

EDUCATION IN MURSHIDABAD IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: A STUDY OF THE BACKWARDNESS OF BIDI WORKERS IN EDUCATIONAL INTEREST

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ABSTRACT

The word education comes from the Sanskrit 'shas' dhatu. Again, if education is used in the sense of the word knowledge/wise, the word knowledge comes from the Sanskrit 'bid' dhatu which means knowledge¹. The Arabic word 'Ilam' means also knowledge. Murshidabad great interest in education from ancient times. From ancient times to the middle ages, education continued to evolve based on religious alignment. In the modern era, the western education system developed with the help of the British, but it did not develop properly in Murshidabad, where the bidi industry was impure. The illiterate bidi workers could not focus on education even today because of poverty. The attendance of percentage of the students in schools of bidi industrial area proves it. Most of the bidi workers came from backwardness of society.

Keywords: Backwardness, bidi workers, illiterate, bidi industries and Murshidabad District.

INTRODUCTION

It is narrated in the Sanskrit's Literature about education that- educational San Perhaps attracted by the said Sanskrit quotation, - "Maataa shatruo pitaa vairi yen balo na pathitaa", meaning – Mother and Father who do not encourage their child's education are his/her enemies. "Na gyanen sadrusham pavitram iha vidyate" meaning - Nothing is more sacred than the education (knowledge)².

Murshidabad has had an old interest in the field of education since ancient times. Karnasuvarna Rakta Mrittika Mahavihara is a shining proof of it. On the other hand, in Islam, the words of the last Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) 'Talabal Ilme Fari Jatun' means-it is mandatory to achieve the knowledge for all³.

Inexhaustible to anyone who seeks it. It is probably based on this message that medieval rulers opened schools or madrasas in different parts of Murshidabad. The flourishing almost sick Khariji-madrasah (school) scattered in different parts of Murshidabad district and the emergence of many scholars and writers can be mentioned as a shining proof of this. In the same way, a new horizon of a modern education system was opened in Murshidabad district due to contact with the British in the last phase of the middle ages, but after the battle of Palashi, when the power and the capital of Bengal was simultaneously transferred to Calcutta, the glory and economy of Murshidabad gradually decreased. After the plundering of Palashi, Murshidabad went below the poverty line, but England gradually became a more capitalist country in the world. As a result, industrial goods entered Murshidabad very easily due to the improvement of transportation system when the Industrial Revolution took place in England. The financially distressed industries of Murshidabad were gradually destroyed. Actually

The industries were gradually destroyed by the economic crisis. Disenchanted with the English policy, the unemployed laborers found the beedi industry, made in indigenous technology, and they adopt it very easily. Bidi industry were flourished in different parts of Murshidabad including Aurangabad, Dhulian, Farakka. Even today, living food and bidi workers are moving away from education and culture.

The importance of Murshidabad in India from ancient to modern periods is undeniable. At the end of the middle ages in India, the modern era began from here. Similarly, the freedom struggle to build an independent India also started in Murshidabad

From 1857. 1879, Murshidabad got its modern shape. As there is no 2021 census for carona

According to the 2011 census, Murshidabad has an area of 5324 sq km, population of 7103407, literacy rate is 66.59 percent, and population growth rate is 21.9 percent. Bhagirathi river flows from north to south in the district, the eastern side of the river is known as Bagri and the western side is known as Radha. Murshidabad district West Bengal in terms of location

Located almost in the middle of the state⁴. The education system in Murshidabad is centuries old. Swadhanicheta Garh – Karnasubarna, the capital of Raj Shashanka

It was a famous metropolis of ancient Bengal. Hiu-en-tsang, the famous Chinese pilgrim and traveler of the seventh century Karnasubane is described for the first time in its description. The Department of Archeology of Calcutta University in the 1960s Excavations prove that there is ample evidence of a student hostel and study center at Karna Suvarna. A university dating back to the 3rd and 4th centuries has been found here through the excavations. Vikramsheela and with this university Nalanda University has considerable similarities. But it was not comparable to Nalanda in size and fame. Hiu-en-Tsang came to Karna Suvarna of Murshidabad in about 638 AD. His travelogue (C-U-Ki) and It is known from biographical books that in the fifth century BC, Gautama came Karnasubarna-Mahabihar of Murshidabad district via Champa (modern Bhagalpur), Rajmahal, to spread the message of Buddhism. He Stayed there for 7 days and propagated the message of self-righteousness. 4000 students and sramanas of this Mahavihara or university to get education Hiu-en-Tsang saw. According to his description, Murshidabad residents were prosperous, educated, learned and characterful person⁵. During the Pala period, several Buddha Viharas and educational centers existed in the present-day Jangipur-sub-divisional area in the north-western edge/corner of Murshidabad district. Even during the Sen period Murshidabad was known as a center of education. The system of teaching was done through Pali, Prakrit, and Sanskrit medium.

