



*Journal of Social Issues and Development (JSID)*

(Himalayan Ecological Research Institute for Training and Grassroots Enhancement  
(HERITAGE))

ISSN: 2583-6994 (Vol. 3, Issue 1, January-April, 2025. pp. 41-61)

## **Transformation of Civil Society in Nadia District in the Light of Partition and Refugee Resettlement: Context of a Sami Urban Town Bagula**

**Sudipta Sadhukhan**

### **ABSTRACT**

The partition of India, occurring alongside the country's independence, represents a significant and complex chapter in the history of South Asia. The colonial rule of Britain, which lasted for nearly two centuries, was marked by widespread subjugation, and the partition that followed had far-reaching consequences. This division of the country resulted in a substantial migration of refugees, which had a profound impact on the socio-economic, political, and cultural landscapes of the border regions, notably in West Bengal, Punjab, and Assam. In particular, the state of West Bengal, and more specifically the Nadia district, experienced notable transformations in civil society due to the partition. The area under the Hanskhali police station in Nadia, including the small railway town of Bagula, provides a case study of these changes. Established in 1862 during British rule, Bagula served as a key railway station connecting Assam and North Bengal with the rest of India. Following independence, however, Bagula became a significant settlement site for refugees displaced from East Pakistan. This influx of displaced populations led to significant changes in the region's cultural, religious, and

---

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Santipur College

linguistic landscape, as well as in local practices, including cuisine, folk art, and music. This paper seeks to analyze the context and effects of these rapid transformations, focusing on the socio-cultural impacts experienced in the town of Bagula.

**Keywords:** Partition Lives, Refugee, Resettlement, Border Land, Semi Township, Civil Society, Nadia District.

## Introduction

The town of Bagula, located in the Nadia district, has experienced significant socio-economic transformations over the period from 1947 to 2011, largely due to the effects of the partition of India and subsequent refugee resettlement. Prior to partition, Bagula was a sparsely populated, waterlogged area with a predominantly Muslim population engaged in agriculture and fishing. However, with the partition, the Muslim families residing in the area migrated to East Pakistan, leading to a demographic shift. In their place, a large influx of low-caste Hindu refugees from various districts of East Bengal, including Noakhali, Khulna, Jessore, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Barisal, Dhaka, and Kushtia, resettled in Bagula. This wave of migration significantly increased the population density of the area. The transformation of the landscape was rapid: rivers and water bodies were filled, and agricultural land was converted into residential areas. As a result, the traditional occupations of agriculture and fishing diminished, giving way to a growing industrial economy.



**Location: Bagula is located at 23.335°N 88.644°E in Nadia, West Bengal**

This shift from an agrarian to a more diversified economic structure included the rise of businesses, government employment, and the establishment of new cottage industries. The high population density and subsequent unemployment also influenced changes in the educational system and religious practices, contributing to the emergence of a more industrial and urbanized society. As noted by Prabir Raychowdhury in his book 'Brihattara Bagula Parikrama', "Today's Bagula is at the forefront of Nadia district in terms of economy and population and is becoming a center of cultural and industrial activities. Before partition, Bagula was merely an ordinary village." This observation highlights the substantial changes that the town has undergone, transforming from a rural, agrarian community into a vibrant, economically active urban area in the decades following partition.

Prior to the partition of India, Bagula was home to only a single educational institution, now known as Bagula High School. However, in the years following the partition, the town experienced a rapid expansion in educational infrastructure, with the establishment of at least twelve new schools and two colleges. This development played a crucial role in advancing vocational education and training in the area, contributing to the broader socio-economic transformation of Bagula. Despite its current status as a non-municipal area, Bagula's evolution from a remote village to a semi-urban center within a few decades is notable within the broader context of Bengal's urbanization. The town's growth in educational facilities reflects the wider societal shifts triggered by post-partition migration and population resettlement, marking it as a significant case study in the region's urban development history.

### **Literature Review**

This research draws on a diverse array of scholarly works that explore the social, cultural, and economic history of Bagula, a semi-urban town in the Nadia district of West Bengal. The literature on the region is rich but fragmented, with significant contributions from local historians and researchers who have documented the transformations Bagula has undergone, particularly in the wake of India's partition and subsequent refugee resettlement.

- One of the foundational texts in this field is Prabir Ranjan Raychowdhury's 'Brihattara Bagula Parikrama'. This work is instrumental in detailing the social and cultural history of Bagula, with a focus on the town's development from its agrarian

roots to a more urbanized society. Raychowdhury's account of Bagula's transition, following the settlement of refugees post-partition, provides valuable insight into the social structures, institutions, and notable figures that have shaped the town's modern identity. His discussions of local governance, such as the role of the panchayat, alongside the evolution of infrastructure like the railway station, schools, and hospitals, are particularly relevant for understanding Bagula's integration into the broader socio-economic framework of West Bengal. However, while Raychowdhury's work is exhaustive in its coverage of social history, it could benefit from a more nuanced examination of the economic forces that influenced these transformations, particularly in relation to partition-induced migration.

