

**The Dooars  
in  
Historical Transition**

**Sailen Debnath**

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# The Doors in Historical Transition

by : Sailen Debnath

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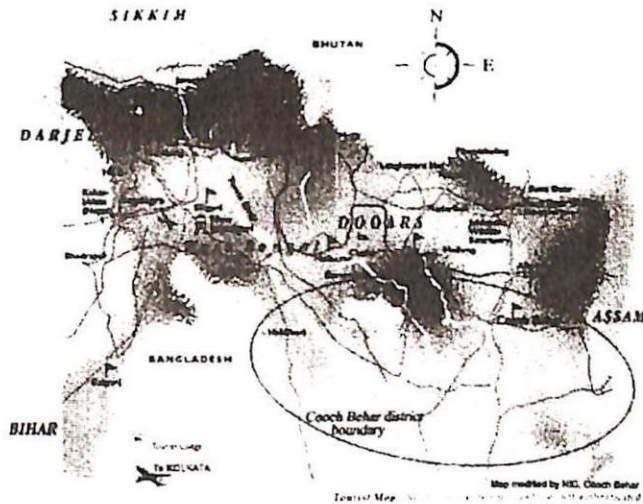
## Preface

This book, 'The Dooars in Historical Transition' is the outcome of a research sponsored by the University Grants Commission; and no wonder, all readers have to admit that with its contents the book is the first of its kind in the field of historical studies and writings. Attempts have been made to unfold the unknown past of the Dooars which at least for historical studies have so far been neglected by our well known historians of Bengal in the past and present. This book is thus the beginning of a series of works which the present author supposes to go on in order to bring into light the most enigmatic of facts still elusive of analysis and explanations. This book has for the first time argued the ground that the Dooars had not been a neglected jungle area in the past rather it was the centre of flourishing culture and civilization. It is astonishing to note that the Dooars was the seat of the kingdoms of Kamatapur and the Koch Kingdom of Koch Behar. The two chapters 'Early History and the Foundation of Kamatapur in the Dooars' and 'The Koch Kings of the Dooars' are of paramount importance in the domain of historical researches not only in Bengal but also in the whole of India. The other chapters though are not altogether new by names but the contents are rich with novel interpretations of new dimensions. The present author has had access to the source materials of the History of Bhutan and therein he came across of valuable references to the evolutionary facts of the history of the Dooars and he has not missed the opportunity of using those materials in reassessing the different aspects of the history of the Dooars.

Different people with renewed interest and sympathy extended their helping hands during the long course of my field studies for the purpose of collecting materials relevant to different chapters. I express gratitude to those who took me to the jungles of Chhipra and Chilapata and the remote areas of the hills in the Dooars bordering Bhutan. In this regard I record the pleasant company I enjoyed with my student, Sujoy, in carrying out arduous field studies in the remotest areas of the Dooars. Since he had known from me the objectives of my field studies, he too took it seriously in order to sharpen his knowledge of the history of the Dooars from the ancient times. Without the help of the employees of different forest beat offices, field studies in the remote areas could not be possible. My gratitude is also due to them.

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## Introduction



### Map of the Bengal Dooars with Morang

**The geographical position of the Dooars:** ‘Dooars’ was and still is a geographical descriptive name. Down the Bhutan hills, the part of India with an average breadth of 30 kilometres and length of 350 kilometres in West Bengal and Assam came to be known as the Dooars. Dooar or Duar means door and the Dooars were the doors of Bhutan leading down to the plains of India and vice-versa. There were in total 18 Dooars, of which 11 Dooars were in Bengal and the remaining 7 Dooars were in Assam. The Bengal Dooars were: (1) Dalimkot, (2) Chamurchi, (3) Zumerkot or Maynaguri, (4) Luckee or Lakshmi, (5) Buxa or Baxa, (6) Bhalka or Bhulka, (7) Gommar, (8) Reepoo, (10) Bagh, and (11) Sidli. The seven Assam Dooars were: (1) Boree Goomah, (2) Kalling, (3) Shurkolla, (4) Chappaguri, (5) Banska, (6) Chapkahama, and (7) Bijni. Geographically the Assam Dooars were between the River Dhanshiri on the east and Manas on the west; whereas the Bengal Dooars were between the river Manas on the east and Tista on the west. But historically the area called Morang between the river Tista and Mechhi too had been associated with the Bengal Dooars. This Morang again was divided into two parts viz. the Easter Morang between the Tista and river Mahanada, and the Western Morang was

between Mahanada and Mechhi. Whereas the Dooars were down the Bhutan hills, the Morangs were down the hills of Sikkim but contiguous to Nepal. The British Government first realised the importance of the Dooars in terms of its natural resources, economic prospects and strategic importance. After the partition of India in 1947, the significance of the Dooars has increased manifold for the chicken's neck of the Dooars is the only corridor of communication of India with its seven eastern states. Bounded by the international borders of Bhutan, Tibetan part of China and Bangladesh, the strategic position of the Dooars is of paramount importance to the people and the Government of India. With abundant reserved forest, tea gardens and green agrarian fields and inhabited by different stocks of people speaking various languages and practising diverse religions, the Dooars of late has become a cockpit of identity-politics and statehood-movements.

