

Resources on local history and culture of North Bengal: an attempt to explore the existing collection in the college libraries of North Bengal

Ratna Nandi

Librarian
Siliguri B. Ed. College
Kadamtala, Siliguri
e-mail:nandiratna@yahoo.co.in

Dr. Pijushkanti Panigrahi

Professor
DLIS, University of Calcutta
Kolkata
e-mail:panigrahipk@yahoo.com

Dr. Durgasankar Rath

Professor
DLIS, Vidyasagar University
Pashchim Midnapore
e-mail:durga_s_rath@rocketmail.com

Abstract: *The study attempts to explore which resources on the rich local history and culture of North Bengal are already available in the college libraries of the North Bengal so that they can be utilized in a better way to present to its user community. The work gives a brief discount of North Bengal and its culture. 50% of the total colleges present here were surveyed with the help of structured questionnaires to collect data on the existing resources specified. Colleges are selected by stratified random sampling. The study finds that maximum hill college libraries i.e. 94% (app.) whereas overall 53% (app.) college libraries have such collection. The study suggests the creation of an institutional repository through the formation of a regional consortium to protect and promote the undocumented rich culture of North Bengal.*

Keyword: *North Bengal, resources on local history and culture, regional consortium, institutional repository*

A. Introduction: North Bengal is a treasure of rich culture and history. There are varieties of culture, music, literature, arts, crafts, etc. It also has an old prideful history. There are also many varieties of resources on these rich cultures and history which if managed and presented in a usable manner would be very important and demanding library resources. This study attempts to explore which resources are already available in the college libraries of the North Bengal so that they can be utilized in a better way to present to its user community.

B. North Bengal: The northern six districts of West Bengal named Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar, North-Dinajpur, South-Dinajpur and Malda are well-known as North Bengal. The area is composite in its nature in all aspects such as physiographic, social, cultural, languages, religion, etc. The northernmost part which is lofty hill consists of the whole Darjeeling district except Siliguri subdivision. From Siliguri, the immediate foothill of the Himalayan sub range, which is known as Terai or Dooars, starts and stretches through the Jalpaiguri district up to the upper part of the Coochbehar district. Physically it is of wavy nature. The next part that comprises of the districts N/Dinajpur, S/Dinajpur and Malda are monotonous plain. The Hill and the Dooars area are the most popular place to the tourists from inside and outside the country. The core area of North Bengal are available in Ramayana, Harivansa, Brahmananda-purana, Vishnupurana, raghuvamsa, Brihat Sanghita and the Greek work 'Periplus of the Erythrean Sea' of the first century A. D. The land was then known as Pragjyotishpura and then kamrup and as the land of the Kirats. The different names of North

Bengal in different stages used were Pundrabardhan, Gaur, Barendri, Gaubanga, Uttariya, Uttarpradesh, Kamtabehar, etc. It has a rich history associated with Coochbehar (Koch) and Maldah (Gaur). Here is also a mixed society. The people of various races, religions, cultures and languages reside here friendly and still maintain their own culture, customs and faith. There are so many small groups of communities such as Rava, Mech, Koch, Toto, Lepcha, Bhutia, Gorkhas, Nepali speaking tribes of hill, Santals, Rajbanshis, etc. There are also other communities like Punjabis, Bengalis, marwaris, Biharis, even Chinesees, etc. One hundred and fifty one mother tongue names have been referred by the people of only Jalpaiguri district. There are varieties of performing arts also along with varied culture. There are Gamvira, Alkap, Domni in Maldah, Bhaoia in Dooars and Nepali folk songs & dances in hill which are most popular. Apart from these, every community has their own song and dances. The region has the originality in its song, folk culture, literature and mentality. These folk cultures are still mostly taught by traditionally and orally than formally through institution. Though, initiatives are taken from the Government to encourage folk cultures especially Bhaoia through competition, scholarship, etc. Till that is not enough.

C. Methodology: The sample survey method was adopted and questionnaires are used to collect the data. To select the sample, stratified random sampling technique is used. The whole area is divided in Hill, Dooars and plain as mentioned earlier. Each area then is divided into rural and urban area, then district wise and then subdivision wise. From each division now 50% colleges are selected by simple random sampling. The data found are shown using descriptive statistics.

