

## Chapter 11

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# Wives as doorways of citizenship

## Indo-Bangladesh enclaves and the repositioning of gender relations

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### Introduction

The connection between one's gender and citizenship comes up in the most unexpected of ways. Existing literature on nation, citizenship, and gender often talk about the complicated dynamics between the gendered identity and its relation to gendered citizenship (Gellner, 2013; Kabeer, 2002; Mukhopadhyay and Singh, 2007; van Schendel, 2005). Nationalism affects women in many, mostly adverse, ways. But, what about women who are stateless? The Indo-Bangladesh enclaves are an intricate example of such statelessness.

Enclaves are small fragments of land owned by one country, inside the geographical boundaries of another country (van Schendel, 2002). The country inside which the enclave resides is called the host country. There are more than two hundred geopolitical enclaves in various continents across the globe. India and Bangladesh share the largest group of enclaves in the world, a historical legacy that had retained its existence despite Partition during Independence in 1947 and the later fragmentation of Pakistan to form Bangladesh in 1971. There are about a hundred thousand people living inside these enclaves, with no access to either basic fundamental rights or any form of formal livelihood. However, what sets these enclaves apart is the unique role women play in mediating the interaction of the enclave residents with their host countries.

Since these areas are secluded from their mother country and are situated within the host country, they do not have access to any state resources or facilities. With the enclaves situated within the territory of another country, there is no way for the enclave residents to visit their mother country, or the officials of their country to visit them. The host country also cannot allow its citizens to enter inside the sovereign territory of another nation, even though it is an enclave, according to the international territorial laws. Hence, the residents of the enclave live a socially and politically vulnerable life with no administration, no recourse to law and no functioning social system.

Drawing on empirical research, this chapter explores this dynamic and asks what happens when women are the mediators of citizenship for the rest of the community? The enclaves between India and Bangladesh provide a unique case study for such a situation. Did their access to citizenship alter the position of

these women within the family? This research found that for women who have been born in India and have been married into the enclaves later in life, their access to state resources becomes a crucial enabler. This analysis is significant because, being based on the socially and politically excluded community at an international border area where women have such a unique position, it extends our knowledge of the gender-citizenship duality. However, in order to understand these communities, we have to understand the exceptional history and geopolitical reality that gave rise to these enclaves.

This analysis is based on a research conducted in 2011, and provides insight into a unique socio-political reality – a real, lived example of what happens to gender relations in a traditional patriarchal society when the state structure and societal regulations are visible only in their absence. In other words, what happens to gender hierarchies when state regulated mechanisms of other social hierarchical norms are absent? Through this case study of the enclaves, I propose that the unique social reality of enclave residents has led to a renegotiation of their gender hierarchy that has made women major stakeholders in decision making within the family as well as the community at large. In other words, when access to public resources was made possible through the women of the community, the space experienced a change in gender power dynamics that favoured these women.

The Bangladeshi enclaves were mostly situated in the northern district of Cooch Behar of the State of West Bengal in India. There were 51 such enclaves, spread across the district, comprising an area of 12,000 acres (Karan, 1966). Gupta and Chanda (2001) state that the total area covered by these Bangladeshi *chhits* (enclaves) is 7,083.72 acres (or 28.66 km<sup>2</sup>). The largest among these is the enclave of Dahagram Angarpota, with an estimated area of 187 km<sup>2</sup>. The smallest, on the other hand, is the Upon Chowki Bhaini, with an area of only 53 m<sup>2</sup>.

In the next section, I briefly mention the methodology I used in undertaking the fieldwork and some of the challenges faced in making it possible. The third section discusses the relation of the enclave residents with the state structure – the ambivalence of simultaneously desiring its presence and complaining of the role it played. The state is never non-existent. In its structural absence, its presence was perhaps felt evermore by the enclave residents. In the fourth section, I focus in detail on how these women are the bearers of citizenship rights for their family, how the system works, and the underlying gendered rubric that makes it possible. I also briefly show how living in the enclaves have different repercussions according to one's gendered identity.

### **Note on methodology**

This chapter is based on fieldwork conducted in two phases – the first phase took place in 2010. This was when I visited the Bangladeshi enclaves located in the Indian district of Cooch Behar for the first time. The focus of this trip was to establish contact with enclave residents, locate which enclaves will be suitable for extensive engagement both in terms of accessibility from Dinhata (the nearest

subdivision) and interviewing local political leaders, media persons and those engaged with the Indo-Bangladesh Enclave Exchange Committee.

