2.0 INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT:

An attempt has been made here to trace the origin of the settlements of the study area (Map 2.1). However, the data to make the picture complete are extremely meagre. No systematic study has yet been made in this respect. Bhattacharya\(^1\) has studied the settlement history of the Murshidabad district, Mukhopadhyay\(^2\) of Bangaon subdivision, archaeological sites of the Nadia district by Ray\(^3\), Murshidabad district by Bamdopadhyay and Bandopadhyay. Remell's Bengal Atlas (1783) shows villages and important places of that time. Habib's\(^4\) Atlas of Mughal India is a recent addition on the political and economic aspects of the region. Yet no total picture on the evolution of the settlements has emerged. Moreover, it is even more difficult to reconstruct the systematic history of a settlement.

The most important source materials for studying the evolution of settlements are physical

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Map 2.1 Settlements of different periods.
landscape, ancient sites and archaeological relics, place names, site of religious centres such as temple, mosques, daraga, habitation of the tribal people, traveller's accounts, local literature including local newspapers, revenue survey maps, zamindary records and the cadastral maps of the Government of West Bengal and topographical maps of the Survey of India. Wherever possible, the author has applied her common sense on the derivation of a village name for identification of the origin of the settlement. In some instances, case studies on the origin of the village has been corroborated from field work. Yet there are certain limitations in using all the above mentioned sources in identifying the age of a settlement. Often there are anomalies in local literatures. Similarly, it becomes difficult to trace the actual age of a settlement from archaeological remains and to correlate the settlement history of the region. In the following lines, the probable period of the origin of some of the settlements, have been discussed.

2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

2.1.1 Ancient settlements - The origin and growth of the settlements of the study area, in true sense, are linked

5. For instance, in the annual reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, the ages of Debagram relics (Ranaghat P.S.), popularly known as Deganer Dhibi, and Charchala temple of Palpara (Chakdaha P.S.) have been over estimated.
with its physical features and drainages. The study reveals that this area became firm and dry enough to be habitable only 5000-7000 years back. The deltaic character of the region, such as swamps and marshes provided ample opportunities for the livelihood of these people who used to follow the profession. The inhabitants were Dhibar (fisherman), Bagdi, and Nishad (hunter), but it was definitely inhospitable for human settlements, herein arianisation. Moreover, the frequency of floods affected influx of human beings in this area even during the 6th century A.D. At that time the Nabaddwip kingdom was divided into 12 main islands. Our study area consisted of 5 islands, such as (i) Nabaddwip in the north, (ii) Madhyadwip in the centre, (iii) Chakradwip south of (i), (iv) Kushdwip or Kushdaha east of (iii) and (v) Andhradwip, north of

7. The origin of the name Bagri is worth mentioning in this connection. For details, see chapter I.
9. This includes the eastern part of Murshidabad district (study area) and north western part of the Nadia district (Mitra, S., op. cit., p. 141).
10. For details of these islands, see Mitra, S., op. cit., pp. 141-43 and Chakraborty, N., Nabaddwip Parikrama (Bengali), Part I, ed. by Basu, N. N., Sahitya Parishad Mandir, Cal., pp. 73-77.
11. According to Narahari Chakraborty, Nabaddwip was named after nine (nay in Bengali) and islands (dwip). Though there are nine islands, the village was one. Others think that it refers to a new (naba) island (dwip). The latter theory is not accepted by Mallick, K.N., 1387 B.S. (1910 A.D.), Nadia Kahini (Bengali), Sahitya Sabha, Cal., p. 5.
(iv) but east of (ii). It may be presumed that an island is named when it becomes fit for cultivation and habitation, but due to lack of reliable data, nothing definitely can be told as to the habitation of this period.

Almost all the other settlements lay close to river banks, because rivers could supply water for domestic use as well as for irrigation and could be used for transport. In fact, growth and decay of settlements in the post-railway era were to a large extent due to the decay of the rivers. The course of civilisation followed the drainage courses, particularly along the Bhagirathi and the Padma.


13. Regarding water transport of Bengal, Dow, A., (1872) remarked "The easy communication by water from place to place facilitated a mercantile intercourse among the inhabitants. Every village has its canal, every Parganah (Fargana), its river .........". According to Rennell (1778), they form a "complete and easy inland navigation" and this gives constant employment to 30,000 boatmen (quoted from Dutta, K.K., 1964: Alivardi and His Times, The World Press, Cal., p. 144).

14. This tract has witnessed cultural contacts and mixtures of various races. Non-Aryans and Aryans in the deltaic tract in the early historic period; the Hindus and Muslims along the river Bhagirathi in the Sena period and the Bengalees and European traders like Dutch, the Portuguese, the Armenian, the French and the British along the river Bhagirathi (Cossimbazar island) in the Mughal Period.
2.1.2 Hindu period - From the discoveries of many Buddhist idols, architectures, it may be supposed that the region came under the influence of Buddhism under the Pala Period (500-1095 A.D.). The only important habitation of this period is Anulia (J.L.No. 153) of Ranaghat P.S. Anulia is a corruption of the Buddhist word Anal, which probably means Agni, i.e., fire. A copper plate of Lakshmanasena (1179-1207 A.D.), a Vishnu idol (Plate 8) and a vault of Muslim period (Plate 9) have also been unearthed from this village which also point out its antiquity. Local discoveries of a Buddhist idol Ugratara, temple of goddess Chamunda, the very name of the idol Chamta in the village Deypara (Krishnagar P.S.), a dilapidated Buddhist idol discovered from a dighi (water tank) in the village Saligram (J.L.No. 99, Nakasipara P.S.) and several high mounds in the village Pansila (J.L.No. 25, Nabadwip P.S.) suggest that possibly they were once foci of Buddhist culture. It may further be

15. No Stupas, Viharas of the Pala Period have been discovered from this region. Some think that the village Subarnabihar (Krishnagar P.S.) was associated with the Buddhist Vihara built during the Pala period.


