Session II

A CITY OF GRINDING POVERTY, ECONOMIC DISPARITY AND SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION
A city of grinding poverty, economic disparity and social disorganization

In the city of Calcutta people are polarized into millions living in squalor in slums and in pavements and a small minority living in prosperity. In between these poles there is the vast population belonging to the various levels of middle class. Although the slum dwellers provide the essential domestic and productive services to the affluent section there is no social relationship between them and the non-slum dwellers. While poverty of the slum dwellers makes the kinship network thin, the affluent executives also fell helplessly drifted from their kin-based matrix of middle class society. From a sample study of 150 professional ‘goondas’ it appears that goondaism in Calcutta thrives on a base of congestion and poverty of the masses and corruption of the upper strata. Although, in the context of rising population, poverty, unemployment and violence one would expect an increasing rate of mental illness in this city, the records of a mental hospital do not indicate that. It has been observed that the deprived citizen of Calcutta seem to be sustaining the unbearable pressures of urban life under a millenarist hope of a desirable kingdom to come, but the “upper” strata are more “disoriented” in the present situation.
LIFE IN A CALCUTTA SLUM

Dikshit Sinha

Slums are, perhaps, a persistent feature of any developing city where the basic urban amenities are characteristically lacking or are in short supply. Calcutta, as a city, has been associated with slums since the eighteenth century when these 'soros' spots grew not quite as a result of rapid industrialization and fast expansion of the city but as a form of urban zamindari system which housed labourers and servants to cater to the city's growing needs (Ghose, 1968). The C.M P.O. report (1966) on Calcutta's slums gives the total population that lives in various bustees as 6,85,115 occupying 92,991 huts in an area of 1,701 acres of land. Except in five central wards slums are found in all areas constituting 5%, to as much as 30.5% of the total population of a ward.

In this paper, based on intensive study of a slum in south Calcutta, an attempt has been made to delineate the social interaction and cultural norms of the slum dwellers within their local setting with a view to finding out whether economic deprivation generated a pattern which could be labelled as 'sub-culture of poverty' (Lewis, 1961).

The problem was originally approached with three general hypothesis:

a) The extremely poor living condition of the slum people will lead to attenuation of the social interrelationships and cultural norms which operate in the larger society.

b) Besides attenuation, adaptation to poverty situation may also generate unique reorganization of the norms of the larger society.

c) Socialization in the slum situation may lead to the self-perpetuation of sub-culture of poverty.

For the present, however, I will focus only some of the social relationships and underlying norms that are found within the bustee. I concentrated my observations on the Bengali residents of the bustee.
The bustee studied was selected in the first place not because it represents all the varieties that are found in the city-slums but because it is typical in having a sufficient number of fairly old population who suffer from chronic poverty.

**THE BUSTEE**

This bustee is located in ward no. 91 on Garcha 2nd lane in south Calcutta. Any visitor from outside will be struck by the contrast that the bustee presents to the adjacent Kothabari. The squalid looking hutments, open drains, accumulated filth and darkness amidst the glare of neon lights, swallow and haggard looks of men and women, bespeak of the utter deprivation and helpless condition of the slum and its people.

There are altogether 61 mostly one storied hutments of mud or brick wall with tin or tile roofs. Once a notorious resort of the underworlds at present the bustee occupies a 7 bighas plot (approx. 2.1 acres). The occupants of the bustee can be categorized into two groups based on their relation to the landlord and mode of occupation: (a) the thika tenants or hutowners who build temporary huts on the land leased to him by the zamindar and rents out rooms; (b) the bharatiyas or the tenants who pay rent to thika tenants. Each of the hutments house a minimum of 8 to maximum of 40 families. For each such hutments there is only one service latrine and one roofless bathing place locally known as 'chatal'. And there are only 7 tubewells and 2 running water taps to serve all the people.

The rooms are let to day-labourers, maid-servants, and low class functionaries such as masoners, machine-men, lathe-man, tram-conductors, office-peons etc., at a monthly rent amounting from rupees 9 to 35.

The population of the bustee is composed of a medley of people coming from such wide areas as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Nepal and from the neighbouring districts of West Bengal. Of the total population of 2451, the Bengalees predominate with 1966 (80.2%) people. The bulk of them came from 24-Parganas and the rest from other districts of West Bengal and East Pakistan. The Hindi speaking
people form the second largest groups with a total population of 440 (18%). The Nepali, Oriya, Bengali, Christian and Buddhist together comprise 1.8% of the total.

The slum people again could be classified according to their mode of origin. The Table 1 below gives the number of families that are slum and non-slum in origin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Place of origin</th>
<th>No of families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Slum</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are 27 different castes among the Bengalis starting from Brahmans and 12 castes among the non-Bengalis. The two Tables (2 and 3) below give different names of the castes among various linguistic groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Castes</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bramhan</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Khatriya</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kayastha</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mahisya</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sadgop</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Karan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vaisnab</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sarnakar</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kaibarta</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sunri</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Goala</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Jugi</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Paramanik</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sutradhar</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2**

_Different Castes among the Bengalis_
_(Not given in hierarchic order)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Castes</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Moira</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Malakar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Karmakar</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Kumbhakar</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Barapabi</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Khundat</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bara Khatriya</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Tanti</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Paundrya Khatriya</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Teh</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Mahato</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Tontule Bagdi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Namasudra</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total families 322
THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE BUSTEE

The social world of the bustee people is primarily made up of their family and kin and secondarily by the local community. The family is not only a place where sustenance and shelter is provided but is also a repository of affection. However, it falls short of middle class concept of home where one not only gets all these but also finds in it a place for comfort and passing leisure time. The bustee people however, cannot do these because of paucity of space, with the result that, if he gets leisure time at all, he is forced to spend it outside his little room at the cost of developing intimate familial relationship.

Before describing the role-relationships in the family some preliminary facts about it may be stated. Of the 441 households in the bustee 374 (84.8%) are nuclear families. There are 16 joint and 3 polygynous families. There are altogether 48 non-family units comprising unattached males, mostly Hindusthanis, who form a sort of messing groups. There are also a few consanguineal families consisting of widow or widower and their unmarried children.
The initial survey of the bustee showed that the families could be categorized into two groups based on stability and instability of income. The first group, comprising 76.4% of the total have a monthly income ranging from below 100 to 150 rupees. The income of a family in this group varies quite often owing to unstable job opportunity for the husbands as well as the wives. Incidentally, in this group most of the wives work outside to supplement their husbands' income and very often they are the sole earners. The second group have relatively high monthly income (Rs. 150 to above Rs. 500) where the husband is the sole earning member with a more or less stable occupation or job. With this fact in mind a stratified random sampling was made and altogether 38 families were selected for detailed observation and interview.

JOINT-ROLE-RELATIONSHIP

I studied altogether 32 families where both husband and wife work. Of these in 28 families wives are the principal earners while in 4 families wives work to supplement husband's income. The case of a family has been described below to illustrate the joint role relationship (Bott, 1968).

The husband S.H. (35) is a biri binder (country cigar) in a tea shop within the bustee. His wife R.H. (26) works as a maid-servant in the neighbouring 'Kothabari'. She earns about 75 rupees a month by working in four families while S.H. earns, at the most, 50 rupees monthly and this amount too is not fixed. They have three children, 2 daughters and 1 son 7, 1, and 3 years old respectively. S.H. told me that before the birth of their eldest daughter he used to work in a cigarette shop at Sealdah and earned about 100 rupees monthly. But the attack of tuberculosis two years back has considerably incapacitated him. During his illness and after that it was his wife who supported him.

Mrs. H. leaves home early in the morning for work. So, Mr. H. has to feed the children and only then can he go to his work. The

* Income was computed from the figures given by the people at the time of census survey during August-September 1968.
children are left at home to play with other such boys of the nearby hutment. Sometimes he takes along with him the youngest daughter to the shop. Mrs. H. comes back from work at about eleven O’clock and cooks food. Sometimes when the husband has no work to do the meal is also prepared by him. Mrs. H. goes back to her work late in the afternoon and returns in the evening at about 7 O’clock. Marketing is generally done by Mr. H. Otherwise children are sent to the local shops whenever the necessity arise.

The money earned by the husband and wife is not pooled together. Mrs. H. spends her money for the children and for food purchased outside the four rations in a month. The husband spends his extra money for smoking hemp or for other similar pursuits. Though the children stay with him for a considerable part of the day he scarcely gives them corporal punishment. But their mother is not that restrained. She frequently beats them and sometimes even keep them unfed when they become too naughty.

In these families husband’s inability to earn enough to provide for the family places wives in the instrumental role of bread-earners. As the wife’s occupation keeps her away from home, especially in the morning and evening, husbands have to do such work as cooking, cleaning and looking after kids which is considered as woman’s job. However, the joint role-relationship happen only in the internal domestic activities. Man and woman have their own pursuits and interest. Resigned to the fate of eating from wife’s earning men were found to loiter in the tea-shops or playing cards with stakes with friends. The boisterousness of the husbands are in sharp contrast with wives’ spine-breaking job of earning money for food just to keep body and soul together and looking after the children because men are considered traditionally inept in this field. As one mother complained, “men do not understand children”.

While men have friends women have only acquaintances. Though the wives of the same hutment often co-operate in family matters the underlying motives is ‘if I help now I can ask for help at other time’. The result is that insults and remarks are quickly
returned which culminates in frequent quarrels and fight between housewives.

Joint recreation, if any, between husbands and wife are few and far between. Newly married couples said that sometimes they used to go to cinema together. One informant commented that these types of joint recreation would happen only for two or three months after marriage, after which this altogether stops. The incomes of the husband and the wife are not pooled together for domestic use. Wives spend their income for domestic purpose or on children while husbands, if they earn at all, keep part of their income for their personal enjoyment. In fact many quarrels between husbands and wives are due to this fact. Continuous quarrels or fight between husband and wife may lead to desertion by one of the spouses. It even leads to periodic estrangement when the spouse may live under the same roof but would maintain separate hearth.

Rearing children is regarded as the domain of the woman. However, husband has to take care of the children when wife is away. He also helps his wife by holding the child when she is cooking, cleaning or is busy with some of her usual domestic duties. This holds particularly good for the new fathers. But in the families where there are older siblings the husband is relieved from this duty and the children are pressed into service. Older siblings not only do the duty of looking after their kid brothers or sisters but perform such function of rearing as feeding, cleaning etc. Moreover, because both husband and wife remain outside home large part of the day children learn to look after themselves from the very childhood.