D. Scope: The study is limited to the geographical area of North Bengal. The general degree colleges and B. Ed. Colleges are taken in the purview of the study. 50% of the total colleges present here are selected as sample. There are total number of colleges are 97 including general and B. Ed. colleges. 49 colleges are selected.

E. Data analysis: A good number of books on the local history such as history of Coochbehar, Gaur, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling or history of North Bengal are found in the different college libraries. There are also specific books on specific communities and their cultures, faith, belief, worship, literature, etc. The data are presented in the following table 1 dividing in the six series according to the total number of such books found. The comparison between the college libraries of hill, dooars and plain area is also shown in the table 2. Chart 1 represent the comparison between hill, dooars and plain college library's resources through bar diagram and Chart 2, chart 3 and chart 4 represent the percentage of such resources present in the colleges of hill, dooars and plain area respectively.

Table1: Rich Local History and/or Cultural Resources:

Area			Rich local History/cultural resources						
	Dist	Sub	Nil	1 - 100	101 - 200	201- 300	301- 400	401- 500	
H	R	Dar	1	0	0	0	0	0	
		Dar	0	0	1	1	0	1	
	U	Kur	0	1	0	0	0	0	
		Kal	0	1	0	0	0	0	
D	R	Dar	Sil	2	0	0	0	0	
		Jal	Jal	0	1	0	0	0	
			Ali	1	0	0	0	0	
		Coo	Coo	1	0	0	0	0	
	Mat		0	0	1	0	0		
	U	Dar	Sil	0	4	0	0	0	
		Jal	Jal	2	1	0	0	0	
			Ali	2	1	0	0	0	
			Mal	0	1	0	0	0	
		Coo	Coo	0	1	0	0	1	
			Mek	0	1	0	0	0	
			Tuf	0	1	0	0	0	
			Din	1	0	0	0	0	
		P	R	N/D	Rai	1	0	0	0
S/D				Bal	1	0	0	0	
Mld	Mld			3	2	0	0		
	Cha			1	0	0	0		
U	N/D		Rai	0	2	0	0		
			Isl	1	0	0	0		
	S/D		Bal	1	1	0	0		
			Gan	2	0	0	0		
	Mld		Mld	2	2	0	0		
			Cha	1	0	0	0		
Total			23	20	2	1	1	2	
Percentage			46.94%	40.82%	4.08%	2.04%	2.04%	4.08%	

H=Hill, D= Dooars, P=Plain, Dist= District, Sub= Subdivisions, Dar= Darjeeling, Kur= Kurseong, Kal= Kalimpong, Sil=Siliguri, Jal= Jalpaiguri, Ali= Alipurduar, Coo= Coochbehar, Mat= Mathabhanga, Mek=Mekhliganj, Tuf=Tufanganj, Din= Dinhata, Rai= Raiganj, Bal= Balurghat, Gan= Gangarampur, Mal= Malbazar, Mld= Malda, Cha= Chanchal, N/D=

North Dinajpur, S/D= South Dinajpur, R= Rural, U= Urban, T= Total, B. Ed.= Bachelor of Education

Though the table shows that the maximum colleges i.e. 23 (46.94%) do not have any such collection bearing the importance of rich local history or cultural tradition, but the 2nd highest number 20 (40.82%) have 1-100 such documents, 2 libraries (4.08%) have 101-200 and other 2 libraries (4.08%) have 401-500 such documents. 1 library (2.04%) has 201- 300 and another library (2.04%) has 301-400 such documents. The different college libraries have various important collection like Manmath Roy collection (Balurghat College), documents on Panchanan Seal and different kings of Coochbehar (Thakur Panchanan Mahila Mahavidyalaya) , documents on tea workers, Tribals, Tibetan History, Himalayan Studies, Darjeeling Himalayan railway, Nepali literature, Documents on Rajbanshi history, culture, languages, literature, music, etc, Books on Gamvira, old biography, etc. One college i.e. Tufanganj College also has a small collection like museum with various documents used by Rajbanshi in old age for fishing or other jobs, etc. made by themselves.