In the next phase of fieldwork in 2011, I focused on the four Bangladeshi and two Indian counter enclaves chosen based on my initial visit. The four Bangladeshi enclaves are Poatur Kuthi, Shibaprasad Mustafi, Madhya Mashaldanga, and Batrigachh, while the Indian counter enclaves<sup>1</sup> inside the Bangladeshi enclaves within India are Chhit Madnakure and Mansab Sheoraguri. The majority of the 50 interviews were conducted in two phases in 2010 and 2011 in the enclave of Poatur Kuthi, but this research would not have been possible without the valuable information as well as insight gathered from the other enclaves and counter enclaves. All interviews were conducted in Bengali and have been translated into English by the author.

In 2015, India and Bangladesh finally agreed to exchange these enclaves and merge them with the surrounding host countries (Cons, 2018). The Bangladeshi enclaves became part of India, and the Indian enclaves became part of Bangladesh (more details in the next section). When I undertook this fieldwork in 2011, the enclaves had not been exchanged, even though there were talks of a merger agreement between the two governments. The survival strategies which the enclave residents shared with me were often clearly outside the remit of what was considered legal, even though they were necessary for survival. In this difficult political context, many of the interviews I conducted are highly sensitive and I have taken care not to reveal any information that could identify or be detrimental to any of my participants.

One of the foremost and most formidable challenges I had to face was the issue of accessibility. Reaching the enclaves would often mean walking for many kilometres across bunds, with no clear road or direction.<sup>2</sup> I would often be asked whether I was from the Indian government and whether I could help them in resolving the enclaves issue. My identity of being an unmarried Bengali woman travelling alone to these areas would sometimes raise astonishment, shock, and often detailed questions about my family. However, at the same time, being a woman made it easier for me to enter the houses and interact directly with resident women. The result was extended discussions on their experiences of pregnancy, deliveries, and often women would express a sense of betrayal for being married off in the enclaves by their families in order to save on the dowry expense.

## **Formation and history of the Indo-Bangladesh enclaves**

Vinokurov defined an enclave as ‘a part of the territory of a state that is enclosed within the territory of another state’. The state to which an enclave is politically a part of is called a ‘mainland state’ (Vinokurov, 2007) ‘central state’ (Raton, 1958), or ‘home state’ (Catudal, 1979). The country by which the enclave is surrounded is called a ‘surrounding state’ or a ‘host state’ (Whyte, 2000; van Schendel, 2002). In the most exhaustive study on enclaves conducted by Evgeny Vinokurov (2007),

he reports 282 existing enclaves and exclaves throughout the world, with a total population of approximately 2.67 million in 2003. The Indo-Bangladesh enclaves<sup>3</sup> formed the largest enclave complex in the world, both in terms of the total area as well as the total population.

When the British came to India, the area over which they gained control first was Bengal. The Mughal-ruled areas came under British control when the Mughal Nazir, Siraj-ud-daulla was defeated by Robert Clive in the battle of Plassey in 1757. The British had by this point gained control over a large part of India and were practically the rulers, with the Nawab merely a figure head. The *chaklas*<sup>4</sup> and Parganas that had until then paid allegiance to the Mughals, now became in effect British territory. This meant that the *chaklas* owned by the Mughals started belonging to the British (at first the East India Company and then, the Crown) and those owned by the king became surrounded by British territory. Though Whyte (2000) reports that the boundary between the British territory and that of the Princely State of Cooch Behar was first ‘determined’ in 1769 and then ‘fixed’ in 1773, the enclaves were not regarded as an anomaly or a complexity at least until the Permanent Settlement in 1793.

The enclaves first became an issue of geographic and political significance internationally when India was granted Independence in 1947. With Independence, ~~also~~ came Partition – the country was divided into two parts based on a communal demographic isolation. The eastern parts of Bengal in the east, and the areas of Sindh, Baluchistan, parts of Punjab and Kashmir formed another nation named Pakistan. The two parts of this country were thousands of kilometres away from each other, separated by the great divide that was India. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, head of the Boundary Commission, was given the arduous task of determining the border between India and Pakistan, while keeping in consideration factors like geographical features, demography, language, feasibility, and so on. According to the Radcliffe Line, made within a month without the existence of any proper map (Banerjee, 2001), the district of Rangpur became a part of East Pakistan, and with the Merger Agreement signed between the Union of India and Raja Jagaddipendra Narayan in 1949, Cooch Behar became a part of the Union of India. Thus, the enclaves of Cooch Behar in Rangpur now became enclaves of India in East Pakistan, and the enclaves of the British inside the Princely State territory now became Pakistani enclaves in India. For the first time, being a resident of enclaves had profound implications for the concerned population, much more than just a shift in their revenue offices. Being surrounded by another country, and completely disjointed from their mother country, these enclaves essentially became political islands with the people having no access to state structure and basic amenities like health care, education, or communication facilities.

