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PRE-BRITISH BENGALI PROSE: SEARCH FOR SOURCES

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INTRODUCTION

One of the problems in the study of source material in regard to the history of Bengali prose is a stereotype about its genesis in the British impact on Bengal and especially in the use of printing press. This stereotype is quite often accepted as a factual history. The great masters of the history of Bengali literature, such as Dr. Sushil Kumar De, Dr. Sukumar Sen and other scholars such as Dr. Sisir Kumar Das have taken the Britannic-genesis of Bengali prose for granted. Basing himself on such a premise, the American historian David Kopf, went to the extent of entitling his book on Indo-Bengali Culture of the elites in the Calcutta region in the early 19th century, British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance:the dynamics of Indian Modernisation, 1773-1835 (1969). The result of such a historical outlook is that scholars of our generation are not even encouraged to search for any other sources of the genesis of Bengali prose, let alone indigenous sources, such as manuscripts and private letters.

Some collections of letters written in work-a-day Bengali have indeed been edited or compiled which give a picture of a different prose style. But the letters which were commonly referred to, found in the Cooch-Behar correspondence, kept in the National Archives of India and edited by Surendranath Sen, or gathered from homes in the upper Rarh region by Dr. Panchanan Mandal, have their origin mainly in the early 19th century; the ones which are prior to the period of British impact are relatively scanty. However, two recent finds of very large collections of letters written either by weavers in East Bengal or a family in the Bhagirathi basin, can definitely be traced to dates in the 6th and 7th decades of 18th century. These may lead one to think in terms of alternative sources for the study of a Bengali prose which must have been extant considerably before that and which therefore considerably pre-dates the impact, beneficial, perverting or otherwise, of English in colonial circumstances. In the second half of this paper, an attempt will be made to spell out the implications of such a discovery.

For the present, it is necessary to start by considering the analytical aspect of such a pre-dating. It is argued in the first sections of this paper that the prose which developed in the early 19th century was the product of certain specific needs by a foreign dominant elite, using the subordinate translation services of their collaborating Indian 'partner' like Ram ram Bose, Mrityunjay Vidyalankar and others. The structure which was reared on those, by people of the eminence of Rammohun Roy and his generation, was to a certain extent constrained by the colonial relationship. However, a study of syntactical structure would show that there are extant evidences in what were initially oral forms of communication, such as songs, folk drama, etc. of the marks of a fairly developed prose form. This was different from the over-formalised and worked out structures that were prepared by Pandits and Munshis engaged for the Sahibs' convenience of learning. In successive parts of this paper I have essayed an attempt to show how an alternative proto-prose structure might be constructed. The proto-prose that one can discern in the lyrics, "kabigans", folk dramas, etc. of the late 18th century was closer to the needs of mass communication in Bengal during the transition from indigenous rural to a foreign dominated colonialism. There is scope for a detailed study by applying tools of syntactical analysis. This might give us an inkling of an alternative line of development which was submerged by the colonial elite of the early 19th century.

However, in the last part of the paper I have suggested that in addition to these submerged remnances there was another and more formal, though easy, and re'llifluent structure of prose in the common epistolary use by the Bengali masses of the 18th century. In fact, one would probably not be overstating the case if one were to say that there might have been a suppression of democratic syntax by the beginning of the 19th century. The implications of such a discovery would appear to lead to the need for considerably more research on the development of Bengali syntax : in one direction it would lead to the search for more such evidence in the 18th century and in the other direction they would lead to a more critical examination of the syntax as practised by 19th century Bengali writers.

The chronological history of Bengali prose begins with European names. Manoel Da Assumpacao, a native of Evora and an Augustinian friar of the Congregacao da India Oriental used Bengali prose sentences in print for the first time in 1734 in his 'Crepar Xastrer Orth, bhed' or 'Calthecismo da Doutrina Christaã'. There is Dom Antonio's 'Catechism' in Bengali in 1743, the legend being that the author was a Bengali by birth and Portuguese by upbringing. But these are only 'few extant writings of a distinctly Portuguese origin... from these and other references, it is not hazardous to conclude that these Portuguese missionaries, like Carey and Marshman of a later age, though on a modest scale, must have created and left behind them an interesting body of Portuguese Bengali literature' (De 1962, pp.58).

These precursors are followed by the Srirampur mission and Fort William College. The publication of the Bible in Bengali prose in 1801 was an important event, in spite of the prose being 'marked .... through out by earliness and immeturity' the work is said to be important 'as the earliest specimens of simple and homely prose' (ibid pp.104).

Next comes the Fort William College (1800) and its Bengali department under William Carey. It has been observed that 'the movement for undertaking literary and scientific works in Bengali prose and for translation into that language, which till 1850 had been so conspicuous an activity in the literary history of Bengal, had its beginning in the publications of the college of Fort William' (ibid. pp.107-08).

In a list prepared from three sources (Annals of the College of Fort William by Rocbuck, Calcutta 1819, The College of Fort William by Claudius Buchanan, 1819 and Long's catalogue) 17 books are mentioned as published from Fort William College in the period between 1801 and 1815. In spite of some doubt about one or two books, whether these were published from the college or not, the 17 books along with A Dictionary of the Bengalee Language by William Carey published between 1815-25 are considered to be the

bulk of the Fort William College publications. Of these 17 books 4 are original writings, 7 are translation works, 4 are grammatical and lexicographical works and the remaining 2 are Carey's collections of 'Kathopakathan' and 'itihasmala'.

So long, these publications have been considered by most historians of Bengali literature to be the beginning of Bengali prose. The reasons for such conclusion are best presented in the following argument :

> Since the practical disappearence of Bengali literature after Bharatchandra's death, its first public emergence is to be traced in the prose publication of this college, which, although no literature by themselves, certainly heralded the more mature productions of the later days. The importance of Fort William College in the history of modern Bengali prose is not due to the supreme excellence of its publication ... but to the fact that by its employment of the Press, by pecuniary and other encouragement, by affording a central place for the needed contact of mind to mind, it gave such an impetus to Bengali learning, as was never given by any other institution since the establishment of British rule (De. 1962, pp.106).

The Srirampur missionaries began publishing 'Digdarsan' (April 1818) the first Bengali monthly and 'Samachar Darpan', (May, 1818) the first Bengali News- weekly, from Srirampur. At present historians consider these periodicals to be regular media for cultivation of Bengali prose. Bengali intellectuals and writers like Rammohan Ray and Bhabani Charan Banduopadhyay brought out weekly newspapers in the early twenties. But it did not mark the end of the missionary command over Bengali prose. Such a change in the scheme of things would take us to the thirties when Bengali journalism became a social phenomenon and by regular practice Bengali prose was transformed to become the vehicle of social exchange.

