

## TWO PIONEER QUANTITATIVE ECONOMIC STUDIES IN BENGALI, 1892-1915

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The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to two pioneer but little known quantitative economic studies in Bengali by Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya in 1892 and by Radhakamal Mukherjee in 1911-1915. A very brief survey of the status of economic studies in these days may be helpful in understanding the significance of the works under review. At a time when a dearth of good Bengali text books in economics is a major hindrance in introducing Bengali as a medium of instruction in honours level or post-graduate level, it may be surprising to know that political economy was taught at Pathshalas, Middle English Schools, Normal Schools in Bengali as early as 1860's and there were at least three text books published between 1861 and 1875. One of them is considered to be of the under-graduate standard of 1930's. The Calcutta University introduced teaching of economics as a separate subject as late as 1908.

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In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Romesh Chunder Dutt expounded their thesis on the economic plight of India with a rigorous professional standard. Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya was a very conservative social reformer in contrast with the revolutionary Brahmin-proletariat Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. The volume of his essays under the title of *Samajik Prabandha* appeared in 1892. Sir Charles Elliot said at a meeting of the Asiatic Society in 1893 that "no single volume in India contains so much wisdom and none shows so extensive reading."

The volume contains several chapters on the state of society, past and present, but two chapters—one on economic conditions (Arthik bishoyok) and another on the subject of level of living (Debenik bishoyok)—represent an attempt to analyse the behaviour of economic phenomena in quantitative terms. Taking a balanced view of the British rule, Mukhopadhyaya pointed to several factors responsible for an increasing poverty inspite of a political stability. He mentioned an