
Khan Choudhury Amanat Ullah Ahmad: A Case Study on His Political and Literary Activities

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Abstract: *The main aim and objective of the present study is to highlight the role of Khan Choudhury Amanat Ullah Ahmad as an intellectual of the Cooch Behar Princely State. He was born at a Jotedar family and he was not highly educated. But he passed Entrance and he had a deep knowledge in Persian, Arabic, Bengali, Sanskrit and English. As he was the Revenue Minister of the state, he got the royal patronage to carry on his literary and cultural activities. He was a member of 'Rangpur Sahitya Parishad' and a member of Executive Committee of 'Kamrupa Anusadhan Samiti'. He was a scholar, writer and folklore researcher. He was an architect of the 'Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha'. He attended many literary conferences. His famous book is 'History of Cooch Behar Vol-1'. He founded 'Hitasadhani Sabha', a political party which worked for the development of the Coochbeharis. However he was expelled from the Cooch Behar State and he took shelter in the Rangpur District of the Bengal Presidency.*

Key-words : *Cooch Behar, Intellectual, Hitasadhani Sabha, Muslim, Rajbanshi etc.*

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Introduction

Amanat Ullah Ahmad was a big figure in the intellectual society of the Princely State of Cooch Behar. Before entering into details of the discussion, it will be better to give an account on the title and the theme of the study. Many research works have been done on the Princely State of Cooch Behar. But no work covers on Amanat Ullah as a writer, thinker and intellectual. In this why I have chosen the theme and selected the title ‘*Khan Choudhury Amanat Ullah Ahmad : A Muslim Intellectual of the Princely State of Cooch Behar*’. The main aim and objective of the

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present study is to highlight the role of Khan Choudhury Amanat Ullah Ahmad as a Muslim intellectual, a writer and an organizer. Now we are entering into the details.

First of all we can mention the birth place of Amanat Ullah and the description of his family. It is well known that Cooch Behar has its historical legacy. This land was a part of ancient 'Kumrupa' or 'Pragjyotishpura'. This land was known also as 'Kamata', 'Louhitya' and 'Koch Kingdom'.¹ After the 'Anglo-Koch Bihar Treaty of 1773' Kamata Koch Kingdom became a native state or princely state.² In the state there were five sub-divisions such as Tufanganj, Cooch Behar, Dinhat, Mathabhanga and Mekhliganj. Amanat Ullah was born at Baramaricha village of Mathabhanga Sub-Division on Poush 17, 1275 B.S./ January 2, 1868 in a jotedar family. He was two years younger than Panchanan Barma and five years younger than Maharaja Nripendranarayan Bhup Bahadur. Maharaja Nripendranarayan was born in the year 1863. Muhammad Amirulla was his father and he was a jotedar. He had two sons and one daughter. They were Amanat Ullah Ahmad, Azim Uddin Ahmad and Maynatunnechha. Muhammad Amirulla was a salaried employee of the Cooch Behar State. This family had two residences ; one was at Baramaricha and the rest one was at Patakura near 'Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha Bhaban'. Amanat Ullah Ahmad had two daughters and one son. They were Fatema Khatun, Rahima Khatun and Emdad Choudhury Ahmad.³ They were Rajbanshi muslim i.e. 'Nasya-Shekh'.

Amanat Ullah was not highly educated. He just passed the Entrance Examination. But he had very knowledge in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Bengali and English language. He lived at the residence of Patakura. He died when he was 90 years old. Out of these 90 years, he was engaged himself in the literary and cultural activities for 55 years. He started to study history at the age of 27 and his literary activities took departure with the expel from the Cooch Behar State on February 3, 1950.

Amanat Ullah's family was famous for the patronization of education and culture. They donated land, fund for the establishment of school and dispensary. We can mention some examples in this regard. Muhammad Amirulla donated Rs. 200/ for the development of Mathabhanga M.E. High School. Amanat Ullah built one two bedded pacca room and one kitchen room for Sitalkuchi Dispensary. Baramaricha M. E. School was established by this family. Amanat Ullah Ahmad got the title 'Khan Choudhury' from Maharaja Raj Rajendra Narayan.⁴

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II

Amanat Ullah was a scholar, writer and folklore researcher. He had deep interest on literary works. It is the fact that he was last revenue minister of the state and he was a member of the State Council since 1909 to 1949 as Muslim representative. So he was eye-witness of many events of the royal house. Barring this he got the royal patronage for his literary and cultural activities. 'Cooch Behar Public Service Commission' was formed in 1939 and the members of it were total 5. Amanat Ullah was of them.

'Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha', a literary association was established in the year 1915. Maharaja Jitendranarayan and Maharani Indira Devi patronized it and Prince Victor Nityendranarayan took the main initiative to found such kind of literary organization. The main aims and objectives of it were-

- i. To study on literature, language and antiquities-ruins of Cooch Behar.
- ii. To search ancient punthis, to collect and preserve and to publish.
- iii. To compose the history of Cooch Behar and to collect historical ruins of Cooch Behar.
- iv. To publish a journal namely 'Cooch Behar Sahitya Patrika'.⁵

The main officials were as follows :

Office bearers⁶

Patron	Maharaja Jitendranarayan
President	Prince Victor Nityendranarayan
Vice President	Prince Hitendranarayan
	Narendra Nath Sen, B.L., Bar-at-Law
Secretary	Khan choudhury Amanat Ullah Ahmad

Amant Ullah Ahmad was the secretary of it was 25 years i.e. since 191 to 1940. The sabha collected many coins, 22 idols and 57 punthis. Amanat Ullah played a vital role to collect the punthis and he deciphered the Narayani coins. Professor Arun Sen, Calcutta University, was appointed for the post of Archaeologist of the state in 1918. Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee came to

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visit Cooch Behar as a member of Calcutta University Commission and '*Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha*' facilitated him. Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee praised it and wrote :

“I was deeply gratified to make the acquaintance of members of the Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha on the occasion of my visit to that historic city as a member of University Commission. The work already accomplished by the Sabha is of striking merit and significances for we find preserved in Cooch Behar valuable relics of our ancient civilization, its history and its culture. It is a matter of deep gratification that members of the ruling family take such an abiding interest in the revival and continuance of that learning which in the past, characterized many a scholar resident in this ancient Raj. The encouragement which is thus given for the preservation and development of our ancient learning recalls to mind, the noble deeds of many a distinguished ruler of the past. I fervently hope that the example so nobly set will be sedulously followed in the years to come be brought to light and made accessible to all students and admirers of our culture and civilisation.”⁷

Amanat Ullah was a leading intellectual of the Cooch Behar State. It has been note earlier that history writing of Cooch Behar was one of the notable objectives of the sabha. In the annual conference of the Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha which was held on March 9, 1917, Prince Victor Nityendranarayan gave the opportunity to Amanat Ullah to write the history of Cooch Behar. It was really a hard work what he did and it was published in 1936 from The Cooch Behar State Press. The name of the book is '*History of Cooch Behar Vol-1*'. This work gave him name and fame.

Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha organized many literary sessions and discussion sessions on literature, Philosophy, science and History. In the first year the following papers were read.

- i. 'Bidushi Kuchbihaar Rani Bhanumati' by Amanat Ullah.
- ii. '*Kamruper Purabastu*' by Nagendranath Basu.
- iii. '*Maharaj Harendranarayaner Granthabali*' by Sharat Ch Ghoshal.

Amanat Ullah was a well organizer. During his secretary-ship E.A. Gait, writer of Koch King of Kamrupa, became the member of Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha. The contemporary intellectuals of Bengal who came at Cooch Behar appreciated the activities of sabha. They were Nagendra Nath Basu, Sashi Bhushan Dasgupta, Tara Sankar Bandopadhyay, Humayun Kabir, Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay, Hemchandra Barua, Pramath Nath Bishi, Nihar Ranjan Roy and Ashutosh Mukherjee.

