THE REFUGEE COMMUNITIES BEFORE THE EXODUS
In order to understand the process of adaptation of Tibetan refugees in Indian setting, it is necessary to comprehend the sources in the traditional social structure which makes for adaptation. This would imply that we study the Tibetan Social Structure and Culture as a Unified System and not as a collection of diverse cultural traits and classes. It also requires us to map the social structure and culture over the geographical terrain of Tibet, because at low levels of technology ecological factors significantly limit the social structure and culture.

Tibet is a vast plateau of around 4,70,000 sq.miles with an average altitude of 16,000 ft. above the sea level. It lies between the latitude of 27° and 37° north. It is a land locked plateau being at least a 1,000 miles away from the sea in any direction. The plateau is bounded on the north by the Kunlin range and in the South by the Himalayas. In the west, it is bordered by the Ladakh ranges and the East Consists of a rugged-terrain with deep gorges.

Palakshappa divides the Tibetan plateau into four following regions:-

1. The northern plateau with an average altitude of 16000 ft. is cold and dry with hardly 20 cms. of rain fall. Moss, lichens and the sparse
grass are the only vegetation found in this area and is thinly populated with nomads.

2. The western highland region which is a source of rivers Indus and Sutlej is more hospitable. While cultivation is possible in the river valleys of the region, there exists nomads and semi-nomads with large flocks of sheep and herds of yaks and mules.

3. The south central region which is the land of valleys is a fairly well populated area. The river brahmaputra and a number of Tributaries flows in this region and the average altitude is not more than 15000 ft. and the valleys are on 11500 ft. high. There are forests with timber and orchards. In some villages even rice is cultivated. The vegetables and fruits are grown in this area. This is the region in which the capital of tibet Lhasa is located. There are several other cities too in this area.

4. The eastern plateau known as kham is rugged and comparatively dry. It is the home of Khampas and through this region passes the trade route to China. Agriculture and fruit gardening is possible in the valleys and pastures on the
support the livestock

The oranges, bananas, pears, and watermelons are crops introduced into Tibet during the last twenty years and now on the increase. As regards the climate, the winters are fiercely cold, with average temperature in the coldest months of 14° to 5° and with absolute minimums of around 40°. More benign conditions are to be found in the southern and eastern valleys which has an average temperature of 68° in July and 27° in January, and in some areas in the eastern valleys, the climate is almost tropical.

As regards the composition of population, ninety six percent of the inhabitants are ethnic Tibetans; the rest are members of more than ten minority groups. Many of the towns grew up around Buddhist Monasteries.

The agricultural system practiced in Zones of intensive agriculture, often terraced, in the valleys, or on the slopes which are better exposed is primitive. Tibet's flourishing breeding stocks of cattle (including the precious tibetan Yak), sheep and goats form the most consistent resource of the traditional agropastoral economy.


Aside from providing the main elements of nutrition (barley and butter) these stocks provide the work force for ploughing and transport and primary materials. Such as wool and leather, which are used both for clothing and for highly appreciated handicrafts, especially carpets.

Owing to the high altitude of Tibetan plateau which is more or less inaccessible to the outside world, the Tibetan nation has developed, in its long history a series of customs and rituals quite distinct from those of other people.

The funeral rites of the Tibetans are usually varied and interesting. They have celestial burial, water burial, cremation, burial in the ground and inurnment in a stupa, according to the financial and social status of the deceased and the family. Cremation is used for the learned scholar-monks called geshe, and other highly placed persons. Their bodies are burned and the bones and ashes are either scattered to the winds or cast into a river.

Marriages in Tibet used to be almost always arranged. Sons and daughters and especially daughters had little right to choose their partners and often did not even know what they looked like until the marriage. There was no intermarriage between the rich and the poor, for social position and wealth were the primary factors,
with good looks and moral character lagging far behind. Society was divided into eight classes, and people could marry only within their own. And intermarriage only within one's own social class naturally tended to perpetuate the rigid class system.³

Common serfs could not marry without the approval of their landlords. Generally speaking, it was easier to marry another serf belonging to the same landlord, as marriages between serfs of different landlords meant that one or the other of the landlords lost a serf.

Marriage was also prohibited between relatives. This rule was absolute with regard to the paternal side of the family, while on the mothers side marriage was permitted only after four generations.

Tibetan social rituals are many and varied and closely connected with religion. Khatas are presented in an extraordinary variety of situations, in addition to weddings, births and funerals, for instance, when one calls on one's elders, pays homage to figures of the Buddha, or takes leave of an honoured person to make a journey. The Khata usually is a piece of raw silk, fabric, woven almost to the fineness of a spider's web, though it is sometimes made of high-quality satin. Its

³. Ibid. pp. 90-93.
length varies from 3 feet to as much as 20 feet. The Khata is a symbol of purity and sincerity. From time immemorial Tibetans have considered that white symbolizes both purity and good luck, so most khattas are white. But there are also gaily colored khattas in blue, yellow, green and red, and these are presented to those who have made vows to attain Buddhahood and are wound around the arrows for the bride to give them color. Colored khattas are the grandest gifts of all. According to Buddhist belief the colored khata is the dress of Bodhisattva and can therefore be used only on special occasions.\(^4\)

Thus being located in an inaccessible region, Tibetan society has had minimal contact with its neighbouring countries. The Tibetan society has been virtually left untouched by the impact of western civilization. Therefore it should not surprise us to find in Tibet its own form of religion, social and political structure which in many respects remains unique in the world.

Although Tibet is a land of many religions including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Bon—a folk religion peculiar to Tibet, but the dominant religion of Tibet is Mahayana Buddhism. Buddhism was purported to have been introduced in Tibet by a Nepalese prince who converted

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4. Ibid. pp. 94-95.
the King and Queen of Tibet. The queen of Tibet came to be regarded as the reincarnation of the Hindu Goddess Tara, and is the only female goddess worshipped by the Tibetan Buddhists. Many of the animistic rights prevalent in the Bon religion were assimilated by the Tibetans in their Buddhist practices. The worship of goddess Tara being one such instance, the religious ceremonies at death, initiation and marriage being the others. Syncretism of this nature illustrates the emphasis on divination in Tibetan Buddhism. It is used to tap the knowledge which a Tibetan feels must always exist somewhere, but which is not attainable by any means other than divination. This process is used to communicate with spirits, forecast the future, and to cure the diseases. Powers of divination gives its possessor considerable prestige in the community.