II

The foregoing resume is a very brief summary of the definitive history of Bengali prose. It is supported by such an irrefutable chronology which links the Fort William College and Srirampur Mission period (1800-1825) with the emergence of a new band of Bengali writers. This chronology has no apparent gaps and as such is accepted by all the historians of Bengali literature, especially of prose literature. In the first such treatise written by Rangati Nyayaratna (1873) and in an important later treatise Ramesh Chandra Dutt (1877) the instances of pre-British Bengali literature were collected from works written in verse. They accepted the beginning of prose literature in Bengali as a post British phenomenon. Since then the other errors of these pioneering attempts of writing a history have been corrected by later historians and the history of Bengali literature has been developed in to a seperate branch of study. But no controversy seems to exist about the beginning of Bengali prose. Rather, facts on this period appear to be finally settled. In all such historical evaluations where new facts have been discovered and arranged, namely Bengali literature in the nineteenth century' by S.K. De, Bangala Sahityer Itihas by Sukumar Sen, Bengali literature by J.C. Ghose and such specialised studies on the period as Bangla Gadya Sahityer Itihas' by Sajani Kanta Das and Sahibs and Munshis by Sisir Kumar Das, this Britannic genesis of Bengali prose has been unequivocally accepted as a historical fact.

From such acceptance over nearly two centuries the adaptation of Carey, Marshman and Ward to the geneology of Bengali seems to be complete and final. In this process of identifying an indubitable chronological progression with essential genealogy, we have cared less for an equally valid biographical fact that Carey did not take to Bengali kindly. In the last years of the eighteenth century when Carey was trying to learn Bengali, he complained constantly in his letters about the 'unsettled state of its forms and expressions, of its grammar and orthography' and he totally failed to understand the link between the written Bengali and the dialect.

> "The language spoken by the natives of this part, though Bengali, is so different from the language itself that though I can preach an hour with tolerable freedom so as that all who speak the language or can read or write, understand me perfectly: yet the poor labouring people can understand me little".
>
> (From a letter written on October 2, 1795, Memoirs of William Carey ed. by Eustace Carey)

There are more unkind comments by him when he describes this country as one "devoted to the service of Satan and immersed in the awful ignorance of heathenness". In his letters collected by Eustace Carey in Memoirs of William Carey we shall not get a single line written by Carey in praise of the Bengali language. Even as a learner, Carey does not approach Bengali with any sense of modesty. In the letter quoted above he expresses no uncertainty even about his pronunciation. He is all correct and the fault lies with the language. Hence the language should be changed to a shape corresponding to what Carey knows, i.e. expects the language to be. Thus, the so-called British parentage of Bengal prose was void of necessary understanding and care. Carey and his ilk were connected with empire-building. Their haste and concern for evolving a form of Bengali prose were impelled by missionary-cum-imperial object of preaching Christian gospels to heathens in their own tongue. Carey and his brother missionaries were hasty to evolve a form of prose, so that, the gospels of the Lord might be preached to the heathen in their own language. Missionaries were also empire-builders and the language of a subject-people could not be given such time as has been necessary for civilised European languages to give birth to a form. So the birth of the prose had to take place by force. The consequence was first an abortion -- the Srirampur Bible in Bengali prose and then a moron -- the Fort William books in prose.

There is therefore little point in using the age-old Bengali metaphor to describe Carey as 'Janaka' of the Bengali prose. My case is :-

1. that the syntactical structure of Bengali prose and the syntactical structure of the Fort William texts are so different that the former cannot be the result of the later, and as such, the Bengali prose cannot be said to begin with the Fort William books;

2. that in the twenties and thirties of the nineteenth century the Bengali newspapers and journals such as, Samachar Darpan, Samachar Chandrika, Sambad Prabhakar, Ganonanweshan, Sambad Bhasker in their regular practice of prose-writing developed the particular Bengali sentence-structure with scope for further modifications;

3. that a proto-prose was extant in Bengali in the later part of the eighteenth century which was pre-British, both in chronology and in syntactical structure and vocabulary.

In the present note I shall not be arguing for the first and second parts involving structural analysis of prose.

My immediate concern is with the third part of the argument i.e. the existence of a proto-prose in Bengali in the eighteenth century. In a passage quoted from Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century by S.K.De in the first section of this note it has been said that a gap in the chronological history of Bengali literature exists between Bharatchandra's death in 1760 and foundation of Fort William College in 1800. Let us examine if a proto-prose literature may be identified for this period.

III

The same historian in his attempt to explain this gap in the chronology says that in this period, 'flourished a class of Bengali Writers, chiefly poets, who were uninfluenced by English ideas and who maintained, even with declining powers, the literary traditions of the past' and again, '... they ... maintain the continuity of literary history during the period of interregnum between the death of Bharat Chandra and the emergence of the new school'.

The main bulk of the literature of the period is lost forever. From the smaller part that has been saved the main forms may be identified as (1) Kabigans, (2) Tappa Songs of Nidhu-Babu and others, (3) 'Ramprasad' Songs, (4) 'Bharat Chandri' verses, (5) Pāncḥālī and Yātrā.

Of these, no sample of pāncḥālī and yātrā literature has come down to us as these were mainly oral literature and the practitioners were uneducated, sometimes illiterate. We shall have to make our assumptions on the basis of scanty samples of the other varieties. On many occasions the dating and authorship of the pieces are in doubt. But stylistically and thematically they belong to the late 18th century.

From Iswar Gupta's historical narration of the 'Kabigans' and from some other writings of later periods, it may be seen that this form was mainly conversational. In 'Kabigan' there were questions and replies between two parties. These were of a particular type. My hunch is that this form of conversation, of framing a question cunningly and of replying to it or avoiding it with equal or more cunning required a prose-style. The laws of versification and the requirements of quick retorts, often with a syntactical change, worked at variance. But the scope of solving the problem was in the form itself. Traditional versification with alliterations, puns and other rhetorics of sounds, was mixed with impromptu statements in simple prose grabed as verse. Even in this second part rhymes were to give an appearence of verse. But anybody may find, by keeping deaf to the rhymes and figures, that these are simple prose. These are also open to technical analysis of syntactical structure. The result will be the same.

Here is an example from early period :

1 ওগো তারা, আয় মা দুখ পাসরি
2 বল দেখি মা আমারে ।
3 কন্যে দিয়ে দৈন্যের ঘরে,
4 সদাই ভাবতেম তোমার তরে,
5 দুঃখ মন পোড়ে ॥
6 জামাই ভিক্ষে করে খায়,
7 শ্মশানে বেড়ায়,
8 কোথা ছিলে তুমি ভিখারীর ঘরে ॥
9 বল মা আমার কাছে
10 জামাই শিব এখন কেমন আছে ।
11 শিবের সুমঙ্গল শুনিবে সকল
12 শুনলে পরে আপন জীবন বাঁচে ॥
13 মনে কতেম আমি সদাই বাসনা,
14 উমাধনে আনতে যাই ।
15 ভাবতাম মনেতে কাঁদতেম নিশিদিনেতে,
16 চলিবার কিছু শক্তি নাই ।
17 গিরি প্রাণ বাঁচালে তোমায় এনে পূর্ণ হলো বাসনা
18 ঘুচলো বেদনা সকল যন্ত্রণা ।
19 তুমি না এলে এখন, যেতো মা জীবন,
20 মায়ে-ঝিয়ে দেখা হতো না
21 এখন জুড়াল হৃদয়, দুঃখ গেল সমুদয়,
22 হোলো কোটি চন্দ্র উদয় এ গিরিপুরে । (হর ঠাকুর)

Of these 22 lines, the lines with numbers 1, 11, 12, 17, 18, 21 and 22 are verse lines in the style of versification of the period. The two sequences between the lines 2 and 10, and, 13 and 16 have been expressed in a style which may be described as prose garbed in verse. Some lines have a mixed-structure.

