Chapter-9

A brief sociological analysis of Bose’s understanding of Indian society.

N.K Bose as we saw, was definitely a stalwart in the vast field of social sciences ranging from anthropology, pre-history, archaeology, temple-architecture, village studies to tribal monographs and many more. He left a deep impact on these domains he ventured into. To map the distinctive contributions of Bose we will have to locate him at the historical juncture in which he was writing along with his contemporaries who were also distinguished scholars in their own fields and dwelling with similar issues as he was. Let us try and analyse our overall deliberations on Bose and try analysing his contributions in certain quarters relevant in sociology. This becomes more important, especially when we want to explore the sociological dimensions of Bose’s work, especially the sociological ones. Thus, various areas of Bose’s work pertinent to sociological forum have been discussed below which shall enable us to better grasp his understanding of the Indian society at large. Bose’s contribution to sociology stands on the grandeur of the rich theory he developed and the one he tested on the ground with deft hands. Therefore, a peek into the life and works of his peers will apprise us of the milieu in which he was writing as well as help drive us into a comparative analysis with the others. This will help us have an assessment of the surroundings in which Bose was placed upon and the distinctive ways he stood out from the others.

The backdrop of Bose’s writings.

Nirmal Kumar Bose was writing at a time when Indian anthropology was going through a very bright phase. The backdrop was found beaming with luminaries like Christopher von Fürer-Haimendorf, Verrier Elwin, G. S Ghurye, D. N Majumdar, Iravati Karve, Hasmukh Dhirajlal Sankalia, Dharani P. Sen and M.N. Srinivas. Not just his contemporaries, he was preceded by such stalwarts like S.C Roy, L.K Iyer and K.P Chattopadhyay and some of them especially S.C Roy had a deep impact upon him. Each one of them had brought with them a special flavor which nuanced the entire foray of socio-cultural anthropology in India. Many scholars believe Bose was writing at a historical juncture which can be labeled as ‘constructive’ (Ghosh: 2008:4) because Ghosh felt the discipline of anthropology was undergoing a bright wave of
institutionalization with luminaries thronging the anthropology department of Calcutta University.

**The luminaries of the discipline: Tracing some of Bose’s contemporaries.**

Bose was writing at an important juncture of Indian society and therefore the rich texture of this significant period must be studied in detail. Ghosh therefore said,

For Majumdar (1950), this phase began in 1912 and ended in 1937. By 1920, Anthropology came into the curriculum of postgraduate studies at Calcutta University with R. Chanda as Head. This was a marked change from the earlier period. By 1918 it was a subsidiary subject in Calcutta University but its true identity emerged only with its development into a full-fledged discipline. K. P. Chattopadhyay was one of the first to be appointed there with R. P. Chanda (who is famous for his idea of brachycephalization in Western India). They were joined by L. K. A. Iyer. The first group of students included luminaries like N. K. Bose, D. N. Majumdar, B. S. Guha, P. C. Biswas, T. C. Das, S. S. Sarkar, Dharani Sen and Andre Beteille (Ghosh:2008:4).

Each one of them had brought with them a special trait worth mentioning and which greatly contributed to the making of the edifice of the Indian anthropology which stands today. Let us study some of his contemporaries to understand the strength of the background in exercising an influence upon them in moulding his ideas and ideologies.

**Christopher von Furer-Haimendorf**

Professor Christopher von Furer-Haimendorf, born in Vienna, in 1909 was yet another anthropologist who worked immensely across the length and the breadth of our country. He worked rigorously among the Naga tribes of the North-Eastern Frontier of India. Like Bose he also held important positions and took important decisions to help the tribal ways of life in the remote areas. Mark Turin wrote,

Professor Christopher von Furer-Haimendorf, who died on June 11, 1995 at the age of 85, was Professor of Asian Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (London), where he built the largest department of anthropology in Britain by the time of his retirement in 1976. For over forty years he traveled, filmed and wrote extensively on the peoples of the Central and Eastern Himalayas and Central India. It is difficult to think of any other European
anthropologist who could rival his 3,650 pages of published ethnography describing a dozen tribal groups. (Turin: 1996:1).

Haimendorf ventured into the steep hilly areas of Naga land and the unexplored areas at the frontier of Burma to make an in-depth study on the Naga tribes. He realized that while conducting ethnography, linguistic skills are essential and so he learnt Nagamese to dispense with the interpreter while working among the Konyak Nagas. Haimendorf’s distinctive approach lies in comparative analysis, among the tribal communities. He understood that even the tribes in the primary sector of the economy residing the neighbouring terrain are not homogeneous groups but have distinctive contrasts. He made stark contrasts between the tribes of the neighbouring areas to bring out these differing traits. Turin said,

He was confined to Hyderabad State, under the jurisdiction of the Nizam, but was able to undertake some of his best fieldwork among such groups as the Chenchus, Reddis and Raj Gonds. Many of the tribal populations that Haimendorf researched at this time were little known and poorly described, and the Chenchu gatherer-hunters provided him with a point of contrast and comparison to the splendidly decorated Nagas (Turin:1996:2).

So when Haimendorf’s forte lay in cross-cultural comparisons, Bose was more interested in building up cultural maps in order to super-impose the culture of a zone over the other to bring out the distinctiveness of cultural zones. Bose was therefore more interested in giving us “short hand description of the space-relation of cultural objects” (Bose: 1967: 22). He was interested in showing the distribution of traits within a zone to show the speed at which they traverse. In this way Bose was perhaps trying to show the relation between the past and the present position of human groups in terms of their socio-cultural dissemination. Unlike Haimendorf, Bose made little comparisons, but more of detailed historic-geographic studies of the area he surveyed. Physical distribution of areas in terms of their topographical composition remained an important component for Bose. Like Haimendorf, Bose too studied ethnic group and brought out vivid ethnographic descriptions, but he perhaps was less interested in inter-group comparisons than carrying out massive vivid surveys of groups and pockets inhabiting those terrains. Haimendorf’s orientation can therefore be gauged when Turin wrote,
Professor Haimendorf was the first foreign anthropologist allowed to work in Nepal. He was drawn to the Sherpas of Eastern Nepal, partly due to their reputation in the scaling of Everest, but more so because of the stark contrast, they provided in terms of religion and culture to the populations of tropical India with whom he had previously lived (Turin: 1996:4).

Bose too studied various ethnic groups like the Mundas, Oraons, Juangs and the Pauri Bhuiyans and tried to show how the groups showed similarities in tagging themselves with the mainstream society rather than trying to find out intricate inter-group differences between them. He made vivid intragroup studies and showed how each of these groups fit themselves in the historical-geographical settings of a physical area and make adaptations to the external environment thus building up their distinctive culture. In contrast to Haimendorf’s idea of studying intra group differences, Bose was more interested in describing how they groomed their acclimatization with the larger society and was more interested in showcasing their underlying unity amongst diversity. Like Bose he also held important positions and took important decisions to help the tribal ways of life in the remote areas. Turin, thus wrote,

At the end of the war, Haimendorf was appointed to the position of Advisor for Tribes and Backward Classes to the Nizam’s Government of Hyderabad to deal with the complicated issue of land reform. In the course of his work, he set up various educational and other schemes for tribal people, all with the aim of preserving and safeguarding indigenous cultures and languages. He also accepted a teaching appointment at Osmania University, which he later relinquished, after 10 years in India, to accept a lectureship at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1949. Within months of his initial appointment, he was made Reader and in 1951, Chair of Asian Anthropology (Turin: 1996:6).

Bose held him in high esteem and made oft references while discussing the predicaments of the marginalized sections and suggesting policies to be undertaken for them. He seemed to hold a high view of Haimendorf when he wrote,

At one-time Professor Haimendorf was responsible for the introduction of several significant welfare measures in parts of Hyderabad when it
was under Nezam’s government. He felt rather strongly that at least for a fair number of years, tribesmen do need special treatment. If they come up in education, which should be of the right type, there may come a time at the end of, say, ten years, when the protection can be withdrawn (Bose: 1972:67).

Haimendorf’s word highly impressed him and he too was found advocating his views against reservation of the tribes which he felt cannot be sustained for a prolonged time at the cost of communal disparity. Bose’s opinions, especially on the welfare measures were strongly impacted by Haimendorf and his comparison with Haimendorf seemed more significant because both held responsible posts to ensure equanimity in the society.

**D.N Majumdar**

Yet another anthropologist writing about the same time was **D.N Majumdar**. Born in 1903 in Patna and having pursued his education in Dacca, he was a name to reckon with in the field of scholarship. T. N Majumdar wrote,

> He started lecturing on Primitive Economics at the Department of Economics and Sociology, Lucknow University as a Lecturer in 1928. He had been selected for this appointment by Professor Radhakamal Mukherjee, who was really interested in Anthropology (Madan: 1961:270).

Majumdar’s analysis of social phenomenon had quantitative accounts and detailed factual analysis. T.N Madan wrote,

> He was a firm believer in a broad based training in anthropology. Accordingly, the courses of study, which he drafted included physical anthropology, pre-historic archaeology, and cultural anthropology at both the undergraduate and the post-graduate levels (Madan: 1961:270). Majumdar’s contribution to physical anthropology consists mainly in the extensive anthropo-metric and sociological surveys which he carried out among the tribes and castes of the five Indian states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Bengal (Madan: 1961:271) Majumdar probably was one of the Indian anthropologists who popularized the idea of biometric anthropology and tried forming clusters of castes on the basis of anthropometric and sociological data. Madan therefore wrote, “In Uttar Pradesh he showed that the caste
hierarchy had a ‘biometric basis’. The castes which constitute clusters, being close to each other in the hierarchical organization, were also shown to be within a close range of biometric variation (Madan: 1961:271).

It is thus evident that Bose and Majumdar were contemporaries; they were working on distinct models. While Bose was trying to tread the line of social-cultural anthropology, Majumdar persistently fell upon physical anthropology, at least in the initial phase of his career wherefrom he showed keen interest in social anthropology. In this field he made descriptive ethnographic studies of distinct tribal groups like the Khasa, Korwa, Tharu, Gond and the Bhil. While making detailed studies, he covered all the aspects relevant for understanding a group as a whole. Madan wrote,

In presenting his data he followed his method of covering all the major aspects of a culture—economy, kinship, religion etc. (Majumdar: 1950) .... He studied cultures rather than the problem (Madan: 1961:271).

Bose’s model of research was explanatory as against Majumdar’s which was descriptive. Madan therefore said, “In the field of Social anthropology, Majumdar’s gift was for descriptive ethnography” (Madan: 1961:271). He described the settings and elaborated in details instead of deliberating on each source-cultural categories and producing a succinct explanation for all the attributes he observed. Majumdar started with physical anthropology and veered towards its cultural counterpart and therefore vivid socio-cultural expatiations were often supplemented with biometric and demographic components whereas Bose designed an explanatory research model. He complemented it with both qualitative and quantitative research designs instead of doing uni-linear research based on exclusive serological quantitative data.

This is where Bose differed from Majumdar. Majumdar was trying to explain the caste hierarchy in terms of genetic makeup, thus remaining ambiguous of other factors which might have played succinct roles. Bose was on the other hand, making an intersectional study of the problem in question and looked for all intervening components of economy, culture, politics and power. Thus he explained the severity of caste based stigma among the tribal communities, who did not practice oil extracting occupation despite it being lucrative chiefly because of the ignominy faced by the ‘teli jati’ (oil extracting caste). The oil extracting castes were relegated to the
lowly status by the overbearing power structure of the society. Bose, for instance, while providing a detailed narrative of Noakhali wrote, “In Sandeep, there is a lucrative business of leather. The Hindu cobblers deal with hide of the dead cows (all but a Muslim is denigrated) whereas the Telis dabble with raw hide” (Bose: 2012:68). Thus, it seems evident that Bose was looking at the problem from all the pertinent angles and not just based on one variable. He probably was more interested in multivariate analysis of the society as against univariate ones based, for instance, on genetic factors alone.

Verrier Elwin

Another anthropologist who could be called a cohort of Bose was Verrier Elwin. Born in 1903, he was an anthropologist, ethnologist and a social activist who fought for the rights of the tribes. He lived in huts near the tribal villages and worked avidly among them and produced a rich collection of anthropological works on them. David Mandelbaum wrote,

He spent the better part of three decades doing anthropological studies of Indian tribesmen, most of that time living in or very near tribal villages. He produced the largest corpus of data on Indian ethnography which has come from a single hand, and, indeed, he was one of the most prolific anthropological writers of recent times (Mandelbaum: 1965:448).

He had come to work as a Christian missionary among the tribes, but realizations evolved soon of a different kind, such that he had to forsake his membership in the Church of England where he had earlier vowed to work as a priest and a communicant. Elwin was a self-taught anthropologist who did not proclaim of having been influenced magnificently by the anthropologists ruling the roost. He asserts that the source of his inspiration to work among the anthropologists came from the poetries. Mandelbaum therefore says,

Elwin’s principal intellectual nourishment was in literature, especially poetry. A number of passages in the book are enhanced by quotations of poetry, both his own and that of others. He describes himself as a humanist anthropologist who came to anthropology through poetry. A good entry way it is, he tells us, because poetry is the revealer, the unveilier, and so helps the student of man in his chief problem of finding his way underneath the surface (Mandelbaum: 1965:448).
It seemed clear that Elwin was seeking to develop a model of practicing anthropology more embedded in aesthetics and art and less in line with hard-nosed science that Bose promoted. For Elwin, poetic expressions and statements were a mode of practicing anthropology. Mandelbaum therefore said,

*This is a poetic statement which in full context makes the reasonable argument that a compassionate interest in the people studied is not hostile to scientific inquiry and is necessary for useful and insightful writing. But while many an anthropologist will agree that poetry is fine and love even better, most will read the passage more literally than it may have been intended and will demur that love is hardly all in the scientific study of man (Mandelbaum:1965:449).*

This is where Bose’s approach differed from Elwin’s. Elwin was more of a utopian who did not follow the given ways of practicing this discipline. He did not have any professional training in anthropology nor did he try to get indoctrinated by this strict scientific regiment enveloping the discipline of anthropology. He worked for the tribes in his own delights without being institutionally oriented towards this discipline. He could not build up any theoretical basis, but worked tirelessly among the tribes. Though a prolific worker, he fell out with Bose at this juncture. Elwin might be an activist who was also asked to shoulder great responsibilities, but his enterprise finds little mention in anthropological corpus. Mandelbaum said,

*This poetic, romantic view is better accepted by anthropologists if held by the people observed rather than by an observer. This is one reason why Elwin’s massive contributions, many of them as sternly factual as any ethnography, are so infrequently mentioned in the general anthropological literature and so little cited even by specialists on the ethnology of India, except for a few of his devoted students’ (Mandelbaum: 1965:449-50).*

Elwin was more of an activist who tried reaching to the people through poetries, stories, writings and pamphlet without any strong academic underpinning which Bose had and he always tried making a perfect synergy of theory and practice while constructing his analysis for tribal welfare much unlike Elwin.
Yet another difference between Bose and Elwin was that, Bose advocated strongly for the induction of the tribes in the mainstay of the society whereas Elwin urged for the isolation of such tribes. Bose always felt that the tribes should be brought to the forefront of the society instead of being insulated to one corner of the society. Elwin on the other hand, emphasised that the tribal society had a distinct composition which must not be tampered with. Mandelbaum therefore said,

He made yet another contribution to India which is difficult to gauge but which may in the long run be even more significant than his impact on tribal policy. It is in influencing the view which Indians have of their society and of themselves as people. In defending the tribal peoples, he clashed often and eloquently with those Hindu puritans who are trying to reform tribal society in their ascetic mode. Elwin vigorously denied that this brand of puritanism was, as they claim, of the essence of the true spirit of India. He countered that the life-affirming, sense-enjoying qualities of most tribal folk were closer to the true India. Thus he has this to say (pp. 168-169) of the ghotul, the boys’ and girls’ dormitory of the Muria tribe, an institution about which he wrote a fine, detailed monograph. “The message of ghotul—that youth must be served, that freedom and happiness are more to be treasured than any material gain, that friendliness and sympathy, hospitality and unity are of the first importance, and above all that human love—and its physical expression—is beautiful, clean, and precious, is typically Indian. While an anthropologist fresh from field work in an Indian village might not wholly agree that all this is typical, it is a most important kind of statement for those Indians who think and write about what is typical of Indians; that is about their character as a nation (Mandelbaum: 1965:50-51).

Bose on the other hand, emphasized the necessary connections between the Hindu caste and the tribal society when he illustrated how the latter were imbibed within the former with apt readiness. While Elwin emphasised a sequestered and regimented tribal living, Bose sought to form a symbiosis between the communities. Therefore, while delivering the 6th N.K. Bose Memorial Lecture, Prof L.K Mahapatra elucidated upon the process of tribal transformation as mooted by Bose,

Prof. Bose refers to the long course of contact between themselves and the neighbouring peasants and artisan folks and their ways of life in the plains and river valley, when the tribal folk specialized, after such
contact, in the production of goods based upon the resources available in their forest dwellings, and sold them to the peasant folk for money or bartered them for paddy or millets. They have thus occupied an economic niche in the local productive organization based on caste specializations (Mahapatra: 2006:6).

Bose’s words clearly talk of the contacts that developed between the two communities, either consciously or sub-consciously, but nevertheless, tried discussing such integration within a theoretical framework. For him, tribe – caste continuum made for a historical study and such social intercourse and processes should catch the attention of the present society and the new forms it took.