**The antiquity of the Dooars:** The searching of the remote past of the Dooars is well-nigh impossible owing to the paucity of source materials worth preserving for historical writing. The first indirect mention of the area can be found in the Indian epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata that the area was inhabited by non-Aryan peoples namely the Kambojas, Kiratas, Savars and the Mutivs. The present research gives the view that most probably the Kambojas and the Kiratas were either the same stock of people or were akin to each other. Most probably the Kiratas, in course of time, came to be known as the Koch. In the Vedic age this area with whatever population it comprised often constituted to be a part of ancient Pragjyotishpur and afterwards Kamrup; never the less, enough facts are there to assert that the Dooars too remained as a seat of political ups and downs and the rise and fall of many ruling dynasties and political units of which Kamatapur was the most prominent. And this continued to be its political identity till the beginning of the Koch Empire with the end of the fifteenth century. Thus Kamatapur and the Koch kingdom gave political distinction to the Dooars except some periods of interludes of political vacuums marked by political chaos.

Bounded by the Himalayas on the North, the alluvial plains of Samatata on the south, the Brahmaputra basin on the east and the Ganga basin on the west, the Dooars has always been watered by rivers like Tista, Karatowa, Torsha, Kaljani, Gadadhar, Raydak, and Sankosh. The history of the Dooars so far can be collocated in time scale reveals the fact that even from the

epic period some rulers ruled in the Dooars. In times, the Maynaguri area of the Dooars emerged to be more important than the rest other areas though preceding that period as well as after Chilapathar or Chilapata area with the Nal Rajar Garh and Mahakalguri area with the remains of the earliest Koch capital in Alipurduar Sub-division too grew into importance and historical prominence. Once Chilapata was the seat of the Kamatapur kingdom and Mahakalguri became the seat of the Koch kingdom.

Among the early kings of Kamatapur, the first Koch king Sangaldip and some other early kings including Sindhu Raja have been totally missing from the collective memory of the posterities. King Jalpesh or Jalpa of Kamatapur astonishingly was the first independent king to have been remembered by people of posterior generations as to have ruled over the major area of the Dooars; and perhaps this has been so because of his contribution to architecture in building the Jalpesh Siva temple in Maynaguri. King Prithu is remembered for his new capital the remnant of which is now the 'Prithu Rajar Garh' to the south-west of Jalpaiguri, near the borders of Bangladesh. The name of the district Jalpaiguri of which the Dooars constitutes more than two-thirds evidently derived its name in pursuance of a tradition from the name of king Jalpa. The Kaivartas who revolted against the Pala rule most probably had been people with deep-rooted connection with the people of the Dooars. It is proved by the fact that the Kaivartas after their defeat in their battle against Ram Pal took shelter first in the jungles of Kamatapur and afterwards, as terrified they had been, fled to father northward and took resort in the Jalpesh temple and many of them began to render service to the temple, "Jalpisang sevamanante gopayanti cha tang Haram"

The sculptures found in different areas of the Dooars now preserved in the 'Akshay Kumar Maitreya Museum' of North Bengal University as well as in some private collections corroborate the view of the present research that the roots of Buddhism and Hinduism in this area of study is very old. Most probably though the Palas might not have directly ruled over the Dooars yet during their rules Buddhism spread more vigorously in the area, albeit, in the first half of the seventh century under the influence of Buddhist preachers in eastern India Buddhism might have begun to spread. In this connection mention should also be made of the fact that Guru Padmasambhava is supposed to have spread Buddhism in Tibet and Bhutan in the seventh century. Hiu-en Tsang came to India in the seventh



