



The Contemporary Situation of the Society Along the International Border Line of Murshidabad District

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Abstract

The international border between India and Bangladesh traverses various Indian states such as Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and West Bengal. Among these, Murshidabad district in West Bengal is situated on the international border. The arrival of migrants in Murshidabad district increased after the partition of the country. During the Bangladesh Liberation War, issues regarding the international boundary arose, and the border people of Murshidabad district had to face various situations. Despite surveillance by border forces and border exercises, bilateral tensions persisted due to uncertain borders, sovereignty claims, cross-border infiltration, illegal residency, smuggling, and crime, all of which have emerged as significant security challenges. Borderland issues, migration, terrorism, border killings, and smuggling are among the major national concerns in this region.

Keywords: *Murshidabad, Livelihoods, Agriculture, Smuggling, Refugee, Fishing, Migration*

Introduction

India gained independence on August 15, 1947, after a long period of British colonial rule. However, along with independence came the partition of India, resulting in the creation of two separate states: India and Pakistan. The border between the two countries, known as the Radcliffe Line, was drawn, dividing Bengal into two parts: West Bengal and East Pakistan. Various districts of West Bengal, including Murshidabad district, share this international border. During the partition, many people migrated from East Pakistan to different parts of West Bengal, and the impact of this migration can be observed in Murshidabad district as well. The Radcliffe Line witnessed the movement of countless individuals crossing from one country to another. During the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, millions of people from East Pakistan migrated to various districts of West Bengal, with many seeking refuge in Murshidabad district. This migration has demarcated Murshidabad's administrative, political, economic, social, and ethnic-religious identity. Various aspects emerge along this border, including economic changes and the socio-cultural livelihoods of those living on the border. The livelihoods of border residents depend on agriculture, fishing, and smuggling. It presents a challenging scenario, as it is difficult to evade the border forces and the river's surveillance, especially under the cover of darkness.

Literature Review

A literature review serves a critical function in research for several reasons. Firstly, it offers a thorough comprehension of existing knowledge and research on the topic, enabling researchers to pinpoint gaps, inconsistencies, or areas requiring further exploration. By examining prior studies, researchers can expand upon existing theories or introduce new ones. Secondly, a literature review aids in shaping the research methodology by guiding researchers in selecting appropriate methods and techniques based on the successes and failures of previous studies. This ensures that the research maintains methodological integrity and contributes significantly to the field. For this particular subject, I must refer to previous literature works such as W.V. Schendel's book

"The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia," which delineates the epicenter of the partition of British India. While the establishment of international borders between India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma has been a focal point in partition studies, these pivotal borderlands have regrettably received minimal attention from historians. Chandrashekhar Dasgupta's "India and the Bangladesh Liberation War" is a definitive account of India's role in Bangladesh's independence in 1971, highlighting how India emerged as a key player through political, economic, diplomatic, and military assistance to the freedom fighters of Bangladesh. Another significant work, Y.M. Bammi's "India-Bangladesh Relations: The Way 4 Ahead," delves into the tensions between the two nations and proposes a roadmap for improving relations, discussing the strategic importance of Bangladesh to India's security and economic interests, including analyses of foreign policies. Ajit Rabi Das's "Rupantarea Pathe Murshidabad: Samaj O Arthaniti" focuses on the geographical and demographic landscape of Murshidabad post-independence, examining the agricultural economy's continuous dynamics, refugee influx, and significant industrial, social, and cultural developments in the district. Deepak K. Mishra's "Internal Migration in Contemporary India" offers a comprehensive analysis of migration experiences in contemporary India, highlighting the impact on society and the interconnections between individual and societal aspirations. The volume also scrutinizes the roles of state and non-state agencies in various aspects of migrants' lives, considering factors such as class, caste, religion, gender, ethnicity, and regional location in post-reform India.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the socio-economic condition of people living on international border.
2. To evolution of determining the livelihood of border people.
3. Through this research it will be highlighted the basic problems of border line people.

Research Question

1. How the residences continue their life to the Musrshidabad border line people?
2. Which commodities determined or influence the live hood of that area?
3. Who helped the people to continue the smuggling to the smuggler?

Methodology of the Study

Social history research methodology encompasses various approaches to studying the past from a social perspective. Here's an overview of some common methodologies which will be used in this historical research. Archival Research: This involves examining primary sources such as letters, diaries, newspapers, official documents, and other historical records. Archival research allows researchers to uncover firsthand accounts and artifacts that provide insights into social phenomena, events, and everyday life in the past. Oral History: Another important methodology for this research. This involves conducting interviews with individuals who have lived through particular historical periods or events. Oral history provides a valuable perspective on personal experiences, memories, and narratives that may not be documented in traditional historical sources. Quantitative Analysis: Social historians may use quantitative methods to analyze statistical data from censuses, surveys, and other sources. Quantitative analysis allows researchers to identify trends, patterns, and correlations within social structures and behaviours over time. Qualitative Methods: Such as ethnography and case studies, involve in-depth examination and interpretation of social phenomena within their cultural and historical contexts. Qualitative research often relies on techniques such as participant observation, interviews, and 6 content analysis to explore social dynamics, identities, and relationships. Comparative and Cross-Cultural Studies: Social historians may adopt a comparative approach to analyze similarities and differences in social structures, practices, and ideologies across different societies and historical periods. Cross-cultural studies help researchers understand how social phenomena are shaped by diverse cultural contexts and historical processes. Overall, social history research methodology encompasses a diverse range of approaches aimed at understanding the complexities of past