Centers of Islamic education and cultural practices were established in important places in the district during the medieval period and later through political and cultural exchanges between the Hindu and Muslim communities, an understanding was created between the two communities. At the same time, a new favorable environment for education and literary practice was created. As a result of this, Chaitanya-inspired Vaishnavism spread widely, as well as cultural education in Vaishnava religious centers. The emergence of medieval literary authors and many distinguished scholars proves it⁶. All but one of the authors of 'Vidyasundar', the first love poem in Bengal about Kali-Mahatmya, were Hindus. That one Muslim poet is Sabirid Khan. Pandit and Guni Alaol's poetry books and Hindu-Muslim harmony are worth mentioning. Daulat Kazi's 'Satimayna' poem (the first volume of which is Laurachandrani) is an incomplete Panchali poem based on the 16th century Bhojpuri 'Mainasat' (Maynasati) story. Here the mention of Krishna's Dwarika, Barmasya Pala, various raga-ragini, Puran-Katha, Hindu-Paricchad and kirtan named Hari along with the worship of Allah and His Messenger/prophetes are deeply significant⁷. In the 18th century, the shifting of the capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad and the settlement of Muslim families such as Chaudhuri, Qazi, Mirza, Sheikh, Syed etc. in this district created a new atmosphere of integrated culture and education. As a proof that the spread of education in the capital Murshidabad was enough, it can be said that only in the city of Murshidabad Arabic Persian and culture totaled forty and More higher education institutions existed. Rani Bhavani in 18th century, Raja Harinath of Kashimbazar in 19th century Under the patronage of Anna Kali, the queen of another dynasty there, many Sanskrit tols and Chatuspathi institutions were established in Murshidabad district. Renowned 19th century Ramnarayana Vidyaratna and 'Radharaman' set up coinage and by publishing many Sanskrit and Vaishnava books, he contributed considerably to the expansion of the educational system. Buchanan Hamilton states that the cities of Murshidabad, Dhaka and Patna were the main centers of learning. Murshid Quli Khan himself was a well-educated person. He built madrasas including the Katra mosque where many foreign students stayed there to study. Higher education curriculum includes Arabic, Persian, Islamic theology, medical science and astrology were included. In almost every village there were primary schools known as 'pathshalas', and in important villages and towns institutions of higher education were known as 'chatuspathis', education there the medium was Sanskrit. Subhankar was a famous mathematician, probably late 17th or 18th century he first gained fame. Hindus also learned Persian to enter state jobs. The appointment of Hindu officers to high posts in Murshid Quli

Khan's reign must have encouraged Hindus to learn Persian. The Hindu Munshi were used to teach Persian language to the people of his tribe. Bharatchandra, Ramprasad and Rameshwar Bhattacharya were contemporary of Murshid Quli Khan. Balaram Das's *Krishnalilamrita*, Samkara Chakraborty's *'Ramayana and Mahabharata'*, 'Lanka Kand' by Kaviraj Fakir Ram and *'Ramayana'* by Satyanarayan Kavi Chandra, *'Mansamangala'* by Ramjivan and Books such as *'Suryamangala'*, *'Dharma Mangala'* by Ghanaram Chakraborty, *'Chaitanya Chandradvaya'* by Prem-das, etc. were from the seventeenth century or the famous book of the eighteenth century⁸. Contact with Europeans led to the spread of modern education systems based on Western education. English education based on this, the erudition of medieval scholars faded as new literacy standards were established. When the capital of Bengal was moved from Murshidabad to Calcutta after the Battle of Palashi, Calcutta was redeveloped under several ways such as Sadar Civil Court, Sadar Nizamat Court, Mint and various factories, several schools, colleges, universities etc. The Hindu College was established in Calcutta in 1817 with the help of the English and some Indians such as Rammohan Roy, Radhakant Dev, Dwarkanath Tagore etc. William Carey, Marshman & Ward established a college in Srirampur in 1818. Bishop College was established in 1819. Thus one after the other when educational institutions were established in Calcutta or its environs, Meckley proposed that all Government grants should be stopped in educational institutions where teaching in Indian languages.

