



The Ancient and Traditional Educational Institution — Ghoshpur High School: Exploring 125 Years of History

Dr. Gobinda Prasad Kar¹ Debashri Giri² Swagata Das³ Arijit Bishai⁴

Associate Professor, H.O.D, Department of History (UG & PG), Bajkul Milani Mahavidyalaya¹

Assistant Professor, H.O.D, Department of Sanskrit (UG & PG), Bajkul Milani Mahavidyalaya²

Guest Lecturer, Department of History (UG & PG), Bajkul Milani Mahavidyalaya³

State Aided College Teacher (SACT-I), Department of English, Bajkul Milani Mahavidyalaya⁴

Abstract:

The emergence of new educated middle class demanded responsible government and autonomy, and simultaneously pressed for reforms in India's education system. Their spirit of social service gave birth to the consciousness of national education. They realized that national development required a system of national education. In this long nationalist movement, several educational institutions emerged as platforms for articulating national aspirations. The ancestral forefather of the Dey family of Ghoshpur, Shri Muchiram Dey, arrived in this village in 1723 from Calcutta (Bengali year 1130). At that time, the village was already known as Ghoshpur.

Keywords:

Education, Middle Class, People, Institution, Administration, Ghoshpur High School

Introduction:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, within the historical context of Indian nationalism, militant nationalist ideology, and Bengal's revolutionary provincial movement, many valiant revolutionaries of the motherland nurtured by a sense of spiritual inspiration risked their lives to fight against British colonial power. Eager to free the nation from foreign domination, they contributed to the rise of the national education movement. In this auspicious transitional period, national education consciousness and its first institutional foundations emerged in this sacred land of India. The rise of national education awareness was influenced by four major forces: cultural renaissance, economic distress, social reform, and the British Government's reluctance to transfer administrative responsibility to Indians. British colonial rule caused the decline of India's ancient village-centered socio-economic structure. The British invested large amounts of capital in India, resulting in the establishment of various industries, although their true intention was to exploit India's wealth. Through their imperialist education policy, they attempted to educate Indians in their own mould. The

Universities and the educational institutions were established, along with roads, railways, and communication systems. All these developments influenced Indian society in many ways and gave rise to a new middle class.

This educated middle class demanded responsible government and autonomy, and simultaneously pressed for reforms in India's education system. Their spirit of social service gave birth to the consciousness of national education. They realized that national development required a system of national education. In this long nationalist movement, several educational institutions emerged as platforms for articulating national aspirations. Ghoshpur High School is an ancient and historically renowned educational institution located under Panskura Police Station in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal. The glorious history of this school is rooted in two villages Ghoshpur and Haur. Ghoshpur was the birthplace of the institution, while Haur served as its field of development. Hence, to understand its complete history, it becomes essential to explore both villages.

Objectives of the Research:

1. To explore the ancient history of the Ghoshpur region through this research-based article.
2. To learn about the past history of Ghoshpur High School.
3. To evaluate how the establishment of Ghoshpur High School contributed to the expansion of higher education in that area.
4. To investigate the extent of socio-economic impact on the lives of the people of the Haur and Ghoshpur regions.

Origin of the Name of Ghoshpur:

In the Bengali Lexicon, the word "*Ghosh*" refers to fennel, a fragrant herb, or sweet basil. Phonetically, the word also implies gravity or resonance. Additionally, people bearing the surname Ghosh traditionally belonged to the *Gowala* (cowherd) community. A village where many Ghosh families resided could naturally come to be known as Ghoshpur. So, did fennel or some unique aromatic flower once grow here, prompting the name Ghoshpur? Or was the village once inhabited by a feudal lord, zamindar, or king with the surname Ghosh? Another possibility is that the area once abounded in grasslands, serving as grazing fields for cattle, and the people living here depended entirely on livestock rearing for their livelihood. According to *Shabdasantandhan-Shabdabhidhan*, a place where cattle make collective sounds is also described by the single term "*Ghosh*."¹ One or more of these reasons must have been active, which calls for a field-level investigation. Although no evidence has been found of any feudal lord or zamindar residing in this village, the neighboring village *Rajhati* was home to zamindars bearing the Ghosh surname. After the abolition of the zamindari system in 1952, this family migrated to Calcutta.