Let us take an example from later period when the style has been followed with little more sophistication.

1 গত নিশি যোগে আমি হে দেখেছি স্বপন ।
2 এল হে সেই আমার তারাধন ।
½ 3 দাঁড়ায়ে দুয়ারে, বলে মা কই মা কই মা কই আমায়
4 দেখা দাও দুখিনীরে
5 অমনি দুবাহু পসারি, উমা কোলে করি, আনন্দেতে
6 আমি আমি নয় ।
7 ওহে গিরি, গা তোল হে, উমা এলেন হিমালয় ।
½ 8 ভব দুর্গা দুর্গা বলে, দুর্গা কর কোলে, মুখে বল
9 জয় জয় দুর্গা জয় ।
10 কন্যা পুত্র প্রতি বাৎসল্য তায় তাচ্ছিল্য করা নয় ।।
11 আঁচল ধরে তারা বলে ছি মা কি মা, মাগো,
12 ও মা মা বাপের কি এমনি ধারা ।
½ 13 গিরি তুমি যে অগতি বুঝে না পার্বতী,
14 প্রসূতির অখ্যাতি জগ-ময় ।
15 মা হওয়া যত জ্বালা যাদের মা বলবার আছে তারাই জানে ।
½ 16 তিলক না হেরিয়ে মর্ম্মে ব্যথা পাই কর্ম্মসূত্রে সদা স্নেহে টানে ।

(Prachin Kabi-Sangeet published by Calcutta University).

In these 16 lines, lines with numbers 2, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 14 are distinctly in the typical verse style of the period. The lines with numbers 1, 7, 10, 11, 12 and 15 are syntactically prose with some verse garbs.

The lines 3, 8, 13, 16 are of mixed syntaxes of verse and prose. To bring our point home we may rearrange the above prose lines in prose paragraph.
গত নিশিযোগে আমি দেখেছি স্বপন, ওহে গিরি গা তোল, উমা এলেন হিমালয় । কন্যাপুত্র (- এর) প্রতি বাৎসল্য তাচ্ছিল্য করা নয় । আঁচল ধরে তারা বলে, ''ছি মা, কি মা, যাগো, ওমা মা, বাপের কি এমনি ধারা ।'' মা হওয়া যত জ্বালা, যাদের মা বলবার আছে, তারাই জানে ।

Many more examples may be given where we will get the same features.

Now, if we examine the structure of 'Kabi' - songs we will see that the structure itself was evolved to admit of such prose-like variations within a verse-structure.

There is some difference of opinion as to what this structure was. The earliest Kabi-songs are said to have mahadā, chitān and antarā only. Some say that the divisions were chitān, mukh (or Mahadā), Khād, antarā. Some again say that these parts were chitān, dhuyā, antara, Jhumair. These sections differ not only in East Bengal and West Bengal but also between the districts.

Whatever may be the division of parts, 'the whole musical gamut of each song is arranged in ascending and descending order into such divisions' which are bound to each other by a particular rhyming pattern. A particular division (section) is not made necessarily of one sentence only. Some part may have 5 or 10 lines, some again may have one or a half line i.e. any part may be of any length. But these parts (not lines) must be linked by the particular design of rhyming. This rhyme-design is as follows :

Chitān
Par chitān
Fuka
Melta
Mahadā
Saoari
Khad
Second Fuka
Second Melta
Antara

Chitān and par Chitān have the same rhyming. Fuka is independent of rhyming. Melta - Mahadā - Saōari - Khad - Second Melta make one rhyming. Second Fuka and Antara are independent of rhyming.

This rhyming design shows that in Kabigan, enough free space was provided within a section so that the Kabiwala might make free statements with the only obligation that where he decided to close the section he would have to rhyme the section with its corresponding section. And such free spaces were used for prose-like statements than for versification. This free space for adding statements was more extended in course of time and Kheur and Haf-Akhrai forms were developed. With this so called degeneration of Kabi-songs in Kheur and Haf-Akhrai the plebeians were developing their kind of prose-exchange, while the elites failed to develop a properly structured public prose.

Let us take an available example, though it is not the best type of Kheur :

Ramprasad

নাইক রাম বোসের এখন সেকেলে পৌরোষ
এখন দল করে হয়েছেন রাম বোস রামকামারের ঔরস ।

Ram Basu

তেমনি এই নীলুর দলে রামপ্রসাদ একটীন
যেমন ঢাকের পিঠে বাঁয়া থাকে বাজে নাক একটি দিন ।
যেমন রাতভিখারীর ধামায় বওয়া থাকে একজন,
হরি নাম বলে না মুখে পেছু থেকে চাল কুড়ুতে মন,
কর্মে অকর্মা তেমনি এ রামপ্রসাদ শর্মা
মন কাজের কাজী ঠাটের বাজী ঠিক যেন ধোপার বিশকর্মা --
নীলমণি বলে, নীলমণির দলে ঢুকলো শিংভাঙা এঁড়ে বাছুরের পালে
যেমন নবাব মলে নবাব হলো উজীরালি আড়াই দিন ।
যেমন মেগের কাছে পলের বড়াই ঘরে করে জাঁক,
দুনিয়ার কর্মেতে কুঁড়ে, ভোজনে দেড়ে, বচনে পুড়িয়ে করেন খাক ।
তেমনি শ্রী ছাঁদ, এই পেটকো মুলুকচাঁদ, তরেন রামপ্রসাদ,
ধরে কৃষ্ণ প্রসাদ,
যেমন জন্মে কভু হাত পোরে না দোলে নবেদার আস্তীন ।

The stylistic freedom that the lines may not contain the same number of foots, and the foots may not contain the same number of moras, make these sentences open-ended and bring in them a prose-like flow. In spite of the speediest foot (of 4 moras) and quick rhymes this is more a prose than a verse or a verse deputising an as yet - unborn prose.

IV

The apparent formlessness of the Kabi-songs is considered by critics and historians of literature as a part of the decadence of the form of versification itself as if this particular form of Kabi-songs was the result of the inability of the Kabiwalla's to compose verse as per rules. Rabindranath in 1896 noted,

> The Bengali words are light, they do not have the accents of the English words, neither have the shortening and lengthening of sounds of the Sanskrit words. Moreover these songs under review are not bound by regular prosody. So, too much use of alliteration was necessary so that these carelessly composed verses might leave some impression on the audience. /my translation/

My submission is that the regularity of the form of versification could not be maintained in these songs because by that time the social base of versification had under-gone a qualitative change. From the imitation of Bharatchandra by the Kabiwallas it is evident that at least some of them, were fully conscious of the rules of versification. (Please see Note A for a very brief discussion on the verse-structure of the period). The verse-parts of Kabi-songs are full of Bharatchandra- characteristics to make it apparent that this was a living tradition with them. The intrusion of the prose sentences was not made through the failure in versification but for the social necessity for the change of the form. The Kabiwallas were not conscious of this change. They were unconscious tools of history. In the newly erected bazar-areas and

in the lately grown 'para's of the 'black-town' behind the main urban centre of the city of Calcutta the new immigrants of weavers, confectioners, Baniks, 'declassed' Brahmins, domiciled Firingis and such others were ready for the dramatic and the prosaic that could address them with idiom of their new pattern of daily life. It may be presumed that they learnt the language in their daily use but did not know, like the proverbial maid of the Moliere-play, that this was prose. So a place for the daily speech was found in the traditional verse-form. Thus, the form changed from a tightly woven structure to a losely bound miscellany. The new content entered into the traditional form through these chinks.

