

**POLICIES AND
PRACTICES**

130

The Kaibarta Question in Barak Valley, Assam : A Curious Case of Settlements in Flux



December 2022



Policies and Practices 130

December 2022

Published by:

Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group

IA-48, Sector-III, Ground Floor

Salt Lake City

Kolkata-700097

India

Web: <http://www.mcrg.ac.in>

ISSN 2348 0297

Printed by:

Graphic Image

New Market, New Complex, West Block

2nd Floor, Room No. 115, Kolkata-87

This publication is brought out with the support of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. It is a part of the research programme of the Calcutta Research Group on migration and forced migration. It is conducted in collaboration with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Institute of Human Science, Vienna, and Several Universities and Institution in India.

The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) is a German-based foundation working in South Asia and other parts of the world on the subjects of critical social analysis and civic education. It promotes a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic social order, and aims at present members of society and decision-makers with alternative approaches to such an order. Research organisations, groups working for self-emancipation, and social activists are supported in their initiatives to develop models that have the potential to deliver social and economic justice. The work of Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, South Asia can be accessed at www.rosalux.in.

Sponsored by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung with funds of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany. This publication or parts of it can be used by others for free as long as they provide a proper reference to the original publication. The content of the publication is the sole responsibility of the partner and does not necessarily reflect a position of RLS.

**The Kaibarta Question in Barak Valley, Assam:
A Curious Case of Settlements in Flux**

Debashree Chakraborty

2022

The Kaibarta Question in Barak Valley, Assam: A Curious Case of Settlements in Flux

Debashree Chakraborty *

Introduction

This paper would try to trace the origins of Kaibarta migration in Barak valley of Southern Assam by focusing on how the community came and settled in the region. The paper is divided into two parts – the first part would discuss the settlement process by taking into account the data collected during field visit. In so doing, the paper would focus on the issues that plague the community – how the community, also a victim of Partition, still continues to face social discrimination despite being ensured state protection in terms of political and social rights. The second part attempts an analysis of a literary text, the novel, *Surma Gangor Pani* (2012) by Ranabir Purkaystha. The novel under consideration narrates the story of Boital, a Kaibarta individual who comes and settles in the Barak valley of Assam after the Partition, and his tryst with life as he tries to figure it out. The paper would try to situate the text in the context of the field study and the data collected by closely reading the representation of Kaibarta community in the text. It may be noted here that the Kaibartas are essentially a migrant community in Barak valley who came and settled here post the Partition. But ever since their settlement, they have been compelled to move both inside (mostly) and outside the valley in search of livelihood. Post-Partition rehabilitation of the community hangs on many loose threads and as such, individuals of the community are on a constant move as they struggle to acquire land rights and secure their means of sustenance.

Kaibartas in Barak Valley: An Exposition

The Kaibarta Community that can be found residing in the three districts of Southern Assam – Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi, which form the Barak valley, are of Bengali ethnicity and trace their roots primarily to the regions of Sylhet and Mymensingh (Bangladesh). The community has a substantive population concentration in these three districts and resides mostly in the wetland areas of the districts. The settlement history of the community in these districts largely begins after the Partition of India in 1947 though there were a few scattered settlements here and there before 1947 as well. The Kaibarta community, as one finds them today in the valley, is mostly engaged in activities related to daily wage labour of various kinds though, historically, their primary occupations were

* Researcher, Calcutta Research Group
Policies and Practices, Issue No. 130, December 2022

fishing and agriculture. The etymological origins of the term Kaibarta have been traced by scholars like Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar¹, Jatindra Kumar Bhattacharjee et al.,² and their scholarly works have all shown consensus that the term Kaibarta means “those who earn their livelihood from water”. The Kaibartas are widely known to be expert fish catchers, boat rowers who can navigate small and large boats in both high and low tides, and farmers.

The Kaibartas generally form part of the lowest echelons of the Hindu society. Ramakanta Das, Assistant Professor at the Department of Bengali, Assam University, who has been working extensively on the Kaibarta community since the last couple of years, opines that the ancestors of the present day Kaibarta community lived much before the onset of the “Vedic era” and hence naturally³, they were out of the Brahminical fold of society for a long period till the time they defeated the Palas and took over the reins of the Barendra Kingdom. It was during this period that the Kaibartas got integrated into the mainstream Hindu society. The genesis of the Kaibarta community is a long discussion which is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the Kaibarta community, as one can find them in the Barak valley of Assam, remains at the bottom of the caste ladder and is listed as a Scheduled Caste community⁴ in the state.

As mentioned earlier, the bulk of the Kaibarta community in the Barak valley of Assam settled there after Partition. Prior to that, sporadic settlements existed in the valley and the community in general, was unorganised. However, it must be noted here that the Kaibartas are one of the last groups to migrate from present day Bangladesh to Barak valley. If the post-Partition settlement pattern in Barak valley is examined closely, one would find that migration in the area took place in waves where the earlier migrants, (1947- till the late 1950s) mostly upper class educated Hindus, relocated voluntarily because of reasons like unwillingness to live in a Muslim country as minorities, better educational and economic opportunities, etc. The lack of immediate violence in Sylhet following the Partition makes the migration pattern from Sylhet (present day Bangladesh) to Barak valley (present day India) slightly different from the other parts that received post-Partition migrants. It was this initial lack of violence that prompted the Kaibarta community residing in various parts of Sylhet to stay put in their ancestral villages.

Interviews with elderly people of the community reveal that they initially chose to stay back largely because of two reasons – firstly, the Kaibarta community, under the leadership of Jogendra Mandal had voted in favour of the “axe”, the logo of Sylhet staying as part of Pakistan as against the “hut”, the logo of Sylhet becoming a part of India, in the Sylhet Referendum held on 6 July 1947 and hoped that they would be granted protection under the new government of Pakistan; and secondly, the community realised that their social position is not going to change from what it already is in the newly re-structured country of India and hence it doesn't really matter if they don't make a move. Also, as a community, the Kaibartas generally sustain themselves through fishing and farming – both of which are resource based occupations. The decision to migrate also meant leaving behind the land and water resources from which they drew their sustenance and hence they tried staying back for as long as they could. But this collective decision did not stand them in good stead for too long as sporadic violence against the minorities (Hindus in this case) broke out in what was now known as East Pakistan. The Anderson Bridge massacre, commonly known as the Bhairabpool incident, that happened on 12 February 1950, and resulted in a mass carnage of Hindus, sowed the first seeds of communal violence in post-Partition Sylhet. Gradually, incidents of “soft-violence” became common in many parts across Sylhet and more Hindus started migrating to Barak valley during the late 1950s and through the 1960s. The Kaibarta community, which initially thought it safe to live in East Pakistan, now faced the heat as violence became a daily reality.

