



Birbhum's Ramchandrapur Mouza in the Light of Biodiversity

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Abstract

Ramchandrapur: A Significant Mouza in Birbhum District of West Bengal. This mouza comprises two villages, Ghuskira and Ramchandrapur. The Sahibganj Loop Line runs through this mouza, with Ghuskira in the east and Ramchandrapur in the west. This region exemplifies communal harmony, with Hindus and Muslims living side by side and sharing cultural practices. The diversity within the Hindu community and the presence of Muslims from various sects and professions contribute to a vibrant and multifaceted environment. Ramchandrapur's uniqueness lies not only in its religious diversity but also in its rich biodiversity, including varied flora, fauna, and agricultural practices. The socio-cultural life in this mouza is noteworthy for its diversity. Historically, the mouza is associated with several landlord families and their tales of rise and fall. Numerous myths and legends are tied to the religious history of this area. However, with the urban migration of affluent families, the traditional rural culture has eroded and been replaced by a hybrid culture blending rural and urban influences. Economic pressures and the need to keep up with market-oriented demands have increased technological dependency among residents. This has also led to greater use of chemicals in agriculture. Arable lands have been converted into homesteads, large-scale deforestation has occurred, and jungles have disappeared. Practices such as burning fields after harvest have significantly worsened pollution levels. The focus on high yields has resulted in the loss of flavorful crops. Whether it's rice cultivation or fish farming, the use of chemicals has created challenges for local livelihoods.

Keywords: ramchandrapur, biodiversity, mouza, landlords, culture

Introduction

India is one of the leading hyperdiversity countries in the world. Indian culture has occupied a unique place in court of the world for a long time because of the diversity in the characteristics of plants, animals and the entire living world due to geographical diversity. Due to the attraction of this unique feature, people from many countries of the entire world have migrated to this country for good and bad purposes. Foreign imperialist, consumerist and self-interested separatists, the geographical range of this country has been greatly reduced, many species of the living world have become extinct. The natural balance is about to be destroyed; which is making the time of mankind's under water journey increasingly imminent. The rural people of the country have joined themselves in this destruction without caring

about the native traditions. An example of this can be found in Ramchandrapur Mouza of Murarai police station area under Birbhum district.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research paper is to highlight the evolution of the biodiversity of Ramchandrapur Mouza, along with identifying which landlords exercised authority over the area and how the ownership of the zamindari (landlord estates) changed over time. Additionally, this dissertation aims to explore how the departure of the elite class led to the degradation of the cultural heritage of Ramchandrapur Mouza and how urban cultural influences brought about a fundamental transformation in the area's culture.



Hypothesis

Since the era of zamindari governance, Ramchandrapur Mouza has witnessed various changes. One landlord after another administered the area. Some landlord families became completely destitute. With the advent of modernity, there have been significant changes in the local culture and biodiversity. Due to the shortsightedness of human society, the livelihood of the population has faced crises.

Methodology

This research dissertation primarily relied on primary and secondary sources for composition. In this regard, oral materials have played a particularly important role. The purpose of this dissertation is not merely to provide some information but to conduct a descriptive analysis of the socio-economic and religious culture of the discussed field. Therefore, the qualitative method has been chosen as the methodological approach to explore possible answers to the research questions.

Discussion

Ramchandrapur is an ancient village adjacent to the Paniyara, Bhadadurpur, kestara etc. Under Murarai Gram Panchayat. 3.5 km south of Murarai Block Office. Ramchandrapur mouza has been formed with these two villages of Guskira and Ramchandrapur located in this distance. The Sahebgunj loop line running north- South separates the two villages. To the east of this railway line is Ghuskira village and to the west is Ramchandrapur. Once this mouza was Hindu dominated, but now Hindus of various castes and Muslim communities live in this mouza. Ramchandrapur mouza is a cradle of diverse culture with Bramhin para, Naldighi para, Dom para, Sahu para, Taluha para, Ravidas para, Kalitala para, Haji para, Piada para, Hazra para etc. 19 ponds and various types of land have also given prominence to the economic culture of the area. The tiny Pagla river flows through this mouza. This river originates from Rambani in Gopikanda block of present Dumka district of Jharkhand and joins Bhagirathi in Murshidabad district.¹ Its crazy form is seen only during monsoons. At other times the river is consumed by drought. Many fishermen depends on this river for their livelihood during monsoon.