- Debdulal Kundu's 'Samikshar Alope Hasikhali-Bagula-Majdia' adds another layer to this narrative by focusing on the environmental and cultural changes in the region. Kundu's work is significant in highlighting the transformation of natural resources, particularly the extinction of rivers and wetlands, which played a pivotal role in shaping the livelihoods of local communities before the partition. This ecological perspective is crucial for understanding the broader impact of demographic changes in the area. However, Kundu's emphasis on the environmental aspects could be complemented by a deeper exploration of how these ecological shifts intersected with the socio-economic and cultural adaptations of Bagula's residents during and after the partition.
- The 'Bagula Book Fair Souvenir' (2022 and 2023 editions) also provides critical primary material for this research. These publications compile essays on a wide range of topics, including the history of education in Bagula, the loss of local wetlands, and the cultural significance of puppet shows in the region. These essays are valuable for their localized perspectives, offering grassroots-level accounts of Bagula's transformation. However, while the souvenir editions offer rich historical narratives, their reliance on anecdotal evidence limits their utility in providing a comprehensive academic analysis. Further engagement with statistical data and comparative studies of similar towns in the region could enhance the scholarly rigor of these works.

- Kundu's 'Puppet Dance and Puppet Village' is another key text, especially in its exploration of the cultural traditions unique to Bagula, such as puppet shows, which continue to be practiced by a small section of the population. This work sheds light on the persistence of traditional art forms amid the socio-economic transformations of the town. Kundu's focus on cultural heritage preservation is particularly pertinent, as it raises questions about how such traditions are maintained or altered in the face of modernization and changing demographics. A more critical approach, however, could examine how these art forms have adapted to new social contexts, particularly with the influx of refugee populations and the shift from rural to semi-urban settings.
- Beyond these local texts, broader scholarly works on the history of Nadia district and its place within the partition discourse provide important context for this study. Books such as 'Society and Culture of Nadia District', 'Partition and Refugee Problem: Context Nadia District', and 'Back to Nadia' offer comprehensive analyses of the socio-political dynamics that have shaped the district as a whole. These works are crucial for situating Bagula within the larger narrative of partition and refugee resettlement, providing insights into the district's demographic shifts, economic adjustments, and cultural transformations. Nevertheless, while these texts offer valuable macro-level insights, they often lack the micro-historical focus on Bagula that is necessary to fully understand the town's unique trajectory.
- Additionally, 'Bengal District Gazetteers Nadia' and 'Cultural Heritage of Nadia's Village' serve as essential references for understanding the historical and cultural backdrop of the district. These texts provide detailed accounts of Nadia's history, including its colonial past, agrarian economy, and cultural institutions. The gazetteers, in particular, are invaluable for their systematic documentation of the district's administrative, social, and economic conditions during the colonial and post-colonial periods. However, these sources are somewhat limited by their dated perspectives, necessitating a more contemporary analysis of how partition and post-partition changes have influenced the region.

There are some on-line references for information on the history of Bagula and Hanskhali like Wikipedia, District Statistical handbook, District Census records, village info used to finalize the matter. The Wikipedia articles on Bagula and Hanskhali provide information on the geography, demographics, civic administration, infrastructure, education, transport, healthcare, and social activities and culture of the two towns. The District Census Handbook, Nadia, 2001 and 2011, Series 20, Part XII A, published by the Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal, provides information on the demographics, civic administration, and infrastructure of Bagula and Hanskhali. On the other hand the website [www.villageinfo.in](http://www.villageinfo.in) provides information on the location, population, and economic activities of Bagula village in Hanskhali tehsil of Nadia district in West Bengal.

Finally, field research has played a critical role in this study, particularly in documenting the ongoing practice of puppet shows in Bagula. This primary data enriches the research by providing real-time insights into how traditional cultural practices are sustained within a rapidly changing socio-economic landscape. The fieldwork also highlights the importance of oral histories and local narratives, which complement the written records and offer a more nuanced understanding of Bagula's evolving identity.

More over some information and ideology on Matua community, the Partition, and the socio-political transformations in West Bengal that are relevant to the history of Bagula and Hanskhali has been taken from the below mentioned books.

1. 'Partition and the South Asian Diaspora: Extending the Subcontinent' by Papiya Ghosh. This book examines the impact of the Partition on various communities, including the Matua community, and their migration from East Bengal to India, as well as Bagula in Nadia district, West Bengal.
2. 'The Bengal Diaspora: Rethinking Muslim Migration' by Claire Alexander, Joya Chatterji, and Annu Jalais. It covers the migration patterns in Bengal post-Partition and includes discussions on the refugee settlements in West Bengal, particularly those of marginalized communities like the Namashudras and Matuas.
3. 'The Politics of Caste in West Bengal' by Uday Chandra, Geir Heierstad, and Kenneth Bo Nielsen. This book provides an analysis of caste politics in West Bengal, including the role of

the Matua community and their leaders in post-Partition Bengal.

