

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

Sumana Das¹ Dr.Madhab Chandra Adhikary²

¹Research Scholar
Department of History
Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University
Cooch Behar, West Bengal, India
Email: dasbarmansumana94@gmail.com

²Professor
Department of History
Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University
Cooch Behar, West Bengal, India
Email:madhab.cbpbu.gmail.com

Abstract: *With the passage of time the land named Cooch Behar became a Princely State of the British from Kamata-Koch kingdom. Cooch Behar State was a Princely State since 1773 to 1949. Cooch Behar became a district of West Bengal from 1 January 1950. The main objective of this research paper is to present the history of newspapers and journals published from Cooch Behar District. The time period for the study is from 1950 to 1980. During these thirty years, many Bengali weeklies, fortnightlies and monthlies were published from Cooch Behar District. These played a special role in shaping public opinion by highlighting local news and in the practice of literature and culture. The first Bengali monthly from Cooch Behar was published in 1877 during the Raj period. Its name was 'Koch Behar Masik Patrika'. Many journals and periodicals have been published since 1950. It is important to remember that even during the national emergency, some periodicals were published from this district. It is also true that the details of local news are not available in the national level news dailies. In such cases, newspapers, periodicals and journals increase awareness in the public mind by publishing local news and play a leading role in literary and cultural study.*

Keywords: British, Cooch Behar, Kamta-Koch, Merger Agreement, Political Organizations etc.

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Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

Introduction

Politicians say that media is the fourth pillar of democracy. Public opinion is formed through the periodicals, journals and newspapers. Local publications are very important in the study of literature, culture and regional history. Cooch Behar is a marginal and last border district of the state of West Bengal in the Indian Union. Many Bengali weeklies, fortnightly and monthlies were published from Cooch Behar District. The main objective of this research paper is to present the history of newspapers and journals published from Cooch Behar District. After independence and the transformation of Cooch Behar from a state to a district, this district was not behind in publishing newspapers. This Cooch Behar region has a long glorious history. I will not go into the explanation of that history. In 1510, the Kamta-Koch Kingdom was formed in this region. Again, in a special political context, the English East India Company signed the 'Anglo-Koch Bihar Treaty' with the Koch kingdom. Through the 'Anglo-Koch Bihar Treaty' of 1773, the Kamta-Koch Kingdom became a native state or Princely State. Since 1773 to 1949, i.e. for 174 years, this state was a Princely State.

From the year of India's independence until the merger agreement of Cooch Behar, there was political unrest in this state for 2-3 years on one issue. This was whether Cooch Behar would remain a part of India or join to Pakistan. Again, even after the merger agreement, there was a debate on whether Cooch Behar would be a part of Assam or West Bengal. There is no space to shed light on that issue here. I hope to raise the issue elsewhere. In 1949, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, Jagaddipendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur, signed the 'Merger Agreement' with the Government of India. Cooch Behar became a district of West Bengal from 1 January 1950. A Princely State became a district. Considering the importance of newspapers and periodicals, I have tried to make a comparative study on the publication of Cooch Behar district and have given the title of this paper '*Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District : 1950-1980*'. The time period for the study has been selected since 1950 to 1980. Both the years 1950 and 1980 are historically significant. The year 1950 is memorable because in this year Cooch Behar became a district of the state. So this year has been taken year as the starting point of the study. Again, in 1980, five years after the national emergency of 1975, the first Bengali daily of North Bengal, '*Uttar Banga Sambad*', was published from Siliguri. So the year 1980 has been taken as the end of the study. Between

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

1950 and 1980, that is, in these thirty years, many Bengali weeklies, fortnightlies and monthlies were published from Cooch Behar district. All of these played a special role in shaping public opinion and in literary and cultural study by highlighting local news.