What initially began as “threat perception” became a lived reality with the Liberation War of 1971 inching close. When asked about their reason of migration, many elderly people from the community cited incidents of violence like the mass killing of all male members of a particular village, abduction of unmarried women, etc., as their reasons of migration. It may be noted here that most of the people migrated in large groups – sometimes an entire village or at times, multiple villages – at the dead of the night in order to avoid any confrontation. The Kaibarta community, though not economically solvent, could manage daily subsistence through fishing and agriculture. Many families even owned land and managed to have a decent living. But migration lent a blow to their way of life as they became dependent on government assistance for their sustenance. Since the Kaibartas were one of the last groups of people to migrate, most did not receive the government land grants (Assam government had an elaborate land distribution system for Partition migrants) that earlier migrants did. Also, owing to their occupational needs leaders of the Kaibarta community stressed on the necessity of being rehabilitated near water bodies. In fact, the abundance of water bodies in Barak valley is an important reason why a large section of the community chose to come and settle down there. As a result, a huge population of Kaibartas was allowed to live in Son Beel, a wetland that forms part of the Karimganj and Hailakandi districts. However, these people were not given any land rights, only acquisition rights. Subsequent batches of Kaibarta who came much later got settled in several other wetlands like Malini Beel (Silchar), Chatla (Silchar) and many of them have now moved away from their traditional occupations of fishing and agriculture owing to various social, economic, and ecological factors. As mentioned already, the Kaibartas did not particularly enjoy any position of power or importance in the caste hierarchy and with their claim to land now gone, their social position became increasingly precarious. Son Beel, one of the largest seats of Kaibarta population in Barak valley did not disappoint the community altogether. With its abundance of fish catches, it continued to provide the community with their subsistence. Son Beel, it may be noted, is one of the largest fishing hubs in Assam. It also caters to the needs of the neighbouring state of Tripura. Kumar et al., in their research titled “Valuation of Ecosystem Services & Benefits of Son Beel Wetland in Assam, India: A Case Study of Natural Solutions to Climate Change & Water” have estimated that the monetary valuation of Son Beel ranges around a minimum of \$88 per hectare per year to a maximum of \$29.716 per hectare per year⁵. The total area of Son Beel is 3458.12 hectare and it remains filled to the brim during the course of the fishing season, that is, from March to November⁶. According to Bhattacharjee et al., there are almost 54 varieties of fishes in Son Beel ranging from abundant to rare in terms of availability. This creates a favourable situation for the fishing community.⁷

One of the characteristic features of Son Beel is that it becomes a dry land during the winters owing to the fact that it has primarily one major inlet – the river Singla, a tributary of the Kushiara.⁸ Also, its land gradient and inclination make the conditions favourable for it to turn into a dry land during the winters. So, during the lean season, the water cover significantly shrinks to an area of 409.37 hectare thus becoming suitable for paddy cultivation. During the dry spell, the community cultivates a type of rice that is locally known as “boro”. Therefore, Son Beel provides the community with round the year scope of sustenance. Apart from these two aspects, Son beel also sustains its inhabitants in other ways. As noted by Moharana Choudhury, Son Beel is also a major water way and almost 50 country boats ply across it on an average day. So boat making factory is a significant venture and around 300 families depend on it for a living.⁹ Son Beel provides its residents with ecosystem services, benefits that human beings receive from nature like food and fresh water security, climate security, fodder for cattle, fuel in the form of wood, etc. To quote Krchnak et al., “Wetlands work as natural infrastructure and networks of natural ecosystems that delivers a range of

important ecosystem services⁷¹⁰ and Son Beel, as a substantive eco-system stands in testimony to this observation.

However, Son Beel is a revenue land¹¹ and is under government control. Even though the area was earmarked as a settlement zone for the Kaibarta refugees, they were never given any ownership rights, only possession rights and hence the community always runs the risk of being displaced as the government of Assam plans to undertake a massive eco-tourism project in Son Beel by promoting it as a tourism hotspot.¹² In fact, the inhabitants have already staged protests as the government started its survey there. The residents fear that with the government's plan of holding water in the Beel area for the entire year, their regular cycle of fishing and agriculture will be hampered thus denting their economic prospects. With the government schemes in place, the area around Son Beel received the benefits of government development projects. Schools came up and now the area has a decent literacy rate. Ramakanta Das opines that an increasing number of people from Son Beel are now embracing education as a way to move out of their traditional occupations which is often fraught with insecurity.¹³ But the ones who stuck to fishing and agriculture now find it hard to sustain themselves. Low fish catches, silting of the water body, erratic weather patterns, etc., are some of the reasons which make it hard for the people there. As a result, many individuals and families have resorted to migrating out of the place. Prof. Manabendra Dutta Choudhury elaborates the kind of challenges that the Kaibarta community in Son Beel faces.

He notes that since Son Beel is a wetland and a government revenue land, it inevitably enters into the conservation bracket and hence, the amount of resource that can be utilised also comes under a cap.¹⁴ With increasing population, such a cap is now making it increasingly difficult for the community to depend on the natural resources alone. The increasing incidences of what Prof. Dutta Choudhury terms as “pre-monsoon” showers in Barak Valley and in the entire northeast adds to the community's woes as they face low crop yields in the years that receive such showers. Moderate to heavy rainfall during the harvest season of February-March sometimes causes pre-term floods that ruin the paddy crops thus causing economic loss to the community. This “pre-monsoon” shower has been quite a consistent phenomenon since the last 10-12 years and could likely be linked to global climate change. He also mentions that Son Beel, as the local name of beel suggests, used to be a perennial water body, but following the general process of evolution of any beel, Son Beel is now in the process of getting transformed into a “hawor”, that is, an annual water body. The process of a Beel's transformation to a Hawor involves siltation, as a result of which fish catches are declining at an alarming rate. He also cites the rapid deforestation along the hills through which the Singla River flows into Son Beel to be a major cause of its siltation. Recent studies show that in the last one hundred years, Son Beel has shrunk considerably – by an area of 3,593.6 hectare.¹⁵ A report published by Mongabay¹⁶ cites the difficulties faced by fisherman in Son Beel as fish catches dwindle at an alarming rate both due to siltation and erratic rainfall. As a result, fisherman are now resorting to unsustainable methods of fishing which is further upsetting the ecological balance of Son Beel. One such instance is the use of what is locally known as the *mabajaal*, which are large synthetic nets with small holes that trap small fish, eggs, etc., in huge quantities thus stressing fish population even more. Constant stress on means of livelihood over a considerable period of time has led a significant portion of the community to move out of Son Beel in search of better economic prospects. Thus it would not be wrong to say that a significant reason behind Kaibarta out migration is rooted in environmental and climate related concerns. Also, the domino effect that such concerns generate is evidently visible in the way the causality of the events associated with the migration of individuals of the Kaibarta community is linked.