The content of Kabisongs is traditionally judged by the same yardstick. To quote Rabindranath from the same article,

> By diluting the spirit of the previous Sakta and Vaishnava poetry these poets have sold them very cheaply to their city clientelle.

A completely new element penetrated into the reference-frame of the Sakta and Vaishnava cultures. This had the nature of comment on the real-life affairs and persons. The very small samples of Kabisongs known to us, thanks to Iswar Gupta's endeavour, contain a considerable part where the Kabiwalla attacks his opponent and where the Kabiwalla defends himself against such attacks. The line between the attack and defence is not very clear in each and every case. In the process the personal and the social inter-mingle in violent and abusive speeches. This gave the Kabisongs its peculiar popularity. Let us take some examples. The attack on and the reply by Ram Basu have been quoted earlier. Here is the sample of an attack on Anthony by Thakur Sinha.

বল হে আন্টুনি আমি একটি কথা জানতে চাই
এলে এদেলে এ বেলে তোমার গায়ে কেন কুর্তি নাই

and the reply by Anthony

এই বাংলায় বাঙালির বেলে আনন্দে আছি ।
হয়ে ঠাকুরে সিংয়ের বাপের জামাই কুর্তি টুপি ছেড়েছি ।

The young Ram Basu once attacked the old Haru Thakur

ঠাকুর বাঁচবে না আর বিস্তর দিন ।
তোমার চক্ষে ধরেছে পোকা স্বর্ণরেখা আছে ক্ষীণ ।

Here is the proverbial self-introduction by Bhola Moira,

আমি সে ভোলানাথ নই
আমি ময়রা ভোলা ভাজাই খোলা
বাগবাজারে রই ।

To describe Kabisongs as containing only Sakta and Vaishnava themes is to see it only outwardly. Inwardly the Kabiwalla himself and his family, friends, relatives, and associates all these became the real context. And these Kabiwallas did not find the poetical form, as practical till then, to be adequate for describing the new reality containing themselves and their immediate surrounding. What was really an extension of the form appeared to be its decadence. It was unconscious attempt of a new form to find a new content. The prose lines and prose- like sections in the Kabisongs are results of that attempt.

Here is an example when Bhola Moira is said to attack Jagmoshwari a female-kabiwali. The attack is full of double-meaning. All the references from mythology and folklore are aimed at the Kabiwali with a sex-overtone.

1 তুমি মাতা যজ্ঞেশ্বরী সর্বকার্যে শুভকরী
2 তোমার ঐ পুরানো এঁড়ে রাম বোস বাপ
3 যেমন পিতা তেমনি মাতা ভোলানাথের অভয়দাতা.
4 মা-বাপ ঠিক লাগিয়ে দিলে —
5 এখন যা । সুধাই তোরে কেন এসে এই আসরে
6 ঘন ঘন দিচ্ছ জোরে ডাক
7 বুঝি মা তোমার হয়েছে কাল বেহায়ার নাই কালাকাল
8 তাই বাবুদের সভায় এত হাঁক ।

In this passage only the lines 1 and 3 are verse-lines and the other lines are prose in rhyme and foot.

V

Let us look at another variety of examples though of the same kind. In the Agamani, Viraha, Sakhi Sangbad and Tappa songs composed in this period we shall find such lines or sections which comply with my idea of latent-prose. Let us give some examples. Here sometimes the prose comes out in a sentence or an expression in a short song. At the present state of my search I am not sure whether this sudden sprouting in prose is so explicit a phenonomenon as to build a body of evidence. But I have met some such lines that seem to me to be more prose than verse. Only a few lines are quoted here

1. সাধ করে করেছিলাম দুর্জয় মান, শ্যামের তায় হল অপমান
2. শ্যাম কাল যান করে গেছে, কেমন আছে, দুটি জেনে আয়
3. তোমার কংস রাজ্যের অংশ লইতে আমি নাই।
4. ওহে গোবিন্দ বড় মন্দ হতেছে
   করেছ প্রেমধার তুমি কোন রমনীর কাছে
   তুমি করে কার দাসত্ব, পেয়েছ রাজত্ব
   সে তত্ত্ব জানতে এসেছে তোমার।

In these examples the composer's approximation of a speech-like expression is, in some places, mixed up with traditional poetic diction and in some places is distinct from that diction. All these are examples from 'Sakhi Sangbad' where dialogue is the format.

If we take some older evidence of "Ramprasadi song" we get a host of monologue - songs where the composer adopts this speech-expression unfailingly. This particular form mingled with the typical 'Ramprasadi-tune'-made this brand of verses a separate genre in Bengali literature. My assumption is that the freshness of these Ramprasad - compositions generates more from their syntax, which is dramatic monologue in verse and latent prose in their basic structure. Here are some examples. (My method of primary selection is, first to forget the closing rhyme and to see whether the line can dispense with that. If it can stand on its own I take it to be a prose line).

1. আর কাজ কি আমার কালী
   মায়ের পদতলে পড়ে আছে গয়া গঙ্গা বারাণসী

2. এমন মানব জমিন রইল পতিত
   আবাদ করলে ফলত সোনা
   কালী নামে দাও রে বেড়া, ফসলে তছরূপ হবে না

3. আমায় দে মা তবিলদারি
   আমি নিমক হারাম নই শঙ্করী ...
   অর্ধ অঙ্গ জায়গীর, তবু শিবের মাইনে ভারি
   আমি বিনে মাইনের চাকর, কেবল চরণধূলার অধিকারী ।

4. আমি নই আটালে ছেলে
   ভয়ে ভুলব নাকো চোখ রাঙ্গালে

5. মন জান না কি ঘটবে লেঠা

6. আমি খেপার খাস তালুকের প্রজা

The dialogue-format of the 'Sakhi Sangbad' and the monologue-format of the 'Ramprasadi' Song were connected with the Kabi Jatra and Kesto Jatra forms of opera-singing which was a mixture of play and song. And in these performing forms there was scope for a dialogue to be stretched to a song, and a song to be squeezed into a dialogue. The 'Akhar' of pala-kirtan is of the same variety. The dialogues of Radha and Krishna on several occasions, of the Sakhis with Krishna, of Akrura with Krishna were traditional pieces where the dialogue element and the musicial element seemed to converge. Here again the composers and the singers were approximating to their speech-structure. They did not know that it was prose, so the prose was hidden in the garb of verse.

This intrusion of prose in the verse-structure sometimes suggests a chronology, but that chronology cannot be definitively established. We could have been definite in our conclusions if we could prove that the prose intruded first into the short songs and then found a place for itself in the larger area of Kabi-Songs. But though Ramprasadi songs were composed earlier,

the other-varieties of songs and the Kobi songs were almost contemporaneous. So we shall have to be satisfied with this interim conclusion for the period that this intrusion began some time after 1750.

VI

- Working out my hypothesis to such a length on the basis of identifying prose-structure in verse may rightly raise question with regard to the method of this identification. In other words this is to ask for the definition of syntactical structure with their prose and verse varieties and of the process of their interpenetration.