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Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha started to publish its mouthpiece '*Paricharika*' in 1916. It was a literary journal. Nirupama Devi was its editor. The contemporary intellectuals were associated themselves with it. They were Jananki Ballav Bidyabinode, Subhod Kumar Chakraborty, Bijoya Charan Gupta, Bhagawati Charan Bandopadhyay, Kokileswar Bhaattacharya, Sarat Chaandra Ghosal, Bimal Chandra Chakraborty, Khan Choudhury Amanatullah Ahmed, Ashruman Dasgupta, Akhil Chandra Palit and others. No doubt it was a big platform of the writers and intellectuals of the state.

He became the member of the '*Rangpur Sahitya Parishad*'. He participated Gouripur Session and Guahati Session of the Uttar Banga Sahitya Sammelan. In the Gouripur Session of the Uttar Banga Sahitya Sammelan (third session) which was held in 1910, Amanat Ullah participated as a delegate of Cooch Behar State. Rakhal Das Bandopadhyay, Akshay Kumar Maitreya, Har Gopal das Kundu, Prabhat Ch Sen, Padmanath Vidyabinod, Atul Ch Gupta etc. participated. Amanat Ullah read his research paper namely '*Koch O Rajbanshi Bhasha Tattva*' and he considered that the language of the Kamata-Koch kingdom is Rajbanshi.⁸

The fifth session of the Uttar Banga Sahitya Sammelan was held at Guahati (at the premises of sacred Kamaksha Temple) on 6-7 April, 1912. The president of this conference was Shashadhar Roy and the president of the reception committee was Kalicharan Sen.⁹ Amanat Ullah attended the conference as a delegate of the Cooch Behar State. He was the proposer of the '*Kamrupa Anusandha Samiti*' and Mrityunjan Roy Choudhury, zamindar of Rangpur, was the seconder.¹⁰ A souvenir was published under the editorship of Bisweswar Hajarika on occasion of 75 years celebration of the '*Kamrupa Anusandha Samiti*' where he praised the role of the Uttar Banga Sahitya Sammelan for the foundation of the '*Kamrupa Anusandhan Samiti*'. He wrote : "In the Annual Conference of the Uttar Banga Sahitya Sammelan held at Kamakshya, Guawahati, in the first week of April, 2012, Khan Choudhury Moulavi Amanat Ullah Ahmad of Cooch Behar moved a resolution for the foundation of the samiti with a view to promoting research and disseminating knowledge on the history, archaeology, ethnography, language, literature and other allied subjects with emphasis on those relating to the area known in ancient times as the kingdom of Pragjyotisha-Kamrupa including modern Assam and the neighboring states, East and Northern Bengal with Cooch Behar and Rai Mrityunjan Choudhury Bahadur, M.R.A.S. of Rangpur (now in Bangladesh) seconded it"¹¹ Amanat Ullah Ahmad was a member of Executive Committee of the '*Kamrupa Anusandhan Samiti*' since 1934 to 1937.

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Amanat Ullah Ahmad attended 22nd conference of the historians of India which was held in 1945 at Peshwar as a delegate of the Cooch Behar State. He presented two papers there. These were-i. *'The Military Tactics of the Maharajas of Cooch Behar since 15th to 17th century'* and ii. *'Discussion on Excavation Works of Local Antiquities'*.¹²

III

Now I am talking about the articles written by him that were published in *'Rangpur Sahitya Parishad Patrika'*, *'Cooch Behar Darpan'*, *'Sahitya'* and *'Paricharika'*. These were-

- i. *'Koch Ranjbanshi Bhashatattva'*, *'Uttar Banga Sahitya Sammelan'*, Gouripur, Assam, 1317 B.S.
- ii. *'Kochbiharer Prachin Bhasha'*, *'Paricharika'*, 1326 B.S., Shraban-Bhadra Sankhya .
- iii. *'Kamruper Itihaser Ekangsha'*, *'Sahitya'*, Magh o Choitra, 1326 B.S.
- iv. *'Bidushi Maharani Bhanumati'*, *'Paricharika'*, 4th Year, Falgun, 1326 B.S.
- v. *'Maharaja Harendra Narayaner Sahityacharcha'*, *'Cooch Behar Darpan'*, 6th year, 21 Sankhya, 1844.
- vi. *'Uttarbanger Pirkahini'*, *'Bangiya Sahitya Parishad'*.
- vii. *'Prachin Sambad'*, *'Cooch Behar Darpan'*, Sankhya-1, 1938.
- viii. *'Jugir Git'*, *'Rangpur Sahitya Parishad Patrika'*.
- ix. *'Chitor Gar'*, *'Cooch Behar Darpan'*, 7th year, 12 Sankhya.