### Negotiating the state

While there has been no official census in the enclaves since Independence, unofficial estimates put the population count as anywhere between sixty thousand to

more than a hundred thousand. Since the independence of India in 1947, the residents of the Indo-Bangladesh enclaves have been denied basic human rights or fundamental rights as guaranteed by the constitution of both the countries. In 2015, the governments of India and Bangladesh finally reached an agreement to exchange the enclaves and absorb them as parts of the host country. The Indian Parliament ratified the 119th amendment to the Constitution, which allowed for the exchange of 111 Indian enclaves and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves and absorb them into their host countries (Cons, 2018, p. viii). Hence, the enclaves ceased to exist as a geopolitical anomaly, though the experiences of the residents of these spaces continue to provide crucial insight into gender relations.<sup>5</sup>

The issue of enclaves was not merely one of political boundaries. The subject of enclaves might be one of cartographic anxiety for the state administrations and political parties, but for the enclave dwellers, it remained foremost an issue of access to resources. Most of the available literature on the enclaves issue focuses on the legal and political ramifications from the perspective of the Indian enclaves in Bangladesh (see for example Jones, 2010; van Schendel, 2002; Vinokurov, 2007). An analysis of the social reality of their lives is yet to emerge, though the doctoral thesis of Hosna Jahan Shewly (2012) was a firm step in that direction. Brendan Whyte's earlier work (2000) has been instrumental in establishing the historical origin of the Indo-Bangladesh enclaves. While Jason Cons (2007, 2013, 2018) has indeed done extensive work on the Bangladeshi enclave of Dahagram, it is a unique case since this enclave is connected to the mainland of Bangladesh. The experience of the residents of Dahagram, which Cons has so intricately portrayed in his work over the years, is, however, not reflected in the lives of those Bangladeshi enclave dwellers who live many kilometres away from the Bangladesh mainland and have no way of entering the country. Another crucial issue is the lack of a gender-sensitive reading of the lived experience of the enclave residents. This chapter hopes to go some way towards filling this gap in the enclave scholarship.

Though the enclave residents were formally denied any access to their host country's resources due to lack of citizenship, in reality, there was no restriction to mobility in and out of the Bangladeshi enclaves. Most of the Bangladeshi enclaves, being close to the Indo-Bangladesh border, are difficult to access. Moreover, with no roads it takes at least one hour on foot to reach even the closest enclaves from the nearest subdivision of Dinhat. In their lived experience, the border does not exist as a barbed wire fence, nor as a location constantly under the scrutiny of security forces. The reality of the border exists in the social isolation that enclave residents experience in their engagements with the neighbouring Indian villages. They are unable to be seen as part of the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) of their surrounding neighbouring villages, and hence face social alienation, political isolation and an administrative vacuum in their daily lives.

There are no schools, markets, hospitals, or bus or train stations in the enclaves. In order to attend school, children from the enclaves have to go to the nearest Indian schools (Jones, 2010). Farmers from the enclaves are dependent on the

local Indian markets for selling their crops, and being an enclave resident often means they have to sell at a price lower than the market price, since buyers are aware of their travel limitations. These market visits were often marked by harassment at the hands of local Indian political groups, police, or Border Security Forces. This situation is further exacerbated by the complicated reaction of local Indian citizens and the Border Security Force to illegal migration of workers from Bangladesh (Banerjee and Chen, 2013, p. 25). Enclave residents from these Bangladeshi enclaves were often accused of smuggling or illegal immigration, and face anti-immigration sentiments even though the existence of enclaves is widely known in these areas.