**G.S. Ghurye**

Another contemporary sociologist worth mentioning is **G.S. Ghurye** who too tried presenting a detailed study of Indian society, especially in the areas pertaining to caste, race and tribes. He was more interested in presenting a historical analysis of the Indian civilization based on indological references and classical texts. Unlike Bose, Ghurye did not undertake any field work and most of the accounts that he presented were historical accounts of the classical contents. His approach was thoroughly historical-cognitive since he tried cognizing the present Hindu society in connection with the past. The cultural expatiations that he provides are mostly based on their congruence with the Aryan culture and all traits in Indian society have been re-designed in a way to produce their links with the Aryan antiquity. Carol Upadhyaya writing about Ghurye said,

A significant feature of Ghurye’s cultural history is the almost neglect of economic/material content in his analysis (Desai: 1984). In his vast body of work, we find few references to agriculture, crafts, trade, and so on, except in discussions of caste based occupational specialization. This is in stark contrast to the work of D.D Kombi, for example, which also reproduced the Aryan invasion theory but reworked it through a materialist perspective. Ghurye’s understanding of culture and civilization dwells on ideas, beliefs, values and social practices—‘culture’ in the narrow sense – and hardly encompasses questions of livelihood, control over resources, or ecological adaptation, which are so central to the modern anthropological understanding of human history and civilization” (Upadhya:2000:18).
Upadhyaya had, therefore, emphasized the fact that Ghurye was found working only at the conceptual level without having operationalized the impending role of the material factors like economy, power, agriculture, geographical factors etc. This might be thought as the primary wedge of difference between Ghurye and Bose. True, it was that in terms of theoretical propositions, both of them were seemed to have been influenced by the diffusion theories and therefore chose to look for the genesis of the cultural attributes prevalent in the society. When Bose chose to take a materialist look at the historical illustration of the civilization, thereby deeply anchoring his theory in geographical and environmental considerations, Ghurye considered rambling only at the ideational level being oblivious of the ground factors. Therefore, when Bose was thinking of grounding his theory on the pragmatic plane of piecemeal components that constitutes the hard core canopy of the civilization, Ghurye decided to suspend it on the vacuum of primacy of thought without giving it a solid backup. Upadhyay therefore said, “Within the ideational level, Ghurye emphasize religion and religious consciousness as the foundation of culture (Ghurye: 1965) (Upadhyay: 2000:17).

Upadhyay felt that Ghurye was trying to compose a kind of theory of a normative order based on the preamble of the Indo-Aryan structure on the strict providence of sacred Brahminical ideal. Ghurye therefore focused on a kind of civilizational unity, the epi-centre of which was predominated by the Brahminical taxonomies. The kind of civilizational entity that Ghurye wanted to provide was therefore a uni-dimensional representation of Indian society ruled primarily along the Brahminical canons. Upadhyay, therefore wrote,

Like the Orientalism on which he drew, Ghurye’s perspective on Indian society was intensely Brahminical. For him, Hinduism is at the centre of India’s civilizational unity, and at the centre of Hinduism are Brahminical ideals and values, which are essential for the integration of the society (Pramanik: 1994). Venugopal understands the underlying theme of Ghurye’s work as ‘normative Hinduism’, defined as an idealised version of Hinduism serving as a mean to judge or analyze diverse phenomena in Indian society” (1986:305). Brahmin is seen historically as the leaders of the Indo-Aryan society and as the “standard bearers of the Hindu civilization” (1986:307); they were the “moral guides and legislators of the immigrant Aryans (Upadhyay: 2000:18).
It thus becomes very clear to us that unlike Ghurye, Bose’s idea was not to construct a Hindu society with strong privilege to the Brahmins over the others. He presented an amalgamated society where different castes can live in cooperation with one another. Thus Bose can be credited for having dwelt on a symbiotic perspective of the civilizational analysis of Hindu society where his focal point was the varna system instead of the Brahminical domain which served the basic palate to Ghurye. Bose was not constructing any normative order, but his interest was to draw a descriptive account of the civilization with particular reference to the Hindu society. His locus of interest was the varna system and especially the division of labour that provided the economic backbone of the Hindu caste system. He was not trying to close upon any prescriptive narration of society, thus abiding by the rule of Brahminical regime; he on the other hand was trying to extol the strategic design of the varnashram system. His ideas were not to admire the Brahminical order as it prevailed but he was catapulted towards Brahminical regime only to the extent necessary to discuss the functioning of the Varna system. When Ghurye was working with a presupposition of Brahminical dominance and their primacy in building the much chequered history of the civilization, Bose was ready to question the Brahminical supremacy and their role in uniting the nation. Bose thus said,

At the same time, there is no reason to believe that brahminical society gave no cause for opposition or revolt. We get clear evidence of the victors having done in Indian society, what they do everywhere. The victors, in the pursuit of their own class interest, shifted the burden of labour again on to the vanquished communities in the Brahmin varna, they assigned them to the lower ranks in it, and deprived the lower strata of the opportunities of higher learning and the practice of religious sacrifices. No doubt Shudras sought to enter the protected areas of the twice-born in secret; but the result of this was they met the fate of the Shambuk (Bose: 1975:83).

Thus Bose’s idea was not to extol any particular rung of the stratified society, but to explain the functioning of the fulcrum that sets the stratification system into motion. For him Varna system served as a tool of analysis on the basis of which he could understand the otherwise peaceful propagation not only of the Hindu system but the overall functioning of the multiple societies. It was not just a Hindu society with a handful of Hindu mentors controlling the society, but the society which Bose
represented was a plural one which functions not at the whim of the grubby Hindu lords but by the magic wand of the benevolent and accommodative Varna order. He does not unnecessarily exaggerate the ideals of the Hindu society, and therefore said,

> There is no reason to believe that the Brahmins had only evil designs... the sad thing is that they never succeeded in giving to the vanquished a place equal to their own. This poison of discrimination gradually weakened and debilitated the entire body of the composite society (ibid:83).

Thus, among other differences in approach, one major spate of difference was that when Ghurye had chosen to select upon one pedestal of the stratified system in reference to which he explained the operation of the whole society, Bose had set his eyes on the classificatory system in whole itself, which acts as the main lever or yardstick behind the functioning of the entire mode of stratification. Thus Ghurye explained society through *Jati*, whereas for Bose it was *Varna* that could help analyse the society. Therefore, Ghurye was working in parts, whereas Bose concentrated on the whole and surely Bose was not an extremist unlike Ghurye.

After having discussed his contemporaries and a brief comparative account presented, let us discuss the set-up which helped Bose ejaculate his ideas that distinguished him from others. This setting which Bose shared with others will give us an idea about the general background of Bose’s work as well as help us take an account of the distinctive contributions he made. A brief acquaintance with the historical backdrop will enable us to better understand the man and his works. This will pave a foreground to deeply anchor the corpus of the achievements he left behind to better understand the Indian society and its patterns.

**The man and his set-up: Locating Bose on the historical trajectory.**

N.K Bose thus worked and wrote at a time when the academic circle was seething with brilliant scholars dabbling with the same subject as was he. Most of them had taken up the discipline of anthropology and sociology to devise means for redemption of a fledgling society that was greatly ravaged by the tides of colonialism. To reform this society a group of social scientists flocked, notable amongst them had been the ones we already discussed. Each of them had brought with them their distinct aura and the scholarly arena and thus turned out to be a compelling and contending forum
with all the scholars working in full swing. To leave an indelible mark in such a challenging arena was difficult which Bose had done with ease and spirit. Bose had already started writing from a tender age, and his first published paper was *The Spring Festival in India*, published in 1927. By 1929, he had already written a book entitled, *Cultural Anthropology*, which went on to become a very important book for the time and ahead. By this time, as already been said, the constructive phase of Indian Anthropology had begun with a spate of anthropologists entering the stage, each with distinct attributes. Amongst differences, most of these scholars shared some stunning similarities such as they shared an illustrated career and most of them were at the helm of important administrative affairs. Most of these academicians and contemporaries of Bose were propelling the study of Indian society and its dynamics to a new direction.

For instance, G.S Ghurye was the first Reader of the Dept. of Sociology at Bombay University. He was also the first Chairman of the Dept. of Sociology at the same university. D.N Majumdar started his career as a Lecturer in Primitive Economics at the Dept. of Economics and Sociology at the University of Lucknow. He too was a renowned scholar being awarded the Premchand Roy Chand Scholarship by Calcutta University in 1926 (Ghosh: 2008: 23). Another of his contemporary, Iravati Karve had initiated her career as a Lecturer in the Deccan College, Pune, subsequent to which she joined the Research Institute in Pune as Head of the Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology. Another anthropologist of his time was Dharani. P Sen, who was a renowned Lecturer at the Dept. of Anthropology, Calcutta University. Ghosh said,

He became a Reader and officiating Head of the Dept. of Anthropology at Lucknow University between1952-53. From 1962-74 he was an extra-mural Lecturer at the Department of Archaeology, Calcutta University. In 1977 he was a Visiting Professor at the Department of Anthropology, Dibrugarh University. He retired as a Reader from the Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University. (Ghosh: 2008: 29).

Yet another sociologist and anthropologist of this time was M.N Srinivas who was the founder of the Dept. of Anthropology in the University of Delhi. He was an extremely learned man who went on to become the Joint Director of the famous Institute for Social and Economic Change. He also became University lecturer in Indian Sociology

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at Oxford University and subsequently took such important charges at the Universities of Manchester, Stanford and California respectively.

So it became very clear that N.K Bose had to compete with the likes of such scholars to leave behind his mark. It was not a very easy task, especially because all of these scholars were trying to carve a distinct niche for themselves and within this academic razzmatazz the act of building up one's distinctive identity is difficult to establish. Bose did this with spontaneity and breezed through this compelling set-up with incredible zest and vigour. Bose too was an academician of great repute and combined research and work to scale great heights. What was even more significant was that unlike the other scholars, Bose did not venture abroad to learn the ropes of research. He completed his education in his own country instead of stepping out of the national horizon and yet developed a scholarship of a stupendous height which only a few could afford.

Most of his contemporaries, though later on returned back to the nation, had initiated their higher education off shore. G.S Ghurye was a Ph.D. scholar under the esteemed anthropologist W.H.R Rivers and A.C Haddon at Cambridge University in England. D. N Majumdar went to Cambridge University to pursue Ph.D. under Prof. Hodson and further went to Dalton Laboratory in London. Iravati Karve was awarded D. Phil by Berlin University in Germany. Ghosh writes, “She had worked under the tutelage of Eugene Fischer at Berlin University” (Ghosh: 2008:26). M.N Srinivas was honoured with a D. Phil in Social Anthropology by the Oxford University. It thus seems evident that the academic ambience in India in the field of sociology and anthropology was steaming up and it was a wonder that Bose devoid of any training in such illustrious universities in the West marched on with incredible pride and trust on his indigenous system. Sinha, therefore said,

In general, Indian anthropologists have been prompt in responding to the latest developments in the West, without caring to pursue the earlier constructive endeavours to their logical ends in the Indian context. This stands out in sharp contrast to what the American scholars did with regard to the American Indian studies. But a yearning to strike a distinct and a relevant course continues to disturb the mind of some Indian anthropologists. N. K Bose writes: ‘The position of Indian anthropology has, on the whole, been colonial in relation to other schools which have dominated the European or American scene from time to time (Bose: 1963:46) (Sinha:1971:8).
Though he never veered towards the much illustrated West, nevertheless the West had always welcomed him with much fanfare. It is no wonder that a trim book entitled *Cultural Anthropology* that he wrote at such a young age of twenty-nine was embraced by the western scholars with open arms. The joyous remarks that Kroeber made of this book could thus be captured,

This 150-page book apprises the English educated Indians of the general subject matter of anthropology. It discusses many areas like the meaning, nature, scope, components, extent, change, evolution and progress. It might sound as if one is reading Wissler’s book, but the book stands out in that it has re-evaluated the works of Wissler and supported the work with succinct illustrations from India (ibid:11).

In India, Bose had much to do and he accomplished everything in a very commendable way. Bose was writing at a time, which can be marked as a point of transition from one kind of research design to another. Ghosh said, “A shift was seen from the descriptive studies of preliterate villages to the analytical studies of complex societies” (Ghosh: 2008:5). Bose’s work at this point of time seemed significant not only because his works were analytical and explanatory in nature but they were often exploratory as well. While carving out explanatory research designs on Indian society, he was careful to design conceptual tools such that they can aid his understanding of new situations and concerns of the society that had remained unexplored. To review his position, we must analyse the pre-dominant trend of research designs of his time. There was a plethora of analytical studies conducted on Indian societies and this was especially notable in the domain of village studies. There was a flurry of activities in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology and Bose’s role in this context remains interesting to watch out for.

**The buzzing activities in Indian anthropology and sociology: a brief review of Bose’s immediate position in this orbit.**

At the time when Bose was writing, there was a fleet of activities on the disciplinary front. He gave a number of such illustrations. (Ghosh: 2008). For instance, Morris
Opler, a Professor of Cornell University worked on Madhopur and Rampur. Oscar Lewis of the University of Illinois researched on Rampura in 1952. David Mandelbaum of the University of California, W.H. Wiser and Charlotte Wiser of Cornell University in 1933-36 all made detailed studies on Karimpur. Alan and Ralph Beals from University of California made vivid studies on Namhali and Gopalpur, Harold A. Gould deliberated on Sherupur. Kathleen Gough, Stephen Fuchs, Ruth and Stanley Freed from the National Museum of Natural History in New York chose to study Shanti Nagar. F. G. Bailey decided to work on Bisipara while Robert Redfield and W. A. Rowe of Cornell University made Senapur, their site of analysis. M. R. Goodall of Cornell University initiated detailed monograph on Chittora while Scarlett Epstein presented a study on Wangala and Dalena. David Mandelbaum and McKim Marriott made a stunning work on Kishan Garhi and Wai town near Pune. John T. Hitchcock, John J. Gumperz, Kolenda, Ralph R. Retztaff and Leigh Minturn are known for their contributions in the study of Khalapur. A.P. Barnabas made a similar study on Sharanpur, while Adrian C. Mayer is still remembered for his outstanding work on Ramkheri. Likewise, G. M. Carstairs conducted a study on Deoli whereas Henry Orenstein accomplished his work on Gaon and Robbins Burling completed a painstaking work on Rengsanggri. Milton Singer's famous work of Madras will be treasured for long while David G. Mandelbaum, O. T. Beidelman and Martin Orans made an excellent analytical work on Jamshedpur. Ghosh further added,

Indian anthropologists who consisted of this group included S. C. Dube (Shamirpet), M. N. Srinivas (Rampura), A. Aiyappan, D. N. Majumdar (Mohana), Prof. Inder Pal Singh (Deleke), K. S. Mathur (Potlod), Yogendra Singh, G. S. Ghurye (Haveli Taluka), etc. A large number of village study monographs were published in the 1960s through the Census of India conducted in 1961. The first of these was a study of Ghaghra by L. P. Vidyarthi (Ghosh: 2008:6).

It thus became very clear that the academic circuit by then was gearing up for extensive studies and the social-political factors had provided greener pastures for such wide scale studies. There was thus an emergent drive among the social scientists to study the rural set-up and its characteristics and this went on for a long time at least up to 1960s. Dhanagare too believed that during this time most of the works were made on the rural set ups and these village studies on peasant societies and communities came to be dominated by ethnographic tradition. He felt the trend of
field work approach engrossed the social anthropologists until almost the middle of the 1960s (Dhanagare: 2007:3420).

In this context Bose left behind an indelible impact on the discipline through his studies of the different order. His detailed monographs of the villages and tribal communities took a foundational step to establish the economic exchanges that acted as the main agent of assimilation in the Indian society. The social processes that went on for ages were not only elaborated by Bose but he at the same time laid bare the internal dynamics of the age old process. Sinha therefore said,

N.K Bose in his studies on tribal transformation and changes in the caste system brought in the dimensions of the economic and power relations seen through history beyond the prevailing concern for the study of customs (Bose: 1949) (Sinha: 1971:7).

Probably one of the distinct contributions of Bose had been the cultivation of a nationalist world-view in explaining the contours of a millennia old civilization. Bose imbibing the lessons from scholars like Boas, Kroeber, Malinowski, Marx and Freud wanted to project an in-depth analysis of civilization. Sinha therefore termed this as the ‘Bose model for Swaraj’ and explained it the following way,

His principal research involvement has been with knowing the nature of the Indian civilization and the processes of its modernization. He has persistently felt that the nature of this complex society should be analysed in depth so that the affairs of the nation may be guided according to its genius (Sinha: 1971:10).

Bose’s contribution remained a treasure chest for the ones immersed in the study of civilization and not just that, it should have propagated a new line of thought which the evolving scholars had practised avidly. But sadly, it was far from true, since that enthusiasm was never transposed in the Indian scenario and therefore a chestful of wealth remained unexplored. Sinha therefore rued,

The most interesting point here is that the Bose model did not generate much enthusiasm among the senior Indian scholars. The reasons for this are I will leave for other scholars to explore (Ubero, 1969). The result has been that these highly imaginative and fruitful work could not be effectively linked with University teaching and research where further
refinement of the conceptual tools and methodology should have taken place (Sinha: 1971:12).

**Civilizational approach.**

An outstanding contribution of Nirmal Kumar Bose lied in ushering up a well accorded perspective for the study of civilization. He wrote voraciously about different aspects of the multiple elements that coagulated into the civilization. There were many writers in this line of thought like Robert Redfield, D. Mandelbaum, Milton Singer, Bernard Cohn and Y. Singh and the next generation of scholars like Surajit Chandra Sinha, N.K Behura, and Baidyanath Saraswati who wrote on umpteen areas of civilization. Their works had influenced the domain of civilizational perspective in some way or the other building up a robust tradition of such knowledge building in the country and outside. N. K Bose’s contribution lies in trying to analyze the civilization through the composition of distinct cultural zones. Such works were not absolutely new in this field since earlier attempts had been done to develop linguistic and racial zones of India. Bose therefore said,

The most exhaustive work of the kind with which we are concerned was first presented by Sir George A. Grierson in his Linguistic Survey of India, prepared between 1904 and 1922. Maps of India...were prepared to show the territorial distribution of the major languages and of the dialects which made up each language (Bose: 1967:14).

Similar studies were also conducted by F.J Richards, who tried giving us an idea of the culture zones of India as against the natural zones. The work was complemented by yet another stalwart, Herbert Risley, who had shown the racial distribution of the country. Bose therefore accredited Risley “who first prepared a systematic map of India, which remained a standard classification for a period of more than thirty years” (Bose: 1967:14). Likely attempts were also made in this direction by B.S Guha (1935) and Von Eickstedt (1934). Therefore, the chief contribution of N.K Bose in this field is the unique effort he had taken to painstakingly collect the material items and artifacts used throughout the country in order to plot a map of their distribution and usage. Bose himself said,
Although language and race, as well as ‘culture’ in a rather popular sense, as in the paper of Richards, have thus been mapped on the soil of India, it is noteworthy that no systematic attempt comparable to the above has been made with regard to the mapping of cultural items in our country (Bose:1967:15).

Bose tried to map the regional as well as the state-wise distribution of the tangible items of culture and trace the road they charter on their ways towards migration and diffusion. Bose was so engrossed by the uniqueness of his own endeavor that he himself suggested that though other scholars like Iravati Karve had performed similar probes but not the kind he initiated. Bose therefore wrote,

A similar, but sounder endeavor to correlate linguistic affinity with patterns of social organization was made by Iravati Karve, much more successfully; although her purpose was not to apply the method to the whole of India and thus produce culture areas (Karve 1938, Karve and Dandekar 1951, Karve 1953)” (ibid:15).

