⁰⁶

Similar is the condition is heaven. There is also peace and heaviness, physical and sensuous. In the Baikuntha described by Manulla, there is enough and various food, that can be tasted.

"With many dishes, rice has been served. The plates and the water-pot are made of gold ... The king eats rice with great relish. There are milk, curd, various sweet-dishes, khir and butter. After taking his meal, the king took the betel-leaf and began to smoke happily in a golden hookah. the bed is full of quilts and pillows and is heavily decorated. The king gets his throne in Baikuntha". ¹⁰⁷

Manulla has projected his own image of zamindari luxury in Baikuntha. P.V. Kane has suggested that in popular usage, Baikuntha or heaven is dreamt as an abode where every unfulfilled desire may be satisfied; and hell is the product of our repressed anxiety and fear. In heaven, luxury and

beautiful damsels are countless, there is no end to enjoyment. And this has been calculated in terms of our work in this world, "a sort of profit and loss account". The kind of meritorious deed that would bring a corresponding amount of enjoyment in heaven and that kind of sin that would bring amount of suffering in hell is well-known, particularly to the Brahmins and their clients.¹⁰⁸ Manulla wrote,

"Whatever he spent for the work of the kingdom he would get back in Baikuntha".

Harinath has a physical existence in Baikuntha.

"His health has been broken and he has become pale".¹⁰⁹

But, through this description of heaven and hell Manulla, above all, upholds the hierarchy of authority. In as much as the peasant could appeal to the King and Zamindar against the farmer and his agents. He is above the izaradar and amlah. In the case of a lapse on the part of the zamindar, the peasant might appeal to the still higher authority of god who would take necessary steps.

"God is the king of the world. He rules all men as his subjects and looks after them as father".¹¹⁰

"You are my king. There is no harm that I am your subject. Be kind to me".¹¹¹ So, the landlord is answerable to higher authority, is also subject of punishment by him. The king also became afraid and began to cry in anticipation of punishment.

"Hearing all these the king felt uncomfortable. He began to cry and tears flow down his cheek".¹¹²

This is an age-old belief of the peasant. The more the distant/authority greater did ~~graters~~ the peasants had a trust in it against immediate authority.

But the lapses in this Rajdharma is temporary. Stability and order is natural. And, in Manulla's narrative, the restoration of stability comes through the sacrifice of the subject. Harinath committed lapses because of his bad behaviour with his praja; he suffers for that. But another ordinary Praja was entrusted to propagate the exploits of his dynasty by order of god in order to relief him from his sin or 'gurha'. In order to earn this the subject has to lose everything, his family and his houses.

"For my exploits the writer would suffer. Thus the king laments over the misfortune of the subject. The king said he who writes the exploits of our dynasty suffers for us Our exploits have been propagated in this world. For that my subject has lost his sons and fathers".¹¹³

But Manulla is dutybound to do this; any subject is dutybound to help the lord in his distress.

"Do the work in the interest of the king. You can be sure that your work would be everlasting".¹¹⁴

Thus the initiative of the subject is recognised, but in the favour of the lord, not against him. Manulla is here successar of Kalu Dom, a figure of old trustworthy servant. Kalu sacrificed his life and Lau sen his overlord, became victorious. Manulla suffered immensely and yet he

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But there is a gap. Raya Harinath went to Baikuntha and his dialogue with God has been reported in a direct speech. There is no reference to Manulla as a story-teller, a writer; we can not guess even how Manulla came to know of the dialogue between God and the King. God did not even .diverge his plan to Harinath.

"Hearing this, the King asked, again, how would you propagate my exploits, please tell me. The Brahmin said, what you to do by hearing that ? I am promising that I shall do that".

God became the direct actor, he came to forefront, he addressed himself,

"Nath how began to think in his mind. How would he make the exploits of King known to this world ?"¹¹⁶

He selected Manulla and Manulla, again, came back to the narrative with a self-introduction. He also met Krishnath. Krishnanath recognised his service.

"The King said he who has written my exploits has suffered for us".

Raja Harinath accepted

"That Prajah has done a service for me for eternity".

The King appealed to God

"Like a son, he saves me from sufferings give him good senses always, Oh Narayan".¹¹⁷

Thus the terror with which Manulla begins his narrative vanishes in the end. Harinath and Krishnath are pleased with him, he has been compared with a good son. This transformation from a terrorised ryot to a son-like subject is certainly an important change. And ultimately all the members of Krishna Kanta Nandi's dynasty were able to meet each other in Baikuntha when Lokenath asked Harinath

"How is your mother Srimati ?" ¹¹⁸

Here we can locate twists and turns in the subaltern mentality. Though he was afraid both of King and God, he never ceased to talk of the role of the subject; he described the limits to and lapses of Rajdharma, the means to restore it. And Harinath was forced to commit lapses because Manulla is destined to write the book,

"Niranjan has confused the King because of the need to write the exploits". ¹¹⁹

Manulla carries the narrative, makes the landlord recognise the importance of the subject; to talk of his initiative even Harinath is scared of further punishment because of Manulla's suffering.

"Thinking this Harinath is feeling uneasy.... I am suffering so much for a subject. Now, there may be more sufferings stored for me for another subject. Thinking this the King began to pray to his lord Niranjan, please do not make me to mere of a sinne ". ¹²⁰

At the end of the narrative, Karinath, instead of Manulla, seems to be afraid. Here, in the exercise of Rajdharma the King seems to be restricted, the praja has enough role to play.