The Tibetan Buddhism is a rich philosophy having its own dialectics and metaphysics. It also consists of an advanced depth psychology linked to the techniques of meditation and the control of psycho-physiological functions (Yoga); an enormous pantheon, countless rituals, popular practices, cosmological speculations and systems of divination.5

Mahayana Buddhism which constitutes the Tibetan brand of Buddhism plays a predominant role in their lives to perceive the manner in which it influences the attitudes and way of life. It is necessary to provide a broad outline of the principles implicit in Mahayana Buddhism.

The Buddha taught that the ultimate need was Liberation and that this had no other object than the experiencing of Nirvana. But the Buddha when pressed for answers regarding the nature of Nirvana, the origin of the world, the reality of the self and the like withdrew into a noble silence. Intellectual curiosity unable to remain content with that silence sought to indulge in varied intellectual speculations. Many claim that it was this that led to Mahayana Buddhism. This, as watts points out, is false, for the vast body of Mahayana doctrine arose not so much to satisfy intellectual curiosity as to deal with the practical psychological problem encountered in following Buddhas' way. The central of Mahayana Buddhism has always been to bring

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6. Nirvana is 'de-spiritualisation'. It is the act of one who has comprehended the futility of trying to hold his breath or life (Prana) indefinitely, since to hold the breath is also to loose it. Thus Nirvana is the equivalent of release, Moksha or Salvation: Nirvana is seen as the cessation (NIR) of turnings (VRITTI), hence the cessation of turnings of the mind.
about the experience of Nirvana, hence the provision of 'skilful means' (Upaya) for making Nirvana accessible to every type of mentality.

Implicit in Mahayana Buddhism (Maha meaning 'great' yana being 'vehicle' hence the great vehicle of liberation) is the concept of individualized and collectivised mind. The unenlightened man, for from the stage of full awakening believes himself to be in possession of a mind uniquely his own, that is an individualised mind. This is an illusion. What is unique is the one cosmic mind. It is quiet absurd to think of Nirvana as a state to be attained by some being. There are in fact many Buddhas. The idea of Boddhisatva is implicit in the logic of Buddhism.

The Boddhisatva became a focus of devotion (Bhakti) a saviour of the world who had vowed not to enter the final Nirvana until all other sentient beings likewise attained it. It is for their sake that he consented to be born again and again into the round of Samsara (which refers to the everlasting round of birth and death) until, in the course of innumerable ages, even the grass and the dust has attained Buddhahood.


8. Ibid. pp. 77-80.
One of the fundamental tenets of Mahayana Buddhism is the belief that Nirvana does not emerge through an annihilation of the senses, nor is Nirvana a separate entity from birth and death. You do not seek Nirvana for it is a folly to look for what one has never lost. Jung calls it 'the self liberating power of the introverted mind'. The sphinx gazes at no distant horizon across the sandy wastes. Its infiuiching gaze is directed inwards and its posture bares the calms arising out of self-knowledge. The Buddha in other words is within each one of us and Buddhahood is simply the manifestation of perfection already in man.

The Buddhist is a Bhikkhu (a begger) and is characteristically represented by a begging bowl which he takes from door to door to acquire his food. Even food which is the basic necessity is not to be bothered about. The only thought is Nirvana.

It is this essence of the Mahayana spirit which is ingrained among the Tibetans, it moulds their attitude to life, in fact their entire weltanschung.

Tibetan Buddhism, however, is a special form of Mahayana Buddhism viz., Lamaism. In it an important

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role is played by the Lama who is just not any monk but a person's spiritual master or teacher (guru). The interesting and significant characteristics of Lamaism is that its central religious activity is the concern of only the monks and hermits and is inaccessible to ordinary believer. The latter pin their deep faith on the members of the monastic community and can only hope to improve their Karma through the giving of the gifts to Monasteries, Lamas or the poor, by making pilgrimages, lighting lamps before the images of deities and asking the blessings of the Lama. The ordinary folk or lay Buddhists do not hear sermons or have any private prayers. They belong to that class of persons whose intellectual faculties are not developed enough.

Tibet is usually described as theocratic state because the Dalai Lama (or the head) is considered to be the incarnation of Avalokiteswara Tibet's patron Boddhisatva. But Stein stresses that it would be more accurate to speak of Tibet as an ecclesiastical state.  

The Buddhist monasteries in Tibet were highly privileged. They were exempted from tax and services and may be regarded as independent overlords, for they own land and serfs yielding them tax and services and
The monasteries supply the government with officials and in this way are able to exercise political control. In addition to this the monasteries indulge in money-lending and acquire thereby an extra source of revenue (fees) through the performance of rites. Rich monks even own property and have two monks as servants. The clear polarisation of social classes is maintained inside the monasteries. The impoverished lower clergy cannot afford to pay for the lengthy studies needed to reach high monastic positions and remain in the state of Avidya or ignorance, and must devote their lives to one of deep and sincere faith on the richer monks and lamas.

The Tibetan religious order is hierarchical and highly authoritarian. At the top of this system is the Dalai Lama who rules in consultation with his tutors. (That is those who as authorities on religion taught the Dalai Lama in his younger days). At the lower rung is the abbot who heads a monastery and is responsible not only for maintaining the land and property of monastery but who in his capacity as religious head is also expected to resolve the religious arguments that crop up from time to time. Every abbot has five lamas assisting him. The status of the Lama depends on the number of

oaths that he takes. The higher categories of lamas take what is known as the complete oath which involves keeping two hundred and fifty vows.

Upward mobility in the religious hierarchy is achieved with severe penances. While one has to take at least hundred vows to achieve the status of a lama and pass rigorous religious tests not many can keep the vows and pass the tests and hence end up in the lower order without reaching the status of lama.

The Dalai Lama in Tibet is not only a religious authority but the political head as well. But though in theory the Dalai Lama is the supreme and at the top of the hierarchy, in reality, the district and often the village sub-divisions enjoy considerable autonomy in the interpretation of laws and in their administration. The head of the district is a member of nobility who is appointed by the Dalai Lama. The nobility is distinguished from the common people in Tibet and the nobility enjoys certain privileges. The recruitment to the class of nobles in Tibet is made on the following principles:

1. A commoner family in which Dalai Lama is supposed to be reincarnated is raised to the status of

nobles. This family receives a large estate from the Government. Thus many of the Lhasan nobles were descendants of the brothers of previous Dalai Lama.

2. Some families are raised to the status of nobility by the Government in return for the past services as warrior, guards etc.