There exists a cultural, linguistic, and physical similarity between the enclave residents and the residents of the surrounding villages. However, the psychological effect of not being 'card-holders' (not having citizen's identity cards) had a significant impact on the life choices of the enclave residents. Chittoprasad,<sup>6</sup> a 62-year-old Hindu resident of the enclave of Shibaprasad Mustafi was born in erstwhile East Pakistan, and left the country in 1962 with other Hindus who were fleeing as refugees. He came to the enclave where he had relatives, and had been living there since. When asked about his experiences of living in his village, he pointed out the restrictions imposed on their daily lives due to administrative regulations: "We do not have ration card. Our movement is restricted, we do not have any roads. Our children cannot study, there is no school. Even for going to Din-hata,<sup>7</sup> we need Panchayat Pradhan's<sup>8</sup> signature. We do not even have electricity".

The inability to migrate was another issue that many of the interviewed enclave residents felt strongly about. Aided by crop failures, limited agricultural success and a move towards a more service-oriented economy, India has seen a strong wave of internal migration in the past few decades. Unlike their neighbours in the surrounding Indian villages, they did not have the choice of migrating to bigger cities like Delhi in search of non-agricultural livelihoods. Taking a train ride in India means the passenger has to carry an identification card, the lack of which can be a cause for imprisonment, especially around the border areas where you are then suspected of being an illegal immigrant. As Kamal, a 65-year-old resident who had once been arrested by the Indian police for visiting a local Indian market, said, "We are daily wage earners. We don't have vote, we don't have any ration card. We are afraid to go to India. I need the voter ID card most urgently. We can travel freely then. We can go to Delhi and work there".

There is a complete absence of any medical facilities in these Bangladeshi enclaves. With no health centres or professionally trained doctors, visiting informal healers from the neighbouring villages of India are their sole source of medical treatment. In cases of childbirth, most deliveries take place at home, and in case of complexities, women are admitted to neighbouring Indian public health centres or hospitals using the identities of relatives with Indian citizenship where possible. This situation has, at least to some extent, overturned the traditionally patriarchal marital relationships in these enclaves in favour of women born in India, as we will see in the next section of this chapter.

## Marriage and citizenship

In the years between 1947 and 2015, the enclave residents managed to continue their lives outside the parameters of any state structure by inventing creative ways of accessing structural resources from the host country. These alternative ways not only bear witness to the ingenuity of these people, but also created a sociologically rare phenomenon – in a traditionally patriarchal society, the women earned a crucial life-defining role and importance in the families that often put them at the centre of the connection between the state and these families.

There is a clear pattern of establishing kinship structures with families living in India over the past two generations in an attempt to access state resources otherwise unavailable to enclave residents. Out of the 50 interviews I conducted with enclave residents, 32 were with those who identified as male, and 18 were with those who identified as female. 26 of the men were in a heterosexual conjugal relationship, and 6 were unmarried. Out of the 18 women, 4 were not married (yet), and 14 were in a heterosexual conjugal relationship. Though the women I could manage to interview were lesser in number than the men, these interviews brought up some interesting information.

There emerges a clear trend: it is mostly women who have Indian or Bangladeshi citizenship who become married with enclave residents through arranged marriages. Of those 26 men who were married, 19 had spouses whose natal families were in India, or who were born in India and had Indian citizenship. The wives of these men had come into the enclaves after their marriage. Similarly, 11 out of the 14 women who I interviewed were born in India or Bangladesh and had become enclave residents after they were married with an enclave resident. In total, of the 40 married participants, 30 were in a marriage where the wife had citizenship rights by birth. Among the 18 women interviewed, only three women were born within the enclaves, and all three were married within the enclaves. The women who were married into the enclaves but were born in India had a voter ID card and often a ration card which gave them access to the subsidised public distribution system run by the Indian government for basic commodities. I did not find any woman who was born in the enclaves and was married outside the enclave within India, neither did I find any men who were Indian citizens but had married into the enclaves. The three women who were born in the enclaves and had been married had another enclave resident as their spouse.

No men with Indian/Bangladeshi citizenship were found to have married an enclave resident woman. In other words, this research pointed towards a consistent and conscious choice of male enclave residents to opt for a wife who is an Indian resident. This apparent discrepancy can be explained by the persistence of the dowry system in these areas. In the traditional arranged marriage form popular in this area, the bride's family has to pay a dowry to the groom's family – often beyond their financial means. A marriage to a groom from the enclaves ensured minimal dowry in exchange for future access to state resources and arrangement of identity cards as future citizens.