century and travelled the tract of land from Ganga-Yamuna basin to Tista-Brahmaputra basin of which the Dooars constituted to be an integral part. At that time also the Dooars most probably was the gate-way from Uttarapath to the Brahmaputra basin, from India to Bhutan and vice-versa. Interesting is the fact that the earliest king of Bhutan named Sangaldip was a Koch and it is said that he ruled the sub-Himalayan plains down the Bhutan hills. It is highly probable that by dint of his being a Koch, he was also the leader of the Koch people living from the early times in the Dooars. It is furthermore interesting to note that Sindhu Raja, the first historical king of Bhutan was of Indian origin and he had control over the sub-Himalayan zones of the Bengal Dooars and Assam Dooars. In the seventh century another religio-cultural wave that influenced the Dooars was the coming of a group of Vaishnava preachers to this area, and these Vaishnavas were known as Paruas. These Vaishnavas might have stayed in the Dooars in the course of their journey to Assam and farther east to Manipur. After the Palas, the influence of Brahmanical Hinduism began to take roots in the Dooars because of the lack of Buddhist patronization. The Senas did not, of course, have any reign over the people of this area, never the less, since then Buddhism faced a steady course of decline and fall in eastern India for it was Ballal Sen to have begun the torture on the Buddhists and the people not believing in caste system. On the other the possibility of remote influence of the Senas can not be ruled out.

With the decline of Buddhism and the rise of Brahmanical Hinduism another stage formed a distinct period of cultural interlude and that was the influence of Nathism or the Yoga of the Nath Yogis. Nathism as developed from the pre-Buddhist period and became a predominant religious cult from the time of Patanjali, the writer of the Yoga Vashya, got somewhat and somehow co-mingled with Tantric Buddhism in the Pala period. Most probably Nathism in its specific form influenced the people of North Bengal as in other parts of India due to the activities of Goraksha Nath, the illustrious Yogi who might have been of Nepalese origin and travelled the nearly the whole North India and certainly the sub-Himalayan zones including the Dooars the connection and communication of which with Nepal was very much direct and traditional in the past. Most probably Maynamati the ruler of Maynaguri in the Dooars was one of the famous disciples of Goraksha Nath. The name Maynaguri is said to have been derived from the name of Maynamati. The Yogis used to have bio-physical exercise and the practice of Hatayoga for the realization of perfect knowledge and wisdom.

The present research has unfolded the fact that the Koch Kingdom was first founded in the Dooars by Viswa Singha and afterwards it was expanded to all directions and specifically towards the south including present Cooch Behar. At least for two generations the capital was at Hingulavas in the Dooars; and for the exploration of this fact a full chapter namely 'The Koch Kings of the Dooars' been assigned in this book.

**The Dooars as the Apple of Discord:** The Dooars became a part of the kingdom of Kamatapur during the rule of the Khen dynasty of Gosanimari, and the Khen kings were the patron of Hinduism. The present research has proofs that over all Hinduization of the most probably began from that period. The establishment of the Koch-Kamta kingdom by Vishwa Singha and his brother Sukladhwaj better known Chila Roy was possible first only in the Dooars. Vishwa Singha had his capital at Hingulavas in the Dooars. Hingulavas is at present in the Alipurduar sub-division of the Dooars, and it is only a few miles to the east of Soantalpur or Samuktala, the biggest weekly market of the area. The European traveller Ralph Fitch visited Hingulavas when it was a sprawling business centre of eastern India. Afterwards the capital at Hingulavas being washed away by the river Raydak flowing by its side, the Koch kings gradually built their new capitals first at Mahakalguri and then at Chechakhata again in the Dooars. The remains of the capital at Hingulavas and at Mahakalguri have been found and still extant. From their kingdom and capital in the Dooars, the Koch kings maintained relations with Assam and Bhutan. It was after a long period that the Koch kings because of their growing enmity with increasingly powerful Bhutan shifted their capital to farther south; and in due course of time the Dooars gradually passed under Bhutanese suzerainty. But the vendetta between Bhutan and Cooch Behar for the possession of the Dooars continued unabated as a result of which the subsequent Koch rulers became dependent on the Mughal Subedars in Bengal.

The conflict between Bhutan and Cooch Behar as to the problem of the possession of the Dooars ultimately brought the British to the scene. In 1772 Bhutan occupied Cooch Behar and the British government of the East India Company on the basis of a treaty signed with the Prime Minister (Dewan Deo) of Cooch Behar dispatched soldiers to drive the Bhutanese out of Cooch Behar; and thus took place the Anglo-Bhutan war. But the question of the Dooars remained unresolved. Though the British government with the hope of developing trade relations with Bhutan and with Tibet

through Bhutan followed a policy of appeasement towards Bhutan near about a century, ultimately took the decision of occupying the Dooars from the possession of Bhutan in 1864. As a result of this decision there ensued the second Anglo-Bhutan war following which was signed the Treaty of Sinchula in 1865. The provisions of the Treaty of Sinchula authorized the British Indian government to include the Dooars in British India. Here it has to be noted that the Dooars and Kalimpong were the last occupations of the British government in India and that well after the great Revolt of 1857.

