Summary and Conclusion

I

The Work:

The entire study is an ethnomological account of the social-cultural aspect of Bengali Kinship. My work is localised in a micro area of southern part of West Bengal. The study however, reflects certain interesting features about kinship structures and kinship behaviour of the communities: i.e. the Brahman of Barasat and Jaynagar (North and South 24 Parganas respectively) occupying the topmost position in the regional caste hierarchy and the other the Bagdi (Jaynagar South 24 Parganas) who are placed down below in the regional social hierarchy. The present study is based on the social and cultural relationship of these two completely different caste group wherein economic and ritual relationship are also talked about. An analytical attempt has been made for precise and correct informations to complete the work quite effectively.

These two castes have been selected in order to find out the acculturated behaviour and the gradual dilution of the various code of the caste system. In other words an attempt has been made to understand how the Brahman and the Bagdi are living in this society being complementary to each other. But in spite of peaceful adherence the gross caste difference still exists. With the advent of modernisation the lower Bagdi caste, to meet the basic requirements of life, have come closer to the upper castes resulting in the breakdown of the caste barrier to a great extent.

We know that 'Man' is born in the family system. Family acts as a reflecting medium where the total kinship system is
seen through. This family is established through marriage and extended by kinship. Family is composed of total network of members, eighty percent of which are 'kin'. Here in this study 'kin' are referred as 'individuals'. Each of these individuals is gradually exposed to the external universe who come to know each other and begins to develop personality, responds as per norms (Sastra) and individuality (behaviour) and proceeds towards the process of socialisation and modernisation. This total concept has been presented in the following discussion.

II

Summing up of Different Chapter:

To start with, a textual configuration of the total castes in 24 Parganas as per census report has been discussed in order to see the position of the castes under study, the acquisition of their positional changes in the society, origin and descent of the caste under study and the occupation they are engaged in. In this study I have specifically included the Radhi and Agradani Brahman of East Bengal.

The Brahman claim their descent purely from Aryan stock whereas the Bagdi appear from their features and complexion to be of Dravidian descent. The Brahman are engaged in priestly occupation, service, teaching and also in agriculture. The Bagdi are mostly agricultural labourer and fish catcher. Some of them are engaged in van and rickshaw pulling, basket making (with cane), vegetable selling and service.

The structure of kinship system includes categories of kin where the social units and different types of kin relationship are talked about, kinship terminology discussed, and the role of different kin are analysed. The kul, gotra, bangsa, goosthi, ghar/bari, sansar and paribar are the different social units within which a kin is born and grown up. First of all, these concepts are seen to vary among the Brahman and the Bagdi; but
no variation in the concept as such among the rural and urban Brahman is found. Among the Bagdi the concept of kul doesn't exist at all. The kul among the Brahman is associated with purba-purush or bap-dada (ancestors). In the Brahmanic literature gotra is mentioned only for the Brahman and for the Bagdi it bears little importance. They have only one gotra i.e. Kashyap. But during marriage the girl is married through gotrantar (changing of gotra) by ritual means and on payment of certain amount of dakshina (token money). The members of the bangsa of a Bagdi live in distant villages but the members of a goosthi reside in the same village. In case of a Brahman the members of the goosthi or bangsa may or may not live together in the same house, village or town. It depends on the economic stability of the concerned member. While discussing the concept of ghar/bari, sansar and paribar among the Brahman, I have seen that the Brahman use these terms in a sequential order; e.g. a person lives in a ghar with all members to form a sansar and ultimately establishes a paribar. But a person belonging to a paribar may not always live in the same sansar but while referring he recognizes himself as a member of his father's paribar. However, the Bagdi refers these terms differently. To them the paribar means extended family which is hardly found these days as they get separated and form a separate establishment of their own forming a sansar, members of which live in the same ghar or bari sharing the same food cooked in a common hearth. Thus family organisation is based on these social units. Through the reproduction the new members are born and they find their origin, introduction, acceptance and development into the family and its society. These social units help to understand the above mentioned system, and the variation in concept shows the difference in the structure of the society as existing among both the castes under study. Secondly, these social units were found to be mutually dependent to each other. As for example, among the Brahman a particular ancestor of kul is the starter of a particular bangsa. Then again, all the persons who share the same ancestry whether they live together or not belong to the same kul; but only those
persons of a **kul** who share the same house belong to a **goosthi**. The members belonging to same **paribar**, **bangsa** and **kul** form a **goosthi**. But among the Bagdi these social units are more mutually inter-dependent. For example they belong to endogamous group and agnatically related to each other, a person recognizes himself as belonging to a particular **goosthi**, **bangsa**, **paribar**, **sansar** and **ghar**. To them these concepts are used simultaneously one with the other and are mutually dependent. Thirdly, these social units form one of the characteristic features for defining the different types of kin relationship. Among the Brahman the **jnati** relationship is characterised by possessing similar **gotra**, **kul** and **bangsa**. The **kutum** relationship is recognized by possessing different **gotra**, **kul** and **bangsa**. The kin relationship termed as **attiya** is overlapping in case of the Brahman, hence it cannot be defined along with other social units. But among the Bagdi social units are used less frequently in defining the kin relationship. They are an endogamous localised group and social units are seen to be used with individual kin and do not form a characteristic feature in defining each kin relationship as seen to be used often in case of the Brahman. Therefore, a social unit definitely forms an important aspect in kinship study.