Bose therefore was probably taking pioneering initiatives in conducting a country wide survey in the use of material artifacts and deriving culture zones based on such usage. Bose’s idea was therefore to make observations, “so that lines of cultural diffusion in the past can be traced even if the latter have been overlaid and partly obliterated by movements in other directions in later times” (Bose: 1967:16). It was way back in 1959 when Bose conducted this survey under the patronage of the Anthropological Survey of India. The survey had planned to study the villages of the country and to examine the basis of the rural life in the country. Bose therefore said,

Accordingly, the survey was conducted under the supervision of the erstwhile observer of central India, viz. Dr Surajit Chandra Sinha whereupon representatives of all the states constituted a working committee for the said purpose. They were entrusted to probe into the basis of village life and substantiate their findings with necessary evidences. The Herculean tasks of the members ensured that the report could be presented within two years (Bose: 2008: introduction).

Sinha said that the survey was conducted in several phases such as studying the distribution of material traits all over India and mapping out the pattern of their
distribution such as linguistic areas in the first phase; study of pottery and metal crafts in the second phase; study of social organizations of crafts and of caste organizations across India in the third phase, study of the superstructures in the society by studying temples, *muths* and kinships in the fourth phase, and studying the process of modernization emerging in the caste and occupations, tribal and social movements in the different parts of the country in the fifth phase (Sinha:1971:10-11). The study was definitely a unique way of studying the civilizational pattern of a country ever attempted before. Not only was it a novel initiative but the study stands out also for its rigor and scope. No scholar had ever thought of studying the nuances of a civilization by studying its nitty-gritty’s at this scale. It is surely an attempt to study the civilization in-depth, and to unveil such facts which otherwise could not have been unearthed through historical reconstruction. The cultural items he studied like village settlement plans, building designs, food, ploughs and hoes, oil and oil pressing instruments, garments of men and women, bullock carts etc. make interesting observations about the civilization they constitute. Nobody had ever thought of looking at them as units of analysis while studying the civilization and its paraphernalia. Bose therefore said,

They are no more than shorthand descriptions of the space-relation of cultural objects. Yet, if we use them with due caution, we feel they can play a useful part in unraveling the present and past relationships of particular human communities.... the regions or states of India, which are today separated by differences of language, share many elements of material culture in common...the contagious distribution of things ...readily cut across geographical distinctness, or even the economic and apparent cultural isolation of various regions. This implies that another kind of cultural affinity was slowly built up through migration and diffusion of culture than the kind we are accustomed to through the history or the rise and fall of empires (Bose: 1967:22).

Bose’s contribution therefore lay in plotting a cultural map of the nation which though apparently vouches for regionalization and cultural specification but actually demonstrates cultural unanimity between disparate regions and sub-nationalities. Other scholars had taken noble initiatives to brandish unity in diversity, but Bose’s way of extolling the unity of a civilization beleaguered through colonialism is both
empirical and aesthetic. It only shows the strong conviction with which the scholar with a deep sense of nationalism had embarked upon a voyage to discover the near invisible contours of unification running through the discreet territories. In this Bose had imagined a pyramidal model of Indian unity which though diverse and discreet at the base becomes unified at the crest as regional disparities give in to unity and solidarity. Bose’s model of structuring the basis of unity by using different levels of phenomenon co-opted from the body social is both unique and novel. The otherwise mundane items that demonstrate the regional distinctiveness had been aptly used to uncover the very basis of solidarity on which the mighty civilization rests. The most famous work where he discussed the intricacies of this perspective is the paper *Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption* (1941) which he showed was the epitome of his study on civilization. Despite these stunning tasks, Bose never explicitly mentioned what exactly he meant by civilization, though he expatiated at length on the subject. Even Surajit Chandra Sinha while deliberating on the civilization had to borrow its definition from Robert Redfield when he said,

> For the purpose of this discourse, I shall broadly follow the ideas of Redfield (1963:282-94, 364-75) in defining civilization both culturally and structurally. The concept of civilization assumes the existence of critically systematized thoughts formulated by specialists (literati) above the level of the unsystematized local oral traditions... (Sinha: 1981:3).

Gayatri Bhattacharya too felt the absence of this clarification when she wrote,

> A more precise articulation by Bose of what is meant by civilization, of the depth and expanse of civilization seems desirable. It must be admitted that Bose did not, earlier in his career, offer any precise formulation of what is conveyed by the term, civilization. He once observed, “... (1) Culture and civilization are terms synonymously used in anthropology. ... (2) Cultures have certain things in common, but each show some characteristics by means of which it can be distinguished from others. If we choose a set of values, then cultures can be compared and ranked as high and low. It is good to remember that their relative position changes if we choose another set of values as our standard. And, then there has been no agreement about any universally acceptable value system for purposes of comparison or evaluation. (Bose, 1960). This use of ‘culture’ as a synonym for ‘civilization’ and vice versa is patent in each of the three essays by him, which contain the word,

But nevertheless, Bose’s model of civilization was a mammoth pillar for analytical understanding of Indian society which leads to obfuscation of a disjunctive sociology and historicizes the growth of a distinct Indian sociology. Despite the fact that Bose’s model could not attract the young scholars to perpetrate this legacy of knowledge building, it still stands on its own dynamism and strength. Sinha too rued on the near obfuscation of this scholar from the academic forum when he mourned that,

The result has been that these highly imaginative and fruitful operations could not be effectively linked with university teaching and research where further refinement of the conceptual tools and methodology should have taken place (Sinha: 1971:12).

**Analyzing Bose’s position in sociological research and practices.**

The paper, *Hindu method of tribal absorption*, is therefore a true epitome of the stand that Bose had advocated throughout his life course. The study makes for a unique point on the trajectory of Indian civilization that Bose sees unfolding over times and he narrates that by various methodological overviews. These ranges from mythologies, folkways and oral traditions to ethnographic accounts and travelogues of itineraries to historical accounts, indological texts, and genealogical studies as well as studying ancient epics and sanskritic texts such as *srutis* and *smritis* and other religious sacred books and Vedic literature mapping out the evolution of age-old groups like castes. These approaches are largely seen as an amalgamation of indological accounts and historical studies of the evolution of the civilization down the ancient time to post-colonial rule. These studies were both qualitative and quantitative in nature. As Beteille opining on this book says,

What is truly impressive about this book is its design. It brings together within a single framework, approaches which are ordinarily practiced separately by ethnographers, indologists and social historians (Beteille: 1992: introduction).
Almost a decade after Bose published his work Dumont and Pocock emphasized the need to bring ethnology and indology together in the study of Indian society. Bose’s contribution to Indian sociology becomes more relevant and stunning if we look at his treatment of tradition. He never spoke of tradition in just bland forms but contextualized it to look at the various amalgamations across the time-span. Tradition for him was not a historical construct but it was something that cut across the historical continuum to accommodate seamless and multiple periods of time wave. Bose definitely was giving a more vibrant form of tradition that very few of his time spoke of. Not only he spoke eloquently and volubly of tradition but the methods he envisaged to capture its various shades were unique of his time. His life-world included all such approaches like structural-functionalism, ethno-methodology and historical narratives that were later individually used by others. Yogendra Singh therefore said,

The new theoretical perspective in the study of tradition has moved in the direction of structuralism and ethno-sociology (Louis Dumont, Veena Das), normative fundamentalism (Coomaraswamy, A.k Saran) and social historicism (Yogendra Singh) (Singh: 1986:11).

Therefore, far before this new trend emerged, Bose had tried and tested all these methods individually and even went to the extent to pigeon-hole all these methods under a single umbrella. Bose therefore can be taken as one of the pioneers of mixed-method research in Indian sociology that starting from the scratch went tepidly to greatly modify the ways of understanding the social reality. However, Bose definitely was not a radical theorist who blatantly uprooted the basic crust of research methodology but he rather took a steady and liberal road to instill changes in the approaches gradually. He was unlike the others who while re-designing the framework for Indian tradition, had vehemently overthrown the canopy of the earlier theories to accommodate the new trends. As Y. Singh talking of the treatment of tradition of other sociologists in this context said,

In this process, of course, the paradigm of tradition has itself undergone basic transformations. It has moved away beyond the framework of the structural-functional social anthropology offered by Robert Redfield, Milton Singer and Mckim Marriott. (ibid:11).
Unfortunately, few of the sociologists have taken stock of the earlier studies before embarking on the new ones. This propagated fractured studies with redundant bases that talks inadequately of the predecessors who had done pioneering works in this field. Many such studies done on Indian sociology suffered from academic amnesia about their true roots and genesis. Singh therefore said,

As Srinivas wrote in his introduction to *India’s Villages* (1955), the important task was to record the entirety of rural social reality before it underwent basic transformation under the forces of social change. Singer’s and Mc Kim Marriot’s contributions, however, had a theoretical orientation to rural society. It was based on the notion of the “social organization of tradition” of Robert Redfield (1955-6, 1956) (ibid:11).

The tragedy, in fact, was that many sociologists did towering works on Indian sociology but forgot the source of their theoretical vitality. They wrote at length but forgot to mention the true point of initiation of their theories. Thus instead of enriching the sociological theories, it only ended up in emaciating their very base and producing myopic visions of Indian social reality. Bose did not follow their foot-steps but rather discussed at length the theoretical stand points of the fore-bearers of the sociology before giving his own explanation of Indian social facts. He therefore started with structural-functionalism to soon corroborate it with trans-cultural studies and used culture and its various components as units of analysis and used them as descriptive and classificatory tools for analyzing Indian society. In the mean while he discoursed upon the social-anthropologists who helped build up these theories.

Thus Bose was not without his base while explaining Indian social reflections. Moving along the line of the famous anthropologist, Clark Wissler (1920) who first developed the idea of cultural traits and culture areas, Bose elucidated on the trait-complexes. He thereupon came to infer a general idea of culture and to likewise demonstrate the countless deviations from the stereotyped interpretations in vogue. Bose therefore applied the idea of the trait complexes to embark on the cross-cultural comparisons along various dimensions. Thus casting Wissler in his theoretical mould, Bose wanted to give an applied study of culture, zeroing down especially on our country and its neighboring districts.
Nirmal Kumar Bose and his emergent emphasis on public ethnography.

Next, Bose puts umpteen emphasis on ethnographic research. The researcher thinks that Bose was gradually moving towards what can be appropriately be called a public ethnography in the sense that he participated and observed and recorded down what he saw without much ado. Participant observation as a part of public ethnography was created sometimes during the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Barbara Tedlock said that,

It developed as an ethnographic field method for the study of small, homogeneous culture. He said ethnographers were expected to live in a society for an extended period of time, and to actively participate in the daily life of its members, and carefully observe their joys and sufferings as a way of obtaining material for social scientific study (Tedlock: 1994:467).

Perhaps, Bose was also trying to create a discourse where the personal rapport building with the tribes got enmeshed with his impersonal theory building. His theory making was therefore not very sombre or autonomous as it was amiable and grounded. True it was that Bose tried hard to adhere to the canons of field work along the scientific path. His ways of recording statements and planning the field trips had been very painstaking but simultaneously he also wanted to grow an impersonal rapport with the inmates to closely watch their life and living. Though he made attempts to systematically organize his work retaining back sufficient objectivity and neutrality but at the same time he was careful to maintain an ambience of amicability, proximity and connectedness as much as possible. So the essential gulf between the public and the private realms had been very well bridged by Bose.

The writings of Bose were not therefore a mundane one-sided monograph but a dialogue where he had put forward the interactional exchanges between them. The exchanges did not just take the form of narratives and texts alone but other mediums of analysis as well. Bose perhaps was not interested in only participatory ethnography but in performance ethnography as well. All that it meant is that Bose did not zero in on just one form of interaction alone but also engaged other forms of communication with the tribal inmates to get a feel of their culture and living. He did not just stay with them to participate in their everyday life to conduct the ethnographic research
but he did venture in their performing arts to know more about them. This performance ethnography brought out the meanings of communal life as depicted through the performing mediums and engagements of the inmates. This could be dance, music or any forms of pursuits in which the folks excelled. This offered representations of tribal life to the authors who had to come out of the ivory-towers to analyze the lifestyles of the tribal folk in flesh and blood.

Bose had presented the translations of the Mundari songs to bring out the crux of the matter. The songs so presented thus narrated the joy and the sorrow of the tribal life and the amplifications so garnered by the author. Bose had also tried using their interior decorations, body art, draping and accessories to interpret their life. Bose felt that these items of daily usage covertly render important meanings to the tribal life.

What is more important is that the actors engaged in performance of tribal art and craft did have very significant things to say. They were not loud about it. Instead of being animated or excited about it they did make their statements quite thoughtfully in a subtle manner. Bose observed that the tribal art was portrayed in a way that it got enmeshed with the tribal religion. The art draped the folk ways in a way that it achieved unison with the folk life and culture. The tribal art was juxtaposed with their religion in a way that there was no question of incompatibility and the two spheres mingled with one another with ease. Bose showed how the tribal art represented their gods through masks and tattoos. Bose said the tribal art was largely ideational and less of pragmatic. Therefore, they portrayed their religion through arts and crafts which ever ways they caught their fancy (Sinha: 1994:52).

Tribal art, as Bose felt, was based on the virtues of a product and not on its paraphernalia. Therefore, when portraying or representing a product through tribal art, the tribe’s men did not pay much attention to the intricate details but was careful to build upon the intrinsic essence of the product which was its soul. So Bose eventually felt that the tribal craftsmen were true artists since their creativity was boundless unlike the urban artists depending on fake ostentation. He showed how the tribal arts and its artists spoke for themselves without petty imitation. They spoke at ease but with an élan incredible for the urban craftsmen. The tribal artists thus took the help of their banal forms of art to narrate their story which was sent out to its audiences but without much ado. Bose brought out the meanings of the tribal songs and poetries in his writings in lucid language to make it accessible to the literate communities so
that they too can re-interpret the performing arts as done by the tribal protagonists. One of Bose’s contributions therefore lied in erecting performing ethnographies which tapped the seamless resources shrouding the colorful tribal life and their culture.

**Bose’s engagement with interpretative action and participatory research**

Bose seemed to have learnt very well the strings of action research. He seemed to have a strong penchant for such a kind of research which necessitated working among the research subjects. Instead of working upon the research objects, the objects in turn became the subjects of the research. The subjects worked in such close association with the researcher that the hierarchy of the research was no longer maintained. The subjects were allowed to participate along with the researcher so that they themselves can enlighten the researcher with their local and indigenous knowledge that in turn can further the prospects of the research. Though Bose had long been doing this kind of research, it actually came to be introduced formally in the academic scenario by social psychologist, Kurt Lewin. Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart said,

Action research began with an idea attributed to social psychologist Kurt Lewin. It first found expression in the work of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in the United Kingdom (Rapaport, 1970), where Lewin had visited in 1933 and 1936 and had maintained contact for many years. Lewin's (1946, 1952) own earliest publication on action research related to community action programme in the United States during the 1940s. (Kemmis & McTaggart: 2000: 560).

However, Bose seemed to have taken to such a form of research far earlier before it had gained popularity in the western academic circle. He was deeply attached to the tribal ways of life. Not only he frequented the sites of tribal occurrences but he made regular visits to problem prone areas to aid the tribal men. Surajit Sinha had rightly said that Bose worked tirelessly even after his retirement from Anthropological Survey of India, when he was invited in 1965 by Yojana Commission to oversee the tribal conditions in the North-Eastern Frontier areas. During this tour he explored the area scrupulously. He enquired about the rising classes of educated middle-income groups and tried to know about their aspirations. He collected data about the newly emerging tribal leaders and the gram pradhans (village leaders) and readily interacted with them. Sinha rightly said that through these interactions,
Bose wanted to initiate into their minds thoughts about their social conditions, necessities of change and ways to attain it. He briefed the educated urban tribal men of the symbiotic relations they were into with their kinsmen who practiced shifting cultivation in the rugged hilly terrains (Sinha: 1994: 68).

Sinha wrote that on tours to the north eastern frontiers, Bose went on without any presumption or hypothesis in his mind. He was a wanderer with his eyes wide open to analyse the situation as he encountered upon (ibid:45). Prof. Annada Bhagabati while narrating his tales of the tour with N.K Bose described very succinctly the ways he participated with the mass. Bose, he said, interacted with the students spontaneously to fathom the ideas flooding their mind. The students were not mere spectators of the meeting but they reciprocated quite vibrantly with him. The meeting he conducted was soon turned into an ambience conducive enough for the young tribal adolescents to share their opinion and raise their voice for various social issues (ibid:43). In this way a grass-root participatory interaction was soon initiated where everyone had something or other to say. Therefore, decisions were undertaken not by a researcher estranged from the process but the issues were resolved from within the group. Here in remained one of the distinctive contributions of Bose to explore a problem from a participatory and ground level stand point. He knew the art of involving everyone while taking a collective decision and therefore the fruits of action research were accomplished soon.

**Social history as one of the constituents of Bose’s research design.**

Social history constitutes one of the pillars of his research, instances of which are aplenty in his studies. Bose, for instance, while studying temple architecture of Puri illustrates the case with the history of the sun cult of India which had come to be associated with the cult of Mithra imported by the colonialists from central Asia. It was blended with the worship of the Vedic sun-god here and was eventually established in Orissa between eighth and tenth centuries A.D. The prevailing cult in Orissa at that point in time was associated with the presiding deity of Jagannath (the sun god) (Bose: 1930:19). The deity was distinguished by the famous car festival known all over the world. Bose thus used social history to investigate the genesis of car festivals in India and its current relation with the distant past. Bose’s seminal
contribution to historical sociology becomes more significant if we look at D.N Dhanagare’s observation on it. He said,

A few social science disciplines in India - more specifically, anthropology, sociology and political science- have chosen to estrange themselves from history in the course of their development and institutionalisation for quite some time. The reasons are not far to seek. Barring some notable exceptions, most Indian sociologists preferred to distance themselves from historical analysis between the 1930s and 1960s. In recent decades, however, in the study of both existing structures and the processes of social change, professional sociologists in India have been increasingly reaching out to history and trying to rediscover historical connections of their discipline. (Dhanagare: 2007:3414).