**The Dooars as the Ethnological Museum of India:** Vincent Smith called India as the ethnological museum of the world and we may call the Dooars as the ethnological museum of India. There are not less than thirty six different stocks of people in the Dooars; and in this present research not less than twenty six separate ethnic and linguistic groups have been taken up for study (vide the content). From the undergoing study it is more or less clear that the Kambojas and Kiratas (even Kaivartas) might have been the aborigines of the Dooars. Though in the past they might have distinct racial characteristics, at present they look to be a mixed people because of marital and social admixture with other stocks of people who migrated afterwards from all directions. There are reasons to believe that the Koch, the Mech and the Tharus constituted to be the majority people of the area and the other groups were later migrants. Following tea plantations in the Dooars under the British, thousands of labourers were brought from Jharkhand and Nepal and this influx of new people changed the demographic conditions of the area. The Lepchas are also said to have been one of the aboriginal groups in the Dooars and as majority of them were living generations by in Kalimpong, they also inhabited in the Dooars with which Kalimpong had all communications. The Drukpa Bhutanese settled in this area only during the period of Bhutanese incursions and occupation of the area in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The Black Bhutias are a hybrid people because of blood mixture of the Bhutanese with other tribal groups of the area who had been captivated by the Bhutanese soldiers. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Rajbanshi Kshatriya Movement, a sankritization-cultural movement, organized among the Koches the Pani Koches and others led to further complication of religio-racial formations of people in the demographic set-up of the Dooars. From the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth

century for reasons which have been explored in the present research the Mech or the Bodos began to prefer Assam to Bengal and in considerable number began to migrate from Bengal Dooars to Assam Dooars.; and this trend increased in the years after 1947. After independence and partition of the country thousands of refugees crossed the border and settled in different areas of the sparsely populated Dooars; and again since the 1960s riots on the Bengalis in Assam led to further increase of immigration of people from the east. In course of time in the 1990s the driving of the people of Nepali origin out of Bhutan and the continuous migration of the Nepalese from that country to this area not only created a crisis rather gave birth to an unprecedented problem in the Dooars along with the backdrop of the demand of the inclusion of the Dooars in the Kamatapur state by the Kamatapur Peoples Party, whereas the Nepalese political organizations of the Dooars and Darjeeling began to demand the inclusion of the Dooars in Gorkhaland.

From the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, specifically after the inclusion of the Assam Dooars into British India in 1942 and the experimental prospect of tea plantation in the Dooars and Assam, the British government encouraged and patronized the migration of the Nepalese from Nepal to the sub-Himalayan zone of Bengal Dooars bordering Bhutan; and no wonder the migrants began to intrude into Bhutan. In the twentieth century this migration increased by leaps and bounds and the Nepalese became majority in southern Bhutan. The increase of the Nepalese in that country drew a cleft with the Buddhist Drukpa Bhutanese which proved to be alarming to the distinctiveness of the Bhutanese culture. Not only in Samchi and Chirang District of Bhutan the Nepalese constituted the majority of the population, rather they grabbed a formidable percentage of Government services. At the sight of the alarming majority of the Nepalese in the Government offices except the posts of Lyonpos (ministers) and Dashos (deputy ministers and district magistrates), King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk and the members of the Tsogdu (Bhutanese National Assembly) considered the Gorkhaland movement too dangerous a signal for the Drukpas of Bhutan, and, therefore, took the decision of throwing the unwanted Nepali population out of Bhutan through the applications of different means. They became afraid right from the year 1989 of the inevitable consequences of the growing Nepali population in Bhutan and there was no difficulty in their realization that unless the influx of Nepali immigrants into Bhutan would

have been stopped, Bhutan one day would certainly become another Darjeeling or Sikkim and the Drukpa Bhutanese would then become not only second class citizens rather unwanted in their own country. King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk toured all nooks and corners of Bhutan and delivered speeches to the Bhutanese students of different schools and Tserubse College on the indispensable necessity of national unity of Bhutan on the basis of Buddhist cultural heritage, social unity as well as Bhutanese national legacy of sovereignty<sup>13</sup>.

