

This sounds reasonable. Therefore, the analysis of population based on the figures of 1855 in terms of density of population, religious composition, the percentage of agricultural population and its religious composition should be close to the realities of the 1840s. Significantly, the area under study gets divided into three distinct zones on the basis of human resources - the five eastern districts having the highest density of population and the four western districts having the lowest. Further analysis of the population of these three sub-regions is based on the figures of 1881. It may be a little further removed from the realities of the 1840s. Strictly speaking, the study of demography tends to relate to the end of the period under study.

Similarly, for the chapter on land and its cultivation the contemporary and near contemporary evidence used by the author relates very largely to the 1830s and the 1840s. The conclusion drawn by the author is nevertheless significant that the area under cultivation increased during the early nineteenth century to make the situation comparable with the state of cultivation at its best under the Mughals. However, there was no change in agricultural technology or the patterns of agricultural production.

The chapter in which the use of contemporary evidence is more prominent is the one on the Intermediary *Zamin-*

*dars*. The *chaudharis* and *muqaddams* constituted the most important component of the intermediaries. Towards the end of the period, the *ijaradars* were becoming increasingly important. The author emphasizes that 'the adoption of the system of *ijara* did not hamper the concern of the state about the welfare of the peasantry'.

The intermediaries were encouraged to extend cultivation. Rewards in cash or in terms of revenue-free land served as incentive. The religious personages or institutions, too, were given wasteland by way of *dharmarth* to bring it under cultivation. The extension of cultivation was closely linked with the concern of the state for revenues. All those who could be useful in extending cultivation, and thereby increasing the revenue were protected by the state. Hardly any distinction was made between the large and small proprietors and tenant-cultivators or the intermediaries and the persons who were ready to invest their capital or labour in bringing more and more land under cultivation. The number of actual cultivators and peasant proprietors increased in this process. In certain areas, the non-cultivating investors acquired proprietary rights in land.

The last chapter relates to transition from the Sikh to the British Raj. In fact, this could be an appropriate title for the book as a whole. The system of *jagirdari*,

which was prevalent earlier, was abolished by the British. The social and economic basis of the former *jagirdars* and other intermediaries was gradually eroded by the policies of a new state. But the new state created its own intermediaries in the form of *zaildars* and *lambardars*. The British administrators brought about changes in the agrarian society by affecting all its three major sections : the proprietors, the tenants, and the intermediaries. The new rulers did not create proprietary rights but they did make the existing proprietary rights rather absolute. In their quest for simplification and rationalization, the British "compressed the existing multiple gradations in rural society into three broad categories of landlord, tenant and labourers".

As observed at the outset, Radha Sharma's study of the peasantry in the core area of the Punjab during the early nineteenth century is based on solid empirical evidence which is analysed in detail for understanding the position of the various elements connected with agrarian production in the context of state policies. Her findings appear to be sound and important. The book is a valuable addition to the literature on agrarian economy of the Punjab.

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## The Ghosts and Monsters of India

Prof. N.N. Bhattacharyya's book *Indian Demonology* gives a detailed description of the various kinds of celestial, aerial and terrestrial demons and demonical beings associated with India's ancient myths and legends. Since there is no clear-cut demarcation between different kinds of demons and spirits, they are generally termed as demons. In fact, Indian demonology is a vast and complex subject, for India has no less than three hundred surviving tribes, each with its own mythology of gods, demons and spirits which have been subjected under diverse historical

conditions to the processes of social and religio-cultural transformation. Those who reached the high status through an upward journey and thus received a proximity with the Sanskrit culture experienced a modification of their original tribal demonology onto which Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain elements are also grafted. The Vedas contain various classes of demons which have characterized the so called inverted pantheon through the ages. These at the same time contain a number of demons who had attained celebrity in the epics, the Puranas and in the later Buddhist

- Indian Demonology, The Inverted Pantheon
- by N.N. Bhattacharyya
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and Jain literature. However, in the Vedas demonology is basically anthropomorphic and the characters were recruited from the gods of alien countries, races and religions together with the indige-nous hostile tribes, natural phenomena, and the popular world of spirits.

In the demoniacal hierarchy, the Vedas as well as the subsequent literature attributed the highest rank to the 'Asuras'. The 'Raksasas' and other classes of demons were assigned to the lower ranks because they represented the indigenous non-vedic cultures at a