The basic division of kinship relationship among the Brahman and the Bagdi is made into two: **Samparka** and **Sambandha**. **Samparka** is established through marriage blood or friendship ties whereas **Sambandha** is through marriage. **Samparka** is of three types; **attiya**, **jnati** and **bandhu**; and **Sambandha** is only of one type i.e. **kutum**. Among the Bagdi **Samparka** is marked by **deiji**, **dharamdeiji** and **gram deiji**, **Sambandha** by **kutum**. While differentiating the kin relationship type among the Brahman and the Bagdi, it has been found that the basic concept remains the same. However, there is some differences in the representation of the terms. The Bagdi have simplified the concept-**attiya** and **jnati** of the Brahman and to them **deijis** are the closest kin, i.e. agnatically related. All the other kin i.e. uterine and affinal are **kutum**. But among the Brahman uterine kin are **attiya** and affinal are **kutum**. Among
the Bagdi deijis are blood related and kutums are related through blood or marriage. For the Brahman jnatis are blood related, attiyas may or may not be blood related and kutum are always related through marriage. Therefore, the term jnati and kutum of the Brahman follow a specific characteristic of its own and can be distinguished sharply whereas the term attiya is overlapping. But in case of the Bagdi each class of kin can be grouped separately.

Then again while distinguishing the type of kin relationship among the urban and rural Brahman it has been found that the rural Brahman refer one's own village people as gram subade attiya or emni attiya. They recognize the blood related attiya as nijer attiya whom the urban term as attiya as they do not possess any emni attiya or like that. Another interesting change in the type of kin relationship is seen in a married woman both among the Brahman and the Bagdi. In the case of married man in both the castes under study the kin relationship does not change rather it gets extended. Among the Brahman a married woman's jnati becomes her attiya and husband's jnati her jnati. But her attiya and kutum remain unchanged rather get extended after marriage i.e. she gets an additional quantum of attiya and kutum of her in-law's relation. After marriage a Bagdi woman's deiji become her kutum and her husband's deiji become her own deiji. Hence the changing pattern involving the Bagdi community is quite simpler as compared to that of the Brahman. While doing the comparative analysis another important point that came out is that among the Bagdi if the widow returns to her parental house she again become deiji to her father's family but if she stays with her late husband's family she remains a kutum to her father's family. This is not the case among the Brahman.

The fictitious kinship relationship which constitute an important dimension of inter and intra caste relationship is quite frequently found among the Bagdi and the rural Brahman; the basic concept is similar. The gram deiji of the Bagdi is similar
to the *gram sabade attiya* of the rural Brahman, and *dharam deiji* concept is similar to the *gangaajal soi* of the rural Brahman woman. These kin are one's own people and treated as actual kin. This very type of ceremonial or fictitious kin relationship is missing in an urban setting. This is quite interesting to note that in context of the rural setting the Brahman and the Bagdi do possess the similar type of fictitious kin system though they are placed at poles apart, so far the caste hierarchy is concerned. But one thing common to them is the geo-cultural environment i.e. the setting. The urban Brahman do not have fictitious kin as is prevalent among their rural counterpart and this is most likely due to their exposure to an urban setting where they hardly feel the charm of living coherently in a simple atmosphere and articulate closely with other communities in social, economic and ritual sphere. To the rural people these fictitious kin often play vital roles in the event of crises. This brief discussion has highlighted the impact of geo-cultural environment on kinship behaviour.

There is relationship of joking as well as that of avoidance found both among the Brahman and the Bagdi. A joking relationship does exist between the *deor* (husband's younger brother) and *beudi* (elder brother's wife), between *sala* and *sali* (wife's younger brother and sister) and *jamaibabu* (elder sister's husband). One sided joking relationship prevails among the *dadu* and *natni* (grand father and grand daughter) when the latter is not supposed to reciprocate. Avoidance relationship is found to exist among the *bhasur* (husband's elder brother) and *bouma* (younger brother's wife) and between husband's other elder kin members and *bouma* who covers her face with a veil while talking to them. However, these days among the urban Brahman this sort of inhibition is gradually fading. But among the rural Brahman and the Bagdi avoidance relationship is seen to be still existing.