These people mostly choose to settle in Silchar – the largest urban space in the Valley. While many male individuals engage in selling fish, a lot others also engage in selling vegetable and fruits. Rest associate themselves with rickshaw pulling or toto driving. The women generally work as house helps but a good number of them are also engaged in construction work like land filling or cement pulling. As a result, Kaibarta population in the city of Silchar rose steadily as most of them came and settled down in Malini Beel, another wetland at the heart of the city. As the urban sprawl of Silchar grew, so did the demand for daily wage workers, a need that was duly mitigated by the Kaibarta migrants in the city. Many families initially settled down in Malini Beel by simply building a hut but later on, the municipality streamlined their settlement process and provided them with land acquisition rights but they don't really have land rights as such barring a few families who reside in certain areas like Bishfuti, etc., in Silchar. Most of the residents in Malini Beel have their identity cards and almost all the households have the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana¹⁷ connection and some have also availed the benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.¹⁸ Most individuals are also beneficiaries of the Atal Amrit Abhiyan¹⁹, Assam Affordable Nutrition & Nourishment Assistance Yojana²⁰ (Anna scheme).

Till this far, it becomes quite understandable that the Kaibarta community has been able to avail a lot of the facilities and welfare schemes run by the government. This indicates that they are part of the ambit of social protection that the government of the country provides. So, technically, they have access to their constitutional rights. But the question that is left to be asked is whether they really enjoy the humanitarian aspect of social protection that is constitutionally granted to them?

Conversations with the residents of Malini Beel have revealed many interesting facets about their position in the society. As has been mentioned already, the Kaibartas belong to the lowest echelons of caste hierarchy and hence their position in the society is always clouded with prejudices of caste and at times, class. Since the Kaibartas are also economically weak, it becomes easier to criminalise them. Kali Krishna Das (M, 36)²¹, a respondent from the Malini Beel area speaks of how Kaibarta individuals always run the risk of being termed as thieves and anti-socials. Many male respondents shared their experiences of how they have been debarred from entering residential lanes at night as residents made a huge hue and cry by labeling them as thieves. One of the respondents narrated an incident when a group of Kaibarta men, while passing through a narrow residential lane that connects the main road to Malini Beel was brutally beaten by the residents who thought them to be thieves. Women, who work as house helps often face the stigma of being called thieves if anything goes missing at the homes of their employers. Das notes that even their children face harassment while passing through residential lanes. Hence, there is a marked criminalisation against the community which not only stigmatises the individuals but also pushes them away from the mainstream. The children of the community mostly go to certain schools that have now been unofficially earmarked for them; the individuals engage in certain kinds of professions and live in specific areas where non-Kaibartas are unwilling to settle. Rakhil Das (M,42), informed that even until a few years back, many autos refused to allow Kaibarta individuals to board because letting them in meant losing out on other passengers. With a note of disdain, he added that while the upper caste people did not have any problem taking services like riding a rickshaw pulled by a Kaibarta individual or allowing a Kaibarta woman inside the house to help with household chores, they have problems sharing space with them.²² Thus, a significant ghettoisation of the community can also be noticed. Such ghettoisation and criminalisation put the community in a rather precarious bracket of protection where despite having democratically granted social and political rights, Kaibartas continue to suffer indignation.

The Kaibarta community has a distinctive cultural heritage. Ramakanta Das, in his book, *Barak Upotyakar Kaibarta Samaj-e Prachalita Meyeli Geeti*²³ has catalogued the cultural practices of the community by mostly documenting songs that Kaibarta women sing on different occasions. The elaborate cataloguing is indicative of a rich collection of songs corresponding to different occasions and rituals that include religious and social events both. Despite having a rich cultural legacy, the participation of the community in mainstream cultural events is limited. The only two events where they do find some recognition are marriage (*dhamaail*²⁴ performance) and *Manash aMangal (Padma Puran)*²⁵ recital. Women performers are usually given a *bayna*²⁶ to sing and perform *dhamaail*. *Manasha Mangal* recitals are performed by both men and women. Apart from these, no mainstream event accommodates them. Despite there being a vibrant practice of theatre and arts, hardly anyone belonging from the community could be seen engaged in such mainstream performances. Ramakanta Das attributes the economic condition of the community to their lack of presence and participation in the cultural circuit of the Valley. He opines that a community that struggles to make ends meet would hardly have the time to engage in performing arts. But the question that still persists is whether the mainstream performing arts groups would allow these individuals to come out from the ghettos and give public performances? This question arises because there exists a few *akebras*²⁷ in Malini Beel itself that solely engage in *kirtan*²⁸ performances and these troupes consist solely of Kaibarta individuals. This is important because even though majority of the Kaibarta families are adherents of the Baishnab segment of Hinduism, their presence is significantly missing from the mainstream practicing Baishnab fold within the city limits of Silchar. Instead they have formed groups in Malini Beel that perform *kirtan* recitals like *prabhatferi*²⁹ and also there is a makeshift *akebra* housed in a thatched hut right at the heart of Malini Beel. This goes on to show the segregation that the community faces while living within the city limits.

What is interesting to note here is that Silchar, in general is largely a migrant settlement. The place grew into a town and subsequently, in recent times, to a city, mostly due to the large scale post-Partition settlement process. Yet there exists a discord in how the earlier migrants/inhabitants in the city treat the Kaibartas. The semblance of camaraderie which should have been there for fellow migrants is completely amiss in the equation between the upper caste earlier migrants and the Kaibartas. Instead, a huge gap has emerged between the two sections in terms of their social position and it would not be wrong to say that the invisibilisation of the community in the social spheres is largely due to their caste.

Practice in Theory: A Study of *Surma Gaangor Pani*

Ranabir Purkayastha's novel, *Surma Gaangor Paani* (2012), written in part conversational *Sylheti*³⁰ and part Bangla and set partly in pre-Partition Sylhet and then in Silchar, is the story of a Kaibarta individual whose life follows the trajectory of the ethnography discussed above. The protagonist, Boital Kaibarta is an unusual character to feature as the lead in a literary work. But at the same, he is a quintessential Kaibarta individual who allows himself to be dictated by his fate which entwines with national politics, social vulnerability, ecological fragility, and communal conditioning. The story of Boital's life begins in undivided Sylhet, in erstwhile East Bengal. The novel follows Boital's life from his childhood till his middle age and chronicles at the backdrop the political and social developments which turn up from time to time. The novel opens on a hopeful note where Boital could be seen enjoying a carefree life free from all sorts of exigencies. The novel begins with Boital and his bosom friend Lula, a Muslim, making the most of their childhood frolicking around in the endless plains of Boiakhaura in undivided Sylhet. Their friendship is metaphoric of the kind of relationship both the

communities shared between each other before the shadows of Partition and Referendum took over their lives. The preliminary section is in fact, a commentary on the life and times that was not plagued by the complexities of the modern ideas of the nation and the state.