17. According to the Buddhist Shastra, i.e., religious book, another name of the goddess Ugratara is Chamunda. It is supposed that Chamta is a corruption of Chamunda (Ray, M., op. cit., p. 40).
assumed that these settlements developed around religious centres.

But Buddhism disappeared with the coming of Sena kings, because they were followers of Brahminism. The important settlement of this dynasty is Nabadwip. It was a great centre of study under the Senas. This was considered to be a holy spot on the bank of the Ganga (Bhagirathi). The town of Nabadwip is said to have been founded by Lakshmanasena, son of Vallalasena (1158-1179 A.D.), who used to visit this locality. This may also be surmised from the presence of Vallaladhipi (Plate 10) and Vallaladikhi at Bamanpukur village close to Nabadwip (J.L.No. 9). During Sena period, glory of Nabadwip reached its zenith. With the coming of the Sena kings and their officers, Nabadwip grew up as a centre of traders and servants who ministered to the needs of a rich and populous court. The existence of another settlement of the Sena period may be noted from the archaeological

18. Regarding the archaeological importance of this mound Hunter remarks, "on the other side of the river, there is a large mound still called after Ballal Sen. It was recently dug by one Molla Sahib who discovered some Barkoshes or wooden trays and a box containing remnants of shawls and milken dresses and also some small silver coins." (Hunter, W.W., 1877, op. cit., p. 142.)

19. Some interesting characteristics of this settlement may be had from Ray, who mentioned that Nabadwip consisted almost entirely of thatched bamboo houses, the characteristic feature of Bengal architecture. Every rich or pious person wished to live as close to the holy river as possible and therefore these houses formed a long sprawling line for some six miles (10km) along the bank of the Ganga" (Ray, B., Census 1961, op. cit., p. 20).

remains, i.e., Debagram (J.L.No. 60) in Kaliganj P.S.
The high mounds and relics indicate that it was possibly a cantonment under the Sena kings. Stones scattered in some places are thought to be the relics of a temple. The only important settlement connected with Adisur, a Hindu King, is village Ichhapur (J.L.No. 36, Gaighata P.S.), adjacent to Gobardanga town. It was settled by Kakatya, son of Daksha, who was brought by Adisura, in about 1000 saaka era, i.e., A.D. 1077-78 A.D. Kakatya migrated from Horho village and established this settlement.

2.1.3 Settlements in the Sultanate Period (1200-1526 A.D.)

This period commenced after the fall of the royal seat of Lakshmanasena in Nadia and the victory of Md. Bakhtyar Khilji in 1200 A.D. From available accounts, it is presumed that the establishment of Pathan rule had no permanent effect on the growth of settlements in the area. Rather this was the period of Bhakti movement, propounded by Sri Chaitanya (1486-1533 A.D.), the Vaishnavite savant of the medieval days, who was born in Nabadwip. Since then, the fame of Nabadwip as birth place of Sri Chaitanya remains unabated. Many other settlements like Santipur, Phulia (J.L.No. 54, Santipur P.S.),

In the village Chakundi, Srinivasa Acharya, a staunch follower of Sri Chaitanya was born. The original village has been diluviated when the eastern bank of the river was preferred for settlement. Sri Chaitanya visited this village. In a temple of the village there remain two deities of Gour and Netai, installed by Gangadhar Bhattacharya, father of Srinivasa Acharya.

Three kilometres west of Chakdaha railway station contains the Sripat of the famous Vaishnava, Jagadish Pandit.

About one kilometre north-west of Chakdaha railway station contains the Sripat and altar of Mahesh Pandit, one of the twelve Gopals of the Vaishnava sect and brother of Jagadish Pandit.

Sripad Madhabendrapuri, guru of Sri Chaitanya once used to reside here. Sri Advaitacharya also stayed in his house for sometime.

Sri Chaitanya came in this village as a guest in the house of Sri Sibananda Sen, one of his close disciples. While Sri Chaitanya was staying at Nilachala (Puri), his disciples of Bengal used to meet him every year under Sibananda's leadership and finance.

In the village Kulia, a fair called Aparadh Bhanjan mela is held on the 11th day of Paush (December). It is said that Sri Chaitanya who was refused hospitality in the neighbouring village of Kanchrapara, came here and was well received by Debananda. The saint was so much pleased with the treatment which he received that he sanctified the place and declared that all who worshipped there on that day (11th Paush) would be absolved of all sins (Majumdar, D., 1978, West Bengal, Nadia, Government of West Bengal, Cal., p. 442).
incidents in the life of Sri Chaitanya and his associates. Some of these important settlements are discussed below.

Santipur was a well-known place even 800 years ago. It is on record that for about 600 years Santipur was populous and thriving town, when Narasimha Nadial\footnote{Narasimha Nadial was a minister of Raja Ganesh Danujamardanadeva who became independent king of Gauda in about 1409 A.D.}, grandfather of Advaitacharya (b. 1434 A.D.), came to Santipur\footnote{The date of his arrival here is placed sometimes before 1291 Saka or A.D. 1369 when there arose a violent dispute among the Kulina (Majumdar, D., op. cit., p. 449).} and settled there. Santipur earned its fame as the home of Advaitacharya, the greatest Vaishnava savant and close associate of Sri Chaitanya. In the village Phulia Sri Narasimha Ojha, the great-grandfather of kabī (poet) Kirttibas, the composer of Ramayana in Bengali, had come from East Bengal and settled here\footnote{According to Ramayana, composed by kabī, it is known that Narasimha came in this village in 1310 A.D. (approximate), when there arose a revolution in East Bengal.}. Phulia rose to the pinnacle of glory as the birth place of the kabī. It\footnote{As the birth place of kabī, the village became so famous that the surrounding mauzas such as Nabla, Belgoria and Malipota were also known as Phulia (Sen, S., and J. Sen, 1978 : Phulia - A Study in Settlement Geography, Landscape Systems, Cal., Vol. I, No. 1 & 2, p. 2). About this time, famous Phulia mel, a social relation among the rarhi class of Brahmins, was started and it spread far and near.} had long been a great centre for learning.
Sri Advaitacharya used to come here for study to his guru (teacher) Santamuni (Santacharya) who resided at Babla (Santipur,P.S.). Phulia was visited by Sri Chaitanya before his departure to Puri. As the meditation ground of Yavana Haridas (b.1540 A.D.), Phulia is also popularly known as Haridaser Pat. Before his arrival at Phulia, Haridas stayed for sometimes in a place near Bangaon. When Haridas was staying there, many people from far and wide paid their homage to him and the place was named Haridaspur (J.L.No. 108) of Bangaon P.S. Village Bargachhi is one of the pata of the Vaishnavas. Sri Chaitanya visited this village. Near this pat are the remains of a garh (fort) and the palace of Raja Harihorh, a local chieftain mentioned in Bharatcharanda's Annadamangal. The lines run thus:

Dhanya Dhanya Pargana Baguan Nam, Ganginier Burbakule Andulia Gram, Tahar Paschim Pare Bargachhi Gram Jahe Annadar Das Harihorh Nam 33 which mean that glory is the pargana Bagwan 34. Village Andulia (J.L.No. 3, Chapra P.S.) is located on the eastern bank of the Gangini, i.e., Jalangi river and on its western bank is Bargachhi village where lives Harihorh, a devotee


34. Bagwan was the residence of Bhabananda Majumdar, founder of the Nadia Raj. Anulia already mentioned, was the residence of Ramchandra Samaddar, father of Bhabananda.
of the goddess Annada. We came across only one Muslim settlement in this period, Chunakhali (J.L.No. 24, Murshidabad P.S.). It contains two ruined mosques of 15th century and a mausoleum containing the tomb (dated 1490) of Fakir Mansab Aulia, a great religious mendicant who came from Persia. As a principal place of worship, the mosques came to be one of the nuclei of the Muslim settlements.

2.1.4 Settlements in the Mughal period - 1526-1757 A.D.:

After the downfall of the Sultanates of Bengal, a state of anarchy prevailed in the country and this state of anarchy continued till the beginning of the reign of emperor Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.). Akbar's tolerant policy stimulated the establishment of new settlements. During the short rule of Humayun (1530-39 A.D., 1555-56 A.D.), growth of only one settlement, viz. Bairroampur (J.L.No. 78, Bangaon P.S.), can be identified. This village was named after Bairro Khan, a general of emperor Humayun and guardian of Akbar. Sureswar Palit, the founder of this settlement was honoured by the title 'Roy' and was appointed a jagirdar of a large

35. Legend says that Devi Annada abandoned the residence of Harihorh, herein means decline of fortune and took refuge with Ramchandra. Iswar Patni, the famous boatman of Annadamangal made the devi cross Gangni from west to east (Ray, Bharatchandra, op. cit., pp 155-59).

tract by Humayum and Bairam Khan helped Sureswar in this respect.

The existence of a number of settlements in the first half of the 16th century have been mentioned in the Chandi (circa A.D. 1544) composed by Mukundaram Chakraborty where he narrated the course of the Ganga (Bhagirathi) and the villages located on its left bank: Matari (J.L.No. 89, Kaliganj P.S.) and Ula or Birnagar (J.L.No. 19, Ranaghat P.S.). Chakraborty mentioned an incident connected with Ula, i.e., the story of Srimanta Sadagar's voyage to Ceylon in search of his father when the merchant prince Srimanta anchored his fleet beside Ula and on a Vaishakh full moon day, worshipped the Goddess Ulaichandi, the presiding deity of the place.

37. Chakraborty, Mukundaram; Kabikankan Chandi (Bengali), ed. by Dutta, Bijitkumar, 1370 B.S. (1966 A.D.), Basumati Sahitya Mandir, Cal., p. 156.

38. According to one theory, the name Ula is derived from a Persian word Aul or wiseman. According to another view, the ulu grasses which grew thick on the char land on which the settlement originally sprang up gave the place its name. This finds support from the fact that the river Bhagirathi once flowed past this settlement: the bed of a deep and broad river which has now shifted its course is still found in the marshes known as Dakater khal and Baromashi bhill (Majumdar, D., op. cit., p. 45). Ula was also a mahal under Sarkar Sulaimanabad of Todar Mall's division.

39. The tradition is that as Srimanta was sailing up to the place, a terrific storm came on. In response to divine inspiration, he called upon Ulaichandi, one of the wives of god Siva to help him. She answered his prayer and protected his fleet, whereupon he instituted a special worship of her in the place, which has been carried on to the present day (Ray, B., Census 1961, Nadia, op. cit., p. 89).
Raja Todar Mall, revenue minister of Akbar divided Bengal for fiscal purposes into *sarkars*, *parganas* and *mahals* in 1580. Though it is not definitely known, it may be supposed that such a systematic division of the region resulted in the establishment of numerous administrative units on hierarchical principles which later aided in the development of settlements. On the basis of this division, archaeological findings and local environment, it may be presumed that Palpara (Chakdaha P.S.) is of about 500 years old. The old name of Kazipara (Palpara) is Paunjour, the name of a *pargana* of Todar Mall. Its neighbouring villages, such as Jasra, Kanthalpuli already mentioned, are of 500 years old.

During the reign of Akbar, chieftains of Bengal revolted against him. Akbar, with the help of his general Man Singh, suppressed them. There are many settlements in the study area which are connected with the revolt.