4. 'Refugees, Borders and Identities: Rights and Habitat in East and Northeast India' edited by Anindita Ghoshal. It explores refugee movements after the Partition, specifically focusing on the challenges faced by lower-caste groups like the Matuas and their resettlement in places like Bagula and Hanskhali.
5. 'Refugees and the State: Practices of Asylum and Care in India, 1947-2000' by Ranabir Samaddar. This book offers an in-depth study of the refugee experience in India, focusing on how the state managed the influx of refugees after the Partition, including the Matua community's settlement in West Bengal.
6. 'The Marginal Nation: Transborder Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal' by Annu Jalais. Jalais explores the migration of Bangladeshi refugees to West Bengal and discusses the political and social challenges faced by communities like the Matuas in the region.
7. 'Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement, and Resettlement' edited by Anjali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia. The book compiles essays that discuss the displacement caused by Partition and includes a focus on the experiences of marginalized communities like the Matua refugees who settled in places like Nadia district.

In conclusion, the literature on Bagula, while rich in detail and scope, presents certain gaps that this research aims to address. By engaging with a broader range of sources and adopting a critical lens, this study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Bagula's transformation in the context of partition and refugee resettlement. The interplay between local history, cultural traditions, environmental changes, and socio-economic development forms the core of this analysis, offering new perspectives on the town's unique path to modernity.

## **Methods and Results**

The methodology of this research involves a multifaceted approach combining both primary and secondary data sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of the transformation in Bagula. The research is predominantly analytical, relying on a blend of field surveys, interviews, and document reviews.

## 1. Primary Data Collection

**Field Surveys:** Conducted on two closed water bodies, Laxmi Bil and Andharer Bil, to assess ecological transformations due to refugee settlement.

**Interviews:** At least 20 interviews were carried out with individuals aged between 45 to 75 years from various fields in Bagula. Key interviewees include:

- Mithu Biswas, a prominent writer from the Matua community.
- Shribas Bala, head of the Bagula Harichand-Guruchand organization.
- Ranjan Ray, a local puppet artist.
- Debdulal Kundu, a local writer.
- Birat Bairagya, an international writer on Matua-related topics.

**Document Review:** Analysis of records at Bagula High School to understand pre-independence social conditions. Information was also collected from some memoirs and pamphlets, such as the autobiographical book “Ami Keno Charal Likhi” and “Bagula Srikrishna College Srishti-r Mul Kahini”.

## 2. Secondary Data Collection

Utilized various secondary sources including Historical and Cultural Texts:

- Subhash Biswas’ “Desbhag o Udbastu Samasya”
- Ranjit Biswas’ “Sanskritik Aitihyer Nadia-r Gram”
- Tajirul Islam’s “Fire Dekha Nadia”
- Robin Sarkar’s “Nadia Jelar Udbastuder Samaj o Sanskriti”
- Debdulal Kundu’s “Samikkhar Aloy Hasikhali-Bagula-Majdia”
- Prabir Raychaudhuri’s “Brihattara Bagula Parikrama”
- “Bagula Book Fair Souvenir” (2022, 2023)
- Basudeb Bepari’s “Shikkhabistare Rajrshi Guruchand o Sekaler Samaj”

The research concludes that Bagula, once a self-sufficient village on the periphery before independence, has transformed into a suburb

within four decades due to the large-scale influx of refugees from East Pakistan. This demographic shift has significantly altered the village's character, turning it into a Matua resettlement center with continuing impacts on local religious practices, culture, education, and food habits.

## Discussion

The literal meaning of the word 'Bagula' is 'crane'. Bagula is a municipal area located in the eastern part of Nadia district, one of the oldest districts in West Bengal.<sup>1</sup> The area is surrounded by canals and is part of the Ranaghat North-East Assembly Constituency. The area was previously home to a large number of cranes, hence the name.<sup>2</sup> Currently, the area is comprised of Bagula 1 and Bagula 2 gram panchayats under the Ranaghat North-East Assembly Constituency. The total area of Bagula-Hanskhali is 246 square kilometers. Bagula is often referred to as the capital or heart of Hanskhali Thana.<sup>3</sup> Recently, Bagula has been recognized as a non-municipal city.



Map of Bagula, today, source: maphill

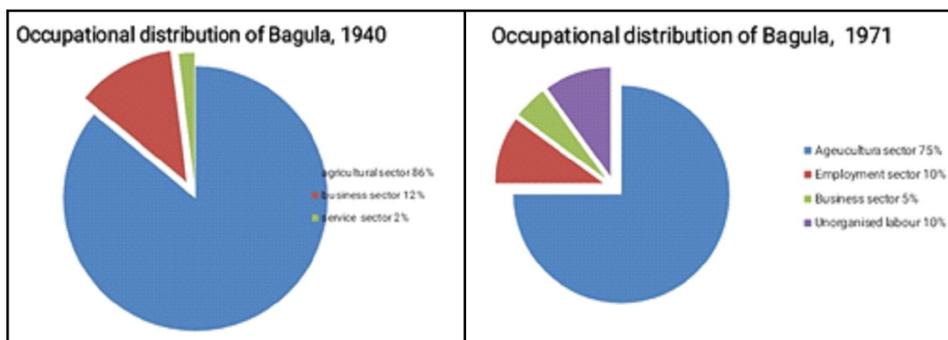
Bagula has a diverse history of becoming a well-known urban area. After 1947, it's not an exaggeration to say that the refugee settlement was established as a urban area. Before 1947, this bustling Bagula was a marshy jungle, which is proven by research.<sup>4</sup> In the early 1940s, around 400 Muslim families lived here. The surrounding villages of Bagula also had Muslim settlements.<sup>5</sup>