The kinship terms of the people under study are arranged in such a way that the particular relationship with a person is understood. The terms have mostly originated from Sanskrit. The total kinship terminology is based on age, sex and generation. Then
again modifiers, suffixes and prefixes are used to denote the terms. However the total terminology is understood from their mode of use as term of address, term of relation and the term of reference. On comparative analysis it has been found the Bagdi use similar terms as the Brahman except bonai for sister's husband and mag for wife, these terms are never used by the Brahman under study. Kinship terms are also used for the non-kin relationship. It is also used on the basis of age, sex and generation. However it is interesting to note that for both the Bagdi and the Brahman under study kin terms are not used for a complete stranger, an unknown person who are addressed differently e.g. Halder babu (person) and his wife as Halder babur bou or parihar. Among the urban Brahman however, some English words are used to designate such person as Mr. Benerjee & his wife as Mrs. Banerjee, or Banerjee nasai in Bengali & his wife as Banerjee ginni. Then again I have found that kinship term changes for both men and women after marriage. They adopt the term of address of each other. But the term of relation and reference makes the relationship clear, for the person. This transformation embeds the concept of gotra, bangsa that a man or woman adapts after marriage.

Kinship terms are carrier and indicator of kinship behaviour and provide the cultural background of kin relationship, i.e. the meaning of some term designate the behavioral aspect of the person concerned. The father is called the janaka (genitor), janma-data (giver of birth) and mother as janani (genetrix) and janma-datri (giver of birth). Father is also said to be anna-data as he feeds the family member. These meaning gives the function and individual role played by the person within the family. Hence in the structure of Kinship system, terminology is one of the most important aspect
of study. Terminology is the complete kit of understanding the behaviour-cultural aspect of the people under study.

The life of every family is built upon the role played by the individual members. These individual members are none but the 'kin' of one another. When these role and function of the kin are joined together the cultural and behavioural pattern of the people under study can be understood. It has been noted that role relation of the same kin varies in the different types of family set-up.

In nuclear family whether of the Brahman or the Bagdi, the husband and the wife are the sole decision maker, socialiser and caretaker of the children. The earning member is the husband and the wife manages the total domestic affairs. In the joint family of the Brahman, the parents and the son are the major decision maker though various affairs of them are attended and looked after by rest of the family members. Thus network of individual relation is based on mutual co-operation, joint participation and above all on the power of adjustment. But in the nuclear family, independent self-styled life is spent. Among the Bagdi due to low economic status the joint family, to its completeness, is not found; nuclear family is more preponderant. The total role relation is based on the economy. They are usually daily bread earner whether staying in a nuclear family or in a joint family. Mostly each member is engaged in work to earn his or her own bread irrespective of age; so when a Bagdi becomes too old to earn his bread he begins to be unwanted and ultimately remains neglected in the family. Similarly among the Brahman, economy is seen to dictate the role relation. In the joint family when the son is financially well poised the father automatically lessen his authority and if he himself is not economically sound he often gets neglected.

On the contrary if the father is economically well settled he exercises his authority over his son and son's wife which often hamper
the harmony of life bringing into the family an atmosphere of dissatisfaction. On comparative analysis the Bagdi are definitely backward caste and joint family system is not in existence: whereas among the Brahman still both the types of family are in existence and the process of acculturation still continues. Moreover, among the Bagdi financial position is inherited through kinship i.e. he is still found to acquire the occupation of his fore-father except for the few who had come out to settle in other places in search of livelihood. But among the Brahman the urban environment and the exposure to modernisation have forced them to search better jobs. This attitude in life has resulted into failure of inheritance of financial position through kinship.

In socio-religious function so far as the case studies are concerned, there is no such distinction in terms of roles and function of the kin of the Brahman and the Bagdi. But among the Brahman the importance and responsibilities lie on the concerned kin and their own closed family members. That is to say that one can distinguish the fictitious kin from the actual kin in case of the Brahman whereas this difference is not possible among the Bagdi; the attitude again points out the coherent and simple way of life.

Among the Brahman all the rites are performed in connection with different rites of passage of life whereas among the Bagdi very few are in operation; this is due to their ignorance of Hindu sastras and low economic status which do not permit them to perform all these rites elaborately. It has been seen that Upanayan (sacred thread), Karnaved (ear piercing) are performed among the Brahman during the marriage.