From the perspective of the enclave residents, this choice gives them access to use of public resources that would be otherwise inaccessible. Take the example of DB, a 32-year-old man who was born in a nearby Bangladeshi village and whose wife was from a nearby Indian village. He had succeeded in getting a ration card by using the address of his in-laws' family, and an election card with the help of the panchayat in the same village. SS, a 32-year-old woman, was married into the enclaves from a nearby Indian village where her parents continue to live. SS pointed out the issues women living in these enclaves face: "When we are pregnant, the doctors [in the Indian hospitals] deny us even the basic facilities. Our children have no future. We still could have lived but for the torture of the Indians. They beat us, torch our houses and continuously threaten us".

She has managed to get 'BPL' (Below Poverty Level) cards for her husband and herself using her parents' address. Though they did not face any problems in getting subsidised rations using this card, their election card brought up another story. Though the election card was also obtained using the same address, their names are often stricken off the voting list. Some of the participants described that the children of enclave residents born in Indian hospitals are often given the names of their Indian relative as their named parents on their birth certificates so that they are able to attend Indian schools when they grow older. This shows the extent of the sacrifices enclave residents are prepared to make to try to ensure a better life for their children. Both the cases of SS and DB hint towards the fact that the local authorities are aware of this practice.

Jason Cons (2018, p. 7) has pointed out the anomaly that enclaves create in the long held relation between territorial continuity and nationalism, in his crucial contribution to enclave literature he states that, '[t]he argument, in brief, is that the enclaves [. . .] trouble Indian and Bangladeshi nationalist imaginations of contiguous territory of the border as neatly dividing inside from the outside, and of identity and belonging. They unsettle the notion [. . .] that nationality and territory must align'. I take Cons's proposition further and, based on my research, suggest that they unsettle not only the notions of nationality or territory, but also those of traditional gendered roles within normative kinship structures. The situation of the enclaves created a unique insight into an important shift in a woman's role in a patriarchal, agrarian society, from one of acceptor of state resources as one of the vulnerable and protected in the family, to that of a mediator between the family and the state.

One of the unintended, but potentially radical, consequences of this unique informal resolution is a dispersion or dilution of an otherwise tightknit patriarchal social structure. In an attempt to realign nationality and territory to counter precarity, the normative patriarchal family structure becomes more equitable in its dispersal of power. This creates a unique opportunity for the scholar of gender relations – here we can witness a real-life microcosm of patriarchy being dislocated, though not completely dismantled, when resources like education, health care and food rations are accessible only through women.

Lack of access to education was one of the foremost concerns of the enclave residents. Often this problem was circumnavigated at the very time of birth. If



the pregnant mother managed to get herself admitted to the local health centre or sub divisional hospital as an Indian resident, she would have the father's name on the birth certificates registered as that of an Indian citizen. Relatives often came to help in these situations, offering their names. By attributing another relative's parentage, at least nominally, to their children, an innovative, though, I feel, quite tragic, solution to the problem of accessing Indian schools was thus found and the extended kinship structures of the women with Indian citizenship played a pivotal role in it.

The wives with Indian citizenship thus gain a power leverage – or symbolic capital in Bourdieusian terms – these are women who are able to find their voice and make their opinions heard. Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as 'any property (any form of capital whether physical, economic, cultural or social) when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception which cause them to know it and to recognise it, to give it value' (Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 8). The access to resources that these women had was valued by the enclave communities, and in turn, this gave them access to other forms of capital – be it more decision-making power within the family, or political participation in determining the future of their own community.

For women living in proximity of a border area with minimal resources, it is an experience which has led to courageous decisions – like choosing to stand for elections in an attempt to represent the people of the enclaves. The capital they had garnered in terms of their symbolic value in the family is also propelled towards a broader social role. Take, for example, the experiences of enclave resident Hafisa Bibi.

### **Hafisa Bibi**

Like the women discussed earlier, Hafisa was born in the Indian village of Kalmati, and was married into the enclaves. At the age of 29, Hafisa Bibi became the first person from the enclaves to stand in assembly elections in the state of West Bengal in India, using her birth identity as an Indian citizen (Chakraborty, 2011). In her interview with me, she said,

I have two children, a son and a daughter. During their birth, the delivery had to be done at home because the doctors at a hospital in official India refused to admit us. They said they could not treat us because we are not Indians. For how many more generations do we have to live like this?