IV

Broadly speaking the people of the Princely State of Cooch Behar were divided on two broad categories- Cooch Beharis and non-Cooch Beharis. Cooch Beharis meant the local Rajbanshi Hindus, Rajbanshi Muslims known as *'Nasya Sheikh'*, the Kamrupia Brahmins or the Maithili Brahmins and some other non-caste Hindus like as the Sahas, Jogis and some tribals. The non-Cooch Beharis meant the upper caste Hindus who had come from East Bengal and the rest part of Bengal and settled in the State. It is true that the ethnic feature, language, food habits and culture of the Rajbanshi Hindu and Rajbanshi Muslims are same. Because the origin of the both is same

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and the '*Nasya Sheikh*' muslim is the converted section.¹³ It is true that the number of the 'Ashraf Muslim' (i.e. Sayyed Sheikh, Mghal, Turks and Pathans) was very poor not only in the country but also in the Cooch Behar State. According to the census report of 1891, the total Muslim population of the State was 170746, out of which only 1146 were the outsider Muslims. A psychological conflict was growing in the Cooch Behar State between the Cooch Beharis and non-Cooch Beharis. The son of soils or the Cooch Beharis called the outsiders as '*Bhatias*' or '*Bahiragata*'. On the other hand the '*Bhatias*' called the local peoples as '*Deshi*'.

It is true that the non-Cooch Beharis dominated in all sides of administration and education, profession and trade-business. So a social tension and cultural tension came in the State that the local peoples demanded their interest. A political party was formed in 1947 known as 'Hitasadhani Sabha'. It started movement against the outsiders i.e. 'Bhatias'. The office bearers of it were as following.¹⁴

Name	Post held
Khan Choudhury Amanatullah Ahmed	President
Satish Chandra Roy Singha	Vice President
Dharani Shankar Bhattachrya	
Jaladhar Sen	Secretary
Majiruddin Ahmed	Asst. secretary

In this connection a song which was composed in the names of the leaders of the '*Hitasadhani Sabha*' can be mentioned here on the account of social tension.¹⁵

“Othore native bhai, jagore native,
Tarao bhatia sab,
Gorji uthilo Sarat Singha,
Tuli hunkar rab,
Eso despran Jaladhar eso,
Satish sange kari,
Dharanir sathe eso Ansar, Kari gala dharadhari,
Kothay Majir majila edes,
Gelo bhatiar hate,
Jel khata bir Purnendu eso,
Khan Choudhurir sathe’

[Free translation: Native brothers, get up and drive out the bhatias. Satish Singha rises up finger with a great plea and please come patriot Jaladhar along with Satish Chandra Singha. Ansar come along with

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Dharani by shoulder to shoulder. The state handed over to the bhatias. Many warriors passed away and Purnendu come along with Khan Choudhury Amanatullah Ahmed]

Amanat Ullah was the supporter of the Muslim League and he tried to merge Cooch Behar into Pakistan. Anyway his political party '*Hitasadhani Sabha*' was banned and he was expelled from the Cooch Behar State on February 3, 1950. The three Muslim leaders were also expelled from the state with him. They were Muhammad Ansaruddin Ahmad (ex-finance minister of the Cooch Behar State), Judge Bajle Rahaman (son, former President of Bangladesh, Hussain Muhammad Ershad) and Advocate Muhammad Makbul Hossain.

Conclusion

But we unfortunately can say that Amanat Ullah was forced to leave Cooch Behar State, from his birth place Baramaricha, Cooch Behar Princely State. He took shelter in Rangpur District. We do not get any information that he continued his literary activities in Rangpur, or not? He died October 31, 1958 at Rangpur in East Pakistan. He left one son and two daughters namely Emdad Ahmad, Fatema Khatun and Rahima Khatun.

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