A notable member of the Dey family served as the former Pradhan of the Ghoshpur Gram Panchayat and also as the former Secretary of Ghoshpur High School, holding these roles for nearly 30 years. In *Ghoshpur Gatha*, authored by Brajakishore Dey, it is mentioned that the village may have been named Ghoshpur because it once fell under the zamindari of the Ghosh family of Calcutta. The same belief has been echoed by the village's senior gynecologist, Dr. Brajdulal Dey. Another senior resident, Shri Ajit Kumar Dey son of Rohininandan Dey, the former Headmaster of Amdan Khiroda Yogendra Smriti Vidyatan also supported this view. Thus, it seems most plausible that the influence of Ghosh zamindars once led to the renaming of this previously obscure village as Ghoshpur. Whatever the reason behind the change of name, it certainly occurred before Bengali year 1130 (English year 1723). This is because the ancestral forefather of the Dey family of Ghoshpur, Shri

Muchiram Dey, arrived in this village in 1723 (Bengali year 1130)². At that time, the village was already known as Ghoshpur.

Geographical Location:

The village is situated about half a kilometer north of the Panskura railway station on the South-Eastern Railway line and about 4 kilometers south of the Mumbai Road (National Highway). On the southern edge of the village flows the Medinipur Main Canal. During British rule, when road transport was underdeveloped, this canal was excavated from the Kansabati River at Mohanpur in Midnapore to provide an easier water route between Midnapore town and Kolkata. The canal joins the Rupnarayan River near Denan in Kolaghat. Apart from transporting passengers and goods by steamers and boats, the canal served as a source of irrigation for nearly 150,000 acres of agricultural land.

There was once a boat station here for travelers moving between Midnapore and Kolkata. The villagers on both banks used a boat rectangular in shape to cross the canal. Wooden posts were erected on both sides, and the boat was tied to these posts using a coconut-fiber rope. Initially, iron chains were used, but after an accident, they were replaced with coconut coir ropes. The person responsible for providing the rope was known as the “*Ghatoowal*.” Ghoshpur gained special recognition with the arrival of Sri Sri Lakshibara Deb. In 1885, the fourth-generation descendant of the Ghoshpur family brought this sacred idol from Midnapore and established it in the village³.

Materials and Method:

In the early twentieth century, this vast region had only a handful of primary schools and very few Middle English (M.E.) or Middle Bengali Schools. Students were taught from Class III to Class VI in these schools, while secondary schools accommodated Classes VII to X. In undivided Midnapore district, the number of such institutions was very small. Before the establishment of Ghoshpur M.E. School, institutions such as Panskura Bradley-Birt High School (1913), Balichak Bhajahari Institution (1928), Gopalnagar K.K. Institute (1905), Raghunathbari High School (1915), and Paramanandapur Jagannath Institution (1929) were the only educational centre's. Thus, the people of this area faced great obstacles in accessing education. There was no trace of a formal education system in Ghoshpur and its surrounding villages.

It was the noble members of the Dey family of Ghoshpur who deeply felt the need to establish a school in this region and took the lead in giving this idea a concrete form. History is shaped by remarkable individuals whose talent, service, intellect, and courage drive the passage of time and illuminate the future. The progressive humanistic wisdom, refined culture, and enlightened worldview of a few individuals often prove more valuable than material wealth. Such qualities were profoundly evident in the Dey family of Ghoshpur. The dialectical truth of history teaches us that separation leads to decline while unity fosters growth. In keeping with this eternal principle, the venerable elders of the Dey family late Nimai Chand Dey and his father Keshab Lal Dey donated sufficient land for the construction of the school building. Other benevolent contributors such as Radhagobinda Dey, Sripati Charan Dey, Adhar Chand Dey, Rajkrishna Dey, and several others extended financial support.

With their initiative, the M.E. School was established in 1901. Evidence of this is found in the inspection report of the S.D.I. of Tamluk dated 16th September 1940, which mentions that an older M.E. School at Ghoshpur had existed for about thirty years and received district grants. Further confirmation comes from another official report dated 2nd September 1944, issued by the District Inspector of Schools, Midnapore, stating that the school originally started in 1901 and was permanently recognized. To determine the founding year of the school, it is absolutely necessary to consult old newspapers, periodicals, and the reports recorded by school inspectors during their visits in the Visit Book. As evidence:

(1) Here is an excerpt from page 5, paragraph 3 of *Ghoshpur Gatha*, written by the late Braja Kishore Dey, a distinguished social worker and one of the prominent members of the Dey family.

The Dey family was not merely landlords. They were devoted to poverty eradication, elimination of illiteracy, education, and religious practices. During that time, there was no educational facility within ten miles of this region. Radha Gobinda, Sripati Charan, Adhar Chand, and Rajkrishna Dey constructed a building at their own expense and established a Middle English School in 1901.