3. The third group of nobles consists of families who trace their ancestories back to early monarchies which existed prior to the rule of Dalai Lama.\[13\]

4. Some of the new noble families are descendants of marriage between the nobility of Tibet with that of Sikkim and neighbouring countries.\[14\]

The nobility in Tibet formed an endogamous group. They manage estates for the Dalai Lama who in theory owns all land in Tibet. The nobles pay an annual rent to the Dalai Lama for the estate they hold. The nobleman has full rights of taxation and of administering justice within his estate. He can select servants for his household amongst his serfs.


manufacturers of rugs and blankets which they export to other countries. But their major source of livelihood comes from the landed estate.\textsuperscript{15}

Below the district administration, comes the administration which is usually small village level consisting of ten to twenty families belonging to a clan organisation. It is a locus of patrilineal clan and hence exogamous. The position of the head of the village is hereditary and is usually the clansman who combines seniority with capability. He sits on the Tribal council of the region as a representative of his clan.

The tribal council and the clan and at a still lower level the family, all represent the principle of cooperation that works in the hierarchical Tibetan social structure. The members of the village cooperate in herding cattle. The responsibility assigned for herding is that of the herdsmen of the village. Careful compensations are made for those families who are short in manpower because of the call for community work. This type of cooperation extends to the Tribal level.

also to organise raids and battle campaigns by the Tribal council.16

The family is also organised on the principle of cooperation in Tibet. The family is a corporate unit possessing rights over lands and over pastures. The noble families thus form a corporate unit with rights of taxation over the landed estate. The families among the peasantry are also corporate entities with tenancy rights over land. To preserve the corporate nature of the family, usually polyandry (especially fraternal polyandry) is practiced, though other types of polyandry such as among friends, and among father and sons when the father marries a second time are also prevalent. The eldest son in the family becomes the head of the family and his younger brothers have to work under his jurisdiction within the family corporate.

The cooperation and corporate living embodied in the Tibetan society is however not universal. Among the commoners, there exists a group called the Du-Jung, where family does not act as a corporate entity. Access to land among them is on an individual basis and they practice monogamy and polygyny.17

16. T.C. Palakshappa op.cit. pp.27.

It is to be noted that the control exercised by the district over the village and by the central governments over the districts is dependent on the geographical location of the districts and the villages. In the remoter areas of Tibet, political control of the Central Government is almost negligible due to bad communications and transport during the winter season. The ecology of Tibet modifies the political hierarchy and grants considerable autonomy at the village and district level.

The principle of cooperation which widely operates in the traditional Tibetan social structure is interrelated with the Mahayana philosophy of collective Nirvana. No man attains Nirvana alone. Liberation is a collective aim and a Bodhisatava is born again and again till all his other fellow men achieve the peace of the noble silence, the realisation of the truth. The quintessence of this philosophy is expressed through the dominant principle of cooperation prevalent in the Tibetan social structure.

This principle of cooperation works not only at the level of the tribal village, clan and family, but also within the context of secular hierarchy. The hierarchy is based mainly on rights over the land. The nobles who hold estates engaged serfs to till the
land. There are different categories of serfs. According to gold stein, as quoted by palakshappa, there are two major types of serfs as indicated in the following diagram.18

Charles bell identifies another category of serfs whom he regards as the masterless peasants. These peasants are dependent on the regular taxpaying serfs to whom they rent land. The serf became bound to his landlord because of the low productivity of land which makes him borrow in order to survive. Many of the serfs who live in abject poverty are indebted to nobility, monasteries and large landowners for nearly three generations. The serfs are therefore not only tied to the land but also to the nobility. There is no way out of this system for the serf except through joining the priestly order, which also is difficult if not insurmountable.19

Besides agricultural and animal husbandry which stratifies the society into distinct 'estates' the Tibetan economy comprises of a trader class also. The trader class could be regarded as the middle class. However, trading is also indulged in by the nobility. Trading involved, till the Chinese occupation of Tibet the import of salt, cotton goods and luxury articles for the nobility. The chief export items were wool, yak-tail, hide, borax and herbs. There also existed in Tibet highly skilled artisans such as Carpenters, Painters, builders and iron-smiths to make weapons. But the category of artisans did not enjoy a high status in the Buddhist society of Tibet.

Thus we notice that the Tibetan social and political structure while being hierarchical provided considerable autonomy for the villages, partly because of the geography of Tibet. Further, cooperation forms a dominant theme in Tibetan-society ranging from the family to the nation. This spirit of cooperation is infused not only by the Tibetan Buddhism which emphasises on collective Nirvana but also by the Dalai Lama who is the supreme authority both in the religious and the secular spheres of Tibetan social life. Further, although Mahayana Buddhism emphasised
other worldly concerns, it nevertheless recognised the this worldly concerns of the laity which was necessary to maintain its polity and economy.
PUNJABIS
The term Panjabis for the purpose of our study includes sikhs - khatris and aroras and the Brahmins and clean-shaven Hindu khatris and aroras and the menial castes and tribes such as Rai-sikhs. I have purposely clubbed these groups together for the sake of manageability into the term 'Panjabis'. Panjabis have been variously described as aggressive, enterprising, lover of good things in life, labourious and belonging to martial race. His industriousness and entrepreneurship have made them famous in not only contemporary India but abroad as well. This has given rise to an image which at times looks larger than the life. This in turn has further provided an impetus to create an aura of laurels around the Panjabi's. The summation of all this results into the development of a 'stereotype' of Panjabis harbouring all the characteristics listed above.

At this juncture, a pertinent question arises as to what extent the stereotype of a community represents its true character. In answer to this query one can say that the stereotype is an often offshoot of the cumulative traits and heritage of a community.
It includes socio-cultural milieu, hearsays, folk songs, idioms, philosophy, creed and ethos of a community. Hence for the research purposes one can rely on these as far as the analysis of a community's past is concerned and the operationalization of it in present.

As regards the community's past, so much can be gleaned from the imperial Gazetteer and other source material, that a fairly accurate picture of the community can be reconstructed in terms of social-economic and geographical settings. The geographical setting of undivided Panjab i.e. before partition in 1947 as described in Imperial Gazetteer has been reproduced below.

In its strict etymological sense the Punjab, or 'land of five rivers' is the country enclosed and watered by Jhelum, Chanab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej. The province lies between 27° 39' and 34° 2'N and 69° 23' and 79° 2' E having a total area of 36,532 square miles.