Bose’s writings instead, strangely show a generous use of history. He does not give a fragmented idea of history but uses it chronologically for macro-structural analysis. He starts with the ancient history to go down to the middle age and then channelizes his study to the colonial era. The way he had treated history is also interesting because he had used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to trace the trajectory of the history of Hindu caste civilization. He starts with the indological texts to find the source of ancient organizations and structures of society. He used various anecdotes from the earlier texts to corroborate his situation. Bose said, for instance, “there is an account in the Chhandogya Upanishad of the destruction of grains by locusts; as a result of this a sage named Chakrayan had to leave the land with his wife” (Beteille 1992:118).

He used history to analyze the process of change creeping in the economic organization of the Hindu caste society as a result of the Muslim rule. To do this he tried to collate the information gathered from the Muslim respondents and compared it with the history of the middle ages. So not just textual analysis, he tried complementing it with the narratives taken from the fellow respondents. He warned us against singular usage of textual sources when he said, “if we are to understand the history of society and the nature of the changes taking place in it, our purpose will not be served by the accounts written by the Muslim scholars” (ibid:130).
He therefore extensively fell back on unstructured interviews and encounters along with textual discourses. Bose thus narrated his experience of meeting a stone worker who excelled in stone-architecture. He wanted to show how the pride held by the stone workers of yesteryears had become oblivious now. This he wanted to show through comparative history crowned with personal interviews and narratives. Bose thus said,

I went to Benaras once in October 1941. There, after many inquiries I located in the Karanghanta ward a certain Muslim contractor called Babu Miyan. He came from an ancient line of craftsmen. He said sorrowfully that these days’ people no longer engage them or show them any regard. At the same time no, one else knows that exact difference between different temples, and how temples dedicated to the different deities should differ. In the past, such matters were the responsibility of the families in which these crafts were pursued (ibid: 118).

He held back to the historical studies once again to locate the changes that the caste structure had undergone in the colonial period. He used case studies to observe the changing family vocations in one Sinha family of Raipur. Instead of digressing into many families, he concentrated on the home of an ancient family of the Uttararaahiya kayastha caste in a place called Chandrakona, the northern part of Midnapore district. He conducted genealogical studies of the family history to understand the nature of changes that had been there since the advent of the East India Company. Bose thus observed

If Sinhas had remained in the calling to which they were assigned within the Varna system, we would probably have not even heard their names today. But when the tide of events flowed on a different course under the impact of the British economic system, the Sinhas allowed themselves to be carried by it, taking sometimes to trade, sometimes to landownership, sometimes to factory management and sometimes to various occupations under government (ibid:144).

To make his inferences conspicuous he uses not just qualitative studies, but couches on precise and systematic census studies rigorously to match his findings with the qualitative ones. Zeroing on the district of Murshidabad and its adjoining areas, he tried doing and re-doing research of various genres to work on his sole theme of caste. Thus, to understand the trajectory of change, he concentrated on Jajigram, again
selected from the north of Birbhum district near the border of Murshidabad district. He studied the families on the basis of their castes and along the yardstick of whether their water is being accepted by the Brahmins or not. So it is interesting to note that, once again we can watch out for Bose’s treatment of history and how he processes historical studies along the lateral symbols of purity and pollution. Thus, to corroborate his position he delivers upon what we say is a multi-segmental idea of history which he shreds into various segments and still focuses on each segment to multiply it still further. It is a step by step interpolation of history to construct sociology of caste along the lines of multiple methods.

This is not just a rhetorical study of historical sociology, but Bose’s work definitely helped in understanding the present condition of castes and designing policies for the post-independent India along the historical axis. The importance of historical sociology has also been emphasised by Dhanagare:

It is, therefore, necessary to recognize that historical sociology, notwithstanding its initial obsessive flirting with evolutionism, is less concerned with any general theory of knowledge. Rather, it essentially involves a quest for a theory, or at least an understanding and search for historical causality, and for methods of empirical verification in those fields of investigation where firsthand experience is not only possible but is also valued as the most dependable source of understanding (i.e., Weltanschauung). Arguing in favor of sociology as a historical social science, in a sense, predicates practicing sociology through history to a certain extent. However, it is not suggested that it is the only meaningful mode of doing sociology or of understanding social reality (Dhanagare: 2007: 3415).

**Bose’s sociological interpretation of Indology:**

Indology occupies an important place in Bose’s theory building and it is the one which has added a sociological dimension to Bose’s work. He had read the ancient texts voraciously and this was reflected in his works. Surajit Sinha, for instance, said,

Bose is not a Sanskrit scholar but he has read the *Geeta, Upanishads* and *Buddhist* literature in translation with great care. According to Bose, these readings must have had an impact on shaping his approach to human problems (Bose: 1972:3).
Thus his inclination towards indological studies was quite evident. Now, such studies were not absolutely new, for they had been used by umpteen sociologists extensively in their work. Brief mention can be made of G.S Ghurye, Louis Dumont, Max Muller, Iravati Karve and Veena Das. This line of thought seemed to hearken back to the Bombay school of sociology which used not only indological approaches but also used them in alliance with the socio-historical studies. The fact becomes clearer when Dhanagare said,

At the Bombay School of Economics and Sociology, Ghurye and research students, had set towering examples of how history, at least in the limited sense of indology, and sociology could be fruitfully cross-fertilised (Dhanagare:2007:3418).

Far away from this school of thought, Bose seemed to have taken to this mixed method very well when he combined not only indology and social history but also social ethnography. Bose’s work is often compared with Ghurye especially because of their proclivity towards caste and tribe. But one area where Bose stands out is his empirical approach and his non-reliance over exclusive use of indological resources for research. Bose was not an arm-chair sociologist and he understood it very well that historical or indological texts alone could not be the basis for research in social science, especially in India where grass-root reality differs starkly from the abstract conceptual reality. Dhanagare had rightly said,

What is relevant to our discussion is not really the question whether Ghurye was intellectually committed to evolutionism and diffusionism, but whether or not classical Sanskrit texts, written and compiled several centuries ago, could be considered as a reliable representation of facts, and whether relying exclusively on their use could be adequate for historical reconstruction. Classical texts often change hands and go through several interpolations by the time they are handed down to us. Hence, the question as to whether or not an analysis based on textual interpretation, however meticulously attempted, could be accepted as a viable substitute for rigorous use of historical method still remains open (Dhanagare:2007:3416).

Undoubtedly Bose had understood this emergent need much before and proposed to re-design the modes of research in India accordingly. He had heavily fallen back on Sanskritic texts and his treatment of classical texts like Vedas, Upanishads, Shruts and Dharmashutras deserve special mention. It can be assumed that throughout his
works he tried working on a bipartite divide between the sanskritic and the non-sanskritic domain of society. He had chosen linguistic terms from the classical texts to symbolically indicate the subliminal difference between the caste and tribe. We can think that the use of such words taken from ancient texts like, *satya* (truth), *dharma* (religion) and *devata* (God) throughout the text serves an important purpose. Bose used such words to symbolically wedge the difference between the castes and tribes. Indological materials for him served the purpose of symbolically bipartite the sanskritic world from the non-sanskritic ones. He mapped and plotted the usage of such words while carrying out extensive ethnographic research on the *Juang* tribes. He was involved, in what we think is an embedded form of research where he juxtaposed one form of research with the other. Such juxtaposition of sophisticated classical linguistic terms with mundane ethno-methodical practices can be taken a contribution of Bose.

His classic work *The Structure of Hindu Society* starts with an intonation of the Hindu reformer, Shri Chaitanya and how he marches on through the forests of Jharkhand to spread his sermons to the hill tribes and finally enchants them with the hymns sung in admiration of Shree Krishna. The book then elucidates how the non-competitive Hindu system of varna was voraciously taken up by the unspecialized tribal economy, which we have already discussed above. The book then discusses how the sanskritic norms and canons of the society paddles fast to bring about equipoise and semblance in the civilization. The book thereafter shows how colonial encroachment lashes heavily against the traditional corpus to disintegrate and decompose the civilization. This was something that Bose lamented upon because he treasured the virtues of the old *Varna* centric Hindu civilization for its resilience and dynamism and never wanted to part with it.

**N.K Bose’s contribution in inter-weaving the links between sociology and common sense.**

N.K Bose’s yet another contribution to the domain of Indian sociology had been in making a stark distinction between sociology and common sense. He discussed at length the common practices and rituals followed by the men found everywhere but
he was careful to abrogate the wrong notions surrounding them. In a way Bose definitely took a strong position in debunking the myths shrouding the hypothetical beliefs and ideas. Bose researched a lot to grapple with the real roots of the social problem and did not limit himself by just reaching at its superficial depth. He wanted to go afar and this probably drove him to the core of the problem. This in-depth analysis helped him to do away with the common sensual interpretations which misled us away from the true nature of the social facts. Andre Beteille (2003), in his seminal book *Sociology: Essays on approach and methods*, writes a chapter on sociology and common sense. He writes,

> It was written to honor Nirmal Kumar Bose who was endowed with robust common sense as well as a passionate belief in the value of scientific enquiry. It tries to place sociology as a particular branch of knowledge in the widest context of general ideas and beliefs. The point is not so much that sociology should set itself against common sense as that it should try to reach beyond it. Only a handful of individual sociologists have succeeded in changing the common sense of their time, but that, rather than success in a political cause, should be the aim of sociology as a discipline (Beteille:2002:9-10).

Bose had gone a long way in trying to reach beyond the common perceptions held by men. It is true that he respected the common men and observed their lives from very close quarters. He also vividly described their life styles and scientifically explained them as clearly as possible to remove any kind of mystifications enveloping it. In this way he showed how common wisdom contributed to the appropriate designing of the society where everything falls in place in spite of the absence of technological fortification. Thereby he showed the strength of common sense knowledge in refurbishing and boosting the basis of sociological theories. Bose for example, while discussing the significance of rice as a cultural trait deliberates on the cultural features that have gathered round the principal food-stuff of the province. He explained succinctly how various activities are channelized centering on the nucleus of rice and which though seemed irrational from outside were brimming with common rationale. Thus while deliberating on the sociology of rice as a cultural trait he went beyond the scope of common sense to draw a bridge between the two. He also seemed to have applied this common sense to embark on the cross-cultural comparisons. This stands corroborated when Bose said,
The paddy fields of Bengal are ploughed with the aid of bullocks. They are harnessed to a yoke which has pegs inserted towards the middle in such a way as to prevent the animals from coming too close to one another when taking a corner. This type of yoke differs from that associated with bullock carts in Bengal, the pegs of which are inserted near the outer extremities instead (Bose: 1961: 22).

Bose, it seemed, thus distinguished the types of bullocks used for paddy fields from those used in bullock carts. He was using such constructs to explain the cultural traits of rural Bengal as well as to indicate the inherent pluralities that ran across the society. He also explained the functioning of common tools like yoke and tried unveiling the strategies behind them that though seemed common-sensical had strong connections with science and rationality. This kind of rigorous observation is only possible for a sociologist like N.K Bose, who worked pedantically thus demystifying sociology from the clouds of common sense and pre-conceived notions. Beteille thus said,

Sociology does not simply deal with facts; it seeks to place those facts on the same plane of observation and analysis. The educated laymen can hardly be expected to master all the facts with which the sociologist deals. He follows at best the method of apt illustration and no consistent rule of procedure for the selection and arrangement of facts. On the other hand, sociological practice develops a characteristic style of argument that does tend to filter through ever-widening circles in the course of time (Beteille: 2002:24).

Thus it seemed pertinent that Bose was moving towards the making of sociology from the fragments of common sense that he had bumped into. Following such common indigenous knowledge, he showed how each geographical province builds upon its own cultural trait that differed significantly from the other provinces. Surely he went beyond the scope of common sense to make sense of social phenomena but yet at the same time he remembered to give common sense its due place in doing and undoing of the society. This dignity must be given to the common man because the store of information he spills out is essential for theory building and which could not be accessed from archives and libraries. N.K Bose while sharing his experience of conducting interviews among the peasants thus said,
Thus the peasant lays bare his experiences about nature little by little, and the geographer can gather ample material for his own purpose from the interview, such as is not readily obtainable from official reports drawn up for special purposes (Bose:1961:252).

The art of transforming collective conscience as Durkheim termed (Morrison: 2006:45), into systematic knowledge is both difficult and useful and this is exactly the art which Bose had mastered so well. Herein lies the true essence of common sense which collected in crude and nascent stage must be mellowed over time and space to discover the real contours of the social phenomena. This is best done by a deft sociologist because no fact originates from scratch, it can only be processed from the common sense. Beyond the glossy and sophisticated sociological explanation remains foiled the unprocessed common sense and the rustic folk ways. However, Beteille, had warned us that,

> Where sociological reasoning acts upon common sense, it tends to moderate both the utopian and the fatalistic elements in it. Common sense easily constructs imaginary social arrangements in which there is no inequality, no oppression, no strife and no constraint on individual choice...sociology is anti-utopian in its central pre-occupation with the disjunction between ideal and reality, between what humans consider right, proper and desirable and their actual conditions of existence, not in this or particular society but in human societies as such (Beteille: 2002:24).

N.K Bose had utilized this virtue of common sense to build upon sociological theory. Especially in the area of intensive field investigation, Bose banked upon the common knowledge of men as much as possible. He understood unless the common wisdom can be tapped, it is not possible to trap the true flavor of the social problem. While planning an interview with the field researcher, Bose plotted all plans to tinker with common narratives of men. While suggesting naïve researchers about research methodology, he proposes ways to fall back on this common-sensical knowledge of the respondents to bring out the necessary information from them. Bose therefore said,

> After reaching the field of enquiry, the geographer should get interested in the life of the people, and this interest must be not merely academic but also genuinely human. When we sit together with a peasant at the
end of his day’s work, we can make him talk about his own difficulties in life, if we are ourselves really interested in the latter…. but gradually, as the intimacy ripens, the geographer will be able to go down deeper. …perhaps the peasant will say many unscientific things, but it is also not improbable that the subject will open up new lines of thought that may lead the geographer to new fields of enquiry (Bose: 1961:251).

Perhaps Bose was also trying to link common sense to some serendipity factor, as we have already said before. We turn to this component once again, because it seemed, Bose assumed that common sensed knowledge can drive us to many unchartered terrains of society which had remained unexplored for ages. The term developed by Merton (1968) and Kuhn (1970) refers to unexpected research findings never anticipated before. T.L Baker therefore wrote,

The inductive process is much more central to the development of new theories, which spring from anomalies-unanticipated observations and surprising exceptions to generalizations that occasionally occur in the course of scientific research. This confrontation with anomalies has been called the serendipity factor and will be discussed below. Suffice it to say for now that coming up with the unexpected, in the process of observation, forces the scientist to bring new ideas to the forming and understanding of theories, in short. To alter and possibly create new theories (Baker: 1999:54).

Thus common sensed knowledge is essential in both making of sociological knowledge and breaking of stereotyped notions thus hailing the discovery of new social facts. Serendipity factors are important because they have been discovered by chance without any pre-determined hypothesis or pre-set research design. Common sense thus instigates serendipity factors and makes sociological theories more enigmatic and complex. This becomes clearer when we find Bose while, summing up the conclusion of an interview, says,

After such an interview, which may last for a week or more, and which need not be confined to a single individual, but may be carried on in the company of several villagers as they sit together for their evening smoke, the geographer should lie down on a large sketch map, the materials he has so far gathered. ….and if he now tries to correlate the physical data with the human, he will experience with a sense of joy how the tales gathered in course of the days spent with the peasant or the
Economic interpretation of caste

Having discussed Bose’s general ideas and approaches, let us now proceed towards this particular approach which he had adopted towards caste structure of the Hindu society in his works. This approach definitely is one of assimilation and accommodation where upon he wanted to create a clear interlace between the sanskritic and the non-sanskritic world. So it becomes very well evident that Bose was necessarily banking his theory upon the social processes that seemed compelling for him. He was thus trying to explain the caste structure through the processes of accommodation and assimilation that had been found from time immemorial. He uses generously the indological texts and scriptures to show evidence of the slow processes of absorption in vogue in the Aryan societies for long. But he warned us that the social processes were not without its proper basis and this could be located in the economic structure of the wider Hindu society. So it is quite evident that Bose was actually giving us an economic approach to the construction of the caste society and more specifically he was talking of the Varna model in terms of its economic sustainability. He made a strong distinction between the caste and tribe on the basis of their capacity for livelihood maintenance which Bose sometimes refers as the carrying capacity. Andre Beteille therefore said,

Bose believed that the whole order of Hindu society, since at least the time of the Mahabharata, had been structured in such a way that a tribe or a section of it was not only allowed but encouraged to maintain a hereditary monopoly over its occupation. Whole groups would thus function as basket makers, or rope makers, or collectors of lac, or dealers of some other product, usually of the forest. But, while specialized occupations were extremely important in maintaining boundaries between groups, such boundaries could be maintained even in their absence through the enforcement of strict rules of endogamy. Bose laid great emphasis on the economic ethic of the wider society which put a high value on hereditary occupations, protected the occupational monopolies of groups and discouraged competition between individuals in the occupational sphere (Beteille:1996: 314).
Bose showed that in the hill and forest regions of Orissa and Chotanagpur, a number of communities lived in tribal villages that worked as craftsmen or specialists. The villagers are linked with one another for economic necessities and mutual cooperation. The *Jatis* like *Pans, Chapua Kamars and Gadiya Lohars* worked in close association with one another. These groups might have been tribes previously but pursuance of a distinct professional specialization has turned them into castes. There are such several groups like the *Birhors* in Chotanagpur in Orissa and the *Makarkhia Kulha* tribes who make ropes and string bags from the forest creepers for sale in the weekly markets. Likewise, the *Kharias* of Mayurbhanj collect from the forest resin, wax, honey, etc., which they sell at a small price to the traders in the village. Adjacent to the Dhenkanal town, the *Juangs* sell firewood to villagers of other communities. They also sell bamboo works and have made it almost their profession. Therefore, Bose showed,

In every case one can observe that each community has adopted a particular occupation. Following variations in local conditions, the same non-Aryan communities might be constrained to adopt different occupations in different regions in Orissa. But once a community establishes monopoly over a particular occupation, others generally avoid taking it up (Bose: 1992: 38).

Thus it remains well evident that the divide between the castes and tribes were fast vanishing. The caste framework was such moulded that it easily made inroads for the new *Jatis*. It was not necessary to maintain all the criteria set for caste affiliation, and conformity to just a few ones could fetch the much coveted caste identity. Just as in the *Varna* system, the occupations were fixed and mutually exclusive, it was not so rigid in the case of newly recruited caste members. Local variations were allowed and a need for a universal caste occupation was not pressed for. The trans-regional versions of traditional occupations were recognized.