During the colonial era, Bagula was primarily an agricultural area, and the main crops grown were rice and jute. The area also has historical significance, with notable landmarks such as the Kuthipara-

Nil Saheber Kachari Bari (a colonial-era administrative building) and the Ganguledi's Pond Ghats (a historic pond with steps leading to it).<sup>6</sup>

“In the 1940s, 86% of the people were engaged in agricultural work, and 12% were involved in business. However, after independence, there was a change in this occupational distribution. In the 1970s, 75% of the people were engaged in agriculture, 10% were employed, 5% were in business, and 10% were unorganized laborers.<sup>7</sup> One of the major reasons for this transformation was the reduction in agricultural land due to overpopulation.

**Table 1 & 2: Occupational distribution of Bagula, 1940 & 1970**

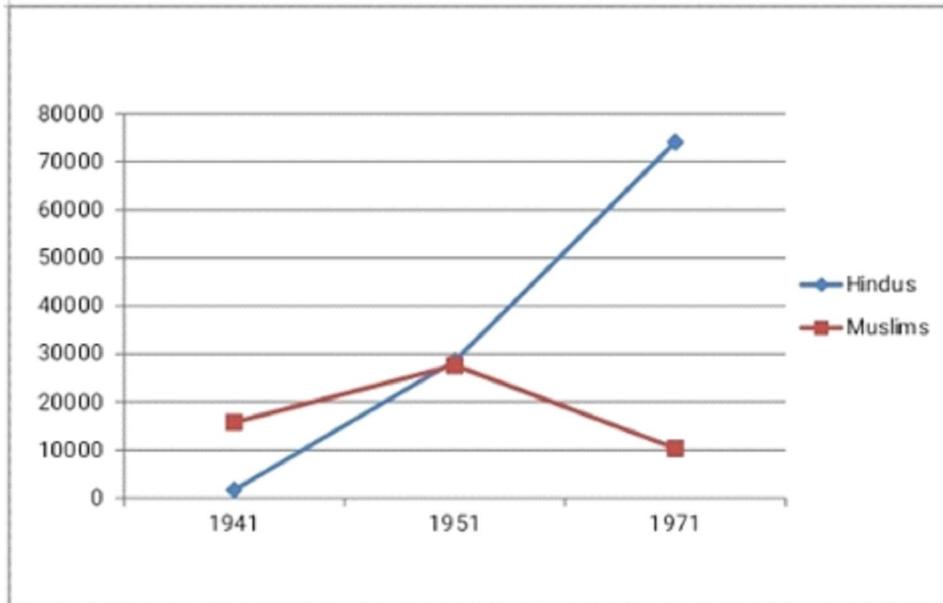


During this same period, there was also a change in the communal composition of the population. In 1940, 91% of the population was Muslim, while in the 1970s, 62% of the population was from the scheduled castes, 26% were from other Hindu communities, and 12% were from the Muslim community.<sup>8</sup> The main reason for this communal transformation was the partition of the country and the subsequent refugee settlement.

**Table 2 & 3: Hindu – Muslim ratio of Bagula from 1941 to 1971**

Census year	Total population	Hindus	Muslim
1941	17251	1553	15698
1951	55515	28312	27202
1971	84065	73977	10088

Dr. Sudipta Sadhukhan



Source: Census report, Nadia, 1941, 1951, 1971

Evidently, after 1941, the population of Greater Bagula suddenly increased significantly (it should be noted that the country was partitioned during this decade). The impact of this increase is still present in Greater Bagula. It is worth noting that currently, the term Greater Bagula refers to all the regions of the Hanskhali block.

The rapid and massive population growth in Bagula had a significant impact on the region's wetlands and bio-ecosystem. Before independence, there was a river in Bagula known as the Goragangni River, which originated from the nearby Churni River and flowed through Hanskhali, Bagula, Garapot, Nodda Kamalpur, and eventually merged with the Ichhamati River near Chunar.<sup>9</sup> This river flowed through 12 villages and was approximately 22.78 km long. However, due to human aggression and rapid population growth, the river has disappeared.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, the river can be considered a victim of the partition of India. According to river researcher Supratim Karmakar, "By analyzing the 1947 satellite image, we saw that the Goragangni River was once alive and received water from surrounding wetlands, including the Choto Cupriya Bil, Mura Gachar Bil, Mayur Hat, and Andhar Bil. Additionally, many small canals, such as the Hanskhali

Hazra Tala Canal, Sat Pota Canal, and Mura Gachar Dighi Tana Canal, contributed to the river's flow."<sup>11</sup>