On the north the Himalayan ranges divide the Punjab from Kashmir and the North-West frontier province on the west the indus forms its main boundary with the latter province except that the Panjab includes
the strips of riverine which forms the Isa Khel Tehsil of Mianwali district, west of that river. Its south-western extremity also lies west of the Indus and forms the large district of Dera-Ghazikhan, thereby extending its frontier to the Sulaiman range, which divides it from Baluchistan, on the extreme South-west is the Sind, and the Rajputana desert forms its southern border on the East, the Jamuna and its tributary the tons divide it from the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, its frontier north of the Sources of the latter river being contiguous with Chinese Tibet.

The province falls into five main physical divisions. Three of these - the Himalayan region, the Himalayan submontane which stretches from the Jamuna to the salt range and the grid plateau of that range are small in area, but the submontane is the most fertile and wealthiest in the Punjaban. The other two are the arid south-western plains and the western portion of the Indo-Gangetic plain west which extends as far westward as Lahore. Both these divisions are of vast extent, but infertile towards the south where they encroach on the plains of the Sind and Rajputana.
The Panjab proper comprises five doabs, or tracts lying between two rivers. These received their names from the emperor Akbar, who formed them by combining the first letters of the names of the rivers between which they lie. They are: The Bist-Jullundhar also called the Sehorwal. Doab, lying between the Beas and Sutlej; the Bori, between the old bed of the Beas and Ravi; the Rechna (Rachinab, or Rachin-ao), between the Ravi and the Chanab; the Chinhat, between the Chanab and the Bihat (another name for the Jhelum), also called the Chaj; and the Sind-Sagar between the Indus and the Jhelum or Bihat. The whole central Panjab is a vast alluvial plain. All the seven great rivers of the Panjab rise in the Himalayas, and after long courses sometimes of several hundred miles, amid snow-clad ranges, they debouch on the plains.

Over the greater part of the Punjab the climate is of the most pronounced continental character, extreme summer heat alternating with great winter cold.20

Geographically Punjab had been the northern land gateway to the Indo-Gangetic plain. Except for the European powers, virtually every invader had entered India through the Panjab. By the same token, regimes securely based on the Gangetic plains such as the Mauryas, The Delhi Sultanate, the Mughals, and the British attempted to expand via Punjab into Central Asia. Because of this, on the one hand the character of the Punjabi people, as a whole, has been shaped into one of self-reliance and initiative, constantly vigilant against external damagers, and on the other the religio-political elements of the diverse cultural traditions (Muslim, Hindu and Sikh) have constantly had an impact on the people at one time or the other. As a consequence on the one hand the prevailing form of social co-operation and the type of political solidarity bear less reference to 'caste' and rules of purity and pollution, then to the family unit and its values. On the other, in spite of a geographical homogeneity, a Uniform historical legacy and a number of common characteristics, various economic, religious, social and cultural differences divide the people sharply.

Panjab became a meeting place of various people and a melting-pot of diverse cultures in ancient times on account of invasions. Hence its society became heterogeneous and heterodox and detracted from the standards of the conservative people. The puritans nestled themselves in the Gangetic Valley and branded the Panjabis impure and impious and shunned contact with them. The literature of this region-breaths a spirit of revolt against the people of Panjab. But in this land of sin and sacrilege there was a unique widening of horizons and broadening of perspectives as a consequence of the coming and mingling of various peoples and their cultures. The result of this is the levelling down of the walls of tradition, demolished the towers of isolationism and breathed in the open air of syncretism. This in turn led to the development of a vast 'Weltanshaung'.

The above account depicts clearly the Panjabis as people who are not stickler of the notions of hierarchy and purity and pollution which has otherwise enveloped the entire Hindu society. The barriers of caste are not all that rigid in Panjab as elsewhere in the country.

Punjab has been pointed out as one of the notable exceptions to the caste system in India. This is due to Muslim and Sikh influences, which theoretically are against the caste system, and to the role of the Hindu revivalist movement Arya Samaj in Punjab.

Although, the sikh religion discourages division of society on the basis of caste, the crusade against the caste system has only been partially successful. The caste system current today divides the Sikhs into three: agriculturists (Jats), non-agriculturists and Harijans. This division, though based on birth, is not as vicious as the tradition caste system in the sense that all sikhs have access to all gurdwars. Moreover, each major caste, in large as measure, is associated with an economic category. Broadly, the landowners are jats, the middlemen, shopkeepers and businessmen are khatris and Aroras (Non-Jats) and a high percentage of labourers, in industry and on the land are scheduled castes (Majhbis).

On account of Jat sikhs embracing the religion earlier than the others, it is the jat social values
which have become basic Sikh values. One of the fundamental traits of Jat character has been the instinct of tribal freedom and tribal kinship. The 'Jats' organisation by clans is notorious and they are naturally grouped in village communities. This tribal solidarity among them forms an important place in their daily lives, the mode of production isolates each Jat family from others and competition over land divides them internally. Consequently factions exist to provide a collective protection to each individual family in its friendships and enmities.²³

Among the non-Jat Sikhs are mainly Khatris and Aroras. Traditionally, they were the trading, banking and moneylending classes. Also among Hindus non-agriculturist the socially and politically important caste groups have been Khatris, Aroras and Aggarwals. All these being business groups concentrated in cities have common economic interests as against rural Jat interests. An important cleavage within the Hindu community is that between the reformist section known as the Arya Samaj and the orthodox section called the Sanatan Dharm.

²³ Amarjit Singh Narang, 'Punjab Development and Politics in Land, Caste and politics in Indian State, Ed. by Gail Omved. Deptt. of Political Science, Univ. of Delhi, 1982, pp. 118-120.
As regards the general distribution of menial castes which comprises of all the lower strata of society such as the vagarants, criminal and gypsy tribes, the village menials and the industrial classes. The vagrant tribes are chiefly to be found in two parts of the province, on the Rajputana border and under the central and Western hills. The village menial castes prevail throughout the eastern districts, the hills and the great sikh states. But they seem to be sort of absent in the west and particularly on the indus frontier. This is partly because the hereditary restrictions upon occupation are more lax and people do not consider shameful the earning of their bread by callings which in other, provinces would involve social degradation where caste-feelings are stronger.24

As regards the actual operation of caste system in Panjab, the sikh community officially and in its system of religious beliefs repudiates the concept of caste. It also shows no recognition of the concept of hierarchy as such.

The non-acceptance of hierarchy is expressed in the value system by the principle of equality, a principle which is supported and sustained by other traditional customary values such as reputation, respect and prestige. The social expression of the egalitarian principle is indeed that the very varied and totally different sets of relationships that a man has are not seen as excluding or contradicting one another. Social networks include multiple ties with men of different types.