time when the 'Asuras' had an Aryan lineage. The original term 'raksa' from which 'Raksasa' was derived denotes a pretector, obviously of the indigenous beliefs, cults and rituals. That is the reason why they were portrayed as destroyers of Vedic sacrifices. However, during a later stage they imbibed much of the Vedic culture and had an upward mobility in the hierarchy of the demons even to have matrimonial alliances with the 'Asuras'. The third in the hierarchy were the 'Pisacas'. The 'Pisacas', though associated with the 'Raksasas' and often identified with them, certainly belonged to an inferior category owing to their remoteness from the Aryan Brahmanical culture. The most well known class of the evil spirits and of course the most dreaded is that of ghosts of human beings, the 'Bhutas'. They had regular references in the Vedic texts. In contradistinction to fiends or non-human spirits these were malignant spirits of men who for various reasons were hostile to the human race. The 'Bhutas' originated from the souls of those who had died untimely or had violent deaths or had been deformed, idiotic or insane or who had been robbers, notorious evil-doers or dreaded for cruelty. In modern usage the term had come to denote a malevolent spirit of the dead but this is palpably not its early meaning, particularly during the Rgvedic period. 'Pretas' were the souls-in-waiting and they also, like the 'Bhutas' roamed about. They were termed as vagabonds of the other world who had a prospect of a rebirth in this world. The 'Bhutas', on the other hand, had no future prospect; once a 'Bhuta', always a 'Bhuta'. In the Vedic demonology one thing is important: while the concept of the 'Pretas' was based on speculations with regard to the spirits of the dead and that of the 'Bhutas' of the Vedas does not account with their later characteristics, the 'Asuras' and the 'Pisacas' had actual bases.

The figures of the Buddhist and Jain demonology collected at random from the Vedic and popular sources are indefinite in outline and vague in character. Buddhism in fact required several demons and spirits to prove its

superiority as also the greatness of its founder. The Buddhist texts convey the idea that these evil beings causing harm to mankind were originally hostile to the Buddha, but after having come in touch with him underwent a complete transformation. In Buddhism also the 'Asuras' had a special place. Then came the 'Daityas', the 'Raksasas', the 'Gandharvas', the 'Yaksas', the 'Kumbhandas', the 'Apsarases' and others. The 'Nagas' or 'Mahogras', snake-like or dragon-like beings resembling clouds, had a really important role in the entire Buddhist demonology. There was also the concept of 'Maras' the Personification of evil principle and temper of man who presented, according to the author, an analogy to the Biblical Satan. 'Mara' is manifestly a form of 'Yama', the God of death. There are many Tantric rites and concepts associated with the names of 'Bhutas', 'Pretas', 'Pisacas' and other demonic beings, though in Buddhism these were all mental creations. In the elaborate Buddhist mythology the early conceptions of the cosmos, heavens and hells, gods and goddesses, semi-divine beings, demons and spirits had all been retained and the omniscient and omnipotent Buddha was projected over and above all of them. The demons and spirits were not classed in any definite systematic order in the Buddhist texts. Many of them, unlike in the Vedic texts, were good genii and friendly to their human votaries, the others been evil with the development of the Mahayana and its offshoots new dimensions were added to the Buddhist demonology. The 'Yaksas' had a special place in the Buddhist demonology. In some places they are described as humanized 'Pretas' or departed souls, while some other Buddhist texts described them as equal to gods. So the Yaksas were the semi-divine beings with supernatural power that brought good or bad fortune to people. The 'Yaksas' of the highest category were very near gods, while those of the lowest, possessed horrific and uncanny qualities. They were more active during the night and were carnivorous. They resembled the ghosts. Though the 'Asuras' were 'Older

Devas', the Buddhist mythology generally saw them as a class of evil beings, usually in conflict with the Devas, but always on a higher pedestal than the 'Pisacas', 'Yaksas' and 'Raksasas'. In the Milinda-panho, the Asuras were called 'Danavas' because they were the descendants of 'Danu'. The 'Asura' was sometimes described as one of the four evil destinies; elsewhere he was called 'Bibhaccha', awful and vile. The mythology of the Mahayana Buddhists is different from that of the Hinayana and the Vajrayana and some changes in the character of the demons and spirits are also witnessed. With the introduction of Mahayana in Tibet certain demons and spirits had lost their malignancy and in a purified nature they became objects of meditation and worship as deities.

Like the Buddha, the Jinas or Tirthankaras also undertook to reform the demons and spirits, destroying their evil propensities and re-employing them in good works. As a reward for their services to the Jinas, the converted demons and spirits were raised to the rank of gods. Those who had unflinching devotion to the creed were the companions of the Jinas, particularly of the Lord Mahavira whose entourage consisted not only of the Vedic gods but of the 'Asuras', 'Raksasas', 'Yaksas', 'Nagas' and others. Like the Buddhists, the Tirthankaras also had taken up the noble task of reforming the demons and the spirits, and re-employed them in good works. They also, in the process, were raised to the rank of the gods. In Jainism, gods, angels, men, demons and spirits, and even animals were conditioned by the fetters of their Karma, according to which a demon might be reborn as a god, and a god, a demon. The good gods are described as 'Daivi', and 'Asuri', while the evil ones are known as 'Kudevas' or 'Kadamaras'. Demons and ghosts were also indicated by the term 'Kudeva'. Details of the 'Raksasas', 'Vidyadharas', 'Pisacas', 'Asuras', 'Yaksas' and 'Nagas' are found in the Prakrit narrative literature. The 'Bhutas' had an interesting role and the exorcists were supposed to be possessed by them. The 'Bhutas' were invoked to