He even expressed his opinion to give up the Sanskrit College. As the glory of Murshidabad faded due to this self-interested attitude of the British, so did the educational system⁹. A new way of thinking and society emerged as a result of the introduction of British rule and western ideas in Bengal after the Palashi and Boxer wars. At the same time, the modern era began in the history of Bengal at the end of the middle ages. Contact with western education and culture creates a new consciousness in the people. Forgetting Indian customs policy, cultures, religious and society, they (western educated Indians) embrace western education. If and some of the English to Indian education and literature looked with disdain. Mill characterized Indians as insincere, treacherous and liars. On June 22, 1813, Wilbur Force, Grant's adviser, wrote—Hindu saints are lust, injustice, and a group of monsters are the epitome of cruelty. He did not stop at condemning the grand Hinduism, he considered the traditional education, industry, law and practice, and customs of the Indians to be barbaric. However, as English education was progressing, native education was declining. From January 1832 to December 1833

14792 English books were sold. Only 5887 books published in vernacular languages were sold there. From January 1834 to December 1835, 31649 English books were sold. Again, only 7260 books published in the native language were sold. Thus the education system of the country is gradually with the advent of new education system from neglect to destruction¹⁰. The British rulers wanted to spread English education by employing Indians in lower government positions at low cost, making money by selling English culture, and above all by imparting religious messages to the Indian people. According to the Charter Act of 1813, the British government did not decided to grant money for the purpose of expanding the education system in India. In 1835, when Lord Bentinck ordered William Adam to survey the educational system of Bengal and publish a report, Adam prepared a detailed report. It is on the basis of this report that the picture of the education system of Murshidabad comes before us for the first time. From 1835 to 1838, Adam followed a total of three steps

presented the report. William Adam in his first report in 1835 stated that there was an English medium school run by the Bengal Auxiliary Missionary Society in the city of Murshidabad. But it did not succeed due to lack of interest of local residents and lack of suitable teachers. His second report was based on the education system in Rajshahi district of Bangladesh¹¹. In his third report, he said that in 20 police stations of Murshidabad district, there were 67 indigenous schools, 62 in Bengali and 5 in Hindi medium, where the sons and daughters of the migrated family from the Western Province were getting their education. A total of 22 schools in 11 villages, of which 20 are Bengali and 2 are Hindi and the remaining 45 schools were in other villages. He also mentioned Nizamat College where Arabic and Persian were taught along with English. In 1825 during the reign of Nawab-Nazim Humayunza, it was first opened for the education of boys and girls of the Nawab family and later it was opened for the education of boys and girls in general.

In 1909, the name of the school was changed to 'Nawab Bahadur Institution'. It was the only high school run by the Murshidabad government¹². There was an English educational institution in the city of Murshidabad run by Reverend Peterson of the London Missionary Society¹³. Adam mentions in his report a girls' school with 28 students run by Mrs. Petersen. 1 taka for parents' funeral, wedding dowry, 1 paise per day to fellow students and an ornament per year etc.

attendance at school was encouraged. Micah Hill of the London Missionary Society in 1824 established girls' school in Murshidabad. By 1825, four native girls' schools and one Christian girls' school were established. Three of these are Gorabazar, Kalikapur and Farasdangai. In 1845, one girls' school was established at Sichhaigri and Daulatabad. The establishment of English medium schools plays an important role in the higher education of the district. Lord Hardinge's despatch of 10th October 1844 declared knowledge of the English language essential for obtaining government employment. It further said that students who are talented in English language will be employed in higher government positions. As a result of Hardinge's announcement of this policy, the number of English schools increased rapidly. In 1843 the number of English schools was 28 which increased to 151 in 1855. During that period the number of students increased from 4632 to 13163.

Gurudas Tarasundar Institution:-

Gurudas Tarasundari Institution, one of the oldest schools in the present Murshidabad district city, was established on March 15, 1845. It was then known as 'London Missionary School' and from 01-01-1948 it was popularly known as 'Khagra Boys high school'. Later (13-08-1960) it was renamed as 'Gurudas Tara Sundari Institution'. Dabad Manindrachandra Vidyapeeth:-

Another one of the oldest schools in Baharampur which was established in 1846 is 'Hardinge Minor English School'. After independence on 03-03-1948 the school was renamed as 'Saidabad Manindrachandra Vidyapeeth'. Krishnanath College School:-