The tribal groups trying to gain a footing on the caste pedestal were allowed to go slow. Approach of the caste mentors towards them had been considerably soft and lenient. Their limitations in struggling up the rugged terrain to the *Varna* edifice were thoughtfully considered. It was accepted that the transition from one setting to the other might not be that easy, so the new recruits were allowed to pursue regionally conducive occupations. It was only that whichever occupations they might pursue; it
must be prolonged enough to claim a monopoly over it. The design of the Aryan society was such that it allowed such liberal provisions to the non-Aryan communities despite retaining the rigid rules for itself. Bose was the man one who pointed out at the greatness of a society that reserves the steel-framed rules for itself and makes allowance for the outsiders. It makes provisions for the newcomers and plays a gentle host to those coming from outside. There might be judicious and shrewd strategies behind the whole arrangement, but the constant tribal incorporation within the Aryan fold in the last place cannot be denied. Bose’s work (1975) was therefore a pioneering act in this direction which provided an alternative interpretation of caste.

So, definitely Bose developed an approach where strict providence was given to the economic ethics and values of the society. The model helps explain the co-existence of tribes and castes as the beneficiaries of the larger Varna model of the Hindu society. This is carved out of the deliberate intentions of systematic division of labour in the heterogeneous society that often has fought over the distribution and conflict over resources. Bose nevertheless was trying to provide a culturo-economic resolution to the burgeoning fights of separatism developing between the castes and tribes. However, we must remember that Bose’s approach was not just economic but cultural as well where he showed the economic snobbery of the higher castes being transformed into a kind of leniency towards the deviant cultural practices of the tribes. Many sociologists have tried explaining this as the shrewdness of the mentors of the Aryan structure to combat the grudges of the tribes but Bose had strictly maintained that the absorption was clearly a product of catholicity of the greater Aryan cultural-economic structure. Beteille therefore said,

Bose has been criticised for dwelling too much on the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the tribe and the wider society and not enough on its asymmetrical and exploitative character. The precariousness of the tribal economy was not always its natural condition. It resulted sometimes from a tribe being pushed back by its more prosperous or better organized neighbours from a better to a worse location where it could survive only on the lowest economic plane (Beteille: 1996:315).
Beteille had strongly vouched for the economic ethics of the Hindu caste society. He advocated for this economic ideal which has been riding past the Hindu society for long. He said the tribes living in the remote areas were actually ignorant of the Hindu beliefs and norms; it was the saints and ascetics who travelled to remote areas as the bearers of this Hindu culture to the distant tribes. Thus the role of the Hindu caste structure in accommodating the tribal recruits is undeniable.

Bose’s understanding of caste structure is therefore different from Srinivas who looks into the caste structure as the sanskritizing medium in the society. He believed that lower castes would always make contentious claims of having belonged to the higher caste orders and would make advances accordingly. Srinivas was therefore taking a phenomenological approach towards caste when he treated them as discreet units with a strong sense of identity. Castes were therefore autonomous enough to hearken back to a glorious past and ask for higher caste affiliations. Bose on the other hand was not trying to empower his tribes so much so that they forget their indebtedness to the Hindu caste structure therefore his construction of tribes was only temporarily empowered. Dipankar Gupta (2005) therefore proposed a phenomenological approach to caste which necessarily does not find castes hankering for a specific Aryan model. He says,

As each caste is a discrete phenomenon, there are many hierarchies based on different principles. The Jati puranas sometimes claim Brahmin status, sometimes a Kshatriya past; occasionally they are children of gods, or Banias from the start, and so on. It is only by acknowledging the discrete character of caste that we can explain multiple hierarchies; and also the refusal of castes to give in to a hierarchy that undervalues them. This alone provides the foundational principle behind caste politics and caste rivalries that we see around us today. It also allows us to reconcile to the reality that caste and politics have always co-existed, even in the ancient past. It is by virtue of being discrete phenomena that castes are pressured to distinguish themselves from other castes on a variety of axes. (Gupta: 2005 :146).

However, one thing where Bose and Srinivas resemble is their functional idea of caste. At one time, Srinivas was a structural functionalist who developed his idea of caste accordingly. Similarly, we find Bose was rather a functionalist who was conformist in many senses. He believed in the organic functioning of the society
where each part contributes in the effective operation of the whole. He was a traditionalist to an extent who would think in retrospection about all those lost and abandoned in lieu of the modern reformation. Instead of jumping head strong into a new and jazzy version of the society, Bose wanted to search scrupulously the old regime to find something valuable. He was a traditionalist to an extent with a strong belief in the vicacity of the ancient order and did not want to readily tamper with it. He espoused various interpretations of the Varna and the caste system to give them due legitimation in the society. This was especially done to give immunity to the ancient system of production and economy that have thrived in our society for long. Gandhi’s idea of swaraj and his reliance on the village economy have also helped him understand the treasure trove hidden beneath our indigenous soil. Growing up in the colonial background with a strong nationalist fervour has helped Bose draw loyalty towards the ancient indigenous system and its potency. Gandhi’s critique of western capitalism and the machine based economy and his vigorous search for an alternative system of production have led him to look at home front. He was a true indologist in the sense that he has analysed the caste system and its implications all along the long historical course that the society had undertaken.

The rich analysis which Bose had undertaken looked for the dynamism of the caste system and its magical relationship with the Varna order and it has always mesmerised us. The caste system and its affiliation to the Varna order has shown how the two have woven a relationship between the individual and society. It is an ambivalent relationship of both solidarity and conflict where interactions always go on unabatedly in the society. Bose thus gives us an interactive vision of the caste system which is not merely a stooge of the given structure but rather an immortal process which presents before us nothing but society in disguise.

**Cultural Change.**

This equipoise gets disturbed when there is a corresponding change in the society. There has been a warp of theory building in Indian society on the propositions of social change and how it affects the different arenas of socio-cultural construction. Though there have been numerous theoretical schools of social change, pertinent reference can be made of only a few major ones. The idea is to discuss the prevalent
theories of social change gaining the foreground in the academic foray and to discuss in particular the contributions of Bose and his distinctions, if any, in designing the theoretical pedestal of social change in India. The theories of social change as offered by the sociologists had been numerous and each addressed a significant element of the Indian society especially at the point of its semblance in course of its intercourse with other planes. We begin our discussion with a comparative analysis between Bose and Srinivas on this front to eke out the distinctiveness of Bose.

Let us therefore start with M.N Srinivas and his famous theories of social change as reflected in his path-breaking work on sanskritization (1968). Srinivas used this term to contemplate upon the process of social mobility in Indian caste society. He studied the underlying mechanisms through which the lower caste men made inroads in the higher rungs of the caste structure through various strategies. Yogendra Singh while explaining the dynamics of Srinivas’s sanskritization, therefore said,

The specific sense of sanskritization lies in the historicity of its meaning based on the Hindu tradition. In this respect, Sanskritization is a unique historical expression of the general process of acculturation as a means of vertical mobility of groups (Singh: 1994:6).

The book, Social Change in Modern India written in 1968, renders a deep and insightful touch to the very process of shuffling within caste structures noticed in rural India and how it juggles with the otherwise rigid Varna pyramid. Singh spoke of dual levels of meanings intertwined within the idea of sanskritization, where one meaning lies in historical specific plane whereas the other in the contextual line. Singh added that historically one might allude to the macro sphere of changes emanating in the status of innumerable castes, the leadership patterns or the cultural traits in different historical epochs. He said,

It is indicative of an endogenous source of social change in the broad historical spectrum of India. In contextual specific sense, however, Sanskritization denotes contemporaneous processes of cultural imitation of upper castes by lower castes or sub-castes, in different parts of India (Singh: 1994:7).
Therefore, the kind of social change that Srinivas was referring in this sense was not homogeneous as in the case of historical specific change. He showed how the kind of cultural corpse might vary across the horizon and might display a wide spectrum in terms of the heterogeneity of cultural practices being borrowed. Singh therefore explained,

The nature of this type of Sanskritization is by no means uniform. As the content of cultural norms or customs being imitated might vary from Sanskritic or Hindu traditional forms to the tribal and even the Islamic patterns (Singh: 1994:8).

Srinivas was frequently seen to shuffle with his concept and bring definitional change in this idea from time to time. Initially he referred to sanskritization as a process of incurring changes in sync with the Brahminical conducts such that sanskritization and Brahminization have become almost co-terminous. Later on Srinivas made substantial changes in the concept to bring it out of the clasp of the Brahmans and made it more secular in its approach. Singh therefore wrote,

The new connotation of Sanskritization is evidently much broader; it is neither confined to Brahmans as a reference group nor to the imitation of mere rituals and religious practices (Singh: 1994:7).

Thus the shift in the meaning was well evident in Srinivas’s works and it attracted the attention of the scholars and experts showing concerns in this particular area, notable amongst them had been A.M Shah who made a detailed study on the ways of explaining social change in India. He noticed that co-incidentally at about the same time when Srinivas was writing on Sanskritization, at about the same time, another renowned social scientist and linguist, was also using the same term. Shah therefore wrote,

The eminent linguist and historian Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (1950) also used the term almost at the same time as Srinivas used it, but without the two scholars knowing about one another's work (Shah: 2005: 238).
Chatterjee about the large scale sanskritization of languages progressing in full swing across the various groups with various communities avidly taking up the Sanskritic terms in their daily conversations. Srinivas did not stop at the mere change in languages but broached the issue of the over-all tendency to inculcate the great traditions in the local ritual, social and cultural practices and this is generally borrowed by the lower groups in pursuance of the groups slightly higher in scale.

The point that this researcher wants to espouse is that long before the likes of M.N Srinivas or Suniti Chatterjee had spoken of sanskritization, N.K Bose had already proposed this theory. Srinivas had first used this term in 1947, in his work on Coorgs and submitted this doctoral dissertation in Oxford University and published it much later in 1952 to be followed by Chatterjee. Shah therefore wrote,

It is well known that one of the basic contributions of M.N. Srinivas to the study of Indian society and culture is his concept and analysis of sanskritisation. He used the concept first in his doctoral dissertation on Coorg religion submitted to Oxford University in 1947 and published in 1952. As Srinivas himself noted later (1967, reprinted in Srinivas 2002: 221), the eminent linguist and historian Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (1950) also used the term almost at the same time as Srinivas used it, but without the two scholars knowing about one another's work (Shah:2005:238).

While Srinivas was introducing his theory of sanskritization to the world at a national conference, Bose was seated in the audience and was not very satisfied with Srinivas’s expatiation. This becomes clear from Shah’s own account,

He (Srinivas) presented his thoughts on Sanskritisation more comprehensively for the first time in ‘A note on Sanskritisation and Westernisation’ he wrote for a seminar organised by Milton Singer at Poona in July 1954. Srinivas could not attend the seminar, but sent the paper for publication in Far eastern quarterly. In the meanwhile, he presented the same paper at the all India conference of anthropologists and sociologists held at Madras in November 1955. While presenting the paper he spoke at some length to introduce it. The paper, the speech and the discussion were published in the report of the conference in October 1956 (see Srinivas 1956). In the paper he expressed his awareness of ‘the complexity of the concept and its loose ness’ (Ibid: 75; 1956a; 2002: 202) and in the speech he expressed his dissatisfaction with the word ‘Sanskritisation’ (1956a: 90). Several leading participants in the
conference, such as V. Raghavan, Irawati Karve, N.K. Bose, P.N. Prabhu and N. Dutta-Majumder, criticised the paper sharply. Since I was a participant in the conference, I could see the criticisms were quite sharp (Shah: 2005: 240).

Srinivas too put up a strong fight and defended his theory but despite his strong defence, the fact cannot be denied that pioneering contributions had already been accomplished by Bose in this arena and no one but Bose deserves to be the pathfinder of this theoretical direction. Much before Srinivas made an extensive fieldwork on Coorgs to locate his position of concurrent transitions in the stratified society, Bose had not only illustrated such tendencies through his seminal work on the Juangs but had also mooted the contours of his theory of social change. Bose remained a pioneer scholar in the field of historical sociology for he had already spoken of the historical evolution of the caste and its changing nexus in the new post-independent era. His vision was wide and he knew the art of canvassing a subject across a broad scope thus looking both for its historical genesis and contemporary relevance.

Bose had already spoken of infiltrating tendencies of lower groups towards the higher ones and this, he said, had been going on since antiquity. Long before Srinivas spoke of the sanskritizing processes, Bose had already mooted the problem of tribal incorporation in the larger Hindu order. He had spoken at length about the way the Munda tribes of Chotanagpur were approaching the greater tradition through special enactments during religious rites and performances. They kept no leaves unturned to attain the status of piety and sanctity as that of the Hindu castes and the ardour of scaling high had come out sharply through the tribal acts of abstentions. Bose did not showcase a penchant for the Brahminical hegemony among the tribes because they were often seen invoking a Vaishnav (one of the major traditions within Hinduism) priest for officiating their ritual practices. Thus Bose went on to say,

Some Mundas of Chotanagpur have recently been incorporated in Hindu society after the performance of a number of religious ceremonies. These Mundas have given up eating beef and drinking intoxicating liquors. They put on the sacred thread for a few days in the year when celebrating the Manda Parab in the honour of the Hindu god Siva. A Hindu priest, who is not a Brahmin but a Vaishnava, officiates for them.
on the occasion and he is even allowed to ride upon his client’s back as part of the ceremony (Bose: 1929:45).

Thus Bose did not give unnecessary privilege to the Brahminical frame of reference but he had alternative frames of reference in his mind while he was drawing a much inclusive picture of the Indian society. Srinivas also regretted,

I now realize that in both my book on Coorg religion and my “Note on Sanskritization and Westernization”, I emphasised unduly the Brahminical model of Sanskritization and ignored the other models---Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Even the Brahminical model was derived from the Kannada, Tamil, and Telegu Brahmins, and not from the Brahmin castes in other regions” (Srinivas: 1966:7).

Long before Srinivas realized and repented that alternative models exist and it would be uncompromising to use just one model of social change over the other, Bose had already broached their existence. Therefore, Bose can be credited for having marched all across the social periphery and accommodating the various models of acculturation as essential ingredients in his theory making long before others proposed them.

Thus Bose was already talking of the processes of acculturation that had long been percolating within the Hindu society. In explaining such processes, he was careful not to give unilateral importance to just the highest rung of the Varna model and therefore recognized the existence of other reference groups as well. Thus Bose had for long been talking of process of social change with due importance to all the groups in their capacity to initiate the same with vigour and zeal. Long before any other social scientist could broach the issue, Bose did it with confidence and resolution and devoted his entire life in explaining the civilization from this plural perspective. Unlike Srinivas who had shifted his meaning of sanskritization from Brahminization to the other dominant castes, Bose had from the very beginning recognized the power of the other castes to be in the dominant positions and did not have to change his course to validate the same. As Singh wrote,

Consequently, Srinivas has been changing his definition of Sanskritization from time to time. Initially he defines it as the tendency among the low castes to move higher in the caste hierarchy “in a generation or two” by “adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its rituals and pantheon”. Here Sanskritization is identified
with imitation of the Brahminical customs and manners by the lower castes. Srinivas later re-define Sanskritization as “a process by which a ‘low’ Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, frequently, ‘twice born’ caste (Singh: 1994:7-8).

Thus Srinivas took long to realize the fact that social change had crept into India not only holding the hands of Brahminical pantheons but there were other groups who could claim equal attention. The model of social stratification that Srinivas had drawn for India was far narrower than the one which Bose had in mind. The latter’s image was far more inclusive, flexible and secular than the former especially because Bose had for time and again accredited the role of the other groups in ushering social change. Srinivas said,

Sanskritization is not confined to Hindu castes but also occurs among tribal and semi tribal groups such as the Bhils of Western India; the Gonds and Oraons of Central India, and the Pahadis of the Himalayas. This usually results in the tribe undergoing Sanskritization claiming to be a caste, and therefore, Hindu. In the traditional system, the only way to become a Hindu was to belong to a caste, and the unit of mobility was usually a group, not an individual or a family (Srinivas: 1966:7).

Srinivas only made hasty references of the tribes and how the sanskritizing processes had come to impact them. His essays though upheld the pioneering concept of sanskritization did not entail the tribal groups in much detail. Therefore, he gave a caste centric but incomplete idea of social change thus carefully circumventing one of its primary agents that is the tribal groups in question. Srinivas’s theoretical discourse on castes therefore assumed the tribal question as one of the legitimate participants in the process of social change without much meaty reference of them. The theory of social change sans the tribal incumbents makes for an incomplete theory building and the vacuum created by the dearth of such tribal participation sometimes makes for a myopic reading of the Indian history. Virginia Xaxa probably had this in mind when he said,

Though M. N Srinivas had the so called lower class in mind when he coined this term, it can be extended to the tribal as well. This process of social change is also called “Hinduization” (Singh: 1972:20-21).
Bose, on the other hand, sketched an all-encompassing frame-work of social change where he had given equal attention to the Hindu and the non-Hindu elements and how the latter developed an alliance with the former. It is a round-about theory where no elements are left behind and interstices are woven between the various levels of the society instead of confining the transition at intra positional levels.

Bose had his eye on inter-positional changes because he tried developing the caste-tribe nexus and not just the caste-caste nexus. Not just positional changes, Bose also spoke of structural changes. Srinivas only spoke of a kind of positional change because he felt the structure remained intact with only superfluous changes on the level of hierarchy. The castes only reshuffled to change their position but the over-all structure remained intact. Srinivas therefore said,

> The mobility associated with Sanskritization results only in positional changes in the system and does not lead to any structural change. That is, a caste moves up, above its neighbours, and another comes down, but all this takes place in an essentially stable hierarchical order. The system itself does not change. (Srinivas: 1966:7).

Bose, on the other hand, was talking of the entire caste system going topsy-turvy thus shaking the hierarchical system at its roots. While elucidating the conditions of the state of Orissa, especially of the period between thirteenth and eighteenth century, Bose had shown how it drowned into destitution followed by repeated encounters. Recurrent invasions had affected its economic strength to an extent that the trait-complex of the caste system had undergone radical change. Bose wrote, that following the Islamic rule, the occupational order of the old Varna system received tumultuous blow. The *Khandaits* who were soldiers had taken to agriculture, *Karanas* who were in charge of clerical works now worked in stone and Brahmins, the erstwhile head of the society had taken to agricultural farming. Bose therefore wrote,

> The entire economic arrangement has been dislocated and the caste system, as a trait complex, has changed in character, because occupations which were more strictly hereditary in former times, have now become very much less so (Bose: 1929:83).
Thus contrary to Srinivas’s locus of positional change, Bose was talking of a substantive structural change, where the entire hierarchical order of the society undergoes rampant transformations. He explained the economic factors as the sole agent of such social change and probably he was one of the pioneers in offering an economic explanation of the civilizational transformation. He not only gave an economic interpretation but also explained the social change in terms of a geo-historical mapping of the social contours. In this way the kind of social change that he offered was hinged on an explanation of local culture in accordance with the physical demography of the area thus suggesting its probable path of diffusion. Bose’s inclination to develop such a model of social change must have had some inspiration that served as the backdrop for such explanation. Bose’s proximity to the school of American anthropology well explains this.