This question may be answered in two ways one being the very simple method of taking a poem and finding out what syntactical devices the poet is using to make a poem. The syntax he is 'devising' is the particular structure, i.e. in this case the verse-structure, and the syntax he is taking from the general practice is the prose-structure. In our present note, the Bengali verses that we are discussing are so simple, and unsophisticated as well that this method should work well.

The other method of differenting between prose and verse structures involves a theoretical framework within which the most modern poems with sophisticated and conscious use of prose-structure and colloquy in an almost mathematically calculated form, may also be placed and judged.

But our case is neither that simple, nor so complex. In the period under discussion prose was not yet born. Hence, the certainty of identification of a prose-syntax is historically not possible. Again, in the absence of other syntaxes in practice, the co-ordinates of the verse-syntax cannot be determined. So, in the case of Bengali literature of the later part of the eighteenth century we shall have to apply both the methods, sometimes simultaneously.

In approximating the syntactical structure of a language the 'linguist' tries to construct a model of the native speaker's 'linguistic competence'. A direct but significant manifestation of linguistic competence is the native speaker's ability to recognize some word-arrangement as his language, in our

case Bengali, and some word-arrangement as not his language. That is to say, every one, who speaksBengali, posseses knowledge to identify the syntactic structure of Bengali, and to identify what is not a syntactic structure of Bengali. Between these two extremes occur sentences of varying degrees of grammaticalness. These are called "semi-sentences". These "semi-sentences" - have a syntactic structure which is not fully within the linguistic competence of the community but neither is it completly beyond it.

In its search for the syntactical difference between prose and verse modern stylistics through the works of Mac Hammond (1961), Jacobson (1960) Levin (1962) Thorne (1965, 1969), Hendricks (1969), and Fowler (1969) have developed a system of study which is consistent with this description of syntactical structure.

The organization of the language of poetry differs from that of prose on the following counts :

1. Outwardly, the phonological features of rhythm and rhyme seperates poetry from prose.

2. With regard to the syntax and semantics the poet works under the restraint of self-imposed rules, i.e. rules which do not form part of the grammar of natural language i.e. of the linguistic competence.

3. These 'ungrammatical' 'semi sentences' occur far more frequently in poetry. Our understanding of these deviant semi-sentences are an essential element of our responses to poetry. These 'semi-sentences' or 'deviant - sentences' enable the poet to say things that can be said through a fully - structured syntax. Things also that cannot be said in such a syntax may well be withing the linguistic competence of the speakers.

I am taking an example of 'Ramprasadi song' to see how we can differentiate between syntactical structure of prose and verse.

মন রে, কৃষি কাজ জান না
এমন মানবজমিন রইল পতিত আবাদ করলে ফলত সোনা ।
কালী নামে দাও রে বেড়া, ফসলে তছরূপ হবে না ।
সে যে মুক্তকেশীর শক্ত বেড়া,
তার কাছেতে যম ঘেঁষে না ।
অদ্য অব্দ শতাব্দে বা বাজেয়াপ্ত হবে জান না ।
আছে এক তারে মন, এই বেলা তুই চুটিয়ে ফসল কেটে নে না,
গুরু রোপণ করেছেন বীজ, ভক্তি বারি তায় সেঁচ না ।
ওরে একা যদি না পারিস রে মন,
রামপ্রসাদকে ডেকে নে না ।

Compositionally the whole verse is a simple description of tilling and harvesting allegorizing "Ramprasad-Kali" relationship. Syntactically every single line (rhythmically complete) is built up on a proverbial phrase (underlined in the text). These phrases do not only come within the linguistic competence of a Bengali-speaking person but this linguistic competence itself is used overtly which brings the theme down to earth. The composer completes the syntactical structure of every sentence and there is not a single deviant semi-sentence. This, to me, is, proto-prose in verse. The figures of speech in first halves of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th lines are so obvious that I do not wish to consider them as prose structure.

A question may be raised here: why should we take these sentences to be of prose-structure and not as instances where colloquy has been used in verse ?

I do nt contradict the suggestion, rather I agree with it. "Ramprasadi" songs are the first instance where a poet includes himself in the theme. This supernatural relationship of Kali with Ramprasad requires a natural idiom for expression. Ramprasad got that in the colloquy. Here the use of colloquy brings the structure near the speech-pattern. The result is a step close to prose and a step away from verse.

But this is not a rule and use of colloquy does not always push the syntax close to prose. I shall take an opposite example from Nidhu Babu's tappa where the use of colloquy forms 'deviant' 'semi-sentences' of poetic syntax.

নয়নেরে দোষো কেন ?

মনেরে বুঝায়ে বল, নয়নেরে দোষো কেন ?
আঁখি কি মজাতে পারে না হলে মনমিলন ।
আঁখিতে যে যত হেরে সকলি কি মনে ধরে
যেই যাকে মনে করে সেই তার মনোরঞ্জন ।

Like the Ramprasadi song here also the poet is a part of the theme and the speech pattern of idiomatic Bengali has been liberally used in the syntax -- (the underlined phrases). The syntax also may be heard as prose. In spite of so many similarities the result is opposite to that of the "Ramprasadi" song. This piece is one step more to modern lyric. Here the lyric is woven with and round these two unelucidated actions of 'Nayana' and 'Mana'. The colloquy does not bring down any super-natural to earth but raises an earthy affair to the level of supernatural. We do not know what happened and what will follow. The syntax in deviant because action is not ascribed to any subject but to 'Nayana' and 'Mana' which may, in reality, only be the agency of action. These are not full sentences in Noun-Verb pattern, so they are semi-sentences.

VII

I shall now leave this search for prose in verse and go straight for prose-sources in the later half of the Eighteenth Century. These are collections of letters written by different persons on different occasions. So for there were two published volumes of such collection of letters, one edited by Surendranath Sen and the other by Panchanan Mandal. Both these volumes contain some letters and documents written in the second half of the Eighteenth Century. But these do not make enough evidence on which we can reach some conclusions regarding the existence of a pre-British Bengali prose.

Recently we have got two other sources. These sources were not known before. One is a collection of letters written by weavers (Tānti) of Dacca. These letters are catalogued by Prof. Anisuzzaman of Chittagong from the India Office Library, London.

We have found another sources. Our colleague in this Centre, Indrani Ray, Fellow of History brought for us from the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris two collections of letters written in and around 1779. This collection, discovered by Indrani Ray is ready for publication, with my transcription and introduction. One part of there letters are in the process of publication in monthly "Parichaya" (May-June 1982).

In the Bibliotheque Nationale, these letters are part of the papers of a certain Jussant (1782). This much could be gathered about this person that he was "Interprete Jure" (the legal interpreter appointed by the Crown) in Chandannagar. Among his papers, besides these letters, there were a collection of Bengali and Persian words with their French equivalents. We are trying to get a copy of that.

These letters are arranged in two seperate "volumes" or parts. The arrangement is the result of good editing. The first bunch or "volume" of letter contain 104 letters written by different members of a Hindu joint family and their relatives and friends to each other. Though all the letter writers do not belong to the same family yet I have succeeded in tracing that the bulk of these letters were collected from one Ramhari Ghose's family.