The question of authority in the family is rather hard to determine, for it requires close observation of behaviour within the domicile. I have tried to study this aspect of husband-wife relationship by observation as far it was possible and also by interviewing. Husbands whose wives work outside admit that this fact tends to diminish their sway over the wives. Wives then no longer oblige them by obeying whatever their husbands say regarding domestic matters. The very fact that their income is important in rearing children seem to have a psychological effect over the men. The submissive role played by
husbands were found to be discussed by some husbands (belonging to the second group discussed above) who claimed that they had absolute authority in their home. They jocularly called these men as *dokho* alluding thereby to their southern origin and "she-man" character. Women too are aware of their independence. They realize that they are no longer bound to their husbands’ whims. While discussing the difference between a husband in a ‘bustee-bari’ and ‘babu-bari’ one housewife commented, “I am not afraid of him (her husband). I do not depend on him”. Another husband said, “I have not allowed my wife to work in spite of the hardship I have to endure because then she no longer will obey me”

SEGREGATED ROLE RELATIONSHIP

In the relatively stable income groups, where husband is the sole earner, family roles are highly segregated. In these families wives do not work outside. Husbands are the sole earners. Wives play a subservient role. Husbands control the family budget. Wives are given a fixed amount twice or thrice in a week. Here too like in the above group husbands and wives have their separate friends and acquaintances with whom leisure time is spent.

To illustrate this type of role-relationship let us examine the family of H.D..

H.D. (40) came to Calcutta when he was only 12 years old. He earned his living by working in such jobs as boy servant, shop-assistant etc. He now works as a peon in the West Bengal Chief Minister’s office. His only room proudly proclaims this fact through a photograph which shows him standing behind the former Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mr. P. C. Sen. H.D. and his wife have three sons aged 10, 7 and 5 years respectively. Though he married seventeen years ago, the span of his effective conjugal life is only 12 years, for H.D. deserted his wife a few months after their marriage because some of his kins accused her of adultery. They remained separated for five years. During these years J.D. kept herself alive by working as a maid-servant in a school mistress’ house at Chetla.
H.D. believes in complete division of labour between husband and wife. "A wife's place is her home and her chief function is to look after her husband and children because God has made them that way. One should never allow them to go outside to work. If you do the result will be like the fellow opposite my room (L. Das and her husband who live opposite his room are maid-servant and day-labourer respectively. L. Das who deserted her former husband to live with B. Das, several years junior to her, beats him frequently)". It is H.D. who regulates family budget. J.D. is given a family keeping allowance weekly. This leads to occasional quarrel between them. H.D. wants that she would trim her requirements according to his income. H.D. confided that he had to beat her sometimes because she 'would not see reason'.

Looking after the children is mostly done by J.D. because H.D. remains out of the home for most of the time. During their leisure time too they remain separated. H.D. spends his leisure time with G. Pal or other friends or in arbitrating bustee disputes.

In all the six families that I studied there is a greater division of labour compared to the families with working mothers. Husbands are here bread-earners while wives are house managers. The authority of the husband too is accepted and obeyed.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS HUSBAND AND WIFE

In the bustee a wife is not a companion whose comradeship should be cherished but whose utility lies in sexual partnership and house management. "Women are born to manage home and rear children"—this is the usual notion regarding wife. The ideal wife is she who is faithful to her husband and work for his happiness. They should not be quarrelsome and be obedient to their husband. But our wives are different because they are illiterate" commented S. H.

The ideal husbands are those who provide their wives with four square meals and look after their happiness. Discussing this aspect with me Mrs. H. commented, "In our bustee husbands not only fail to provide food to their wives and children but they on the other hand enjoy at their wives' expense".
One of the important aspect of family life in the bustee is the awareness that conjugal ties are not indissoluble. Though the percentage of desertion is only 4.5%, this figure would be higher if account is taken of the 50 free union cases where either of the spouse had deserted their previous partners.

It seems that extra-marital sex relation take place to some extent. But quantification of this is difficult to make. Most of the information was gathered indirectly. A few men admitted that they have or had sex liaison with women other than wife.

PARENTS VIS-A-VIS SONS AND DAUGHTERS

Children be it son or daughter stay with their mothers and help her with household chores till they reach a certain age. Daughters and sons are taught to cook and to do other household jobs from an early age. Little distinction is made regarding the nature of works entrusted based on sex. The local primary school teacher who keeps an ever changing attendance book frequently receives requests from parents to relieve their sons early so that they can cook rice. It is a common sight to see little boys and girls cooking or fetching water while their parents are away. As has already been said above another important job is to look after their little brothers and sisters. From eight years or so sons begin to stay away from home and mother, increasingly. When they reach twelve or fourteen years they start their occupational career as day-labourers or servants or in some other jobs that are locally available. The wage earned thus is not given wholly to family but a substantial part is spent on themselves.

Daughters stay with their mothers till they are fourteen or fifteen years old. At that age or even earlier they begin their independent jobs as maid-servants or go on helping their mothers till they are married.

Parents admit that their children are not ‘respectful’ towards them. While parents generally tend to equate this behaviour with lack of education, further probing showed that these parents themselves had not behaved with their own parents ‘respectfully’. Actually they equate obedience with respect. Extracting obedience from a
growing child is a tough job in this situation. Children tend to be submissive when they are young. But with increasing age they become more and more recalcitrant. Parents, while talking to me, attributed this to bad association. But little effort is made to curb this sort of behaviour. Punishments are mostly given when they become too much bothersome but not for their deviant behaviour. Children frequently abuse their parents in a language couched in sexual terms. Norms such as not to argue or talk back to parents are not practised. Beating of father and mother start from an early age and very often continue till late age.

Sons frequently complain that their parents are behaving badly with them because they are unable to give what the parents want. S. S. alleged that he had to live separately from other brothers though the hut is owned jointly because they were treating his wife and children badly at his mother's provocation. It is worth noting here that these facts mostly come from families who have some movable or immovable properties. But in the other families where there is no such ground sons complain about their parents' discriminations too. In the bustee sons normally separate from their family of origin as soon as they are married. Parents too work as long they can move about.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

I have already showed that one of the important roles of brothers and sisters is to look after their younger brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters play together till they are 7 or 8 years old. From then on boys show more active interest in 'boyish sports' while girls become more inclined to 'feminine games'. Age difference between the siblings are not maintained. Abusing each other or beating is common among the siblings. If the age difference between the brothers is small then there is a tendency to move about together. But if the gap is long then the ties between brothers become loose. The relationship between brothers have become, in general, rational and impersonal rather than based on moral obligations. In one instance one brother borrowed money from his elder brother at 5% interest.
I have so far shown the intra-family role relationships in the bustee. Below I will discuss the relationship between different kins beyond the nuclear family.

_How much connected the network is?_

Every one recognizes that beyond the family a person's relations extend to the kins because man's birth and marriage create an indissoluble ties with a group of individuals. This way one has a set of 'Antiya-Swajan' or consanguinal and affinal kins. But at the same time, it is stressed, that barring a few exceptions relations between kins are not what, people said, "it should be". Family has become discrete and kin ties are considered more often than not as bothersome. In response to my questions that what one should do if one's condition became better people said that they would try to live in peace and amity with one's family and kins.

To cite an example,

D.D. is a 32 years old day-labourer who lives in this bustee with his grand mother (70), wife J.D (26) and one 7 years old son. His wife works as a maid-servant. His married sister resides in the same bustee a block away. He visits his sister's house quite often. As he is the only son of his father he has no other near relatives. He heard from his grandmother that his father's brothers or sisters are now living at Nadia, but he has never seen them. Similar is the case regarding his mother's kins. He has no contact with his affines either. Asked who among his kins be considered as having good relation with him, he quipped, "poor people have no friends or kins" He complained that his own grandmother is pestering daily for the fifty rupees that he borrowed a month back. Failure to comply with his desire led her to abuse his son and wife. (The grandmother, though is living with him in the same room, maintains separate hearth.)

In all the cases studied, except in one, the kinship network is _loose knit_, that is, all the kins known to a family are not in contact with one another. In one case a person who was brought up in maternal grandmother's house reported that since all his maternal kins were living in the same village or villages nearby the contact with different
kins were effective. He, however, has little knowledge of his father's kins, except the name of grandfather's because his mother was deserted by his father when he was young. The looseness of kin network I think, is to a great extent responsible for lessening of social pressure. Because kins keep little information regarding their kins' whereabouts or doings, individuals are left to choose their own life's course.

Related with the question of connectedness of kin-network is the knowledge of kin (Firth, 1956). One of the striking features of bustee kinship is the remarkably shallow knowledge of kins. Of all the cases studied in one case only the knowledge extends up to fifth generations (the informant in this case being a Brahman priest) but otherwise the usual knowledge is up to second ascending generation. The usual rationalization of such limited knowledge is either illiteracy or the fact that they have never seen or heard of kins beyond what they know. So the kin group is limited to one's own generation and to the immediate descending and ascending generations. Some people have difficulty in remembering even their grandfather or grandmother's name. Of affinal relations the knowledge is limited to spouse's parents and siblings.

The amplitude of this narrow range kin system is rather thin, with maximum number of kins recognized being 75. Knowledge of kin among family members vary according to age. On the whole the knowledge of kins of the husband and of the wife is almost equal. Nature of marriage have some important effect. In those cases where marriage is not ritually consummated the spouses have little knowledge of one another's kins save the immediate ones, that is, parents and siblings. In those cases where marriage was solemnized ritually the knowledge of the kins of the spouses tend to be a little more extended. Another point worth noting is that it is the husbands who keep contact with their kins. The reason is that it is the husband who is relatively free to visit his kins and is and also, because that money is not available to bear both the husbands and wife's or family's travelling expenses.

The table below lists the range of recognized and nominated kins, that is, kins known by name, in fifteen representative families:
The genealogical data shows that in all cases the knowledge tapers off after first ascending generation. In the second ascending generation knowledge consists of only one's grand-parents with all his siblings fading out. The Table 5 below shows the knowledge of ascending generation's names in fifteen families.

TABLE 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of Ascending generation's name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father's father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's mother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In other words there is a tendency to remember FF than FM. The same pattern is evident in the mother's generation.