**Presenting a middle range theory of national integration.**

Bose’s theory of national integration, he proposed for the country can be taken as foraging for middle ground between the usually predominant forms of public policies for mass-integration. Weiner says there are usually two such strategies, which he articulated upon,

In general, there are two public policy strategies for the achievement of national integration: (1) the elimination of the distinctive cultural traits of minority communities into some kind of "national" culture, usually that of the dominant cultural group-a policy generally referred to as assimilationist: "Americanization," "Burmanization," "detribalization;" (2) the establishment of national loyalties without eliminating subordinate cultures-the policy of "unity in diversity," politically characterized by "ethnic arithmetic." In practice, of course, political systems rarely follow either policy in an unqualified manner but pursue policies on a spectrum somewhere in between, often simultaneously pursuing elements from both strategies (Weiner:1965 :56).

Bose’s theory can be taken as a middle ground between the two policies since he at the same time upheld the national character of the Hindu Varnashram system and on the other hand celebrated upon the theorem of unity in diversity. Bose had thus strongly advocated the kindness of the Hindu religion and its corresponding policy to even accommodate the tribes and the non-Hindus into the national mould. However, Bose for time and again had been criticized for his obsession with the Hindu society and extolling unnecessarily its policies towards tribal absorption. On the contrary,
many saw these policies of Hindu society as shrewd strategies of domesticating the tribes with strong patronizing agenda and latent exploitation. Yet Bose never relented in admiring the Hindu religious elites and the overall malleable crust of the Hindu society. Thus, Andre Beteille reminds us,

Bose has been criticized for dwelling too much on the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the tribe and the wider society and not enough on its asymmetrical and exploitative character (58). The precariousness of the tribal economy was not always its natural condition. It resulted sometimes from a tribe being pushed back by its more prosperous or better organized neighbours from a better to a worse location where it could survive only on the lowest economic plane. As a recent writer has tersely observed about a major area of tribal concentration in Bihar, 'it can be surmised that the people of Chota Nagpur remained primitive so that their neighbours could grow' (59). But, whether these tribes were pushed out or pulled in, their lives were never wholly unaffected by the larger currents of Hindu civilization. (Beteille: 1986:58-59).

Therefore, Bose did not stop extolling the generous nature of the Hindu society, which had strongly embedded economic benefits for the downtrodden classes. The exclusive monopoly over a task that was given to the tribes in the Hindu society talks of the flexibility and generosity of the caste society which Bose upheld. Even Beteille said,

Our understanding of the transformation of tribe into caste or the fusion of tribal elements into the general society will remain incomplete without an appreciation of the role of the economic ethics of Hinduism. Evidence of oppression and exploitation cannot be used to discount its hold over the minds of people in the entire sub-continent down to our own times. The economic ethic was part of a wider system of beliefs and values which we describe broadly as Hinduism and which overflowed the boundaries of Hindu society in the narrow sense. (Beteille: 1986: 58-59).

Thus it is pretty evident that Bose fell back on different elements of the Hindu society to corroborate its consideration for the other communities. It never just worked for itself but persistently made in-roads for the other communities standing on its threshold. Thus the argument is this that Bose was tenaciously trying to create
integration along the horizontal line where he wanted to boil down all sorts of multiplicities into a single unifying sect. He tried legitimatizing this along various lines, chief among them being the religious and the caste. This becomes clearer when Bose says,

The great teachers who wanted to convey to the country their faith had always toured the whole of India and one of the greatest of them, Sankaracharya, who flourished in the eighth century A.D. built four Ashramas (Monasteries) in four corners of India, which flourish to this day. Everywhere the same scriptures are read and followed and the epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are equally popular wherever you may travel (Bose: 1991:12).

He contrasted this form of integration with the one that followed with the British conquest when integration policies were framed along the vertical lines of stark demarcation between the people on the lines of language, religion, races and the like. He, on the other hand, upheld a form of integration that would promote the distinction of all communities that inhabited the Indian union. The tribes were not cut off from the Hindu society and they must assert their existence on their own crest. The society was modernizing fast, and the tribes would not sustain any insulation from the buzzing society, but work in unison to bring out the true essence of a multicultural society like India. Thus the merging between the two popular forms of public strategies, where a national or at least an ideal-typical value system might be built up at least carefully, in a way it does not hurt the sentiments of the different groups that are opulent and ready to display their difference from the dominant culture, sect or ideology, is important. This is necessary to resuscitate back the flexibility and resilience of a plural country, which our country truly is. This was unlike the imperial practices where the colonial forces had strong lines of coercion up their sleeves and the masses had learnt to distance themselves from the segmenting policies of the elite. Instead of tying the masses along a common cord, the foreign power had zoomed on the innate differences of each of the communities and played them one against the other. The communities were at logger heads with one another thus creating a context easier for the British forces to fragment the nation into vulnerable pockets.

He takes a middle-range approach while problematizing the issue of integration. The theory of middle range has been taken from Robert Merton, who proposed local,
contextual and middle level facts instead of over-arching and over-whelming grand theories espoused by Talcott Parsons. He felt Parsons’ grand theories do not take into consideration contextual and immediate factors that might be found in the proximity and that might help interpret a given fact. Instead grand theories are abstract and based on syntactical statements and complicated verbiage that neither shows any realistic interpretation of the fact nor any reasonable ways of addressing it. For instance, L. Mark Raab and Albert C. Goodyear said,

Accordingly, Merton's (1968:38) stated objective for middle-range theory has been welcome to many: Middle-range theory is principally used ... to guide empirical inquiry. It is intermediate to general theories of social systems which are too remote from particular classes of social behaviour, organization and change to account for what is observed and to those detailed orderly descriptions of particulars that are not organized at all. Middle-range theory involves abstractions, of course, but they are close enough to observed data to be incorporated in propositions that permit empirical testing (Raab & Goodyear: 1984: 257).

Bose likewise does not talk of grand and radical transformations in the country. He does not refer to syntactical and abstract ideas but is always ready to keep his head on the ground. Instead of drafting top-bottom policies he rather proposes the reverse. He proposes policy decisions by monitoring the ground reality of the groups and their immediate circumstances, instead of jumping head long in an abstract mire of hefty and long drawn policies. His policies were meant to address the local situations instead of addressing the farfetched grandiose ones. He wanted them to be spear-headed by the common men themselves instead of letting the state intervene everywhere. In fact, he wanted an ambivalent effort where the local issues are dealt strategically with judicious use of state resources. Such grass root democracy initiated by the masses, is what he wanted. Bose therefore said,

It is dangerous to burden a government with so heavy a task, and in a country inhabited by one-seventh of the world’s population. Such a process should be avoided, even if it is only for the following reason. The Government of India is not in a position to remedy with reasonable rapidity with all the ills of a nation which has suffered from several centuries of servitude and impoverishment…. this may be a major reason why local initiative should be promoted and organized in order to solve the numerous problems of social and economic life. The secret of
our success lies in our ability to deal efficiently with situations as they
rise at the local level and in combining with it services made available
by the Government in a manner so that local initiative is not scotched,
but encouraged and fortified (Bose:2014).

**Visualising Indian society through the looming influence of American anthropology.**

N.K Bose was undoubtedly a stalwart in the field of anthropology for his stupendous
work in India and widely known all over the world. Bose had demonstrated excellent
expertise on research and building up an all-round scholarship on Indian society and
its intricacies. The way he consolidated his authority on various gamut of the social
sphere was through his pedantic knowledge and a sound grip on Indian society as a
whole. Perhaps his thorough reading of the preceding anthropologists had helped him
shape his views and kens and this could explain the influence of American
anthropology on Bose. A large many thinkers like Franz Boas, Wissler, Kroeber and
Lowie had impacted him profoundly and their vibes have been echoing strongly in his
works. The chief ideas of American anthropology especially their thrust on human
gEOGRAPHY had largely influenced him which he tried transposing on Indian context
and its typical structure. India being a country with a chequered history had its own
traits that if explained from American anthropological perspective would have been
misleading and a travesty since every nation and its nestled discipline has its own
distinct features.

Therefore, one of the major contributions of Nirmal Kumar Bose remains how he
explained and interpreted idiosyncratic Indian problems with the aid of a foreign
tHEory and yet claimed a strong clutch on indigenousness and nativity on his theory
making. The robe that Bose was wearing while re-searching was therefore truly
cosmopolitan that mingled both global and national colours. While serving his nation
and designing an appropriate theory Bose was not parochial and did not show any
orthodoxy in drawing from other nations as and when required for knowledge
building and reasonable interpretation. The way Bose leaned on American
anthropological theories and other extraneous sources rightly indicate that he probably
wanted to obliterate all possible impediments between national boundaries while
knitting theories and discovering knowledge.
American anthropology had traversed through various trials and tribulations which had gone a long way in designing its concepts and functioning. A brief peak into its garb will help us understand the path it veered through and how it left an indelible mark on Bose. Bose thus, as we saw, was largely influenced by Franz Boas, one of the founding fathers of American anthropology. Boas while espousing his way of practising anthropology had for long referred to the role of geographical factors in influencing the culture of the people. He had always acknowledged the active role played by the natural factors in shaping the social life though initially he was allegedly taken as a critic of geographical determinism. Speth for instance wrote,

One might easily carry away the idea that he had a low opinion of Tylor or Ratzel, as was certainly not the case. His critique of environmentalism for instance, was urged so forcibly that for years I failed to grasp how carefully he took cognizance of geographical factors (Speth: 1978:12434-435).

Boas later on admitted of the creative role played by the environment in ushering the patterns of culture of the people inhabiting those geographical conditions. It was thus readily believed that ecological factors pertaining to the area went a long way in determining the culture of the people. Boas in asserting this did not belittle the creative genes of men but he nevertheless placed a pivotal importance on the environmental factors though his critics felt he had posed an ambivalent take on environmental determinism for long. Boas in his historicist-anthropic-geographical-paradigm had for time and again stressed the relation between environment and culture. From 1901 till Boas died, he went on deliberating on this synthesis and this was reflected in most of his works as the intellectuals working on him had revealed (Speth: 1978:12[Boas: 1940, 1932]). Speth wrote that Boas, while spelling out the broad outlines of his approach, had dictated that

Multitude of relations between man and nature; the procuring and preservation of food; the securing of shelter; the ways in which objects of nature are used as implements and utensils; all various ways in which man utilizes or controls or is controlled by his natural environment: animals, plants, the inorganic world, the seasons, and wind and weather {Speth:1978:14[ Boas:1938:4]}. 
It appears that N.K Bose had taken the same road while explaining cultural
distinctions and peculiarities in diverse settings in the Indian context and time and
again he had fallen back on Boasian model. Bose showed how the culture and living
in the society depends on the various items of food, utensils, ploughs, clothing, huts,
roofs, millets, oil seeds, oil pressing instruments etc. He said since oil pressing
instruments prevailed in our country for long, there must have crept many
differences in their usage. One can study the changes in the use of these instruments
to infer the cultural practices in the society. Bose, for instance, began his study from
the patterns of oil consumption in various states. He then made a survey on the
various practices of oil extraction among various communities in West Bengal to find
the underlying cultural nuances that such practices carried for the communities. He
observed that frequency of oil usage declines farther North West from Bihar and
Orissa; instead it is replaced by milk and ghee. Bose studied the oil consumption
patterns in the northern states to ascertain the place of oil in the cultural matrix of
such societies. Bose therefore said,

If we compare the use of oil in the different regions we get the
impression that the use of oil and of fish was absent from the culture
which prevailed in the past in Punjab, Rajputana and the United
Provinces. Oil was perhaps a characteristic product and market of
ancient Indian culture; this is why we find its widespread use throughout
the country outside of North West India (Bose: 1992:75).

Bose thereafter researched on the implications of oil extraction among various castes
and found that Telis (oil–pressing castes) who traditionally pound the oil seeds to
press out the oil are placed in the last rung of the hierarchy. The occupation brings
with itself such social stigma that even the Kol tribes refuse to induct themselves in
this lowly occupation in the fear of losing their respect. Bose, for instance said,

One also sees the Kols themselves making use of the oil mill when no
oil pressers are near at hand; but for fear of losing caste they use human
and not cattle traction for turning the mill. In Hindu society the Teli or
oil presser caste is regarded as a low caste whose water is not
acceptable. This is why others are reluctant to adopt their occupation for
fear of losing caste or being degraded (Bose: ibid:75).
Thus it becomes clear that Bose was treading the road of Boasian anthropo-geographic method whereupon he studied the impact of geographical factors in ascertaining the cultural patterns of the society. The details of mundane objects mapping a distinct geographical area both of organic and inorganic capacity are taken into consideration to draw the socio-cultural contours of the region. Thus though Bose heavily fell back on the stalwarts of the American anthropology and some of his concepts were largely designed in sync with his American mentors, nevertheless he can be credited for having proposed a model of social change hinged on the parameters of geo-historical model of explaining change in Indian society.

Besides the theoretical import, Bose definitely can be credited for having applied a foreign theory brilliantly in the Indian context to bring out the indigenous idiosyncrasies characterizing the nation. However, Bose was not without his base while explaining Indian social reflections. Moving along the line of the famous anthropologist, Clark Wissler (1920) who first developed the idea of cultural traits and culture areas, Bose elucidated on the trait-complexes. He thereupon came to infer a general idea of culture and to likewise demonstrate the countless deviations from the stereotyped interpretations in vogue. Bose therefore applied the idea of the trait complexes to embark on the cross-cultural comparisons along various dimensions. Thus casting Wissler in his theoretical mould, Bose wanted to give an applied study of culture, zeroing down especially on our country and its neighbouring districts. Armed with a treasure-trove of oral history, Bose built up a geo-cultural model of knowledge encompassing all aspects of the concurrent society in his book *Biyallisher Bangla* (Bengal in 1942). As historian Gautam Bhadra has rightly pointed out, this book “was not only a scientific, physical approach to history, or a beautiful geographical encyclopedia or a mere model to serve expatiating of local culture, but a political testimony essayed by a Gandhian scholar” (Dey: 2012:381).

**A new approach towards fact-gathering and researching: *Biyallisher Bangla*, a case in point.**

Bose’s distinctive contribution was building up a body of knowledge pertaining to the intricate pockets of the erstwhile undivided rural Bengal. Very few earlier works were as informative as, for instance, *Biyallisher Bangla*, for the work really was a vivid account of almost everything that happened in Bengal at that phase.
The work was interesting because it was not verified and tested against corroborated facts but was composed purely on the basis of narratives and tales of the local people. Bose while participating in the Quit India Movement called by Gandhi in 1942, was imprisoned in the Presidency Jail wherefrom he was transferred to the Dumdum Central jail. He was incarcerated for as long as three years and a month. He practised writing daily which provides a succinct account of his daily engagements, which were later published in the form of a book, *Biyallisher Bangla*. He spent his days with prisoners who belonged to various districts and they apprised him of distinct flavours of their places. Abhik De wrote,

In the introduction of the said book, Bose wrote how his anthropological heart jigged at the scope of collecting accounts of men of different districts. Not just collecting notes, he focused on building up an anthropological enquiry of Bengal. Engrossed in amassing these interesting facts, he mapped of many future schemes (Dey: 2012:392-393).

The detailed chronicles entailed such mundane but almost all sundry themes that man could think of, such as wise antidotes of common maladies, occupational changes, changes in immortal reciprocal relationships, historical changes and many others. Accounting for the sharpness of Bose’s works, historian Gautam Bhadra wrote that the book can be taken as an account of the material civilization of Bengal within a given time frame (ibid:381). The book also entails the directions of changes that veer in various directions and provides a detailed compendium of social changes marching in nooks and crannies of the erstwhile un-partitioned Bengal. He collected information about the intricacies of each districts from their respective inhabitants. Though they were no corroborated evidences, yet the otherwise remote and minute details came to the purview.

In this way Bose’s one distinct contribution remained as the narrator of the untested and unveiled stories of the Bengal. He can rightly be credited for having uncovered many tales and historical facts of the state and as a curator of the latent changes creeping therein. The narrative cuts across castes and communities to give us a distinct flavour of the district wise composition. Bhadra said,

The work truly transects the caste-community hiatus to give a succinct account. The leather workers of Tripura participating in the caste
movements have been re-named as ‘Rishi’ (saints) who live in many villages of Brahminberiya (Bhadra: 2012:384).

The work had strong historical attributes for they rightly point out the evolution of the processes in play but more than history there are simple observations that make Bose’s work stands out from others. Bhadra, too said,

Bose opined that in working with the present society; too much pre-occupation with historical practices is not conducive for research for it leads to a kind of conservatism and indifference. Bose believed that the historians of the colonized country have some fetishes which in turn can affect their researches (Dey: 2012:384).

Therefore, Bose’s way of doing research and thereby recording the impending changes was systematic yet flexible and malleable. It was like recording the happenings of a society through the eyes of a pilgrim, travelling from one corner of the world to the other with deep respect and curiosity for other cultures. This kind of work cannot be a uni-linear inscription of history, for it has to juxtapose the historical elements with the daily verbal accounts of the men engaged in the social sphere. *Biyallisher Bangla*, an account of un-partitioned Bengal in 1942, was a kind of work which provided a chronicle defying the conservatism and insipidity noticed in earlier works. The vibrant narratives of the prisoners gave an offhand and impromptu district-wiswise transcription at that historical juncture which went on to become a significant account of Bengal to be treasured for long. His informers for this work were many, who, according to Bhadra,

Were prisoners, his co-workers in polity who wished to initiate the social change. There is no vested interest for spear-heading any such reciprocity, but an embedded responsibility to introduce his nation to the outward world.... the data collectors included one Bhupal Chandra Panda from Medinipur, Bijoy Kumar Bhattacharya from Murshidabad or Charu Chandra Bhandari hailing from 24 Parganas. Everyone is a renowned organizer who has never harvested any nexus with Bose and therefore there developed no complicity or connivance between the writer and his sources (Dey: 2012: 378).
Bose gallantly recorded what came his way without being wary of the consequences or its implications. The way of building history and corroborating changes by complete reliance on folkways, mores, oral history and commentaries without falling back on archived or recorded memoirs was not only a novel approach in history-making but also a profound attack on the structured and strait-jacket historical approach of accounting change prevalent in society and canonized for long. This particular work definitely had earned for itself a distinct place on the platter of culturo-historical collections of Bengal and not just the work but the very way of doing research had trodden a new ground in the scholarly ambit. This particular way of building knowledge was yet another contribution of Bose. He delved upon a very resourceful legacy of doing literature in Bengal. Let us peek into this tradition of Bengali literature to understand the potentiality of Bose’s work a little more.