Now let us enter into the main discussion. The first Bengali monthly published in the Cooch Behar State was '*Koch Bihar Masik Patrika*'. This newspaper was published in 1877. Its editor was Kumar Rangil Narayan. The newspaper was published by the Cooch Behar State Press.¹ The royal family, the Maharajas were always patrons of literary and cultural works. It is also true that since Cooch Behar was a native state, free publication often fell under royal restrictions. Moreover, political organizations were prohibited in this state. Anti-royal or anti-British activities were completely prohibited. A literary organization called 'Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha' was formed in 1915 on the initiative of Kumar Victor Nityendra Narayan. Khan Chowdhury Amanat Ullah Ahmed was the secretary of this literary organization since 1915 to 1940. He was the Minister of Revenue.² An intellectual society and a group of writers was developed around this literary organization.

The Maharajas and high-ranking officials of the state were patrons of literature and culture. Therefore, it is noteworthy that there was an atmosphere of literature and culture in the Cooch Behar State since before independence. Even when the state became a district, that trend did not stop. As a literary organization, the first thing to mention is the 'Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha'. This society published a high-quality literary journal. After independence, the 'Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha' continued its work. The work of this society is still going on. Scholars and writers of the district were associated with this organization. A list of the names of the presidents, editors and magazine editors of the 'Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha' from 1950 to 1980 has been given below table no-1.³

Table No-1

The Office Bearers of the Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha (1950-1980)

President	From To	Secretary	From To	Editor of journal	From To
Maharaj Kumar Goutam Narayan	1950-1970	Debi Prasad Sen	1947-1952	Bharati Bhushan	1945- 1950

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

Tin Kari Mukhopadhyay	1970-1971	Birendra Lal Sarkar	1952-1954	Jatindra Mohan Choudhury	1959- 1972
Ashruman Das Gupta	1972	Sukdeb SEngupta	1954-1955	Paresh Chandra Some	1973
Charu Chandra Roy	1975-1988	Heman Kumar Chakraborty	1955-1958	Gopesh Chandra Dutta	1974- 1975
		Pabitra Kumar Bhattacharya	1966-1970	Digbijay De Sarkar	1976- 1988
		Shib Shankar Mukhopadhyay	1971-1975		
		Boidyanath Chakraborty	1975-1988		

The Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha published a fortnightly literary magazine. The name of this fortnightly magazine was ‘Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha Patrika’. This magazine was first published in 1959. ‘Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha Patrika’ was published in a new edition in 1975. The editor was Gopesh Chandra Dutta. The last issue of the second year of the new edition was published on 8th Chaitra, 1381 B.S. (1976 C.E.). The editor of this issue was Digbijay De Sarkar. The writers included Shibshankar Mukherjee, Bhabatosh Dutta, Digbijay De Sarkar, Mrinal Kanti Dam, Charu Chandra Roy, Aparajita Goppi and Nripendra Nath Pal. In the preface of this magazine, ‘*Amader Katha*’, the editor wrote, “The last issue of the new edition of the second year of the Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha Patrika has been published.

The office bearers of Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha have tried to publish regularly in this irregularly published magazine. We cordially invite the members of the society and readers who love literature and culture in this regard. Three valuable articles have been included in this issue.

We are happy to be able to publish the article focusing on the personal life of Shri Ashruman Das Gupta, the president of the Sabha and the oldest citizen. We are disappointed that this issue of the magazine could not be enriched as expected since it was published in a very short time”.⁴

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

Many periodicals and journals were published from Cooch Behar district in the decades after 1950. It is to be noteworthy here that Amiya Bhushan Majumdar's family was the pillar of the intellectual society of Cooch Behar. Amiya Bhushan Majumdar was a good writer. His works are numerous. Two researchers from the Bengali Department of the University of North Bengal have written doctoral dissertations on him. Professor Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Emeritus Professor of the University of North Bengal and Bangaratna Awardee, has commented in this regard, "The house of Amiya Bhushan Majumdar is called as Jorasanko of Cooch Behar".⁵ A list of periodicals and journals published in the 1950s, the period of publication, the name of the editor, and the type of journal has been given below table no-2. It is worth mentioning that all these publications were in Bengali.

