PEEPING AT A COLONY FROM A COLONY: Africa in Bengali’s Perception

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The British planters in Natal imported Hindu coolies from Bengal to cultivate their fields. They were preferred than ‘Hottentots’ and other tribes for their mildness.
Ansu Datta’s (2013) research explored a hitherto little researched area of transoceanic slave trade between Southern Bengal and the Cape in the Republic of South Africa. This migration took place between roughly the 1650s and about the middle of the nineteenth century until the slave trade was finally abolished. This book highlighted new social formations in the Cape society, especially among the Coloured in South Africa.
The two items form part of the Jeffcoat Collection and the note accompanying the cap reads: “Knitted by a slave of my grandmother’s and worn by me in 1838.”
Both Africa and Bengal were looked down upon by their colonial masters as stereotyped tropical lands of inferior people and unendurable climate.

Most early medical texts were based upon experience of Bengal.

Some of the British medical experts turned their eyes to Africa in search of a similar negativity.
Patrick Brantlinger asserts how British culture lent support to widespread belief in racial superiority, the need to transform "savagery" into "civilization," and the urgency of promoting emigration.
East and Central Africa attracted particular attention from the 1850s: driven by geographical curiosity, especially the search for the sources of the Nile, and by a quest for wealth.
Investigations of prehistory and anthropoid apes presumed that Africans, Australians, or other primitive peoples are the missing link between the apes and civilized or white people.

- Proximity between the Africans and the chimpanzee and gorilla was highlighted.
The myth of Dark Continent which originated in the Victorian England disseminated in the British Empire as a part of colonial ideology.


Jyotish Chandra Chakravorty tried to expose the cannibalistic nature of the Africans in *Rakkhuse Africa*.

Satyacharan Chakravorty - *Rakhaser Desh* (1926) (*The Land of Demons*) wrote, ‘Ever since the white men had come from Europe and started settling, they(Africans) started improving, but old habits die hard’
‘The Richtersveld mountain range is not like the Indian divinely souled Himalaya. Its soul is as barbaric and savage and has an uncontrollable lust for human flesh like the country’s primitive tribes- Masai, Zulu, Matabele etc’

Sir Henry “Harry” Hamilton Johnston. British explorer, botanist, linguist and colonial administrator, one of the key players in the “Scramble for Africa.”
In most of the Bengali science fictions myths about Africa created by the European powers coexisted with knowledge of science.
Congress leader Seth Govind Das intended to establish a historical truth, that before the white merchants came to Africa, Indian merchants from Kathiawar had already established their respective trade relations with African tribes.

The first American adventure film Trader Horn (1931), shot on location in Africa, did not acknowledge this.
SHRIKANT MOHTA & MAHENDRA SONI present
A SHREE VENKATESH FILMS PRODUCTION
A FILM BY KAMALESWAR MUKHERJEE
Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse, an earliest proponents of social liberalism.

Leonard Courtney led the work of the South African Conciliation Committee which brought the sufferings of the Boers to the attention of British people.
Bravery shown by the Boers became an object lesson for the Bengalis, ‘Where do we have that bravery, devotion, self dependence and love for freedom with which the Boers had attracted the sympathy and respect from the entire civilized world?...If we could exhibit any such useful strength like the Boers, the Government would not have kept us under such vigorous rules. It would have given us a bit more freedom by loosening our shackles.’ ‘The Boers and Indians’, 1902, Bharati.

SARALA the editor of Bharati, a niece of Rabindranath Tagore, herself took an active role in the formation of organizations to impart physical training.
Gandhi and his stretcher-bearer team during the Anglo-Boer War
During the Second Boer War the Bengalis followed the path of Herbert Spencer in criticising the military censorship and suppression of real facts by the British imperialists.
The Secretary of State for India, Sir George Hamilton warned Curzon, ‘If any considerable number of prisoners are sent to you, you will have to take special measures to prevent the Babu editors and Congress papers from having continual access to the prisoners. What with the Boer power of lying, and the native powers of exaggeration, we should have some frightful yarns, and nowadays, provided any statement is constantly repeated in print, a large proportion of the public accept it as truth’
A ZULU LEADER

A BENGALI BABU
‘East Africa is the legitimate colony of the surplus of that great Indian nation... I stand, therefore, today before you as an Indian speaker on Indian soil,—that your forefathers have dug,—cities that your forefathers have built in a land which your ancestors gave to the citizens of the country—citizens by the right of heredity, citizens by the right of tradition, citizens by the right of patriotic love which has been nurtured, fostered and developed by the sweat of the brow and the blood of the heart of the pioneers exiled from India, so that Indian interests may grow greater’
‘Such colour prejudice, from an Indian, who has himself suffered from the racial prejudice of the European, is to me revolting in the extreme. It is neither in accord with Indian sentiment, or with Indian National Honour and Civilization...’

Rabindranath Tagore, 1928, ‘Indian Abroad’ Modern Review.
Indian Cyclist all alone
Round the World

RAM NATH BISWAS
অঙ্ককারের আফ্রিকা

রামনাথ বিশাল

ভূমণ্ডল পৃথিবীর ১৪৫০ সালের সহে বিশালের বিতর্কিত

[Image of a book cover with a savannah scene and a young boy smiling]