This section is informative of the natural surroundings of the place where it is set. The stress on the details of the setting is crucial as it sets the tone of novel – the complexities of the relationships it explores, and the longings it chronicles. At the same time, the novel follows the trajectory of the historical developments of the time and situates the lives and aspirations of the characters in the immediate social milieu. The carefree life that Boital and his friend Lula enjoy lasts from their childhood till they attain adulthood. The shadows of Partition start to loom large as both the friends enter adulthood and their idea of a veritable world, which for the better part of their lives, was to live an unadulterated, carefree life in the lap of the endless plains of the mighty Surma, singing the songs of the rivers and the land, now change to occupying territories and earmarking those as Hindu or Muslim properties.

Their conversations, which for the longest time, constituted of discussions on rivers, songs, women and love, now changed course to include bloodshed and gore. This change is significant because both Boital and Lula represent two different positions in the social spectrum largely dominated by the upper caste Hindus. Boital, a Kaibarta and Lula, a Muslim, do not find it hard to bond with each other and strike a friendship because even though separated by religion, their position in the social spectrum is not much different. Parimal Bhattacharya, in his book *Fieldnotes from a Waterborne Land: Bengal Beyond the Bhadrakalok*(2022), notes the sort of relationship that Kaibartas and Muslims shared with each other. Albeit he speaks about his experience in West Bengal, but the pulse seems to echo for the two communities on the other side as well:

... Fortunately for us, there were educated young men from East Bengal who had lost everything during Partition. So the school began with eighteen pupils and one teacher. At first, we built a structure with bamboo and straw. After more and more villagers began to send their children, we replaced it with a pucca structure. We burned the bricks ourselves with clay from the Damodar's bank. We knew how to do all this, and men from Sheikhpura were expert masons. We were equally poor, the Mussalmans from Sheikhpura and we the Koibortos, and equally shunned by the landed folk. We toiled with our hands and lived by drenching our feet with the sweat of our brow. We were children of this soil, children of the same mother, only we suckled from different breasts.³¹

Instances of harmony between the communities lie evident across this section of the novel. Boital, a Hindu, had free access to *mukams*³² and Lula, a Muslim, knew the songs of *Manasha Mangal* by heart. Boital's desire to learn the *Manasha puthi*³³ by heart and become its minstrel is nurtured by Lula who puts him through people that know how to sing those songs. However, this feeling of oneness does not last long as communal tension starts escalating following a string of events the most important of which is the Hazrat Bal incident in 1963. In the novel, the representation of this tension is brought out through the drifting apart of Boital and Lula.

But, as the roots of communal violence delve deeper into the psyche of Boital and Lula, they start losing the protection that their mutual social position provided them all these years. Till the Sylhet Referendum, Lula and Boital can be seen engaging in discussions about their aspirations and desires in life but the last remains of their bond start to snap after Partition as the realities of religion and politics take over the reins of friendship, love and respect.

As the country changed its name to Pakistan, so did Lula's character and outlook. May be he got some engagement to serve the country and religion. May be he thought that he has to build a country out of

religion. The ones who have already left the country are a good riddance anyway. The ones that remain must be ousted or converted. Though such though process did not change Lula as a person and he still remained friends with Boital. But he effectively waited for the dark to descend so that he could turn himself into a different person and carry out his sinister plans.³⁴

The seeds of hatred, mistrust and religious fanaticism soon posit the two friends against each other and their subsequent encounters are bequeathed with tension and drama of every kind. Lula, now a self-proclaimed religious preacher by the name of “Dilbahar Bangal”³⁵, goes on singing songs of the “Nabi”³⁶ across small villages and market areas of Sylhet. These songs, even though religious, have political undertones – dealing with themes of assertion of Islamic identity thus irking Boital who takes it as a betrayal from his best friend. Religious polarisation bring out the worst in both the friends and their fall out eventually leads to bloodshed as Boital kills Lula who tries to rape a Hindu girl citing it as his holy duty. This rift between Boital and Lula at the backdrop of religious uncertainty is crucial and also symbolic of the breach of the first line of protection that the Kaibarta community, now a religious minority in post-Partition East Pakistan, had. As mentioned earlier, the community chose to stay back in East Pakistan on the trust that they would not be harmed by Muslims who they considered to be allies owing to their social status. But with the turn in time, the equation between them also changed. With their newly acquired status of a religious minority, the Kaibarta community became susceptible to violence that eventually facilitated their departure.

With Lula’s death, Boital doesn’t stay back in East Pakistan anymore. It may be mentioned here that Boital never intended to leave Sylhet which he treated akin to his “mother”. India, to him was “step-mother”.³⁷ However, these references to India and Pakistan (East Pakistan or present day Bangladesh) are not made merely in terms of the places which they are. Boital imagines these places in terms of river – the Surma and the Piyain of Sylhet and the Barak in India – and says, “Is there any mother as loving and caring as a river?”³⁸ But all the tall promises that he made to himself and to everyone who ever told him of leaving East Pakistan take a backseat as he is compelled to leave the land of his ancestors. Boital then comes and settles down at a camp in Chatla, near Silchar. This also marks the beginning of the second section of the novel that closely follows Boital’s life as he tries to make ends meet for himself and his wife. Newer characters are introduced in this section. Boital’s interaction with people was limited during his stay in Sylhet. Barring his friend Lula and his Guru Sristhidhar, he never got the chance to discuss the intricacies of life with anyone. But in Silchar, he met with different kinds of people and his ideas about caste, social position, and hierarchy became nuanced. It is here in Silchar that he first got to understand the fault lines of caste as he got otherised by the family of the upper caste Zamindar family in whose land he finally settles down. It must be mentioned here that Boital assumed the identity of a *Agradani*³⁹ Brahmin as Durga, the Hindu girl whom Lula tried to rape belonged to this category. Incidentally, Durga was also his guru Sristidhar’s daughter. Though this elevated caste status fetched him some acceptance but it also made him aware of the casteist fissures in the society. Even though he identified as a Brahmin, yet, congruent to general practice, Boital would always be served food in a separate plate in the yard if ever he ate at the Zamindar’s place. This was because the *Agradanis* are not considered to be in the same fold as other Brahmins. The non-Brahmins – usually the other house helps at the Zamindar’s household ate their food in separate utensils at a farther corner in the yard. Throughout the novel, Boital can be found expressing his angst against these practices. He understood that his position in the Zamindar household would have been worse had he told them about his actual caste. He goes to the extent of thinking that he might have been poor back when he lived in his village, but never faced a dearth of food, nor did he face any humiliation. Boital hardly faced discrimination while growing up because of

the lack of proximity to people who facilitate such discrimination. But in the town, in this new place, things were different.