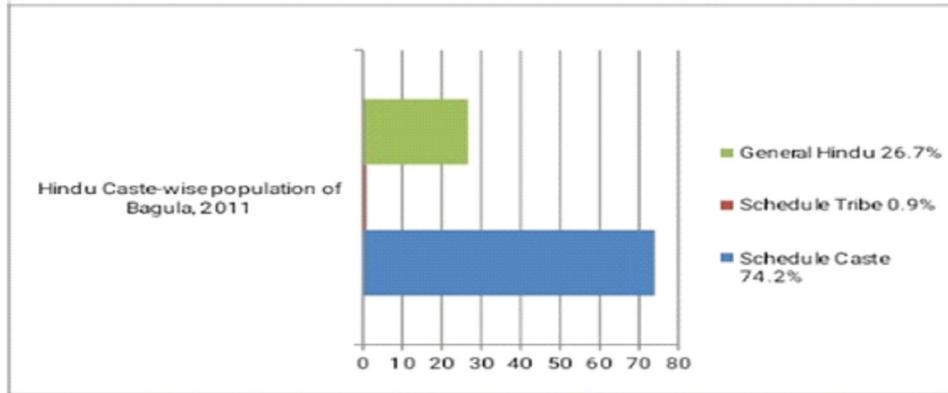
Since the 1971 Bangladesh war, the population of Bagula has increased manifold. As a result, several wetlands and grazing lands adjacent to the river have disappeared. From the area near the Bagula railway station to Purba Para, there were two large wetlands, namely Bhavani Pur Bil and Andhar Bil, which have become extinct due to human habitation.<sup>12</sup> The closure of these water bodies has led to the near-extinction of aquatic life, including fish, insects, snakes, and other animals. Additionally, the expansion of urbanization and the scarcity of water bodies have increased the severity of flooding in this area during the monsoon season.<sup>13</sup>

The arrival of people from East Bengal in Bagula has not only disrupted the environmental balance but also brought about significant changes in the social fabric of the area<sup>14</sup>. The previously uninhabited areas have become densely populated with lower caste Namasudra Matua refugee settlements.<sup>15</sup>

The Matua community, a Hindu Scheduled Caste from East Bengal, has had a significant impact on Bagula's socio-economic, educational, and cultural landscape<sup>16</sup>. Inspired by Harichand Thakur, they emerged as a unified social force.<sup>17</sup> After independence, a large number of them resettled in various parts of Nadia, including Bagula. The statistics below show their rapid growth.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 3 & 4: Hindu caste-wise population of Bagula, 2011**

Census year	Total Hindu population	Schedule caste
1951	28312	13227
1971	73977	44850
2001	260916	128416
2011	293040	144090



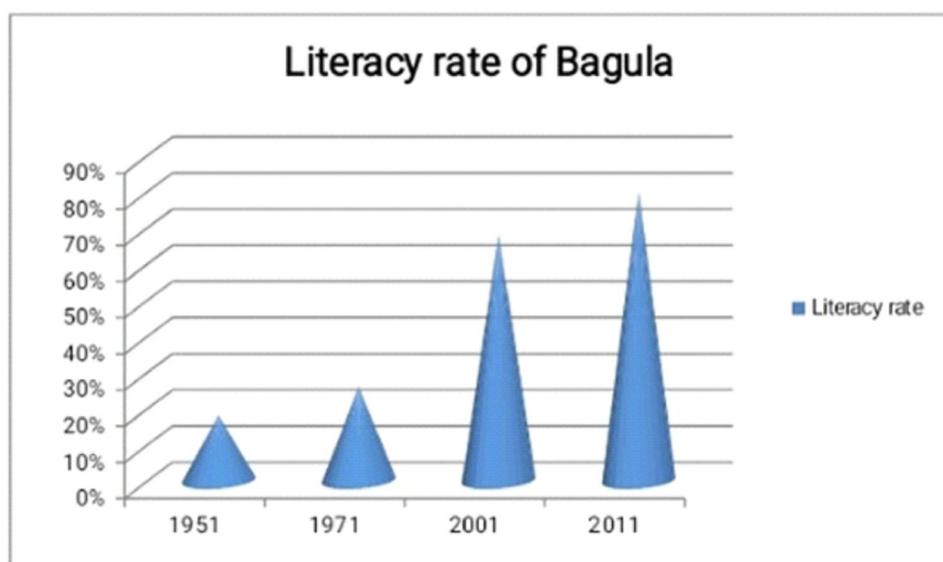
Source: Census report, Nadia District, 1951, 1971, 2001, 2011

As a result, they have brought about changes in the area's socio-economic, political, and religious structures. One of the main festivals in Bagula is the Matua Nam Sankirtan, celebrated on the birth anniversary of Harichand Thakur (in Chaitra or Vaishakh).<sup>19</sup> Matua people from West Bengal, Andaman, Dandakaranya, and other parts of India gather here during this festival. The Matua community's religious belief emphasizes the importance of hard work and prayer, leading to a significant increase in their interest in education.<sup>20</sup>

