

***DINABANDHU
MITRA***

***NIL DARPAN;
OR, THE INDIGO
PLANTING
MIRROR,
A DRAMA***

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Dinabandhu Mitra

Nil Darpan; or, The Indigo Planting Mirror, A Drama

Translated from the Bengali by a Native

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INTRODUCTION.

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The original Bengali of this Drama—the Nil Darpan, or Indigo Planting Mirror—having excited considerable interest, a wish was expressed by various Europeans to see a translation of it. This has been made by a Native; both the original and translation are *bonâ fide* Native productions and depict the Indigo Planting System as viewed by Natives at large.

The Drama is the favourite mode with the Hindus for describing certain states of society, manners, customs. Since the days of Sir W. Jones, by scholars at Paris, St. Petersburg, and London, the Sanskrit Drama has, in this point of view, been highly appreciated. The Bengali Drama imitates in this respect its Sanskrit parent. The evils of Kulin Brahminism, widow marriage prohibition, quackery, fanaticism, have been depicted by it with great effect.

Nor has the system of Indigo planting escaped notice: hence the origin of this work, the Nil Darpan, which, though exhibiting no marvellous or very tragic scenes, yet, in simple homely language, gives the “annals of the poor;” pleads the cause of those who are the feeble; it describes a respectable ryot, a peasant proprietor, happy with his family in the enjoyment of his land till the Indigo System compelled him to take advances, to neglect his own land, to cultivate crops which beggared him, reducing him to the condition of a serf and a vagabond; the effect of this on his home, children, and relatives are pointed out in language, plain but

true; it shows how arbitrary power debases the lord as well as the peasant; reference is also made to the partiality of various Magistrates in favor of Planters and to the Act of last year penally enforcing Indigo contracts.

Attention has of late years been directed by Christian Philanthropists to the condition of the ryots of Bengal, their teachers, and the oppression which they suffer, and the conclusion arrived at is, that there is little prospect or possibility of ameliorating the mental, moral, or spiritual condition of the ryot without giving him security of landed-tenure. If the Bengal ryot is to be treated as a serf, or a mere squatter or day-labourer, the missionary, the school-master, even the Developer of the resources of India, will find their work like that of Sisyphus—vain and useless.

Statistics have proved that in France, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Saxony, the education of the peasant, along with the security of tenure he enjoys on his small farms, has encouraged industrious, temperate, virtuous, and cleanly habits, fostered a respect for property, increased social comforts, cherished a spirit of healthy and active independence, improved the cultivation of the land, lessened pauperism, and has rendered the people averse to revolution, and friends of order. Even Russia is carrying out a grand scheme of serf-emancipation in this spirit.

It is the earnest wish of the writer of these lines that harmony may be speedily established between the Planter and the Ryot, that mutual interests may bind the two classes together, and that the European may be in the Mofussil the protecting Ægis of the peasants, who may be

able “to sit each man under his mango and tamarind tree,
none daring to make him afraid.”

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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I present "The Indigo Planting Mirror" to the Indigo Planters' hands; now, let every one of them, having observed his face, erase the freckle of the stain of selfishness from his forehead, and, in its stead, place on it the sandal powder of beneficence, then shall I think my labour successful, good fortune for the helpless class of ryots, and preservation of England's honor. Oh, ye Indigo Planters! Your malevolent conduct has brought a stain upon the English Nation, which was so graced by the ever-memorable names of Sydney, Howard, Hall, and other great men. Is your desire for money so very powerful, that through the instigation of that vain wealth, you are engaged in making holes like rust in the long acquired and pure fame of the British people? Abstain now from that unjust conduct through which you are raising immense sums as your profits; and then the poor people, with their families, will be able to spend their days in ease. You are now-a-days purchasing things worth a hundred rupees by expending only ten;—and you well know what great trouble the ryots are suffering from that. Still you are not willing to make that known, being entirely given up to the acquisition of money. You say, that some amongst you give donations to schools, and also medicine in time of need—but the Planters' donations to schools are more odious than the application of the shoe for the destruction of a milch cow, and their grants