In the second bunch there are 78 letters exchanged between persons in the hierarchies of business and land-holding, namely in the merchant — sub-contractor channel and at the landlord - tenant level.

In the first bunch, the collector collected 4 letters in some group of relatives, e.g. a father writes to his son, the son replies and the son writes to his father, the father replies, and 2 letters in some group of reltives e.g. the cousin writes to his uncle and the uncle replies.

In the second bunch one letter from one position to another and its reply make a group.

These groupings indicate that the collector was collecting letters and words in the tradition of European writers of a later period. For Carey also, acquiring the Bengali language meant learning Bengali words and some forms of writing. Hence he got his munshi Ramram Basu to 'write' 'Lipimala' which is a collection of letters and he himself published a 'vocabulary'.

These two bunches of letters are preceded by a list of letters in - French. We are annexing an English translation of this list with this paper to give an impression of what it is all about. The list is only the first translation, so many lines are marked by dots to indicate illegibility.

The second bunch of letters contain information report, application, negotiation for procuring job, show cause notice, explanation, partnership proposal, marriage proposal, social news, license, notice for appointment, purchase-deed, contract-deed, agreement, receipt, partition-deed, appointment letter, instruments of bail, appeal, hypothecation-deed, sale-deed, land-patta, gift-deed etc. The first bunch of letters contains such subjects as can be raised between relatives -- grand father asking for cloth and money, grandson giving news of new job, sickness in the family, imprisonment in the Kuchery, permission for sending the wife to her parents, complaints against fish-stealing in the pond, money for the annual puja, fire in the house, departure for Allahabad, search for a bride, date for a marriage, presentation for the son-in-law, asking the employee to come back and join duties, etc.

One or two letters from each part are annexed, so that it may be seen how these letters read.

VIII

Now we would like to deal with an important question in connection with these letters : what shape of pre-British prose comes out from these letters and how is it different from the Bengali prose as we know it to-day.

In my introduction to the book containing these letters I address myself mainly to these questions and attempt an elaborate analysis. Here I submit a brief summary of some of my conclusions presented there.

1. The form of the letters of both bunches are very rigid. Even private feelings are exchanged in that rigid format. Consequently, this exchange acquires a stereo-typed expression. One reason of such rigidity may be traced to the fact that in those days, letters were practically written down by one or two Writers in a village or locality. So even the private news or feelings were communicated to the addressee through the mediation of the letter-writer. The letter-writer has definite forms of writing to different relations and positions.

2. In the first bunch the format of a letter is divided in three parts: in the first part compliments and good wishes, in the second part the particular, in the third part again the concluding compliments. In the first and third parts the language are almost the same in all letters differing only in 'pronam' (if addressee is some one superior) and 'Ashirwad' (if the addressee is some one lower).

3. In the second part, the language is different from letter to letter and from the first and third parts. This second part gives the letter its individuality. Here is an example.

পরম পূজনিয় শ্রী যুত রামদেব ঘোষজা
ঠাকুরদাদা পিতাযথো ঠাকুর মহাশয় শ্রীচরণযুগলেষু

। সেবক শ্রী রামহরি দাষ ঘোষষ্ঠ প্রণামা সতো সহস্র নিবেদনঞ্চ। আগে মহাশএর শ্রীচরণ যু ভানু ধ্যান করনই তাহাতেই এ চাকরের সম আনুরূপ মঙ্গল বিশেষ : মহাশএর আসির্বাদ পত্র পাইয়া সকল সমাচার ওগাতো হইলাম। নিম খরচের চাল খরিদ করিতে আমাকে লিখিয়াছেন তিনহাজার মোন চাল খরিদ করিয়া মজুদ করিয়া রাখিয়াছী নৌকাভাড়ার সওগতি করিয়া তুরাতেই চাল বোজাই করিয়া পাঠাইব তর্ষ্য পর শ্রীযুতি রামমণি দাশী সমুর বাটী জাইবেন তাহার খরচাপত্র জে লাগে তাহা মহাসয় দিয়া বিদায় করিবেন। ।। ইহা শ্রীচরণে নিবেদন করিলাম তারিখ ৬ আশ্বিন রোজ সুক্রোবার দুই প্রহর সময়।

The three parts are indicated by third brackets. It is a letter that carries two pieces of information, normally one is enough for a letter. The pieces of information are complex so the language of the second part of this letter goes beyond the stereo-type.

4. In the letters where the piece of information is not that important the language of this part becomes indistinguishible from the other two parts.

5. In this second part there is a combination of Sanskritised mode of address with Persianised language of communication. The combination seems to be easy and without strain. Here is a good example

... মহাশএর শ্রীচরণ সুভানুধ্যান অহরাত্রদিবা করিতেছী তাহাতেই এ নফরের অহিক পার্থিকে। ঐহিক - পারত্রিকের। নিস্তার

6. In the second bunch where mainly official formal letters are collected, we find the same ~~xxxxxx~~ combination of Sanskrit and Persian forms. The indigenous form of Bengali is also written in a practised hand with natural felicity. Here is an example from an appeal against increase in rent.

... আমি অনেক কালাবধি গ্রামের রাইয়তগিরি করিয়া আসিতেছি আমার মালগুজারি
নিজ জোতে সাড়ে তিন সত[1] টাকা পাচখান হাল আমার নিজে (র) গ্রিহস্ত লোক
দরবার[2] কেমন তাহা দেখি নাই চাষ করি ভাত খাই[3] এখন দয়ি হজাদার[4]
শ্রীজাদব রায় রায় আমার জমায় গ্রীশ টাকা[6] বেশী করিয়াছে কহে তুমি দেও[5]
এ কারণ মহাশয়[7] কাগজপত্রের মালিক জদী সদরে প্রজাদিগের বেশী হইয়া[8] থাকে
তবে আমিই দিতে করুন রাখী ইহার বিহিত মহাশয় দেখিতে আজ্ঞা হইবেক[9] ।
[10] [11]

- This is a brilliant piece of Bengali prose where many variations of Bengali syntax are used with certainty and without ambiguity, not one syntactical pattern is repeated. The 11 sentences give 11 different variation of syntax. The 9th, 10th and 11th sentences being the concluding section — and containing only an appeal, 'E Karan' is the term that differentiates the information part from the concluding appeal.

7. The letters contain words of Sanskrit and Persian origin. The number of words of European origin are very few. Many of the words are now obsolete and some of them are used only in court. However these letters represent a source of vocabulary <u>different from the one we know</u>.

I would not like to make any over-bearing statement that all the letters are of the same quality. But in these 182 letters there are many such letters that are very good cases for syntactical analysis. In the forthcoming book I have tried to make a list of such words which are not in use now and those syntactic structure which we get from these letters. For the present note I would like to stop here and go to my concluding part and make a quick comparison of the prose of these letters with the Bengali prose as practised under British aegis.

IX

The sahibs made a 'production machinery' for 'producing' Bengali prose. This 'machinery' was first put into action in the Fort William College and was functioning in publishing 'Samachar Darpan'.

This system was fully dependent on the services of the pandits. William Carey and John Marshman did know some Bengali. It can be guessed that they understood Bengali and by practice and experience might have developed enough knowledge of it to monitor the translation work. But there is nothing to prove that they could write Bengali as well. Carey and Marshman did not write anything originally in Bengali. The books that run by Carey's name are collection of dialogue; and stories. Carey might have planned and supervised their production. It cannot however be proved beyond doubt that he himself wrote these books. The dialects that have been used in these books suggest the opposite.