But, in the ultimate analysis, the order came from God, the feeling belongs to be landlord, union takes place only in heaven and the bad kings or his agents are an oppressors to be punished only in hell. Manulla is entrapped in 'religiosity', 'he has', as Marx would have said 'either not yet found himself' or 'has already lost himself again'.¹²¹ Here, all the initiative of the peasant are not meant for his own liberation but for the service of his master. His own works belong to/other, the fruits of his initiative has been taken away by **his** master, he becomes an 'alienated self', in this case, he cannot recognise his own work properly, he comes under the yoke of the others. As he searches the source of his own initiative in other worlds, he loses control over the real world.¹²² Religion here becomes the 'opium of the people'.

Conclusion :

It seems that we have put much emphasis on the moral and religious order in order to understand some elements in the consciousness of the subordinate. This sense of order lies in their/It derives its specific character, concrete form from the daily experience of the peasants in a specific region or place. 'Insaf', 'Huk' or Hurumat are general rations. But whether to take 'abwab' is a right or not is to be determined by the particular situation of a particular

area in which a subaltern is placed. In Kantanamah it seems that the presence of ^{the} Company has not been thought as a major break. There is reference to the greater insecurity during the management of the Court of Wards or reference to 'Hercolets' sahib but that **Manulla** was not particularly by it perturbed at least in the narrative. But in a similar poem written by Krishna-Haridas about a peasant rebellion against the dewan in Dinajpur, **however**, Goodlad, the collector, has the crucial role to play. Thus the experience of the peasant varies from area to area; the specific expression of the belief in dharna may well have been different.

In this very context of religiosity, there is 'dharmic protest'. Be-insaf of Narinath leads to the anger of God, he has been saved only through the sacrifice of his subject. Goodlad's be-insaf leads to the peasant rebellion in Idrakpur; Manikchandra's greed raises the wrath of the peasant who cursed him to death. In each case it seems, Rajdharna has been violated in some way or other; how the retribution has taken place, again, depends on the specific history of domination and subordination in that area. But all these activities always mean to restore order, to maintain balance, to keep a unified and homogenous image of Rajdharna. Rarely **itself that has been** questioned. This dharna consist of certain ideas. First, there is always a hierarchical notion of authority. An authority may be wrong, there is always a scope to appeal to higher authority against that. One may appeal to a zamindar against yaradar; one may appeal to the Company or queen against **one's** overlord; one may look redress from God or dharna against the Company or the queen. So, it may be that the existence of several types of authority makes the peasant to chose his area of appeal and

initiative at the same time it finally restricts him to the submission to one or another authority. Secondly, there is always an element of self-sacrifice for superior authority. Puru makes his sacrifice for his father, Kalu don makes sacrifice for his master. Thirdly, there is always an insistence on duty. Both the King and the subject have to perform certain duty. The domination subordination relationship has been clocked in a mutuality of duty, in an all pervasive image of father/son that ^{is} included within every other relations, king/subject, god/his devotee. Each can be used in the place of other, thus legitimising the relation of domination, giving it an universal image, making it a natural order. Everybody seems to be part of that order, justice would be done in one place or another; heaven and hell are also subject to that other. This illusion became universal, transcending all time and place. Fourthly, a subordinate, having belief in the order, often fails to recognise his own initiative, he places it in ^{the} other world. Loss of this consciousness makes him ~~to~~ feel alienated even at the moment of his defiance and rebellion, from his project.

Hence, it is probably wrong to see the roots of collaboration in the mentality of the subaltern only in his desire of getting material benefit, in the politics of buying up. His backwardness lies in his world-view, a view suffused with religiosity. Again its role is never one-sided. From ~~the~~ recent researches it can be clearly shown that time and again the subordinate made rebellion because of a continuing faith in moral order, because of the urge to get back a lost world. 'Rajdharma' can be a source of explosion at that moment. In fact, the praja recognises his first identity

as *praja* (subject) against the *rajah* (as king) in terms of *Rajdharna/prajadharna*; he is becoming conscious of the marks of his distinction. That is first step of self-recognition without which no rebellion is possible. The subaltern is not ^epassive but an active agent. His submission is not to a particular King or to a lord but to an universal law like *Rajdharna*. Even at the moment of abject submission, he, in his own way, internalises the principle of *Rajdharna*, on whose basis he might recognise or challenge any violation of it; in some cases, he can easily cross the limit of submission and can take part in the act of overthrowing a ruler; to him there is no contradiction in it. From the same belief structure he can rationalise his defiance as well as his submission. In Rungpur the peasant can raise slogans against *Devi Singh* 'Dine Zalim Kutha asht' (the religion of the oppressor is short). In one context religion teaches ^{one}to be submissive, again in another context, that makes people to rebel. Again at the moment of insurrection, the peasants implicitly accept the structure of authority, within them *Rajbhakti* for 'a King' is ever present. That urge again is 'natural' and 'legitimate'. In some cases, it may also happen that open rebellion can be termed 'be-insafi', 'be imani'. Thus collaboration and resistance, the two elements in the mentality of subalternity, have their own boundary and limits. But these are then, may easily change into another; one ends and other begins. Thus in a pre-capitalist society or in a semi-feudal culture the roots of both collaboration and resistance lies in religiosity, in the praise of *Rajdharna*, in the perception of *Praja-dharna*.

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[For specific references and detailed quotations, please see the Bengali version of this article in the Amustup, autumn number, 1987. However, essential notes and references have been cited. All the translations are mine.]

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