SOCIAL RELATION BETWEEN THE KINS

Social relations between kins not only depend on physical accessibility but also on such factors as economic difference, genealogical connections, and personal choice. I have already shown that the bustee families could be differentiated on income and occupational
stability. Families with unstable occupation and income have less contact with their kins and the number of effective and intimate kins in such case was also small. On the other hand families with stable occupations show better knowledge of kins and more effective or intimate contact with kins. The Table 6 lists six families showing difference in occupational stability and income and their extent of contact with kins.

**TABLE 6**

Extent of Contact with Kins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of Kins</th>
<th>Families with unstable income</th>
<th>Families with stable income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandal</td>
<td>Bose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth of generation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead kins</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Extent of contact*

| Effective | 5 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 8 |
| Intimate  | 6 | 6 | 13| 20 |

Of the families shown in the table above Bose and Adaks have most of their kins within Calcutta or at its suburbs. Most of their effective kins are affinals. In the Mandals' case except one mother's sister, all his relatives are in the villages. The five kins with whom his family are in effective contacts are all consanguinals. In the families with stable income cited above Giri and Das have most of their relatives in the city. Tikkadar has all his relatives, except two families, in the villages. And all the effective and intimate kins are either maternals or affinals.

Social relations with kins can be gauged from the different ceremonies attended by the kins. In the bustee such occasions are few and far between. Important life crisis ceremony such as Annaprashan has become obsolete. Marriage and Sradha ceremonies have undergone some adaptations in the bustee. In both the cases the essential rituals are observed only. Kin's participation has become rare. In the case of marriage it has become rather a close
family affair with few intimate kins being present only. In the Tables 7 and 8 kin’s participations in few marriages and *Sraddha* ceremonies are given.

**TABLE 7**

*Participation of kin in Marriages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of the family</th>
<th>Relation with the head of the family</th>
<th>Kins present</th>
<th>Number of Non-Kins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>K G</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>B(2) S(1)*</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>K.D</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>F B (1)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>N.N</td>
<td>Sell</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>M N</td>
<td>Sell</td>
<td>M B (1)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>B.D</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>B , F.B, M.B</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>G.P</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>B, D, W.B</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>B.L.</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>D Z (4) B Z</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures in the bracket shows the number of families

**TABLE 8**

*Participation of kin in Sraddha ceremony*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of the family</th>
<th>Relation with the deceased</th>
<th>Kins present</th>
<th>Non-Kin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>G.P</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>F.B (2)S(2)Br.in-1</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>B.G</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>P.D</td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>K.D</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In analysing kin relation in the bustee it was found that families have more contact with affinal and maternal kins than with the paternal or consanguinal ones. The obvious reason seems to be the importance of the mother. Since wife plays a prominent and pivotal role in the family the tendency to have closer relation with affinal and maternal kins might seem natural. Another factor, I think, that might have had some effect is the nuclearization of family. With the nuclearization of family the help and support that was available in a joint family is no longer feasible. A newly married girl might
find in her mother a better counsellor than in her mother-in-law. Moreover the mothers have interest in seeing that the marriage of their daughters comes off successfully. But it might be asked how far in the bustee situation relation with affinal or maternal kins remains effective or intimate. In all the families studied it was observed that just after marriage families have close relation with affines. With the progress of time the relations gradually cool off. Relations with affines also is dependent to a great extent on their economic condition (Table 6)

FACTORS AFFECTING THE INTENSITY OF KIN RELATIONS

In discussing why kin-visits in the bustee is so infrequent informants pointed out that the paucity of space and economic condition would not make it possible to entertain guests in their house for a long time. Due to low economic capacity it becomes imperative that when some kins have to stay in their house the expense will have to be borne by the guests. R Haldar said that when he visited his native village he used to put up with elder brother but he paid for his meals. Similarly T Bhandari had to pay for his maintenance when he had to live with his mother-in-law just after marriage. The moral obligations of mutual hospitality among the kins is accepted as an ideal norm but it was pointed out that in their impoverished situation this has to be kept in abeyance. Disparity in wealth and corresponding difference in residence also places obstacles in normal kingly interactions. A Haldar said that though his Mashi (mother’s sister) resides in a nearby Kothabari they never visit their house because, he feels, that they are above his station. Only two cases were found where the family concerned have their close kins who live in Kothabari. In both cases respondents said that they have never been paid visit by their more prosperous kins. M. Roy, a small scale businessman who resided in the bustee for more than three years recently shifted to Jadavpur because he found that among other things, living in the bustee was hampering his relation with kins. For they would not come to the bustee and had begun to look down upon him.
While remoteness of genealogical ties cancels out any possibility of kin interaction, physical accessibility plays no minor part in affecting contact between kins. Out of 38 families studied 28 families reported that most of their kins were in the villages. The families coming originally from the slums have their kins in the city but they too have contact with very small group of kins.

To a great extent kins relations or contact have become selective based on likes or dislikes and not on structural principles alone. Many families were found to have no contact with their brothers or sisters sometimes living in the same bustee while contact with relatively distant kins were effective.

THE CONTENT OF KIN RELATIONS

In describing family I have already delineated the pattern of interaction and norms between the members. Scope for observing extra familial relationship was very little. Nonetheless, I had opportunity to observe the behavioural pattern between Bhasur (husband's elder brother) and younger brother's mother and father-in-law, between maternal uncle and nephew etc. In all the cases the element of respect seems to be lacking and the social distance has shortened considerably. Smoking biri or cutting jokes with elderly persons has become common. Normally a brother's wife when talking with Bhasur must veil herself and use a gentle tone and should show no petulance. The Bhasur on the other hand, should be reserved in his behaviour. Though this is the ideal norm none of these conventions are observed in the bustee. I have at least one case to show that sexual relation exists between Bhasur and his younger brother's wife.

Two cases of incest happened in the bustee five years ago. But both the families have left the bustee now. It was reported that in one case daughter and father were involved while in another stepdaughter and father were implicated. Though it can not be inferred from these two cases that this is the order but it certainly points to the extent that the content of relations have changed or deviations from accepted norms have taken place.
The pattern of relationship between sons-in-law and parents-in-law and between daughters-in-law and parents-in-law too have changed. Mother-in-laws have little hold over her daughter-in-law because the latter runs the home and not the son.

BUSTEE AS A COMMUNITY

The people of the bustee regard it as a separate entity from the adjacent regions. To them a ‘bustee-bari’ and ‘kothabari’ are separate not only in physical aspects—the former being mainly a conglomeration of huts and hutlike tenements constructed out of mud, bricks and tiles while the later is mainly a structure of concrete and bricks—but also in other socio-economic criteria. The inmates of ‘kothabari’ are regarded as ‘babu’ or belonging to the ‘Bhadralok’ (Sinha and Bhattacharyya, 1969) class separate from bustee people not only in respect of money but also in education and general behaviour. Interaction with the neighbouring ‘kothabari’ people happen only in their respective capacities as employer and servant but not on social and cultural level. Recently some ‘Bhadralok/Babu’ workers of leftist political parties have been trying to convert the people of this bustee to their line of thinking. But so far this has met with only limited success.

The initial impression of the bustee would present many points of resemblances with the village (Siddiqui, 1969). As in the village the bustee people have a consciousness of kind and the frequency of face to face relation too is considerable. But a bustee differs from the village in having a large number of people who occasionally drift from place to place. In the village people consider their village as a permanent abode and have great sense of pride and attachment expressed in the term “Bhitye-bari”. The people of the bustee are conscious that the “bustee lacks samaj (society)”, in comparison to the village. An old resident of the locality not only knows the members of his hutment but most of the people of his street. But the acquaintance is often limited to the level of “cognitive recognition” (Goffman, 1963) that is, “linking a man by the sight of him with a framework of information”, in the sense that the knowledge in most cases is confined to the names, residence and occupation and not on
the basis of intimate knowledge of personal biography. The frequent shifting of residence from one bustee to the other hardly enables the people to mature their acquaintanceship fully. Another aspect of the social profile of the slum which attracted my attention is the apparent spontaneity with which the squabbles and quarrels were solved. The daily quarrels between mothers over one another's children, occasional family feuds between brothers or the dessertion issues are solved by the public on the spot. The loud voice of the two warring groups would draw instantly a large crowd. Some interested people among them would then come forward and after ascertaining the reasons behind the quarrel try to pacify both the groups. Such frequent quarrels, as between mothers, frequently draw a large number of supporters behind each group but generally remain restricted in hurling invectives, and recounting the past misdeeds of each others but never take the form of physical clash.

In the case of disputes of graver nature the help of leaders of the bustee is taken. Sometimes the arbitration takes the form of court proceeding where the witness and deposition of the two contending parties would be taken before arriving at a judgement. But the effort is always made towards arriving at a consensus rather than rigidly evaluating rights and wrongs. For example, the case between K.N. and K.D. may be cited. In this case the latter was accused of molesting the former's daughters. K.D. pleaded that this case was trumped up to coerce him to submission by the friends of K.N. The case was arbitrated collectively by G.P., H.D. and P.M. After four days full sitting of the court it was decided that the case should be dropped and both groups should settle their dispute "because such matters would disgrace the name of the bustee to the outside world". It may be mentioned here that both the contending groups were backed by their respective friends. Fearing that any judgement might displease the people and ultimately lead to violence, recourse was taken of this middle path.

Ordinarily the people would conveniently overlook the moral laxity that occur not infrequently in the bustee. Such incidence as birth of a child to a widow or prostitution would hardly agitate
the peoples' mind but sometime this will be raked up in connection with some other incidence with which the issue at stake is remotely connected. This again underline the personal interests of the group concerned. Sometimes this may lead to drastic action as driving out the offending person from the bustee which is surprising for a people who normally take a "live and let live" attitude. For instance R D and her daughter were driven out of the bustee because it was alleged that they were permitting illegal visitors to their room at night. But in fact this aspect was raked buy by her hutowners in league with some other local people because they refused to pay a higher rent.

Outside help is very rarely sought in settling the bustee disputes particularly of police because of their strong dislike of it. Police are regarded as always conspiring against the people. But when situation takes a shape which is beyond the control of the people police help is taken. For example, when fight occurred between two adjacent bustees police was called.

From the above discussion it is apparent that apart from minor squabbles which are solved on the spot, the graver issues are temporarily settled rather than solved. This may be due to two reasons. Firstly, in the absence of clear cut mandate and authority the leadership finds it extremely difficult to enforce their verdict. And secondly, the lack of social sanction (which people visualize as lack of Samaj) leaves people free to act according to their own discretion.