**Bose’s achievement in garnering the growing corpus of the vernacular literature.**

This is yet another area of research and writing especially in the domain of literature in which Bose left behind indelible footprints. He wrote about mundane themes which hardly were taken up for serious consideration. He not only dabbled with such every day and mundane practices but also built up scintillating literature which had emitted a brilliant radiance on its own. *Paribrajaker Diary* was a collection of various random papers that Bose wrote at different points of time. The papers which were published at different junctures of his life were first imprinted in 1940 in the form of a book entitled *Paribrajaker Diary*. Abhik De wrote, “Some new essays were later incorporated to publish the second edition in 1945” (Dey: 2007:7).

The book had taken a different kind of an approach to its themes that reflect different dimensions of the society. The book is akin to the itinerary of an avid traveler who takes deep interest in anything and everything that meets his eyes. He travels across the social periphery to venture into the lap of the nature which enticed him boundlessly. The essays he wrote on the different aspects of the virgin nature and its uncontaminated lifestyles attract the readers for its innocuousness and its unprocessed flavor. Bose wrote these essays not from the strictures of rigid methodology but from the perspective of a spontaneous traveler, wandering from one place to another with an open mind. Many of his anthropological accounts were in the forms of travelogues with meticulous presentations of the itinerary. Most of these essays were written in vernacular which contributed to a spring bed of literary writings in Bengali. Bose
could be credited for having contributed to the precious legacy of Bengali literature based on memories, oral histories and especially travelogues. Though Bose, could not be taken as the pioneer of this tradition, but he carried it forward and especially added yet another element, that of adapting a story telling approach towards anthropological accounts through such spontaneous and free-flowing travel based narratives.

This tradition of presenting literature in the form of impulsive extempore of travel details had been noticed in Bengali literature for long, especially published in journals and magazines. Among some of the pioneering journals in Bengali, chief amongst them according to Dr Shanti Kumar Dasgupta and Hairbandhu Mukhoti were,

- **Bangala Gazette** (the gadget of Bengal) (1816) by Gangadhar Bhattacharya, **Samachar Darpan** (the mirror of news) (1818) by the missionaries of Srirampur, **Sangbad Koumodi** (1821) by Raja Rammohan Roy, **Samachar Chandrika** (1821), **Sangbad Timirnashak** and **Bangadoot** by Babu Neelratna Halder. It was much later in 1831 that **Sambad Prabhakar** was published by Iswar Chandra Gupta (Dasgupta & Mukhoti: 1975: 411).

It went on to become a milestone in the Bengali Literature. According to Dasgupta and Mukhoti, this journal had ruled the roost in Bengali literature and made dominant changes in the styles of composition which went on a long way in grooming the language. He was the first to show how trivial areas like every day mundane affairs, royal occasions, and social phenomenon can become succinct topics for literary compositions. Later on under the tutelage of Iswar Chandra Gupta, many scholars of Bengali Literature like Babu Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, Dinabandhu Mitra, and Babu Manomohan Basu flourished to leave their impact on the discipline.

Bose probably had carried on the legacy of Iswar Chandra Gupta in his attempt at amplifying uncelebrated and inconsequential topics of everyday life for deliberations and research. Pradip Kumar Bose (2012) gives us a succinct detail of this fact. Iswar Chandra Gupta’s significant work on district wise exploration of the undivided Bengal was probably the first of the type where he discussed every inconsiderable and little thing which was never before considered for scholarly write-ups. Gupta’s work, **Bhramankari Bondhur Patra** (1975), not only was a cache of meticulous descriptions of the districts like Faridpur, Pabna, Chattagram, Kumilla, Bikrampur, etc alongside he, also recorded intimate details of such subjects like the castes, occupations, dietary
habits, rites and rituals, dressing styles and other intricate items. The book must have influenced Bose who thereafter worked upon a bigger corpse of information about the erstwhile Bengal through his book, *Biyallisher Bangla*, which we have already discussed. Historian Gautam Bhadra is also of the opinion that Bose might have been aware of the book, (Dey: 2012:186) and it might have subliminally influenced him.

The only difference between *Bhramankari Bondhur Patra* and *Biyallisher Bangla* is that the former was written on the basis of journeys undertaken while the latter was presented through confinement in the prison and depending on oral histories, memories and recollections.

Going back to *Paribrajaker Diary*, we find that the book floated in an imminent dualism between scientificism, which Bose avidly advocated and an instinctual action based on free spirit and flexible grounding. Pradip Kumar Bose, too, observed that though Bose was a self-professed field scientist, an advocate of objective and a self-confident scientist who searched for ultimate truth based on fact finding, nevertheless his Bengali writings bravely defied such an image (Bose:2011:101). Coming out of the rigid scientific garb, Bose went on a spontaneous spree to write what he wished without being shackled by the rigors of scientific strictures. Bose therefore contributed significantly to the legacy of theory building that had begun in the Bengali literature through memoirs, journals, letters, short collections and other styles of literary compositions. Not only Bengali literature, Bose had contributed to the trend already set in anthropological writings. Pradip Kumar Bose said in popularizing the anthropological discipline in Bengal unlike other states, more than the institutional superstructures, these journals and papers had played a pivotal role. Anthropological accounts grew through cultural interactions that had anchored in Bengal through such journals like *Bibidhartha Sangraha* published by Rajendralal Mitra, and the likes published by N.K Bose and Binoy Ghosh. These mediums perhaps played more important role than the Universities and mammoth institutions like Anthropological Survey of India (Bose: 2012:107).

Therefore, one of the distinctive contributions of Bose was recorded in garnering and nourishing the existing trend of disciplinary and inter-disciplinary works through popular writings in little magazines, bulletins, gazettes, magazines, newspapers, periodicals, reviews, tabloids etc. Some of such mediums through which he published regularly were, journals and newspapers like *Shanibarer Chithi* (Saturday’s letter),
Ananda bazar Patrika (a daily newspaper in Bengali), Patra (Letter), Desh (country), Sangathan (organization), Sacchitra Bharat (illustrated India) etc.

**Extensive research on Calcutta: a distinctive mark of Bose’s contribution to urban sociology.**

In continuation with his penchant for writing in journals and magazines, Bose developed booty of such writings on Calcutta. He wrote at length on Calcutta which found ready expressions through Bengali bulletins that published his works regularly. It was not only Bose who concentrated on Calcutta; there were others who had been writing on the same subject for a long time. There were many who were frequent in such Bengali literary magazines which scribbled on many aspects of the flourishing city. The magazine culture that boomed in Bengal around the eighteenth century fed on this subject as one of its staple diet to success. Kolkata, as it was called an enigmatic city with mystery hidden under its wings that unfolded with each passing day. The scholars narrated each of its elements that added more captivating colors to the already colorful city. Therefore, before going into Bose’s work let us have a brief understanding of the tradition that developed in attempting to expatiate this city to realize the distinctiveness of Bose’s work on Calcutta, a brief over-view of other such important works might be helpful to us.

**A brief review**

Probably one of the earliest noted works on Calcutta must have been Kaliprashanna Singha’s *Hootum Pyanchar Naksha* published in *Sambad Prabhakar* in 1796. Singha gave a social depiction of the city in its full vigor and zest. In her translation of this work, Chitralekha Basu said,

He derided the opulent middle class Bengali society, while recording, in passages that still seem new minted, the extraordinary chaos, and physicality of the city; essentially, its famous un-containability. Published by the *bat-tala* (literally, ‘under the banyan’) press, with its scandalous, affordable bulletins, Hootum Pyanchar Naksha is situated in the heart of the beginnings of modern Bengali popular culture, from where it’s been transposed, bellicose and uncomfortable, into the ‘high’ domain of the Renaissance (Basu:2008:20-21).

Singha spoke of the razzmatazz of the Durga Puja, one of the paraphernalia of the urban culture and broached upon many of the related items like indigo plantations,
railways, self-proclaimed Babas, (ascetics) and various sundry urban practices. The work is one of its kinds in developing a live and vivacious commentary of the daily life in Kolkata.

Yet another book written by a famous Indian, Nirad C. Chaudhuri was *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951) went on to become a significant work on Calcutta. The book is a candid representation of the author’s feelings towards the natives of Calcutta as placed against the East Bengalees who had migrated from the erstwhile un-partitioned Bengal. The two though co-existed had sharp differences in their living and styles and this came out very sharply in Chaudhuri’s work. He said the differences were conspicuous in many aspects of life. He therefore said,

In appearance and manner, the people of Calcutta were placid and quite. They were soft spoken and generally courteous. They earned for them a bad reputation among the immigrants or sojourners from East Bengal. They said that the people of Calcutta had honey on their lips and poison in their hearts. I used to remonstrate that it was after all not so very bad to have money somewhere, even if not everywhere, since we of East Bengal had poison both in our hearts and on our lips. The argument never convinced my fellow East Bengalis, for what they were mortally afraid of in the man of Calcutta was that the polished and plausible fellow would cheat them of money or wheedle them into some imprudent course by the power of his glib tongue (Chaudhuri:2008:184).

The book can be taken as a tongue-in –cheek representation of the natives of Calcutta counter-posed against the migrants from East Bengal. He had to pay a heavy price for the book he wrote. Besides the counterthrusts he went on to analyse the men in totality and why Calcutta was proceeding towards its imminent decay. Not just the communal life, Chaudhuri also went on questioning the role of the prolonged imperial history which impacted the city. He felt the colonial imperialism should not help explain the total decay of the city for there are more than meets the eye. He admired the colonial zest in upholding the city’s conceit and rued that with the end of imperialism, the city lost its lustre. Ian Zack in his introduction to, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, therefore clarified Chaudhuri’s views when he wrote that,

As British power waned in India, so did Bengali enterprise; not because Bengalis were imperial lackeys—Bengal produced some of India’s fiercest and most violent nationalists—but because the economic fortunes of Britain and Bengal were so intertwined and because they
were both essentially Victorian societies, and past their peak. When the final partition came to Bengal in 1947, Calcutta lost its great riverine hinterland to the east, the home of so much jute and rice and of so many Hindu mansions, and never subsequently recovered. Bengal’s decay, at least in Chaudhuri’s view, became complete. This was a different way of representing Calcutta with a thrust on colonial canons but the consequences were severe. Chaudhuri had to pay a heavy price for the book he wrote, it was “arguably the greatest memoir in English prose” written in the twentieth century, was published in 1951, and soon after he was fired from his job at All India Radio (Chaudhuri:2008:182).

Writings on Calcutta are numerous and one amongst these is written by the genteel critic, essayist and journalist, Sudhin Dutta. The distinguished essay, *The World’s Cities: Calcutta*, (1957) upholds a succinct bird’s eye based view of the city and especially its umbilical attachment to the Bengal. He presents a sojourn of the city and seems disappointed at times with the city was losing its glamour and glib. The author acknowledged the towering presence of the European rulers in contributing to a distinct cultural canopy of Bengal. He therefore said,

> For nowhere else in the modern world has a new culture emerged from the deliberate intermingling of the two older ones----the peripheral culture of rural Bengal and the cosmopolitan culture of English Wiggery; and to my mind it is the finest legacy of British rule (Dutta: 2008:507).

Dutta loved brooding over the past remains of an abdicated culture and found reminiscing the colonial history as having indelible impact on the making of the national one. He therefore went on saying,

> Bengali prose, at any rate, originated in the impact of Western ideas on Ram Mohan Roy and his contemporaries; and Michael Madhusudan Datta remodeled Bengali verse as a memorial to English literature. Extending their discoveries, Rabindranath Tagore evolved a seemingly fresh language; and gradually in the last fifty years it has become the speech of every educated Bengali (ibid:508).

For him Bengal and Calcutta were interchangeable words since the flavor of the Bengal cannot be felt without that of Calcutta which it contained. The cosmopolitan vibes of the city are an essential trait of this distinctive flavor and this escalates at an
unprecedented rate owing to its imposing presence over Bengal. Dutta therefore writes, “But during the last two hundred years the capital has so dominated the province as to become one with it; and this is untrue of another city in the country” (Dutta:2008:508)).

To add to the list of this genre, works sketched on Calcutta, mention must also be made of Sasthi Brata’s *My God died young* (1968) and *Jamshed into Jimmy* (1972) by V.S. Naipaul. Both the works provided a snapshot of the everyday life of Calcutta seasoned by the heat and dust of the city. Both the works bring out the quintessential culture of the city and pictures the struggle the city has put up to retain its uniqueness. Naipaul therefore said,

Calcutta remains what it always has been through growth, creative disorder, and quiescence. It is still, despite the strong challenge of Bombay, India’s principal commercial city, and the element of Calcutta culture which might be said to be dominant is that represented by the business buildings of Dalhousie Square and the squat business houses of Imperial Tobacco and Metal Box on Chowringhee. (Naipaul: 2008:379).

**Preparing the ground for the development of urban sociology in India and locating Bose on the site.**

Thus the above passages give us inkling about the plethora of writings on Calcutta, since early times and the contemporaries of Bose such as the ones mentioned above wrote profusely on the subject. Despite such a trend, Bose left behind an indelible impact through his writings on Calcutta which represented an altogether different approach to the subject, distinctively apart from the others. It can be supposedly believed that Bose was one of the first to conduct a full-fledged survey on Calcutta on such an extensive ambit and there was probably no such precedence in the academic ambit till then. The earlier works by Kaliprasanna Singha, Nirad.C Chaudhuri and Sudhin Dutta were descriptive accounts of the city which stood for their styles. Bose on the other hand made the first attempt to make a systematic and quantitative study of the city and offered explanations for the quaint findings revealed by the study. He probably was one of the first social scientists to make such in-depth explorations of the city and explain the eccentric patterns that the city’s demographic distribution ushered. However, he was essentially not a pioneer in the domain of
urban sociology which had already shown signs of adequate growth by the time he began writing. Let us have a quick look at this trend of growth in India, and locate Bose’s place in it.

Urban sociology in India grew following the steps of Patrick Geddes who surely can own the claim of initiating such a drive in our country in general and Bombay University in particular. Geddes had long been writing on urban sociology before he joined the Bombay University as a Professor in 1919. His two of the most famous books include, *City Development: A Study of Parks, gardens and culture and institutes* (1918) and *Cities and evolution* (1950). Geddes was instrumental in initiating an intellectual wave of urban sociology in India. For Indra Munshi writes,

Geddes came to India in 1915. During his 10 years stay in India, he toured through the length and breadth of the subcontinent and prepared several reports describing in details the nature of urban problems and the possible ways to overcome them.... these reports nearly 40, are said, to represent the first major contribution to the development of modern town planning in India on a fairly large scale. He is believed to have done more than any other individual to promote town planning in India (Meller: 1979:343) (Munshi: 2000:488).

Urban sociology as a discipline was molded under his tutelage in Bombay University and not just here, Geddes was a name to reckon with across the country. According to N. Jayaram,

Outside of the University of Bombay, Geddes left a lasting imprint on the works of Radhakamal Mukerjee (Mukherjee 1979: 31; see also Mukherjee and Singh 1961, 1965). To pay homage to Geddes's memory, J.V. Ferrriera and S.S. Jha have put together a volume of essays titled *The Outlook Tower: Essays on Urbanization in Memory of Patrick Geddes* (1976)” (Jayaram:2013:319).

Mukherjee built up a tradition of urban sociology in India focused on social ecology. He used this approach and studied in detail the cities of Bombay (1961) and Gorakhpur (1965) as done by Geddes on Bombay (1915), Madras (1915a) and Indore (1918). Following Geddes there were important works done on this area by G.S Ghurye. Despite having no formal trainings in urban sociology, Ghurye following the footsteps of Patrick Geddes, went on to become an influential name in urban
sociology so much so that, N. Jayaram said, “Thus, Ghurye laid the foundation of urban sociology in the country, especially by the application of the ecological perspective to the understanding of the city and urbanisation” (Jayaram:2013:317). He wrote immensely on the subject which included much acclaimed works like, *Cities and Civilization* (1962) and *Anatomy of a Rururban Community* (1963). Then a professor at Bombay University, Ghurye gradually canonized the specialized sub-discipline of urban sociology to anchor it on the firm grounds through institutional legitimatization. Jayaram said,

Ghurye proudly claims that he 'successfully got Sociology separated from Economics and Politics' with the new University Act coming into force in 1956. This academic autonomy appears to have had positive implications for urban sociology. With a separate Board of Studies in Sociology coming into existence, Ghurye, for the first time, introduced 'Industrial Sociology' and 'Urban Sociology' into the curriculum (Ghurye 1973: 151) (Jayaram:2013:317).

Thus as many believed, Ghurye not only was pivotal in introducing urban sociology in India, he sustained it for long by providing a generation of thinkers of the discipline who were hooked to the subject. Jayaram therefore said, “Thus, Ghurye laid the foundation of urban sociology in the country, especially by the application of the ecological perspective to the understanding of the city and urbanisation” (Jayaram: 2013:317). This included dissertations submitted under his supervision, an exhaustive list of which had been compiled by Pillai (1997). The dissertations pertaining to urban sociology supervised by him included, *The Social Ecology of Provincial Towns with Special Reference to Bangalore* (1953), *An Ecological Study of the City of Delhi*, later published as *Delhi: A Study in Urban Sociology* (1957), *Suburban ecology of the city of Bombay* (1961) later published as *The Greater Bombay: A Study in Suburban Ecology* (1962), *Socio-Ecological Study of a Workshop Town (with reference to Chittaranjan)* (1963) and *A Socio Ecological Study of an Immigrant Community* (1959). In this way a hagiographic portrait of Ghurye’s inevitable role in moulding the crux of urban sociology was laid. Thus Ghurye was instrumental in developing a stout legacy of scholarly works on urban sociology. His students later on becoming head of the departments of the newly formed universities to introduce the subject in full fledge. Thus, urban sociology as a sub-discipline was gingerly clogged to the greater
discipline of sociology and Bombay became a distinct school to be gleefully reckoned with Ghurye.