Krishnanath College School was established in Baharampur on 1st November 1853. Initially it was a branch of Baharampur College and was known as 'Behrampur Collegiate School'. In 1903 it was renamed as 'Krishnath College School'. The head teacher had 16 assistant teachers and three scholars and one maulvi and two masters of drawing. It was well known as a leading school not only in Murshidabad district but also in the whole of Bengal. According to the proposal of Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandi, the new name of Baharampur College was 'Krishnath College'. From the year 2021, it is known as 'Murshidabad University'. Chak Islampur 'S. C. M. High School' was established in 1858 as an 'Anglo Vernacular School' by the efforts of Shyamdhan Mukherjee. Kandi Raj High School:-

On April 1, 1859, when Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar came to Kandi to inaugurate the theater 'Vidyasagar Bhavan', he suggested that it should be turned into a school instead of a theater. In 1823, Mrs. Hill established a night school at Jangipur, which was converted into Jangipur High School in 1877. In 1885, under the initiative of Chandranath Hazra and Satish Chandra Ghosh, Beldanga Kasimbazar 'Raj Govinda Sundari Vidyapeeth' was established. According to the mother name, Maharaja Monindra Chandra Nandi, the zamindar of Beldanga, gave this name to the school. In 1895, a local zamindar of Salar, Kumarkeramtullah, established 'Salar Edward Zakaria High School'. In 1897 Jagbandhu Roy Kanchan Tala, a zamindar of Dhulian founded the 'Jagbandhu Diamond Jubilee Institution'. In 1902, 'Raja Vijay Singh Vidyamandir' was established with the initiative and encouragement of Shashibhushan Das, Radhavallabh Dutta, Shyamapada Bhattacharya and Shripad Singh. To overcome the lack of infrastructure for secondary education, the state government launched the secondary education program like the child education programme. In the academic year 2003-2004, 111 secondary education centers were approved in Murshidabad district. Baharampur College in 1853, Baharampur Girls College in 1946, Shripad Singh College in 1949, Jangipur College in 1950, Kandi Raj College in 1950, even in Aurangabad with the help of bidi workers and bidi manufacturers opened D.N. college, but it was not possible to bring the Bidi workers back to the mainstream of education¹⁴. While the literacy rate has been on the rise since independence and Aurangabad and its surrounding areas, well-known as the capital of the beedi industry, have

not yet reached the desired levels. Even after independence, the measures taken to promote education in this district cannot be said to have improved the education system compared to other districts of the state (West Bengal). The literacy rate of Murshidabad district is much behind the literacy rate of other districts of the state. Among the 18 districts of the state, Murshidabad ranks 16th above Malda and North Najpur. Based on the 2011 census, the literacy rate of Murshidabad is 67.53 and is far behind the literacy rate of East Medinipur (87.66)¹⁵.

Dr. Sunirmal Kar in his research paper found that 28 percent of 70 percent of school going boys are involved in beedi rolling and 54 percent of 73 percent of school going girls are involved in beedi rolling. He mainly divided the children between 6 to 10 and 10 to 14 years and showed that the prevalence of bidi rolling is higher among children between 10 and 14 years. As a result, the attendance rate in high school gradually decreases. He also showed that girls tend to tie bidis more than boys of the same age. Boys lag behind girls in both going to school and tying bidis. Social norms are also responsible for this. Bidi binding of girls in marriage is given importance as an additional qualification. On the other hand, it is also universally accepted that children of educated mothers never remain illiterate. Dr. Sunirmal Kar Bidi Rolling 31 percent and poor 33 percent are the main reasons for which they cannot attend school. In fact, these two reasons are closely related to each other. Poverty invites bidi rolling and family children also engage themselves in bidi rolling to support the family financially. As a result they become irregular in school and eventually drop out. Family motivation, lack of work or employment opportunities in other fields, as family heads put pressure on their bidi rolling, their school attendance gradually becomes irregular and later stops. As a result, the number of school dropout increased gradually after class 5. So most of the families believe that bidi rolling disrupts children's education¹⁶. When schools opened after Karona, student attendance in bidi rolling areas was microscopic, sometimes 9 percent, sometimes 2 percent. 'Gotha High School' near Aurangabad in Suti Block of Murshidabad has a student population of around 6000. The number of students from ninth to twelfth was 2652. Today (17/11/2021) total 58 in 4 classes Students come to school. Among them there were 44 female students. The attendance rate was practically 2 percent. Headmaster Ashish Tewari said – “Bidi laborers populated border area, schools closed for a long time. Naturally, most of the students have gone abroad with their fathers and brothers to work as masons. And the girls are engaged in tying bidis at home.” Meeting on the way with Priya Khatun and Rani Khatun, students of class 10 of this school. Rani's father is a hawker and Priya's father is Raj Mistry (mason), a resident of Ramakantapur. Both say that they do not go to school due to tie bidis at home. Another school in Suti in Murshidabad district is Chabghati K.D. School 9200 students study in the school. Probably the highest in the district as well as the state. Although the total number of students from ninth to twelfth is 3600, 481 people were present in the school that day (17/11/2021). Headmaster Koushik Das said “Let the atmosphere of learning come back regardless of attendance. I think the number of students will increase. However, there is some financial problem in Bidi Mahalla on the border¹⁷.”