There is ground to believe in this. According to this system, the province was divided into *sarkars* or divisions and such divisions into a number of *parganas* or districts, which were the working administrative units. A district was in charge of a military commander and of revenue collector (Dundar, G., 1936: *A History of India from the earliest times to the present day*, Ivor Nicholson & Watson Limited, London, p. 199). Even in the revenue division of a Pre-Mughal days, it is found that the term *thana* again refers to a division of the country for frontiers, where settlements of Paiks, or Bengali Militia existed (Blockmann, H., *Geographical and Historical Notes on the Burdwan and Presidency Divisions of Lower Bengal*), quoted from Hunter, W.W., 1875: *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. I, 24 *Parganas & Sundarbans*, Trubner & Co., London, p. 356).
during this period. It is known that Akbar constructed a cantonment at Sutragarh in Santipur where 1,300 Pathan and 900 Rajput soldiers were posted. At the time, when Pratapaditya, one of the Baro-Bhuniyas of Bengal, threw off the Mughal yoke at Mohammadpur in Jessore, Raja Mansingh is said to have passed through the south of the Nadia district. Hatikanda, a mabul under sarkar Satgaon and a village (J.L.No. 49) in the Haringhata P.S., contains a banyan tree under which Mansingh is said to have tethered his elephants and from that tradition the village derived its name. Traces of a road exist in Haringhata P.S. which is said to have been constructed for the passage of Mansingh's army. It is believed that at Chakdaha, on his way to Jessore, Mansingh's army was weather-bound for some days. Stavornius (1785) mentioned Chakdaha as the centre of a great weekly market or bazar. During his campaign, a group of Chauhan Rajput soldiers, accompanied him. Some of these Rajput soldiers were reluctant to return to Delhi and they were permitted to settle at Mithipur (J.L.No. 15) in the Raghunathganj P.S.

41. Majumdar, D., op. cit., p. 437.
42. Quoted from Ray, B., Census 1961, Nadia, op. cit., p. 91.
At the time of this revolt, some chieftains and zamindars took part in Akbar's side while others with Pratapaditya. The settlements established or related to their activities are mentioned below. Bhabananda Majumdar, a local zamindar of Bagwan pargana (now in Bangladesh) and founder of the Nadia Raj family, helped Akbar. As a gift, he was rewarded the grant of the zamindari of 14 parganas. Then in 1606, he shifted his residence from Ballavpur in Bagwan pargana to Deuli near Matiari (J.L. No. 52) in Krishnaganj P.S. Kasinath Roy, a Kavastha chieftain, was honoured with the title of Samar Singha by emperor Akbar as a mark of respect to his bravery in putting down the Sultanates of Bengal. Raja Todar Mall, on behalf of Akbar, declared the conquest of Bengal from Chaturbestita Durga, later renamed Chauberia (J.L. No. 135, Bangaon P.S.), a settlement established by Kasinath Roy. From available accounts, the existence of a settlement named Sukpukuria (J.L No. 62, Bangaon P.S.) comes to our notice. The settlement, many years after its origin, was named Sukpukuria because the prince became very happy (sukh in Bengali) after the birth of his two sons.

44. Dutta, R.C., 1960: Banga Bijeta (Bengali) in Ramesh Rachanabali, ed. by Jogesh Bagal, Sahitya Samsad, Cal., pp. 6-7, 13, 73.
45. The river Jamuna encircled the durga (fort) on four sides (chatur, four in Bengali) and acted as ditch.
Pukuria refers to association of the settlement with nukur (tank). Kalicharan (b. 1546 A.D.), son of the prince and the naval general of Pratapaditya, helped the latter against Akbar. Pratappur (Gaighata P.S.) adjacent to Ichhapur as earlier mentioned, was named after Pratapaditya. The latter advanced from Jessore to give Raghab Siddhanta Bagish a sound lesson when Mr. Bagish refused to pay him land revenue. Pratapaditya was pleased with the yoga power of Raghab and Pratappur bears the testimony of this incident.

A settlement contemporary to Pratapaditya is Charghat (J.L.No. 29, Swarupnagar P.S.) near Gobardanga. There is a dargah in memory of Thakurbora, a converted fakir. According to Tieffenthaler, Maxudabad (Murshidabad) was founded by Akbar and this seems to be corroborated by the fact that there is a place to the east of the town called Akbarpur (J.L.No. 73, Murshidabad P.S.). From the first half of the 17th century, it began to acquire the reputation for the manufacture of silk fabrics and Tavernier, who visited it in 1666 and called it Madesoubazarki, says that it

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47. Ibid, p. 131.
48. His Hindu name was Kamdeb Roy who was defeated by Sultan Hussain Shah (Mitra, op. cit., p. 436).
was a large place and the residence of the diwan (receiver general) of the nawab Saista Khan.

According to Ain-i-Akbari, Bhagwangola, because of its situation on the bank of the river Padma, began to acquire the reputation of an important river port after the conquest of Bengal by Akbar. In the 18th century this river port became so important as the source of city's supplies, that Alivardi Khan, during the wars with the Marathas, was forced to keep a garrison in it "to preserve the communication for supplies open between the Ganges and the city". The shift of the river Padma northward was felt on the decaying importance of this place. In spite of this, it was a fine place in the early 19th century.

During the reign of Jahangir (1605-1627 A.D.), villages Jangipur and Debagram were founded. "Jangipur

53. A century ago the main stream of the Padma receded from the village and in its place sprang up the present village which in contradiction was called New Bhagwangola or Alatoli (Hunter, W.W., 1876, Vol. IX, Murshidabad and Padma, Trubner & Co., London, p. 84).
54. Bishop Heber who visited the place in 1824 left the following account of the place: I found the place very interesting and even beautiful; a thorough Hindu village with either Europeans or Muslims. The small neat mat-houses are scattered over a large green common, fenced off from the main river by high grassy mound" (Heber, R., 1828, Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, Vol. I, 2nd edn., John Murray, London, p. 136).
or Jahangirpur is said to derive its name from having been founded by the Mughal emperor Jahangir. It was best known as silk trading centre in the 18th century.

In the village Debagram (J.L.No. 105, Ranaghat P.S.), there is a large mound, popularly known as Deganer Dhibi. This mound is said to cover the ruins of an ancient fort, supposed to be the seat of a kumbhakar chieftain, called Devpal or Depal. According to local tradition, Raja Devpal was one of the Bengal chieftains who raised their standard of revolt against Delhi during the reign of emperor Jahangir. He is said to have met with a tragic end when his territory came under Raghab Roy.