It has been shown above that the only structural unit in the social life is the nuclear family and a very weak form of kin relation. In the group life people often complained of selfishness and individual interests. This notion is behind the withdrawal from intense and unnecessary relationships. "People will be good to you as long as you please them" - is the common saying. People will help one another on specific social purpose but it does not extend beyond that to draw people in a permanent network of group action. People living in a hutment though address each other by kinship terms the interaction takes place on family-to-family basis rather than as a
joint group. Death or marriage do draw together the inmates in a temporary alliance but it never takes a corporate form.

Locally there is an attempt to solve the integrative problems by group action. Three years back a Development Committee was formed under the aegis of Calcutta Rotary Club. The club undertook a development programme of the bustee, aiming at cleaning of the bustee and redress of the local grievances. It also tried to arbitrate the local disputes and bring about peaceful settlement. But this group action broke down in the face of individual apathy. The organizers found to their dismay that people are not disciplined to put forth the unselfish effort that organizational life demands. People were even found reluctant to contribute a meagre four annas monthly that were needed to keep the roads and drains clean. I found people more inclined in placing faith in individuals that they know best, particularly the hutowners, to settle mutual disputes rather than on a common leadership. This results in the formation of small groups. This is particularly manifested in the local pujas. Every such occasion will bring to the surface more than two groups competing against each other to raise contribution for pujas. Group alliances too are not fixed. It shifts and forges fluidly as individuals sever connection from one group and transfer to another or autonomously changes his loyalty. To what extent the breakdown of group life is due to ineffectual leadership needs, however, detail examining.

SUMMING UP

In summing up we find that in the bustee the social life is characterized only by the elementary structural unit of the nuclear family. The family as an unit has become quite discrete with great degree of personal choice exercised in relation with the kins. There is a tendency to drift away from kins with marriage and increase of family size.

As far as the effect of poverty is concerned it was found that due to the inability of husbands to provide basic sustenance and consequent employment of the wives, the latter become the central figure with considerable freedom and authority in the family. The family
as an institution for procreation, sustenance and shelter remains intact. But the other elements of relationship such as affection, love and obedience can not find full expression in the existing situation. While love and affection is mainly bio-psychological, the pattern of obedience is normative and relative to the cultural pattern. The classical Hindu literature gave a model regarding husband and wife relationship which places emphasis on respect and obedience on the part of the wife. The people of the bustee too are conscious of this, but in the contingent situation of poverty, we find that in the day to day interaction between husband and wife the latter do not act in terms of the norms of respect and obedience. Husband’s failure to provide food for his family has corroded his authority to a great extent. This failure often leads to escapism which finds expression in hemp smoking and a subdued and defeatist attitude among the unemployed husband.

In parent-child relationship also the ideal norms of respect and obedience are lacking. Due to the absence of parents from home for most of the time of the day, leaves them with little time to watch and regularize the behaviour of their children. And because the element of expectation on the part of the children vis-a-vis their parents is lacking they realize from an early age that parents can not gratify what they demand. Consequently, when they reach adolescence the children behave as if they are independent of their parents.

In the kinship system the range and depth of kinship network has become narrow; the range being limited to second ascending generation and to first cousin laterally. The social relations between kins have become attenuated to a considerable degree with the emphasis on personal aspect than on conventions. And from the structural point of view the families show a decisive inclination to have more contact with affinal and maternal kins than with consanguinal

The group life is very weakly developed, punctuated by individualism. There is a tendency to retreat from unnecessary contact with neighbours. With the result that interpersonal relations are marked by strain and individuation. Reciprocal relations beyond households may play some important part but happen only so far as it sustains mutual interests.
CULTURAL PROFILE OF CALCUTTA

Finally, the question may be asked as to the future prospect of the bustee people. Though some attempts are being made on the part of individual organizations to bring succour to the people and the Government has taken certain measures to modify the existing land tenure system, these measures will hardly deliver the goods. For it bye-passes the major issue, namely, poverty. Our observations indicate that the lot of the people will hardly improve if we do not try to give them at least a stable income so that they can organize their future life to some extent and fight from an objective position of strength.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is based on data collected during the 8 months' field work (August 1968 to November 1968 and February 1969 to May 1969) as a Junior Fellow of the Anthropological Survey of India. I am indebted to Dr. S. C. Sinha, Joint Director, Anthropological Survey of India, under whose guidance the field work was done and the paper written. I am also grateful to Dr. D. K. Sen, Director, Anthropological Survey of India for providing me with necessary facilities.

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THE WORLD OF GOONDAS IN CALCUTTA

Sabyasachi Mukherjee

Man instinctively worships power. In ancient times the strongest man was the best and this fact determined supreme leadership in society. With the growth of civilization, physical strength alone ceased to be the criterion of leadership in society. Physical strength, utilized for the well-being of society, was given the pride of place. The knights of the middle ages were honoured because they lived to make society better. Gradually, social appreciation, political approval and legal sanction formed the bastion of the use of force or strength. This is the rule of law with sanction behind it. The rule of force of the primitive society is a historical fact. The rule of law is only a by-product of civilization. It must however be added that the use of force is an inalienable right of the state for its existence and it subserves the ordered growth of the community. Goondaism is the use of force for the furtherance of individual interest. A goonda seeks to serve himself or his associates and not society at large.

The foundation of the British rule in India augured ill for its inhabitants. "The servants of the Company", writes Macaulay, "obtained, not for their employers but for themselves, a monopoly of almost the whole internal trade. They forced the natives to buy dear and sell cheap..." Every servant of a British factor was armed with all the power of his master, and his master was armed with all the power of the Company. Enormous fortunes were thus rapidly accumulated at Calcutta, while thirty millions of human beings were reduced to the last extremity of wretchedness. They had been accustomed to live under tyranny, but never tyranny like this." India became the El Dorado of persons from beyond the seas. Calcutta along with the rest of India occupied by the English groaned under the foreigners. To crown the misery of the common man great landowners and other wealthy men who had settled in the city employed 'paiks' and 'lathials' for defence and offence as the case might be. But after the Sepoy Mutiny, the Government to forestall future
calamities, cut down the number of retainers of the men of substance to a minimum. The dismissed 'paiks' and 'lathials' hanged about the city. They adapted themselves to the changed circumstances, most of them were now better off and their ill-gotten gains from bullying, blackmail and robbery far exceeded their former income while in the employ of rich masters. The goonda of the day is, to some extent, the spiritual descendant of these swash-bucklers.

The ordinary dictionary meaning of the term 'goonda' is a ruffian. But in common parlance, he is an outlaw, known and understood more for his bravado than for other felonious enterprises. The term certainly has a bad odour about it and, conveys social condemnation and lack of social sanction behind his use of physical force. The legal definition of such a person bears out the popular conception of a goonda. Section 1(4) of the Goondas Act, 1923, says, “Goonda includes a hooligan or other rough” Section 3(1) of the Act, further explains the term, “Such person or gang or body is committing or has committed or is about to commit or is assisting or abetting the commission of—

(i) a non-bailable offence against person or property, or
(ii) the offence of criminal intimidation, or
(iii) an offence involving a breach of the peace, so as to be a danger to, or cause, or to be likely to cause, the inhabitants or to any section of the inhabitants...”. The definition and elaboration do not explicitly explain who really is a goonda. The Calcutta High Court took up the definition of the term ‘goonda’ in the unreported case of Said Shahib Jan Mian and three others Vs. the King. In this case it was held, “Goonda is a habitual breaker of law.” In a number of later decisions this definition was further clarified. Lastly, it has been maintained that ‘a goonda is a habitual breaker of law’ and ‘there must be some element of violence in his activities’. Such a type of persons is a menace to the community and to the public order. Constant watch and control only can keep them in check.

But Goonda Act becomes inoperative due to constitutional grounds. So an attempt was made to deal with goondas under Preventive
Detention Act, 1950. Cases of 150 persons who were detained between 1954 and 1964 under Preventive Detention Act for indulging in goonda activities in Calcutta have been studied and the result is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Physical Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 — 21 years</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 — 25 &quot;</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 — 30 &quot;</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 — 40 &quot;</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 40 &quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Weapons used**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knife</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomb</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomb &amp; knife</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soda water bottle</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lathi</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolver</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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**Residential accommodation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bustee</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
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**Residence in Calcutta**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Territorial Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta born</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Bengalee</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homi outide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuge</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intoxicants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wine</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganja</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All type</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not addicted</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kept</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothel-goer</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not attached</td>
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</table>

**Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>No or little</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Final</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above</td>
<td>5</td>
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**Employment**

<table>
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<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No work</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Politics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No connection</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected Left</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected Right</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Age-group:* This survey does not cover the juvenile delinquents as they have not yet attained the full maturity of criminality. Delinquency has a formative stage. Juvenile delinquents, though technically left out of this survey, are but goondas in the making.
and give us a glimpse into the green-room of their elders. The age-group between 21 and 25 is on the peak of criminality. The criminal biography indicates that they started their criminal career generally between the age of 16 to 18 years. During this period, the criminal activities are coloured by a grand display of power. In the period of gestation, the show of force is more than the force itself. Target of force is the person. Personal violence causes spilling of blood and blood often creates a ghastly spectacle. At this stage the delinquent is more concerned with the display of his powers than with acquisition of property. Display of force adds to his importance in the community and people out of fear satisfy his demand. He retains his unholy hold on society as long as he is in fine mettle. For this reason, goondas well stricken in years and a prey to senile decay are rare. But it does not mean that persons who are advanced in age do not at all indulge in goonda activities. The survey reveals that three persons who are on the wrong side of forty were detained for their goonda activities. Physical fitness and not age is the determinant of goondaism.

Physical standard: Physical fitness is generally synonymous with strength. But a goonda is not always a man of strong built. On the contrary, persons of medium built, are most efficient and 83 persons of that category are found in the list. Even persons with deformed and disabled limbs are not found wanting in the illegal activities. Blindness of one eye, deafness of one ear or both, absence of wrist from one hand and the like are common enough in these criminals; but there is, for very good reasons, no deformity in respect of any leg. They must have a pair of healthy legs to carry them nimbly.