**Looking eastwards at Bose’s work on Calcutta: a milestone in sociological research.**

Now in the east a man with equal dexterity and conviction was concentrating on a little researched city, Calcutta. The above analysis reveals the fact that Calcutta had remained less explored in sociological studies. Other metropolises like Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Bangalore and even smaller towns like Gorakhpur and Chittaranjan have surfaced well in urban sociological writings, but the erasure of Calcutta, which served as the capital of the British empire and went on to become a major city was mysteriously cut off from sociological dissections. Even sociologists from Lucknow school with rich Bengali backgrounds like D.N Majumdar (1961) and Radhakamal Mukerjee (1961) worked on Kanpur and Gorakhpur respectively and could not turned back to explore Calcutta. Therefore, sociological writings on Calcutta suffered a deadly blow. It was probably Bose, who for the first time opened the door for systematic understandings of the city and recorded the intimate details with utmost rigour. Surajit Chandra Sinha complained of the academic amnesia of Calcutta in a seminar organized on the 69th birth anniversary of Nirmal Kumar Bose. He lamented that, social historians have very carefully dismissed the essential status of Calcutta as a social and cultural fact. Sinha therefore writes,

There are stereotyped claims and counterclaims about the relative ‘urbanity’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’ of Bombay and Calcutta and some consider Calcutta to be more of an overgrown cluster of villages than Bombay....while some of these stereotypes and general historical notions hang on our mind, social scientists in Calcutta have virtually ignored the existence of this city as a social and cultural fact. There are, of course, a few notable exceptions. We may mention here Dr. S. N. Sen’s pioneering socioeconomic survey of the city (Sen1960) and Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose’s recent survey of the social profile of Calcutta (Bose 1965). One may also come across scattered articles on various aspects of social life in Calcutta in historical journals and other periodicals. But all these do not add upto a substantial coverage in depth (Sinha: 1972:8).
Sinha probed into the possible causes behind the academic abhorrence or indifference towards the city. He felt the anthropologists and the sociologists in the city were more in tune with the conventional studies of other communities which can ensure them of a cross-cultural comparison. Calcutta being the very community they belong would not offer them the approach which they had been insisting for. Another plausible reason might be the size and density of the city which stunts any research initiative to make a wholistic study of the city through observations and interview. The city is too large to come within the grasp of any viable research design unless of course mammoth projects are undertaken to study the giant city. Sinha therefore said, “Calcutta is too large, complex and heterogeneous to be amenable to the standard canons of anthropological research” (ibid:8).

Probably the first systematic work on Calcutta was Dr S.N Sen’s survey of Calcutta conducted by the West Bengal State Statistics Bureau. Ashok Mitra in a preface to the book, The City of Calcutta: A Socio-economic Survey, 1954-55 to 1957-58, said,

The Calcutta Metropolitan organization, for the first time for any city of India, begin to amass a world of information in the shape of a system and to this organization must go the credit of building and continuing an information system, almost unique at least in Asia for a city of Calcutta’s size. Independently, Shri Nirmal Kumar Bose published a seminal work on the morphology of Calcutta, the value of which will increase with the years (Ghosh, Murari, Dutta& Ray: 1972: VI)

For all the reasons illustrated, Bose’s work remains one of the pioneering studies on Calcutta not only for its canonical systematization but also for the amazing facts about the city it uncovered. Bose led the survey on Calcutta launched by the Anthropological Survey of India in June 1962. It was an organized and precise study on the basis of plotting maps that helped the researchers to study the demographic distributions and to find out if any changes had been introduced subsequently.

The book probably was a well-researched almanac of the different wards in the municipal corporation. The land-use maps were used resourcefully to extract information of the different neighbouring wards of the city. The survey was rigorously conducted to produce combing search of each individual ward. The rich and scrupulous accounts of wards served as a treasure trove that one can boast upon and was surely redolent with further research possibilities in the city. The report
(1960) that was published was a kind of city directory offering itemized and blow–by–blow account of every ward related to its area, viz. residential strength, commercial centres, industry, shops, recreational, religious, administrative, educational, hospitals, slums, burial growth, cremation ground, tram depot, park, tank, etc. The land-use maps were successfully used by Bose to understand the trend of change getting manifest in cities and he made inferences that showed the strength of his foresight.

**Bose: one of the harbingers of community studies in India.**

Bose presented a detailed monograph of the Bengali community and made a cognitive analysis of their communal life in vivo. Delving on the Bengalis as a cogent community and making thorough dissection was probably one of his contributions. There were hardly any studies in the past that captured the communal trajectory of the Bengalis as well as the thick and thin of their communal living in Calcutta. In this sense, Bose definitely can be taken as a harbinger of community studies in India and more specifically in Bengal. It was back in 1928 that R.M MacIver made a significant contribution by etching out the importance of community studies to the understanding of society. For him, “community is not only a real, it is a vital subject of study” (MacIver: 1928:9). Community study as a distinct method of studying communities has been recognized in the west for long. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it tries to study the communities in live interactions rather than as separate entities in confined spaces. Conrad M. Arensberg therefore said,

> It is a naturalistic, comparative method. It is aimed at studying behaviour and attitudes as objects in vivo through observation rather than in vitro through isolation and abstraction or in a model through experiment (Arensberg: 1954:110).

Historically speaking, H. Steward (1950) believed that community study is said to have been considered as a separate method first in anthropology. The method goes as far back as mid-thirties when Dollard (1937), studied the white and the Negro communities in Southern town. Arensberg thereafter quoted the words of Robins M. Williams, Jr, who said,

> It was not until World War II that “action research” developed in the attempt to put social psychological problems such as race discrimination or prejudice into their proper community settings in order to make use of a community feeling and organization for a “solution” (Arensberg: 1954:10).
In the light of this research it can be asserted with thrust that Bose made enlightening contributions in this direction which can be considered a milestone in community study. He studied in depth the Bengali communities and tried to find out how they interact with others through community support systems. Bose felt that the collective living among the Bengalis hinge back upon community organizations which go a long way in sustaining such social groups. Bose while conducting the social survey on Calcutta found a thick growth of such voluntary institutions of both communal and non-communal character like the educational institutions, recreational clubs, social service organizations, religious institutions, caste based organizations etc. Bose understood the vitality of such community organizations when he remarked, “this sudden spate of community organization which started in the middle thirties has already resulted in producing 431 such organizations recorded by the investigators in different parts of the city” (Bose: 1968:58).

Bose studied these voluntary institutions to find out the nature and the character of the community that these institutions emanated. He inferred that Bengali’s lack a spirit of communal feeling. Their capacity to mingle with a larger social whole cutting across linguistic affiliations is challenged, which therefore impede their skill to lead larger organizations. Bengali’s are parochial and remained cocooned in native shells thus discouraging cosmopolitan collaborations and further socio-cultural mixtures. Bose therefore repented,

A Bengali seems to feel happier in the company of those with whom he closely agrees, rather than in the company of others with whom he may have points of difference. Unities are not stressed; differences are not easily tolerated. This subjects some institutions to repeat forces of fission. Yet the Bengali is more a social being in Calcutta than many for whom Calcutta has not yet become a home. (ibid:79-80).

Bose was one of the first urban sociologists to have delved upon the canons of community study with unparalleled meticulousness. He did not study the Bengali community in an insular way but tried to record the form it took through its incessant osmosis with other communities as well. In this endeavour he did not confine himself
to just Bengali communities but studied others with the same fervour. He tried to harp on the symbiotic relationship that developed between the different communities. He tried to find out despite harvesting an ensuing sense of collective living for a prolonged period, why did the communal boundaries not ebb out. This he noticed was particularly true for the Bengali communities which somehow were left out of the cosmopolitan whole. This community suffered from a sense of doom and depression while others were rejoicing in their groove. This Bose attributed to the community’s sense of nationalism that was far more pronounced than others but it did not quite realize that it was eventually being cut off from the others. Bose therefore said,

The Jain or Sikh festivities in Calcutta have tended to become more exhibitionist than ever before. A new and healthy interest in ancient literature, whether Jain, Hindi or Punjabi, is distinctly in the ascendant among Calcutta’s inhabitants belonging to these communities. ‘Nationalism’ among groups is on the increase, even when the everyday pattern or organizations of life are changing fast. The Bengali of today seems to suffer from a feeling of frustration by contrast. In politics, he seems to have stepped out of an imperfect nationalism to an imperfect socialism, which seems to be the guiding star on the horizon. But this increases the distance between the Bengali and other language groups of India who live together within the city...........the westernism arising among the affluent Rajasthani or Punjabi has its parallel among the small proportion of the Bengali rich also. But in Bengal, nationalism has already exercised its influence for such a length of time, and so deeply, that the difference is apparent between these three communities even when they approximate one another in their western ways. The explanation why the Gujarati rich are somewhat different in culture from their Rajasthani or Punjabi counterparts in the same class may perhaps be due to the strong nationalistic influence to which they have been subjected in Gujarat ever since the rise of the Gandhian movement (ibid:81-82).

Community study as propounded by Bose was therefore a kind of intersectional study that tried to throw light on various interstices that lay at various cross roads. It was not just a study of one single community but how it was influenced and yet it influenced other communities. The above quotations might point out at an ethnocentric idea of community building but Bose’s idea was not so, instead he wanted to build up an all-encompassing idea of a community which he found was lacking. The lacunae were severely felt which he thought was a severe blow to the process of an integrated
community formation process in Bengal. He felt Bengal had all potentials to grow up into a modern and unified community, especially keeping in mind the rich national fervors it had produced. The nationalistic spirit should have worked to reinforce the communal feelings among the brethren of the city but unfortunately it did not happen. Therefore, Bose’s idea was not the endorsement of the city, but an analysis of its loopholes so that the cracks are repaired and the fissions are checked. Community study is difficult to conduct with an open mind devoid of the baggage and reservations and especially by an insider and especially the way Bose accomplished the same with conviction.

The study remains important not only as a vivid account of the city and as a historical treasure trove for further researches but for other reasons as well. The analysis not only gave us an insider’s gaze and a thriving account of the community, but also brought out such proximate facts which could have never been captured by an outsider. Therefore, the study that Bose conducted had a debunking motive which helped give us a critical analysis of an emerging city. Strange facts were revealed which could not have been possible otherwise. That the city’s identity of an emerging urban conglomerate was only superficial was readily discovered by Bose. He said that the city, though acted to be apparently very suave and cosmopolitan was actually not so. The outer glib and gaudy manifestation of the city belied the closed society that it still was. Bose repented that though modern pursuits were sustained under the garb of capitalism, that could not refute the ill effects of the native capitalism under the refuge of a colonial master that had overpowered the nation. Therefore, capitalism would never bring about the industrial upliftment desired of a modern and urban outfit. With a thorough crisis of employment opportunities, situations in the city will never see the sunshine of the day. Bose therefore said,

What is significant in the present context is that the Indian industrial enterprise did not gain a free scope for expansion under the shadow of British interests. As trade advanced and some industries arose, while large scale migrations took place from the country into the city, it failed to keep pace with the growing demand of employment which arose from among the migrants (ibid:82).
Bose’s community study was therefore an endeavour to throw light on communities and further sub-communities within the city. He took a functional approach towards such studies and this was emboldened when he said,

The distinctnesses are not inconsiderable. But as nothing is unchangeable in life, given the necessary determination, coupled with critical understanding, it is possible to overcome the walls which separate one community from another at the present time (ibid: 356).

The approach is more relevant today in the context of rising communal clashes and ethnic conflicts in the city. This is more so when there is an urgent need for ethnic networks and pacifying tactics devised for marginal groups like depressed classes and migrants. The study has not only opened doors to a well accomplished communal study; it simultaneously paved way for a systematic study on migrant behaviour in Indian demography. The migrant behaviour had been well analysed by Bose to bring out the nature of urbanization evolving in Calcutta. The work definitely is a rich addendum to the research on migration, diaspora and the encapsulating area of urban geography.

**Bose: One of the pioneers in studies of migration and diaspora**

Bose’s work was therefore considered a stepping stone in the field of migrant culture and behaviour. It qualified as one of the early studies of the migration and Diaspora in India. Among the early works on Indian Diaspora one can recount, H.C Chakladar’s *Aryan occupation of Eastern India* (1962) and K.C Zachariah’s *A Historical study of internal migration in the Indian Sub-Continent* (1964).

Bose while working on Calcutta, said, the city would be far from developing into a full grown metropolis with these castes like closed and parochial settlements squatting on the urban premise. What is distinctive about Bose’s contribution was his analysis of the migrants and portraying the framework of the city in semblance with the migrant culture. Bose’s work will remain one of the early studies on migration that chose to highlight the much distressed status of the migrants in Bengal. Bose’s contribution lies in the way he analyzed the migrant culture to bring out the sad plight of the city. His work was symbiotic in the sense he understood that urbanity does not reside only in the glamorous lifestyles of the well-heeled classes, but even in the nooks and crannies of Calcutta where these subaltern communities reside. Bose probably was one of the first to study in deep the plight of the migrants and analyze...
the reasons behind their misery. His study of the community has been wholistic since even within the razzmatazz of the urban life, he did not forget to attend the poor migrants tucked in one corner of the city. His insightful thinking helped understand the urban potentials of the city. He discovered rural pockets within the urban setup and indicated towards a process of rurbanization, a term that later became the catchword in urban sociology, especially under the auspices of G.S Ghurye. While G.S Ghurye became famous with his book *Anatomy of a Rururban Community* (1963), N.K Bose went into near oblivion with his seminal work, *Calcutta: A Premature Metropolis* (1965), one of the most important works on Calcutta.

The work definitely helps us understand the rich mosaic of the urban culture as constituted by the multiple communities and their migrants. The work helped essay the common thread that ran across the disparate communities. Though all of these communities had distinct identities, yet what unified them were a growing sense of insecurity and a feeling of void. Immigrating out of the native villages, the migrants kept hankering for their own kinsmen in the city they settled upon. Thus Bose showed the we feeling that would have cropped up among the immigrating folks never actually did since there developed a drive to collaborate with one’s primary group members. Thus secondary associations never grew as the cities sprouted caste like structures that dotted the framework of the urban edifice. Bose while explaining the situation said,

> The net result was that there was not enough mobility of labour. A man who came from Bihar tried to gain the help of his comrades from home in order to find employment. A Rajasthani supported a Rajasthani more than anyone else while competition was harsh. This low order of opportunities which left any people unemployed even while they were eager to work made everyone to seek the support of his co-villagers or his caste-men, or even only of those speaking his own language rather than venture upon the open sea of competition on the basis of his own individual worth......this superstructure of cultural pluralism has persisted in the civic community of Calcutta, and has perhaps helped indirectly in maintaining communal differences....at present , we are still living in a state of immature or imperfect urbanization. (Bose: 1968:82).

The work remained one of the cornerstones of sociological treaties on urbanization process in general and Calcutta in particular. The work went on being referred by
numerous sociologists later on in their attempt to interpret the migrant behaviour. The work though discussed in our academic circuit got less resonance outside. The kind of hallowed existence that Ghurye had earned for himself was never accorded to Bose though his contributions were no less. No other acclaimed sociologist had thought of deliberating over Calcutta the way Bose did, but despite that we don’t sense as much rage and furor over Bose’s work as that of Ghurye’s. Ghurye came to be recognized as the beckoner of urban sociology in Bombay University which was already consecrated as the Bombay school of sociology, such consolidation never happened in Calcutta University and therefore Bose was never given that place which was due for long. Surajit Chandra Sinha therefore said,

This, of course, does not answer why the major university in the city failed to take the initiative to develop a sociology department, which could immerse itself in the varied socio-cultural problems of the city (Sinha: 1972:8).

Without a sociology department in the university, Bose never actually got the scope to demonstrate the large amount of work he accomplished in the area of urban sociology. Had the department been initiated, Bose could have taken strides in introducing urban sociology which he had his heart upon. He worked elsewhere, but his university did not give him the anchorage that he rightly deserved and this was unlikely of an institution he had worked for so long. Without this institutional fortification, probably much of his noteworthy contributions went unnoticed.

He did stunning works on urban sociology, for which he was invited to deliver lectures by various universities. One such was the Hiroshima University in Japan, which later on felicitated Bose for propounding research designs for urban sociology. Bose’s contribution in this field was stupendous, not only in espousing the canons of urban culture but in urging the city folks to shed off their inhibitions and join hands with their fellow men from other communities in their urge to build up a cosmopolitan civilization much in sync with the melting pot culture of the west. In this sense, Bose was liberal in picking up ideas from the west to refurbish his own country, but surely he was carefully selective while importing foreign ideas to reform the indigenous system.
Concluding remarks:

It is really an arduous task to describe a man like Nirmal Kumar Bose in a few words, but despite that, time has come to recount his work in a few words. Bose’s philosophy had been to draw a portrait of the wonderful civilization (Sinha: 1994:67) that we inhabit. The wondrous nature had been drawn on the basis of the dynamic unity that was found nestled in the immense diversity enveloping the Indian civilization. Bose therefore urged with us not to get disappointed with the apparent regionalization noticed in the material culture that soon gives in to universalization as we move higher towards the non-material cultural traits (Bose: 1961:12). This was what Bose wanted to establish through his civilizational perspective which vouched for the unity of the nation and to blur all differences between the most disparate regions. Bose not just compared different states within the nation but even compared the latter with the countries outside to soon discover a strange fact. He saw despite the stark uniqueness, the Indian civilization had a strange innate property of identifying itself with the areas far extraneous and foreign from itself.

This accommodating nature has been revealed in his study on castes and tribes. Caste for him was a stark reality with an unique property for itself. As far as the tribes were concerned, on the basis of this much celebrated unity, he framed policies to discourage all forms of cessation. He made attempts to work out a symbiosis between every disjointed reaches of the civilization so as to stall every conjuring strategy of disintegration. He felt the plains people must be brought nearer to the hill tribes to work out this symbiosis of the civilization that he was so proud of. He was not just interested with the higher echelons of the society but for him local ones acted as the agency of conjunctions. Therefore, he believed the folk-urban continuum must be refurbished to unleash a fresh air of vitality and enterprise that was much needed to reinforce the spirit of the civilization. The legacy of Nirmal Kumar Bose thus finds extra leverage especially in the recent era of balkanization (Bose: 1991:67) affecting our national spirits. The aim of the research would be to revitalize the legacy of Nirmal Kumar Bose and hand it over to the younger generation as was his last wish (Bose: 1994:34). This treasure trove must be fully appropriated by us to pick up the keys of national re-generation as left behind by Bose.
References


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