In communal religious function among the Brahman 'kinsman' from the distant places visit at least once in a year; this type of visit is not possible for the Bagdi as they cannot afford the expenditure. Secondly, all the religious festival are not seen among
the Bagdi. Above all the community level functions offer the Bagdi some source of income, because on these occasions they play drum and often engage themselves in some small business.

The rural Brahman perform regular religious function more often than the urban Brahman. The reason behind this is that by such occasion they keep in touch with attiya, jnati and kutum who stay nearby. The urban Brahman are so busy that they often cannot spare themselves to take part on such occasions and some even do not bother to perform puja regularly. This type of attitude is due to the influence of modernisation and westernisation. The Bagdi too perform regular puja when his agnatic kin extend their cooperation. In general, the affinal and uterine kin do not participate; coincidently if they happen to be present there they also cooperate and visit each other.

The idea behind understanding the cultural background of kin relationship is to elicit information about the norms and values i.e. the core pattern of the cultural life. It has been seen that Samaskara are performed by an individual in various stages of life cycle. Kinship terminologies portray the cultural and behavioural pattern of the individual as well as society as a whole. It also depicts the role differentiation and represents the social position of the various kin. The Hindu kinship is a dharma ordered transformation. Here dharma is principle of life and not the religion. The performing of karma (performance) is the dharma for a Hindu. The performance of karma of an individual is rendered by kinship usages and the entire ideology functions through a family. A particular kin is related to or associated with a particular Samskar which gives the immediate and ultimate meaning of the total social network of the people under study. Hence there lies the importance of the cultural background of the kinship relationship in the family. However the Bagdi are seen to involve themselves in the above mentioned facts of life less frequently than the Brahman. This is due to their ignorance of the Hindu sastras and the relative economic instability which force them to be left behind, even if some of them are aware
Therefore the kinship system is the major organising principle, for categorising different kin in the society. An individual in the total family system identifies himself after puberty his personality begins to develop and then onward he starts socialising. He can respond as per norms and finds the values (structure of kinship system), expresses through language (kinship terminology) depicting the behavioural pattern (role analysis) and thus the cultural orientation of the people under study (Sarukar through rites of passage) can be understood. In the present discussion this total study has been made from relational analysis and the individual identity as a member of the family.

III

Examining the Hypotheses in Terms of Empirical Data:

The available data as summarized from all the chapters have supported the hypothesis—

i) Both the castes under study are Bengali Hindus. They speak colloquial Bengali and the Bagdi possess a dakhne (of south) accent. They have no language bar and can communicate with each other. This has helped them to come closer, reciprocate and acquire each other's way of living by which the social distances are minimised; keeping in mind the respective hierarchical position in the social scale. Wealth and education bring the people of lower caste to higher position among their own caste group but not in the hierarchical ladder. Therefore the caste status does not influence the kinship system of any community, by and large it depends on and is influenced by the language they speak. Secondly the kinship system depends on the total cultural milieu. Culture is understood from the locality and behaviour of person. The development of personality is through the traditional cultural pattern of the respective society to which
one is born. The kinship behaviour of the two communities under study is influenced by the Bengali cultural set in which they live. The respect shown to the elder, the joking pattern evident between two sets of kin group and the roles assigned to the kin like mother's brother, father's brother etc. are shared by other communities living in and around the Brahman and the Bagdi.

ii) In terms of urban and rural setting the kin terms will definitely differ. The rural people migrating to an urban area try to adapt the modified culture of urban setting where various communities are found to live close to one another. The Brahman of rural area as for example use the term chokra or chokri to designate a boy or girl but the same Brahman in urban setting would never use this term; rather he would refer them as chela and meye respectively. Then again some terms of the lower castes are never used by the upper caste. As for example the Bagdi use the term mag to refer his wife but the Brahman will never use such term. In fact the rural Brahman use the term paribar for his wife but an urban brahman uses bou, patni or stri to refer his wife.