The British Government encouraged the Nepalese to settle in the down-hills of Bhutan and King Jigme Wangchuk wanted to stop it. In 1950s, King Jigme Dorje Wangchuk adopted an undeclared policy to convert the Hindu Nepalese to Buddhism but failed. In 1989 King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk introduced "Di-lam-Namcha" or national etiquette and national language policy by asking the Nepalese willing to stay in Bhutan to take to Dzongkha or Bhutanese national language. After a census at that time, King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk accused India in the language, "the total population of my country is only 6 lakhs, but in the U.N. record it is 1.2 million. Some Indian officers advised my father to show a much higher number in order to prove Bhutan per capita income wise a very poor country for the purpose of getting more U.N. aid". The king wanted to mean that such a misstatement of total number of population should provide no excuse to the Nepali intruders into Bhutan with the claim that they had not intruded and population did not increase. Population increase was shown in paper as expediency; but the Royal Government took stringent measures in throwing out the non-citizen Nepalese from Bhutan. It has to be noted here that as nearly one lakh Nepalese were ousted from Bhutan and as refugees all of them did not return to Nepal, thousands of them settled along with their kinsmen in the Dooars and the Darjeeling hills leading to a destabilization in the set of language-wise population ratio in the area, and this has proved itself to be another cause of tension in the Dooars.

The Bhutanese reaction to the G.N.L.F. movement proved to be more than a reprisal from some unthought-of horizon as the people involved in the movement were only psychologically prepared to counter the reaction that could be unleashed from the side of the West Bengal Government and the Central Government of India, as a riddle of history, they certainly did not foresee the Bhutanese dark horse to move fast beneath the green trees of the Himalayas. As the Government of Bhutan ousted thousands

of Nepalese from Drug-Yul or Bhutan, the ousted ones now apparently stateless, could put no virtual resistance to the Royal Government, and practically in utter despair they attempted to show their capability to spring back by forming the "Bhutan People's Party" (B.P.P.). Practically this party having been formed by the ousted Nepalese began to work from Siliguri, the Dooars, Kalimpong and some pockets of Darjeeling, though, their headquarters remained in their camps in Nepal. This party initially under cover raised some armed gangs which intruded into Bhutan to carry on raids in Southern Dzongkhags or districts. But untrained as they were, many of them were simply caught by the ever alert Bhutanese police and thrown into the jails of Punakha and Thimpu. The real fact here remains to be said is that for the activities of the B.P.P. and the armed gangs, North Bengal began to get the extra heat of tensions because the Bhutanese Nepali insurgents unavoidably began to use the Dooars as their corridor between Nepal and Bhutan. The B.P.P. got ice-cold reception even from the bonafide Nepali citizens of Bhutan, and the Drukpa Bhutanese considered its objective to be a glaring matter of Nepali conspiracy against the Drukpa Buddhists in Lo-Mon (Bhutan). The B.P.P. declared that democracy in Bhutan was its objective. But here again the enlightened king Jigme Singe Wangchuk snatched away the slogan of the B.P.P. by himself proclaiming that the cherished goal of the Wangchuk dynasty in the completion of one century of hereditary monarchy in Bhutan since the accession of Sir Ogyen Wangchuk in 1907 was the establishment of constitutional monarchy and people's democracy in the peaceful land of Bhutan ; and that grand event would be marked by his abdication in favour of his son crown prince Jigme Ghaser Namgyel Wangchuk. Now the people of Bhutan have seen in their own eyes the formidable fulfilment of their beloved king's words in letters and spirit; and they have no reasons to look at the B.P.P. for any democratic guidance. Thus the hope of B.P.P. is lost for ever. Though the Nepali refugees under their leaders at present are trying their best to sneak into Bhutan from Nepal and from and across the Dooars, the Government India in the nicest of its relations with the Government of Bhutan is in no mood to allow the Nepalese to cross into Bhutan. But the Dooars has remained as the cockpit of this unending struggle, for in the months of May and June, 2007, as the Nepali refugees wanted to go across India from Nepal to Bhutan, the Indian security forces intercepted them, and more than two refugees succumbed to bullet injuries. Tension is still unabated and it may tend to proliferate in the future.

**The Socio-political Transitions:** Since the independence of India, the Dooars has been the hub of political upheavals. In the backdrop of centre-periphery relationship and the peripheries always being deprived, this area has so far witnessed socio-economic and political movements born of economic, political and cultural deprivations as well as ethno-economic and ethno-cultural identity crises. The Naxalite movement being originated in Naxalbari of Darjeeling district swept the Dooars very much and it cast deep impression and terror in the minds of the people. In most of the villages of the Dooars the movement aroused the minds of the peasants who overtly or covertly were under its spell. The program of *Khatam* as was organized under the programs of class elimination propagated by Charu Majumdar led to the murder of many people in the Dooars. "Khatam" or the action of eliminating the so-called class enemies in villages was a wrong principle of political mobilization by individual murder of select few people whose political class-character was never adjudged by their socio-economic conditions, and the properties they possessed, but very often only by their political affiliation or by the name and colour of the party or parties they directly or indirectly belonged to for a long or a short period of time. As for example in the Dooars the Naxalites killed some petty jotdars who otherwise could have been comrades in action against the capitalists or could be friends in a revolution for radical change. Ordinary people in villages were terrified at the brutal and gruesome ways they killed the fellow villagers vilifying them as class enemies. As for example, at Bholardabri, a village in Alipurduar (Dooars) they killed Rajen Pandit who was a refugee from East Pakistan and arduously was running a family of 12 dependents. By any means he was no class enemy at all. In another case in the same village they killed a person, chopped his head off the torso and hanged the head and the torso down the branches of trees with ropes in two separate places, the horrible sights of which cast a gloom on the faces of bemoaning villagers. Certainly after such acts the Naxalites could count no support from the villagers at all. But when the Naxalite movement was ongoing, there began another movement in the Dooars and that was organized by the Uttarkhandis for the establishment of a separate state to be called Uttarkhand.