Caste solidarity in Panjab rarely-operated in practice. The only customs in which any solidarity was expressed among the Jats on a caste basis was that in the villages they did not visit the houses of Mazhbiais, take food from them, eat with them or intermarry with them. Jats, Khatris, Aroras all ate with one another and there was also an increasing number of cases of inter-marriage between them. In villages, neither Jats nor Mazhbis had any solidarity on a caste basis. Jat landlords, on antagonistic terms with one another forced those Mazhbi who they had recruited to work for them to support them politically. Allegiances were thus cross caste allegiances and it is more helpful to look at them in terms of a patron attaching himself to certain clients who relative to him are in an economically depressed
situation. The kind of relationship a Jat landlord had with the Mazhbis, the same he had with small proprietors who were in some way indebted to him as with tenants. The core of the relationship was the same in all these instances and unaffected by caste.25

The loosening up of caste rigidities has its genesis in the Sikh religion. It dates back to the days of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith. He had evolved a discipline which found practical expression in the path conceived by him to be offered to everyone, irrespective of one's caste creed or sex. He attacked the caste system. Before God, the distinctions based on birth were at best meaningless, in fact, such distinctions became invidious when they implied the denial of salvation to a large number of people. One does not become high before God by regarding oneself 'high'. Every individual was equal before the Guru and all the followers were equal before one another.

Guru Jodh Singh, the last Guru of the Sikhs, said that a Sikh should be a proof against sensual temptation and indulgence. The watchwords of a Sikh should be continence, truth, contentment, mercy, duty, humility and service. He should not live on charity; he must earn his own livelihood through honest means. For a Sikh, the communal brotherhood was more important than the ties of kinship. A Sikh should always be ready to share his food, clothes and other belongings with the needy.  

All this and much more have gone into the building up of the personality of Khalsa (one who is pure). Furthermore the Sikh religion encourages worldly success and social responsibility, values which have obviously helped their progress. Sikhism centres around Nam (worship) and Seva (service).

The trait of hardworking amongst the Panjabis also found its expression in the exhortation of the Guru Nanak which is given as below:

Only he finds the true path of life who earns his bread by the Sweat of his brow and shares the fruit thereof with his fellow-being.

These ideas had taken root and under his nine successors Sikhism had become a thoroughly practical religion.²⁷

Moreover, Gurus also believed that the individual must play full role in the affairs of the community and be in possession of spiritual as well as physical qualities. It is imperative that spiritual achievement should be combined with physical powers, because the one without the other may degenerate into sheer hypocrisy or ruthless tyranny. That is why the Gurus, particularly the last, besides advocating spiritual uplift had attempted to revive the old Kshatriya spirit of valor by means of heroic literature, marital training and glorification of weapons of war. They had been convinced that the people must develop their spiritual, mental and physical faculties so that they may develop a

well balanced personality and plan their due role in the affairs of the society. It is only such people as are at once saints and soldiers, who can resist evil or fight tyranny in any form and help in the maintenance of conditions necessary to the advancement of the individual and the society.  

Since, it is a well known fact that religion plays a very pivotal role in not only shaping, moulding and directing the lives of the people, but also acts as a repository of faith for the vast masses. Needless to say that Sikhism too had profoundly affected the life styles, thinking and philosophy of the Sikhs in particular and the Hindus in general. It had injected into the personalities of Hindus and Sikhs in Panjab certain traits which taken together constitute the 'Stereotype' of Panjabis. The specific and peculiar characteristics of the Panjabi stereotype would mainly include, industriousness, hardworking, aggressive, martial, robust, gun wielding, proudy, lover of wealth, women and wine, gregarious etc. As to what extent this Panjabi stereotype befits our situation in the Tarai, that we shall be analysing in the data

analysis chapter. Here we got to see if there are other supportive evidences for this stereotype. one such example is a study conducted on Sikhs in Canada. In the opinion of Jehlin, 'the sikhs have long been noted for their power to adapt themselves to circumstances they cannot control. Their practical optimism and freedom from apathy has led them to accept whatever befalls in the providence of God and try to turn it to their own advantage.

In Canada, too, the Sikhs showed this ability. They not only adapted themselves to a new climate and a new civilization, but to new occupations as well. Coming from the farms of Panjab, they got construction jobs on the Canadian railways. Later they turned to lumber industry, so that one authority was compelled to say that these farmers from Panjab have not only adapted themselves to work in the moist forests of western Canada, but they have mastered the mechanized skills of the more intricate mill work.

Their success as orchard agriculturists is seen in the peach farming in sutter country. While, in 1966 they owned 20% of the farms, they produced 35% of the peach tonnage. Most now live in modest
houses with plumbing, electricity, gas for cooking and heating. This is far different from the living conditions of the early settlers, who often slept on the ground around open fires, or in barns on the hay; their cooking was over camp-fires, their food the simplest. They worked ten or twelve hours a day for a dollar and a half and yet they managed to save. Their adaptability, their determination to save part of their income however meagre, alongwith hardwork and the 'Khalsa Spirit' of helping each other out with the lending of tools and equipment, have all contributed to the prosperity of the Sikh farming community.

This description of the Sikhs is more or less close to the image of stereotype and that it match perfectly albeit with some aberrations. As regards the Khatri's and Aroras, the traditional mercantile castes of Panjab, it would not be exaggeration to say that they held almost a complete monopoly of trading and banking. We get a fair picture of

these castes during Ranjit Singh time. Although all categories of traders were benefited during his regime but the maximum advantage went to the Khatris and Aroras of the Punjab. The extension of Ranjit Singh's rule towards the indus and beyond opened out vast new opportunities of trade and commerce. These opportunities were fully exploited by these people. The Khatris mostly spread out along the Grand trunk Road in the direction of Peshawar while the Aroras extended their activities in the direction of Multan. They ran shops in villages, in towns and near military cantonments; acted as money lenders and sarafs; and supplied goods to troops under march and in camp. Wherever it was possible they acquired lands and devoted part of their time to cultivation. The Aroras in the South-west Panjab particularly evinced considerable interest in cultivation and their settlements became a by-word for admiration of individual enterprise. In their various commercial pursuits the Khatris and Aroras were at a great advantage as compared with the traders of other communities. This was due to the fact that the administration of the state, both at the level of centre and the level of the local administrative units, was dominated by people
who hailed from the same social stock, and many of them were bound together by close kinship ties. Moreover the Bedis, the Sodhis, the Trehans and the Bhallas among them 'being associated with the families of the Sikh gurus were specially favoured by the state.'