This stratification in terms of caste can be better understood by referring to the observations made by Dipankar Gupta who notes:

There are no phenotypical differences between castes, but it is presumed that Hindus have specific coded substances in them that set them apart from one another. These substances are incommensurable and cannot be compromised; hence the rules relating to purity and pollution were meant to be strictly observed. Commingling of substances led to becoming polluted, and therefore social relations had to be finely calibrated to make sure that people did not compromise their inherent and inalienable substances by being in close physical proximity with members of different castes.⁴⁰

During his time at the camp where he initially took shelter after arriving in India, Boital noticed that the other inhabitants had a cold attitude towards him. It was mostly due to his caste identity. What struck Boital the most was that despite being refugees, these people were united by their sense of loss; rather they were divided by the fault lines of caste. This caste based discrimination is probably the reason why he again struck a friendship with three Muslims youths in Silchar and eventually revealed to them about his Kaibarta identity. His prior attachment with Lula and the Muslims youths' acceptance of him for the person he is might be the reasons which prompted him to confide in them and find some solace. Caste related conversations occur frequently in the novel and Boital seems to question the discriminatory practices every time he got a chance. Through Boital's questions, the novel gives a pen-picture of the status of lower caste, non-Brahmin people in the then Silchar. It must be noted here that Boital's cover as an *Agradani* Brahmin did not last long primarily due to his candid assertions about his love for water, fishing, and his way of living, which needless to say, did not match the conventional way in which a person of that caste is supposed to live life. This brings in more shame and intolerance against Boital. However, this newfound information about Boital does not deter the Zamindar from using Boital to run errands for him. It becomes clear to the Zamindar that Boital is an honest, no-nonsense person and hence he entrusts Boital with the task of extracting money from the workers of the tea-gardens which he owns, makes Boital give out threats to defaulters, etc. The Zamindar's mechanisations with Boital is reflective of the observation of Rakhal Das (mentioned above). With the caste equation at play, upper castes always try to reap as much benefit as they can from the lower caste individuals and in this case, the Zamindar strives to turn Boital into a monster of sorts thus foregrounding the common placed attitude of ascribing the lower castes as criminals.

After coming to Silchar, Boital took up the work of a rickshaw puller. It may be noted that prior to his relocation, Boital used to fish for his livelihood. Boital's nonchalance with water has been mentioned repeatedly throughout the course of the novel – "...[the] addiction that meant more to Boital than all else was of course water. Boital doesn't fear water."⁴¹ Rather he feels powerful when in the proximity of water. Boital not only knows how to catch the most rugged fish in tricky waters, but also knows how to conserve the eco-system on which he is so dependent on for his existence. The novel is assertive of a mutual relationship between Boital and water and often refers to him as a "Joler Pook"⁴². Not only does Boital know the nuances of catching fish, but also has a deep working knowledge of the flora and fauna around the water bodies. The detailed descriptions in the novel about floods and the means which Boital employs to survive through these are indicative of his knowledge of water. This is again a metaphoric assertion of the Kaibarta community's relationship with water and their connectedness to it.

But Boital loses his connect to water after relocation as he is hardly left with any other choice but to embrace other means of work for sustenance. Even though he deliberately settles down in Chatla Hawor in order to be near to water, it does him no good as Chatla is an annual water body where fishing is possible only for a few months of the year. For the remaining months, one has to either subsist on agriculture or figure out some other means of work. Without any land grant, Boital did not have the option of engaging in agricultural activities, and hence decides to leave Chatla to take up the work of a rickshaw puller in Silchar. Even though he works hard to make an honest living, life is not very kind to him. Soon after he comes to Silchar, a series of back to back thefts puts him under the scanner and people assume that he is behind all the incidents. Boital's caste and the social vulnerability that comes as an adage instantly criminalises him for crimes that have not been proven to be committed by him. This has partly to do with the assumptions that people in Silchar make owing to his criminal past, apparently the stories of which (Boital killing Lula) made way to his new place of settlement as well as his being a member of the lower caste with hardly any financial means. Boital thus transforms to a supposed thief from an individual who was once respected for his deep knowledge of water. His skill sets, which were of great use to him and the people around, are rendered useless as he embraces a new place of settlement and a vocation. Boital's loss is once again, symbolic of the loss of the Kaibarta community. Relocation from their ancestral place has dented the community's resources and skill sets as the individuals are now removed from their chosen field of application and face the challenge of acquiring new skill sets in order to ensure sustenance.

As mentioned earlier, while relocating, Boital brings along with him Durgabati, daughter of his Guru Srishthidhar, the very woman he saved from being raped by Lula. Durga and Boital never marry observing the rituals, but start living together anyway. The onset of their relationship is mostly based on Durga's need to be protected and Boital's sense of responsibility towards Durga. In usual times, such a union would not have been possible owing to the caste differences between them. Even though the harrowing times of Partition made it possible for the daughter of an *Agradani* Brahmin and a Kaibarta to live together, the shadows of caste never really leaves Boital even in the sphere of his family life. Years into their companionship, Durga starts to raise questions about Boital's occasional serenades of fishing. She tells him of her dislike of the smell that hangs around in their home for days after he comes back from fishing – “the home reeks of a *maimali*⁴³ smell whenever you go out for fishing... it becomes difficult to sleep when the bed smells of fish.”⁴⁴ Boital's caste and profession thus intertwine as his social interactions change or expand from one ambit to the other. Till his relocation, he was respected for the professional skill sets he acquired as part of his caste. But post that, both the aspects that so defined his identity, become a hindrance to his social position leading to his otherisation both inside and outside his home. Boital yearned to go back to his “mother”, to Sylhet, in the hope of being his own self again. His thought was fuelled by his longing of the all those elements in the midst of which he grew up – the river Surma, the Hakaluki Hawor, the village *Manasha* temple, etc. In his mind, all he wanted to do was to fish in the strident waters bodies of Sylhet and sing the *Manasha* recital because these constituted his training. This also leads Boital to constantly change his profession. He tries his hand at multiple tasks and finally ends up working at a printing press. While breaking the news to Durgabati, he simply says, “I am not a fisherman anymore, I am a machineman”.⁴⁵ This hard try to give up one identity in exchange of another speaks volumes on how caste and class impact the general state of being of an individual in a society that tries to seek answers to every question by looking at the world through the lens of caste and its prejudices. On another instant, Boital decides to convert to Islam because he gets fed up with the caste based discrimination around him. This constant employment of what Spivak terms as “strategic essentialism”⁴⁶ hardly does Boital any good as his identity as a Kaibarta continues to define

him under every circumstance that he finds himself in. The only instances when Boital rises above the trivialities that so define him is during his performances as an *ojha*⁴⁷. These are moments that make him feel wanted and respected. But these are sporadic events and do not define his general state of being. So, Boital, by and large, remains on the fringe where his position in the society is shrouded with the shadows of caste and class.

