

Entrepreneurial Apathy of Bengali Bhadrakalok of Nineteenth Century Bengal and its Social Impact

Radhakrishna Kar

Research Scholar, Jharkhand Rai University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

ABSTRACT

During the period of British Raj in the 18th and 19th centuries a group of social elite class people were arose in Bengal region in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent and had a great influence on the society. As they are the “gentlefolk” of the society they think of themselves as a cultured and educated group above the peasantry and working class. These Bengali bhadrakalok were largely carried out and took part in the Bengal Renaissance. Under the influence of western culture and education these people were much more interested in clerical job than business. By adopting the western education and culture they wanted to hold an honorable position in the society. Aim of this study is that by exploring the mentality of the Bengalis towards entrepreneurship, it will, at least aware the Bengali youth who are heavily dependent on fixed salaried jobs.

KEYWORDS: entrepreneurship, bhadrakalok, culture, education, society

INTRODUCTION

A group of “gentlefolk” who think about themselves as cultured and educated group arose in the scenario of Bengal region during the eighteenth and nineteenth century under British Raj. These groups of people were greatly influenced by the western culture and education and became the bhadrakalok of the society. Bhabanicharan Bandhopadhyay (1787-1848) listed three kinds of bhadrakalok in ‘Kalikata Kamalalaya’. The first groups are those who are in ‘high office’, that is, are banians or dewans to the British. The second are the middle class or ‘madhyabitta’, though they are not rich but comfortable. The third are the ‘poor but bhadrakalok’ group who work as accountants or sarkars and are accountable on a daily basis to humiliating treatment by dewans.¹

Impact of western culture on Bengali bhadrakalok:

In relation to the introduction of the English language, Macaulay in his minute has clearly stated that the wealth of knowledge in the English language was much greater than the other languages on this world. Not only this, he also mentioned that for the Indians, English was the language of their ruler, the upper class people and even it was the main communicative language for trade and commerce In his opinion.

"Nor is this all, in India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the

¹ Bandhopadhyaya, Bhabanicharan, ‘Kalikata Kamalalaya’, ed. Bishnu Basu, Calcutta, 1986, p.7.

How to cite this paper: Radhakrishna Kar "Entrepreneurial Apathy of Bengali Bhadrakalok of Nineteenth Century Bengal and its Social Impact"

Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-5 | Issue-2, February 2021, pp.95-98, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd38361.pdf



Copyright © 2021 by author(s) and International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development Journal. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



seats of Government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East... whether we look at the intrinsic value of our literature, or at the particular situation of this country, We shall see the strongest reason to think that, of all foreign tongues, the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects"²

Since the establishment of the Hindu College in 1817, the English educated Bengali middle class was created in the society. Children from the upper-middle class aristocratic Hindu family got the chance for their higher studies in Hindu College Macaulay wanted to create interpreters English educated class of persons who were Indian in colour and blood, but English in taste. In opinions, in morals and in intellect who worked as a interpreters between the British rulers and the millions of Indian common people whom they govern. To govern the people of India for a long period of time it was a challenge for the British ruler to create English educated middle class interpreters who will naturally cling to them. The European trading companies employed as compradors Brahmins and kayasthas as well as members of the indigenous trading and artisan castes Subarnabaniks, Gandhabaniks, Tantubaniks and Telis during the first half of the nineteenth century. We already observed that these compradors or banians earned huge money and become prosperous in their life. But in the second half of the nineteenth century we observed that as the economics of the British Empire attained its maturity they began to eliminate

² Ghosh, Binoy, ‘Banglar Samajik Itihaser Dhara’, p-196

these banians from modern business. Thus, the indigenous Bengali elite wanted to secure their future by investing their money on land business. The permanent settlement offered opportunities for investment in landed estates and become the land lord or Zamindars. And for them this was the hallmark of their social status. They provoked with the cunning plan of the British rulers and the indigenous Bengali elite turned its back on business and left modern industry and international commerce in Calcutta to European. The newly created Zamindars wanted to secure the life of their next generation through administrative professional and intellectual occupations. On the basis of their newly acquired English education the colonial rule of the British Government directly or indirectly made the Bengalis overwhelmingly dependent on service clerical jobs, the chakri.