Deformity militates against physical fitness but deformed and disabled persons sometimes develop a strong flair for competition with a normal person. Backed both by physiological and psychological reasons, they sometimes are a little more desperate than their able-bodied counterparts. Desperate attempts are sometimes the overt acts of the defectives.

Type of weapon: Health and strength wield a great influence of the mind and character of a goonda. The choice of weapon depends
on the state of health. A comparatively weak man prefers explosives and soda water bottles. He can just throw them and make good his escape without facing the victim. But a confirmed goonda does not like to take any chance. 90 persons, out of the total number of 150 persons, used both knife and bomb. They use the knife when the victim is comparatively a feeble man and is within the reach of their hands. But the confirmed goondas take recourse to bombs when the victim is strong and is beyond the reach of their hands. Use of soda water bottles requires some practice and in the hand of an expert, they become a formidable missile. A well-trained goonda, possessing only one hand, is capable of throwing 10 soda water bottles in a minute and thereby can keep a huge crowd at bay.

A dagger or a knife in the hands of a goonda is generally used for offensive purposes. But bombs are used both for offence and defence. Possession of a revolver or a pistol heightens the stature of the goonda in the eyes of the public and his compatriots. Only with a show of it he can secure a high position in the hierarchy of goondas.

*Income-group:* Deprivation and frustration are conducive to the growth and development of the goonda spirit in a man. Most of the goondas are born of poor parents and 79 persons of them belong to the income group of persons earning about Rs. 100/- per month. The living conditions is also very poor. 72 persons are residents of the bustee area. 22 persons have no permanent residence in Calcutta. They are homeless vagrants. An unattached person has no respect for the soil and generally he becomes a desperado. When the income exceeds Rs. 400/- per month, the number of persons infected with the goonda spirit decreases and it come to 5 persons only.

Parental control is a great factor in life. From statistics it is not possible to state anything about parental control, although attendant circumstances throw a flood of light on it. Goondas, who have their fathers alive and who have their fathers dead, are almost equal in number i.e., 74 and 76 persons respectively. A goonda generally comes from the low income group. The members of this group are always engaged in earning their living by the sweat of their
brow. The exclusive preoccupation with their living leaves them little time to look after their wards and hence a father alive or dead makes no difference in the life of young ones prone to delinquency. These unhappy children grow up without the fostering care of their fathers. They are without roots in the family. Deprived of joy at home, they seek it outside according to their lights. Consequently they develop into runaways and find allies among the street urchins.

*Living condition*: Congestion has much to do with the formation of a criminal mind. In a crowd a single man is a nonentity and can merge his identity in the vast ocean of the multitude. It is difficult to sift out a culprit from among a mob. Central Calcutta is by far the most densely populated and as such it is the worst affected area. Out of the total number of 150 detained persons, 70 persons are from this area. In this locality the servants of the well-to-do when out of employ, sometimes swell the number of goondas. Bereft of patronage, the retainers of the rich scrape together a living by goondaism.

Over population has made architecture vertical. When the houses are on the same plain, watch and surveillance are comparatively easy. But vertical houses demand constant up and down movement over and above patrolling areas on the same level. In such a condition unobtrusive watch from outside becomes almost impossible.

_Territorial distribution_: Calcutta is the microcosm of Indian criminals. Employment and different avenues for earning attract many people from other states of India. In the jail, goondas coming from the Punjab shared bed with those from Tamilnadu. Even Chinese and Burmese nationals come to its fold. But Calcutta-born gentlemen tower above them all. Their number comes to 78 persons. But all of them are not sons of the soil. Compared with them, refugees from East Pakistan form an insignificant minority. They are only 12 in number and they are only novices. The last generation of the refugees is lost in the futile search of an anchorage. The present generation tries to find it through anti-social acts.

_Moral standard_: A goonda's nerves are always on the strain and hence he has frequent feasts of depression. But signs of depres-
sion are a death-knell to a goonda. He has to keep up his spirits. So he takes to wine. 102 persons are addicted to wine. Only 16 persons of them smoke ‘ganja’.

Wine does not always tone them up. Goondas try to find some ‘kick’ in the company of women as well. Women of easy virtue like to have goondas as their protectors. It is found that 96 persons visit the brothel, 13 persons live in open sin with fallen women. 38 persons are married but 6 of them married girls whom they had kidnapped. Only three persons have nothing to do with woman.

Education: Education is a great civilizing force. Most of the goondas are without the benefit of education. They are not licked into shape. Hence they are the sport of chance desires. Of the total 150 persons, 127 have no or little education, 18 of them have passed the Matriculation or School Final Examination and 5 of them have gone beyond Matriculation standard, but none of them is a graduate. Artistic qualities are inborn and may be found even among the uneducated. 2 persons are good painters, 1 is in the habit of writing poems, 12 are good singers and 3 can play on the ‘tabla’. 14 of them are good sportsman and one among them was football player of international repute.

Employment: Most of the goondas have not their time well filled with honest and creative work. Only 5 persons of them have regular employment. But 123 persons have no employment at all and have no ostensible means of livelihood. 22 are under-employed for they cannot stick to any work for more than a few days. Regularity grinds the goondas. They either give up the regular job on the flimsiest pretext or are dismissed for their misconduct.

The unscrupulous traders indulging in shady deals at times escape the arms of law. But goondas generally know of their activities. Both of them are brethren of the underworld. These traders require protection, help and guidance of the goondas. To win the goondas over they pay the goondas tributes which are more handsome than the salary earned honestly. Thus easy money comes to them as royalties to their prowess and goondas also take pride in swallowing
the same. This easy flow of money tempts them to get rid of the drudgery of a regular service.

Political affiliation: Many of the goondas are without any political colour. Only 23 persons have political contacts. Some fallen angels of politics may take to goondaisn to feed fat their ancient grudge. Frustration lands some to goondaisn. Again with some goondas politics are a camouflage. They put on a political hue to wriggle themselves out of a difficulty. With them politics are a means and not at end.

CONCLUSION

The spirit of lawlessness is now abroad nearly everywhere. In many quarters of the globe under various names goondaisn stalks over the stage of the world. Administrators find it difficult to combat the evil. The rise and growth of goondaisn all over the world can be traced to the change in the socio-economic force of the present day world. We shall here briefly enumerate the causes that made goondaisn prevail in Calcutta and why the powers that be fail to cope with the problem. During the Second World War, Calcutta became the Head Quarters of South East Asia Command and was subject to the strain of war economy which tore asunder the fabric of society. Money-making was the absorbing passion of some who adopted questionable methods to get rich quick. It is not perhaps too much to say that the ways of the new-rich were the ways of goondas. They unleashed the forces of evil. The alliance of the rich with desperadoes made the bad characters look respectable in the eyes of the people for affluence in sometimes influence. The rich can defy law and to perpetuate their power, they harbour and patronize desperate persons. Other events that followed heightened the stature of the goondas. During the communal troubles there was a further shift in the attitude of society towards goondas. At that time the services of the goondas were much in demand. The desperate courage of the goondas saved the life and property of many and made some localities safe and secure. They became local heroes and had a large following. They had an army of delinquents at their command. They ceased to be universally condemned. Again the
power-politics of the day bring the socially boycotted goondas with the pale of civilized community. During the elections they do yeoman's service. Sometimes their brawn is an asset to the brain of a party intent on capturing power. This places the administrator into a tight corner. He knows full well the soil on which goondaism thrives but cannot get to the bottom to root it out. Legal action can be taken against anti-social elements but not against socially-accepted persons. In an unstable society a goonda may be held in esteem for some reason or other and may be looked upon as a useful member. This undeserved stature gives him the extra-legal position. Political turmoil and goondaism often go together. When the body-politic is out of joint, the forces of darkness get the upperhand. It is then the goonda in the garb of a patriot hoodwinks society and gains the esteem he does not deserve. Such a sorry state of things calls for a radical change in society. The need of the hours is to strengthen the moral fibre of the people at large.
PROBLEMS OF THE MENTALLY DISORDERED IN CALCUTTA

Ajita Chakraborty

MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

It is a common and popular assumption that mental illness is associated with social conditions in the same way as it is thought prostitution and crime are associated. The common factor among lunatics, prostitutes and criminals is, each constitute a distinct group in the eyes of law; law which reject and cast them' out from the society. Speaking of the mentally disordered, it is certain historical situation in western Europe, which has placed them under law and behind bars (Foucault, 1967). The movement to free them is still continuing in most countries, but mental illness is firmly established in people’s mind as a social problem. Traditional Indian concept regard madness as disease process and do not associate it with demonology as it was done in medieval Europe. However, this difference in view points has not made the problem greatly different in our present day complex urban societies.

It is also common to assume social change and social disorganization increase the rate of mental disorders. Whether it is a correct assumption or not, we have no clear answer, because the co-relation is not simple and the conceptual and methodological difficulties present in the subjects dealing with these questions have not yet been overcome.

I should say, if the participants are expecting to hear how the present troubles of Calcutta are making us mad, they will be disappointed, or, to put it in other words, Calcutta is indeed sending us mad, but perhaps, not crazy! I hope my attempt at levity brings home to you, at least, the semantical difficulty from which we suffer! What is mental illness? What is this particular phenomena that we should associate with social change? Well, there is no
agreed definition of mental illness. The old term lunatic which deprives the person of his full human status has been discarded by all concerned and the term mentally ill is generally preferred now-a-days. However, this term begs the question. Is it an illness like typhoid or arthritis? Then what concern is it of non-medical persons? Still, the majority in the medical circles accept mental disorder as illness, but this attitude has its critics (Szazes, 1961). There is, however, a general agreement that certain aberrant behaviour, recognized as such, is and had been present in all societies at all times including prehistory of mankind as evidenced from myths and attitudes towards the afflicted person in most archaic of societies (Fortes, 1965). We do not know what causes mental illness, or rather, we know, that a great number of causes are at the root of mental illness, but it is the result, the outcome that concerns us more as it invariably involves the society. The mentally ill persons either reject and withdraw from the society and other human beings or make insistent demands of help. There is often a refusal to accept and behave according to norms, not only of his given culture, but also of basic human life (like talking or eating).