It is not fully known how Marshman edited "Samachar Darpan" regularly. The method of his selection and intervention cannot be guessed.

But it is evident from the books of the Fort William College and from the files of Samachar Darpan that translation was the main prop of this system of "producing" books and journals in Bengali. Translation was mainly done from English. But the Sanskrit Pandits who worked in these places did not know English. Then how were these written ? These were written obviously through co-operation between the Sahibs and Munshis. But how did this 'co-operation' work, particularly when both the co-operators lacked proper knowledge of each other's language.

Here a peculiar comprador partnership, typical of a colonial country, came up involving both the Sahibs and the Pandits.

The Sahibs were in the need of a prose in Bengali. They had to depend on the traditional intellectuals of the Hindu society i.e. the Brahmin Pandits. The pandits had to give such a shape to the language, build such structure for

syntax that might be understandable to the Sahibs by applying their knowledge of English. Here the Sanskrit language came to help and the Bengali prose was written in such a Sanskritised diction that the Sahibs could well follow the meaning by just a word by word translation. Bengali syntax was formed by applying Sanskrit and English rules. Its clause pattern was Sanskrit and its verb (tense) pattern was English. The indigenous Bengali speech-pattern was not the model for this written prose. The indigenous usage of words was not the stock-vocabulary for those Writers. So this British-Indian prose is correct in the use of tense and adjective, but can never find the correct way of arranging the clauses in the sentences, a task, which cannot be done without a properly structured syntax.

In the letters I quoted from the collection we shall find the opposite. There is less use of adjective, this is used mainly for decoration in the address. The sense of tense is conveyed by the context and not by any morphological change in the verb. And so, except some such letters in Ramram Basu's Lipimala, nowhere in the books of the Fort Willian College or in the pages of "Samachar Darpan" can we get a single prose-passage that can be structurally compared with letters I have quoted.

In the Fort Willian College phase the writing of Bengali prose was only an academic exercise. The subjects that were taken up for writing Bengali books did not crop up from the experience of a Bengali-speaking community. So the Bengali books were translation works, middleman between the Sahibs and the 'native' language. The Sahibs provided the theme, the pandits provided the language.

The pandits could do it, because by the Eighteenth Century the Sanskrit language through the cultivation of Smriti and Navya-Nyaya had undergone a bureaucratisation. Sanskrit got transformed to a language of family and religious laws. The language was not communicative but prescriptive. Sahibs could follow such a thing and British bureaucracy and the traditional Brahmin bureaucracy joined together to produce Bengali prose through paper and press.

APPENDIX - I

Table of contents of 1st part of Bibliotheque Nationale letters April 1779.

1. From the paternal great grandfather to his great grandson.
2. Reply of the great grand son to his paternal great grandfather.
3. Another of the great grandson to his paternal great grandfather
4. Reply of the paternal great grandfather to his great grandsn.
5. The Maternal great grandfather to his great grandson.
6. Reply of great grandson to maternal great grandfather.
7. From great grandson to Maternal great grandfather.
8. Reply of maternal great grandfather to great grandson.
9. Same of paternal great grandfather to grandson.
10. Reply of grandson to his paternal grandfather or great grandfather.
11. Same of grandson to paternal grandfather.
12. R. of paternal of grandfather to grandson.
13. D. of maternal grandfather to grandson.
14. R. of grandson to maternal grandfather.
15. D. of grandson to maternal grandfather.
16. R. of maternal grandfather to grandson.
17. D. of father to son.
18. R. of son to father.
19. D. of son to father.
20. R. of father to son.
21. D. of a mother to her son.
22. R. of son to his mother.
23. D. of son to his mother.
24. R. of the mother to son.
25. D. of Elder and younger paternal uncles to their nephew.
26. R. of nephew to his paternal uncles.
27. D. of nephew to his paternal uncles.
28. R. of paternal uncles to their nephew.
29. D. of maternal uncles to their nephews.
30. R. of a nephew to his maternal uncles.
31. D. of paternal amount of her nephew.
32. R. of nephew to paternal amount.
33. D. of husband of paternal amount to nephew.

34. R. of nephew to husband to paternal amount.
35. D. of maternal amount to her nephew.
36. R. of nephew to his maternal amount.
37. D. of husband of maternal amount to nephew.
38. R. of nephew to husband of maternal amount.
39. D. of father-in-law or father of his own wife to his son-in-law.
40. R. of son-in-law to father of his wife.
41. D. of elder brother to younger brother of same.
42. R. of younger brother to elder brother of same mother.
43. D. of elder brother to younger brother of same mother.
44. R. of younger brother to elder brother.
45. D. of husband of his elder sister.
46. R. of [brother-in-law] to husband of my elder sister.
47. D. of husband of my younger sister.
48. R. to husband of my younger sister.
49. D. of my sister in law or wife of my elder brother.
50. R. of brother in law to the wife of his elder brother.
51. D. of a step mother or wife of father to son by first marriage of her husband.
52. R. of step son to his step mother or second wife of his father.
53. D. to brother by second marriage.
54. R. of a brother by second marriage to his brother by first marriage.
55. D. to daughter in law.
56. R. of the daughter in law to father of her husband.
57. D. of the elder sister to the younger sister by same marriage.
58. R. of younger brother to elder sister by same marriage.
59. D. to his sister by second marriage.
60. R. of the sister by second marriage to brother by first marriage.
61. D. of father to his grand son-in-law.
62. R. of grand son-in-law to father of his wife.
63. D. of the mother of his wife.
64. R. of the mother to husband of her daughter.
65. D. to brother of his wife.
66. R. of brother in law to husband of his wife.
67. D. of paternal uncle of his wife.

68. R. of nephew to the paternal uncle of his wife.
69. D. of maternal uncle of his wife.
70. R. of nephew to maternal uncle of his wife.
71. D. to paternal amount of his wife.
72. R. of paternal amount of his wife [illegible] to 7 nephew or husband of her niece.
73. D. to maternal amount of his wife.
74. R. of maternal amount to nephew or husband of her niece.
75. D. to father of his step mother or second wife of his father.
76. R. to the same.
77. D. to brother of his step mother or second wife of father.
78. R. to son of my sister by first marriage.
79. D. to his paternal germain cousin.
80. R. of paternal cousin to paternal cousin.
81. D. to son of paternal germain.
82. R. of son of paternal germain to the
83. D. to maternal germain cousin.
84. R. to germain cousin above mentioned cousin.
85. D. to the son of maternal cousin.
86. R. of son of maternal germain to above mentioned.
87. D. to son of his elder brother.
88. R. to the same.
89. D. to son of his elder sister.
90. R. to the same.
91. D. to father of my son in law.
92. R. to the same.
93. D. to his male slave.
94. R. to the same.
95. D. to his dewans or sirkars [illegible]
96. R. to the same.
97. D. to his servant ...
98. R. to the same.
99. D. to his gomosta or agent.