of medicine are like unto mixing the inspissated milk in the cup of poison. If the application of a little turpentine after being beat by Shamchand,^[1] be forming a dispensary, then it may be said that in every factory there is a dispensary. The Editors of two daily newspapers are filling their columns with your praises; and whatever other people may think, you never enjoy pleasure from it, since you know fully the reason of their so doing. What a surprising power of attraction silver has? The detestable Judas gave the great Preacher of the Christian religion, Jesus, into the hands of odious Pilate for the sake of thirty rupees; what wonder then, if the proprietors of two newspapers, becoming enslaved by the hope of gaining one thousand rupees, throw the poor helpless people of this land into the terrible grasp of your mouths. But *misery and happiness revolve like a wheel*, and that the sun of happiness is about to shed his light on the people of this country, is becoming very probable. The most kind-hearted Queen Victoria, the mother of the people, thinking it unadvisable to suckle her children through maid-servants, has now taken them on her own lap to nourish them. The most learned, intelligent, brave, and open-hearted Lord Canning is now the Governor-General of India; Mr. Grant, who always suffers in the sufferings of his people, and is happy when they are happy, who punishes the wicked and supports the good, has taken charge of the Lieutenant-Governorship, and other persons, as Messrs. Eden, Herschel, etc., who are, all well-known for their love of truth, for their great experience and strict impartiality, are continually expanding themselves lotus-like on the surface of the lake of the Civil Service. Therefore, it is becoming

fully evident that these great men will very soon take hold of the rod of justice in order to stop the sufferings which the ryots are enduring from the great giant *Rahu*, the Indigo Planter.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

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- Goluk Chunder Basu.
- Nobin Madhab

Bindu Madhab } *Sons of Goluk Chunder.*

- Sadhu Churn—*A neighbouring Ryot.*
- Ray Churn—*Sadhu's brother.*
- Gopi Churn Das—*The Dewan.*
- J. J. Wood

P. P. Rose } *Indigo Planters.*

- The Amin or Land Measurer.
- A Khalasi, *a Tent-pitcher.*
- Taidgir—*Native Superintendent of Indigo Cultivation.*

Magistrate, Amla, Attorney, Deputy Inspector, Pundit, Keeper of the Gaol, Doctor, a Cow-keeper, a Native Doctor, Four Boys, a Latyal or Club-man, and a Herdsman.

WOMEN.

Sabitri—*Wife of Goluk Chunder.*

Soirindri—*Wife of Nobin.*

Saralota—*Wife of Bindu Madhab.*

Reboti—*Wife of Sadhu Churn.*

Khetromani—*Daughter of Sadhu.*

Aduri—*Maid-servant in Goluk Chunder's house.*

Podi Moyrani—*A Sweetmeat Maker.*

FIRST ACT—FIRST SCENE.

Svaropur—Goluk Chunder's Gola or Store-house.

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Goluk Chunder Basu *and* Sadhu Churn *sitting*.

Sadhu. Master I told you then we cannot live any more in this country. You did not hear me however. *A poor man's word bears fruit after the lapse of years.*

Goluk. O my child! Is it easy to leave one's country? My family has been here for seven generations. The lands which our fore-fathers rented have enabled us never to acknowledge ourselves servants of others. The rice which grows, provides food for the whole year, means of hospitality to guests, and also the expense of religious services; the mustard seed we get, supplies oil for the whole year, and, besides, we can sell it for about sixty or seventy rupees. Svaropur is not a place where people are in want.—It has rice, peas, oil, molasses from its fields, vegetables in the garden, and fish from the tanks;—whose heart is not torn when obliged to leave such a place? And who can do that easily?

Sadhu. Now it is no more a place of happiness: your garden is already gone, and your relatives are on the point of forsaking you. Ah! it is not yet three years since the Saheb took a lease of this place, and he has already ruined the whole village. We cannot bear to turn our eyes in the southern direction towards the house of the heads of the villages (Mandal). Oh! what was it once, and what is it now!