The view-points, even the manner in which I have presented the problem so far, may not be agreed to by other psychiatrists, let alone to any conclusion I may present, which highlights the difficulties I have mentioned earlier. In spite of such difficulties one is always free to form opinions and I quote the following opinions of well-known experts with which I am in agreement. In a review of epidemiological studies of mental disorders, Dr. H. B. M. Murphy says, “Nature of the relationship between sociological events and rates of mental illness still remain uncertain. Studies indicating increase in mental diseases following social change and those suggesting decrease are about equal.” To quote from another authority, “Only where under-developed areas are in contact with West and undergoing westernization there seems to be increase in rate when compared with members of the same group not undergoing change (Kiev, 1964)”. As far as I can make out, the above conclusion is based on studies of tribal groups. Social change and disorganization in so far it means westernization has yielded some positive co-relation with mental
disorder. You will agree it is not possible to test the above hypothesis in Calcutta, where ‘westernization’ has gone on since the founding of the city some 200 years ago. You will perhaps also agree, in spite of a high level of industrialization the Bengali society in Calcutta has many features of ‘underdevelopment’ within it. Hence, it is difficult, if not impossible, to formulate what is ‘westernization.’ Methods of investigation designed for this type of studies are somehow inapplicable to Calcutta. Of course, we the Calcutta psychiatrists or psychologists have not been able to produce any original kind of studies suited to local conditions.

At this point, I must emphasize, notwithstanding whatever has been said before, as psychiatrists we are seeing a lot more mental cases these days. An upward curve of increasing rate is found everywhere. Some of the reasons for this trend may be, people are more aware of the illness and that help can be obtained; there are more facilities for treatment available; there is also a diagnostic bias among doctors, tending to diagnose conditions which would pass as normal variations some years ago.

Even and in spite of the above considerations which are applicable to all countries, most experts agree there is an absolute increase in mental illness all the world over. I shall return to this topic later. In other countries sophisticated data has been kept for at least, last 30 years, on which one can base some assumptions. But in our country even if any data is collected, it is unreliable and unobtainable. The Union Government has taken some steps regarding this vital aspect of psychiatric research, i.e., data collection but, unfortunately, West Bengal is totally indifferent to it.

THE PROBLEM IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CALCUTTA, THE CITY OF COMPLEXITIES

Is there a problem in the city with the mentally disordered?

(A) If any member of to-day’s learned gathering had occasions—Heaven forbid! to grace the chamber of one of my colleagues and have forked out multiples of thirty rupees, he must have felt the
problem as one of his pocket. If he has taken one of his relatives with mild symptoms of being slightly off balance, say after childbirth, the problem would appear much the same—of expenses. Otherwise, he will get best attention and adequate treatment; perhaps, he will find the nursing homes are not of very high standard, perhaps, his friends know very little about them and they are somehow suspicious; on the whole, help will be available and the problem solved.

Now suppose your clerk who lives somewhere in Garia or near Dum Dum—his rather promising and only son goes off his head one day and starts throwing brickbats at passerby—what happens? His friends catch hold of him and carry him to a hospital emergency, there to be told to come next day for the regular out-door. Perhaps, a local doctor gives him an injection and the night passes quietly. The next morning, the boy, though accompanied by a dozen of friends and the distraught family, does not present an alarming picture to the psychiatrist-in-charge, who cannot spare more than 5–6 minutes for interview and examination in a heavily crowded out-door, the family would like to spend an hour. They return home dissatisfied, bewildered and excited. They start asking for advice from all and sundry. One thing they realize but are unable to accept is that immediate admission in a free or low cost bed is not possible anywhere in the city. They might pool their resources and get the boy treated privately, but it is more likely they will go from hospital to hospital and doctor to doctor. Instead of making the best of the treatment that is available they make themselves thorough nuisance in the eyes of the hospital doctors and loose their sympathy. Eventually, whatever the treatment, the boy gets better, he might even pass his examination and get a job. When he relapses after a few years, the father is wiser, an admission is arranged. If he has been married off in the meanwhile, his wife looks after him which is a great help. He goes back to his job. If he relapses frequently and is unable to keep his job, more difficult problems appear. He is now a chronic case and his admission in mental hospital becomes almost impossible unless he has relatives who can pull strings to get him a free bed in the large long-stay hospitals in Ranchi. Otherwise, he remains at home as a burden on his family.
As there are no social welfare agencies, treatment of the mentally ill in Calcutta depends solely on the efficiency, resources and interest of his family.

In matters of employment and marriage, single attacks of schizophrenia (the major mental illness) does not spell absolute doom here as it does in the West. Social stigma of having mental disease seems to be confined to higher strata of the society, not among the hospital cases I encounter. The types of cases that we see, or the diagnostic pattern, is not greatly different from that in other cities in India.

Our hospital is situated in the more affluent south western part of the city, but 80% of the patients are drawn from a strata we have termed—non-manual middle, i.e., clerk, small shop-owners etc. We get a fair proportion of students, but both the highest and the lowest strata are scantily represented. Hospitals situated near industrial and slum areas may present a different picture of pattern of help sought. For example, the psychiatric O.P.D. of the hospital situated near the Sealdah Station is well attended by people coming from the rural area surrounding Calcutta, people who can afford no expenses for treatment. That particular O.P.D. has no facilities for any treatment, so it refers many cases to other hospitals, which only a fraction of these referred cases ever attend. This means the poorer section of people do seek help but do not pursue treatment within hospital organization.

It is the experience of all doctors in Calcutta, that hospitals, general or otherwise, are mainly utilized by middle to lower middle class of people. The situation in Howrah hospital situated in wholly industrial area is well worth a study. I shall return to this topic later. Social conditions as reflected in our own patient population reveal some interesting features. There is a preponderance of refugees from East Pakistan among our patients. We are conducting a study to see if this group is in any way specially vulnerable. So far, I can say, if anything they are more hospital minded or more aware of organized social benefit facilities.
Soon after the gold control order we had a spate of goldsmiths, thrown out of their livelihood, coming with symptoms of depression and other mixed psychosis. This group seemed specially vulnerable, being elderly people with life long habits of meticulous orderly work. It is for record, that I did see one or two cases of chhana-wallas after the chhana control order! For sometime we are getting a sprinkling of students coming with a variety of symptoms resulting directly from frustration over long closure of schools and colleges and postponement of examinations. I have not as yet seen any case which can be related directly to the present state of unrest going on in West Bengal, at least for the last two years. Workers have brought in their sick relatives, more because they now have time, rather than because tension has increased at home. What I find most baffling is their answer to questions—"How are you managing?" which is always—"Somehow!" Perhaps the anthropologists and sociologists present here are conducting studies which will one day reveal how our factory workers, with closure or strikes in their factories for 4–5 months at a time, had maintained their morals and have not felt the pinch.

(B) Let us now ask one more question. What happens, if suppose, a country brother of your driver, goes off his head?

The same story is repeated, his country folk, residing in the same bustee, with perhaps a brother of the patient working in the jute mills, come to the hospital with the patient. An ECT may be given straightaway, but there is a difference this time, whatever the doctor's advise regarding treatment, the friends are more likely to send the patient back to the village as soon as they can. The patient may get better there and come back to Calcutta only to relapse. The story may take a different line—a slum dweller may wander off at the very onset of the disease. If the patient is an elderly widow, a "Ghutewali" for example, or even a young housewife, who will do no work but sit somewhere and shout and abuse, she is very likely to be turned out of the house and may wander off. Such cases, specially, when they have no friends, or have relatives who do not want to be bothered, soon become a very familiar sight in Calcutta—a man or woman, dressed in rags, carrying bundles under his arms.
or above her head roaming around aimlessly in the streets. If she starts abusing passers-by or he starts directing traffic, or commit any such acts of public disturbance, then luckily or unluckily, as you take it, he will be arrested. The police will produce him before a magistrate to get an observation order. If after the end of a month which he spends in the lunatic ward of a city jail, the psychiatrist-in-charge finds the person a ‘lunatic’, the magistrate will commit ‘the said lunatic’ to the custody of the jail, pending a vacancy of a free bed in Ranchi where he can be subsequently removed for treatment.

If these patients do not create any disturbance, but take to the streets, living quietly off dustbins, they may remain free for a long time. Often such cases get adopted by the neighbourhood, who clothe and feed them. But they soon fall prey to diseases and die, quite often, at one of mother Teresa’s homes. Such persons become the most irritating and difficult problem of the civic authorities. Such degradation of a human being produce feelings of revulsion in all civilized people. Metaphorically speaking, stray dogs and wandering lunatics are the best indicators of a country’s state of civilization. In Calcutta, a number of docile lunatics are placed under the Vagrancy Act and put in Vagrants Homes. In India, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras are the only cities having this Vagrancy Act, which is designed to check begging. The study of vagrancy in Calcutta when it is undertaken will be an interesting one. I had occasions to visit these homes and was told that one third of the cases apprehended give up begging, often do well in schools run by the Directorate, and learn a trade, facilities for which are also provided. Of course, the scheme falls through, as jobs can seldom be provided for them. The accommodation provided in 4 such homes run by the Vagrancy Directorate can take in perhaps, not even 1% of the city’s beggars, but of this meagre quota, more than 60% are now occupied by mentally ill persons, who being sick people and not vagrants block up, on one the hand places which are not meant for them, and on the other, get no treatment for their condition. Though the benefit of food and shelter provided are not to be minimized, specially when one thinks of abandoned mentally defective children and adults, still, the problem of the mentally disordered, if one takes into account
modern advances in treatment and the world wide movement of mental health, rightly and properly belong to the authorities responsible for health. However, in our city these self exiled and cast-outs are nobody's problem, a fraction of them are just somehow shoved out of sight, but a great many of them are always to be found out there, perhaps, enjoying the freedom of the streets.

The conditions in the vagrants homes are bad, but not as bad as in the jails. Through the intervention of some public spirited persons some female cases were removed from the Presidency jail and were placed in a special jail in north Bengal. The vacant places in Presidency jail have been filled up in no time and the conditions are as bad as ever. It is to be said there are psychiatrists in charge of the lunatic wards but proper treatment is well nigh impossible due to legal difficulties, though some drugs are occasionally available.

The majority of cases in vagrants homes and half the cases in the jails are non-Bengalis, though for many names even addresses are unknown. They are mostly from Bihar, a situation which reflects the plurality of Calcutta and makes rehabilitation extremely difficult. If a Bihari women recovers she can neither be sent to her village nor can she be discharged here with nobody to look after her. It is only Calcutta of all Indian cities that has this particular problem in this magnitude, that is treatment, welfare and if necessary, rehabilitation of a large number of migrant labour from other States.