100. R. to the same.

101. D. to .....

102. R. to the same.

103. D. to his changer.

104. R. to the same.

2nd Part :

1. To the Raja or prince of the country.
2. ..... the Secretary.
3. To the Dewan or ..... of the Raja.
4. To the same.
5. To the Royal Secretary of .....
6. To the same.
7. To the Guru or Goswamin (?) of .....
8. To the same.
9. To the European master.
10. From the European master to the Bengal Agent or servant.
11. To the inferior master Bengali.
12. To the same.
13. To a superior friend.
14. To the same.
15. To an equal friend.
16. To the same.
17. ..... of the guru engagement of marriage .....father of the girl
18. To the same.
19. To an inferior friend -- marriage of .....
20. To the same.
21. From a friend to a friend.
22. To the same
23. Condolence on the death of a friend.
24. To the same.
25. Dasatok.

26. Dasstok.
27. Commission on the .... of a province [?]
28. The inhabitants to the Raja.
29. Contract for cloth.
30. Contract for rice and fuel and ...
31. Contract for lime.
32. Contract for cloth.
33. Engagement of the merchant. ..
34. New engagement the first one not having been kept.
35. Engagement for supplying rice to the captain & ship .....
36. Engagement for supplying of wood for a ship.
37. Engagement for/or Kabuliyat .....compromise .....
38. Engagement for the zamindar.
39. Engagement made in front of the Raja.
40. Engagement passed in front of the Zamindar.
41. Engagement of — in front of the Zamindar.
42. Engagement.
43. Engagement of Servant.
44. A receipt.
45. B.
46. Receipt for cloth.
47. aB.
48. aB.
49. aB.
50. ar.
51. [quittance] Chalen the general discharge.
52. aB the same
53. The minute of ....
54. [cont.]
55. Engagement passed by the master to the servant.
56. Engagement of the servant vis-a-vis his master.
57. The Quaranter of body [?] [Corps]
58. Declaration.

59. The same of engagment passed in front of the arbiters .....

60. Engagement of .....passed by the parties in front of the Zamindar.

61. The Minute.

62. Paper of hypothecation of house and ...

63. Sale of Seignurie called taluk.

64. [Cont.]...

65. Sale of title [?]

66. Dochot patta.

67. ..... of a .....

68. Gift of land free from khajne payable [?] to the king, prince or seignurie to different-persons, like Brahmins, Moors, Servants and the Writers .....

69. Decision of Brahmins regarding the subject of the voluntary inheritor of a person who dies childless

70. Order of a prince of inhabitants of a place ..... rehebilitation of a woman in her caste after having washed herself for infamy which was imposed on her wrougly by the .....

71. Order of Prince to render the land of an inhebitant which .....has occupied without reason.

72.

73.

74.

75.

76.

77.

78.

APPENDIX II

EXAMPLES OF LETTERS

From the first bunch :

পরম পূজনিয় শ্রীযুত জগন্নাথ মিত্রজা
মহাশয় মাতাযহ ঠাকুর শ্রীচরণ কমলেষু
সেবক শ্রী রামহরি দাস ঘোষস্য

প্রণামা সতো সহস্র নিবদনঞ্চ আগে মহাশএর শ্রীচরণ যুগানুধ্যান নিয়তো প্রার্থনিয় তাহাতেই এ ছাওয়ালের সম অনুরূপ মঙগল বিশেষ অনেক দীবস হইল মহাসয়ের সে বাটীর কোন সমাচার পাই নাই তাহাতেই ভাবিত আছি বিবরিয়া লিখিতে আজ্ঞা হইবেক অপর আমি সাহেবের সরকারে দষ হাজার টাকা কর্জ্জ করিয়া মোকাম হরিপালে কাপড় খরিদ গত সনে করিয়াছিলাম সে কাপড় বিক্রী গতো সালে করিতে পারি নাই তথাছ আরবার হাল সালে সাড়ে তিন হাজার তঙকা সেই মোকামে পাঠাইয়াছী এ কাপড় আইলে হাল বকয়া দুই সনের কাপড় লইয়া কলিকাতা জাইব সেখানে খরিদার বিস্তর আছে কাপড় বিক্রীর কোন ভাবনা নাই ইহা শ্রীচরণে নিবেদন করিলাম ইতি

From the Second bunch :

মহামহিম শ্রীযুত জমিদার সাহেব বরাবরেষু
লিখিতং শ্রী রামদুলাল কর্ম্মকার

কস্য ... পত্র মিদং কার্য্যঞ্চ আগে আমি শ্রী রামনারায়ণ ঘোষকে চোরবাদ দিই নাই আমার বাটীর খীড়কির ঘাট হইতে খান চারিখান ঘটী একটা জলের ঘাটে থাকীয়া গিয়াছে সে পুষ্কনিতে পাচা পচশি সকলে জল সরে এ কারণ আমার জিনিষ হারিয়াছে এ এ কারণ আমি পাচা প্রতিবাসি সকলকে প্রতকে জিজ্ঞাসা করিলাম জে তোমরা জদ্বপি দেখিয়া থাকো তবে আমাকে কহো তাহাতেই সকলেই আমাকে কহিলেন আমরা দেখি নাই এবং জানি না তাহার পর আমি আর কিছু জানি না - এখন ঘোষ মহম্মদর (?) সাহেবের সরকারে নালিষ করিয়াছে জে আমাকে চোরবাদ দিয়াছে জদ্বি সবুদ্ধ করিতে পারে জে আমি চোর কহিয়াছি তবে হাকীমের সরকারে এক এত টাকা গুনাগার দিব আর ওহার দাওয়ায় নিষা করিব এতদর্থে মুচলখা পত্র লিখিয়া দিলাম ইতি

nc/.

A Note

On the verse-style in Bengali in the late 18th century (in reference to discussion in pp 8 and 11 in the text)

In a very tentative summary on the characterists of the verse in the late 18th century the following points may be noted. These notes are to fecilitate the understanding of the main argument of this paper and should not be taken to be any comment.

1. The verse is payar i.e. lines containing 8/6 - moraic foots and its different variations in Tripadi, Chaupadi, Lachari and others where rhythmically the line is extended to contain more than two foots.

2. The rhyme is mainly close-ending but in case of lines containing more than two foots it is foot - ending.

3. The payar lines contain a single-meaning — unit, with verb or with a verb understood.

4. The language is ornate and full of figures of speech. The figures are drawn mainly from sound. The other principal figures are Metophor, Simile, Allegory, Comparison, Hyperbole.

7. The verse was Judged by the virtuose of the poet in using these figures. The use of figures came down to the mid-nineteenth century prose-writers, where verse-styles were mixed in prose-structure.

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44. The Jute Industry in Eastern India During the Depression and its Influence on the Economy of the Region (Forthcoming in Dietmar Rothermund (ed.) *The Great Depression and the Periphery : Asia, Africa and Latin America* (in German) Verlag Ferdinand Schoning, Paderborn, 1982)

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47. More on Modes of Power and the Peasantry

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PROCEEDINGS OF CONFERENCES & SEMINARS

1. Problems of the Economy and Planning in West Bengal (CSSSC, 1974)
2. Change and Choice in Indian Industry (K. P. Bagchi & Co., 1981)

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1. Historical Dimensions (Calcutta, Oxford University Press, 1977)
2. Three Studies on Agrarian Structure in Bengal, 1850-1947 (in press)

ABSTRACTS OF ARTICLES

Abstracts of all articles written by CSSSC academic staff :

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