Becoming a university graduate and getting a clerical job was the ultimate goal of life of the Bengali youth. The economic crises involving the collapse of the agency houses and the union Bank, combined with the infusion of British finance capital, had deleterious effects on Bengali entrepreneurs and many of them forfeited their fortunes. On the other hand the permanent settlement of 1793, had inaugurated a new order of land holding that would have profound implications for the one-time dewans and banians. The profitability of Zamindari and the decreasing opportunities for commerce in the urban areas led the more astute leading Bengali families of Calcutta to become renters on a substantial scale. The Bengali entrepreneurs shifted their attention from urban based trade and commerce and commodity production to other alternative commercial ventures like acquiring Zamindari property which they considered comparatively safe for investment and supplement their Zamindari income by undertaking various urban professions. Gradually this become the fashion of the Bengali middle-classes gentleman, the bhadraloks concentrated their attention on educating their wards in English schools so that they could get an employment in the British ... commercial firms or start an independent profession like that of law which also required English education. So the foundation of the Hindu College as we already mention in 1817 had played a vital role for the production of successive batches of highly educated youth who were much more interested in getting employment in administration, education and legal profession than taking up business as a career though some of them came from successful business families of Kolkata and its suburbs. Even the leading business families of the nineteenth century Bengal were worried not about the revival of their business tradition but for future of education of their wards. To the Bengali bhadraloks education become a kind of ritual. The attachment of the Bengali bhadraloks to education stood for an attitude that tended to infiltrate downwards, notably in to some higher artisan castes and well to do peasants.³

In the field of education, achievement usually extends to the profession. During the nineteenth century money and education were interrelated. Education was dependent on money and money was dependent on acquired education through various professions. The English educated Bengali bhadraloks wanted to develop their social status through education and the acquired money from the clerical

³ Sinha, Pradip, Social Changes, in N.K.Sinha(ed), The History of Bengal, 1757- 1905, 2nd edition, University of Calcutta, pp-384-426.

professions. To maintain this trends of the bhadralok mentality the English education become a matter of attraction. The aim was like English education - chakri - money - status. Mainly in the nineteenth century the Bengali educated middle class intellectual were emerged in the society. The influenced and number of their classes increased as a result of the spread of English education and modern education. In the early nineteenth century the opportunity of English education was limited within the upper class rich families of Bengal. For example Dev family of Sovabazer, Two Dutta families of Hatkhola in Rambagan, Tagore family of Jorasanko, Singha family, Singha family of Paikpara, Mullick family, Laha family, Seal family etc. All these wealthy rich families in the nineteenth century in succession dominated the educated intellectual class of Bengal society. In the descent they acquired the bhadralok image in their life. The ancestors of these families of Bengal acquired a huge capital through their various professions and now wanted to invest these capitals for the well being of their next generation. So through money and education they acquired the higher and elite position in the society. This education policy followed until about the middle of the nineteenth century. Then after the establishment of Calcutta University in 1857 the scope to acquire English education was opened for the common middle class people. so what we understand as modern educated Bengali middle class and intellectual class developed from the second half of the nineteenth century. In the Somprakash Patrika (1881 - 1882) the editor discussed why the Bengali was attracted towards English education. In that time the parents of our country wanted to educate their child only to acquire a job. The main goal of their life was to get a job under the British Government. The people of our country never thought that the education of their children would help to benefit the country or they never gave their free opinion for the well being of the country. Their only aim was to get a clerical job under the Government and to be well established in the society as a bhadralok. In every aspect of their life they got respect for their Chakri. Society, parents, and guardians everybody praised them for their job only. While earning a lot of money from other than the Chakri, but did not get that kind of respect or position in the society. If any British employer praised their employee then the employee thought that their life was blessed. The highest honor in society was for those who hold high positions in Chakri and who got a huge salary from their job. They hold that bhadralok image perfectly in the society. But the society did not appreciate those people who engaged themselves for the benefit of their own country or who earned more from their individual free business. The parents of the bhadralok also used to feel honoured for the high position of their children⁸. So, during the British colonized period chaki was become the strongest elevator for social status among the Bengali bhadralok. As Chakri got them a high standard image with in the family and society so the Bengali were no longer wanted to engaged themselves in any laborious worker any independent work. Throughout their life they became able to maintain their luxurious life because of their job. So, the young educated Bengalis were become job-dependent, only to get the social status and honor in their life. Even the Bengali youth from the artizen class also wanted to educated themselves in the western culture. After completing their education they also become the aspiring candidates for service or clerical jobs. Thus from the very beginning of the English education it become mercenary and commercial so after the

establishment of the Calcutta University during nineteenth century, the middle class bhadralok were increased day by day who rushed for the government job. Chakri or vocalots became main goal of their life. The census report of Calcutta 1871, 1881, 1901 also gave a clear picture of this tradition.⁴