The area was once ruled by Mahespur royal family of Sultanabad.² The place named 'Rajbari' north of Ramchandrapur village is proof of that.³ There was once a settlement here. Ravi Sahu is a resident of Ghuskira village. He started the construction of a Shiv-Kali temple at this place. A stone block is worshiped here as Goddess Kali since many years.⁴ An ancient Shiv Linga is also here. Also sometimes the zamindar Raja Udaynarayan of Rajshahi, sometimes the Charushila estate of Noanagar Pargana's, sometimes the family of zamindar Paresch Sarkar of Ramchandrapur and the family of Kismat Ali of Ghuskira, the family of Ramdas Sen of Bahadurpur, the Ghoshal family of Murshidabad Khagra have dominated this area.⁵ Incidentally, it should be noted that the Sarkar Zamindar of Ramchandrapur was the main zamindar of this area. Zamindar Paresch sarkar being childless, he adopted Durgaprasanna Mukherjee of Maluti, a 'Temple village' of Jharkhand. Zamindar Paresch Sarkar handed over his zamindari to Durgaprasanna Mukherjee. Durgaprasanna replaced his title 'Mukherjee' with the title 'Sarkar'; Some time after receiving the zamindari, Durgaprasanna brought his three brothers to Ramchandrapur and he managed the zamindari work about 1200 bigha as with great efficiency. Durgaprasanna had four children. They were Upendra, Baidyanath, Guruprasanna and Dulal Chandra respectively. Among them Upendra Sarkar looked after the work of zamindari seresta.⁶ At this time every year a Monk from Benaras came to his house and with his constant encouragement Durgaprasanna went on a pilgrimage to northern India. Before leaving for the pilgrimage, he explained to his brothers responsibility of delivering the revenue to the Suri Collectorate on time. But his brothers did not fulfill that responsibility. Despite the request of Durgaprasanna's wife, they did not deliver the revenue to the Suri Collectorate on the specified day. As a result, the British government announced the day of his zamindari sale by beating drums in the villages of the area. ⁸ Anna's of this zamindari was bought by Ramada's family of Murshidabad. Out of the remaining 8 annas of Zamindari were bought by the family of Kismat Ali of Ghuskira and 4 Anna's of property were bought by the family of Panchubala Devi, the successor of the Ghoshal



family of Berhampore. The incident took place during Durgaprasanna stay at the Banaras, on the day he returned from the Tirtha Darshan, one of their employees went to fetch him from Murarai railway station. Durgaprasanna kept getting news of his zamindari from the servant while returning from Murarai Station by bullock cart. As instructed by the family, the employee did not want to raise the issue of zamindari auction, but the employee could not control his speech due to one another questions of the Zamindarbabu, Durgaprasanna suffered a heart attack in the bullock cart and died.⁷

After the zamindari left, Durgaprasanna's sons moved to Sultanpur a Murarai Block- 1 village and settled down. After the auction, Durgaprasanna's successors dropped their 'Sarkar' title and resumed the use of their ancestrail title of 'Mukherjee'. Among Durgaprasanna's four sons, Baidyanath and Guruprasanna took up jobs in the police department. After retirement Baidyanath returned to Sultanpur. As Guruprasanna got involved in some scandalous activities, he moved from his workplace Jalpaiguri to Sultanpur and this time he affidavit in the Rampurhat court and changed his title from 'Mukherjee' to 'Banerjee'. His successors still use the title 'Banerjee'. Upendra Mukherjee lived in Sultanpur house. And Dulal chandra Mukherjee passed medical practitioner degree from Banaras and practice in Sultanpur. Later, at the request of zamindar Harinath Biswas of Birahimpur, Upendra Mukherjee settled permanently in Khanpur to serve as priest Shiv temple that established by Biswas family of Birhaimpur.⁸ Later, Harinath Biswas appointed Panchanan Mukherjee of Dakshin Mahurapur to officiate at the Shiv temple to protect his consort's Ahead. At present his son Milan Mukherjee is the worshiper of the said temple. ⁹ It should be noted here that Durgaprasanna's brother stayed in Ramchandrapur.

The presence sufficient ponds and rivers has played a special role in the agricultural production of this area. Ramchandrapur Mouza is a notable name in the cultivation of Swarna, CM, Maury khasa, Gobindavog, Badshavog etc. Varieties of rice. The production of various vegetables, Mustards, Wheat, Kesari, kalamotor, chickpeas etc. Also deserves special mention. Irrigation through submersibles

is widely used there for summer Corp production without keeping in mind the future water crisis. Various varaities of fish seedlings are supplied from this mouza to Murarai and far away. Nearly 200 years old Neem and pakur trees, 100 year old Banyan trees and palm trees are still standings today as witness of a lot of history. Apart from this, acacia, Palm and arjun trees are also seen. Cows, Buffaloes, goats, ducks, Hen etc, along with horses, sheep, dogs etc. Various migratory birds can seen along with crows, pigeons, Shalom's, magpies etc. But their number is gradually decreasing. Foxes tortoises exits in some parts of the mouza.¹⁰