Boital's tussle with identity, the loss of his skill sets owing to circumstances beyond his control, are all reminiscent of the general experience of the Kaibarta community who had to begin on a new note having lost a lot. All through its narrative, the novel follows the journey of Boital as he tries to navigate through the rough waters of life that has been made rugged through the turmoil in the times he lived in. The novel does not end on a conclusive note; rather it leaves the reader guessing as to what would happen to Boital now as he departs from his home in Silchar after his house is inundated by flood water. The home which he had so laboriously put up having been displaced once does not give shelter for too long as flood waters sweep away even the last scrap of his belongings making him to set out in search of a new place to stay. This cycle of settlement and relocation is once again symbolic of the general Kaibarta experience as members of the community find themselves moving from one place to another due to economic or ecological reasons with hardly any robust rehabilitation regime at their behest. The closing remarks in the novel ensue in the form of a conversation between Boital and his daughter who asks, "Baba, don't we have a house?" to which Boital replies, rather philosophically, "... no, we don't. ... people shouldn't stay at the same place for long, they should move to new places. New places make humans better than what they used to be."⁴⁸

From the above discussion, it may be discerned that the Kaibarta community is caught in the midst of an endless loop of settlement and displacement owing to ecological and economic reasons. While the ecological aspect to their displacement does not feature much in the novel – it is mostly the caste aspect that has been dealt with here – the ecological factors are extremely crucial to the present state of the community's migration patterns. Prof. Dutta Choudhury opines that since the Kaibarta community is made to settle in the wetland of Malini Beel, it not only hinders the community's prospects but only has effects on the ecological balance of the area around it.⁴⁹ Malini Beel acts as a natural reservoir and used to be instrumental in flood control measures thus saving the city of Silchar from intermittent flood. But this capacity of Malini Beel is now gradually getting lost due to the settlement process which involves land filling, siltation, etc., thus not only making floods more frequent in the city but also pushing the community into an abyss as they are the worst hit group. As has been elaborated earlier, the community lives in the vicinity of water and hence floods are a part of their lives anyway. But with the growing incidences of pre-term showers, heavy rainfall, etc., owing to global climate change, the living conditions of the community is increasingly turning out to be precarious. The Kaibarta community in Barak valley, which is essentially a migrant community, has now turned into a community of internally displaced people (IDP). This is particularly true for the section of the community that settled down in Son Beel. They had to move out of Son Beel due to reasons that are entrenched in ecological matrix but their subsequent settlement did not bring them much relief either as sporadic displacements continue to plague their lives in Malini Beel. Boital's story seems to be coherent with the cycle of events that inform the community's life. While Boital's story is fiction, its symbolic proximity to the real time events affecting the community's life is an example of the social imagination of the precarity that hangs around the Kaibarta community of Barak valley. In a state of constant flux, both the community's and Boital's lives seem to be hanging around a loose thread over which they don't have any control

and with the caste question already at play, there is no gainsaying that the community stands at the crossroads of vulnerability.

Notes

¹ Sarkar, Prabhat Ranjan. *Bangla O Bangali*. (Kolkata: Manasi Press, 1988), 156.

² Bhattacharjee, Jatindra Kumar, et al. *Amulyacharan Bidyabhushan Rachanabali*. 3rd edition. (Kolkata: West Bengal Pustak Parishad, 1990), 189.

³ Ramakanta Das (Assistant Professor, Department of Bengali, Assam University, Silchar), in discussion with the author, July 2022.

⁴ As per the Scheduled Castes Order, 1950.

⁵ Kumar, Deepak et al. "Valuation of Ecosystem Services & Benefits of Son Beel Wetland in Assam, India: A Case Study of Natural Solutions to Climate Change & Water," *Hamburg University of Applied Sciences Research and Transfer Centre Sustainability and Climate Change Management* 7:4-5.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340161942_Valuation_of_Ecosystem_Services_Benefits_of_Son_Beel_Wetland_in_Assam_India_A_Case_Study_of_Natural_Solutions_to_Climate_Change_Water

⁶ Kumar, do.

⁷ Das S, Bhattacharjee J. "Climate change and livelihood Problem of Fishing Communities who are living in Largest Wetland of Assam Named as Sonebeel," in *European Scientific Journal*, Special Edition. 2015, 27-36.

⁸ Das, Pulak and Santosh Joshi. "Erratic Rainfall Patterns and its Consequences in Barak Valley, Southern Assam, Northeast India," *Emvis Assam: An Emvis NewsLetter*, October to December 2012.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267776019_Erratic_Rainfall_Patterns_and_its_Consequences_in_Barak_Valley_Southern_Assam_Northeast_India

⁹ Bhattacharjee, Malabika and Bhaskar Mohanta. "A Survey on Fishing Gears Used for Fishing in Sone Beel, the Largest Wetland in Assam, Northeast India," *International Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Studies*, 5(4), 2017, 268-271.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333489314_International_Journal_of_Fisheries_and_Aquatic_Studies_2017_54_268-](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333489314_International_Journal_of_Fisheries_and_Aquatic_Studies_2017_54_268-271_A_survey_on_fishing_gears_used_for_fishing_in_Sone_beel_the_largest_wetland_in_Assam_Northeast_India)

[271_A_survey_on_fishing_gears_used_for_fishing_in_Sone_beel_the_largest_wetland_in_Assam_Northeast_India](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333489314_International_Journal_of_Fisheries_and_Aquatic_Studies_2017_54_268-271_A_survey_on_fishing_gears_used_for_fishing_in_Sone_beel_the_largest_wetland_in_Assam_Northeast_India)

¹⁰ Krchnak K.M. et al. "Putting Nature in the Nexus: Investing in Natural Infrastructure to Advance Water-Energy-Food Security," *Bonn2011 Conference: The Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus – Solutions for the Green Economy*.

¹¹ Primarily agricultural land that may not be used for industrial or residential purposes.

¹² Kushal Debroy, "Will Son Beel, Asia's second-largest seasonal wetland, get a facelift?," *East Mojo*, April 23, 2023.

¹³ Ramakanta Das (Assistant Professor, Department of Bengali, Assam University, Silchar), in discussion with the author, July 2022.

¹⁴ Manabendra Dutta Choudhury (Professor, Department of Life Science, Assam University, Silchar), in discussion with the author, July 2022.