Murshidabad rose to the pinnacle of glory during the reign of emperor Shah Jahan (1627-58 A.D.). The principal agricultural commodities of this period were rice and mulberry (silk). So cheap and lucrative were the business of silk that it inducted the foreign traders to settle at Murshidabad city and its surroundings. The Dutch, Portuguese, French and English traders were permitted to establish several kuthis or trade houses for

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55. Hunter, W.W., 1876, op. cit., p. 82.
56. The silk filatures here were erected as early as 1773. In 1802, Lord Valentia described Jangipur as the "greatest silk station of the East India Company with 600 furnaces and giving employment to 3000 persons", (quoted from Hunter, W.W., op. cit., p. 82).
57. He is mentioned as the ruler of Degan in Bharat Chandra's Annadamangal.
mercantile intercourse. A number of notable marts, such as Beliaghata, Maksusabad (Murshidabad), Cossimbazar (Kasimbazar), Kalikapur, Saidabad, Amaniganj, and Faras-danga came into being along the river Bhagirathi. This is also corroborated from Van-Den-Broucke's (1660) map which mentions Muxudabath (Murshidabad), cossimbazar, Saidabath (Saidabad) and Baraheer Beldanga as prosperous river side settlements.

In the Nadia district, five villages came into existence during the said period. They are Krishnanagar, Srinagar (J.L.No. 183, Chakdaha P.S.), Dignagar (J.L.No. 83, Krishnagar P.S.), Bhandarkhola (J.L.No. 143) and Chhaygharia (J.L.No. 115) in the Bangaon P.S. Raja Raghob Roy (1632-83 A.D.) shifted his royal court from Matiari to the present town of Krishnanagar, then a small village known as Reui, inhabited by the Goala caste. The site was almost in the central position of his territory and Raghob selected it for companionship of the pahdits of Nabadwip, Santipur, Kamalpur (J.L. No. 15, Chakdaha P.S.), Bilwapuskarani or Belpukur (J.L.No. 10, Krishnagar P.S.), Dharmadaha (J.L.No. 103), Bilwagram (J.L.No. 52) and Bahirgachhi (J.L.No. 104) in

59. Between the 17th and 20th centuries, renowned Brahmin families of Santipur had produced a few hundred scholars and gurus. We get the name of about 60 pahdits with scholars titles in nyaya and smriti in Belpukur in this period. The list of the more famous ones of scholars in Kamalpur would run into a few pages (Majumdar,D., op. cit., pp.343-44).
Nakasipara P.S., Aismali (J.L.No. 94) of Ranaghat P.S. for spiritual discussion. These seats of study were sustained by the Nadia Raj and landed aristocracy. Except Nabasipur and Santipur, the existence of other education centres is known from about the middle of the 17th century. In about 1640 A.D., Raja Raghab was struck by the scenic beauty of Mardana village (Chakdaha P.S.) on the bank of the river Murali. He built a royal palace and temples there. The village was renamed Srinagar. The members of the Nadia Raj family, from Raghab to Krishnachandra (1710-82 A.D.) used to live here off and on. The village was later on deserted and became full of jungles. At about the same time, another village named Bhanderkholo was established. It was so named because it contained the bhandar, herein food store of the Nadia Raj. After the shift of the capital from Matiari to Reui, Raghab Roy constructed a link road between Krishnanagar and Santipur and excavated a large tank (663m X 191m) to supply drinking water to his subjects at a cost of rupees 20,000. The village was named after the said dighi, i.e., Dirghikanagar and presently Dignagar. To the east of the dighi, he constructed a beautiful building and two temples. At

60. The name seems to be appropriate yet to-day, because plenty of crops are grown in the bil Lakshmi.
that time, Gopalnagar, a village (J.L.No. 74 of Bangaon P.S.) on the bank of the Ichhamati, was a flourishing market. Tehatta (J.L.No. 101, Tehatta P.S.) was a settlement contemporary to Raja Raghab Roy. This village on the bank of the Jalangi grew as a market centre.

Village Chhaygharia was established by two sons of Ramballav Mukhopadhyay. The latter helped Jahangir in putting down khurram rebellion and was awarded by the grant of Joypur and Mulghar parganas. Village was named Chhaygharia because Ramballav had six (chhay) sons. At the invitation of the zamindars, people belonging to different castes, except the Brahmins, settled here, because the zamindars were relatives of Ramchandra Khan, a converted Muslim and close associate of Sultan Hussain Shah.

There are a number of villages near Santipur which contain objects of historical interest. Baganchra (J.L.No. 12) is named after Bag-Devi, the goddess of learning, whose image was installed here by an ascetic named Raghunandan Bandopadhyay. Chand Rai, mentioned in Bharatchandra's Annadamangal, and a relation of the Rajas of Nadia, was a resident of Baganchra where in 1665 A.D. he erected a temple with its tall spire "kissing

61. Both Ramchandra Khan and his daughter-in-law Ramballav Mukhopadhyay were jagirdars under Hussain Shah (1493-1519 A.D.), a ruler of Bengal (Mukhopadhyay, N. C., op. cit., p. 36).
the full moon" in which a lingam of Siva was installed. Chand Rai is said to have been the diwan of Raja Rudra Roy (1683-1694 A.D.) at whose behest he set up the neighbouring village of Brahmaasasan62 (J.L.No. 13) by granting brahmostar land (land granted to Brahmin) for residence and study of 108 families of Brahmins. William Hedge, an agent of the East India Company and governor of their affairs in the Bay of Bengal, wrote in 1683 in his diary63 that while he was travelling to Kasimbazar by boat, he had to get down at Moula (Mahula, J.L.No. 3, Beldanga P.S.) because the river Bhagirathi above that place was full of shoals.