Table2: Local History/cultural resources in Hill, Dooars, & Plain (comparison)

	Nil	1 - 100	101 - 200	201- 300	301-400	401-500
H	1	2	1	1	0	1
D	9	11	1	0	1	0
P	13	7	0	0	0	1
T	23	20	2	1	1	2

Chart 1: Local History/cultural resources in Hill, Dooars, Plain (Bar Diagram)

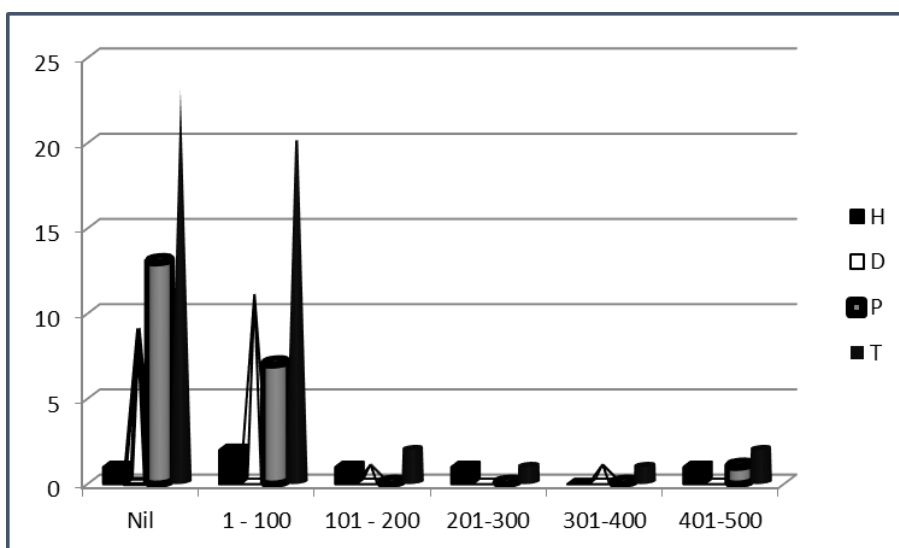
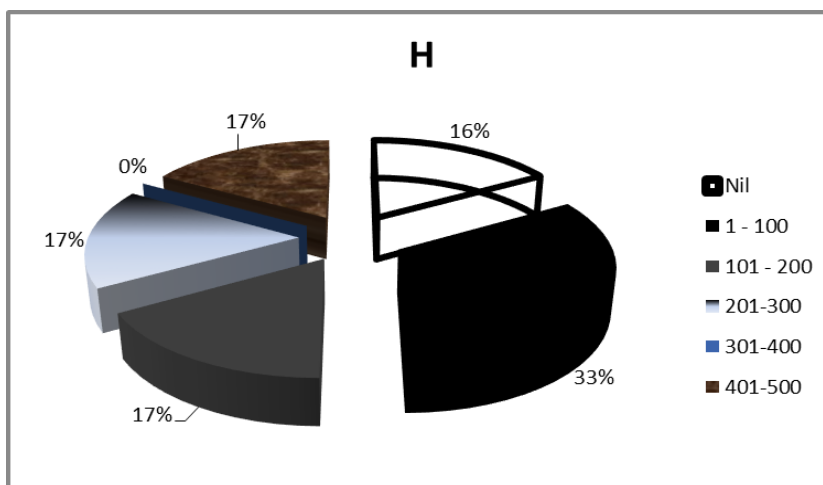
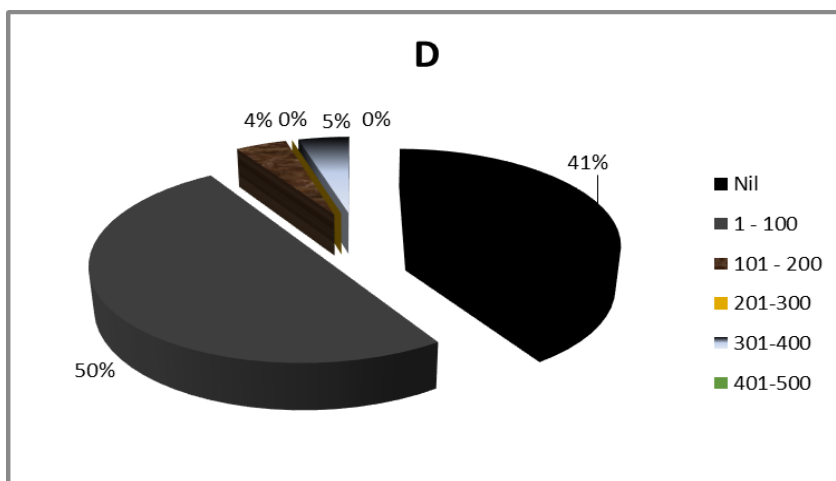