¹⁵ Kar, Devashish. "Application of GIS Technology for the Study of the Fish Diversity and Habitat Parameters in the Wetlands of Barak Valley with Special Emphasis of Sone Beel: The Biggest Wetland of Assam," *Lake 2014: Conference on Conservation and Sustainable Management of Wetland Ecosystems in Western Ghats*. https://wgbis.ces.iisc.ernet.in/energy/lake2014/proceedings/7_Kar_Lake%202014-R.pdf

¹⁶ Dhar, Atrayee. "Fishermen Struggle to Survive as Assam's Largest Wetland Shrinks Away," *Mongabay*, October 1, 2021. <https://india.mongabay.com/2021/10/fishermen-struggle-to-survive-as-assams-largest-wetland-shrinks-away/>

¹⁷ "Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana," Government of India. www.pmu.gov.in

¹⁸ "Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana," Government of India. <https://pmaymis.gov.in>

¹⁹ "Atal Amrit Abhiyan," Government of Assam. <https://nhm.assam.gov.in>

-
- ²⁰ “Assam Affordable Nutrition & Nourishment Assistance Yojana, (ANNA Scheme),” Government of Assam. <https://directorfcs.assam.gov.in>
- ²¹ Kali Krishna Das (Resident, Malini Beel, Silchar), in discussion with the author, July 2022.
- ²² Rakhal Das, (Resident, Bish Futi, Silchar), in discussion with the author, July 2022.
- ²³ Das, Ramakanta. *Barak Upotyakar Kaibarta Samaje Prachalita Meyeli Gaan*. (Kolkata: Creative Concept, 2019).
- ²⁴ A quintessential performance of songs and dance native to Sylhet with a distinctive style of dance involving hand and feet coordination. Usually performed in almost every social function in both Hindu and Muslim households. It holds great significance for Sylhetis and in post-Partition context, it is a marker of cultural identity
- ²⁵ Recital of the epic Manasha Mangal Kavya, performed in reverence to Manasha, the snake goddess. These recitals are extremely popular across the Barak valley of Assam and are mostly performed by Kaibarta singers.
- ²⁶ A contract.
- ²⁷ A place of worship usually belonging to the Hindu Vaishnava fold. These could be important seats of learning as well where apart from worship, devotional song recitals are performed. These also provide shelter to people who have nowhere else to go and are generally presided over by a chief seer.
- ²⁸ Song recitals sung in reverence to Hindu gods, especially Lord Krishna.
- ²⁹ *Kirtan* recitals performed in the morning while moving across neighbourhoods or visiting people’s homes.
- ³⁰ In this context, referring to the language Sylheti.
- ³¹ Bhattacharya, Parimal. *Fieldnotes from a Waterborne Land: Bengal Beyond the Bhadrakolok*. (Gurugram: Harper Collins, 2022), 60-61.
- ³² A local shrine usually dedicated to an Islamic preacher.
- ³³ A book.
- ³⁴ Purkayastha, Ranabir. *Surma Gangor Paani* (Kolkata:Ekush Shatak, 2012), 75
- ³⁵ Bangal is the colloquial *Sylheti* term of identification of Muslims.
- ³⁶ The Bangla term for Prophet Mohammad.
- ³⁷ Purkayastha, Ranabir. *Surma Gangor Paani* (Kolkata:Ekush Shatak, 2012), 92.
- ³⁸ Purkayastha, 90
- ³⁹ The section of Brahmin that performs the last rites of a person.
- ⁴⁰ Gupta, Dipankar. “Caste and Politics: Identity Over System,” *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 21.(2005): 409. DOI.10.1146/annurev.anthro.34.081804.120649
- ⁴¹ Purkayastha, Ranabir. *Surma Gangor Paani* (Kolkata:Ekush Shatak, 2012), 128.
- ⁴² Literal translation, water insect; but colloquially, the phrase is used to identify a person who shares an intricate relationship with water – a relationship that is not just characterised by dependence on water but extends beyond that to include an emotional attachment to it.
- ⁴³ A colloquial *Sylheti* term used to identify the fishing community.
- ⁴⁴ Purkayastha, Ranabir. *Surma Gangor Paani* (Kolkata:Ekush Shatak, 2012), 342-43.
- ⁴⁵ Purkayastha, 343.
- ⁴⁶ Spivak, Gayatri. “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds, Larry Grossberg and Cary Nelson. (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1988), 66.
- ⁴⁷ Generally a male who sings and performs the *Manasha Mangal Kavya*.
- ⁴⁸ Purkayastha, Ranabir. *Surma Gangor Paani* (Kolkata:Ekush Shatak, 2012), 344.
- ⁴⁹ Manabendra Dutta Choudhury (Professor, Department of Life Science, Assam University, Silchar), in discussion with the author, July 2022.

CRG Series on Policies and Practices

113. The Invisible Migrant Workers: In Life , In Death
114. Biometric, Notion of Governmentally and Gender Relations in Rohingya Refugee Camps
115. Media on Migrants : Reports from Field -I
116. Media on Migrants : Reports from Field -II
117. Transition without Justice in the Postcolonial World: Protection Discourses for Refugees & Migrants in South Asia
118. Media Discourses on the Bengal Bangladesh Border
119. Culture, Migration and the Time of an Epidemic: The Nautanki Theatres/ Bhojpuri Nataks in 1990s
- 120.COVID-19, Migrants, Media
121. Refugees and Migrants as Subjects of Economy and Politics
122. COVID-19 and After: Work, Life and Salience of Primitive Accumulation
123. Two Essays on Ethics and Practices of Care and Solidarity
124. Protection and Punishment : Myths and Realities of Refugee Protection
125. Migrants, Refugees, and the Contested Question of Social Protection
126. Two Essays on the Rohingya Crisis
127. Development and Displacement in the Damodar Valley of India
128. Election Campaigns as Performance: Migrants and Refugees as an Issue in West Bengal Elections
- 129 Brecht, Manto and Two Situations