1881

Government employee			
Law and justice group:	167	Barister:	51
Police group:	3283	Unil:	350
Jail group:	105	Atorney:	31
Castoms, Abgari group:	121	Moktar:	510
Telegraph:	58	Teacher & professor:	1752
Post office:	31	Civil Engineer:	32
Other group:	490	Shop keepers:	14131
Municipality & port employee:	57	Clerk:	16315

1891

Clerk of Govt.office:	6353
Clerk of business office:	7857
Barister:	74
Solicitor:	61
Moktar:	1039

1901

Govt. employee:	18950
Businessman (small):	125,679
Intellectuals:	22,530

However from the census report it is clear that the so called middle class bhadralok which was established under the British colonial rule in the mid-1800s were rushed for the clerical job for their better future and to maintain the image and honor in the society. Thus, the British government replaced the traditional Indian education system in 1835 with a western education system only to educate a class of men who could serve as interpreters and work in the new government as their obedient employee. Many of the Bengali educated earned huge money by using their education and become called the elite class of the society. During nineteenth century the elite class Bengali who earned money and honor only because of their devotion towards English education were⁵ –

Madhusudan Gupta
 Krishnamohan Mallik
 Rasikkrishna Mallik
 Radhanath Sikhder
 Ramgopal Ghosh
 Pyarichand Mitra
 Kishori Chand Mitra
 Rajendralal Mitra
 Shibchandra Deb
 Harchadra Ghosh
 Pyaricharan Sarkar
 Digambar Mitra
 Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyaya.

Rajnarayan Basu
 Durgacharan Bandyopadhyaya
 Surendranath Bondhopadhyaya
 Iswarchandra Vidyasagar
 Madhusudan Dutta
 Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya
 Harishchandra Mukhopadhyaya
 Durgacharan Laha
 Keshabchandra Sen
 Shibnath Sashtri
 Umeschandra Dutta
 Bipinchandra Pal

From the history of the families of their educated elite class of Bengal it was clear that only because of the English education they got a high respectable position as bhadralok in the society. During colonial period this English education was the valuable passport getting any type of Govt. salaried job. So day by day this English education becomes a matter of honor for the Bengali elite class. The Anglo-vernacular schools were increasing rapidly and a huge number of students came under the influence of education of the growing popularity of the Calcutta University. The Bengalis were truly attracted towards English education and rushed for Chakri and vokalati and become indifference towards their commercial side. This indifference of Bengalis to trade and commerce had brought disaster to their economic life. Even today the Bengalis have to suffer for this apathy towards trade and commerce. In that time the elite class did not understand the value of industrialization. As a result a huge number of educated youth have to suffer for the problem of unemployment.

Conclusion:

In Bengal, business and businessmen are treated with suspicion and looked down upon since the nineteenth century. Whatever may be their financial position, their social status is much lower than the landed gentries and educated professionals like the teachers' doctors and lawyers. This attitude still dominates the social values and ethos of Bengal society. One of the reasons for the disruption of the normal historical momentum of entrepreneurship is the social negligence towards the merchant class in Bengal and Indian society especially in Bengali society. They never got any kind of inspiration or rewards for their achievements in the business field for which no social status and power is available. As a result though they had acquired enough capital for investment in business but they never became the capitalist. However the Bengalis were truly attracted

⁴ Ghosh, Binoy, 'Banglar Nabajagriti' (Renaissance of Bengal), p-66.

⁵ Ghosh, Binoy, 'Banglar Samajik Itihaser Dhara', p-201.

towards English education and rushed for Chakri and vokalati and become indifference towards their commercial side. This indifference of Bengalis to trade and commerce had brought disaster to their economic life. Even today the Bengalis have to suffer for this apathy towards trade and commerce. In that time the elite class did not understand the value of industrialization. As a result a huge number of educated youth have to suffer for the problem of unemployment.

Reference:

- [1] Ghosh, Binoy, 'Banglar Samajik Itihaser Dhara, Prakash Bhawan, Calcutta, 1968.
- [2] Bandhapadhyay, Bhabanicharan, 'Kalikata Kamalalaya', ed. Bishnu Basu, Calcutta, 1986.
- [3] Sinha, Pradip, Social Changes in N.K.Sinha(ed), 'The History of Bengal', 2nd edition, University of Calcutta.
- [4] Ghosh, Binoy, 'Banglar Nabajagriti'(Renaissance of Bengal), Orient Longman Ltd, 1979.
- [5] Sen, Ramcomul: English Bengali Dictionary, Calcutta 1834.
- [6] Smith, George: The Life of Alexander Duff. 2, Vols. London 1879, vol-1.
- [7] Palit, Chittabrata, 'Hundred Years of Bengali Business Enterprise', Shriropa, Kolkata, 2016.