Ramchandrapur Mouza, the seat of culture of Hindu-Muslim harmony, has also set an example in the field of education. In this context, it may be noted that during the colonial rule, a toll was opened for the purpose of dedicating the children of Suju Sk in Ghuskira village during pre- school stage.¹¹ At present seven Anganwadi centre in this mouza provide education through two primary schools. One Integrated Child Development Centre (S.S.K.) and one Secondary Education Center (M.S.K.). A sub health centre is a government initiative to provide health services to the community. A club named 'Bandhav Samity' is associated with cultural and social activities. There is a sports field in Murarai Thana. This ground is particularly notable in the history of the sport. Formerly famaous footballers of Birbhum district, Kamaruddin, Soharab Ali, have come up from this ground. Every year, a large scale cricket competition is organized in this field. Many people from Ghuskira and Ramchandrapur were or are occupying high positions in various department of government administration. Local residents live comfortably through jobs, business and agriculture. With the help of the government, mud houses are gradually being built. Bamboo Julia, Sieves made by Dom families of the area and palm leaf mats and palm leaf mats made by tribal community are in considerable demand in the local markets.¹²

The religious culture of Ramchandrapur mouza deserve special mention. One Durga Temple, three Kali temples, two Jagaddhatri temples, two Shiv temples, one Gram Devata Tala, two Jumma Mosques, two Waqtia Mosques and four Pir Shrines indicate the regular worship. Basantipuja and the fair



around it started 12-13 years in the Durga temple established by Sarkar family of Brahmin para. There is an ancient broken Narayan Mondir in this neighborhood the temple.

There is shmashankali of Adinath Mukherjee's family and dakshinkali than of Nityagopal Mukherjee's family. The worship of Bhatam Kali has started in this neighbourhood since 1984. Kalimata is so named because this pooja started suddenly. On Dolpurnima the Hindu community of Ramchandrapur mouza builds an idol Radhakrishnan in Naldighipara. On the last day of the month of Boishakh, a Bhaktamela is held in the area around a ancient five faced Shivlinga in the Brahmin neighbourhoods. Around 130 to 140 years ago, Dipend halder found this five faced Shivlinga while fishing in the Pagla river and later handed it over to several individuals including Pinakinath Mukhee a resident of ramchandrapur village. At this time Pinakinath Mukherjee donate 5 shatak of land in a part of his Basat Bhiti and established this panchamukhi shivlinga at that place.¹³ It is said that many Hindu temples and idols in this area were vandalised during the Santal rebellion in 1855 to 1956. It was then that the five faced shivlinga was lifted from a temple by the rebels and throwing into the pagla river. According to the information giving by the elders of the village. Banabrata festival is celebrated here since the time of the establishment of this Shivlinga in Ramchandrapur village. From that time this festival is celebrated on the last day of the month of Boishakh every year and the fair is held on the next day that is 1st Jaishthya. This fair is locally known as Bhakto Mela. People farm far and wide folk to this bhaktamela in Ramchandrapur every year during the Navanna, the frenzy in the public can be noticed specially around the Karttik Puja in Ramchandrapur. The worship of Saraswati and other parvans of Hinduism are also observed with devotion by the Hindu community of this mouja. Ghuskira village under this mouza is now Muslim dominated Mosque, Eidgah, Pir Shrine etc. Are located in this part. The Muslim community here observes every festival with great purity and devotion. The sincere participation and cooperation of Hindu- Muslim in each other's religious festivals is particularly noticeable in this area. From this

example it can be said that there is an atmosphere of Hindu Muslim harmony in Ramchandrapur mouja.

It can be said best on the information that emerged in the process of research based on the mouja, like other mouzas under Murarai Gram Panchayat, due to the ignorance of the residence of Ramchandrapur mauja on the one hand their past traditions and rural cultural culture and about to be lost on the one hand, the biodiversity of the area is facing a crisis. Incidentally it should be noted that once all the rich family who developed the traditional culture of this mouja, most of them left the village and move to other places. The traditional culture of the villages has disappeared in many cases. In its place, a strange mixed culture has taken place in the mix of rural and urban culture. This culture assimilation seems to have occurred due to the ease of communication and the touch of modern mechanization. In order to keep up with the market-oriented economy, technology depends has increased among the local population as well as the use of chemicals on agriculture land. Moreover, arable land has been converted into Bhiti to accommodate the captive population. A large amount of indiscriminate felling of trees has been done. The forest has been destroyed. Also after harvesting the tendency to set fire to land is observed at a large rate. This has resulted in habitat loss biodiversity loss, biodiversity loss and infertility. Many species of animals and birds have lost their shelter. Sita only hoping for a high yield, the production of magic rice like Sita balam stopped in the hope of higher yield. There is increasing interest in hybrid or hybrid crop production. Hybrid fish farming is also worth mentioning. Many seasonal flowers like Shiuli, Champa, Java, Jasmine rose etc. Are cultivated in tubs in the courtyards of many houses or on the roofs of buildings. Due to the use of more and more chemicals in the hope of more production, harmful insect are dying along with many beneficial insects. As a result the production capacity of the lands is gradually decreasing. The natural balance is being destroyed. Due to the extensive use of submersibles in farming, it can be emphasized the water crisis in the area will become Severe in the future.



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