In the last decade of 17th century, another village e.g., Ghoshpara (J.L.No. 63, Kalyani P.S.), the seat of Kartabhaia sect, came to prominence. This village is connected with Srimad Aulchand (1694-1769 A.D.), preceptor of the sect, his disciple Ramsaran Pal and his wife, known as Satima.

In Nadia district, two important persons were

62. Brahma in Bengali refers to Brahmin caste and sasan, administration, hence the word stands for able administration.

63. Quoted from Mukharji, B.B., p. 76.
Maharaja Krishnachandra (1710-82 A.D.) of Nadia rai and Mr. Krishnachandra Palchaudhury (1749-1809 A.D.) - popularly known as Krishnapanti, a great philanthropist.

Older settlements in Ranaghat P.S., which were connected with the Maharaja's life, were Murugachha (J.L.No. 102) of Nakasipara P.S., Ranaghat, Aranghata (J.L.No. 49) and Gangnapur (J.L.No. 175), Baidyapur (J.L.No. 165), Kayetpara (J.L.No. 146) with Palchaudhuri's life. From the last quarter of the 18th century, Swarupganj of Nabadwip P.S. became an important trade centre on the bank of the Bhagirathi. It was named after Mr. Swarup Sarkar Chaudhuri, nephew of Krishnapanti.

During the first decade of the 18th century, district Murshidabad witnessed the birth of new settlements. In 1700, Murshid Quli Khan, the diwan of Bengal, made it (Murshidabad) the headquarters of his dewani in place of Dacca, because of its more convenient situation than Dacca. Here he shifted his office with the entire dewani staff and the agents of zamindars. The banks of the Bhagirathi witnessed a ribbon band growth of settle-

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64. The original name of the village was Bromhadanga. Ranaghat was named after a ghanti (out-post) of dacoit Rana. He worshipped goddess Kali, whose fame spread far and near when the place was renamed Ranaghat in place of Bromhadanga. It was turned into an urban centre by Krishnachandra Palchaudhuri in the early 19th century (Chaki, N.C., 1976: Nadia Parichiti in Bengali, Messers N.N. Ghosh, Ranaghat, Nadia, pp. 15-16, 26-27).
ments that were urban in character. Thus Dahapara, Bhattamati, Farrabagh (garden of light) on the western bank and Naginabagh (garden of precious jewels), Ayesbagh (garden of pleasure), Nishatbagh (garden of intoxicating pleasure) and Chunakhali on the eastern bank of the river Bhagirathi became the residential sites with beautiful gardens of the nawabs, zemindars and courtiers of the Murshidabad darbar i.e., court of the Murshidabad nawabs. Near Chunakhali is Hatinnagar (J.L.No. 111, Berhampur P.S.) where the nawabs seem to have kept their elephants.

Beldanga had its origin in the early 18th century with the Hazra's Hazarduari as a nucleus. This big building was built by the Brahmin Zemindars (Hazra). The very existence of the old sites for silk industry suggests that the silk trade brought prosperity to the settlement. The old name of the settlement...

65. This finds support in a remark of Lord Clive, who after the battle of Plassey (1757), wrote: "The city of Murshidabad is extensive, populous and rich as the city of London..." (Quoted from O'Malley, L.S.S., 1914, Bengal District Gazetteers, Murshidabad, Ben. Sec. Hk. Depot., Cal., p. 207). At that time, the largest dimensions of the city proper are said to have been 8 kilometres along the Bhagirathi in length and 4 kilometres in breadth on each bank of the river, while the circumference of its extensive suburbs has been put as high as 48 kilometres.


67. Bilwadanga and Beldanga are also some of the other names of this settlement, Ibid, p. 167.
ment is Indranagar, after the name of Indrachandra Seth, son of Jagat Seth of Murshidabad. Some influential Muslims were also attracted by the silk trade and they settled at Debkunda (J.L.No. 49, Beldanga P.S.) in the northern outskirt of the settlement. Both Hindu and Muslim zamindars constructed buildings which added beauty to this townscape. Rennell's map (1781) clearly mentions Beldanga as a large market place. A number of Jain colonies such as Mohimapur, the residence of the famous banker Jagat Seth, Mahajantoli (Kasimbazar) and Jiaganj were developed in the first half of the 18th century. The old name of Jiaganj was Gambhila, but this name was changed when a pious Jain lady, Jia by name, came to settle here from Vindyachal, U.P. Gambhila was an important centre of the Vaishnava. Azimganj, formerly a suburb of Murshidabad, was perhaps so called after Prince Azim-us-Shan, grandson of Aurangzib. Jiaganj-Azimganj attracted a large number of Jain merchants, who are said to have migrated here from Bikaner in Rajasthan in search of fortune. Nihalia house, north of the present Jiaganj market, became the nucleus of the Rajput and other Hindu settlement.

Village Giria came into prominence as a battle field in the mid-18th century. The fates of Alivardi

68. This battle field is locally known as Panipat of Bengal (Beveridge, H., op. cit., p. 235). Like Panipat, Giria is also close to the capital of Bengal, i.e., Murshidabad and fates of the two nawabs of Bengal were decided here.
Khan and Mir Kasim were decided here in two battles fought in the neighbourhood, the first one between Alivardi Khan and Sarfaraz Khan in 1740 and the last one between the English and Mir Kasim's army in 1763. The battle of Giria (1740) makes us familiar with some settlements that were in existence at that time. Roy mentions that nawab Sarfaraj Khan with his troops arrived on the second day of his march at Deoan-Sarai (J.L.No. 17, Lalgola P.S.) and Khamra69(J.L.No. 47, Ragbungthganj P.S.). The first place was noted for its large square tank with staircase on four sides, a considerable inn and a well. It was situated on the Badshahi road and halfway between Murshidabad and Gour. In Rennell's map, Khamra has been mentioned as a place with large market centre. In this battle, Goas Khan, the chief of the nawab's army, showed valiance. He is regarded as a superman70 for his loyalty to his master as well as religious activities. A dargah in his memory had been built at a spot where he died in the battle. It is located at Chandpur village of Giria mauza.