avert terrible cyclones and were regarded as one class of 'vyantara' gods. In most cases they were mentioned along with the 'Yaksas', 'Raksasas' and 'Pisacas'. The Puranic writers were hostile to Buddhism and Jainism. In order to malign them they tried to utilize the popular beliefs and sentiments regarding the demons and spirits. The epics were the main sources of Puranic demonology. Epic tales pertaining to the fights between the gods and the demons were elaborated and fabricated in the Puranas. Though the gods were defeated many times by the 'Asuras' they did not die because they were supposed to have drunk 'amrita', the

nectar of immortality which was in their possession only. In the Puranic demonology, the greatest importance had been attached to the demons of the 'Asura' category. The 'Raksasas' were less prominent. In fact, with the destruction of Ravana, 'Raksasas' began to receive diminishing importance. Most of the legends about the conflict between the gods and the demons as found in the Hari, Vishnu and Matsyas were basically Vaisnavite, where Visnu appeared to be the saviour of gods. The 'Bhutas' and 'Pisacas' were described in the Vayu. The 'Pisacas' were born of Kapisa. In the Puranas the demons and the spirits had seldom good qualities, and

unlike in the Buddhist and Jaina texts, they always remained evil natured.

Bhattacharyya, in fact, has come out with a wonderful and detailed description of the demons and evil spirits as perceived in our ancient texts. Throughout the work he has made a comparative study too of the Vedic, Buddhist, Jaina and Puranic concepts of these supernatural beings. The sources are mostly primary in nature and the opinions, not partial. The world of Indology and demonology at the same time is going to be enriched with this work in terms of the study and research on them.

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## A Dictionary of Moral Concepts in Gandhi

In the technical sense of the term Gandhi was not a philosopher but he was a socio-political genius of action of the 20th century. A genius is a man of extraordinary intellect who discerns the secrets of human life and determines purpose of human life. He is not a slave of traditions; he is their creator. He is not a man of the age, but of ages. Gandhi had these traits in his personality. He was much influenced by the *Bhagavadgita*. According to him it mirrors the philosophical spirit of the Vedic and the Vedantic Indian lore. Many thinkers of India interpreted it in their own ways. However, they only interpreted ancient Indian thought without taking cognizance of the fact that social and political conditions might have changed in the Indian tradition. The dynamic nature of tradition was not appreciated in accordance with the changed contemporaneous social realities.

In the medieval times the *Gita* had a negative impact on the Indian masses. The medieval ages developed an ascetic and pessimistic philosophy of world negation and life negation. The tendency of asceticism negated social realities. People withdrew from struggle in the social life which is the very spirit of the teachings of the *Gita*. They reneged on a dynamic view of life and closed their

eyes towards stark responsibilities of social life. This trend continued in the modern times as well. Gandhi tried to strike a balance between theory and practice which is the quintessence of the doctrine of *karma-yoga* in the *Gita*. In the medieval Bhakti movement the *bhaktas* and the Sikh Gurus dotted the 'i' and Mahatma Gandhi in modern times crossed the 't'. All of them tried to reconcile theory and praxis as existentialist voluntarist thinkers and social reformers. Gandhi's contribution lies in reinterpreting the *Gita* in the context of India's twentieth century socio-political milieu.

He was an actor in the drama of freedom struggle of India and not a spectator. He had it in his mind to translate his ideas into living reality. For this and in view he started his experiments with 'truth' in South Africa and finally continued the exercise on the soil of his motherland (India). He continued his efforts till he succeeded in freeing his motherland from the clutches of the British colonial rule. The British ruled over us due to weak will power of the Indians. The Indians could not peep into the mischievous designs of the British. They were victims of the British policy of "divide and rule". They were never united to give a collective fight to the

British colonizers. They could not transcend their narrow grooves of selfishness.

The original contribution of Mahatma Gandhi lies in applying the key tenets of the classical scripture to the contemporaneous socio-political scenario of the twentieth century India. He was successful in infusing the spirit of fearlessness into the castrated, weak and emaciated will of the Indian masses. He left no stone unturned to infuse life and invincible will in the freedom movement to achieve the target of independence of India. At last his struggle was crowned with success on 15 August 1947 when the English were forced to quit India forever.

His socio-political ideology is reflected in his seminal slim booklet *Hind Swaraj* or *Self Rule of India*. The underlying idea in *Hind Swaraj* is that the self-rule is possible only if people of India are strong-willed. In order to come out of the cocoon of *akrasia* he reinterpreted the voluntaristic ancient Indian concept of *ahimsa* (non-violence) which was used by Lord Buddha about 2500 years ago. His method of non-violence is a weapon of the strong-willed person. For Mahatma Gandhi Kurukshetra is not the battlefield in the present Haryana state of India. It is human body which is the

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