The above description shows clearly that the mercantile castes viz Khatris and Aroras have been oriented to the practices and intricacies of trade long back. This shows they are conversant with the practice of agriculture also. Reproduced here below is the extract from Sir George Campbells's Ethnology in India, which describes the position of Khatris and Aroras.

"Trade is their main occupation; and besides monopolising the trade of the Panjab, they are the civil administrators and have almost all literate work in their hands. The Khatris are one of the most acute, energetic and remarkable races in India. They are staunch Hindus and generally educated. No village can get on without the Khatri who keeps the accounts does the banking business and buys and sell the grain. They seem, too, to get on with the people better than most traders and usurers of this kind. In

Afghanistan, among a rough and alien people, the Khatris are as a rule confined to the position of humble dealers, shop-keepers, and money-lenders.'

Regarding the Aroras, he is often called as the trader par excellence of the South-Western portion of the Panjab, that is to say the lower valleys of our five rivers. More than half the Aroras of the Panjab dwell in the Multan and Derajat divisions. Like the Khatri, and unlike the Baniya, he is no more trader; but his social position is far inferior to theirs. He is commonly known as a Kirar, a word almost synonymous with coward and even more contemptuous than is the name Baniya in the east of the province. The Arora is active and enterprising, industrious and thrifty. He will turn his hand to any work, he makes a most admirable cultivator. In the western Panjab he sews clothes, weave matting and baskets, make vessels of brass and copper, and do goldsmiths work. He is also branded in the local proverbs like, This vex not the Jat in his jungle, or the Kirar at his shop, or the boatman at his ferry; for if you do, they will break your head. Again 'Trust not a crow, a dog or a Kirar, even when asleep'. So again, 'you can't make a friend of a Kirar any more than a Sati of a prostitute'. The Arora is of inferior
physique his character is thus summed up by M.V. Thorburn "A cowardly, secretive, acquisitive race - the qualities both despised and envied by the great tribes of Panjab"\textsuperscript{31}

Thus the above description of Khatris and Aroras as described historically perfectly matches the stereotype of Panjabis developed of late in the Tarai belt. It shows two things. Firstly, the orientation and a way of life of community plays an important role wherever and whenever they happen to be either in their own area or elsewhere. They would normally be the carriers of the traits learnt and inherited at the level of socialization.

The last in the ethnological detail of the Panjab with which we are concerned is the tribe of Rai-Sikhs. As quoted by Amir Hasan, they are tough, ruthless and are an ex-criminal tribe. They are a sort of vagabonds and would do anything for a consideration like killing, kidnapping, lifting the cattles and women folk of other castes. They are alcoholic and sometimes distill their own liquor\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31} Denzil Ibbetson; op.cit. pp. 247-251.

The vernaculars of Panjab belong entirely to the Aryan family of languages. These languages are divided into numerous dialects. The 'western Panjabi (also called Jatki, 'The Jats' Speech and Multani comprises the Hindko, Pothwari, Chikhali, Dhundi, Ghebi and Awanbari. Eastern Panjabi has two main dialects: the standard of the Majha, or central part of the Baridaob, Spoken round Amritsar; and that of the Malwa, the tract south of Sutlej. Western Hindi comprises - Harian (The dialect of Haryana), Bangru that of Bangar, Jatu (the Jat speech) and Ahirwari (The Ahir Speech).

The ethnic type in Panjab is distinctly Aryan, there being few traces of also original or foreign blood. The typical Panjabi is tall spare but muscular, broad-shouldered, with full dark eyes and an ample beard. The hair is invariably black but the complexion varies from a deep olive brown to wheat coloured. As a rule the lower classes are darker than the upper, and the complexion is fairer in the north-west than in the south-east. The Jats of Manjha and Malwa exhibit a splendid physique, and the peasantry of the plains are generally a five people.

33. The Imperial Gazetteer of India op.cit.pp.284-
The staple food consists of the grain grown locally. Well-to-do people eat wheat and rice, while the ordinary peasants food consists chiefly of wheat-barley and grain. In the west and south-west Bajra (spiked-millet) is mostly consumed in the winter. Pulses and vegetables are eaten with bread by prosperous zamindars and townspeople; but the poorer classes who cannot always afford them merely mix salt in their bread and if possible eat it with butter-milk and green mustard with bread. Ghi is used only by those who can afford it. Meat is seldom eaten except by the better classes, and by them only on occasions of rejoicing or by way of hospitality. The common beverages are buttermilk, water mixed with milk and sugar, country sherbats and sardai a cooling drink. Hemp is ordinarily drunk by the religious mendicants (fakirs). In towns cows milk is used, but in rural tracts buffaloes is preferred as being richer. In the camel-breed tract, camels' milk is also drunk.34

The dress of the people is of the simplest kind and, in the plains, made entirely of cotton

34. The Imperial Gazetteer of India op.cit.pp.290-293.
cloth. A turban a lion-cloth, a loose wrap thrown round the body like a plaid, and, in the cold season, a vest or jacket of some kind, are the usual garments. White is the usual colour but dyed stuffs are often worn especially on festive occasions. As a rule muslims avoid red and prefer green. Hindus similarly avoid blue, but it is the characteristic dress of sikh zealots, like the Akalis.

Women are far more conservative and the influence of Islam has brought about the adoption of trouser (Salvar) instead of the Hindu Skirt (Sari) which is only general in the South-east. Here again local and tribal customs vary. Thus Rajput women, Hindu as well as Muslims wear the trouser (Salvar) and Gujjars 'the Petticoat while many sikh and Hindu Jat women wear both. The wrap or chaddar is universally worn; and the parda system compels most Muslims and many Hindu and Sikh ladies of the better classes to wear, when compelled to leave the house, an ungainly and uncomfortable veil (Burka) which covers the whole form.

The ordinary peasants' house is not comfortable, though hardly attractive, built of mud with a flat
roof and rarely decorated, it is cooler in summer and warmer in winter than a house of brick or stone. In the cities, small houses have long been the rule. The furniture of an ordinary house is cheap and simple, comprising a few string beds; stools, boxes, spinning-wheels, and cooking utensils with a grain receptacle of mud.
BENGALIS
The erstwhile Bengal was the largest and most popular in India. It lies between 19° 18' and 28° 15'N and between 82° and 97° E. The province is bounded on the north by Nepal and Tibet and by the mighty chain of Himalayas, on the east by Assam and the continuation of the range of hills which divides Assam from Burma on the South by the Bay of Bengal and Madras, and on the west by the United and central provinces.