Table No-2⁶

Publications in the 1950s (1950-1959)

Name of publication	Year of publication	Editor	Pattern of publication	Language
<i>Ayan</i>	1950	Probodh Chandra Pal	Monthly	Bengali
<i>Awaz</i>	1950	Mrs. Kamala Bhattacharya	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Amader Katha</i>	1953	Niraj Biswas	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Uttarayaan</i>	1954	Amiya Bhushan Majumdar	Monthly	Bengali
<i>Jugbarta</i>	1955	Kalidas Bagchi	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Jagaran</i>	1956	Binay Krishna Das Choudhury	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Mashal</i>	1956	Tapesh Bose and Kalyan Sen	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Khabar</i>	1957	Baidyanath Chakraborty and Haripada Mukherjee	Monthly	Bengali
<i>Simanta</i>	1958	Aparajita Goppi	Monthly	Bengali
<i>Nagarik</i>	1958	Arun Kumar Bhattacharya	Weekly	Bengali

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

<i>Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha Patrika</i>	1959	Jatindra Mohan Choudhury	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Ganashakti</i>	1950	Shibendra Narayan Choudhury	Fortnightly	Bengali

Now we are like to highlight the publication of Cooch Behar district in the 1960s (1960-1969). The name of publication, publication year, name of editor and pattern of publication have been mentioned in the following table no-3.

Table No-3
Publication in the 1960s (1960-1969)

Name of publication	Year of publication	Editor	Nature	Language
<i>Kalpurush (Tanganmari)</i>	1960	Tapan Deb	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Prabhati</i>	1961	Arun Kumar Dam	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Mahakal</i>	-	Surndranath Lahiri and Anil Kumar Sengupta	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Boitalik</i>	-	Anil Deb	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Digdarshan</i>	1962	Rambilas Rabidas, Gopesh Datta, Arunseh Ghosh	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Kahlar</i>	1962	Pallab Choudhury	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Amar Desh</i>	-	Nityananda Saha	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Sabuj Pata O Halde Kuri</i>	1962	Ranjit Deb	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Tribritta</i>	1965	Ranjit Deb	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Bichitra</i>	1965	Dipen Chanda	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Torsha</i>	1965	Nirmal Choudhury	Quarterly	Bengali

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

<i>Kochbihar Samachar</i>	1966	Jogesh Chandra Roy and later Shankar Roy	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Balmiki</i>	-	Gopesh Datta	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Adhunik Sahitya</i>	1967	Arunseh Ghosh & Ranjit Deb	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Kochbihar Barta</i>	1967	Pratip Kumar Majumdar	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Gramer Bhasha</i>	1968	Suresh Chandra Choudhury	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Desh Barta</i>	1968	Anil Kumar Sengupta & Surendra Nath Roy	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Nibedan</i>	1968	Shyamapada Barman & Mathuresh Chakraborty	Monthly	Bengali

Some rare issues of above mentioned publications of this decade have been collected. Among them, '*Kochbihar Samachar*', '*Mahakal*' and '*Saptahik Tribritta*' were registered. The registration number of '*Kochbihar Samachar*' is Government of India, Registration No - 8904/65 and Postal Reg. No. WB/CB-07. The registration number of '*Mahakal*' is Government of India R.N.-8093/65, Postal R.N.-WB/05. The registration number of the '*Saptahik Tribritta*' newspaper is Postal Reg. No. WB/COB-08.¹⁰

The decade of the 1970s witnessed the publications of various literary and news periodicals and journals of Cooch Behar district. The name of publication, publication year, name of editor and pattern of publication has been mentioned in the following table no-4.