It has to be mentioned here that "Uttarkhand" as a nomenclature of a separate state in North Bengal was first used in a conference in Darjeeling in 1949. But a new "Uttarkhand Dal" sprouted into existence on July 5,

1969, in the compound of the historic Jalpesh temple in the Dooars; albeit, afterwards, Jateswar (in the Dooars) grew into a centre of its brisk activities. Panchanan Mallick, Kalindranath Barman and Sitanath Roy were the front-rank leaders of the Dal; however, Panchanan Mallick was the key theoretician and mobilizer; and after his death, Jugal Kishor of Jateswar ran the work of the Dal during the days of its decay and gradual dismemberment. In the intermediary period between the decline of the Uttarkhand Dal and the emergence of the Kamatapur Movement, an auxiliary organization named "Uttarbanga Tapsili Jati O Upajati Sangathan" (U.T.J.U.S.) of the so called autochthonous people, mainly the Rajbanshis, became the torch-bearer of a movement of anomalous type with explicit demands for the redressal of their socio-economic and educational grievances, but more with the objective of dormant political design and ambition including the one against the citizenship of the Bhatiyas (Bengali refugees and immigrants from erstwhile East Pakistan and Bangladesh) after 1971. But the strength of this organization collapsed all on a sudden at the time of its big central conference held at Alipurduar Parade Ground in the Dooars in 1986. The leaders of the conference claimed that the Bhatiya hoodlums, members of different clubs and the activists of different political parties opened the Pandora's Box of their brutal force on the processions injuring hundreds of people, even women old and young were not spared; and the police took no cognizance of the crime. On the contrary, the people of Alipurduar gave the account that the leaders of the UTJUS delivered provocative speeches asking the audience to reclaim those plots of lands even of Alipurduar town which once had been grabbed by the immigrant Bhatiyas. They further added that no plot of land was grabbed; the Bhatiyas had to buy lands in the prices as were prevalent from time to time. The reason of that unfortunate incident still remains to be a matter of impartial investigation, but this, undoubtedly, alienated even those Rajbanshis who so far maintained aloofness from political involvement, though, the incident was enough to terrorize them not to assemble at Alipurduar in the subsequent times. To tell the truth this disastrous incident was the swan's song of the UTJUS, of course, from its ruins was resurrected the Kamatapur People's Party, The Kamatapur Liberation Organization and the Kamatapur movement.

The causes of the Uttarkhand and later on of the Kamatapur Movement can well be guessed from the perusal of their un-orchestrated logical grounds



and demands put forward in different times and in the course of the evolution of their ideas. Since the points for the justification of the demands of Uttarkhand ultimately merged with those of Kamatapur, therefore, here only the points for the demands of Kamatapur have been discussed. Kamatapur statehood movement has not only been guided by the Kamatapur People's Party and the Kamatapur Progressive Party but also by the Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO), a terrorist outfit, which came into being allegedly with the help of the United Liberation Front of Ahom (ULFA). The Rajbanshis do not constitute more than 22% of the total population of the Dooars, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and in other districts of North Bengal their share in the population is even less, therefore, only a single community based popular movement as seemed almost impossible for the matter of its being virtually minority, the over-enthusiastic or on the contrary the most frustrated activists of the movement took up arms and training for the use of armaments for the purpose of attacks on soft targets and thereby create terror in the minds of the people. The first gruesome incident that adumbrated the terrifying existence of the K.L.O. was a series of pathetic and gruesome murder of C.P.I. (M) activists and party leaders in the Dooars in the year 2000. It is noticeable that in the year 2001, the KLO terrorists remained in temporary incubation for hatching up their future plans and, therefore, seldom leaped on their preys. Might be, they, all through that year, stashed their ammunitions in the hearts of jungles in the hills and the plains after repeated armed operations in the previous year. Then again in 2002, they took the lives of many C.P.I. (M) and Revolutionary Socialist Party (R.S.P.) cadres and leaders, though; no activist belonging to any other party was even threatened by any means.