Lalgola came into being during the reign of Alivardi Khan (1740-56). Dulal Roy, originally an inhabitant of Paligram of Ghazipur district in U.P. came

69. Roy, N.N., op. cit., p. 68.
70. Ibid, pp. 70-71.
here along with its brother and cleared off the dense forests and established a small settlement named Srimantapur. The beautiful site on the bank of the mighty Padma, delightful and invigorating climate, facilities for water communication etc., attracted the early settlers.

During nawab Alivardi's regime, the neighbourhood of Murshidabad was sacked by the Bargis. Its effects were felt on cotton, silk trade and habitation. This is reflected in a letter which mentions "weavers and inhabitants fled, silk (was) often carried away wet (wet) and on the reels and piece goods before (being) manufactured - the one wound off and the other finished in utmost hurry and confusion". According to Salimullah, author of Tarikh-i-Bangal (written in 1763) "all rich and respectable people abandoned their homes and migrated to the eastern side of the Ganges" in order to save the honour of their women. Immigrants took shelter around Bhagwangola, Islampur, Raninagar, Azimganj (Domkal) and even in distant Rajshahi, now in Bangladesh. After a treaty with the Bargis,

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71. Letter to the Court of Directors, 8th January, 1743, para 15.
some people returned in their ancestral homes. Field investigation reveals that the origin of such villages as Sibnibas (J.L.No. 36, Krishnaganj P.S.), Paschim Satberia (J.L.No. 19, Haringhata P.S.), Rajkoli (J.L.No. 24, Bagdah P.S.) and Ghat Baor (J.L.No. 61, Bangaon P.S.) was due to panic of Bara raid. Deoaner Berh, close to Majdia railway station, also came into being at about this time. This village was awarded to diwan Raghunandan Mitra by his lord Krishnachandra. After the foundation of Sibnibas, village Krishnaganj (J.L.No. 39) flourished as a market place. Village Krishnapur (J.L.No. 35) was settled by the goala caste.

73. Maharaja Krishnachandra shifted his royal seat from Krishnanagar to Sibnibas. Settlement was named after abode (nibas) of God Siva (Sib). For details of the settlement see Sen, S., and J. Sen, 1981: Sibhnigas—A Study in Settlement Geography, GRI, Cal., Vol. 43, No. 2, p. 174).

74. The residents of Satberia shifted their bastubaris (homesteads) from Jagulia to the present village. The settlement denotes sat i.e., seven and beria, bari i.e., homesteads. For details, see chapter V.

75. In 1742, Raja Sibchandra of Seoraphuli (Hooghly district) with his belongings came to this jungle smoothered place which he cleared for residence (Mukhopadhyay, N.C., op. cit., pp. 159-60).

76. Under the leadership of Ghatak (title) Brahmins, people belonging to different castes came to a woody place from Burdwan region. Natural scenery of the baor charmed them. They constructed a ghat (staircase) for landing in the baor. The village was thus named Ghat on the baor (Mukhopadhyay, N.C., op. cit., p. 142).
who were brought by Krishnachandra for protection.

Except the construction of Mansurganj palace, south of Azimganj town, nothing is known regarding growth of new settlements during the reign of Siraj-ud-daulah (1756-57 A.D.).

During the eighteenth century, there were big settlements, some of them flourished as ganj. Note-worthy that they were developed along river banks. The settlements mentioned by Vijayram Sen\textsuperscript{77}, a resident of Bhajanghat and a poet laureate in the court of Raja Krishnachandra Ghosal of Khidirpur are Goari (Krishnanagar), Hatra (J.L.No. 13, Chapra P.S.), Bali (J.L.No. 10), Tungi (J.L.No. 11) and Madhupur (J.L.No. 18) of Nawda P.S.,\textsuperscript{7} Kushbaria (J.L.No. 69) of Domkal P.S. on the bank of the river Khoria (Jalangi), Lakshmipur (Raghunathganj P.S.), Jiaganj, Mogaltuli (J.L.No. 60), Dahapara (Murshidabad P.S.), Kasim-bazar, Saidabad of Berhampur P.S. and Khidirpur(J.L.No. 1) of Beldanga P.S., Mahata (J.L.No. 84, Beldanga P.S.), Plassey and Ghoraikshetra (J.L.No. 111) of Kaliganj P.S., Gotpara (J.L.No. 58) of Nakasipara P.S., Nawadwip, Phulia, Nabla, Haradham and Chakdaha on the bank of the river Bhagirathi.

Col. James Rennell (1781) in his memoir of a Map of Hindoostan also mentioned some important villages and trade centres along the river banks: Comrah (Khamrah), Bogwangola (Bhagwangola), Cutlamary (Katlamari), Jellinghy (Jalangi) on the river Padma, Jungipur, Moorshedabad (Murshidabad), Cossimbazar (Kasimbazar) on the river Bhagirathi, Murcha, Goss, Azimgunge on the river Culcully (Sialmari), Taragunee, Putikabari, Buxipur, Ballytunghy, Kishenagur (Krishnagar) on the Jellinghy (Jalangi) and many other settlements shown in Map 2.1.

2.3.5 Settlements in the British period (1757-1947A.D.) - The loss of power of the nawab of Siraj-ud-daula in the Battle of Plassey (1757) synchronised with the rise of the British power in Bengal. This period was remarkable for taking certain measures which had impact on the growth of settlements. Baharampore which probably was a settlement of Brahmans78 was selected as a cantonment in 1767 in order to have a force near Murshidabad city to keep the nawab in check.