Before independence, the only educational institution in Bagula was the Bagula High School, established in 1925. In 1940, only 10% of the population received education.<sup>21</sup> However, in the three decades following independence, several educational institutions were established to cater to the needs of the refugees. These included at least seven high schools, one degree college, one engineering college, and three vocational training centers. The refugees played a leading role in establishing these institutions, with notable contributions from individuals such as Kamalakanta Das, Shambhunath Goswami, Jitendranath Ray, Rabindra Kishore Mallik, Sushil Kumar Gupta, Ajit Kumar Bhadra, Satish Chandra Bose, and Krishna Chandra Ray. Additionally, Chandranath Bose, known as Gandhi of Faridpur, established Bagula College.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the rate of higher education in Bagula increased in subsequent decades, as evident from the statistics below.<sup>23</sup>

**Table 5 & 6 : showing the growth of Literacy rate of Bagula, 1951 to 2011**

Census year	Literacy rate
1951	10002 (18%)
1971	21568 (26%)
2001	67838 (68%)
2011	212314 (80%)



Source: Census repost, Literacy Rate, West Bengal District Census Handbook, Nadia

The influence of Matua religion is not limited to education, but also has a significant impact on the social fabric of the community. Matua is not just a religion, but a movement for the emancipation of the oppressed and marginalized communities. The history of Bagula's religion, society, and literature is deeply rooted in the Matua movement, which has played a crucial role in shaping the community's identity. Before the partition of India, Bagula was a small Muslim-dominated area, but with the influx of refugees from East Bengal, it has become a thriving community.<sup>24</sup> Despite the presence of Muslims, the community has maintained a harmonious relationship between Hindus and Muslims. Additionally, the Matua religion has helped to bridge the gap between different castes and communities, promoting a sense of unity and cooperation. The contribution of Matua religion to the social and cultural development of Bagula is undeniable.<sup>25</sup>

**Dr. Sudipta Sadhukhan**

To further expand this social change, the Matua magazine was published in Bagula. The first magazine published by the Matua Mahasangha, 'Jaidanka', was released in 1979 from Bagula. This magazine has a prominent place in the history of Matua literature. Under the editorship of Rabindranath Das, it was published as a religious and literary magazine in 1979 (17th Falgun 1386 Bengali era) on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Sri Sri Guruchand Thakur. Sri Mat Narayan Gosai took the initiative to publish this magazine on behalf of the Matua Sangha. Sri Tarakchandra Maitra, the editor of the magazine, published it from Bagula.<sup>26</sup>

In politics, the Matua community has become so organized that since the 1962 Assembly elections, only Matua candidates have won in this constituency in all subsequent Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

In this way, the people of the Matua community have made significant contributions to social reform, educational reform, and reforming the caste system, while also playing a crucial role in the history of Bagula's transformation into a non-municipal city. The establishment of educational institutions, health centers, and various factories has contributed significantly to the development of any place into a city, and the people of the Matua community have made substantial contributions to the establishment of these institutions in Bagula.<sup>27</sup> In other words, it is clear from the above discussion that the contribution of the Matua religion and community to Bagula's transformation into a city cannot be denied.

### **Conclusions**

The evolution of Bagula from a sparsely populated, agricultural area into a bustling semi-urban center reflects a profound socio-economic transformation driven by historical events, particularly the partition of India and subsequent refugee resettlement. This research underscores several key findings that elucidate the broader implications of these changes on Bagula's development:

- 1. Demographic Shifts and Urbanization:** The data reveal a dramatic shift in Bagula's demographic composition and urban landscape post-partition. The significant increase in population, from 17,251 in 1941 to 84,065 in 1971, underscores the impact of refugee resettlement. This rapid population growth led to the transformation of Bagula from a rural, predominantly Muslim area into a densely populated, diverse semi-urban locale. The

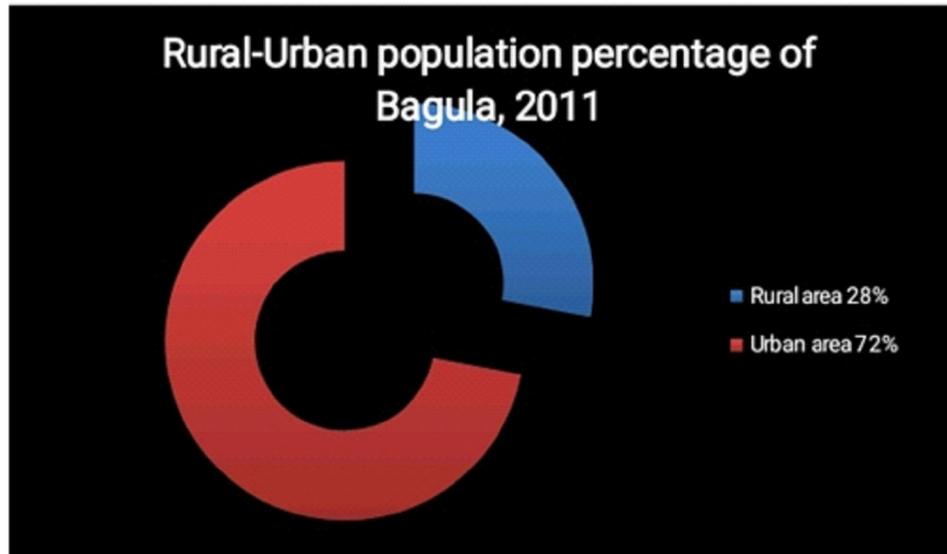
decline in agricultural land and the conversion of wetlands into residential and commercial areas exemplify the physical and economic changes accompanying urban expansion.