The most distinctive feature of the province is its network of rivers - The ganges and the Brahmaputra, with their affluents and Tributaries. These rivers are of use in many ways. They furnish an admirable and cheap means of transport; they contain an inexhaustible supply of fish, and they bring down vast quality of fertilizing silt which they distribute over the surface of delta.

The people of Bengal appear from their physical type to belong to three distinct stocks - Dravidian, Mongoloid and Aryan. In 1903, in the province as a whole, out of every 100 persons, 95 lived in villages and only 5 in towns. Bengal is distinctly an agricultural country. The most striking feature of East Bengal was that nearly two-thirds of population who are either landlords or tenants depend on agriculture.
The languages spoken in Bengal belong to one or the other of four linguistic families viz. Aryan, Dravidian, Munda or Kolarian and Tibeto-Burman. Of these, the languages of the Aryan family are by far the most important, being spoken by no less than 95 percent of the total population.

In East Bengal, the cultivator takes as a rule three meals a day. He begins in the early morning with rice left over from the previous nights' supper, parched or popped rice and jack-fruit or mango when in season. The midday and evening meals have boiled rice as their foundation and with it are mixed pulses of different kinds, fish or vegetables.

The garments commonly worn by men are the dhoti or waist cloth and the chadar or loose cloth worn over the shoulders. Those who can afford it wear a piran or coat. Among the strict Farazi Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal, the dhoti is worn as a lungi or kilt, and is frequently of coloured cloth. Muhammadans wear a skull-cap, and Hindus a Pagri. For women, the sari is almost universal, one end being worn over the head and shoulders and fastened to the waist. In the towns men wear an English shirt over the dhoti,
the tails hanging loose, and a chadar over the shoulders, English socks, loose slippers or shoes, and an umbrella complete the costume. All but the very poorest women wear ornaments on wrist, neck and ankle, they are generally of silver brass or lac.\textsuperscript{35}

The houses in lower Bengal are not congregated into villages, but each homestead stand in its own orchard of fruit and palm trees. The sites have been laboriously raised by excavation, which has left tanks in every compound, and the houses are erected on mud plinths and built round a courtyard with wooden or bamboo posts and interlaced walls of split bamboo, with thatched roofs resting on a bamboo framework.

The chief amusement of people lies in attending the fairs which are held all over the province. These gatherings are at stated seasons, generally in connection with some bathing festival or other religious ceremony, and are attended by numerous hawkers, who set up booths for the sale of miscellaneous articles. The religious mendicants, jugglers, actors, musicians, all of whom

\textsuperscript{35} The Imperial Gazetteer of India Vol.III, Today and Tomorrows Printers and Publishers New Delhi pp. 194-239.
contribute - their quota to the entertainment of the crowd. Every market is thronged by gaily dressed crowds who exchange the gossip of the day and discuss the latest cause-celebre while making their purchases. The great annual religious festivals afford an excuse for merry gatherings, when members congregate in the fields and amuse themselves with wrestling, hook swinging etc. Football is by far the most popular outdoor game and huge crowds assemble on the maidan.

The general characteristics which distinguish agricultural conditions in Bengal are a regular and copious rainfall, a fertile soil and a dense population subsisting on the produce of land. Not only do the eastern districts receive a great deal more rain, but owing to the annual overflow of the great rivers that traverse them they remain practically under water for six months in the year and the people live on little island mounds and can move about only by boat. The surface of this tract is low and flat, and much of it is covered with huge marshes where rice and jute luxuriate. In fact in the east of the province rice and jute are grown exclusively, the farmer occupying two-thirds and both together, no less than three fourths, of the gross cropped area.36

The Bengali is a very clever fisherman. In the bay of Bengal he practises deep-sea fishing drying his catch ashore on stakes driven into some sandy beach. The larger rivers are trawled from a sailing boat and the smaller streams are fished from weirs.

The Hindu Society in Bengal has been traditionally divided into two major castes or varnas, namely the Brahman and Sudra. Below the Sudras there were the untouchables and the tribal people or antyajas and Mleehchhas, but the kshtriya and vaishyas, the two other major varnas of the ancient Indian society have been almost non-existent (except in scattered groups) in this part of the country at least since the 12th-13th centuries A.D.

The ritual status of the different castes was determined theoretically by the nature of their occupation or profession. Certain occupations or professions were traditionally regarded as superior or more sacred than others, and those who were engaged in these occupations hereditarily were given a higher status in the social hierarchy than those who were
engaged in inferior or less sacred vocations. The functional character of the caste system is quite obvious and was designed to build up a non-competitive productive organisation in our country. Caste provided some sort of a guarantee of occupation to every individual member of the society, and that is why it managed to survive the political upheavals of centuries.

As regards the origin of Brahmins in Bengal the legend has it that the king Adisura invited five Brahmins from Kananj to perform some sacrifices, as the Brahmins of Bengal were ignorant of Vedas. These Brahmins were ultimately settled in Bengal and were granted villages for maintenance. They derived their surnames from these villages, and were the forefathers of the entire Brahmna community of modern Bengal with the exception of a few minor groups like the Vaidikas, who come at a later period.


Thus from the name of the village Bandya or Bandyaghati we get the surname of Bandya + Upadhyaya or Teacher = Bandyopadhyaya, corrupted into Bannerjee. From the village Mubhati comes the surname Mukha + Upadhyaya = Mukhopadhyaya or Mukherjee. The village catta gives the name of catta + Upadhyaya = Cattopadhyaya or Chatterjee. The surname Gangopadhyaya or Ganguli comes from the village Gangul, Ghosala from the village Ghosa or Ghosali, Pipali or Piplai from Pippal, Kanjilal from Kanji, Gargari from Gargar, Mahintya from Mahanta, Simlai from Simla, Siddhala from Siddhal etc.

The functions of the Kshtriya or the martial caste were discharged in Bengal by members of the some of the lowest castes like the Goala, Bagdi, Hari and Dome. The Aguris or Ugrakshatriyas of the Burdwan district were drawn equally to the agricultural and marital professions.

The nineteenth century saw a radical change in the occupational pattern of many of the trading and artisan castes. Though higher or English education was dominated by the three upper castes - Brahman, Vaidya and Kayastha even at the end of 19th century,
the census figures reveal that it was slowly percolating among the lower castes too.