The KLO activists built secret camps in the depth of the jungles of Bhutan and the Dooars became their sporting ground for recruitment, movement and armed operations. The government of Bhutan had hesitations in taking virtual action against the armed terrorists, because, the Dooars from Phuntsholling to Gaylephu was the corridor for the movement of the Bhutanese people from western Bhutan to the eastern part of the country and vice-versa. On several occasions the KLO terrorists attacked the passengers of Bhutanese vehicles plying across the Dooars; but time came when the Druk-Gyalpo demonstrated intrepidity in taking action against the terrorists' hubs in Bhutan; of course, in that hard decision the role of the Government of India and of the Indian Military Training Team in Bhutan

(IMTRAT) in maintaining co-ordination was of paramount importance; no wonder, all logistical supports along with the essentials for operations were provided by the Indian Army Headquarters in the Dooars.

Atul Roy, the leader of Kamatapur Progressive Party, declared that the K.P.P. had no connection with the K.L.O., but the people of street could not be convinced any way since the fact could never be verified; however because of the connection of the K.L.O. with Bangladesh another dimension of contact of the K.L.O. with the Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan bubbled up on the surface and this in fact sent a shivering message to the Indian Intelligence branch both of the State and the Central government. The government of India too put heavy pressure on the friendly government of Bhutan to flush out the terrorists from their hideouts in southern Bhutan. With the apprehension that the anti Bhutan Nepali terrorists might have some workable relations and information-network with the Indian terrorists and this interlink in the future not only would be detrimental to Indo-Bhutan relationship, rather that easily could endanger peace and prosperity of Bhutan, King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk left no space for a second thought in taking military action named "Operation Bhutan Flush Out" in 2003 against the terrorists' camps in Bhutan ; and the Indian army extended all types of logistical help and support to the Bhutanese army. Most of the K.L.O. terrorists in total 44 including Tom Adhikary, Milton Barman, and Harshabardhan etc. were thrashed out of Bhutan and were arrested; but its leader Jiban Singha and his sister, as active as Bharati Roy another female terrorist, took shelter in Bangladesh. Along with the capture of the terrorists, Narayan Debnath also got a new lease of life from the captivity of the terrorists in Bhutan, for he was handed over by the Bhutanese government to the Indian authority and then the government of West Bengal could send him to his anxious parents in Nishiganj, Cooch Behar.

Initially the members of the Bhutanese parliament debated the pros and cons of the option of military operation mainly owing to the fact that for communication from Phuntsholing to Gaylephu and Sabdrupzongkhar or from Western Bhutan to Eastern Bhutan and vice-versa the people of that country had to depend on the Dooars infested by terrorists who in order to warn the Bhutanese government had already attacked Bhutanese buses and citizens on several occasions. The government of Bhutan first of all ascertained assurance from the Indian side for the safety and security of Bhutanese citizens and vehicles travelling through the Dooars, and then

issued order for military operation under a joint Indo-Bhutan defence mechanism and the financial burden of which was shouldered on by India. Since the K.L.O. mainly targeted the C.P.I. (M) activists it became the duty of the West Bengal Police to guard the C.P.I. (M) party offices in the Dooars; and its important leaders in the sensitive areas were brought under the umbrella of police protection round the clock. Through the sacrifice of some of its trusted members, the C.P.I. (M) reaped a good harvest of renewed support of the "Bhatiyas" (Bengali refugees and immigrants from Bangladesh) at a time when its popularity was dwindling after a long period of twenty five years of rule in West Bengal. There were, of course sufficient reasons on the part of the Bhatiyas to be more worried and terrified, because, in view of community-wise population ratio in the Dooars where the KLO targeted the highest number of victims, more Bhatiyas than Rajbanshis fell victims to the bullets of the K.L.O. This difference though was sufficient to ignite a communal riot in the most effected areas, yet for the vigilance of the government and due to the patience of responsible citizens nothing of that sort did happen. The common citizens did not like to be instigated on communal lines by whatever means the terrorists might have taken. The secret ire of the sulking terrorists was that only the Bhatiyas had all connections with the Calcuttans and southern Bengal and they were against the formation of Kamatapur as a state of which the Dooars would be a part. The military crack down in Bhutan and stringent measures of the police in the Dooars virtually broke the spine of the K.L.O. network and recruitment process; but whether its recurrence will belie the present lull remains to be seen.