Table No-4
Publication in the 1970s (1970-1979)

Name of publication	Year of publication	Editor	Nature	Language
<i>Tribritta</i>	1970	Ranjit Deb	Monthly	Bengali
<i>Jiraf</i>	1970	Arunesh Ghosh	Monthly	Bengali
<i>Northern Review</i>	1970	Baridralal Raha (later Narayan Deb	Monthly	Bengali & English
<i>Panchanan</i>	1969	Kumar Pramodendra Narayan	Weekly	Bengali

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

<i>Ananya</i>	1970	Ashish Bhattacharya & Shyamali Bhattacharya	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Uttar Seemanta Banga</i>	1971	Narayan Deb	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Nababarta</i>	1972	Sadhan Guha	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Jajabar</i>	1973	Shekhar Guptabhaya	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Uttarbartta</i>	1973	Gopal Sarkar	Bimonthly	Bengali
<i>Kishan</i>	1973	Nirmal Choudhury (Mouthpiece of District Krishak Sabha)	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Paramanu</i>	1973	Ashish Bhattacharya	Bimonthly	Bengali
<i>Rajdhanir Baire</i>	1973	Gouri Dey, later Amal Deb	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Kochbihar Sambad</i>	1974	Manoranjan Dautta & Lila Datta	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Ratnapreeth</i>	1976	Naren Das	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Satyer Jay</i>	1976	Janab Uddin Ahmed	Weekly	Bengali
<i>Robot</i>	1976	Jibatosh Das	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Kuhak</i>	1976	Sushil Datta	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Alakshye</i>	1976	Ashish Bhattacharya	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Shaiba Bhumi</i>	1976	Abhijit Sarkar	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Sabujer Anjali</i>	1978	Biplan Rakshit	Quarterly	Bengali
<i>Jhar-Tufan</i>	1978	Jiban Dey	Monthly	Bengali

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

<i>Nepathye</i>	-	Mahadeb Roy & Parikshit Banik	-	Bengali
<i>Balmiki</i>	-	Biswanath Das	-	Bengali
<i>Sahityapatra</i>	-	Alok De Sarkar	-	Bengali
<i>Mukti</i>	-	-	-	Bengali
<i>Mashal</i>	-	Ganesh Bandyopadhyay	-	Bengali
<i>Nirmok</i>	-	Chanchal Pal	-	Bengali
<i>Kalbaishakhi</i>	1979	Ramanimohan Barma	-	Bengali
<i>Meghla Akash</i>	-	Afchhar Ali	Fortnigh tly	Bengali
<i>Tarpedo</i>	-	Dilip Das	Fortnigh tly	Bengali
<i>Barnaguchchha</i>	-	Tapas Basunia	-	Bengali
<i>Taranga</i>	-	Digbijay De Sarkar & Mrinal Kanti Dam	-	Bengali
<i>Sona</i>	-	Sadhan Kumar Guha	Monthly	Bengali
<i>Sahityapatra</i> <i>Nabalipi</i>	1979	Sunil Sana, now Gouri Saha	Monthly	Bengali

We have collected some important publications of this decade. It is the fact that the name of editor and publication year of some publications could not get. These publications have been mentioned below with the help of the table no-5.

Table No-5
Publications in the 1970s (1970-1979)

Name of publication	Year of publication	Editor	Nature	Language
<i>Nepathye</i>	-	Mahadeb Roy & Parikshit Banik	-	Bengali
<i>Balmiki</i>	-	Biswanath Das	-	Bengali
<i>Sahityaptra</i>	-	Alok De Sarkar	-	Bengali
<i>Anyanya</i>	1970	Ashish Bhattacharya & Shyamali	Fortnightly	Bengali

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

		Bhattacharya		
<i>Mashal</i>	-	Ganesh Bandopadhyay	-	Bengali
<i>Niromok</i>	-	Chanchal Pal	-	Bengali
<i>Meghla Akash</i>	-	Afchhar Ali	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Torpedo</i>	-	Dilip Das	Fortnightly	Bengali
<i>Taranga</i>	-	Degbijay De Sarkar & Mrinal Kanti Dam	-	Bengali
<i>Raidak</i>	1972	-	Monthly	Bengali