(2) An excerpt from the Inspection Report of S. Ghosh, District Inspector of Schools, Midnapore, dated 02.01.1944:

Ghoshpur M.E. School – Date of visit: 02.09.1944

The School, which was originally started in 1901, was a permanently recognized M.E. School. Sd/- S. Ghosh

District Inspector of Schools, Midnapore⁴

Foundation Day and Location Identification:

In fact, no definitive documentary evidence has yet been found from which one can declare with certainty the exact foundation day of this M.E. School. Therefore, one has no option but to rely on logical inference. During British rule and the era of the landlords, the 1st of January was welcomed as the English New Year with grand celebrations and various ceremonies. On such an important day, it was not possible to invite any distinguished British official to preside over the foundation ceremony. At the same time, without having a notable British official inaugurate the school, the chances of securing approval were minimal. Hence, it may reasonably be assumed that the M.E. School was established on 02.01.1901. Even the Centenary Celebration Committee of the School (2001) had accepted 02.01.1901 as the foundation day⁵.

Events behind the Establishment of the School:

The zamindari system was abolished in 1952, and monarchy was legally dissolved in India in 1966. However, people have not forgotten the contributions of the ancient zamindars. Though a few landlords managed to retain their influence until the abolishment of the system in 1952, most families saw a decline in their prestige. From the 1880s onward, the forefathers of the De family had been living in Ghoshpur since 1723, beginning with the arrival of Muchiram Dey. With time, the family grew, and so did the number of branches. Disputes arose among the family members over the division of zamindari property. These disagreements were not confined within the households; seeking fair settlement, they approached the court. As the settlement process was prolonged and as the family members gradually realized the futility of conflict, a compromise was finally reached on 05-12-1900. At that time, traditional education had not yet penetrated rural areas.

After the settlement, the once-disputing members began to dream of establishing formal education in the village. Many members of the Dey family voluntarily came forward to realize this dream. Thus, there was no lack of enthusiasm or initiative among certain individuals to acquire suitable land and collect the necessary funds for constructing the school building. To give shape to their resolution, the senior member of the family, the late Nimaichand Dey, son of Keshablal Dey, donated appropriate land for constructing the school building. The land was located at Ghoshpur, J.L. No. 139, Plot No. R/S-110 L/R-118. Situated at the nerve centre of the village, it was ideal for a Middle English School. The following respected persons voluntarily came forward to bear the expenses of constructing the school building:

1. Radha Gobinda Dey, son of Nityananda Dey
2. Sripati Charan Dey, son of Nilkantha Dey
3. Adhar Chand Dey, son of Nimaichand Dey
4. Rajkrishna Dey, son of Kshetramohan Dey⁶

First Situation

Kolkata received the status of capital of British India in 1772. From that time onwards, the importance of Kolkata gradually increased. A cordial relationship began to develop between the merchants the English and the zamindars. They became interested in introducing English, the language of the rulers. On the other hand, for educated boys and girls, learning English became absolutely essential in order to obtain clerical posts or government positions in public or private institutions. Therefore, the practical-minded Dey Babus became eager to establish a Middle English School (commonly known as M.E.) in Ghoshpur village for imparting education to students at the secondary level.

At that time, for the first stage of secondary education, there were opportunities to obtain approval for two types of schools: (1) Middle English School (2) Middle Bengali School. In the first type, all subjects were taught in English, while in the second type, all subjects were taught through the Bengali language. Before 1901, within a radius of 20 km, there was not a single primary school let alone a secondary school other than the Pulshita Primary School (established in 1885). The rural population lived simple lives and had little interest in formal education. They believed it was enough to learn only basic account-keeping or letter-writing. Although there were *pathshalas*, the teachers were poorly or half-educated. Students learned only limited portions of Vidyasagar's First and Second Books and Dharapaat, all taught in Bengali.

A natural question arises: Was the school established for the general public or only for the children of the Dey family and a few privileged families? If the intention truly had been to spread education, efforts to establish a Middle Bengali School would have been seen. Two possible reasons may justify establishing a Middle English School: (1) To gain the favour of the rulers. (2) To offer English education to the children of the Dey families and other influential families. For example, two children from two aristocratic families of Amdan village studied here: (1) Binod Parai, son of Mahesh Parai (2) Atul Chandra Samanta, son of Shashibhusan Samanta. Although the M.E. School was established in 1901, the exact date of government recognition is unknown. However, from the Inspection Report of SDI of Schools of Tamluk dated 16/9/1940, we learn that the school existed since 1901 and had once enjoyed official approval excerpt:

“16th September 1940 paid a visit to the Ghoshpur unrecognized M.E. School today. There had formerly been an M.E. School at Ghoshpur on the other side of the canal which had existed for about 30 years and enjoyed grant from the district funds”.

Sd/-: U.P. Sen, S.D.I of Schools, Tamluk⁷.