But of late the issue of the Gorkhaland Movement that spilled over to the Dooars from the hills of Darjeeling unleashed enter-ethnic distrust and clashes for political and cultural identity including bloodshed and arson. The latest spur of tension and unprecedented conflicts between the Nepalese and the non-Nepalese set forth the question whether the Dooars, once considered as the peaceful greenery of eastern India, would remain calm and quiet as before or it would be besmeared and stained with blood. To the peace-loving people of the Dooars, the role of the government in dealing with the Gorkhaland movement seemed to be dubious; and for that reason, the unbiased people of the area grew very much aggrieved.

**Strategic Importance of the Dooars:** In the colonial period the strategic importance of the Dooars was felt by the British in view of the position of

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Bhutan, Sikkim and Chumbey valley of Tibet just to the north of the Dooars. The eleven Bengal Dooars were the gate ways to Bhutan as well as to Chumbey valley, Sikkim and Tibet. From the year 1774 this importance along with its commercial potentiality for trade transactions with the Himalayan countries and Tibet was realized by the British East India Company's Government. After the treaty of Sagauly in 1816 with Nepal and more after the virtual annexation of Darjeeling in 1835, though entrance into Sikkim came more or less within the reach of the British government but the more important alternative route from the Dooars through Kalimpong and Bhutan remained out of grip; and therefore, the annexation of the Assam Dooars in 1842 and of the Bengal Dooars and Kalimpong in 1865 remained to be a matter of vital importance. Viceroy Lord Curzon with the apprehension of the strategic and commercial importance of Chumbey valley kept the provision of British Indian predominance over the valley in the Treaty of Lhasa in 1904. The British Indian Government's Tibet policy and attitude towards Bhutan and Sikkim since were guided by strategic consideration evidently after 1914, the year of the Simla Agreement signed by Tibet and British India but not ratified by China, in the sphere of overall strategic view of the Himalayan zone the position of the Dooars always played a role of significance. Along with the partition of India in 1947, the strategic importance of the Dooars increased manifold. After the virtual annexation of Tibet by the Chinese Red Army in 1950s, the eyes of the Chinese Government on the Dooars fell like that of a flying vulture for landing in search of a feast in terms of imperialistic adventure, for the narrowest stretch of India between Chumbey valley and the border of Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) is only fifty kilometres. The Dooars is the chicken's neck of India connecting the North East including Assam with the rest main body of India. If China by any means can occupy this chicken's neck or can disrupt the frail communication network of India through the Dooars, disaster will spell itself in cornering India to surrender the entire North East to the parading boots of the Chinese army. China has nuclear missile launchers and airfields with hundreds of deep penetration aircrafts and all-weather communication network in Tibet wherefrom Chinese capability to maul the Dooars unto the borders of Bangladesh in times of a probable war seem nightmarishly a real possibility. The Chinese army in their positions in Chumbey valley all along the borders of India and Bhutan are more equipped than their Indian counterparts; therefore, the

counter-defence system of India does seem convincing against Chinese missiles and bombers destroying the bridges and digging the roads of the Dooars. In view of Chinese friendship and deep military understanding with Bangladesh, India has no choice other than strengthening a reliable defence network in the Dooars and in its vicinity.

The Indian strategy to save the Dooars is to take on the Chinese in Chumbey valley from three sides- from the west, from the south and from the east. From Kalimpong to North Sikkim, Indian military presence is not negligible though not satisfactory. All along the eastern border of Chumbey valley India has to have the collaboration of Bhutan with which as per the provisions of the Indo-Bhutan Treaty of 1950, India has that level of military understanding. For the defence of India and Bhutan, Bhutan is not a buffer but allied with India for a common cause. The question is whether India is capable of respecting Bhutanese reliance on India in case of a motivated and aggressive military push from the North. Along the borders of Bhutan with Tibet and specifically with Chumbey valley the Indian and the Bhutanese army have positions of adjustment side by side for the same purpose in the factual backdrop that the Bhutanese soldiers are exclusively equipped with Indian armaments and Indian training on expenditures met by the government of India as a part of the cost of the Indian defence forces. At Hasimara in the Dooars, India has one of the biggest air defence set up with a military airbase for all types of Indian military aircrafts- fighters and bombers including Mig 21, high flying Mig 25, Mig 29 falcons, deep penetration aircraft Mig 27, the Jaguars, the Mirages and the latest Sukoy. The Bagdogra airport in Siliguri is also a military airbase given for civilian purposes on conditions; and that with Hasimara form a line of air defence system inter-connected by a chain of military installations of armouries and military barracks covering a stretch of one hundred kilometres intersected, of course, by some civilian gaps of towns and villages. In the age of growing globalization for trade, mutual understanding, cultural exchange and peace, there may not be any real horror of war again between India and China, but as long as enmity remains between the two Asian giants there is no question of under-estimating the strategic and communicational importance of the Dooars.



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