societies, cultures, and social dynamics. Researchers may employ multiple methods and theoretical frameworks to uncover, interpret, and analyze the social dimensions of history.

Result and Discussion

The people of the international border region of Murshidabad district have been deeply affected by displacement and refugee for decades. Murshidabad district shares an international border with Bangladesh and some blocks along the northeastern region of this such as Farakka, Samsheganj, Suti I, Suti II, Raghunathganj, Bhagwangola, Raninagar I, Raninagar II and Jalangi blocks on the international border line. During the partition of India in 1947 and the Bangladesh Liberation war in 1971, many people crossed the border and took refuge in Murshidabad district. Refugees arriving in this region lose everything and fall into the abyss of poverty, food, housing, and permanent employment. They face the challenge of the importance of social insecurity the displaced refugee families slowly began to integrate with the local people and settled in small plots of land allocated by the government they started farming and adapted themselves. Moreover, some earn their living by doing small businesses and others by doing daily labour. Along with this the similarities between the communities of India and Bangladesh are seen through their language, food, festival and at the same time they continue to shape the socio-political and economic aspects.

Agriculture and fishing are among the main sources of livelihood for the people of the areas along the Murshidabad border. Being located along the border line they face constant challenges with the border security forces while farming fishing. Surveillance firing by the security forces becomes difficult for them. The bordering blocks of Murshidabad are located along the river banks, making the land in that area very fertile due to the riverine alluvial soil, suitable for a variety of crops. Every year they produce different types of crops such as rice apart from this, farmers cultivate other crops like jute, wheat, mustard, pulses, maize and vegetables. These border farmers produce crops like potatoes, tomatoes, brinjals, cauliflower and green chillies. River in the Murshidabad border area such as the Padma, Bhagirathi, Bhairab, Jalangi as well as some canals and beels play an important role in the livelihood of agriculture, providing fertile soil through the silt deposited in the flood waters every year.

In addition to agricultural work, many villagers in the border areas rely on fish farming in rivers canals and ponds. Which is their main source of income or economic direction for their livelihood. People in border areas have to face adversity in their fishing livelihood and due to natural disasters like storms, rains, flood, they have to face huge losses in fishing and fishermen every year. Fishermen face challenges from border security measures along with their fishing roots have become difficult. Due to surveillance by prevented from fishing along the international border.

The villages along the Murshidabad border are densely populated with most of the people socially and economically engaged in pastoral activities. The main items associated with Chhotan are cattle, cows and buffaloes, food items, electronic goods, cough syrups, narcotics etc. And since the villages are located along the border transportation is carried out through river channels and small roads. Poverty, unemployed and lack of stable economic opportunities force local people here to engage in this activity.

In the current situation the biggest challenge facing the border region in Murshidabad district is due to illegal settlement. The main reason for this is the economic inequality in the border areas which has led many countries from the regions near Bangladesh to cross the border and live here illegally. Many people come to this country in search of better job, farming, and a better life. As a result solidarity within the community of local residents is becoming an obstacle to social. And current situation most alarming issue along the Murshidabad border is terrorist activity. The activities of various terrorist groups are rearing their heads present day. Near the border such as Sagarpara, Jalangi, Lalgola, Bhagwangola, Ranitala, Raninagar, Raghunathganj, Suti, Dhuliyani have become hotspots for document forgery. These various groups involved in illegal activities are often funded through. Cross border networks and have links radical organization. These activities often include illegal migration,

smuggling networks, and the movement of extremist elements that attempt to exploit weak border surveillance and the economic vulnerability of local residents.

Conclusion

From 1947 to 2021, the international border line of Murshidabad has undergone notable shifts and tensions, stemming from its delineation during the partition of British India. This border between India and Bangladesh has been marked by disputes, smuggling activities, and occasional clashes. While both countries have made efforts to manage and secure the border through the erection of physical barriers and deployment of security forces, porous stretches and riverine boundaries have remained challenging to monitor effectively. Issues such as illegal immigration, cross-border terrorism, and smuggling persist, posing ongoing challenges to stability and security along the Murshidabad international border. Addressing these challenges requires sustained diplomatic efforts, innovative border management strategies, and enhanced regional cooperation. By fostering dialogue and collaboration, both countries can work towards ensuring the stability and security of the Murshidabad international border, thereby promoting peace and prosperity in the region.

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