- 2. Environmental Impact:** The disappearance of the Goragangni River and the transformation of adjacent wetlands highlight the environmental consequences of rapid urbanization. The reduction in water bodies and the loss of biodiversity due to increased human activity reflect a broader trend seen in many regions undergoing similar transformations. This environmental degradation is a significant byproduct of the demographic changes and urban pressures experienced by Bagula.
- 3. Cultural and Social Dynamics:** The influx of refugees, particularly from East Bengal, has led to notable shifts in the social fabric of Bagula. The transformation of Bagula's communal composition, with a decrease in the Muslim population and a rise in Scheduled Castes, particularly the Matua community, has had profound implications for local social structures and cultural practices. The Matua community's influence extends beyond mere demographics; it has significantly impacted the region's educational, religious, and political landscapes. The establishment of educational institutions and cultural festivals, such as the Matua Nam Sankirtan, underscores the community's role in shaping Bagula's socio-cultural identity.
- 4. Educational and Economic Development:** The post-independence era saw the establishment of numerous educational institutions and vocational training centers in Bagula. This expansion in educational infrastructure has contributed to improved literacy rates and economic diversification. From a single school in the 1940s to a network of high schools and colleges, the growth in educational facilities reflects the town's adaptation to its new socio-economic realities. The increasing literacy rates from 18% in 1951 to 80% in 2011 further illustrate the positive impact of these educational advancements on the local population.
- 5. Significance of the Matua Movement:** The Matua movement has played a crucial role in the socio-economic and political development of Bagula. The community's contributions to education, social reform, and political organization have been instrumental in the town's transformation. The Matua

community's ability to mobilize and influence local governance and social policies demonstrates the broader implications of communal movements in regional development.

- 6. Economic Transition:** The shift from an agrarian economy to a more diversified economic base is significant. Originally dependent on agriculture and fishing, Bagula's economy transitioned towards trade, small-scale industries, and other services due to the influx of refugees and the consequent urbanization. This economic shift has been pivotal in the town's growth, influencing its development from a rural area to a semi-urban center.
- 7. Impact of Partition on Local Infrastructure:** The partition of India not only resulted in demographic changes but also led to the rapid development of infrastructure in Bagula. The establishment of new schools, colleges, and vocational training centers post-1947 reflects the increased demand for educational and social services driven by the new refugee population. This infrastructure growth highlights the adaptive strategies employed by the community to meet the needs of a rapidly changing demographic.
- 8. Social Stratification and Community Integration:** The integration of diverse communities, including refugees from East Bengal, has led to new social stratifications. The rise of the Matua community as a significant social and political force reflects a broader trend of marginalized groups gaining prominence in regional politics and social structures. This integration has influenced local governance and community relations, showcasing the dynamic interplay between different social groups in a transforming locality.
- 9. Health and Sanitation Challenges:** The rapid urbanization and population growth have posed challenges in terms of health and sanitation. The expansion of residential areas and the filling in of water bodies have impacted public health infrastructure and sanitation practices. The increase in population density has exacerbated issues related to waste management, water supply, and disease control, highlighting the need for improved urban planning and health services. Table shows present urban development of Bagula.

**Table 7: Rural-Urban population percentage of Bagula, 2011**



- 10. Cultural Retention and Transformation:** Despite the significant demographic and socio-economic changes, certain cultural practices have persisted, such as the tradition of puppet shows. The retention of these cultural elements amidst modernization reflects the resilience of local traditions. However, the transformation of cultural practices in response to new social contexts also illustrates how traditional arts and customs adapt to changing environments.
- 11. Educational Advancements and Social Mobility:** The expansion of educational opportunities in Bagula has led to increased social mobility and professional opportunities for residents. The rise in literacy rates and the establishment of higher educational institutions have facilitated greater access to knowledge and skills, contributing to economic and social development. This educational advancement has played a crucial role in integrating the new population into the socio-economic fabric of Bagula.
- 12. Environmental Degradation and Urban Planning:** The disappearance of wetlands and rivers due to urban expansion underscores the need for sustainable urban planning. The loss of natural water bodies has not only impacted local biodiversity but also increased the frequency and severity of flooding. This

environmental degradation highlights the importance of incorporating ecological considerations into urban development plans to mitigate adverse effects on local ecosystems.