On the other hand, State Achievement Service (SAS-2022) was held on 12-12-2022 all over West Bengal. The attendance of students in schools in Bidi Rolling area of Murshidabad was much lower than other parts of the district. The attendance rate of students in Suti was 33.59 percent and the attendance rate of students in Dhulian was only 28.06 percent¹⁸.

The education rate among bidi rollers is very low. At a very young age they started bidi rolling to provide financial support to the family. Bidi rollers usually spend 12 to 14 hours due to bidi rolling. So they have nothing any time for study. Some of them study up to primary and upper primary. Very few students attain higher education. Girls are usually engaged in bidi rolling to various domestic works and boys are employed in bidi factories, shops, restaurants and masons in different states¹⁹.(Burman, Eti-2019)

It is very difficult for a single mother to control the whole family when the head of the family moves to different states or countries as a migrant worker in order to earn money. Mother spends more than 12 to 14 hours due to bidi rolling and other household chores. As a result, they cannot concentrate on educating their children. According to a mother of Islampur village of Suti-2 block of Jangipur sub division of Murshidabad district- “ the boy's father is not at home, he has gone abroad for work. I have admitted the boy in a coaching (Islampur Pathfinder Coaching Centre and Academy). But the boy does not go to coaching centre, even though I beat the

boy so much, he still does not want to go to the coaching. If he goes to coaching, he has to pay 10 rupees or 20 rupees per day for tiffin. Where will we get so much money? That's why I went to coaching and brought back my son's admission fees²⁰." (source-field survey).

Dr. Bourman Poulomi Nikhil Kumar Iti research paper mentions poverty, number of numerous/big member in the family, associated with the bidi rolling in early ages, health problems etc. are the main problems in acquiring educational qualification of bidi workers. In the bidi rolling area, he conducted a preliminary survey based on educational qualifications and showed that 38.1 percent of bidi workers are illiterate, 42.9 percent are educated in primary, 19 percent are educated in secondary education. (Nikhilkumar Iti, 2019).

So, most of the bidi workers are educated in primary education, because most of them do not get educational environment. They do not understand the importance of education as they are from the back word sections of the society. Most of their parents are illiterate so they cannot educate their children. In other words, as the father in other states of the country or abroad and the mother is busy with bidi rolling, the children cannot concentrate on education. Therefore, the number of drop outs is higher in areas where the bidi industry is dominant. As a result the illiteracy rate is higher than other regions. (Nikhilkumar Iti, 2019).

However, it is very important for bidi rollers to be educated for problematic or risky occupations in various fields. So that, they can protect themselves from the pernicious of bidi. Care should be taken to ensure that the contaminated dangerous air full of small tobacco particles does not freely enter the body through the respiratory tract. If the body is sick, regular health check-up should be done in government or private hospitals. Tobacco leaves and bidi leaves (popularly known as tendu leaves) should not be kept in bedroom but should be arranged outside. On the other hand, bidi workers need to take care that tobacco leaves or tendu leaves do not get damaged due to drying or dampness. It is very important to educate the bidi workers due to the multiple needs.

CONCLUSION

So on the basis of earlier discussion it is known that at the end of ancient learning, the teaching phase of religious Hindu-Muslim harmony started in the middleages. When the British came to India, a new horizon of modern education opened up in Murshidabad district. Due to the contract with western education literacy rate gradually progressed through ups and downs in independent India. Many new schools were opened in different parts of Murshidabad district to make the education system more dynamic. But despite all these efforts, the literacy rate of other district of the state (West Bengal). Dr. Sunirmal Kar has shown in his research paper that in Murshidabad, where the bidi industry is dominate, the attendance rate of students in school, is gradually decreasing, if the demand for bidi rolling increase after 10 years. As a result, the number of school dropouts in Murshidabad district is increasing. Many times it is not possible for students to go to school in order to have the same opinion from students to parents. Therefore, the bidi rolling has created a major obstacle for the bidi workers to acquire knowledge.