SOME ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS

No discussion on mental illness in its social perspective can be complete without mentioning the following topics, which by the way, are the more important social psychiatric problems in the west.

First, the psychopaths or the sociopaths (the misfits)—groups of people who, though not manifestly abnormal, cause other people or the community to suffer through their acts. They are the drug addicts, alcoholics, perverts, vagabonds, habitual criminals, gamblers, people given to unprovoked violence, and, where opportunities exist, people who are unable to hold on to steady jobs. In U.K.
law has been changed so that, many people who come under above categories are forced to accept some treatment. The very list is enough for us to realize, it will be a long time before we can consider say, drifting or vagabondism as mental abnormality. Yet, these are typically city problems and Calcutta is teeming with the misfits. It is, perhaps, only the ‘blacksheep’ of an affluent home, who may, though rarely, be brought to the psychiatrist, thereby proving that we do have true psychopaths.

Second, to certify a person as lunatic means he is deprived of all his rights and can be locked up indefinitely. Many countries have formulated safeguards to prevent misuse of certification. As the Indian Lunacy Act is very much antiquated, the Indian psychiatrists are trying to introduce a new Mental Health Act. My own efforts in this respect has brought me surprising realization. I find the concept of civil liberties is almost absent in this highly political city of ours. Some three years ago, the State Government opened a mental hospital in the city and placed it outside the jurisdiction of any law relating to mentally ill persons. In spite of my vociferous (though lone) protest, they did not even realize it is an anachronism. The newspaper which 6–7 years ago made an issue of certain changes proposed for the Lunacy Act, did not take any interest in the matter. Now the hospital situation in Calcutta is such that no patients can be kept, in occupying a bed, for any length of time. This factor, i.e., quick discharge may be one of the reasons why the city has not had a court case of false certification and unlawful detention in the past 20 years. But I feel it is not an isolated phenomenon relating to psychiatry. People’s attitude and understanding of laws are radically changing since the British left and the Zamindary system was abolished (most cases of false certification in the old days used to be associated with disputes involving inheritance of landed property). The whole topic may seem rather irrelevant and unimportant to you, but it is being mentioned to underline the futility of borrowing and propagating ideas and concepts from other countries, with the logic what is good for them is good for us. All the reforms instituted for the mentally ill in advanced countries may be extremely good in themselves but they may be utterly meaningless in our context.
Third—the question of rehabilitation which is closely linked with the problem discussed just now. Mental illness is a chronic disabling process, some treated and all untreated patients gradually cease to be functioning members of the community. In this respect it is somewhat similar to tuberculosis and leprosy. You are perhaps aware of the problems in our sanatoriums for these diseases. Recovered patients refuse to leave the hospitals. In a tuberculosis sanatorium there is a patient’s union demanding among other things, jobs when they are discharged. If resources were available, unemployment benefit or disability pensions would have solved this problem. But mental illness pose some other fundamental problems of relationship between the individual and the society. On the one hand mental patients need care and protection by the society, on the other they challenge the society’s right to force it on them. Our patients neither want to come into the hospital on their own nor do they want to stay. Whether you force them through law, or coax and cajole them through social welfare agencies, to accept treatment, problems remain. Even while making good all the defects Calcutta has, no advanced country has as yet found the ideal solution how to deal with their mentally ill. Some problems will always remain as long as they are problems of human will, choice and freedom.

CONCLUSION

Without minimizing the problem and registering a strong protest at the neglect by the authorities of the rudimentary organizations that we did have, I must say, in my experience, the increase in the rate of mental illness in Calcutta is not what one would expect. I am offering two arguments to support my assumption. First, the types of cases that we see are not the types more obviously related to stress, i.e., depressions and anxieties. Our cases are mostly schizophrenias; the percentage distribution of different diagnostic categories coming to the hospital outdoors has not undergone any change in recent years. Second—allow me to bring back some facts already mentioned. I have stated, the unclaimed cases on the jails and in the vagrants homes come from the lowest strata of the city’s population. My guess is there are about 3000 cases of this type in
Calcutta and Howrah, including those who are at large. This is not a high figure. Of course, it is very approximate, because so many cases are sent back to villages, so many did and so many cases recover spontaneously. Yet, I think this is a group of cases which must reflect the true indication of psychiatric breakdown rates. As I have stated, patients from this strata do not come to the hospitals, nor can they afford private treatment. It is also not possible for them to ‘hide’ mental patients in anyway. Loss of accounting can only occur the way I have mentioned. Hence, these cases should represent the hard core psychotics, who, it is not unreasonable to expect, as a sort of residue in psychiatric mixture, hold a proportional relationship to the whole quantity.

If this section of population is taken as less vulnerable to social stress, then we have to explain what is social stress and find an answer for the actual increase that has also been mentioned before. I think the increase in number of cases that we see are due to the same reasons that are causing higher breakdown rate elsewhere and not due to the social factors operative here. West Bengal is undergoing deep and major social changes, but these changes are not of such nature that cause true mental strain, that is, they do not enhance the deep seated alienation inherent in man. In western countries, more correctly, societies whose technology has reflected in their social structure, perhaps, processes are operating that increases man’s alienation from man and society. I feel the true psychological effect of the present changes in Calcutta are being felt more in the upper strata than in the lower ones. It is the ‘upper’ who are more disoriented. The others are now more buoyant, more hopeful than ever before, it is perhaps millenarist hope of the kingdom to come, perhaps there is just a touch of cargo cult in all these endless processions. In the midst of these momentous changes I do not find any conflict of values, conflict always presupposes two opposing and fairly rigid codes. What I find is an absence of values, which strangely enough, seem to suit everybody.

There is something else which is also absent in this city of grinding poverty, economic disparity and social disorganization—unsmiling
faces. I do not mean filth and malnutrition is filling us with any 'joie de vivre', but I challenge you to go on watching faces in the streets and find out how many hard, sullen faces you see. No—we do not feel the misery of our miserable existence, we Bengalis are incapable of feeling despair. I think this is what lies behind the inexplicability of Calcutta.

REFERENCES

THE EXECUTIVE OF CALCUTTA

Gouranga P. Chattopadhyay

INTRODUCTORY

This paper, I must say at the beginning, should have never been written because its basis is going to be personal impressions only.

With this short introduction, let me plunge into the subject matter. I do not feel that there is a completely homogeneous executive culture prevailing in Calcutta. I have come to this conclusion on the basis of some personal observations and some facts.

FOUR EXECUTIVE SUBCULTURES

It is usual to classify executives into two broad categories—general and functional. The latter are such people as the works manager, who is an engineer of some kind, the finance or accounts executive, who is usually a chartered or cost and works accountant and so on. Such functional executives almost inevitably have specialized academic qualifications—they are engineering graduates, chartered accountants, diploma holders in labour welfare (labour welfare officers), doctorates in economics or statistics (the marketing executives) and so on. But the general executives, on the other hand, can be matriculates, ordinary graduates etc. In other words, they need not necessarily have any specialization. These people are the branch managers, general managers, directors and so on. Some of the older top executives of some of our traditional industries like jute are only Senior Cambridge passed or less. I had once tried to collect data on the social and academic background of the executives in the jute industry in West Bengal, but due to lack of cooperation from their official association in West Bengal I could not proceed with my work.

There is also a third type of executives, who manages the family business and is a near kin of the entrepreneur. He belongs to a special category, for reasons I shall go into later on.
Of late a fourth kind of executives are making their way into the industry. They are the graduates of the two Institutes of Management at Calcutta and Ahmedabad, a few university departments of business management and a sprinkling of foreign M.B.A.s. These young men and women are highly educated and are trained in using sophisticated management techniques in various functional fields like organizational behaviour, financial and economic planning, information and data processing systems and the like. They come very near, in their approach, to the older generation of functional managers. It may be worthwhile mentioning here that during the late fifties the Government of India had set up a commission to enquire into the state of management education in the country. After collecting data this commission argued that while the government had spent money in buying machines and training men to run these machines, next to nothing had been done to get trained personnel for various areas of management. As a result, not only the two Indian Institutes of Management were set up at Calcutta and Ahmedabad (the money coming from the Government of India and at those of the States of West Bengal and Gujarat respectively), more money were pumped into some universities to expand existing departments of Business Administration or to set up new departments where they did not exist.

One of the exercises that could be undertaken by anthropologists is to study the interactions of these four types of, as it were, subcultures, within the broad executives culture. I shall first try to give a general idea of the common elements of culture among all these four subcultures, and then highlight some of the points of difference.

THE COMMON ELEMENTS SHARED BY THE FOUR SUBCULTURES

At a superficial level, in Calcutta, the members of this culture can be identified by some traits of their material culture. Their homes almost inevitably are drawing room centred rather than the bedroom centred homes of the middle class Bengalis. The radiogram and the refrigerator are conspicuously displayed, with an occasional tape-
recorder. A collection of standard cottage industry products like
dolls and masks adorn the shelf over the pelmet, or the mantelpiece,
if the house is old. A small liquor cabinet and a collection of beer-
mugs and wine-glasses add to the status. A stock of whisky is must.
A hidden bottle of rum for sharing with close friends, (this is to keep
the costs down) may also be discovered behind some books. A
fascination for imported clothes is yet another common element.
Children’s education is usually given through English medium public
schools or semi-public schools and they are encouraged to address
their parents as “Daddy” and “Mummy”. The kind of luxury
articles and dress that these people buy are reflected in the saving
pattern of the executives. Beyond a safety level, they do not save
money for investing in business by buying shares.

Almost all major companies encourage club and restaurant habit
in their executives by giving them expense accounts and club members-
ships at company cost. Usually an executive has two accounts in
his club—one personal and the other financed by his company though
both the accounts are sponsored by the latter. The company account
is supposed to be used only for entertaining business acquaintances.
But it is not unknown for an executive to lament over the fact that
he is bored with drinking in the company of fellow executives in order
to spend an amount per month that his employers consider necessary
to project a proper image of his company. As a result, he seldom
runs a bill at his club in his personal account. Apart from drinking
and having lunch at times, playing golf is very important even today.
I wish to recall two anecdotes in this context. The first one is that
once a senior executive of a British company seriously advised me to
start a miniature golf course to give our Institute’s boys practise
before they got their diploma. The second one is slightly more
elaborate. We had once organized a seminar in Calcutta to discuss
the relationship between practising managers and our Institute’s
faculty. An executive suggested that we should allocate funds to
let some experienced managers take a sabbatical, stay with us and
write books, immortalizing their profound experiences. Before any
of us could find our wits to reply, a down to earth executive got up
and said that unless one of the Chambers of Commerce introduced
a Merchant's Cup* for writing a book, he was sure that no amount of sabbatical would be sufficient incentive for an executive to write a book. As for other kinds of leisure activities, going to pictures in balcony seats and ball-room dancing at every party, which results in dinner being served after midnight, is a must. Unlike the British, for Indians dinner is at once a cue to eat and then go home. The executives feel the pressure of this tradition too. So dinner has to be served at the dead of night to a tired crowd after a lot of dancing, and perhaps this is a contributory factor to the widespread gastric trouble that haunt executives in India.