During this period, Maharaja Krishnachandra chose three places which later became foci of settlements. For residence of his two sons, Maharaja established two villages in Renaghat P.S., Haradham on the left bank and Anandadham on the right bank of the river Churni. Maharaja

78. Hunter, W.W., 1876, op. cit., pp 75-76.
in his old age desired to spend the rest of his days at a place near the Ganga. Accordingly, he built for himself a palace on the Alakananda, a redistributary of the Jalangi and called it Gangabas, residence on the Ganga. By and by, the reputation of the place drew pilgrims from far and near who came to bathe in the Alakananda, its water being considered holy because of its link with the Bhagirathi.

During Hastings’s rule, Bengal was visited by a famine of unusual severity. Though relief was provided, the number of deaths from famine was very high in comparison to relief. Before the commencement of 1771, one-third of a generation of peasants had been wiped off from the face of the earth. Villages which were once very flourishing were fast being turned jungles. Effects of this famine were felt on cotton industry and agriculture. The languishing cotton industry received a terrible blow as a result of death of a number of silk weavers. After his death, the place gradually lost its importance. Nothing remains today of past grandeur of the place save the temples of Harithara and Kalbhairab.

79. After his death, the place gradually lost its importance. Nothing remains today of past grandeur of the place save the temples of Harithara and Kalbhairab.


82. Even two decades after this famine Cornwallis declared one-third of the Company’s possessions in Bengal to be a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts.

the famine, raiyats (cultivators) were at the mercy of the landlords, but after the famine, each landlord began to attract the raiyats of his neighbours by offering lower rents. We come across the growth of new settlements like Auldanga (J.L.No. 21), Ronghat (J.L.No. 22), around Rajkol in Bagdah P.S. about this time. The Raja of Rajkol helped the distressed people during this period and they settled there.

Murshidabad enjoyed some degree of suzerainty up to 1793 and then Calcutta as a military, political, and commercial centre, became the stronghold of the East India Company. The decay of Murshidabad city and its suburbs commenced from this time.

With the beginning of indigo and lac cultivation, some settlements grew in importance. Jangipur, Azimganj (Domkal), Sonatikri, Patikabari, Raninagar, Banjetia in the Murshidabad, Shikarpur, Hansadanga in Nadia and Chowberia in Twentyfour Parganas districts became important centres of indigo cultivation, while Durgapur and Mangal of Murshidabad were centres of lac cultivation. The British brought a number of tribal people, locally known as Buno for indigo cultivation. The habitation by them gave rise to a number of settlements, such as Mollabati (J.L.No. 28), Srimantapur.

85. In 1779, the East India Company permitted all Europeans to establish indigo plantations.
(J.L.No. 99), Palla (J.L.No. 121), Paikpara (J.L.No. 106), and Morighata on the bank of the river Ichhamati in Bangaon P.S.

In 1813, the decay of Kasimbazar was brought about by an artificial change in the course of the river. This engineering operation caused dreadful havoc and the population, estimated to be "one hundred thousand souls" was, according to local tradition, entirely swept away in course of twelve months.

From the mid-19th century to the days of independence, the region experienced depopulation due to high mortality from fever, emigration of the people to Hugli Industrial Belt and healthier areas etc. There was hardly any growth of settlement in this period.

Village Maheshganj (Nabadwip P.S.) was established by Mr. Bipradas Palchaudhury in the later part of the 19th century. Belemath, a small village near highway of Phulia, was founded by the residents of Nabla, Belgharia, who abandoned their jungle-smothered villages and settled here about forty years back. During the World War II, three places such as, Dhubulia (Krishnagar P.S.), Cooper's Camp (Ranaghat P.S.) and Chandmari (Kalyani P.S.) became camping centres of the English troops.

After the war, these camps were abandoned but after the

partition of the country, they are being used as rehabilitation camps.

2.1.6 Settlements in the independence period - Independence of the country saw the birth of a new territory, carved out from the then existing country. The new country known as East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) is predominantly inhabited by the Muslims. The Hindus from the East Pakistan emigrated to India in very large numbers. Nadia district witnessed a very high influx of displaced persons. Nadia lost a little more than half of the total area of the former undivided district to East Pakistan. Naturally, the residents of the East Pakistan part of the district took shelter in Indian portion of the district. The government distributed khas land for residence and loans for construction of houses. Appendix II.1 shows the Government Colonies of the districts at the time of independence.

2.2 CONCLUSION:

The river Padma determined the course of civilisation in this tract. On its banks developed the settlements, one of which (Kammasuvarna) became the capital of Gour. The western part (Rah) of the Bhagirathi is comparatively older than the eastern (Bagri). As the tract was marshy, it took times for human habitation. The ancient settlements of the Bagri are connected either
with Sena kings or Buddhist religious centres. Sultanate settlements are mostly connected with the life of Sri Chaitanya and his associates. During the sixteenth century, Murshidabad, Kasimbazar and Saidabad became reputed for silk trade. European traders set up their kuthias there. The importance of the above places and the Bagri as a whole was raised during the Bargi raid and shift of capital of Bengal from Dacca to Murshidabad in 1704. Orderly administration of the Nadia Chieftains helped to the growth of settlements there. The Rajas also established a number of country seats and resorts. Shift of the capital of Bengal from Murshidabad to Calcutta in 1774 and abandonment of a part of the river Bhagirathi in 1813 shattered the importance of Murshidabad, Kasimbazar and their neighbourhood. Indigo cultivation in the nineteenth century gave rise to a number of tribal colonies. From the mid-nineteenth century, the region fell under the grip of virulent malarial fever. Some settlements were depopulated. Migration of population from villages to elsewhere made the situation critical. Rehabilitation of the displaced persons of the East Pakistan in post-independence period gave rise to a number of colonies and rehabilitation camps (Plate 11). The last five years witnessed a shift of the original settlements from interior to the roadside or urban area or in the town itself.
In order to understand the metamorphosis of settlements, a detailed study of the evolution of each mauza for the last fifty years (1921-71) was undertaken, the results of which are presented in appendix II.2.

So far the growth of settlements from ancient to the present day has been studied. In the subsequent chapter, factors affecting settlements have been studied in detail.