Although she did not win the election, her candidature was extensively supported by the residents at that time. An elderly resident of Poatur Kuthi, the same enclave Bibi was from, said: 'We have been suffering for 64 years silently. We are glad one of us is standing in the election. If she wins, we will try to pressure the government into assimilating the enclaves with the mainland'. This acceptance of leadership from a young woman was one of the key indicators of positive change in patriarchal social norms during my study. Her decision to fight the elections

also supports Naila Kabeer's (2012, p. 217) argument that 'struggles around gender justice are then struggles around notions of fairness at the institutional level [...] ideas about citizenship offer an important bridge between these two processes of change because they help to mediate the translation of individual notions of selfhood into socially recognised identities'.

In this context, an interesting parallel is found in the migrational marriages studied by Farhana Ibrahim (2018) in western India. Ibrahim studies migrational marriage patterns in the western Indian region of Kutch and historicises the practice of marriage as a means of transgressing the limitations imposed by borders. She notes that 'women's mobility across borders is one site on which national cultural and political anxieties unfold' (2018, p. 1). These very anxieties, I argue, can evolve into a form of capital for these women – one that might help them navigate the patriarchal structures in a unique and sometimes even empowering way. It is not permanent in nature, and it does not lead to a definitive transformation; however, what it does is introduce forms of gendered power, even if for a brief period of time, that would not have been otherwise possible.

## Conclusion

This case of women's increased empowerment due to their unique access to resources through kinship structures also draws out the complexities of gender relations. A question that comes up is, why do the families of these women agree to such an arranged marriage, despite the well-known forms of hardship that life as an enclave dweller entails? Queries related to the reasons for getting married into the enclaves often led to the dowry system and how the access of state resources was itself seen as a form of dowry in these spaces. While getting married to an Indian citizen in one of the Indian villages would have meant practicing a traditional form of dowry system during their wedding, an enclave resident may not claim a monetary dowry. In essence, the families of these women were not able to transcend the dowry system – the access these women provided to rations, schooling and medical services through their citizenship was itself seen as a wedding trousseau. This raised the question of how one can consider such marriages as a form of empowerment for these women. My research showed that being wedded into the enclaves was definitely seen as a misfortune these women suffered and a decision their resource-poor families took to avoid the financial strain of paying a monetary dowry. This decision might also have been influenced by the devalued position of daughters in these families as compared to sons. However, their access to state resources meant that in their marital families, these women enjoyed an elevated status.

Another issue which complicates these experiences is the rise of nationalist right-wing forces in India in the past few years. Religious tensions along the border areas in recent years and the introduction in 2019 of the National Citizenship Bill by the government of India has further complicated the position of the enclave residents. Even while they have now been accepted as legal residents of

their host countries, their lived experiences continue to be precarious in the light of these developments. Indian citizenship has been historically biased against the Muslims (Jayal, 2013), and this anxiety has only added to the ostracisation of the enclave residents.

The enclaves continue to remain a place of interest for researchers, not least due to these unusual gender dynamics, their eccentric geopolitical history, as well as the risk of communalisation that the enclaves continue to pose in the sensitive Indo-Bangladesh border areas. I would like to conclude this chapter by calling for more detailed research into the lives of enclave residents which not only improves our understanding of borderlands but also bordered identities.

## Notes

- 1 Counter enclaves are enclaves situated within enclaves. Bangladesh has 21 counter enclaves in India.
- 2 I am sincerely grateful to Shubhankar Chakraborty, then a journalist with the local *Uttar-banga Sangbad*, who made these visits possible with his time and intricate knowledge of the geography of this area.
- 3 Locally known as *Chhitmahal*. *Chhit* in Bengali literally means ‘a fragment of a cloth’, and *mahal* means ‘an area from where revenue is generated’. Hence, the term *chhit mahal* is used to identify the enclaves in local language, and the residents of the *chhit mahals* are known as *chhit mahalis*.
- 4 *Chaklas* were small fragments of land, a part of the larger *Parganas* into which the areas under Mughal control were divided.
- 5 For a more elaborate history of the origin of the Indo-Bangladesh enclaves, and the South Asian political engagement with the issue since 1947, refer to Whyte (2000).
- 6 Due to the sensitive nature of this project, all respondents have been given pseudonyms for the purposes of this chapter.
- 7 *Dinhata* is the nearest town, located in the district of Cooch Behar in the state of West Bengal in India.
- 8 *Panchayat Pradhan* is the elected head of a group of local villages.

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