Surprisingly, or perhaps not so surprisingly, reading is an unknown exercise for a large majority of executives. During short courses that we hold for executives, I have even been told, by way of remonstrating against the amount of home work that we give, that the executive has even given up reading short stories, and not to speak of novels and that at best he reads the daily newspaper and at times the Times Magazine.

I have an impression that, as far as family life is concerned, there is an element of parent-children alienation. Children are to be certainly left with grandparents whenever the executive gets a chance of wrangling a foreign trip with his wife. Even during annual holidays at Kashmere or Gopalpur-on-sea, children are preferably left behind. In day to day life, since evenings are spent largely in parties or at the club, and that is the time when one can spend with one's children, there is little communication between parents and children.

**THE CULTURALLY ROOTLESS CULTURE**

The Calcutta executives, to a great extent, thus appear to be culturally rootless. I have seen Bengali executives at quandary during "Bhratri dwitiya". They were embarrassed when a sister, who has married into a traditional Indian home, went through the ritual and gave gifts; the brothers realized too late that they were expected to reciprocate it. During the Pujas, I have heard executives

* The Merchants cup is one of the most coveted golf trophies.
greeting their subordinates by saying “Happy Pujas”—which is, I suppose, some kind of Indianization of “Merry X’mas” or “Happy New Year”. But they go in for the Christian festivals with gusto, after distorting these to some extent. Obviously there is no question of church-going or praying. The element of family reunion is also absent. But all night parties and heavy drinking are musts during X’mas and New Year’s eve. At Easter, well, I had once asked an executive’s children on a Good Friday morning if they had had Easter Eggs. Their indignant mother answered, “Eggs! That will come a little later. They have just breakfasted on hot-cross buns!”

But while all these executives live in a world of imported goods, cars, public schools and hot-cross buns, they willy nilly pay their allegiance to the traditional culture. As a matter of fact, this conflict of cultures seriously hamper industrial growth and peace. It is well known to any anthropologist that every organization demands a particular kind of repetitive behaviour, which in its turn is derived from a system of norms and that these norms are dependent on a value system. Industrial organization was evolved in the West and considerable adjustment of values was needed there before the men who ran the industries at various levels found their moorings in a new situation. As a matter of fact, even today this process is going on in the West. In India, at a very short notice the machines were brought and the organizations to run the machines were created. The men who are parts of these organizations find that the traditional values that they believe in are at variance in many areas with the values that these organizations demand. The executives, who have to uphold this new value system, have no option but to pay lip service to the new value system. But in their behaviour, they still adhere to older values. As a result, the more they upbraid their subordinates for not adhering to the new values, the more angry, frustrated and confused the latter become.

This is, it may be noted, not to suggest that a particular kind of Western value system and the consequent behaviour pattern are the only possible choices for the industrial and commercial organizations in India. There are many ways of resolving this organizational
dilemma of value conflicts. But the unfortunate facts is that barring one or two organizations in India, which are highly innovative, most of them appear to merely copy the Western pattern and try to make the best of the resultant organization, without caring to examine at least the key variable existing in the environment and within the socio-technical system of the organization.

To elaborate this point regarding value conflict, let me quickly give a few cases. Recently one of my students, interviewed some senior Bengali executives. One of them denied that he puts any emphasis on kinship while recruiting or promoting. But in course of the inter-view it came out that he was furious with his kins because they had refused to help his wife and children while he was in England. He considered it as their duty as kins and since they had not done their duty, he was out to see it to that none of his kins ever got help from him in industrial career. Thus, in truth, he was showing his strong attachment to the traditional value on kinship system.

A second executive, who also likewise denied having any traditional values said that all things remaining same, he preferred to give jobs to a kin or to an ex-student of the school where he had been educated. He never realized that all things cannot remain the same if one gave emphasis on kinship and such other ascriptive characteristics.

Apart from the type of instances given above, one could also cite the cases of kinship being a criteria of getting important club membership, to be brides being first approved of by senior directors, instead of by the parents of the groom, strong cliques that cut across the formal organization being formed on the basis of caste and region and appointment of near kins to important posts through an apparently impersonal selection system.

But the effect of traditional values is really felt in the area of superior subordinate relationship when the gap in the hierarchy is large. A senior executive's attitude towards the wokers is largely that of a Zamindar towards his field hands. Here both age and hierarchical positions are felt as justifiable ascriptive statuses for demanding unquestioned loyalty—which is not forthcoming, giving
rise to industrial unrest. (I am not suggesting that this is the only cause or even that this is the most important cause of industrial unrest).

Thus we see that the executive culture is really a thin polish over the hard grains of the traditional Indian culture. Everyone knows that the grains are present, but they behave as if these do not exist, as a result of which continuously one rubs against the grains and gets hurt.

Now to give a little time to the subcultures.

THE DIFFERENCES AMONG THE FOUR SUBCULTURES

Till now the dominating sub-culture is the one that have men who are hardly educated compared to their responsibilities. Those who take decisions concerning hundreds of human beings and crores of rupees are usually Senior Cambridge passed or graduates. They have little or no specialization, though they have authority over others like engineers who have put in several years of intensive specialized training and education. They are suspicious of any kind of intellectual activity or systematic (in the sense of its being scientific) approach to problem solving in their organization. They put a high premium on experience and even if experience shows that for every ten right decisions, three major blunders are committed, those blunders are quickly forgotten and the problems of lower productivity or unhealthy organization are never thought of by them as the result of their lack of necessary knowledge in the various fields of human behaviour, technology, finance etc. This sub-culture is the most isolated one. In some companies they differentiate between two kinds of executives—the Brahmins and the Scheduled Castes. Obviously, reference here is not made to their caste. Those people who get jobs by virtue of having kinship, public school and club connections and little specialized knowledge, are the Brahmins. They patronize similar clubs, drop into one another's house without being formally invited, and marry into one another's family. There is a strong feeling of antagonism between them and the functional managers. This is not only reflected in the use of such terms as Brahmins and
Scheduled Castes, but also in the classical antagonism between factory staff (who are mostly higher educated) and head office staff. I have also heard the terms "the assess" and "the bosses" to differentiate between them! These generalists not only fight the older specialists, but they also find it hard to accept the young highly educated managers of the type our Institute produces. As a matter of fact, we are not sure how long our graduates will be able to resist this dominating subculture and finally give up trying to utilize their newly acquired knowledge. This antagonism, we may find out, is not blind resistance to change, but it really stems from a fear that these youngsters may, in the near future, prove the old generalists to be redundant, or at least, comparatively inefficient.

The specialists or the functional managers, on the other hand, are by and large more traditionally oriented. One of the likely reasons for this is that they have to spend longer periods in their colleges, universities, I.I.T.s and so on in the company of solid middle class boys. Because they start their working life comparatively late, they also marry late and have to cope with the value system of middle class women who are more traditionally oriented. Also, they cannot afford to spend too much on luxury goods or for sending their children to too costly schools. All this is because they start their life comparatively late and have to save money at a greater rate in order to provide for a decent retired life.

In our third category comes the entrepreneur, who is also an executive, or the executive who is the brother or nephew of the entrepreneur. These people are mostly found in large and small family business. By and large they are highly traditional people who make little concessions to the Western values. At best they will wear suits while going to office. But even this is dispensed with if the office is not air-conditioned. They behave as traditional patriarchs, both at home and at office, and make no bones about it. Because they have money, and it pays to patronize clubs and restaurants, they frequent these places. The functional executive is seldom there, but the generalists, who are very much there, resent these people, though very little can be done by them to get over the resentment. As a result cliques abound in these clubs and in the organization of
official balls and charity balls. Our own experience is that because
these entrepreneur executives really mean business, once they are
convinced of the utility of new kinds of education or organizational
change, they accept the change faster than the die-hard public school
type of generalist.

I have so far tried to briefly highlight the four divisions found in
the executive culture of Calcutta, and the inherent value conflict that
runs between the Indian tradition and the executive culture on the
one hand, and between these four divisions as well. Very useful
research can be undertaken to study in depth these value conflicts.
Such researches, apart from their academic value, would be very
useful to bring in much needed improvements in the strife-ridden
Indian industries.

THE EXECUTIVES AND THE BUREAUCRATS

I have altogether skirted two aspects of the executive culture. The
first area that I have left out is the sub-culture of the public
sector enterprise managers. This is yet to be studied, as also their
interaction with the other sub-culture executives at places of business
and recreation.

The second area is the relationship of the executives with the
bureaucrats in the government. The vintage car rallies, where the
executives, ex-feudal overlords and high police and military officials
come together, the Navy Balls or the 'Made for each other contest',
where the army chiefs, the governor of a State, the government
Secretaries and the executives come together, and many similar other
institutions need also to be studied to find how these cultures interact
and the consequences thereof on our economy and political life.

It is now accepted by almost everyone that in order to survive
India must not only industrialize herself more quickly, but that
these new industries must be capable of producing world standard
goods. From this angle, the industrialists and the senior executives
have to perform leadership role in the country, and as a consequence
form at least a major section of the country's elite. But till now,
without giving either any leadership, or performing their own task
of improving organization and the quality of goods, they are trying to become accepted as part of the elite through a very traditional institution—namely, conspicuous consumption. The bureaucrats who lack the economic resources of the industrial executives, sometimes, combine with them and sometimes fight them to gain similar recognition by using their traditional weapon—namely, power. This interaction need to be studied thoroughly, and quickly, for healthy Indian life.

KNOW THYSELF

We, who claim to be an important part of the Indian elite—the intellectuals—well, I wonder who would study our interactions with the executives and the bureaucrats.