It is very pertinent to mention here that the 1970s were a significant decade in the history of India. In 1975, the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi declared a national emergency. During the emergency, the fundamental rights of the people were not respected. There was no freedom of the press during the emergency. The publication of newspapers and journals came to a standstill and the public opinion was gagged. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that in the 1970s, a large number of publications were published from Cooch Behar district. Many of these publications were registered. '*Tribritta*', '*Jhar-Tufan*', '*Kochbihar Sambad*', '*Ratnapith*', '*Satyer Jay*', '*Saptahik Paundradarpan*', '*Sahityapatra Nabalipi*' and '*Kalbaisakhi*' had registration numbers. The lifespan of many publications was very short.

We just like to mention one more thing here in respect of publication. That is, two daily newspapers were published from Cooch Behar during the 1970s. One was '*Pratyahik Samachar*' edited by Shankar Roy and the other was '*Dainik Tribritta*' edited by Ranjit Deb. After a short period of time, these two daily newspapers were closed.¹¹ Both the newspapers disappeared. '*Tribritta*', a literary periodical, created a stir in the literary world of North Bengal by awarding and felicitating various personalities of the literary world for four times. The four award and felicitation programme along with the names of recipients have been mentioned in the following table no-6.

Table No-6 ¹²

First Felicitation Programme (1971-1972)

Name	Year	For what
Amiya Bhushan	1971	Garh Shreekhanda (Novel)

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

Majumdar		
Shakti Chattopadhyay	1972	Dharme Ache Jirafeo Ache (poems)

Second Felicitation Programme (1975)

Name	Year	For what
Sunil Gangopadhyay	1975	Arjun (Novel)
Krishna Dhar	1975	Kabikritir Janya
Jiban sarkar	1975	Kachim (stories)
Harish Chandra Pal	1975	Folk culture
Shishir Bhattacharya	1975	Little magazine
Pyarimohan Das	1975	Folk culture
Brindaban Chandra Bagchi	1975	Literature for children

Third Felicitation Programme (1977)

Name	Year	For what
Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay	1977	Nayan Shyama (Novel)
Samir Rakshit	1977	Banyar Par Bari Fera (story)
Manindra Roy	1977	Kabikritir Janya
Sukumar Bhattacharya	1977	Toto Kahini
Shankar Chattopadhyay	1997	Keno Janma Ken Nirjatan

Fourth Felicitation Programme (1994)

Name	Year	For what
Bhagirathi Mishra	1994	Charanbhumi (Novel)
Aparajita Goppi	1994	Ahata Pakhir Mata Dana Jhaptay (poems)

Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

Sukhbilas Barma	1994	Folk culture
Nirad Roy	1994	Amar Mukhe Jakhan Boishakh (poems) ¹⁰

'*Tribritta*', a literary organisation extended a special welcome to Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal, Debesh Roy, Jiban Dey and Ashish Sanyal. Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal was a fore ranking intellectual of Jalpaiguri and also of North Bengal. Dr. Sanyal's famous book is '*Rajbanshis of North Bengal*'. Debesh Roy was a famous novelist of the present time; his famous works is '*Titaparer Brittanta*'. Harish Chandra Pal, an author of several books on Cooch Behar, published his '*Gosanimangol Punthi*' and several other punthis in the first '*Tribritta*' magazine. Moreover, Harish Chandra Pal's play '*Ek Ratrir Ghatana*' and Samir Chakraborty's play '*Shilalekh Kinba Jhar*' were also published for the first time in '*Tribritta*' magazine. It is necessary to say that the '*Tribritta*' little magazine organised felicitation programmes for four times to different personalities of the literary and cultural world. This has undoubtedly created a stimulus in the literary world of North Bengal.

At the end of the discussion, it can be said that a group of writers was emerged in Cooch Behar through writing in newspapers and magazines. These publications play a leading role in the study of literature, culture and regional history. Moreover, these publications also have a great contribution in shaping public opinion.

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Newspapers and Publications of Cooch Behar District: 1950-1980

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