Chart 2: Local History/Cultural resources in Hill



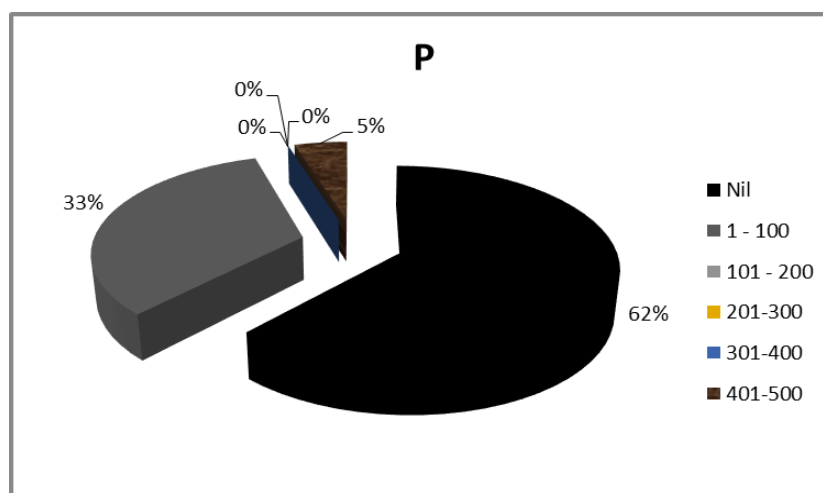
In total, the maximum colleges do not have this type of resources, but in Hill, maximum i.e. 33% of colleges has such 1-100 resources including documents on Nepali literature, Himalayan studies, Tibetan History, etc. 17% of college has 101-200, 17% college has 201-300 and 17% college has 401-500 such resources. Only 16% college has no such resources.

Chart 3: Local History/Cultural resources in Dooars



In Dooars also, the highest percentage i.e. 50% of colleges has 1-100 such resources including documents on Rajbanshi, king of Coochbehar, tribal, tea workers, etc. 41% colleges have no such resources, 5% has 301-400 and 4% has 101-200 such resources.

Chart 4: Local History/Cultural resources in plain



In Plain area, the highest percentage i.e. 62% of colleges does not have such collection and the 2nd highest percentage i.e. 33% has 1-100 such resources. They have the collection like Manmath Roy collection, documents related to Gamvira, Malda history, etc. 5% college has 401-500 such resources.

Conclusion: It is found from the study that there are already short collections of the resources on rich history and culture of North Bengal in overall approximately 53% colleges of North Bengal. In Hill colleges the percentage is high, approximately 94% colleges and in Dooars, 59% colleges have such collections. In Plain colleges approximately 38% college libraries have such collections. A few colleges have a very good and rare collection of various cultures and histories. If these resources would be managed and promoted in co-operation to the users communities it would form a very rare and important knowledge resource base. That would help the researchers who want to work on North Bengal a lot. The region is also full of other this type of rich resources including Nepali folk music & literature, Rajbanshi music and literature, Tibetan history, and many other indigenous knowledge resources of which documentation are not done. So, attempt should be made to start the work of documentation, preservation, organization and presentation in a collaborative way. This can be done through the formation of a regional consortium with these colleges and creation of an institutional repository including these resources along with other resources. The protection, promotion and publicity of these original cultures also would be possible through this project.

References:

1. Joseph, B. (2011). The emergence of Darjeeling as a tourist destination. *Salesian Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences: Darjeeling and the Indian East*, 11 (1), 27-39.
2. Jyotirmay Roy. (2008). *Rajbanshi brittanta*. Kolkata: Arpita Prakashani.
3. Samit Ghosh. (2009). *Uttarbanger Itihas*. Kolkata: Patralekha.