- 12. Political Mobilization and Community Leadership:** The political mobilization of the Matua community, evidenced by their consistent electoral victories, demonstrates the influence of organized social groups in shaping local and regional politics. The community's leadership and political engagement reflect a broader trend of marginalized groups leveraging political platforms to advocate for their interests and drive social change.

In summary, Bagula's transformation from a rural village to a semi-urban center is a compelling case study of how historical events, demographic shifts, and cultural movements intersect to reshape a locality. The changes observed in Bagula reflect broader patterns of urbanization and social transformation in post-partition India, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of refugee resettlement, environmental change, and cultural evolution. The contributions of the Matua community, in particular, highlight the role of organized social movements in driving community development and shaping regional identity. This comprehensive analysis of Bagula's development underscores the significance of understanding local histories within the broader context of national and regional transformations.

#### REFERENCES

1. District statistical handbook, Nadia, 1992, p. 86
2. Raichoudhuri, Prabir (compiled and edited), "Brihattor Bagula Parikrama", Troyee Publication, Kolkata, First edition- 2007, page-23.
3. Raichoudhuri, Prabir (compiled and edited), "Brihattor Bagula Parikrama", Troyee Publication, Kolkata, First edition- 2007, page-28.
4. Field survey, Bagula, Nadia, 20.04.2024
5. Kundu, Debadulal (compiled and edited), "Samikshar Aloy Hasikhali Bagula Majdia", Placenta Publication, Bagula, Nadia, First edition 2022, page- 8, 11.
6. Edited by Pavitra Biswas, "Bagula Boimela Smaranika", Placenta Publication, Kolkata, 2023, page-30.
7. Census report: Nadia, 1941, 1971, Occupational distribution, Pp. 174-175, P 152

**Transformation of Civil Society in Nadia District in the Light of Partition and Refugee...**

8. Census report: Nadia, 1941, 1971, Communal distribution, pp 164-165, P 103
9. Biswas, Ranjit (compiled and edited), "Sanskritik Aitihyer Nadia'r Gram", Indira Publication, Kolkata, First edition- June 2003, page-106.
10. Raichoudhuri, Prabir (compiled and edited), "Greater Bagula Parikrama", Troyee Publication, Kolkata, First edition- 2007, pages-23, 28.
11. Karmakar Supratim, Nadijibir Notebook, Dhansere, kolkata, 2022. P 78
12. Edited by Pavitra Biswas, "Bagula Book Fair Souvenir", Placenta Publication, Kolkata, 2023, page-14.
13. Field survey, Bagula, Nadia, 20.04.2024
14. Ghosh Papia, 'Partition and the South Asian Diaspora: Extending the Subcontinent', Routledge, New Delhi, 2007, Pp. 157-159
15. Bairagya, Birat (compiled and edited), "History of Matua Periodicals and Matua Souvenir", Bibhuti Printing Works, Naihati, North 24 Parganas, First edition- March 11, 2020, page- 331.
16. Alexander Claire, Chatterji Joya, and Jalais Annu, 'The Bengal Diaspora: Rethinking Muslim Migration', Routhledge, New Delhi, 2015, P 187
17. Biswas, Mithu, "Face to Face with Harichand", Placenta Publication, Bagula, Nadia, Publication date- 2002-23, page- 5.
18. Census report: Nadia, 1951, 1971, 2001, 2011, District wise scheduled caste population (Appendix), P 192, P183, P 203, P 178
19. Thakur Chandal, Kalyani (compiled and edited), "Ami Ken Chandal Likhil", Bibhuti Printing Works, Kolkata, August 16, 2016, page-35.
20. Samaddar Ranabir, 'Refugees and the State: Practices of Asylum and Care in India, 1947-2000', Sage Publications, Delhi, 2003, p 356
21. Islam, Tajirul (compiled and edited), "Firye Dekha Nadia" (Looking Back at Nadia), Silpanganee Publication, Baharampur, Murshidabad, page-107
22. Bhadra, Ajit Kumar, "The Story Behind the Establishment of Bagula Srikrishna College", Pamphlet.
23. Census repost, Literacy Rate, West Bengal District Census Handbook, Nadia, (1951, 1971, 2001, 2011)
24. Chandra Uday, Heierstad Geir, and Nielsen Kenneth Bo, 'The Politics of Caste in West Bengal', Routhledge, New Delhi, 2015, p 149
25. Bepari, Sri Basudeb, "Rajarshi Guru Chand and the Society of that

**Dr. Sudipta Sadhukhan**

Time in the Spread of Education”, Publisher- Deepika Bepari, Hooghly, First edition- March 18, 2022, page- 86

26. Bairagya, Birat, (compiled and edited) “History of Hariastra and Matua Literature”, Naihati, North 24 Parganas, First edition- March 11, 2020, pages- 360, 250.
27. Raichoudhuri, Prabir (compiled and edited), “Greater Bagula Parikrama”, Troyee Publication, Kolkata, First edition- 2007, page- 150.

**Note: This original research article, authored by Professor Dr. Sudipta Sadhukhan, is being submitted for publication in the Journal of Social Issues and Development, a publication of the Himalayan Ecological Research Institute for Training and Grassroot Enhancement.**