CRG Series on Policies and Practices

74. Cities, Rural Migrants & the Urban Poor-III: Migration & the Urban Question in Delhi
75. Classes, People, and Populism
76. Logistical Space I: Logistics and Social Governance
77. Logistical Space II: Mobilities and Spaces
78. Logistical Space III:Hubs, Connectivity and Transit
79. Logistical Space IV: The Asam Paradigm
80. People, Politics and Protests I: Calcutta & West Bengal, 1950s - 1960s
81. People, Politics and Protests II: Bengal and Bihar
82. People, Politics and Protests III: Marxian, Literary Debates and Discourses
83. The Importance of being Siliguri, or the Lack thereof: Border-Effect and the “Untimely” City in North Bengal
84. Logistical Space V: Representations of Connectivity
85. Logistical Space VI: Logistics and the Reshaping of Global Governance
86. Logistical Space VII: Finance Capital & Infrastructure Development
87. Logistical Space VIII: Trade, Capital & Conflict
88. Logistical Space IX: Conflict & Social Governance in Northeast India
89. People, Politics and Protests IV: Occupy College Street: Notes from the Sixties
90. People, Politics and Protests V: The Creative & Cultural Dimension of the Naxalbari Movement
91. People, Politics and Protests VI: Karpurri Thakur
92. People, Politics and Protests VII: The Radical Rural
93. People, Politics and Protests VIII: Left Front Government in West Bengal (1971-1982)
94. Population and Rent in *Capital*
95. *Capital*: Value & Translation
96. The Urban Turn
97. Peasants, Students, Insurgents and Popular Movements in Contemporary Assam
98. Migration and Governance I: Promises and Paradoxes of a Global Gaze
99. Migration and Governance II: Responsibility to Protect- Questions of Race, Religion, Resource and the Unspoken Fourth
100. Migration and Governance III: Population Flows, Refugees, and the Responsibility to Protect in the Global Protection System
101. Migration and Governance IV: Global Capitalism and Refugee and Migrant Labour
102. Migration and Governance V: Statelessness, International Conventions and the Need for New Initiatives ? Addressing the New Frontiers of Statelessness
103. Migration and Governance VI : Migrants and Movements across Asia : Mobility, Global Migration Governance and the European Response
104. Global Capitalism, Informal Economy and the Question of Labour
105. Reflections on the Mediterranean Refugee Crisis
106. Populism- I :Politics, Policies and Social justice
107. Populism- II: States and Political Parties
108. Populism- III: Leadership and Governmentality
109. Interrogating Citizenship: Perspectives from India’s East and North East
110. Auto-Ethnography as a Research Method: Evidence from Field Research on Ethiopian Irregular Migrants in South Africa
- 111 Borderlands, Migration and Labour
- 112 Two Writings on Climate, Disasters and Displacement

CRG Series on Policies and Practices

- 31 Local Dynamics, Universal Context : Border Trading through Moreh, Manipur
- 32 Two Studies on Asylum Seekers and Other Immigrants in Finland
- 33 Endangered Lives on The Border: Women in the Northeast
- 34 Globalisation and Labouring Lives
- 35 Right to Information in a Globalising World
- 36 Bengal-Bangladesh Border and Women
- 37 Between Ecology and Economy : Environmental Governance in India
- 38 Incomplete Citizenship, Statelessness and Human Trafficking: A Preliminary Analysis of The Current Situation in West Bengal, India
- 39 Place of Poor in Urban Space
- 40 Law and Democratic Governance: Two Studies from Europe
- 41 Finding a Point of Return: Internally Displaced Persons in Sri Lanka
- 42 Colonialism, Resource Crisis and Forced Migration
- 43 Situating Transit Labour
- 44 Two Essays on Security Apparatus
- 45 Governing Flood, Migration and Conflict in North Bihar
- 46 A Gigantic Panopticon: Counter-Insurgency and Modes of Disciplining and Punishment in Northeast India
- 47 Public Interest Litigation in India: Implications for Law and Development
- 48 Governing Caste and Managing Conflicts-Bihar, 1990-2011
- 49 Emerging Spaces and Labour Relations in Neo-Liberal India
- 50 Peace by Governance or Governing Peace? A Case Study of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)
- 51 Women, Conflict and Governance in Nagaland
- 52 Tripura: Ethnic Conflict, Militancy & Counterinsurgency
- 53 Government of Peace
- 54 Bengal Borders and Travelling Lives
- 55 Financialisation, Labour Market Flexibility, and Global Crisis
- 56 The Chronicle of a Forgotten Movement: 1959 Food Movement Revisited
- 57 The Religious Nature of Our Political Rites
58. Social Impact of the City Planning Machinery: Case Study of Road-Widening in Bangalore
59. In Search of Space: The Scheduled Caste Movement in West Bengal after Partition
60. Stateless in Law: Two Assessments
61. Failed by Design? : The Limitations of Statebuilding
62. Contesting Ideas on Peace (A Report & Some Reflections)
63. Body/Law/Technology: The Political Implications of Society as Apparatus
64. Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism-I: An Overview
65. Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism-II: War, Debt, and Reconstruction of Economy
66. Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism-III: The Arab Question in Post-Colonial France
67. Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism-IV: Mobile Labour and the New Urban
68. West Bengal-Bangladesh Borders: Humanitarian Issues
69. Policing a Riot-torn City: Kolkata, 16-18 August 1946
70. Labour, Law and Forced Migration
71. Rohingyas in India: Birth of a Stateless Community
72. Cities, Rural Migrants & the Urban Poor-I: Migration & the Urban Question in Kolkata
73. Cities, Rural Migrants & the Urban Poor-II: Migration & the Urban Question in Mumbai

CRG Series on Policies and Practices

- 1 People on the Move: How Governments Manage Moving Populations
- 2 Resources for Autonomy - Financing the Local Bodies
- 3 Peace Accords as the Basis of Autonomy
- 4 Debates Over Women's Autonomy
- 5 Unequal Communication: Health and Disasters As Issues of Public Sphere
- 6 Globalisation, State Policies And Sustainability of Rights
- 7 Autonomies in the North and the North East: More Freedom or the Politics of Frontier Management?
- 8 Examining Autonomy : The 73rd Constitutional Amendment in Assam
- 9 Democracy, Autonomy and the Community Media
- 10 Women and Forced Migration
- 11 Flags and Rights
- 12 A Status Report on Displacement in Assam and Manipur
- 13 Weapons of the Weak: Field Studies on Claims to Social Justice in Bihar & Orissa
- 14 Towards a New Consideration: Justice for the Minorities
- 15 Conflict, War & Displacement
- 16 The Draft National Rehabilitation Policy: A Critique
- 17 Limits of the Humanitarian: Studies in Situations of Forced Migration
- 18 Prescribed, Tolerated, and Forbidden Forms of Claim Making
- 19 Three Studies on Law and The Shifting Spaces of Justice.
- 20 Primitive Accumulation and Some Aspects of Work and Life in India in The Early Part of The Twenty First Century.
- 21 Citizens, Non-Citizens, and The Stories of Camps
- 22 Tales of Two Cities
- 23 Ways of Power, Minorities, and Knowledge on Minorities: An Assessment of Research Policies and Practices.
- 24 Whither Right to Food? Rights Institutions and Hungry Labour in Tea Plantations of North Bengal
- 25 Hunger, Food Scarcity, & Popular Protests in West Bengal
- 26 Cyclone Aila & the Sundarbans: An Enquiry into the Disaster and Politics of Aid and Relief
- 27 View from India: Media & Minorities in Europe
- 28 Protecting the Rights of the Tsunami Victims: The Sri Lanka Experience
- 29 Nation Building and Minority Alienation in India
- 30 Environment and Migration Purulia, West Bengal

POLICIES AND PRACTICES is the research paper series brought out by the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG). Writings under this series can be referred to and used for public educational purposes with due acknowledgment.

ISSN 2348-0297