Another report from 02.09.1944 by the District Inspector of Schools states: *“The school which was originally started in 1901 was a permanently recognized M.E. School.”* Though the school was established in 1901 and later received government approval, its recognition and grants were suspended between 01.01.1929 and 31.12.1938 when it remained closed. The school also changed locations several times⁸.

Second Situation:

Over time, the school building deteriorated and became unusable. Additionally, disputes arose among the descendants of Nimai Chandra Dey regarding the land. As a result, the school was relocated to the southern end of the village, on plot number 148 (old number 134). The land belonged to Radhagobinda Dey, son of Nityananda Dey. However, the date of relocation, construction costs, and financiers remain unknown. Even here, the school did not last long. For unknown reasons, it ceased functioning on 31.12.1928 and remained nonexistent for the next ten years. Its government recognition and grant were withdrawn. It would be more appropriate to say the school did not die but entered a coma, as after ten years it revived once again in the village of Haur⁹.

Third Situation:

Was the intense desire to establish a lasting legacy merely an inspiration for creation, or a necessity of the time? Which of these played the greater role in the establishment of the Ghoshpur Middle English School in Ghoshpur mouza? During the school's third phase, evaluating this question becomes a natural and necessary task.

Was it the effort of an individual, or of the entire village?

The founders did not make even the slightest attempt to immortalize any individual. What they wished for was to establish the Ghoshpur Middle English School for the purpose of enhancing the prestige of the village. Their noble intention was fulfilled with the establishment of the Middle English School in Ghoshpur mouza in 1901. The school succeeded in receiving government approval and grants. The significant contribution of the members of the Dey family, who were part of the zamindari, during the initial phase, cannot be denied. However, they cannot avoid responsibility for the subsequent developments either. There is a Bengali proverb: "*Agaroh, Bigroh, Nigroh*" (interest, conflict, deterioration). The truth of this proverb becomes clearly evident when examining the school's situation during its stay in Ghoshpur. The enthusiasm, energy, and devotion to work that were visible among the members at the time of the school's establishment in 1901 were these maintained and practiced in later years?

On the contrary, it can be said that the school management committees, in their strategic position, failed to do justice to their responsibilities and duties, or even to recognize their necessity. As a result of negligence, disregard, and indifference in the years following its establishment, the school could not survive long in its first location. The school management committee at that time was compelled to relocate it to the extreme southern end of the village, beside paddy fields. Although the school's first location was not ideally suited for developing an academic environment, it was situated at the center of Ghoshpur mouza and by the roadside. Therefore, students never faced obstacles regarding access. But the second location was at the edge of the village, with no proper communication facilities. Thus, this relocation can rightly be called the school's exile period.

Weak administration, a lack of qualified teachers, and a drastic decline in the number of students led the school towards a comatose state on 31.12.1928. With no teachers or students remaining, the school lingered on in a dilapidated condition for a few more years. Yet the founders' dream was not entirely lost. The school, bearing the name Ghoshpur from its origin, survived in a comatose state until 31.12.1938. However, from 1st January, 1929 to 31st December, 1938, the school remained closed due to various obstacles, causing temporary suspension of government recognition and grants. This period coincided with the "*High Tide of Mass Politics*" in revolutionary Midnapore. The district witnessed the unprecedented killing of three District Magistrates in three consecutive years by young student revolutionaries. As educational institutions often harboured politically

active youth, revoking school approval during this turbulent time was common. According to Nanigopal Adak (Once former student of Ghoshpur High School and now Retired Head Master),

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From 1959 to 1969, Sudhir Kumar Mallik served as Headmaster. The person who played the most crucial role in elevating the school's reputation was the Secretary of the Managing Committee, Shri Brajakishore Dey, who served for more than thirty years across two terms (1946–1969 and 1976–1983). Ghoshpur High School reached its pinnacle under the leadership of Brajakishore Dey, Hemchandra Adhikari, Atul Chandra Roy, Sudhir Kumar Mallik, and clerk Sudhir Khatua¹¹. Educational institutions shape enlightened, capable, and humane citizens scholars, scientists, economists, writers, philosophers, doctors, engineers, and skilled professionals. Swami Vivekananda believed that *"The end of all education is man-making,"* meaning the harmonious development of body, mind, and soul.

Conclusion:

The illustrious alumni of Ghoshpur High School have upheld and enhanced the school's dignity for generations. Even after 125 years, this historic institution continues to shine thanks especially to the noble efforts of Shri Nanigopal Adak in the post-independence period. With reverence to all education-lovers, we conclude these reflections an expression of our inquisitive mind and our heartfelt sentiments.

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