iii) The respective position in the regional hierarchy has not affected the kinship term used but it has surely reflected upon the kinship behaviour and the role played by the different kin. This is due to the impact of the western education, economic stability, free mixing and the liberalized outlook among the higher caste and on the other hand the persisting illiteracy, economic instability and ignorance among the lower castes. As for example father of a Brahman nuclear and joint family is always looked after by his son even when the former does not earn. But this is not the case among the Bagdi and the father becomes a burden as soon as he superannuates and cannot earn further. This is because of the low economic status. The Bagdi are the daily bread earner and each member works for the family. But among the
Brahman parents are always cared and looked after even though one is unable to feed rest of the members in his family. This shows that economy controls the behavioural pattern of the society. This differential treatment meted out to the elder is due to their relative position in the regional and social order. The upper castes in general show respect to the parents even in their old age whereas lower caste like Bagdi are more concerned about the economic potentiality and capability of the parents or any elder member. To a Bagdi a geron father is a burden whereas to a Brahman the superannuated father is an asset to be revered. Secondly the role played by the respective kin varies among the lower Bagdi caste and upper caste, the Brahman. As for example the Brahman parents are very much concerned about their children's education since the early age but the Bagdi engage their children in work as soon as they are capable of. This is due to financial constraints and ignorance as well. Hence the role of a Bagdi parents differs from that of a Brahman.

iv) The Sanskritic norms and values referred as Samskar have certain impact on the kinship structure of a caste. It has been found that the Brahman follow more Samskars related different rites of passage than the Bagdi do. This may be because the Brahman occupy the topmost position in the caste hierarchy and being priestly scholars they have laid down certain norms and customs; therefore a Brahman is a strict follower of every Samskar. Secondly the Brahman themselves have prescribed certain rules and regulation to be followed by the lower caste. Hence the lower caste groups are often debarred from certain rites.

Thirdly the Bagdi are ignorant about the details of Hindu sastra. Fourthly the poor economic condition acts as a constraint. This is also seen among the Brahman of the rural
area. They cannot afford to perform all the Samskars in the sequence as laid down in the Hindu sastra, as a result they now perform Upanayan during marriage, Chudakaran and Karna-vedh during Upanayan, Namkaran during Annaprasan and so on. Among the urban Brahman however all the Samskars are performed at one time i.e. during marriage. This is due to paucity of time and due to pressure of modernisation. This ultimately affects the kin behaviour to a great extent. For example according to Brahminic ritual prescription the maternal uncle has to take an active role during the various life cycle rituals. But when among the urban Brahman all the rituals are performed at a time, the role of maternal uncle becomes disfunctional as the priest himself performs the functions by doing some expiatory rituals.

IV

Important Observation and Future Potentialities:

From the above delineation so far as the kinship terms of the Brahman and the Bagdi are concerned it emerges that there is no much of a difference in the structure of kinship system. The kinship behaviour of the two communities however show differential picture. As for example:

i) The Bagdi refer their wife as mag which is never used by the Brahman.

ii) The Bagdi refer their sister's husband as bonai but the Barhman refer them as jamaibabu.

iii) During marriage, birth and death the Pradhan of the Bagdi holds a vital position and with his consent rituals related to different rites of passage are performed; but among the
Barhman only the head of the family enjoys such position.

iv) The concept and usage of the term bancsa and goosthi are different between the Brahman and the Bagdi.

v) A Bagdi widow on her permanent return to parental house is then recognized as deiji by her father's family though she was a kutum after her marriage. This type of conversion of relationship is not seen among the Brahman.

However the two different settings i.e. the urban and rural locations offer some amazing differences. As for example:

i) Caste awareness is gradually weakening and is losing its importance in regularising or directing the social life. This phenomenon of liberalised attitude as seen in urban centres and in urbanised rural areas under study, has played a great role in continuing a peaceful life. This is further established by absence of any major dispute on the issue of narrow castism in the area under study.

ii) Secondly the barrier between the different castes tends to be loosened due to urban environment. This has made the different castes to come closer and thus social distance is getting reduced day by day. It has often been found that the lower Bagdi women are working as maid servant in the houses of the upper castes who once upon a time avoided the touches of the former. Now the Brahman under study dine along with other castes in various social occasions. It is not the caste but the social and economic status that matters now because the same Brahman are often found to refuse to mix with the persons of his own community whose socio-economic status is low.

iii) Inter caste marriage is quite frequently seen to occur between the Brahman and even with the Bagdi and other lower caste members.
iv) The rural Brahman often refer their wife as *paribar* which is not the case among the urban Brahman.

The Brahman occupying the highest position in the social ladder and being the bearer of the Great Tradition follow the Sanskritic terms and orthodox norms in their relationship with other kin. On the other hand the Bagdi occupying the bottom of the social scale and carrying the Folk Tradition sustain a number of kinship markers which are slightly distant from the Great Tradition.

Therefore my work though localised in the micro area in the southern part of West Bengal, reflects certain interesting features about kinship structure and kinship behaviour of the two communities who are placed at opposite poles in the regional social scale.

If the work is extended to other parts of India, we shall be able to build up a structural model of kinship system and thereby establish the role played by the geographical setting and the impact of Great and Little Tradition in the perpetuation of certain types of kinship system.