In subsequent years artisan castes of Bengal like Kamar, Kumar, Chamar and Muchi have drifted either toward agricultural labour or skilled labour in industries other than their traditional ones, while castes like Bagdi whose traditional occupation was labour in the fields have maintained it to an appreciable extent.

As occupational mobility increased movement of the social groups in the 19th century, attempts were made by various castes and subcastes to achieve a better position for themselves in the social hierarchy. The caste structure in Bengal was probably much less rigid than in many other parts of India even in the pre-British period. The Brahmins though enjoying a very high ritual status, had to share social and economic power with the vaidyas and the Kyasthas.

The Namasudras who formed a very large community in East Bengal were treated by the upper castes as chandals or untouchables. Early in the 20th century some of the Namasudras claimed recognition as Brahmin and assumed the new caste-name of Namobrahman. But
this claim was not taken seriously by the Hindu Society.¹³⁹

There are two classes of traders in Bengal, one who buys and sells goods which are produced by others, and the other who produces goods and sells them to others. Outside Bengal the first class as merchants and bankers, is regarded as Vaisya, while the second class, as artisans, is ranked as sudra. If the Vaishyavarna had not disappeared in Bengal, caste like Swarnbanik, Gandhabanik, tili, saha etc., whose professions are trading and banking only, would have been called vaisyas while blacksmiths, potters, weavers etc., who are both artisans and traders would have ranked as lower in social status.

But as there is no vaisyavarna in Bengal, they are all grouped together as 'good' sudras under the name of Navasakha. Ordinary brahmins are not degraded by acting as priests to them. Navasakha originally meant nine branches or subdivisions,

but subsequent promotions from lower orders have increased to fourteen at the present time.\textsuperscript{40}

They are Tili (originally dealer in sesame seed or betelnut, now general merchant), Mali (gardener and flower garland maker), Tambuli (dealer in betel-leaf and food-grains), Gopa in the restricted meaning of sadgopa (agriculturist), Napit (barber), Together with Madhu - napit (sweatmeat seller), Gochali or Barui (betel-leaf-grower), Kamar (blacksmith), Kumar (potter), Tanti (weaver), sanbhabanik (conchshell worker), Kamsyabanik (bellmetal-worker), and Kuri koria (dealer in sweets. The Dhobas or washerman are regarded as unclean sudras, and brahmanas do not take water touched by them. A peculiar caste is the yogi which is neither functional nor tribal. It is a sectarian caste. They are believed to be the degraded descendants of a class of Buddhist ascetics.\footnote{Ibid, pp.109-110.} They are found principally in the eastern district as weavers, small traders and cultivators.

As regards some tribal and cultivating castes, in Bengal there are two classes of Kaivartas, Chasi or Haliba and Jaliba or Jalia, who may be regarded practically as two separate castes. The occupation
of the former is mainly agriculture, which was at one time looked upon as a noble profession belonging to the vaishy community of the vedic age, but which on account of various causes came to be despised and gradually fell to the share of sudra folk. The occupation of the jalia kaivarta is to catch fish, a profession which from the time of vedas belonged to non-aryan outcastes.\textsuperscript{41}

The Namasudras of Bengal are not an occupational caste. They are found in various occupations as cultivators, fishermen, boatmen, carpenters etc. They are regarded as 'untouchables' by the higher castes of Bengal and only a generation ago were known by the name of chandala.

The Namasudras are a virile, industrious and martial - spirited people, who with their toils in the fields in water and in forests supply the higher castes with food, transport and other necessities of life, and in times of danger offer with their brawns and courage, protection to the lives and properties of those who are called the gentlemen's of society.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, pp. 124-126.
As regard to the treatment meted out to the Namasudras by the higher castes, it must be said that until recent times, they are called chandalas, whom the Dharmasstras describe as a despised out caste people whose contact must be avoided as far as possible by all decent men. They are not allowed entry into the higher castes houses lest their touch would defile the house. They were not to be given education, lest it would inspire them with a desire for their upliftment and a higher standard of living. Furthermore, physicians would not go to their houses for treatment of their diseases, and even barbers would not shave them, though a barber had no objection to shave Muslims and christians and even a converted Namasudra. What is worse still, even the light of spiritualism and religion was denied to them. Brahmans would not serve as priests to them. They were not
the light of spiritualism and religion was denied to them. Brahmans would not serve as priests to them. They were not allowed entry into any temple, because their presence would impart impurity to the dieties. In a word, they were not encouraged to feel that they were members of the same religious community as the higher caste people.

It is no wonder, therefore, that when Islam with its spirit of equality between man and man of the Muslim community appeared in Bengal and invited the down-trodden people of the Hindu Community to receive the solace and shelter of Islamic faith, thousands upon thousands of these people welcomed the invitation and became converts to the new religion.

The social picture of Bengal by the middle of the 19th century changed radically on account of the prevalence of exchange economy. This resulted into accumulation of huge wealth by the new urban Bengali upper class which was diverted into land. Investment in land was made safe by the Permanent settlement for deriving an annuity like income without any effort or enterprise on the part of the investor.
This produced a very interesting and unique social situation in Bengal, the broad features of which are these. The city capitalists becoming landholders, living most of the time in the city as lords and visiting occasionally their rural estates like feudal princes; The rural landholders squandering most of their peasant fleeced money in urban luxuries and vices and their times in indolence and group rivalries and caste-politics and a lot of culture mongering. A considerable part of their wealth was wasted in competitive conspicuous consumptions and luxuries, such as religious and social ceremonies, entertainment of British rulers for seeking their favour and patronage, feeding the feudal vices, and also in religious charities and endowments and temple building, possibly for the redemption of their exploiters Soul Stained with people's blood.42

The structure of feudal bureaucratism in Bengal, and to a large extent in India, was based on the caste hierarchical power system, and was dominated by the Brahmins, the Kayasthas and the vaidyas. The despising of merchants is a very old

characteristic in Bengali thought, and although the merchants were not allotted the lowest rank in caste-hierarchy, their occupation was never considered socially respectable. The term bania or baney was always uttered with contempt by the members of the upper castes. Merchants might acquire great wealth, yet they were never accorded a high social position or prestige for that. As such, the new social mobility induced by an exchange economy, could not provide any fresh incentive to them for hoarded capital. They had nothing to gain by that. The upper castes on the other hand, had much to gain. The achieved 'class' - power and status of money was added to their ascribed 'caste' power and status, and they became far more powerful in society. No, such possibility existed in the case of the 'baniks'. Even the social mobility induced by education especially by English education proved ineffective in removing caste-ascriptions.